

# AMETHYST

## F.A.C.T.I.O.N.S.



PATHFINDER COMPATIBLE



# *Amethyst*



# FACTIONS

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# CHAPTER ONE

# ORIGINS

6

## THE MOOT HILL

*Seeing the deacon for the first time was humbling. Despite criticisms to her brother, Tasia still found herself subservient, saluting her aligned hand to the temple, elbow pointed low, the moment she saw him.*

*It was reflex rather than will.*

*Or was it programming?*

*She wondered what had happened to make him this way, whether all deacons looked like that. The emaciated figure was stretched two feet taller than her though weighed the same. He shuffled clumsily with the aid of an exoskeleton that reinforced his legs and added a pair of articulated canes protruding from the shoulders, making him a four-legged animal that still stood up-*

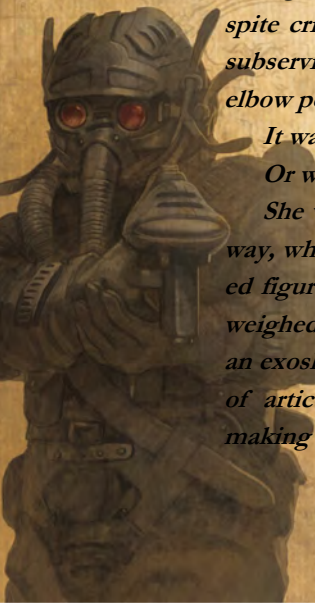
*right.*

*In zero-gravity, deacons moved with grace, never stumbling, but when suffering the artificial gravity of the lower levels of the capital ship, they were pathetic.*

*Tasia was curious how they would survive on Earth after the gates closed, when the Saints started the long process of rebuilding the planet. The pursuit of liberating Earth would benefit the mortals rather than their gods.*

*The thin shape hobbled past her. Nearly every inch of skin was sealed from the outside to protect from infection. What she could see was as thick as leather and hairless.*

*His helmet was donned. The guards flanking him were elite, with slung vapor rifles and scabbards on their backs with blades ground to a molecular edge.*





*Tasia had no idea of the deacon's name, though knew they all had them. She assumed a male, though there was a lack of definition.*

*He said nothing to her as he approached. They never associated with those below status, yet this one deemed it necessary enough to look them over. It made one pass by the craft, then diverted to her. She began to tremble as the gangly hand grabbed her arm. It turned it over to notice the barcode—her ID, genetic name, and date of birth. Tasia heard the faint whiff of a breathing apparatus.*

*He released her and made for the door. A member of his entourage detached to hand her orders.*

*Her instincts said obey. She always did.*

*Everything else was incidental, like the still living flower she kept in her EDF bag. Still flapping as if trying to fly despite unable to do so. It could be out for only a few seconds, enough for her to admire it a moment before the magic it radiated could set off the alarms. If she maintained that discipline, what harm could it inflict?*

*Every day was regimented, nearly every moment accounted for. Nearly. For those brief few seconds, she brought it out.*

*Punch the clocks.*

*Follow the schedule.*

*Never question.*

*The deacons claimed it their natural state.*

*Conform.*

*Consume.*

*Obey.*

*Forget the past, they said, and follow the program. Tasia believed the deacons looked down on the rest as little more than organic machines. She remembered the mantra—six hours on, six hours off. The rhythm was conditioned from birth to render dates meaningless.*

*She couldn't even remember the colony, their home, that last remnant of humanity still with an unbroken connection to the past. Perhaps that's how it was back then, with people little more than cogs in a military-industrial complex.*

\* \* \*

*She had read the reports of what had happened in Angel. A mild skirmish, they claimed. Friedkin and the rest of the team were dead, save for Stone whose failsafe hadn't triggered, indicating he had been captured by Angel military.*

*As Tasia had more experience in the region than*

*anyone alive, they had lifted her exclusion status and assigned her a new team. She made a point to not remember their names at this point.*

*Additional resources were being diverted to Canam for this one endeavor. Tasia hadn't been told why, or even how the deacons knew of these artifacts Saints were obsessing over.*

*At the inset, Saints were gathering artifacts from around the globe to better study disruption. Powerful relics—those forged by the elder races—radiated significant disruption, more so more than even the minds that forged the relics in the first place.*

*Once retrieved, cataloged, and studied, they were fed into a coilgun and launched into the sun. Somehow, these purple gems took precedence over all other concerns.*

*To properly facilitate her mission, Tasia required Stone. He was an engineer, and one of the few people left she trusted that wasn't family. She stressed the former when advocating the mission despite numerous other engineers on board.*

*Despite rumors that the deacons could remote activate a suit failsafe, incinerating a soldier within his or her suit, no one had ever seen it occur. Even if possible, Stone was too far out of range given the EDF scrambled wave-based communication beyond a few kilometers*

*If her ship got close enough, she might be able to pick up his signal, but the city was on an alert, and second engagement would become a diplomatic nightmare and expose the Saints to even more scrutiny.*

*Angel occasionally entertained envoys from other bastions including Selkirk, York, and even Porto from across the ocean; their technology would be recognizable. But there were others. Sierra Madre. Moteogo. Novo.*

*Tasia ensured the signal was weak, revealing nothing of the sender, and employed an archaic language known to both Angel and Saints. The Radiotelephony spelling alphabet predated the Hammer and utilized pulses to convey a simple message. The message originated from an archaic transmitter recovered from a failed bastion from the other side of the planet.*

*Tasia confirmed her knowledge of the captured survivor in Angel, along with a willingness to trade. She kept the message simple; there were guidelines she was constrained to follow*

*Saint technology was forbidden.*

*Saint knowledge was forbidden.*

*Tasia made a request for a conclave—a classic parley—like in medieval times. She included coordinates*





## CHAPTER ONE: ORIGINS

outside, though near Angel, not south within the contentious forest of Cyon, but rather the northern half, where the wall closed in farms and beyond spread rolling green knolls. She picked one at random, requesting only a small diplomatic team to meet her.

The location was within sight of the Angel wall, a show of faith to placate the likely trigger-happy planet-born techans. She opted out of taking down a Caldera—the knife-shaped transports would be associated with a military operation. Instead, she took a Solis, a small one-man craft not designed for long excursions in open echa.

It relied wholly upon a single anti-gravity generator for its propulsion, which manifested externally as a set of aeriform structures resembling wings though were not functional as such. The cockpit rested on a gimble mount, allowing its main body to rotate or shift depending on the maneuver being attempted. The Solis's drive also removed all inertia within the vessel, allowing it to accelerate to maximum speed instantly and stop as quickly without breaking every bone in Tasia's body.

She landed well out of sight of the Angel outer wall and further than their active radar, necessitating a considerable walk to the coordinates. There, she waited two hours ahead of the scheduled time. It was another risk. The Solis had been completely shut down, but there was a chance it would not restart.

The Angel fanjet appeared over the distant wall and approached quickly. Punctual.

Tasia was impressed it was alone. Undoubtedly, a dozen more hummed out of sight opposite the wall.

The landing ramp opened before the craft settled. It was an antique compared to her's, running off a rechargeable battery pack with a day's life.

One man stepped off as the vehicle touched down. The disturbed air from the rotors threw his hair and uniform about. Landing lights blocked his face from Tasia's view. As he moved into focus, Tasia noticed he was her height, her age, and was neither a politician nor a civilian. The battledress displayed rank and authority. She wore simple clothes acquired from grounders, nothing that would reveal her origin.

Tasia waited for him to speak first.

"A moot hill," shouted Martin Camus over the still gyrating rotors. "Taking inspiration from the outside world, real medieval touch."

"It's necessary"

"Likewise."

"I need him."

"Friend?"

Tasia thought about how to respond.

"Yes," she said. Martin laughed.

"No, he's not," he responded. "We're all soldiers. You're afraid he'll eventually reveal something, and for whatever reason, you can't or won't trigger that failsafe. As we don't know who you are, I can't exactly declare him a prisoner of war. Currently, he's in detention on suspect of being a terrorist."

"It was a military operation to retrieve..." Tasia started, then trailed off, realizing she could reveal aspects of her mission.

Saint knowledge was forbidden.

"No," Martin said, "by all means. Don't let me stop an obviously illuminating monologue." Tasia quickly went over the risks in her head, about how to word it. Carefully.

"You know how disruption works," she answered, "about the radiance infecting this planet, a confluence of catalysts. That bright star above...and another, it's antithesis, resting in a crater half-way across the world. Both stealing a part of this planet each day."

"Looks like they got it all," said Martin.

"They call it Attricana. Do you?"

"Does it matter?"

"It encourages...but the star doesn't itself radiate disruption. Did you know that?"

"No...but how do you?" he asked. Tasia realized each time he asked a question, he was uncovering something. She could see the gears turning behind his eyes, deducing what he can. Her stoic veneer started to come back.

"Disruption spreads from creatures it spawns, the magic they cast, and the artifacts they create," she said. "There are those more powerful than others. As I've been told, if we remove enough, the disruption would decrease where our technology could survive longer in the wild. Then we can all fight back. Retake this world. Echans keep these secret. But there are a handful of objects that can apparently control reality itself... though not ours...theirs."

"But you won't reveal what these are," Martin stated rather than asked.

"You wouldn't be able to do anything about it," Tasia snapped. "But you asked. I was honest. I'm just here for my man." Martin brought his arms out wide.

"I'm standing on a hill, waiting for your offer."

Tasia started to regret this course of action. She had hoped for a closed-collared general that had never seen combat, never negotiated outside of a school debate.

"If I tell you something forbidden," she said, "I in-



validate both our lives.”

“You’re bound by disruption as us,” he said. “Wait.” She could see the gears turning again. “Of course, you are. Meaning there’s no real way for anyone to eavesdrop. You’re on the honor system. They must trust you. So, claim that you swayed me with that previous soliloquy. That the mutual threat of disruption convinced me to act in good faith. Take a chance. You may just succeed.”

Tasia’s fixed stare on Martin’s gave way, and she perused the beautiful landscape surrounding them. The tall grass billowing in the slight breeze from the still turning fanjet rotors. Unlike her people, his bastion could overhear them. She had a recording device as well, but she was confident it broke down while she ascended the hill.

“Do you believe your actions are based on the role you fill,” she asked, “or do you fill a role because it’s how you wish to act?”

He wasn’t entirely sure what she meant, so gave the best answer he could. “I chose my career. Willingly.”

“You followed your father?” she countered. It was a typical assumption, and once made put Martin off.

“Yes, but it’s what I wanted.”

“You have a family? Sister? Brother—”

“Why does that matter?” Martin snapped. Tasia returned to glaring at him, finally able to glean something personal.

“Brother, then,” she said, “and I assume your brother chose the opposite...because that’s what brothers do. Was he the one that died?”

“Where are you going with this?” Martin snapped. “There are those that embrace what is, while I prefer what was. No matter how bad, it was still better.”

Tasia believed her provocation would produce a fiercer reaction. Whatever happened, this brother was not dead, but close enough to be considered so.

“I...” Tasia was about to agree but instead said, “That’s my people’s attitude as well. And if we change the world back to the way it was, would we change along with it? Would you still do what you do? Would I?”

“Realistically, if that light winked out tomorrow, lifetimes would pass before we’d see the glory of our species’ former years return. I wouldn’t change. Would you? I assume you have the freedom to do so?”

“You wouldn’t let your brother do that?” Tasia replied, probing again. “Have you forgiven him?”

“If we succeed,” Martin said, with Tasia noting the plural pronoun, “it won’t matter.”

Tasia nodded. She knew she was deviating off topic, but this was the first civilized communication she has had with someone outside of her company, someone that couldn’t report her.

“Neither of us is fully aware of the world we desperately want to create,” said Tasia. “It’s as much a dream as the fantasy world surrounding us. Would we even recognize normal? Perhaps your bastion is a poor imitation based on fractured records and ideology.”

“You almost sound like him,” Martin responded. “I don’t really care what becomes of the new world...just as long as humanity is in control of it.”

Tasia’s shoulders dropped, and she exhaled. The joust was concluding. She had made the connection—the pieces were falling into place. How fortunate it would be him that would emerge to parley. A fake smile crept to a corner of her mouth.

“Of course,” she said. “You’re right. Everything should fall into its place. We’re the apex, the alphas, the ones others should fear. We lack the power to destroy the world like we once did. When it’s over, the machine of man will resume, and we’ll all fall into place like the dutiful gears we are.”

Martin appeared confused by where their conversation had strayed. He made another step forward. She imagined a desk separating them as he leaned in.

“We’re not so different,” he said. “In the end, we’re one species whose failure is inevitable as long as we fight amongst ourselves. Our walls divide worlds, not knowledge.”

“Captain, you’ve been accurate on many points during this conversation,” said Tasia, “save one. I don’t believe we’re that alike at all. I think walls will always be walls. Indiscriminate.”

Martin straightened, turned around, and made a signal to the aircraft. It began to start up.

“I’m still standing on a hill,” he said, “waiting for your offer.”

Tasia had been curious if techans on Earth were as fanatical as her people. Clearly, they were. She realized that the only thing separating the two of them was what she knew.

That was about to change.





**T**he world changed, and it continues to do so. It appeared nothing more than a faulty mutation in a relatively inconsequential infant species. For thousands of years, a species of hominid had enjoyed a modicum of success in the wild landscapes of ancient Africa. Their advantage was their mammalian physiology matched with an aggressive attitude and a jaw that could bite through nearly anything.

One day, an infant was born that would be neither given a name nor idolized for anything it ever said. It was only bestowed with a genetic fault that made it an inferior member of its species. Unlike the other members of its family, this solitary outcast lacked a single genetic marker that established the strength of the muscles in its jaw. It couldn't bite down as firmly, pull the leaves off branches as successfully as its brothers and sisters. In any other time, this pathetic creature would be fated for an early death.

This did not occur.

To anchor such massive muscles to their head, the skulls of these apes, comprised of disconnected plates that moved and enlarged as they grew, were forced to fuse, fixing the size of their heads early in life. With this one aberration, lacking the gene to increase the power of its bite, the plates of its skull didn't fuse, and its brain continued to enlarge to fill in the expanse.

This unsuccessful hominid found itself smarter than the others. It might not have been the first of its kind to pick up a bone and use it as a weapon, but its children might have, or perhaps their children. Eventually one of them did, setting the path for an entire species. There would be branches in this evolution—one division, stronger and smarter but taxed with huge caloric demands in the face of an encroaching ice age, failed after only a few thousand years. Their competitors, dumber and weaker, survived on smaller diets. Reduced dietary demands allowed mothers to care for their children rather than join on the hunt, increasing reproduction, and exploding the population. With numbers came conflict, came winners and losers, and aggression once again prevailed. Those that remained home developed communities, language, traditions, and eventually mythologies. Before science could anchor itself, myth had begotten religion, and gods were emplaced to explain the world.

Despite fear and paranoia, despite corruption and fanatics, the drive to succeed and expand trumped the desire to maintain the status quo. The species learned

and built. They wrote down their accomplishments for others to understand. Questions were asked, castigated, and ultimately answered.

At the cusp of a global emergence (a spiritual shift that could finally supplant the aggression coupled with evolution), a tragedy of biblical proportions halted and subsequently erased millions of years of human growth. They were on the threshold of harnessing the knowledge that they had been slaves to, finally balancing the ways of gods with the ways of science. They looked beyond the cradle of their world and saw a universe welcoming them, a cosmos brought into existence for the singular function to be observed and understood by the very intellects it would create and contain. The potential of mankind collapsed from a single act that fell outside the parameters of this universe, something the cosmos had no hand in preventing.

A great intelligence had torn a hole in the fabric of space, not to another universe, but into a spatial dimension outside of the confines of accepted reality. This dimension held a polarity—split into positive and negative space, containing our physical universe and its four dimensions between. This intelligence did this to gain power denied to beings bound by a normal cosmos. But was this a singular creature or one of many? Were its actions benign or malicious? Was it born an inhabitant of this universe, with a heritage not dissimilar to man, or was it an entity with a capacity worthy of deification?

The planet is plagued by the machinations of two gates: one into positive space, the other into negative. From one spills a fountain of chaos, creating life in every crevice; the other spreads a corruption encouraging flatness and conformity. Stuck in the crossfire are the evolved hominids, constrained by the limits of reality—the laws the universe had slowly set down over billions of years of trial and error. Why would mankind not wish a return to the laws that gave them intelligence and power? Why wouldn't they wish to continue their destiny to be the inheritors of their planet? Had they not the right to escape their cradle to take a place among other evolved species in the expanse of the universe?

With such stakes on the line, the troubles of elves and dragons may feel utterly insignificant. Such weights to be measured. Such responsibilities levied. Such shoulders to carry these burdens. Those that take on the quest to seek out these seemingly insignificant amethyst stones take upon them such accountability. It



would be hard to believe those with investment in the outcome would leave events to play out without influence. Every soul, bound to magic or science, must pick a side in time. A balance between opposing forces may never be found. And behind the faces of the most fanatical are greater forces choosing to remain quiet and invisible. Unfortunately, with such stakes on the line, the desire for subterfuge is slowly slipping, and the greater menaces to the world have begun to appear.

Demonecha.

Saints.

Angels.

Are the people of the planet prepared for the answers to come?

Are you?

## FACTIONS

In this second volume in the *Amethyst* saga, many answers will finally be revealed. This book, though it contains much of interest to players, is primarily written for the storyteller, the games master. It reveals several major plot elements in the setting that should not be disclosed to players until the appropriate time. If read by a player intending on running through an *Amethyst* campaign with a character, knowing these secrets may spoil the satisfaction of discovering them naturally through the game. From this point on, the reader enters the land of unmarked spoilers.

The warning has been issued.

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## THE REAL HISTORY

*Amethyst began in the shower after I had watched the film Dragonslayer. Yes, that long ago. I had this strange habit when I was young where I would take an idea seen on television that was not science fiction and skew it into science fiction. I imagined a setting where dragons would rise from the ashes of a nuclear holocaust, where humans would be forced into walled cities to survive. This was years before the film Reign of Fire was released.*

*There was no real fantasy in the setting save for dragons. Humanity lived within walled cities scattered over the planet. There were no elves, spawn, or disruption. The story dealt with one bastion, Angel, and its constant attacks from a family of evil dragons to the south. There was an Asian city within Angel where a Chinese dragon took refuge. Back then, that creature*

*was the one called Amethyst. I shelved the idea as I was trying to be a screenwriter at the time.*

*Then 2002 came; my friend Chris Brown wanted to try this new version of D&D everyone had been playing. I was never much a diehard fan of fantasy in comparison to science fiction. I wanted some originality with the setting so I looked over my old story treatments for inspiration...and Amethyst was the only one with any fantasy. The setting became Amethyst with the standard D&D setting crammed into it. I didn't even change the names. Monsters were everywhere and bastions had a hard time surviving. It was still a traditional techno-fantasy by this point, where wizards could wield lasers if they so wished. One player did, and I quickly discovered how broken the game could get when the same person could wield technology and magic.*

*Throughout all of this, I never thought of Amethyst as a serious setting. I set it on Earth because the original story was set on earth. There wasn't much of a story, just an obvious McGuffin to keep the players moving place to place.*

*Then I ran into David Fidler, my best friend from years past. I told him I had been dragged back into role-playing from a nearly three-year hiatus. He asked what the setting was and I explained, "It's a techno-fantasy not unlike others except that the world of fantasy and science don't mingle at all...in fact, they actively disrupt each other's existence."*

*He said, "Wow, that sounds quite original."*

*And I replied, "Yes...you're right." I didn't tell him that the last part didn't exist until I said them. That was what I needed...the final mark of the setting to make it original. It cured a massive flaw in the story where science should be able to overwhelm magic. It answered many problems, gave motivations to people on the other side, and fixed a glaring game mechanic. I began a huge retroactive shift in the setting.*

*The setting was still a vanilla fantasy, but I eventually unloaded what I had to my personal website. After the campaign finished two and a half years later—yes finished, actually finished—I began the second edition. I started a second round of setting alterations, taking out more of the fantasy clichés and inserting more original content.*

*Amethyst was a collection of ideas based on original concepts and others inspired by artwork found online. I had gotten permission from artists to use their artwork for free on my page, some of which were and are well known in the industry. Despite being allowed to use their art for free for my free game, Amethyst still had no original art to call its own.*

*I wanted the game to be the best it could be. Progress moved smoothly as the game grew. Eventually, I needed a black and white artist but found few. One of the original artists that supported me with free work offered his talents for*





B+W. This would be Nick Greenwood, which would eventually become the most productive relationship I have had outside of my local gaming group.

The setting was still evolving. Disruption was only an electromagnetic pulse, allowing the use of enchanted traditional firearms and steam power, giving Amethyst a steampunk layer. I realized that this still didn't work with what I wanted and altered the setting again, taking out even this compromise. Now all technology above 18th century would break down. Anything more complicated than a windmill was vulnerable, and I had to lay down reasons for all this to occur. Now the motivation for those following technology was even more important.

Then came 4<sup>th</sup> Edition D&D. We were admittedly not pleased. We spent the better part of thirteen months creating a kick-ass 3.5 variation. I decided I didn't want to waste all the work that had been done with the 3.5 version. We would release it and see what response it got. I was still perfecting the setting, only leaving enough of the traditional D&D clichés for the mechanics to work.

After the release of 4<sup>th</sup> Edition rules, everyone associated with the project supported our move to utilize it. When the Game System License was released, as other companies were running from the system, we signed on, one of the first to do so. This garnered the attention of a major third-party publisher who offered to print and distribute our edition in ways we could only imagine. Alas, 4<sup>th</sup> Edition rules never recovered from initial fan backlash, and the lack of third-party support harmed it.

However, I felt the economic downturn of the period affected the market just as much. Amethyst Foundations, our 4<sup>th</sup> Edition adaptation would not be released until two years after 4<sup>th</sup> Edition's release. By then, the writing was on the wall for the core rules. Fans were jumping ship. Dias Ex Machina strode on, releasing Amethyst Evolution for the 4<sup>th</sup> Edition not long after, which ended up making us more money than Amethyst Foundations did. To prove that 4<sup>th</sup> Edition could be utilized for various systems, we followed with Ultramodern4, by then our most popular book to date (and it would only be recently beat by the release of Ultramodern5). This proved a market was there for 4<sup>th</sup> Edition, and we followed it up with the cyberpunk game NeuroSpasta and the superhero game Apex.

However, my heart was still with Amethyst. By then, our second Amethyst campaign had concluded, and I was already setting up my third. Dubbed Cradle, it would be set 5,000 years after Logos. I had also decided that before I could move on with the next Amethyst, I wanted to make one final push to get Wizards of the Coast to support its dwindling 4<sup>th</sup> Edition players. Instead, I received an email from the director of Paizo

inviting us to support their system. How could we say no? Amethyst Renaissance proved to be a solid performer, the evolution of everything I had learned about game development at the time. It was also a better representation of the setting at the time. I would eventually combine both Amethyst Foundations and Evolution into the complete Amethyst Compendium.

However, what I really wanted to do finally finish the next book, one that would cover the second year of the original campaign from ten years earlier. I wanted to release it in full color, but with that challenge in mind, I didn't want to keep the core books still only in black and white. I attempted an audacious project—to attempt to fund not only the second book of Amethyst in color but release the original books in color as well. Nick and I negotiated a price and I set the goal at \$10,000. To satisfy fan requests and give the Kickstarter the best chance it could have, I decided to expand the setting to support other systems as well.

Fate Core was the early favorite, as was Savage Worlds. Our support for 13<sup>th</sup> Age came as a direct result of its creator showing his support for us. Even though the 5<sup>th</sup> Edition version of the classic fantasy rules had yet to be released, our knowledge of open gaming knew that we would be able to support it, a fact that shocked the gaming community at the time. What was even more shocking was that our Kickstarter campaign succeeded. Years later, we finally had all the core books released, though some were more successful than others. This book, *Factions*, is the ultimate achievement of that campaign, the result of five years of development. There is still more Amethyst to come—by the time I wrote this book, I was still running my fourth Amethyst campaign, totaling almost fifteen years of experience this setting. You have only seen the surface of what's to come...

Editor's Note: He does ramble on a bit, doesn't he? But then, that's one of the things that brought me to this setting in the first place. When I first read through the original 3.0 version of Amethyst, I skipped over the bulk of the book at first to read the story segments (only half of which appeared in the newer core rulebooks). The story that you get from the actual rulebook portion doesn't do justice to the breadth of possibilities this setting presents. The central experience of Amethyst is how we, the players and GMs, respond to a world that is at once familiar and unfamiliar, and how we in turn set about changing it even more. I personally recommend going for a drive through your home region and populating the landscape outside your windows with wizards' towers surrounded by huddling hamlets, roosting dragons on every peak, dreadful armies marching through farmlands pillaging homesteads and burning fields, and every so often, huge imposing walls keeping the



magic-folk out. I can virtually guarantee you'll come up with a few good adventure seeds that way.

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Aiden's eyes sprung open when the volume jostled him awake. It wasn't a natural sound. The buzz was reminiscent of the electric razor Martin had given him and couldn't return to the store. The pitch was gaining as it approached. Aiden could see Raven already up and battle ready, Mischa to, sans the drawn swords and donned armor. Mahan woke a moment after. Raven and Mischa had backed against trees. No one exchanged glances or words. At this late season, the sun was not due to rise for another four hours. There wasn't even a strip of glow on the horizon. Dark clouds covered the moon and Attricana.

Over the sounds of nature and wind, Aiden turned to the source in the north. The godly beam of white light flickered through the trees as it approached. The glow, cast down from above the canopy, lit the roof of needles and leaves, leaving little for the soil below. As a passing angel, it rolled over them. Aiden poked his head from the shadows of trees. It was smaller than a galleon of the sea. He could count a half-dozen jutting oars that didn't move. Too small for wings but they stabilized the craft in some way. Perhaps they were for propulsion, but there were neither exhaust nor spinning blades. The bottom wasn't flat but sharp as a blade, ending in a knife-edge to cut across the top of the canopy. It was taller than long, longer than wide, slicing through the air without jostling the trees. Aiden's mouth cracked open as he saw the detail in its passing. He knew what that was. From this vantage, Aiden caught details he had missed initially, including fragments of a symbol on the side of the hull, stimulating a memory from when he noticed them on the soldiers in Angel.

"Saints," Aiden whispered loudly. The others took notice.

"How did they find us?" Mischa responded

"I don't think they did," Aiden answered, "otherwise, they'd have attacked by now. The aircraft I retrieved the Amethyst from was within this forest. They also could have tracked our prints from the sky, but I doubt they know where we are." Frantically, Aiden pulled his boots on, ignoring the others. He drew the cords tight but didn't bother tying. He jumped to his feet and snatched his spellbook on instinct.

"Remember the flammable trees," Raven whis-

pered back.

The light tracked the tree canopy. The skin was off-white, sullied with dark specks like peppercorn, weathered by an uncaring nature. In the light from Attricana, Aiden could see bumps and curves rather than jagged edges and cavities. It was as tall as Chen's biblio but no wider than his kitchen. It moved slow but steady and passed over them.

"Their technology could sniff us easily," said Aiden. "Infrared, light amplification. They should see us."

"It's the forest," answered Mahan. Disruption. It's blocking them.

"Then remain still," Mischa grumbled. "Their eyes can still see."

"They are risking much," said Mahan. "We know they are still vulnerable. The more advanced the tech, the easier it can fail."

They all noticed the pussywillow catkin, each glittering with their light, bluish sparks, not unlike the primary spell Aiden had kept with him. They emerged from the trees surrounding the saint vessel and floated upwards. While some were pushed aside by the air currents, others attached themselves to the underside of the ship. As more followed, the lights on the saint vessel began to flicker. The nearly soundless craft started to lurch on one side. The ores spun in a spot, shifted rearward, and the ship quickly ascended back into the sky, vanishing into the night moments later.

The group stood in silence as the catkin fell back into the trees.

"I guess they don't like the saints either," said Mahan.

"Magic prevents mankind's retaking of the planet," said Raven, "and the artifacts we seek are the icons of that. We will not see the last of them."

\* \* \*

They reached a fork just outside Antikari. The dirt trail east would widen and become the Continental Cross, connecting coast to coast. North led just outside Xixion, into Kannos.

"If we go alone, would we not be at risk?" Raven asked.

"A quest requires risk," Mahan replied. "Larger groups equate a larger target. Mischa and I will travel to Janoah. My king in Abidan is wise. If he held one, he would reveal so if asked."

"Assuming the trust of a king," Mischa whispered away from the conversation.







*"Savarice is noble," Mahan snapped back, "possessing proximity of blood unmatched. Ancestry blessed by dragons."*

*"I agreed as chaperon out of respect for you, not your nation. Moreover, I hope to time our arrival with one of those pagus attacks and join your knights on the wall."*

*"Regardless," Mahan replied, "with opponents on the hunt, it's best we separate, at least initially. Aiden?" Aiden remained quiet, troubled by the abruptness of the event. "Of come on, Aiden; you must have expected this. I know of your books. The fellowship always splits."*

*"We've all accepted this reality, Mahan" Aiden*

*snapped, "but even taking those books into account, there are just as many tales where a party divided fails. Besides, the Continental Cross tracks through Abidan. You don't need the diversion. Where else are you going?"*

*Mahan smiled, realizing there was no need to conceal the truth. "I know of a seer sitting atop of Raunnis, the pagoda mountain in Kannos. It's very dangerous."*

*"Why haven't I read about this? Why didn't you tell me?"*

*"I'm not a walking encyclopedia, brother. Chen reminded me of it, and we had been distracted of late. Mischa and I discussed it last night. Besides, it's mysticism, and you're not interested in that."*

*"If we are seeking augers and soothsayers," Aiden interjected, "why not approach Ramkava?"*

*Raven rolled her eyes. "By the books, no," she spat out. "Cryptic and confusing, taking pleasure in their puzzles, the talking stones would be a last resort."*

*"Agreed," Mahan answered. "It's not a permanent separation. When you find your answers, seek Janoah. Regardless of who arrives first, the city will embrace and protect you."*

*As the horses pondered the direction their riders would eventually beckon them to, Mahan held his hands and whispered a prayer for Raven and Aiden. Raven bowed and accepted it. Aiden also did so out of respect for his friend but not his god.*

*"You may not thank god, so I shall do it for you," Mahan said.*

*Aiden fired back, "I thank you for all you have done and will continue to do."*

*"Keep to the main roads. Trust that custodian blade by your side. Don't be frugal and hitch on a blimp made of stitched underwear. Have some class. Enjoy it."*

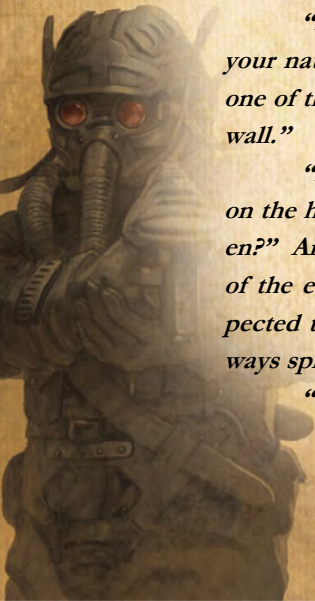
*"Thank you," said Aiden. He brought his steed closer. He held out a hand. Mahan accepted, placing his other hand over his friend's.*

*"Peace be with you in all your journeys, my friend. May God guide you in ways where you don't have to listen. If you come to Janoah and see us missing, find the king. He will listen and believe you. Other than that, do not wait."*

*"Understood."*

*Mahan looked to Raven and nuzzled his horse alongside as Aiden orbited around to Mischa.*

*"Stay alive," Aiden blurted out.*





*"Easy," Mischa answered. "Keep your head out the clouds and out of fights. When in doubt, run. Make that your motto and reputation." They shook hands. "Leave the glory to those who seek it. Take neither trophies nor women. Heroes draw attention...I'll proudly take that mantle."*

*"Act a coward, be your advice?"*

*"Play your strengths," Mischa responded, releasing his hand.*

*Mahan didn't bother offering a hand to Raven. He was quite aware damaskans had issues with physical contact.*

*"A safe journey back home, but do not stay. This world and my life are richer with you in it," Mahan said. Raven broke from her shell. She reached across and embraced him. Mahan held her. Her face cuddled his collar, shielding her emotions from the group.*

*Mahan whispered so gently, only her ears could hear.*

*"Keep your word. Keep him safe."*

*"I swear," she spoke softly back.*

*"God hears the whisper; I'll hold you to it." She nodded. "And if anything happens to you, he will answer more severely." She coughed a laugh and withdrew. He held her hand as he did all those he cared for.*

*She glanced at Mischa, staring back. "Don't die, elf," he said. He tapped his horse, and it began a slow trot down the northern road.*

*"He'll miss you," said Mahan. Raven smiled.*

*The two sides pulled apart. Mischa was slow but didn't look back to check on Mahan. Mahan kept his eyes on his friends. "He is right about one thing," said Mahan. "Pick your battles. A legend is so because he dies. Brave men live because they know when to run."*

*"I will miss your speeches."*

*"Goodbye, my friend." Mahan pulled his mount around and caught up to the ranger, though looking back occasionally until the others were out of view down the Cross. "I hope the best for him," he said.*

*"Obviously," Mischa answered, "the future of the world depends on it."*

*"I stress him," he reaffirmed. Mischa gave him a confused look. "I hope she lets him down easily."*

*Mischa looked back down the road, but they were gone. He started to put the facts together in this mind. He had not thought of it. He was no eunuch. Raven looked like the type sold to kings or barons in exchange for prized land and houses—the youngest virgin—the most exceptional beauty in the land. Dress her in a petticoat, a ruffled blouse, headdress, cover the*

*entire affair in white lace and you would have a nubile princess of unrivaled purity elder men would war over.*

*Mischa once had taken a liking to a noble daughter in Barbelos some years back, but after seeing how hard it would be to unstrap her from the thirty-pound crinoline around her waist, he wagered it wasn't worth the effort. "Even I didn't notice that," he said.*

*"His feelings or his chances?" Mahan asked.*

*"Anyone can read that man's feelings. His loins burned for her the moment I saw them...the two of them, not his—"*

*"I got that, Mischa."*

*"The only one not aware is her. For a custodian, she catches very little. They would be truly horrible for each other," Mischa declared.*

*Mahan nodded. "I know...wait, why do you think?"*

*"He's neurotic, and she's a basket case."*

*Mahan increased his gait to take the lead. "You like them...don't cover it."*

*"What's your reasoning? Why do you think they're a doomed match?"*

*"They're similar in all the wrong ways."*

*They rode quietly for a moment before Mischa changed topics. "Did you call me articulate?" he asked.*

*"I did," Mahan answered.*

*"Does that mean I move well?"*

*Mahan laughed. "This is going to be an interesting journey."*







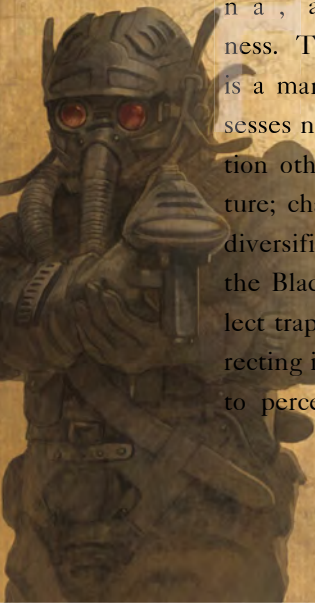
## CHAPTER TWO

# LIGHT

16 **L**ook closer. The light may shine bright, but it also can burn. Forces alleging to speak for good claim Attricana, akin to heaven, substantiates their righteousness. The truth pairs it closer to indifference; the light is a manifestation of high entropy, of chaos, and possesses no fundamental intelligence, no drive or motivation other than those dictated by its fundamental nature; change as a state of nature and the fundamental diversification of life. The perceived malevolence of the Black Gate is only due to the all-consuming intellect trapped within it, and if Attricana has any such directing influence for good, its hand is nearly impossible to perceive. The same magical forces that brought

about the civilizations of dragons, fae and intelligent animals also created abominations; in truth, most monsters plaguing the heroes of this new fantasy world emerged from Attricana and not Ixindar. Thankfully, civilized nations are aware of the side effects of magic and continue the crusade to rid the world of evil, no matter the source.

*All the information in this section is suitable for player use, although the GM may choose to limit it in her own campaign.*





## THE PEOPLE

Attricana promotes infinite diversity of life, with magic providing runaway evolutionary pressure that can change one species into a new one in the span of a single generation. Even the prominent peoples of the world are not immune to this influence, a fact oft-bemoaned by the laudenians; whenever a fae population expands into a new ecological (or even social) niche, their fundamental nature changes – often by a tiny, barely noticeable degree, but sometimes far more dramatically. Evolved creatures generally don't change quite as extensively as the fae, but magic is unpredictable, and yesterday's crawling beasts may become tomorrow's great civilization – or the next terrible monster.

## CHAPARRANS

While more than 80% of all the world's chaparrans reside in Canam, they are not exclusive to the region. Nevertheless, they avoid global conflicts, preferring their assumed role as the defenders of their natural homelands. Other fae races contend the chaparrans are obligated to involve themselves in the struggle against the darkness. Like the laudenians, chaparrans prefer to keep to themselves, and are rarely seen outside their native habitats despite the rising threat across the globe. Even in Southam, a region saturated with towering forests, chaparrans refuse to involve themselves in local conflicts.

One other obstacle, seldom discussed with outsiders, is the desire of the chaparran nations (of which Dawnamoak and Laurama are the largest) to ensure their external façade remains unified. This has already proven difficult given the philosophical divisions between the two dominant chaparran enclaves in Canam. Even those populations are themselves divided into numerous tribes with their own motivations and grievances.

Dawnamoak only achieved its supremacy over a large region after centuries of repressing a zealous group of racist fae, the Kobus, though the fanatics still reside in small pockets. Given that they are already the most prone of all the fae species to devolution and diversification, the desire of the chaparrans to maintain unity as a people is understandable – if they did not, they might soon cease to be, their grandchildren evaporating into the populations of nymphs, satyrs, dryads,

sylphs, centaurs, and other such flighty dionysiads.

In Southam, after observing the ethnic violence between tenenbri and narros, it was easy for chaparrans to exclude themselves from all external affairs, resulting in many ignoring both the awnee and humans. Where an innocent interloper in Dawnamoak might become lost in the shifting trees and be unceremoniously deposited back at his starting point weeks or months later, an intruder in a chaparran-claimed Southam jungle might be found a few days later, usually hanging on tree branches over a span of several miles as a warning to others.

The only notable exception to chaparrans' isolation is the Kundalgoni—a network of platforms, trellises, rope bridges and primitive cablecars scattered throughout the forests of Southam as an early compromise with the narros, enabling non-chaparrans to pass above the forest canopy without interfering with the chaparrans' territory. The Kundalgoni is utilized by virtually every race save the tenenbri (who prefer to travel below the surface, and whose subterranean tunnels that acknowledge no nation's boundaries are generally tolerated by the chaparrans except when they hamper the growth of the forest).

## CHAPARRAN ALTERNATE RACE ADU BUSHMEN

### RACIAL TRAITS

**Average Height:** 5'8" – 6'3"

**Average Weight:** 80-120 lbs.

**Average Starting Age:** 100 years

**Estimated Life Expectancy:** 3,000 years

**Ability Scores:** +2 Dexterity; +2 Constitution or +2 Wisdom; -2 Charisma

**Size:** Medium; as a Medium creature, you have no special bonuses or penalties due to your size.

**Speed:** 30 feet

**Vision:** Low-Light Vision (you can see twice as far as a human in starlight, moonlight, torchlight, and similar conditions of poor illumination. You retain the ability to distinguish color and detail under these conditions).

**Languages:** Chaparra and one human language. If you have a high Intelligence score, you can choose any additional languages you want.

**Racial Skill Bonuses:** +2 Stealth, +2 Survival

**Chaparran Weapon Proficiency:** You are proficient with all thrown weapons (daggers, clubs, shortspears, spears, darts, javelins, throwing axes, light hammers, tridents, shuriken, and nets).





## CHAPARRAN TRAIT SARWA'KHAN

**Trait:** Regional

**Prerequisite:** Chaparran; must be an Adu Bushman

### BENEFITS

**Class Skills:** You gain Acrobatics and Knowledge (nature) as class skills.

**Equipment:** You gain one of the following weapons—shortspear, spear, javelins, throwing axe, or trident.

**Natural Hunter:** Once a day, when employing a thrown weapon against a target within 30 feet, repeat making attack rolls until you hit twice or roll a natural 1. If you hit twice, the attack is a critical hit. If you kill a target with this ability, you can use natural hunter one additional time that day.

Standing apart from traditional chaparrans, the Adu Bushmen—a nearly isolated sect of an already insulated people—have evolved many traditions and beliefs foreign to their brethren.

The Adu don't swing across tree-tops; they don't fire arrows at their targets from afar. The Adu wield shorter-range weapons like spears and prefer stealth for closer kills that eventually evolved into a branch of chaparran martial arts exclusive to the bushmen, the *sarwa'khan*.

Unlike other elvish military disciplines, *sarwa'khan* possesses no flamboyance. Adherents do not fly or teleport or transform. The weapons they wield are remarkably primitive, though deadly in the hands of a trained bushman.

The Adu focus on ground-based stealth in their hunting practices, approaching as close as possible to their prey before utilizing remarkable accuracy in their weapons. This practice was originally developed in the hunting of game, the Adu being carnivorous by preference, though it didn't take long for them to adapt this technique against any opponent.

**Predator:** Whenever you are undetected by an opponent (not in combat, or using Stealth in combat) your speed increases by 5 feet.

**Perfect Throw:** When wielding a thrown, you may use Dexterity as your primary ability for all attack and damage rolls.

**Long Shot:** The ranges for any thrown weapon you wield are doubled.

**Surprisingly Resilient:** While you are not wearing heavy armor or carrying a shield, you gain a +1 dodge bonus to AC and Reflex saves.

**Throw Anything:** The penalty to attack rolls when throwing a weapon not designed to be thrown is reduced to -2 rather than -4.

Although the chaparrans are proprietors of the forests and usually assumed to be exclusive to that domain, in truth, their culture has learned to adapt to many environments where wildlife is opulent.

Forests are not unbroken, often divided by rolling hills and plains. Where the trees encircle these regions, the chaparran bushmen emerge.

Despite being skilled in agriculture, the majority of the Adu Bushmen are hunters, and skilled ones at that, allowing their talents of brachiation to lapse in exchange for virtual unrivaled stealth upon the ground. Although the Adu are perceived to be less civilized than other chaparrans given their nomadic nature—shifting to track water and animal migrations—in truth the Adu are generally less xenophobic, and it was they that persuaded their kin into developing the Kundalgoni in Southam as a way for them to reach out from their cloistered fields. And secluded they were, as visitors would have to traverse often through hostile chaparran forests to reach the more amicable bushmen within.

As a result, the Adu are extremely rare outside of chaparran nations; know a male by his facial hair (a trait virtually unknown among any fae), and know a female by her extremely short hair (with many being as bald as a narros monk).





# CHAPARRAN FEATS

## GLIDE STRIDE

**Prerequisite:** Sarwa'khan

**Benefit:** Your speed is not reduced when moving through difficult terrain. When benefitting from stealth, your speed is increased by 5 feet (this compounds with the Predator racial feature).

## HUNTSMAN

**Prerequisite:** Sarwa'khan

**Benefit:** All thrown weapons you wield have their damage increased by one step (1d4 to 1d6 to 1d8 to 1d10). If you score a critical hit, increase the damage dice by one additional step.

## UNMATCHED ENDURANCE

**Prerequisite:** Sarwa'khan

**Benefit:** You can never be exhausted, only fatigued. You only need to take 4 hours of rest to no longer be fatigued.



## CURSORIAL HUNTING

**Prerequisite:** Sarwa'khan, Unmatched Endurance

**Benefit:** Once per day, you can voluntarily gain the fatigued condition to inflict one of the following effects.

*Killing Stroke.* Turn your last hit into a critical hit.

*Predator's Step.* As an action, gain a +1 bonus to AC for 1 minute (10 rounds).

*Scent the Prey.* As an action, you gain a +1 bonus to Attack rolls for 1 minute (10 rounds).

## RARAMUNDI

**Prerequisite:** Sarwa'khan, Unmatched Endurance

**Benefit:** Once per day, when you are reduced to 0 hit points or less, you can take the fatigued condition and gain 1 hit point as an immediate action.

# DAMASKANS

Damaskans continue to expand their influence across the globe, more likely due to their relationship with humanity, but are few and far between in Southam. Apart from the occasional wandering knowledge-seeker, a few human, narros, and awnee communities harbor small enclaves of plenary damaskans, though in Vanaka, damaskans are enslaved. Without a dedicated community of their own people like Damaska, Limshau, or the smaller damaskan kingdoms of Canam, these damaskan enclaves are largely integrated into the cultures that shelter them (and many of the younger generations even come to closely resemble their hosts, though they largely remain genetically damaskan). They still cannot avoid their natural tendency to act as record keepers, and damaskans remain the uncommon archivists of Southam, recording a history much of the rest of the world is ignoring.

In the north and across the ocean, with the exception of several free houses and villages, most damaskans share the singular drive to acquire and protect knowledge, and despite leanings of individualism and branches of distinct cultures breaking out on the fringes of the largest damaskan kingdoms, they all believe themselves one unified people. While they display an almost human-like ability to diversify their culture without devolving into distinct species or subspecies like their cousins, their unifying factor is a peculiar monomania, almost cult-like—though not worshipping a person or god, but rather the principle that







knowledge, all knowledge, must be preserved. While there is nothing sinister about this concept in theory, in practice many damaskans place it above their own instinct for self-preservation, putting themselves in danger rather than allowing a book to be lost.

Furthermore, not only does this preoccupation not distinguish between useful and dangerous knowledge (several fae libraries contain books that would be

banned and destroyed by even the most tolerant human cultures), but they seem to value preserving the knowledge over making use of it. Consequently, thousands of tomes in the library cities have never been read in this age (though they are meticulously catalogued for the benefit of any who would *like* to read them), and outside of their own particular disciplines of study, many damaskans can be astonishingly ignorant.



# DAMASKAN ALTERNATE RACE

## PENEMUNE

### DAMASKANS

#### RACIAL TRAITS

**Average Height:** 4'8" – 5'7"

**Average Weight:** 70-100 lbs.

**Average Starting Age:** 100 years

**Estimated Life Expectancy:** 1,500 years

**Ability Scores:** +2 Intelligence; +2 Dexterity or +2 Wisdom; -2 Strength

**Size:** Medium. As a Medium creature, you have no special bonuses or penalties due to your size.

**Speed:** 35 feet

**Vision:** Normal

**Languages:** Damaskan, English. If you have a high Intelligence score, you can choose any additional languages you want.

**Racial Skill Bonuses:** +2 Acrobatics, +2 Knowledge (All)

**Ambidexterity:** The attack penalties for your off-hand are the same as your primary hand for the purposes of two weapon fighting or if forced to fight with your off-hand.

**Gravity Focus (Ex):** As a free action, you are able to enter a state of heightened awareness. You can do this as many times a day as the higher of your Dexterity or Intelligence bonuses. Until the start of your next turn, you gain the following benefits:

- Increase your speed by +10 feet.
- Gain a +5 bonus to Acrobatics and Climb checks.
- Gain a +2 bonus to AC and a +5 bonus to all Ref saves.
- Enemies gain no attack bonuses against you from flanking, if on higher ground, or if you are flat-footed, kneeling, sitting, or prone.

**Mnemonic Library.** If making a check to recall any information regarding a past event you have experienced (either directly or indirectly), you automatically succeed. If you have not experienced the event as part of your adventuring career and it makes no sense for you to have experienced it as part of your background, you can still make a Knowledge (history/local) check.

**Synaptic Plasticity.** Yes, that's correct, you do gain a +2 bonus to all Knowledge skill checks.

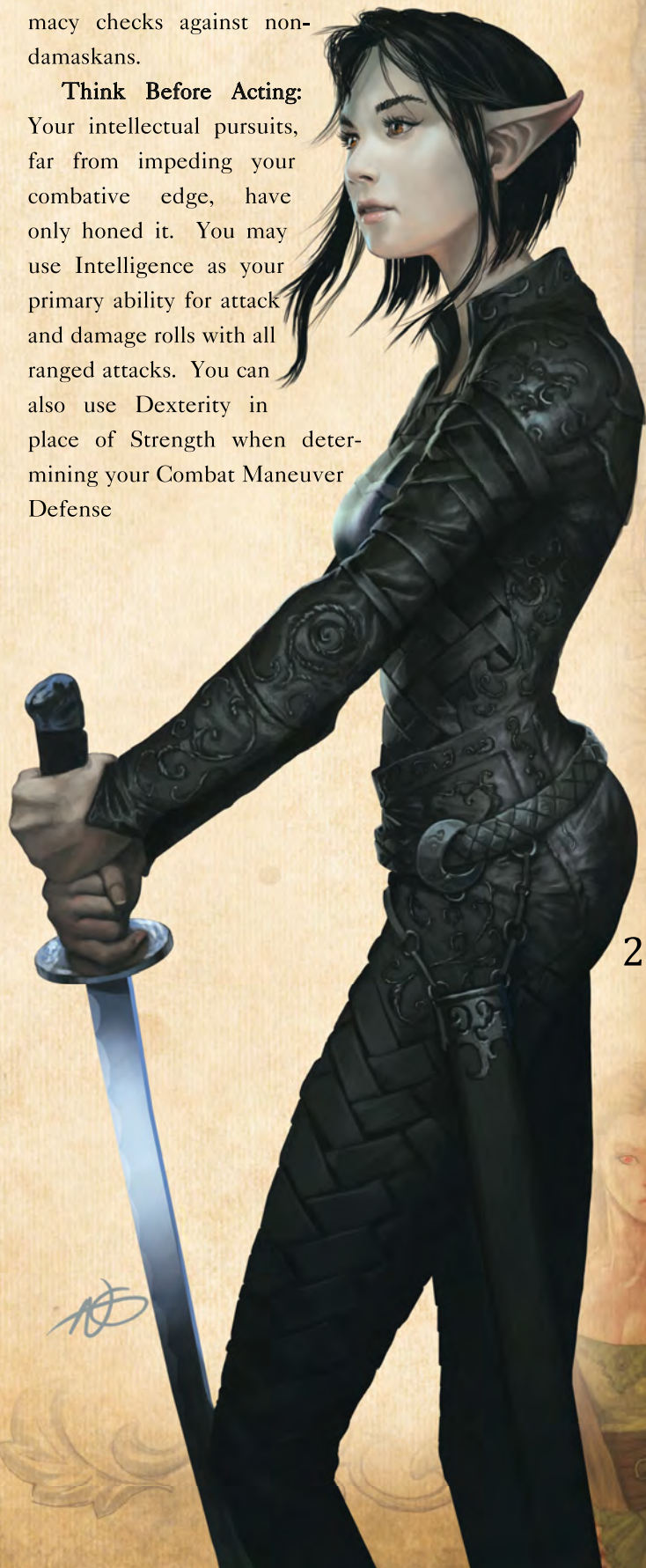
**Tachygraphy:** You can write any language you know in damaskan orthoglossy, which can be written five

times faster than any other script (non-damaskans can learn to read and write orthoglossy by learning damaskan, but cannot learn to write it at full speed). You can write any other script (except Pleroma) at double speed.

**Tactless:** Damaskans are honest and speak often without thinking. You suffer a -2 penalty to all Diplomacy checks against non-damaskans.

#### Think Before Acting:

Your intellectual pursuits, far from impeding your combative edge, have only honed it. You may use Intelligence as your primary ability for attack and damage rolls with all ranged attacks. You can also use Dexterity in place of Strength when determining your Combat Maneuver Defense





It is believed damaskans and their obsession with recording knowledge emerged simultaneously. Elders cared little for history, while damaskans feared to forget. While most damaskans possess a perfect memory for their particular areas of interest, a few anomalous fae possess true eidetic memories—absolute perfect recall of everything they have ever experienced. Not only that, but penemunes possess the ability to draw on the history of those around them, similar to the documented pseudo-scientific ability of psychometry or akashic memory, though limited to living people.

This recall must be voluntary, giving the penemune access to the history of anyone willing to share. Combined with their total recall, it is no wonder other damaskans consider these rare fae living archives, libraries contained in a single person.

Despite attempts at replicating this ability through training, it is clear a penemune can only be born, and such a creation has only been recorded in the new age, making this subrace one of the youngest and rarest in the world.

Another curiosity comes from their parentage—a penemune can only result from a union of a damaskan and a human or a damaskan/human half-fae. Despite physical inheritance verifying genetic similarity with the human parent, a penemune is entirely damaskan, possessing no half-elf characteristics. Although damaskans as a whole are generally agnostic, and religious practice is rare in their communities, there are a few in Limshau who consider these individuals blessed.

## GIMFEN

22 Gimfen began existence as playful tricksters, tolerated in a greater society that found little use for them. Eventually, gimfen found focus as spies and architects, possessing an aptitude for engineering that even the narros lacked. As their numbers grew, gimfen managed to fashion their own culture, an amalgamation of the ones they were scattered within.

It wasn't until the new age did they discovered their true calling, accentuated by their interactions with humanity and their evolutionary drive to improve and expand. It was not a unanimous shift, with many gimfen keeping to their agrarian roots, breaking from their culture when the call came to fill the role as assassin, spy, or burglar.

For others, it was the engineering aptitude that

tempted them to full-on embrace technology, a concept virtually foreign to all fae. Gimfen not only could understand the technology of man but expand on it quickly, creating what was needed in any situation and do so faster than the humans that bestowed the knowledge in the first place. It's a perplexing ability—being able to adapt existing technology to meet any need while being unable to see that need until it is brought to their attention. Where humans don't exist, gimfen never realize their full potential regarding technology.

In Southam, the gimfen number less than a thousand, with the majority residing in the Ouroboros—less a town and more of a mobile strong point. The colossal walking castle strides over forests and mountains, seeking resources and evading predators. Occasionally, it parks for years at a time until needing to uproot. No native gimfen claims to know why such a monstrosity was built, only that they were the ones that built it.

## GIMFEN ALTERNATE RACE PYGMAE GIMFEN

### RACIAL TRAITS

**Average Height:** 3'3" – 4'3"

**Average Weight:** 40-60 lbs.

**Average Starting Age:** 30 years

**Estimated Life Expectancy:** 500 years

**Ability Scores:** +2 Wisdom; +2 Charisma or +2 Dexterity; -2 to Constitution

**Size:** Small. As a Small creature, you gain a +1 size bonus to Armor Class, a +1 size bonus on attack rolls, a -1 penalty to your Combat Maneuver Defense, and a +4 size bonus on Stealth checks.

**Speed:** 25 feet

**Vision:** Normal

**Languages:** Damaskan and one human language. If you have a high Intelligence score, you can choose any additional languages you want.

**Racial Skill Bonuses:** +2 Bluff; +2 Escape Artist

**Appetite:** Pygmae possess multiple stomachs, and their digestive systems are capable of breaking down cellulose, as ruminant animals do. While you cannot subsist on cooked or processed food, you can sustain yourself on any sort of plant matter, including grass and bark. You also possess very strong teeth, granting you a natural bite attack (inflicting 1d4 damage) if you don't mind the taste of your target.

**Just There:** As long as no one is looking at you, once a day, you can spend an action to teleport up to 30



feet. You cannot use this feature during combat unless you first make a Stealth check to hide. Your destination also cannot be in view of anyone. You must be able to see the destination.

**Magical:** Unlike other gimfen, you generate an EDF, and thus cannot hold technology without it disrupting.

**Mole:** You can vanish into the dirt without even getting your fingers dirty. You possess a burrow speed of 10 feet. You can also squeeze without sacrificing additional movement.

**Size:** On average, pygmae gimfen are between 6 inches and a foot shorter than normal gimfen. Your size is still Small.

**Tiny Frame:** You suffer a -4 penalty when attempting a bull rush against targets bigger than you.

**Lithe and Irritable:** Size is not an obstacle to you in a scrap. You may use Dexterity as your primary attribute for attack and damage rolls with all melee attacks. You can also use Dexterity in place of Strength when determining your Combat Maneuver Bonus.

As gimfen embrace machines in increasing quantities, the number of bucolic gimfen has justifiably decreased, likewise has a veiled offshoot of the gimfen rarely encountered in the world, the pygmae.

While most gimfen share similar physical features and a t-

tributes, defining them as gimfen, pygmae differ to such a degree as to almost classify them as an entirely different branch. Several details keep them with the gimfen species: first, the pygmae do not exist in any significant numbers and in no noticeable concentration to develop their own culture. Second, while they appear naturally and consistently among the gimfen population as an offshoot race would, there is no discernable pattern to their birth rates other than they occur roughly 15% more often in technological communities than agrarian ones. Third, an important part of the gimfen religious tradition is that Mecha's blessing prevents them from ever spawning an offshoot race, and such the gimfen themselves would never consider the possibility that pygmae are a completely new species.

Alas, because of the pygmae characteristics, they and their families are usually swiftly banished (as kindly as possible) from technologic communities because unlike traditional gimfen, pygmae *do* disrupt technology. Even agrarian communities with a vested interest in attracting techan attention prefer to keep pygmae away, such that they usually find themselves settling in smaller agrarian communes or even the occasional all-pygmae village.

A pygmae is one of the few species of fae that closely resembles its mythological counterpart. They are smaller than traditional gimfen and posses abilities wholly unique to them, many of which resemble many of the abilities inherent of the romanticized gnomes of Earth literature.





## GIMFEN FEATS

### SUBTERRANEAN

**Prerequisite:** Pygmac

**Benefit:** Your burrow speed increases to 30 feet, and your teleportation increases to 60 feet. You can use your Just There ability twice a day

### DOVE

**Prerequisite:** Any gimfen

**Benefit:** Until you make an attack roll or use an offensive spell or effect, you gain a bonus to AC equal to half your Reflex save bonus. Once you lose this bonus, you do not regain until a new day.

### TAO

**Prerequisite:** Any gimfen, Dove

**Benefit:** Each time an enemy attempts an attack roll against you, you gain a +1 bonus to your next attack roll. This bonus is cumulative until you make an attack roll, after which the bonus is lost until you finish a short rest. If your attack roll with this bonus is 20 or higher, it is considered a critical hit.

### ABSOLUTE

**Prerequisite:** Any gimfen, Tao

**Benefit:** After initiative is established, until you make an attack roll or use an offensive spell or effect, you gain DR/10 Magic. You regain this ability when you roll for initiative again.

are the most prone to degradation. Their only hope to preserve the species is to avoid contact with other environments that might force them to change, and avoid entanglements with lesser fac peoples who could tempt them to debase their rarified blood.

As a result, they prefer to remain aloft in airships and floating keeps, invisible from the ground. This network is far more extensive than most are aware of, thanks to illusions that disguise the towers as clouds or even part of the sky from the ground.

As more non-laudenians take to the skies through technology and magic, the more is revealed of true extent of the network. Some believe that the Brigadoon-like concept of Laudenia itself, reputedly anchored somewhere in the Nankani Mountains, is merely a ruse to distract ground-dwellers.

Of course, Laudenia *does* actually exist, and usually can be found in approximately the position legend reputes, explaining why the densest concentration of the sky network is found in the skies over Canam. But not even the laudenians would be able to say for certain that it is truly the greatest wonder of the skies.

Rumor has it that the laudenians themselves have their own legend of a mythical hidden kingdom, similar to the human Shambhala, El Dorado, or Avalon.

The laudenians call this place *Selmana*, or “pure land.” Although they believe it floats somewhere in the north, neither human nor elf has ever found it. As for who lives there, laudenian myth asserts they are titans. This appears unlikely, but thanks to the massive disruption field that flows above the Chronzia glacier, no mechanical flying craft has ever been able to penetrate the far north to find out.

Laudenians are rare to find on the ground, and even rarer to find outside of Canam. Sightings of them in Southam are virtually nil.

## LAUDENIANS

There is sufficient evidence among ground-dwellers that laudenians exist. Their floating city, reputed to resemble the crystal spires of far-future science fiction more than the filigreed elven cities of fantasy, is less widely accepted. The laudenian sky network is widely known *of* among regular dirigible travelers, albeit mostly as a distant glimpse at the edge of sight. No-one knows for sure just how many of these sky-keeps there are throughout the world, nor the true size of the fleet of airships that plies the aether between them. The laudenians aim to keep it that way.

The laudenian species is doomed, and every one of them knows it. As the race closest to the elder fac, they

## LAUDENIAN TRAIT SURA

**Trait:** Supernatural

**Prerequisite:** Laudenian; must be at least 1,000 years old.

**Avrah:** You are immune to the sickened and nauseated conditions.

Laudenians are assumed to live forever, barring acci-



dents, and the oldest have soaked up so much of Attricana's energy over their lifetimes that they attain unrivaled magical abilities. The most respected of these laudenian elders are given the title of *sura*, and are all but revered as sacred beings. No blessing or ceremony is involved—just a consequence of magic coupled with time.

Laudenians altered by magic to the extent of being called a *sura* are often respected in the community. They are assumed to be sacred, already respected given their age.

## LAUDENIAN FEATS

### AKANA

**Prerequisite:** Sanis

**Benefit:** You gain DR5/piercing. As long as you are conscious, you never suffer damage from a fall. You can never accrue corruption from Ixindar.

### ATIPO

**Prerequisite:** Sura

**Benefit:** You are immune to any effects that can cause you to be charmed or frightened. You have necrotic resistance 10.

### SUDRA

**Prerequisite:** Atipo

**Benefit:** You possess DR5/slashing and poison resistance 10.

### SANIS

**Prerequisite:** Sudra

**Benefit:** You gain true seeing, as the spell of the same name, up to 20 feet. This effect cannot be dispelled.

## NARROS

As a rule, the narros view the world in black and white. People are either friends or enemies, and strangers are all pending judgment. This has resulted from thousands of years of conflict, with the narros assuming the roles as the peacekeepers of Attricana. Outsiders are kept at a distance to ensure the safekeeping of those requiring protection. Even in Canam, where most narros are not under constant threat of invasion, they still

train massive armies and build their cities to resist a siege, almost as if the narros expect a call to crusade at any moment from some higher power and never want to be caught unprepared.

In Southam, there is no false menace looming around, no spurious cause to form armies and castles; the narros are categorically under threat from enemies seeking their destruction. Cities have fallen. Battles have been lost. Southam is gripped in a holy war between narros and tenenbri, fighting over cities, relics, land, traditions, and simple spite.

The conflict tracks back to before the return of magic, back when fae reigned uncontested on the planet. The narros controlled the westernmost of the continents that became North America, which they called Geno Terrane; the tenenbri had Antarctica, or rather the lush and fertile land of Antumbra. Between these two territories lay the holy land of Cratonis—South America—and the divine city Antok, sacred to both peoples. A dispute over a fundamental law of their faith resulted in a religious schism, which in time became a military campaign by both races to control the land: a conflict the tenenbri eventually won.

After the return of magic, the tenenbri found their homeland frozen over, resulting in their pilgrimage to Southam, and old conflicts resumed. History quickly repeated itself and the narros, accustomed to open field combat, could not establish a defense against the paramilitary tactics of the tenenbri. One by one, the narros cities fell, later appropriated by the emerging new species in the region, the awnee. The narros, by nature stubborn and implacable, refused to simply abandon their crusade.

Instead of immigrating to the north, where the tenenbri have little presence, they gathered all their remaining defenses around their last great city: Antok itself, preserved by some miracle through the vast epochs since the Cretaceous period. Ultimately their dedication created a new breed of narros, hardened and unsentimental, loyal only to the cause commanded by the faith.







## NARROS TRAIT IRON CORE

26

**Trait:** Race

**Prerequisites:** Narros

### BENEFIT

**Hematite:** Your speed is not reduced when moving through difficult terrain, and you gain a bonus to your hit points equal to twice your Constitution modifier.

The most common derogatory demonym for the narros is 'stonebones,' which while descriptive of their legendary resilience, is not strictly accurate – in fact, their skeletons are laced with metallic compounds that render them almost completely unbreakable. And while fac are normally immune to such evolved concerns as cancer, those narros whose lineages are well on the road to

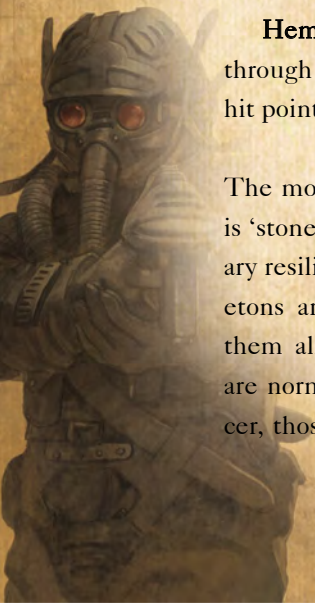
anathema are prone to a particular malady in which these metallic cells grow uncontrollably.

Although initially beneficial, this can in time threaten the life of the narros as metal spurs are forced outward through her flesh, like the rocky growths on oggraks and chiggoths. Eventually, the bones begin to fuse together, turning the soon-to-be-deceased narros into her own funeral statue. However, before such a fate, a narros does benefit from increased durability, creating either an unstoppable force or an immovable object. The iron core narros is a disease, but it is a disease many narros allow to propagate.

## NARROS FEATS CHAMOSITE

**Prerequisite:** Magnetite

**Benefit:** You gain a bonus to your hit points this





level equal to your Constitution modifier, and you gain a damage bonus with melee attacks against incapacitated targets or immovable objects equal to your level.

## DOLOMITE

**Prerequisite:** Chamosite

**Benefit:** You also reduce all bludgeoning, slashing, or piercing damage you take by 2.

## IRONSTONE

**Prerequisite:** Dolomite

**Benefit:** You gain DR5/Magic

## MAGNETITE

**Prerequisite:** Iron Core

**Benefit:** If you spend a standard action to plant your feet, until you move on your own accord, you cannot be moved by any sort of forced movement unless it affects the ground under you. If an enemy attempts to shove you, your roll to resist is always a 20.

# NARROS PRESTIGE CLASS

## NARROS KUGADA

To be a kugada equates to being a loyal knight of the narros faith, a zealot of Oaken. All that matters is the campaign. A kugada is a crusader, a cavalier, having sworn fealty to not just the royalty of narros, but to the edicts of the narros core belief system. As a consequence, the kugada can suck the life out of a party. The prouder members attempt to convert those they meet, while the dogmatists among those find heathens aplenty worthy of judgment. There are always exceptions, and the further a kugada is found from Antok, the more civil they tend to be to outsiders. These are hard-line narros.

Outside of their combat skills, the kugada are famous for their views regarding narros exceptionalism. The kugada generally endorse and spread the edict that narros are defenders of Attricana—fundamental guardians of light—and thus possess a manifest destiny that the narros will replace the laudenians as the respected elders and moral center of all fac. It is believed an order of human crusaders, the Knights of Myre, replicate the kugada doctrine though take the extremism to a more corruptible level.

**Hit Die:** d10.

## REQUIREMENTS

To qualify to become a narros kugada, a character must fulfill all the following criteria.

**Race:** Any narros

**Base Attack Bonus:** +6

## CLASS SKILLS

The kugada class skills (and the key ability for each skill are Climb (Str), Handle Animal (Cha), Intimidate (Cha), Perception (Wis), Ride (Dex), Survival (Wis), and Swim (Str)

## CLASS FEATURES

**Arrogant Smite (Ex):** At 1st level, once a day, when a kugada hits a creature with a melee weapon attack, she can elect to judge that creature “unclean” or “unworthy,” and deal an additional 2d8 damage matching the damage type of the weapon.

Arrogant Smite’s damage or uses per day increases every second level (see table), finally culminating at 10th level at 5d8 and 4 times a day.

**Ego Drain (Ex):** Starting at 2nd level, you believe yourself the face of your crusade. You may be physically short, but your ego strides like a giant. You have de-

| LEVEL | BASE<br>ATTACK<br>BONUS | FORT<br>SAVE | REF<br>SAVE | WILL<br>SAVE | SPECIAL                     |
|-------|-------------------------|--------------|-------------|--------------|-----------------------------|
| 1     | +1                      | +1           | +0          | +0           | Arrogant Smite (2d8, 1/day) |
| 2     | +2                      | +1           | +1          | +1           | Ego Drain                   |
| 3     | +3                      | +2           | +1          | +1           | Arrogant Smite (3d8, 1/day) |
| 4     | +4                      | +2           | +1          | +1           | Order of One                |
| 5     | +5                      | +3           | +2          | +2           | Arrogant Smite (3d8, 2/day) |
| 6     | +6                      | +3           | +2          | +2           | Holy Punisher               |
| 7     | +7                      | +4           | +2          | +2           | Arrogant Smite (4d8, 2/day) |
| 8     | +8                      | +4           | +3          | +3           | Zealous Rage                |
| 9     | +9                      | +5           | +3          | +3           | Arrogant Smite (4d8, 3/day) |
| 10    | +10                     | +5           | +3          | +3           | Arrogant Smite (5d8, 4/day) |



veloped a bit of a superiority complex, and it reflects on those around you. If you and at least one ally within 10 feet are targeted by an effect that grants a Will saving throw, you gain a +10 bonus to the roll, and your allies suffer a -5 penalty.

If there is no ally nearby to look good in comparison to, you gain no benefit. You can attempt to suppress this feature for up to one hour a day.

**Order of One (Ex):** At 4th level, each time you kill an opponent, you either gain temporary hit points equal to the maximum value of your hit die or gain one additional use of Arrogant Smite that day.

**Holy Punisher (Ex):** Once per day, starting at 6th level, you can use a Standard action to select one opponent that can see you and understand you. Your critical threat range increases by 2 against the target until the target is killed or you inflict at least two critical hits.

**Zealous Rage (Ex):** At 8th level, as a standard action, you can let out a ferocious yell to gather the eyes and shudder the hearts of those around you. All opponents within 30 feet of you must succeed on a Will saving throw (DC 15 + your Charisma bonus) or become frightened for 1 minute.

A creature can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success. If a creature's saving throw is successful or the effect ends for it, it is immune to your zealous rage for the next 24 hours.

## PAGUS

The accepted belief from most people is that the pagus represent a unified threat spilling into Canam from an isolated region in the north. With mountains and rough water holding them back, the pagus can only attempt an extensive northern route through bitter cold or the more direct route over the Tethuss bridge (closed on one side by the city of Janoah in the nation of Abidan), which the pagus have attempted to assault on more than one occasion. Isolated and with few threats, the pagus are believed to be an unchecked epidemic that may burst from its borders and sweep the continent.

Unknown to the rest of the world, the pagus population, although high, has been kept from achieving this perceived inevitability by internal conflict. When denied opposition, pagus inevitably turn on each other. Racial unity is discarded in favor of tribal allegiances; tribes under the thrall of jealous dragon lords fight each

other for their masters' amusement, while the mysterious shemjaza urge their slaves to cull the weak among them through constant battle.

Combine civil unrest with an already hostile species, and it's no surprise north of the Tethuss bridge is unknown territory to the rest of the world. In truth, the region is as colorful and as dynamic as any other. The pagus are not constant in their dispositions, with some almost respectful to outsiders. The conflict between tribes is not always triggered from barbaric impulses or primal desires, with several pagus actively working against their people to prevent the holocaust caused by a wave of their kind slaved behind dragon or shemjaza control.

Pagus are not found in any great numbers outside of Apocrypha and Kakodomania, their spread south and west from the site of the Black Gate being blocked by holy dragons. A few shemjaza expeditions to Southam have been rooted out and destroyed by tenenbri inquisitors, but by and large the forces of Mengus are content to leave Southam to its own doom.

**Note:** The adventure at the end of this book involves heroes traveling north of Tethuss, making pagus PCs a definitely viable option.

## PAGUS TRAIT KROSS PHANATIK

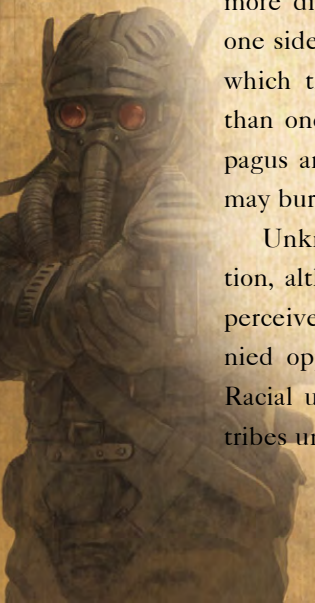
**Trait:** Race

**Prerequisites:** Pagus

## BENEFITS

**Equipment:** You gain a copy of *The Atonement of the Fire*, one martial melee weapon, a set of low-quality clothes.

**Self Control:** You have found balance in yourself, and struggle to maintain that steadiness both internally and in the actions you take. Each day that passes that you remain free from evil is another victory, and one step closer to inner peace. It's not enlightenment you seek, but rather that which so many others flaunt, self-discipline. Eventually, you will seek no higher authority, only bending a knee to those earning your loyalty through actions in line with your own. It's not about anarchy—it's about the freedom to choose your own path. You gain a + bonus with saving throws against attempts to control or influence you, like charm or even





Intimidation checks.

Not all pagus desire to let their primitive emotions possess them. In several villages, wisdom is not a trait one is blessed with, but rather a state one must practice cultivating. Like a muscle that must be trained to be toughened, only by acts and repeated habitual patterns can a pagus learn civility. Shockingly enough, when given the option, many pagus embrace this path.

It's believed by even outsiders that the pagus are considered a failed species by those that corrupted them. They are cannon fodder, worth only as much as the weapons they carry. Although their emergence came from the corrupted whisper of Ixindar, their bodies and perhaps even their souls still retain a small sliver of the chaos that created their ancestors.

Manifesting as a whispering madness when pagus are uncontrolled, this can send the pagus in one of two directions: into further insanity if led by one equally broken, or into a stupor, acting as machines loyal to a superior intelligence, though this assumes the master as evil. If pagus are

presented with a principled and just leader, these same traits can easily find themselves carried downward.

This has come to pass in several pagus villages in Apocrypha. The most known is Axum Uruk, author of *The Atonement of the Fire*, detailing the path of enlightenment for pagus still under control of Ixindar. Axum wishes to free all pagus from any non-pagus control, believing his people can govern themselves. His disciples are mostly clustered around the north side of Tethuss, warning Abidan of impending attacks. Unlike other pagus, Axum knows of a safe route through the west and has sent pilgrims to ensure the survival of his cause, though often, these pagus are assumed a threat and eliminated. Only time will tell if his doctrine takes root.





## PAGUS PRESTIGE CLASS MONGER

At every moment within the mind of a pagus, the corruption of Ixindar fights against the natural chaotic tendencies of Attricana. Ixindar often takes the high ground, though it can never full snuff out that final spark of chaos. The result is a creature barely in control of its impulses until set loose. Conditioning from more powerful minds has kept them in check, but when that switch is flipped, step back. The monger is a term given to those pagus firmly locked into the abovementioned brainwashing. Whether the pagus has broken free from bondage, or whether attempting redemption or not, the switch never vanishes once implanted.

**Hit Die:** d10.

### REQUIREMENTS

To qualify to become a narros kugada, a character must fulfill all the following criteria.

**Race:** Any pagus

**Base Attack Bonus:** +6

### CLASS SKILLS

The monger class skills (and the key ability for each skill are Climb (Str), Handle Animal (Cha), Intimidate (Cha), Ride (Dex), Survival (Wis), and Swim (Str)

### CLASS FEATURES

**Flipped (Ex):** At first level, the monger can, after rolling for initiative, enter her conditioned battle mode, achieving one rank. Each time the kugada starts a turn, she increases her rank by one, and this continues at the beginning of each turn until the end of combat.

The maximum rank achievable is determined by the kugada level. The kugada cannot prevent a rank from

occurring—only ending combat will end the effect.

**Rank 1:** Gain a +1 bonus to damage with all melee and ranged weapons.

**Rank 2:** Gain a +1 bonus on the first attack roll of this turn.

**Rank 3:** The damage die of any weapon wielded increases by one step (1d4 to 1d6 to 1d8 to 1d10 to 1d12).

**Rank 4:** Gain 5 temporary hit points.

**Rank 5:** Gain a +2 bonus on the first attack roll of this turn (+3 total).

**Rank 6:** Gain a +5 bonus to speed.

**Rank 7:** Re-roll all 1s and 2s on damage dice.

**Rank 8:** As a swift action at the end of this turn, make a single melee attack against the closest target, enemies first—allies second.

**Rank 9:** If the kugada rolls the maximum result on a damage die with a melee or ranged weapon, roll that die again and add the result to damage. This can only occur once per hit.

**Rank 10:** Regain 6d6 lost hit points once on the turn this rank is unlocked.

**Rank 11:** The first time the kugada hits with a non-critical melee or ranged attack this turn, she can turn it into a critical hit.

## PAGUS FEATS

### PLACID

**Prerequisite:** Kross Phanatik

**Benefit:** While others fight with primal ferocity, you do so with calm and mindfulness. On your turn, you can enter a state of serenity as a swift action. While in this state, you gain the following benefits:

- You gain a +2 bonus with Wisdom-based skill checks and Will saving throws.
- The first time you make any attack against an ene-

| LEVEL | BASE<br>ATTACK<br>BONUS | FORT<br>SAVE | REF<br>SAVE | WILL<br>SAVE | SPECIAL              |
|-------|-------------------------|--------------|-------------|--------------|----------------------|
| 1     | +1                      | +1           | +0          | +0           | Flipped (Rank 1 & 2) |
| 2     | +2                      | +1           | +1          | +1           | Flipped (Rank 3)     |
| 3     | +3                      | +2           | +1          | +1           | Flipped (Rank 4)     |
| 4     | +4                      | +2           | +1          | +1           | Flipped (Rank 5)     |
| 5     | +5                      | +3           | +2          | +2           | Flipped (Rank 6)     |
| 6     | +6                      | +3           | +2          | +2           | Flipped (Rank 7)     |
| 7     | +7                      | +4           | +2          | +2           | Flipped (Rank 8)     |
| 8     | +8                      | +4           | +3          | +3           | Flipped (Rank 9)     |
| 9     | +9                      | +5           | +3          | +3           | Flipped (Rank 10)    |
| 10    | +10                     | +5           | +3          | +3           | Flipped (Rank 11)    |



my, you gain a +2 bonus to attack.

- You have resist 5 fire, acid, and electricity.

This state lasts for 1 minute. It ends early if you are knocked unconscious or suffer damage. You can use this ability a number of times a day equal to your Wisdom modifier.

## SERENE

**Prerequisite:** Tranquil

**Benefit:** While in your calm state, you gain the following additional benefits:

- You gain a +5 bonus to AC against ranged weapon attacks (this does not stack with the +1 bonus from Tranquil).
- You gain a +5 bonus to speed.

## TRANQUIL

**Prerequisite:** Placid

**Benefit:** While in your calm state, you gain the following additional benefits:

- You automatically pass all Will saving throws.
- Your attack bonus against a new enemy increases to +4
- You gain a +1 bonus to AC.

# TENENBRI

Despite the desire for all self-aware beings to achieve internal psychological consistency, the opposite occurs with the tenenbri. A plague of cognitive dissonance has permeated their society. There is the state which is natural to them, and there is the condition imposed by the ruling class.

Originally a damaskan offshoot, the magic that created the tenenbri robbed them of sight but enhanced their other senses in exchange. Loud noises do not deafen them; indeed, the echoes help them perceive their underground world more clearly. Their senses of touch and smell are also superior, though the latter is only marginally better than most other fae. Consequently, tenenbri are by nature far more empathic than most fully sighted beings; they can literally read the state of a person's emotions via pulse and heartbeat, perceiving subtle changes in stance, body temperature, and pheromone release.

This empathy occasionally can prove overwhelming

to a tenenbri, and they become incentivized to migrate towards happier people or those whose emotions are passionate without being overly negative. At the same time, the way their biology treats texture the same way a sighted person would regard color leads them to appreciate a variety of sensations, including many that others would consider unpleasant, leading them to seek out new experiences, to not only be welcoming, but encouraging of differences. This attitude runs in contradiction to the tenenbri's current dogma of insular conformity, and leaves them deeply neurotic as a species.

This hypocrisy has remained ingrained in the tenenbri culture for so long, tracking back to before their records began, that it is believed by outsiders (including excommunicated tenenbri) that the psychological stress of resisting natural instincts has now become part of the tenenbri's biological makeup. Modern tenenbri have been known to lash out capriciously when forced to acknowledge their natural behavior, almost like an entire race of people has been brainwashed.

This dissonance came about some ten thousand years before the first conflict between the tenenbri and the narros, when the ruling class of tenenbri, an assembly of female elders known as the Domme, employed a cult of personality to convince their subjects that once accepted behaviors were unnatural; that, in fact, these behaviors were aspects of an ancestral sin the tenenbri perpetrated against their god, Oaken. Such sin is contracted rather than committed, and only by following "The Line" (edicts put forth by the Domme) can a tenenbri be "pure of state" and free from the sin's influence.

The Domme utilize their fanatical caste, the "Pel'cato" to induce compliance with those below, a successful practice given their ironclad control of the majority of all tenenbri. The exodus further heightened this, as all surviving tenenbri appeared in the same place, allowing the Domme to exert control without having to reach beyond the mountains and caves they found themselves in.

As predicted, exceptions occur, and when tenenbri are raised outside of their kingdom of Vanaka, their natural behavior emerges (though prior psychological stress can still linger). The clearest example of this manifests in Sharajaclypse, an ostracized tenenbri mistress with a growing community of outcasts and freeborn tenenbri that are encouraged to follow their natural behavior.





Though the Domme would love to declare her teachings heretical, Sharajaclipse has one inconvenient advantage; she is one of the dragon-touched blood royals, a title no mistress in the Domme can boast. Acting directly against her would be dangerous at best and cataclysmic at worst for their control over tenenbri society. However, since Sharajaclipse and her people account for less than 0.01 percent of the tenenbri, for the most part they can be safely ignored.

In Vanaka—the kingdom of tenenbri—the Domme continue their crusade of nationalism, creating conflict with nearly every race in Southam, with their worst enemy being the narros of the kingdom of Axom—Southam's narros being equally religious, jingoistic, and almost equally racist. Their conflict tracks back longer than anyone alive can remember but has since devolved into a race war where all political or religious motivations, previously the solitary source of the conflict, are now only used as pretexts. The narros still claim the conflict is a holy crusade, but the tenenbri have more or less abandoned the claim except for formal purposes—ironic, considering that they were the ones who started it over a claim of religious persecution. But where Axom can call on reinforcements from across the world (and thus have an interest in claiming the moral high ground in order not to dissuade their less beleaguered cousins from getting involved), nearly all tenenbri live under the Zoic Mountains in Southam, and could not rely on any assistance from outsiders even if they wanted it. Thankfully for the tenenbri, the perils of travel between Canam and Southam by both land and water make a major influx of northern crusaders unlikely.

In open combat, even against superior opposing numbers, the narros seldom lose. The tenenbri achieve victory by never facing their enemies in the field. They employ guerilla tactics, sabotage, and assassination, breaking up disciplined lines and shattering enemy morale before driving them to retreat through tunnels laced with magical traps. Although tenenbri possess legendary swordsmen, these warriors are few and focused on individual dueling rather than mass combat. Tenenbri wage open war only when no other options are available, and this usually results in a pyrrhic victory. As long as the narros remain behind the impenetrable walls of Antok, the tenenbri may never achieve total victory.

## TENENBRI ALTERNATE RACE SHALEN TENENBRI

### RACIAL TRAITS

**Average Height:** 4'5"-5'3"

**Average Weight:** 50-75 lb.

**Average Starting Age:** 55 years.

**Estimated Life Expectancy:** 500 years

**Ability Scores:** +2 Wisdom; +2 Charisma or +2 Dexterity; -2 to Strength

**Size:** Medium. As a medium creature, you have no special bonuses or penalties due to your size.

**Speed:** 35 feet

**Vision:** Blindsight 100 feet

**Languages:** Tenenbra. If you have a high Intelligence score, you can choose any additional languages you want.

**Racial Skill Bonuses:** +2 Perception, +2 Sense Motive

**Amalgamate:** As an action, you can perfectly merge into the landscape. As long as you are in contact with a surface and are in dark or dim conditions, you can use an action to perfectly blend into your surroundings.

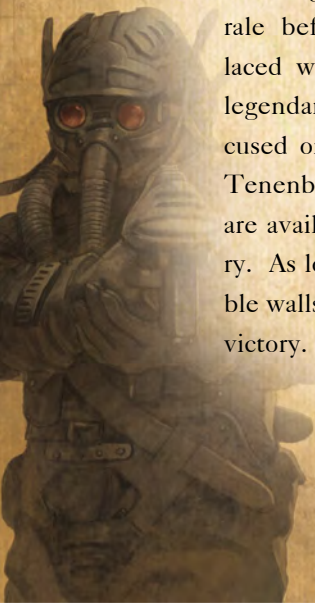
You are not invisible, although you are very hard to see; you can attempt a Stealth check even if the target can see you. Your location can still be detected by any noise you make.

Amalgamate lasts until you move; in which case, you become visible at the end of your turn. After this effect ends, you cannot use it again that day. Ordinary darkvision (supernatural or infrared-based) does not negate this ability, but darkvision that is based on ultraviolet imaging (such as some forms of night-vision goggles) do.

**Blindsight:** You possess blindsight to 100 feet. You cannot read with blindsight, but you can read Pleroma—its glowing words illuminate even those who cannot see. You cannot be subjected to gaze or blinding attacks and you suffer no penalties from displacement or any other effect that produces a visual illusion. You can still be subjected to deafening attacks. Any of the following conditions reduce the blindsight range to 30 feet: being on a mount, being in the air or on a boat, or sleeping.

**Crawler:** You gain a Climb speed of 30 feet.

**Zatou:** Blindness might hinder swordsmen of another kind, but never you. You may use Wisdom in place of Strength for attack and damage rolls with any melee weapons. You may also use Wisdom in place of Strength when determining your Combat Maneuver Bonus and Defense.





The anathema of tenenbri are known as kythix—hideous creatures prowling caves and feeding on anything they can detect with their enhanced senses. It has been postulated this descendant species came about as the internal conflict between desire and edicts tore tenenbri souls apart, although this is unlikely as the kythix emerged before the Domme took power. However, the psychological discord the Domme imposes can inflict lasting damage, and the shalen are believed a result.

Though sane, shalen are slightly unbalanced and exhibit certain features reminiscent of their more monstrous descendants. Shalen are adept in the darkness, able to vanish even in the faintest of shadows. Considered the greatest assassins of the tenenbri, shalen can remain unmoving for hours if not days until a target moves close. Understandably, shalen are rather antisocial. Although their differences from normal tenenbri are rooted in their psychological rather than their physical environment, it still changes their fundamental forms, in much the same way that divergent species and anathema emerge; it's entirely possible that indoctrination, mental reprogramming, and/or mind control may be altering a fae physically.

## TENENBRI TRAIT VANAKA NATIONAL

**Trait:** Race

**Prerequisites:** Any tenenbri from Vanaka

### BENEFITS

**Cognitive Scarring:** Irrespective of your opinions on it, you have been instructed since birth to believe your natural impulses flawed, the result of an ancient sin inherited through your heredity. As you attempted to suppress this instinct (regardless if you still are), your mind formed barriers to prevent psychological distress, the success of which is debatable. These blocks have the fortunate side-effect of resisting outside magical attacks upon your mind. You have a +2 bonus with all Will saving throws.

Despite assumptions by the Domme and rigorous efforts to condition the people into a congruent mindset, there is still a wide variety of personalities populating the tenenbri kingdom of Vanaka. Selecting this path

does not mandate that one still be a citizen of the nation, but rather one with enough time raised under the Zoic Mountains to paint a modern personality and affect future life choices.

As a national, you were born and lived your infancy surrounded by your kind in the darkness of Vanaka. You probably didn't know who your parents were, as many offspring are raised communally (easier for indoctrination). Whether fundamentalist or dissenter, most tenenbri start the same way.

## TENENBRI PRESTIGE CLASS ITHRANNAS

The multidimensional sigils that make up the Pleroma script are visible to any who are initiated into their mysteries, even the blind. The largest number of spellcasters within tenenbri society is within their ordained priesthood, which possesses a penchant for extreme rituals intended to awe and cow the laity. From this caste, the tradition of *ithrannas* was born—a discipline similar to the human traditions of *onmyoujutsu* or *feng shui*, but with very distinct theological differences. Ithrannasa cast their spells within prepared ritual spaces onto consecrated surfaces, whether these be slips of paper or sections of tunnel floor, wall, or ceiling. The fact that nobody except other spellcasters can see these lurking spells makes them ideal for setting traps, and many an unwary narros force has fallen foul to such invisible inscriptions.

**Hit Die:** d6.

### REQUIREMENTS

To qualify to become an ithrannas, a character must fulfill all the following criteria.

**Race:** Any tenenbri

**Skills:** Knowledge (arcana) 5 ranks

**Spells:** Able to cast 3rd-level spells. Must have selected the abjuration school.

### CLASS SKILLS

The ithrannas class skills (and the key ability for each skill are Diplomacy (Cha), Heal (Wis), Knowledge (arcana) (Int), Linguistics (Int), Spellcraft (Int), Use Magic Device (Cha)





## CLASS FEATURES

**Consecrated Ground (Ex):** At first level, the ithrannas learn to cast spells into a prepared space, which then stores a spell until triggered. Preparing a 10-foot radius space on a floor, wall, or ceiling requires a ten-minute ritual; for each higher-level spell slot used for the spell, the space's diameter can be increased by 5 feet (this supersedes any normal benefits for casting the spell at a higher level). Once the space is prepared, any spell you know with an area effect may be cast into it, and remains stored there until you trigger it as a swift action, at which point it takes effect normally as though cast from any point within the prepared area. You are aware when the surface is touched or tampered with in any way, but not who or what is affecting it. Once the spell is cast, the space becomes unconsecrated again; however, if you dismiss the spell prematurely, the same space can be used to cast a different spell. If cast as a normal spell, you do not recover the spell slot until the spell is triggered or dismissed. Any spellcaster can clearly see and identify the inscribed spell, but for non-spellcasters, spotting the prepared surface requires an opposed Wisdom (Perception) vs Dexterity or Intelligence (Stealth) check.

**Circle of Faith (Ex):** At second level and at every additional level, the ithrannas gains 1 additional abjuration spell of any level or levels she can cast (based on her new wizard level) for her spellbook.

**High Mass (Ex):** When attempting consecrated ground, it uses up a spell slot one level lower than normal (to a minimum of 1<sup>st</sup> if the spell is normally a 1<sup>st</sup>-level spell, it can be cast as a 2<sup>nd</sup>-level spell and still use up a 1<sup>st</sup>-level slot).

**Ofuza (Ex):** At 8th level, in addition to casting spells into prepared spaces, you can cast them into consecrated slips of paper, wood, slate, or similar surfaces. The surface must be at least the length of a fully spread

hand and at least half as wide. This will affect a single 5 foot space. You can prepare up to three ofuza at a time with a single 10-minute ritual. Once prepared, you can cast spells with an area effect into them the same as consecrated ground, triggering them the same way. Since ofuza are smaller than consecrated circles, non-spellcasters make their Perception (Wis) checks to spot them.

**Missa Vulgaris (Ex):** Starting at 10th level, the time you require to perform rituals (including preparing consecrated ground and ofuza) is reduced to 5 minutes. Additionally, once per day, you can infuse *any* spell you know into a prepared surface.

## TENENBRI FEATS

### EMOTAGION

**Prerequisite:** Any tenenbri, Vanaka National

**Special:** You cannot select the Enclerosis feat.

**Benefit:** As an action, you can pick up the emotions, intentions, and even rudimentary thoughts of a living creature within your sensory range. You can't detect a creature with an Intelligence or Wisdom of 3 or lower. The difficulty class for the Will saving throw to resist this is 10 + your Wisdom modifier. If successful, you learn the target's emotional state, where it's attention is directed, and even what is most on its mind at that moment (even though you may not know what is the focus of the target's emotions). Questions verbally directed at the target creature naturally shape the course of its thoughts (assuming you share a language), but the target may actively try to resist being read; in which case, you suffer a -4 penalty to your check. Once you use Emotagion on a target, you cannot use it again against that same target for 24 hours. You cannot use this ability if the target is hostile (attacking you or allies) or if you are not at full hit points. If you succeed, the GM

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| LEVEL | BASE<br>ATTACK<br>BONUS | FORT<br>SAVE | REF<br>SAVE | WILL<br>SAVE | SPECIAL            | SPELLS PER DAY             |
|-------|-------------------------|--------------|-------------|--------------|--------------------|----------------------------|
| 1     | +0                      | +0           | +0          | +1           | Consecrated Ground | +1 level of existing class |
| 2     | +1                      | +1           | +1          | +1           | Circle of Faith    | +1 level of existing class |
| 3     | +1                      | +1           | +1          | +2           |                    | +1 level of existing class |
| 4     | +2                      | +1           | +1          | +2           |                    | +1 level of existing class |
| 5     | +2                      | +2           | +2          | +3           | High Mass          | +1 level of existing class |
| 6     | +3                      | +2           | +2          | +3           |                    | +1 level of existing class |
| 7     | +3                      | +2           | +2          | +4           |                    | +1 level of existing class |
| 8     | +4                      | +3           | +3          | +4           | Ofuza              | +1 level of existing class |
| 9     | +4                      | +3           | +3          | +5           |                    | +1 level of existing class |
| 10    | +5                      | +3           | +3          | +5           | Missa Vulgaris     | +1 level of existing class |



must then determine if the target's emotions are positive or negative. If positive, you gain a +2 bonus to Wisdom- and Charisma-based skill checks against the target for five minutes. If negative, you are shaken for five minutes.

## DEPERSONALIZATION

**Prerequisite:** Emotional Blunting

**Benefit:** When in a fugue, instead of falling unconscious the first time you reach 0 hit points, your hit points are increased to one-quarter their maximum; if this occurs, you also gain immunity to the following conditions—confused, cowering, dazed, exhausted, fascinated, fatigued, frightened, nauseated, panicked, shaken, sickened, or staggered. Your Intelligence, Wisdom, and Charisma ability scores also drop to 3; if your Dexterity, Strength, or Constitution are 20 or less, they each increase to 20. If any are over 20, they gain a +2 bonus. You cannot communicate in any way. Your alignment changes to neutral. Once you have reached this point, your fugue does not end until the end of the day.

## EMOTIONAL BLUNTING

**Prerequisite:** Identity

**Benefit:** When in a fugue, you automatically pass all Will saving throws.

## ENCLEROSIS

**Prerequisite:** Any tenenbri, Vanaka National

**Special:** You cannot select the Emotagion feat.

**Benefit:** You gain a +3 bonus to Will saving throws. If you succeed at a Will saving throw, you gain a +3 bonus on your next attack roll if within one minute.

## FUGUE

**Prerequisite:** Any tenenbri

**Benefit:** The stress has finally reached its peak. You can now enter a state of mindlessness where your higher functions become suppressed, though also enabling you to become resistant to outside mental influences. This is a side-effect of trauma and mental hardships, and not necessarily a talent a tenenbri develops, wants, or even is aware of. After rolling for initiative, make a DC15 Will saving throw (you can voluntarily fail this roll). If you fail, certain cognitive functions amplify while others are suppressed. You enter a fugue. You

can neither cast spells nor make Intelligence, Wisdom, or Charisma skill checks.

During this state, you can't be charmed or frightened. This mindlessness lasts a number of minutes equal to your Wisdom modifier. After you wake from this state, your memory of the last few minutes is muddy—you fail any attempts to recall memories while in this state.

## IDENTITY

**Prerequisite:** Fugue

**Benefit:** While in a fugue, you cannot suffer Charisma, Intelligence, or Wisdom damage. Also, if your Dexterity, Strength, or Constitution are 18 or less, they each increase by +2 while in a fugue.

## IMPROVED AMALGAMATE

**Prerequisite:** Shalen tenenbri

**Benefit:** You can use Amalgamate twice a day. Additionally, you can crawl or climb 5 feet on your turn without ending the effect (this increases to 10 feet if you have the Improved Crawler feat. You also do not reveal your presence to creatures able to see using blindsense.

## IMPROVED CRAWLER

**Prerequisite:** Shalen tenenbri

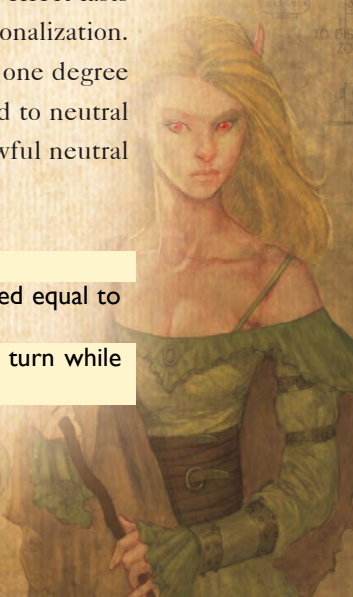
**Benefit:** Your climb speed is now equal to your normal speed. Your speed is also not reduced while crawling. You also gain tremorsense if not wearing shoes to a distance double your blindsight.

## SPLIT

**Prerequisite:** Depersonalization

**Benefit:** When you first enter a fugue, roll 1d4 and gain one of the following effects below; this effect lasts until fugue ends or you trigger Depersonalization. While in a fugue, change your alignment by one degree (For example, you could change chaotic good to neutral good, or chaotic neutral to chaotic evil, or lawful neutral to lawful good).

| 1d4 | Result  |
|-----|---|
| 1   | Increase your Dexterity by +6.                                  |
| 2   | You gain a climb and burrow speed equal to your normal speed.   |
| 3   | You regenerate 2 hit points each turn while above 0 hit points. |
| 4   | Increase your Strength by +6.                                   |





able to force a corrupted creature back to the light spontaneously. It's this enigma that founded much of the original animosity and suspicion that has followed the tilen ever since. It doesn't help matters that the elder tilen, few that they were, refuse to speak in detail of their history. What *has* been recorded is vague and riddled with unanswered questions.

It tells of an ancient line of fae fascinated by the power of Ixindar, but rather than completely fall to the whisper of Mengus, these brilliant and powerful individuals warped the power to serve their needs, using negative energy to keep their souls alive within unliving bodies. What began as experiments with lifeless husks controlled by negative energy eventually evolved to creatures echalogical influence would refer to as vampires.

These lords of death carved their own territory in the previous age of Terros, during a period of conflict between the forces of order and chaos. These vampires, properly known as *ghulath*, fled into a timeless limbo beyond the gates when it became clear the world they knew was about to end. Upon returning, they resumed their slow and eternal campaign to rule what remained of the world after the forces of chaos and order annihilated each other.

However, when Attricana opened after Ixindar, the still intelligent thralls of these lords, and only these specific creatures, regained their pulse, their zest for life, while also simultaneously losing every fragment of Ixindar corruption. They gained all the benefits of their former selves with none of the drawbacks, and as an additional byproduct gained back their very lives.

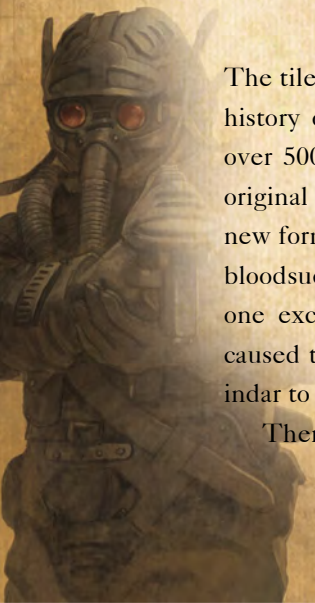
How fortunate.

Elder tilen all share this sin of past offenses, but unlike the tenenbri or several major human religions, it is not considered an original sin, as all elder tilen refute organized religion and any attempts to pass their destructive heritage onto their offspring. Unfortunately, outsiders raised on vampire legends, with their themes of contagious sin, are generally inclined to pass judgement, even on the innocent. There have also been accusations that the elder tilen know why and how their species came about—that one of the vampire lords knew somehow of the world's fate and laid out a plan for their species to slowly take over the word. Much of this is preconditioned by the assumption that the vam-

## TILEN

The tilen are an extremely young species, tracking their history only within the new age. As such, no tilen is over 500 years of age... except for the elder tilen, the original stock, those not born but rather perverted into a new form. These ancients began their new existence as bloodsucking undead fiends until something—and no one except the elder tilen themselves knows what—caused the switch in their souls that bound them to Ixindar to flip back to Attricana.

There remains no other example of Attricana being





*Two generations I track to an elder—high upon the pyramid (an accurate representation of our growth). Despite my proximity, I have failed to glean many details of the time before the tilen. How did they come about? It isn't like a cult where an unwilling member escapes after a time of silent dissent, but rather where a founding member is abducted and forced to grasp the sins of their past.*

*Imagine stepping on insects your entire existence, only to be turned into one and discovering your kind can talk. Remorse runs so thick within the elders that to reminisce would be to invite catatonia as shame overwhelms even the toughest souls. Events of the past remain a mystery, actions and motivations more-so. Occasionally, I'll hear another clue to help assemble the past. Along with dragons, the elders are the only ones with clear memories of that time.*

*Everything else is assembled from the faded memory of elves, that blasted fugue they all suffer from, rendering the first age as muddled as a dream. The corruption of Ixindar, despite its current absence, did rewire tilen to recall nearly every moment of their past. I imagine*

*our elders are no different despite living many times over their offspring. They know, and by some unspoken agreement refuse to speak of it. But occasionally, something slips out I immediately take to parchment.*

*Phaethis was their claimed territory in the first age, once a battleground during a period known as the Brilliance. It was a primordial land, with preserved remains of the old fae before being appropriated and personalized by their anathema. My ancestor, Verena Nova, was a convert and thrall under a necromancer known as Sacander, a creature that apparently still exists in this new world.*

*Sacander was a founding necromancer, one of the first vampires, and consequentially was not turned. The mindless spawn, the feral undead phyrus, were also immune...only the eidolons, those sentient loyal servants of the lords, were given a chance at redemption. And when Attricana opened, it was this small group and no others that became blessed. I'm thankful for the miracle, but even I admit that fortune does not favor the wicked.*

*Serana Nova, tilen ethnographer*

pire lords and their eidolons possess a direct connection to the old fae of ancient times.

## TILEN TRAIT DHAMPHIRI

**Trait:** Race

**Prerequisite:** Tilen

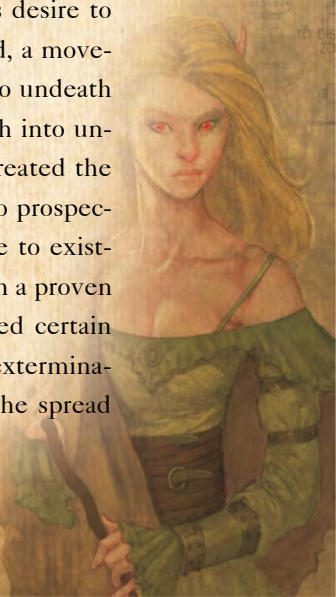
### BENEFITS

**Shadow Sentry:** You add your highest saving throw bonus (class+prestige bonus only) to damage rolls against undead and double this value to damage rolls against ghulath, phyrus, and eidolons (all variations of vampire).

In this situation, the term dhamphiri is not ecological influence, but the reverse; a collection of like-minded tilen took the name from an obscure human myth, a bizarre example of the influence of ancient fae history upon human folklore that itself inspires the name of a sect of vampire hunters.

Unlike many other paths, the dhamphiri is not a time-honored order with a colored history and regimented discipline. There are no venerated masters sitting atop mountains awaiting pupils. The tilen believe their redemption lies not only with their civilized manner but with their commitment to eradicating their predecessors, including both the eidolons the tilen emerged from as well as the necromancers/vampire lords that created the ancestry in the first place.

This is not a vendetta but rather a focused drive to clear the air regarding one's culture by wiping out the culture that came before. All tilen share this desire to erase the blight of necromancy from the world, a movement propagated by the elders—once slaves to undeath themselves. Although there has been research into uncovering a way to replicate the process that created the tilen—with the hope of offering that option to prospective wandering eidolons looking for a purpose to existence other than the satiating the hunger—such a proven technique has yet to emerge. This has forced certain tilen into embracing a radical view that only extermination remains, the only option in preventing the spread





of corruption across the globe.

A self-proclaimed dhamphiri follows a path dedicated to eliminating all creatures formed from necromancy, especially those propagating the energy. In order to do so, they voluntarily amplify their innate vampiric tendencies to make themselves better vampire hunters. All tilen inherently possess the ability to seek out creatures of darkness, an inherited trait from their darker days when they were instinctively drawn to control undead thralls and swear under a more powerful lords. A dhamphiri and her prey are inexorably drawn together.

## TILEN FEATS

### WITCHING HOUR

**Prerequisite:** Dhamphiri

**Benefit:** Between sunset and sunrise, up to your darkvision, you can see through illusions as well as the true forms of polymorphed, changed, or transmuted things.

### DEATH BREAKER

**Prerequisite:** Witching Hour

**Benefit:** You can use Blood Surge against undead creatures. You do not recover hit points, but you double all dice when inflicting damage. You also have a +5 bonus on saving throws against necromancy/Ixindar spells.

### KRSNIK

**Prerequisite:** Death Breaker

**Benefit:** You cannot suffer negative levels or ability drain. Once per turn, if you kill an undead creature, you regain a number of lost hit points equal to the creature's Challenge Rating.

### SLAYER

**Prerequisite:** Krsnik

**Benefit:** Your weapons are counted as magical and silver against undead opponents. You are also immune to damage from necromancy spells. You are also immune to fear from undead creatures.

## HUMANS

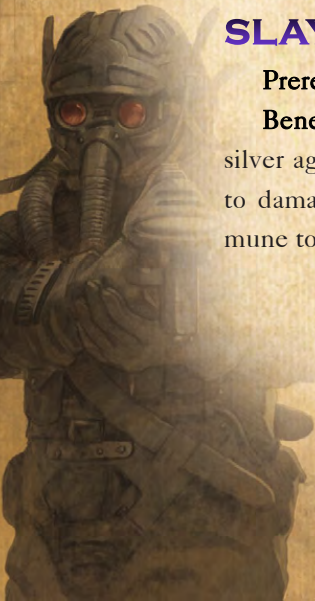
While the cultures and traditions of humanity were shaped by mysterious whispers passed down from the time of magic, they are now actively shaping the future of the planet. In the age before man, fae battled fae across thousands of years with no evidence recorded that a victory was in sight.

In the modern age, with humanity entered in the equation, changes occur yearly. Evolution forces a species to expand rapidly, to the detriment of competitors. Although fae share common psychological traits, there appears no source or pattern to these traits. Evolution breeds certain universal qualities, but in the end, there is more variety to mankind, inducing greater adaptability. It took some time for the fae to realize that to know one human did not equate knowing the common traits of them all.

Humans can be found in most of the larger kingdoms (even those where the dominant population is fae) and in smaller communities, from autonomous villages to larger free houses. A large number of them live within the walls of bastions, cloistered by technology. Echans accuse techans of both ignoring the greater conflict and being the center of one, depending on the reference point and worldview. In Canam, isn't difficult to gain that worldview, to discover where events are leading—most humans ignore those facts in favor of self-seeking benefits.

In Southam, this perspective is lost. Once a land populated by more than half a billion people, the human inhabitants found themselves devastated by the return of magic, especially within densely populated urban centers, regions later claimed and rebuilt as the first narros cities. Unsurprisingly as a result, the self-sufficient indigenous human communities across Southam had a better chance at survival, with some unaware that anything had even happened to the world until decades later.

With the arrival of magical creatures, regardless of their intentions, humanity found themselves in the crossfire of ancient racial hatred. Like in the north, many of these human cultures united, merging traditions and amalgamating belief systems. Although Christianity emerged as the dominant religion of the land given its saturation from before, the isolation of various communities did create several departures that mixed with local indigenous beliefs. These are so vast





in their diversity as to be impossible to cite examples here.

The other human faiths, unfortunately, did not survive in large enough numbers to sustain themselves compared to the juggernaut of Christianity's monopoly. Its dominance over the humans in the region has even resulted in several fae picking up the faith, though in extremely small numbers. This, along with the Southam bastion of Novo, will be addressed further in Chapter 9.

Overall, humanity's greatest ability remains its capacity to adapt and innovate, allowing exceptional people to rise, even if part of that forces others down as a side effect. Couple that with an aggressive reproduction cycle, and it won't be long until their population brings them back into control of the planet once again.

## HUMAN SUBRACE QUINOX WINTERFOLK

### RACIAL TRAITS

**Average Height:** 6'0"-7'0"

**Average Weight:** 95-170 lb.

**Average Starting Age:** 40 years.

**Estimated Life Expectancy:** 300 years

**Ability Scores:** +2 bonus to one ability score.

**Size:** Quinox humans are Medium creatures and have no bonuses or penalties due to their size.

**Speed:** Quinox humans have a base speed of 30 feet.

**Skilled:** Quinox humans gain an additional skill rank at first level and one additional rank whenever they gain a level.

**Languages:** Quinox humans begin play speaking English. Quinox humans with high Intelligence scores can choose any languages they want.

**Age:** Quinox winterfolk reach adulthood the same as normal humans (in their late teens) but then live to as much as 250 years before noticing the effects of time. Although your lifespan is believed to be around 300 years, technically no winterfolk has died of old age.

**Size:** Winterfolk are generally tall, thin, and long-limbed. None of them are under 6 feet, with the men towering over 7 feet.

**Burns Like the Cold:** You have immunity to cold.

The Winterfolk of the Free House of Quinox are human in all respects... just with a little extra in their genes.

## NEW RACE AWNEE

### RACIAL TRAITS

**Average Height:** 2'8" – 3'5"

**Average Weight:** 40-90 lbs.

**Average Starting Age:** 5 years

**Estimated Life Expectancy:** 30 years

**Ability Scores:** +2 Dexterity; +2 Constitution or +2 Wisdom; -2 Strength

**Size:** Small; awnee are Small creatures and gain a +1 size bonus to their AC, a +1 size bonus on attack rolls, a -1 penalty to their Combat Maneuver Bonus and Combat Maneuver Defense, and a +4 size bonus on Stealth checks.

**Speed:** 30 feet

**Vision:** Awnee can see in the dark up to 60 feet.

**Languages:** An awnee can speak, read, and write awneen and either narroni or English. The awneen language is about as different from narroni as it is possible to get, but contains enough narroni loanwords to be able to hammer out a mutually intelligible pidgin in a short time if necessary.

**Racial Skill Bonuses:** +2 Stealth, +2 Survival

**Insusceptibility:** Awnee are immune to disease. They gain a +5 bonus to saving throws against poison.

**Play Dead:** If an awnee suffers damage but not enough to be reduced to zero hit points or less, an awnee can elect to fall prone and imitate death. Any creature examining an awnee in this state must succeed at DC20 Perception (Wis) check to discover the bluff. An awnee can only remain in this state for 1 minute per character level. After recovering from this ability, an awnee cannot use it again that day.

**Valiant.** A awnee has a +5 bonus against being frightened.

The majority of spawn creatures remain bestial and primitive, ranging from simply oversized animals to grotesque monstrosities bearing only a superficial resemblance of the original creature. While some are unique and often sterile from the amount of chromosomal mutation, others can propagate into entirely new species, and in some cases have even completely replaced their original stock

Even then, just as with natural evolution, few spawn races have the potential to form higher intelligence and then to be in a situation to develop a culture outside of the need for simple survival. In the Terros Age, the only spawn of note to achieve civilization were the drag-



ons (if they are indeed spawn creatures, which is widely debated). In Canam, the only known developed spawn race are the kodiaks. In Southam, where nature did a far more thorough job of reclaiming the landscape, several primitive spawn races have emerged, but only one has developed anything resembling a civilization: the possumfolk known as the 'awnee.'

The awnee would rebuke any accusations of their kind being scavengers or squatters—it's only a side-effect of surviving under threat of the greater conflict menacing overhead. Southam, or Gagua to the awnee, is embroiled in a holy war between the resident narros and tenenbri, a war that tracks its history back to the first age, before the fall of the first Hammer. Detached from any greater global concerns, the native fae fell back into old racial violence, forcing surviving humans and other spawn races into the crossfire. While the humans struggled to survive, and the lesser spawn were either wiped out or enslaved, the awnee prospered.

Originally nomadic (to escape all the larger things that constantly tried to eat them), the proto-awnee rarely congregated in groups larger than one or two dozen for very long. This changed when the awnee began settling in ruins left from the fae war.

Although a few awnee found solace living underground in abandoned tenenbri colonies, most of the remnants they appropriated came from the narros, and thus much of the initial concepts in awnee culture were influenced by the dwarves. The awnee learned much from discarded tomes and the few narroni stragglers blowing on the last embers of fallen cities. Although officially the narros do not approve of their fallen cities being taken over by a newcomer race, there is little that they can do about it.

Thus began the awnee's virtually uncontested expansion through the southern lands, cut off from the north thanks to the war, though leaving thousands of miles of forest and mountains to call their own. Alas, although the awnee reproduce quickly, they live relatively short lifespans, so have not fully taken advantage of the space. They rebuilt the stolen ruins into grand cities, but have built no new ones of their own. Those awnee living outside the cities fall back on their nomadic lifestyle.

### PHYSIOLOGY

Awnee range from three to four feet tall with long

snouts and short fur. They feature prehensile tails and are known for extreme speeds when required. They are also immune to most poison. To outsiders, it's clear the awnee were spawned from the native opossum population, but unlike the kodiaks, they underwent significant physiological changes. They are also far more intelligent, with a greater social drive and thus capacity for forming a larger civilization. Despite their limited lifespan, they already outnumber other spawn races in the world, though that is still a drop in the ocean compared to humanity.

To offset their short lifespans, awnee reproduce extremely rapidly. The average gestation rate is only a single month, with a clutch numbering as many as six per cycle. Once born, offspring will clutch onto their parents for their first few months until their fur coats emerge. They are generally nocturnal when outside their cities and are well known for their aggression, refusing to step down from a fight, even against intractable odds.

### HISSING AND PLAYING DEAD

Awnee are known to be fierce warriors but, like most spawn creatures, suffer in the fields of magic. Although they were intelligent enough to learn to read narroni on their own, none of the abandoned narros texts involved the use spells. As such, it was centuries before the first awnee wizard emerged, trained by a narros expatriate. To this day, awnee wizards are still exceedingly rare. Hunters, scouts, and assassins, on the other hand, are extremely common. As the awnee are small creatures, they have perfected the art of stealth and paramilitary tactics including guerilla warfare and infiltration, similar to the tenenbri.

Given the saturation of forests in Southam, the awnee have taken to avoiding direct open combat. There are simply not enough of them to wage open war on a battlefield. Although it is not common, a few narros had employed awnee mercenaries for reconnaissance and subversion into tenenbri lands, given the awnee and the tenenbri share a love of the dark. The awnee and the tenenbri do not get along, despite a few shared proclivities; the xenophobic regime in Vanaka has no use for them except as slaves, and given their penchant for escaping, tenenbri would rather wipe them out than take them as prisoners.



## CULTURE

The entire awnee mythology was passed down through word of mouth, and as such, there is no concrete history how it came about, though it is assumed to have been inspired by the narros who left records behind when their cities fell. The awnee tongue is original, but they only developed a written language after learning and mimicking narro-ni.

Awnee refer to their land, all of Southam, as Gagua, which the awnee believe is a living god that created the awnee to defend the land from bloodshed in the name of false gods worshipped upon it.

Under Gagua are the Baccu, the name of one of the twelve—as well as each of the twelve—awnee deities. The twelve Baccu are claimed to be one single soul split twelve times into different bodies. To refer to Baccu refers to one if alone or all twelve if together. They were created by Gagua and then taken as brides to propagate the first awnee (so goes the myth). Apparently, Gagua would take the form of many different types of awnee to create the entire species.

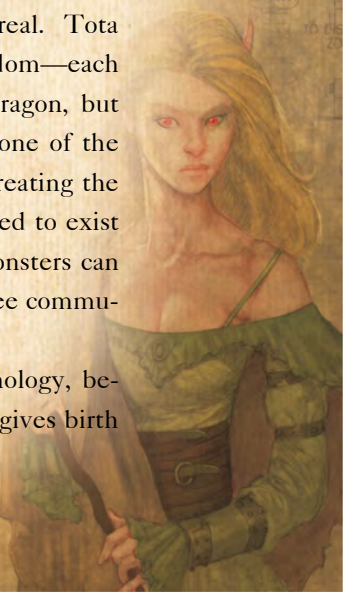
Afterward, two ancient souls blessed by Gagua emerged. Known collectively as the Raj, these two regularly reincarnate in new bodies when older ones pass. They are considered both rulers and prophets; when one dies, it is believed a replacement is born somewhere on Gagua that very moment, though it can take years for the awnee to locate it.

The Raj are separately referred to as the Zipa and the Zaque and can be of any gender and technically any race. Neither halves of the Raj are allowed to be in the same place at any one time, as it is prophesized that if both were killed at once, the souls of the Raj would be lost forever. Although the awnee have declared that fae do not actually *have* souls and therefore cannot be of the Raj, the current Zipa is notably not awnee, but the human Mateas Aguirre, the first time that has ever oc-

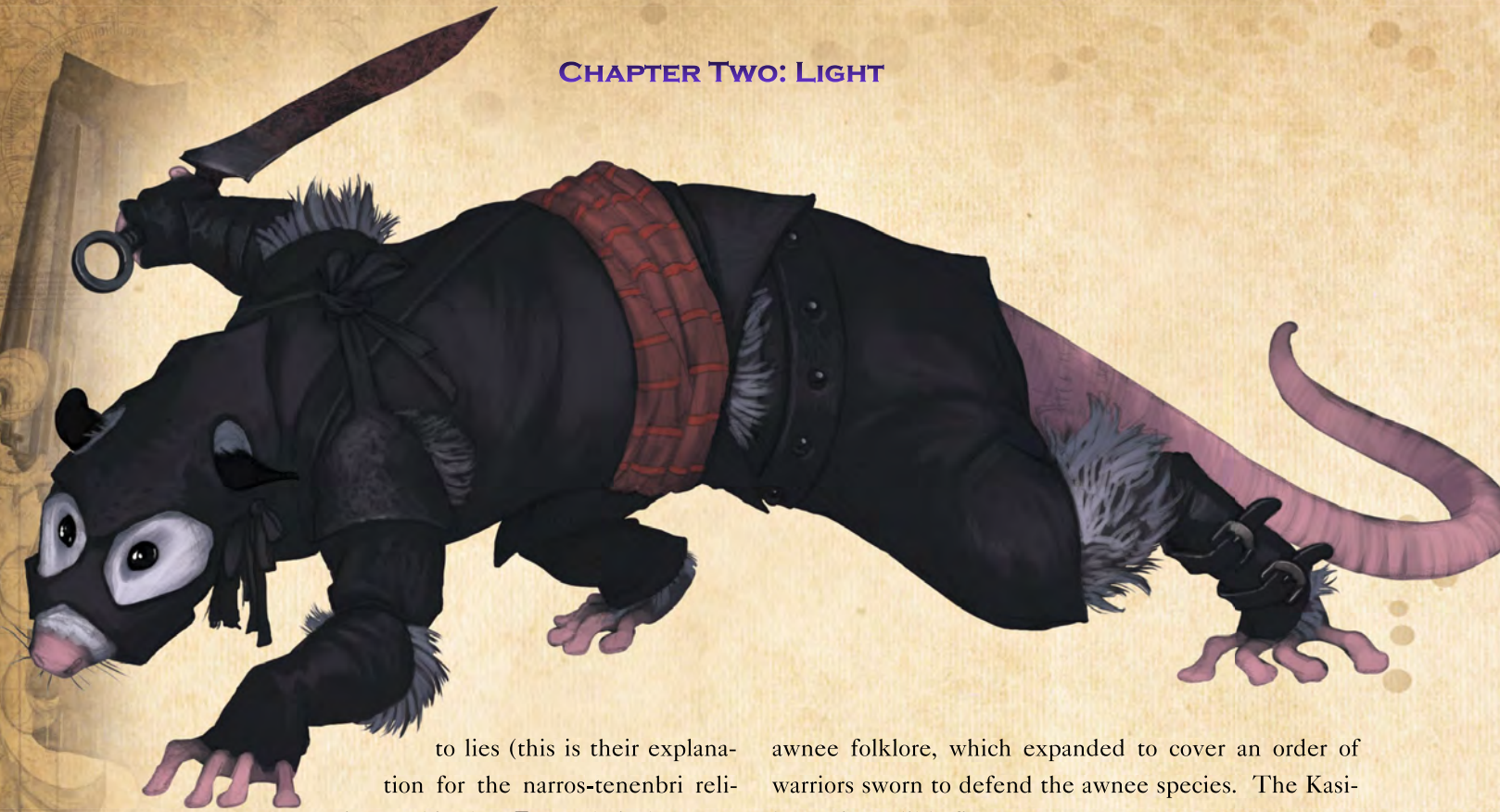
curred. Mateas was discovered to be the Zipa later in life; the Zaque is a female awnee, Furiac, a position she has held since birth. In the current year, she is very young for the position and authority.

With gods and eternal spirits in place, all that was left were monsters. Unfortunately, the personification of the devil in awnee folklore is very much real. Tota inhabits various lakes in the land at random—each dawn, it switches position. Tota is not a dragon, but rather a very large spawn abomination, and one of the most powerful monsters in the world, later creating the Seven Beasts of Tau—other monsters believed to exist across Southam. Sculptures of the seven monsters can be seen adorning numerous buildings in awnee communities.

The awnee never write down their mythology, believing that confining truth to stone or paper gives birth







to lies (this is their explanation for the narros-tenenbri religious schism). Even their laws are succinct and aid in memorization. This has resulted in the Short Code.

Awnee laws are basic and connected to various crimes relating to personal property, inbreeding, and murder. One notable exclusion is execution since awnee are forbidden to take the lives of other awnee on any condition. As such, punishments in the short code are broad and genuinely bizarre, including public humiliations (wearing no clothes, pillories, shavings, forced to walk backward), embargos (cannot eat certain foods or forbidden to use cutlery or even fire), or servitude (to the wronged party). Even banishments are seldom employed.

As this code is considered part of awnee religion, it extends to non-awnee as well—meaning despite awnee taking lives in war, non-awnee residents within their communities are treated equally in the judicial system.

## AWNEE TERMINOLOGY

**Awneen:** The language of the awnee

**Basilisco:** The most northern awnee cities, and the one closest to water.

**Gagua:** The awnee word for Southam; the awnee believe the land itself is a living god that created the awnee to defend Gagua from bloodshed in the name of false gods upon it.

**Kasika:** The name of a famous mythological hero in

awnee folklore, which expanded to cover an order of warriors sworn to defend the awnee species. The Kasika are incredibly fierce.

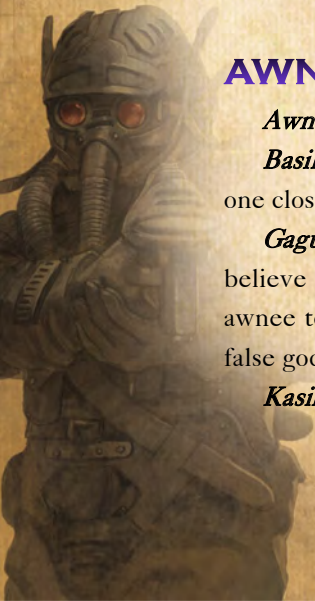
**Machi:** The shaman in the awnee culture, the machi, who are all female, control the religious order of the awnee as well as act as spiritual leaders. They are believed to be manipulators of many aspects of the empire.

**The Seven Beasts of Tau:** The beasts of Tau, legendary monsters that are part of the awnee zodiac, also dictates to warriors which beast they must claim a trophy from. Few monsters are slain, and when a single creature is killed, an identical one emerges several years later, though each one unique. The seven beasts are Tegu (a hydra), Mobi (a roc), Monai (a colossal snake), Yasy (a giant), Kuruk (an oggrak), Oye-Oye (a chimera), and Lution (a werewolf).

**Tundama:** The awnee southern capital, built from the appropriated ruins of the narros city of Tennarok. The seat of the Zipa.

**Sogamoso:** The awnee northern capital, built from the appropriated ruins of a fallen narros city, the original name of which has not survived. The seat of the Zaque.

**Well of Hunza:** Awnee mythology has adopted the Well of Salvation in the holy city of Antok as their own—probably pulled from narros records left behind when their cities fell. Awnee plan to wait until the tenenbri and narros wipe themselves out before moving in to take what was rightfully theirs from the beginning.





## AWNEE NAMES

Like the chaparrans, the awnee possess single, long names, denoting both their given name, family name, and position. They generally don't like them compressed, though it is sometimes unavoidable.

For example, with a name like Quenakoetocha, "Quena" is the given name, "koet" is the family name, and "tocha" is the individual's rank in each society.

### MALE AWNEE NAMES

Texalcacoatl, Coyotcullinalli, Eztilitacanoyo, Huicatltotia, Mazatmetzilin, Nahuatnecalli, Tenochtezca, Tochtlitotal

### FEMALE AWNEE NAMES

Aquinozalxo, Camaxcitallil, Lallicoaxoch, Ixtlimazat, Milinticazuma, Pataliquetzal, Laceleltalli, Yaotliyaractzi, Zaniyahzuma

## AWNEE TRAIT KASIKA

**Trait:** Race

**Prerequisites:** Awnee

### BENEFIT

**Ramo:** You know how to find shadows when others risk exposure. In the same way other disciplines require focus to be more efficient in combat, you can enter a state of enhanced concentration where you can discern enemy awareness to greatly increase your ability to use Stealth. Employ ramo as a swift action. Until you make a melee attack, are noticed via a Perception (Wis) check or five minutes have elapsed, you have a +2 bonus to Stealth (Dex) checks. Additionally, any area that can provide a hiding opportunity has its area increased by 5 feet but only if the kasika is moving through the space and not stopping on it. This applies even if the kasika moves through broad daylight.

The highest order of awnee soldiers are members of the order of Kasika. These individuals are renowned for their ability to infiltrate cities with no awnee population and remain unnoticed until required to strike, a call that may or may not ever come. They don't shy away from combat, and are indeed very deadly at close quarters, but try to avoid it when it isn't necessary for their mis-

sion rather than risk potential failure.

Strictly speaking, the order does not prohibit non-awnee from joining, but most don't really have the right skillset – or, for that matter, size. The Kasika are aware of the influences they have taken from the resident humans, narros, and tenenbri; the techniques used are an amalgam of many cultures. The ratio of non-awnee in the order is reflective of the population of none-awnee in the cities, with there being more narros than human, more human than all the others combined, and who all in total account for less than 0.1 percent of the kasika order.

Enrolment figures with the Kasika are unreliable considering there are technically two variations that have adopted the same name. One are the Wasipaq, roughly translated to "irregulars"—representing more the militia guarding the cities and policing the peculiar set of awnee laws. The Wasipaq are more figureheads though they don't lack the training, leaving the Qamku-na, the infiltrators, and the one more closely affiliated with the Kasika name. These are the ones sent from the cities to be trained with nomadic masters, the finding of whom is part of the test. This usually involves mountains, river crossing, with the added detail of an inaccurate map. After six months, the student is sent back home but is considered a failure if the teacher can locate him or her before reaching the city. This has created more than a few trained wandering warriors across the land.

The basic fundamentals of Kasika involve reconnaissance and interference, with the occasional bit of surreptitious sabotage. Kasika seldom endorse outright assassination (although they are certainly more than capable of it when called for), and when engaged in combat, Kasika use shadows, only engaging targets already armed for a fight.

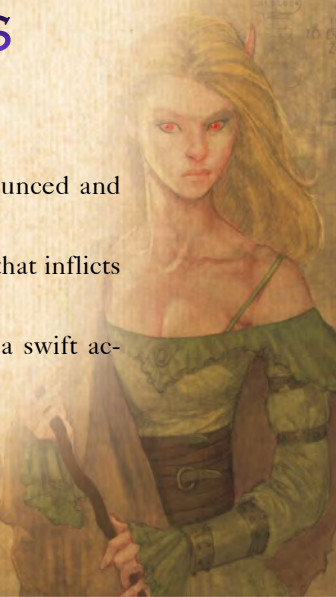
## AWNEE FEATS

### BITE

**Prerequisite:** Awnee

**Benefit:** Your teeth become more pronounced and deadlier.

- Your bite counts as an unarmed weapon that inflicts 1d4 piercing damage.
- You can make a single bite attack with a swift action.





## DARK SHIFT

**Prerequisite:** Kasika

**Benefit:** If benefitting from Stealth—you can teleport up to your movement as an action to any space you can see and reach that also benefits from the same condition.

## ENHANCED TAIL WORK

**Prerequisite:** Awnee

**Benefit:** You gain additional abilities with your tail.

- Your tail becomes prehensile. It is treated as a hand, though it cannot hold more than light weapons.
- You automatically pass any Acrobatics (Dex) checks of DC15 or less.

## HISS

**Prerequisite:** Awnee

**Benefit:** You can hiss as a swift action. Any creature hostile to you that starts its turn within 10 feet of you must make a Will saving throw at 10 + your Constitution ability modifier. On a failed save, the creature is frightened until the start of its next turn. If a creature's saving throw is successful, the creature is immune to your hiss for the next 24 hours. You can use hiss a number of times a day equal to your Constitution modifier.

## ARBOREAL LOCOMOTION

**Prerequisite:** Awnee

**Benefit:** You gain a climb speed of 20 feet.

## BRACHIATION

**Prerequisite:** Awnee

**Benefit:** If you are within ten feet of a tree, you can move without provoking attacks of opportunity as long as your destination is at least 10 feet from that or another tree. Your climb speed is now equal to your normal speed.

## TUNNELER

**Prerequisite:** Awnee

**Benefit:** You gain a burrow speed of 10, though only through sand, earth, and mud.

## THREAT AVOIDANCE

**Prerequisite:** Awnee

**Benefit:** You can move 10 feet as part of a Swift action.

## THE ORIGIN OF ORIGINS

*Each race in Amethyst came from a mythical parallel, not unlike a literal thousand other works in various media. I had put down several ground rules—for one, the fae races all had to resemble humans to the extent that a film adaptation would only require makeup rather than digital effects. Then each race carried a historical parallel and lacking that, an allegory. With the narros, it was Japanese culture. With damaskans and their central city, it was Egyptian before modern religious conversion (noting the similarities between Damaska and Library of Alexandria before its final destruction). With other races, it was less complicated.*

*The tilen were originally a group of benign vampires in another setting I had developed. The characters Saleena Kaaris and Mire Diemasko were pulled from that setting. With the gimfen, I went about created a species that would encompass all the playful—if also annoying—elves reflected in classic literature and works of art. In each situation, the final race had to be realistic. Anathema could exist as exceptions, as monsters even, but the main fae races had to have internal consistency, just like the world around them. When I established the look of many of the races, I had arbitrarily deemed that the races would appear younger in adulthood based on the infancy of the race, laudenians looking the oldest, and gimfen looking the youngest, letting all implications simmer.*

*Occasionally, a characteristic of a race occurs because of an unrelated setting aspect. When deciding how to handle half-fae realistically in Amethyst given my stance in sticking close to science whenever possible, a friend challenged me to take them out of the setting, saying that half-fae could never occur, and if they did, would be like an F1 hybrid, effectively sterile. I didn't want to do that, so I created bonding—stating that offspring could never happen accidentally with fae. Imagine my train of thought as that romantic concept eventually begot the slaver nation Baruch Malkut. Afterward, the tilen inherited the trait that they only breed other tilen, causing more racial conflicts.*

*A few races also deviated from their historic allegories because of this desire to stick to some measure of science and common sense. The tenenbri became albinos and blind due to*



their lives underground (which is actually closer to the mythological concept of 'dark elves' than certain RPGs would have you think – ed.). The narros became clean shaven and hygienic. As for the chaparrans, it was an attempt to create a race tapping African culture and mythos while presenting the race as a departure from the standard anemic skin tone common in standard mythology. The new awnee race does likewise with South American mythos, save for the circumstance the race is spawned from opossums and not fae.

It's obvious not one race was created whole cloth from a single idea over a single sitting in front of a computer, but rather emerged organically as the setting grew (and then got mucked about later by the editor, who sometimes had different ideas – ed.). Disruption of technology by magic only occurred months into my first campaign, so one of the gimfen's defining aspects was nonexistent then. Of course, the gimfen were nonexistent, as during the entire first campaign (of the four I ran), we were still employing vanilla fantasy races. It was only when the original d20 Amethyst book was released in 2008 that they finally receive new names and in some situations, a complete ethnic retrofit.

The only exception were the kodiaks, who are awesome and created basically in a single day because bear people. (Bear people are awesome. – ed.)

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*Raven and Aiden were sauntering slowly with Aiden occasionally staring back at his friends as they vanished behind the trees.*

*"I didn't know," said Raven.*

*Aiden nodded. "I'm honestly surprised you had to validate that," he responded.*

*Raven tilted her head, inquisitive over what was overheard. "The fellowship always splits?"*

*Aiden laughed. "Another fantasy trope," he said. "It's annoying that our awareness of cliché doesn't preclude us conforming to it."*

*"If so, what would be our fate?" she asked.*

*"One side would get captured, prompting rescue. Or one side would be killed, prompting revenge. Regardless, the separation would be longer than expected...beyond a single book, with a reunion only occurring when events are most dire. Usually involving a last-minute plot twist and convenient timing on the part of the heroes. Knowing our luck, they'll ride into a fight hours from now."*

*"How fortunate," she said. Raven lightly tapped her horse to hasten. "For us, I advise a quickened pace. We must reach Antikari before that ship leaves."*

*Aiden met her pace. "I'm not worried. Most of the time, these stories cut to the destination."*

\* \* \*

*The two men traveled to the end of the evening without incident. It would be three days before they brushed the border with Xixion. With hope, they would stumble upon a few from Locus-Mallis and gauge how the attacks had been this season. There were few villages along this path to Kannos.*

*A few more days by this road would eventually take them to the Mundi city of Salvabrooke, but Mahan followed Chen's instructions for an alternative route. He didn't share that with Mischa. Although they had both seen the map, most of the smaller hamlets and villages were never listed. Every morning, Mahan would pray for his friends and receive an overwhelming sense of calm, reassuring him of their safety. Mischa didn't subscribe to that and assumed it was wishful thinking. Privately, he envied such confidence.*

*Eventually, the trees changed to cliffs, and the blood mud road earned its reputation from the pigment in the sludge. The passage of time felt a crawl. Mischa sometimes judged Mahan's patience more annoying than a virtue.*

*"You wish to go blind," Mahan said on the fifth morning. Mischa was staring directly into the bright sun rising over the tall Nankani Mountains.*

*"Marking the time," Mischa answered. He lowered and looked at him. "It's my birthday today."*

*Mahan's voice lifted. "Really? Dare I ask?"*

*"If you dare?"*

*"Thirty-eight."*

*Mischa snapped quickly to the cleric. "How did you."*

*"God told me in a whisper."*

*"It was a guess."*

*Mischa pulled back on his horse quickly but tried as quietly as he could. "Whoa...What do we have there?" He motioned with a nudge.*

*There was no longer smoke, just torn fabrics, broken wheels, and desecrated bodies. It was a wagon, or rather the fragments of one. The movement from this vantage was vague, but the figures were tearing apart anything of value they couldn't keep, eating everything that bordered on edible.*

*It was still hundreds of feet away at the base of the hill, amidst a handful of old oaks. Mischa knew they were upwind and would be invisible given the altitude*



and the eyes of the attackers.

*"Puggs...annoying rodents," Mischa snarled.*

*"To think the fae may be destined to this fate," Mahan responded. The creatures were scurrying about, trying on various clothes, fighting over scraps. A few others desecrated the bodies. They were still pulling boxes and crates from the broken wagon. This had only occurred minutes prior.*

*When captured and domesticated or when raised in a culture that did not promote thievery or deception, puggs were sometimes raised to live healthy lives. Whenever someone heard the term "house elf," they referred to a pugg. It was an unfortunate truth that for every fae captured or broken in the slave market, there were ten puggs processed and forgotten.*

*Some were bred in pens though slavers did operate routes as far as Xixion. They were never given much in the form of skills and never underwent the extent of processing other fae did. They were trained for chores, hard labor, and occasionally cooking.*

*In open echa, or when surrounded by other puggs, they were malicious and violent. In history, their likenesses had been attributed to brownies, boggles, leprechauns, and various other sprites. Puggs were small creatures with the sharp feature as an elf, but much more feral, with traits of dogs and cats. They were the fastest growing species to emerge from the gates. All they cared for was breeding and eating and finding the most natural solution to both.*

*Puggs were the most primitive fae race. They painted no art, wrote no poetry, and carved no sculptures. Their towns and villages were nothing more than huts of logs and mud. They despised farming. If they ran out of prey, they eventually turned on each other.*

*"They give boggs a bad name," said Mischa. "How many? I count eleven."*

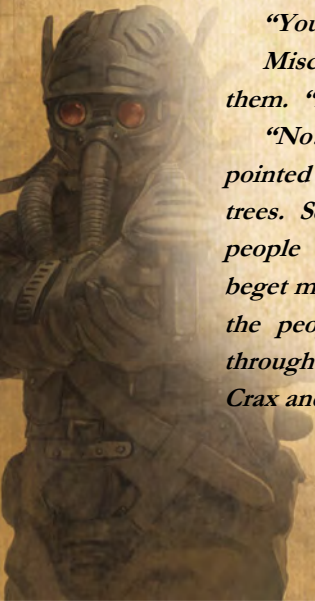
*"Twenty-two," Mahan corrected.*

*"Twenty-two?"*

*"You need glasses."*

*Mischa squinted, but the daylight was against them. "Any survivors you can see?"*

*"No...but there's a village over there." Mahan pointed to a clearing from a low mountain with no trees. Second story buildings meant industry, meaning people worrying about their caravan. Puggs would beget more puggs, and once they tracked the wagon to the people, they'd bring about an army to sweep through. "Getting further south. Hope they cross into Crax and war with boggs. Won't that be ironic?"*





*"Not for those people," Mischa responded. "This lot will track into the village by tomorrow."*

*"Yes, well," said Mahan as he reached back to draw out his bars, "due time to uphold the honor to the fallen, agreed?" Mahan was almost reserved in his announcement. Mischa removed his weapon. A good swipe with such a long blade would cleave through two at a time.*

*"Agreed," was Mischa's response, unsurprised by Mahan's statement. People died. Others need protecting. "Ride them down on horse or do you prefer stealth?"*

*"It's your birthday; I'll leave it you."*

*Mischa pondered it. He sighed and looked over like a patron in a restaurant. "I have not ridden down an opponent in a long time. I would love to try out the fire in this steed."*

*"Horse it is. Mind if I say a prayer before we charge?" Mahan held out a hand, palm to the ranger.*

*"Will it help?"*

*"You'd be surprised."*

*"I would be. Make it quick."*

*Mahan whispered words Mischa could hardly hear. "I never inquired of your faith?" Mahan asked normally.*

*"My tribe was duty-bound to eradicate demons."*

*"Not an answer; those monsters we call demons hardly earn the title."*

*"I'm not Aiden. Debate does not become me. You know me as blunt, so let me stay in character. I once read an old poem that ended with 'God's in his heaven, all's right with the world.' Look at the world, Mahan. Look at those monsters. The world...is broken. And if there was a god, then he—it—is dead." Mischa beckoned his horse to advance, leaving Mahan in silence. He encouraged his horse to catch up.*

*Mischa slammed his cleat hard, and the beast launched. The few plates Mischa had laid over its shoulders wouldn't cushion a blow as much as direct the most damage on an opponent not immediately trampled over. Mahan's mustang was less graceful, less intimidating, but nearly as fast, as it didn't have to contend with barding or a towering ranger with gear and armor.*

*When Mischa declared his screaming charge, the puggs thought him an easy kill. Two fell under-hoof immediately; another crushed its skull across the front plates. Puggs were known for some high jumps to offset their diminutive stature. Mischa didn't even need to reach down. The creatures jumped up for a high strike, only to be slapped out of the air. Mischa went through*

*a third when he pulled the weapon back up.*

*One struck with a sharpened stick, only to have the wooden point blunt off the ranger's mail. Mahan was more graceful, only striking at the puggs that jumped to attack. With a lighter weapon, Mahan moved with more grace.*

*One unfortunate vermin caught its ribs on the cleaver's edge, brought up with the blade. Mischa didn't bother shaking it off. He beat the blunt beast across another and then another. A flick of the sword threw the corpse into a pugg aiming a primitive bow. It was the last one still trying to fight. It targeted and fired its dart to Mischa. The bolt stuck out of the mail in his leg. Mischa looked down, not even wincing at the pain. The bolt had a small metal tip and had barely gotten half a fingernail past the rings. His silk soaked up the rest. Mischa changed his grip on the cleaver and hurled it with surprising velocity. The blade struck the pugg, pinning it to the tree behind. Only three survived into and east, away from their homeland, surely to be killed by other predators.*

*Mischa patted his steed, firmly. He slipped off to his feet and further praised the animal. "That was a good charge. Made me proud." Mahan dismounted but only gave him a gentle pat. Afterward, he approached the caravan. Mischa was still praising his mount. Mahan worked through the debris.*

*"Already on the carrion, you impress me," said Mischa.*

*"There would be records of who these people were and where. Their families deserve the courtesy."*

*A shuffle about the boxes brought out Mahan's weapon. Mischa's cleaver was still three feet into a young tree, so he readied his father's dagger. Mahan brushed a few empty bags aside.*

*He wore a silk shirt, torn, covered by a velvet jacket. His trousers looked of crocodile leather. Nails were trimmed and clean. His face was devoid of even the spotted marks from days unclean. The survivor was barely alert, eyes half open. Mahan dropped his weapon and jumped forward. The man was uninjured. Mischa looked in but stayed outside as Mahan checked for injuries.*

*"He's alive," said Mahan, who then glanced at the five gold rings across both hands. One held a signet. "Noble."*

*"Better still," said Mischa voiced up. "Reward."*







## CHAPTER THREE

# DARKNESS

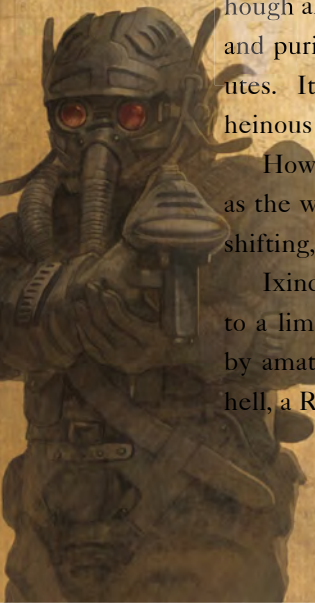
48 **A**ttricana encourages random creation. It randomizes mutation, throwing logic to the wind, allowing amazing creatures to walk the planet. Although always deified as a virtuous light of righteousness and purity, the white gate exhibits none of these attributes. Its influence has even created some of the most heinous monstrosities to ever appear in this world.

However, it also created the dragons and fae, as well as the wondrous world around them, a world constantly shifting, one impossible to predict.

Ixindar has no power to create, only to preserve and, to a limited extent, alter. The greatest misconception by amateur metaphysicists describes Ixindar as akin to hell, a Raphaelesque vision of torment and chaos. Polit-

ical propaganda from many echans and techans endorse this claim, using as their evidence the savage pagus and cruel, inscrutable shemjaza, which they call demons out of some archaic and only borderline appropriate religious trope. In certain cultures, the term demon is not portrayed overwhelmingly negative at all.

There is no denying their nature to be sure. A brief glimpse of their motivations appeared in an exceedingly rare codex known only as *The Skin and the Ars Ordo Grimoire*. The book was found by the wizard, Keris Rifts, and after his death went missing from his library. Though the exact contents are unknown, the book supposedly details the fall of Mengus and her true relation





*They assume chaos for their books decree it.  
They believe it evil for they claim righteousness.  
They repeat the words to verify their piety.*

*Armies of order and light they call themselves. So,  
we must be the armies of chaos. If the lines were  
drawn in such a way, why would so many convert to  
our cause?*

*In truth, they are the chaos. Look at what At-  
tricana commits to this world: creatures both subtle  
and extreme, handsome and vulgar. It mutates and  
turns the normal into the abnormal. It reshapes the  
land. It destroys order. Floating rocks, abomina-  
tions, and living embodiments of madness. Attrica-  
na is the chaos, and from it spills the end of all  
things.*

*How easy it would be to label us evil? The truth  
shall come out. It is they, for it is the light that refus-  
es to abide by the rules. Ixindar does not corrupt, it  
organizes, imposing the rule of law on a discordant  
reality. It uniforms, bringing constancy to this world  
of chaos. Tranquility follows. The landscape of Ka-  
kodomania is perfect in its absolute purity. We en-  
deavor to end the chaos and bring about the death of  
anarchy. We are trying to save the universe.*

*Marix*

*Lord of the Kronix*

*The Skin and the Ars Ordo Grimoire*

to Amethyst. Among its more well-known passages is a quote from an Ixindar general known only as Marix:

A side effect of this belief is the insistence that all life, with consciousness or otherwise, operate in service of order. When Ixindar corrupts, it subverts any uniqueness in a subject. This corruption could spread to every corner of the universe, leading to no freedom, no expression of independence, nothing that would increase disorder in the cosmos. Its ultimate end is the merging of all creation into a single, perfectly tuned machine.

Like Attricana, Ixindar radiates a power that is synonymous with magic. Even trying to learn about this power invites its corruption. The power of Ixindar does not generate disruption. Instead of outright defying the laws of nature as Attricana's magic does, Ixindar's magic redefines local reality such that the desired effect is as scientific and predictable as an autumn leaf falling to the ground. Unfortunately, the inherent disorderliness of a living consciousness is anathema to this power, and

few can sustain its effects for long; only the dark intellect at the heart of the black gate can wield the power to impose her will over huge swathes of the world. The landscape of Kakodomania, where the rules of reality are what Mengus decides them to be, is a sign of the potential of Ixindar.

Ixindar's radiance suppresses the disruptive power of Attricana, dispelling magical effects and even harming or killing magical creatures within it if their magical essence is not repolarized to the black gate.

Ixindar's magic, on the other hand, cannot be suppressed by its counterpart, at least not in any way known to human, fae, or dragon. No one is sure if closing Ixindar would destroy the shemjaza, pagus, and typhox dragons plaguing the world in the same way that Attricana's closure would doom all magically-sustained life from the face of the Earth.

## WEIGHTIER CONCEPTS

Ixindar is the name given to a black (or negative) sphere of undefined energy half buried in the center of Kakodomania, known in pre-Hammer times as Siberia. Just as with Attricana, virtually nothing is known about this gate. It may be a rip leading to a dimension with a flipped polarity to Attricana or a realm absent of dimension (philosophers and mathematicians may debate whether such a thing is even possible). With echalogians, this is the limit of their exploration on the topic, considering the study of Ixindar is hindered by the fear of its corruption.

Men of science don't possess such qualms. They view Ixindar and Attricana as both physical events in a physical universe that can ultimately be explained. If Attricana is a portal to a higher dimension, perhaps Ixindar is a portal to a lower one (or vice versa). Perhaps they are both positive and negative planes of a single dimension. Scientists have attempted to employ string theory to explain their observation from both positive and negative gates—while also admitting the terms “positive” and “negative” to be arbitrary.

The prevailing hypothesis involves a lesser variation of string theory called brane cosmology, postulating that the universe was formed by a collision of two outer dimensional layers. Their interference created the physi-





*They fear death, a natural fate for all life, a destiny shared by the universe itself. They deny our belief that this is all recurrent. We observe it in nature with no limit on the scale. Regardless if the universe freezes, collapses, or tears itself apart, time is endless, and this entire process will start over again.*

*Another universe, another set of rules, and another chance for life with nearly infinite combinations. Our souls are part of that system. Don't be afraid of change...it's the natural way, the flow of the universe.*

*Attricana is the faucet; Ixindar is the drain.*

*Asino Chernenkoff  
R&D Division Gamma  
Krebet*

cal universe while also acting as a barrier to keep its rate of disorder relatively constant. As the two dimensions drift apart, the universe expands and vanishes; only to create itself anew when the two membranes collide again, repeating the process ad infinitum

A gate could very well be an anchor to prevent a dimension from drifting. The flow from the negative gate appears to encourage a set of rules different from both Attricana and normal scientific laws. But where Attricana encourages chaos, Ixindar compels order, referencing the second law of thermodynamics—that any closed system will inevitably increase entropy (that is, to increase disorder). Attricana encourages chaos, creating randomness in life and natural laws, precipitating anarchy and destruction. While creating life in every possible configuration, said life also becomes increasingly difficult to control. The fae anathema are a perfect example; the long-lost elder fae were the pinnacle of their species' physical form, all subsequent derivations becoming more and more bestial until they become grotesque and vicious monsters.

Conversely, Ixindar reduces randomness, encouraging the universe to remain as it is. Nothing is created; nothing is destroyed, and the level of entropy never rises, contrary to the law of thermodynamics, suppressing the tendency of entropy while Attricana significantly accelerates it.

Another theory recently emerged proposing that Attricana is directly related to dark energy and could, in fact, be a source of phantom energy (encouraging the universe to tear itself apart). Ixindar has no such equivalence, and as such is a foreign concept in this uni-

verse—being able to stop or reverse the arrow of time, a concept that even the most brilliant researchers acknowledge is pure science fiction. One leading echalogian once documented in a scientific journal dismissed such complex theories.

This doesn't explain how Ixindar can excise the capacity for imagination from individuals, draw the life-force from creatures, or terraform a landscape into a uniform expanse of black glass. When considering these observations, scientists examined one possible solution...that an intelligence exists on the other side.

Theologians are quick to label this as scientific proof of the existence of God (or of the alternative, unpleasant as the thought may be), but scientists are quick to point out that advanced intelligences capable of controlling phenomenal powers do exist in this world, even if they depend on Attricana to live. Fae mythology speaks of a powerful dragon who allegedly embodied the white gate's power; could not a similar being lie at the heart of the black gate?

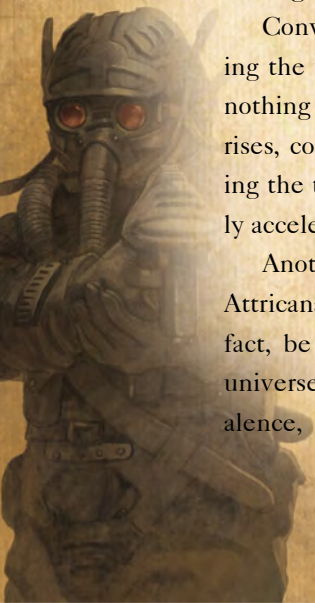
## SAEQAAR

## THE DARK LANGUAGE

Pleroma, the language of dragons, channels energy directly from the white gate: it is theorized that the multi-dimensional sigils that make up the language are, in fact, the 'base code' of whatever reality lies beyond Attricana. However, the adverse also exists—a language when uttered, channels magic from the black gate. These letters do not reflect and scatter the sunlight, but rather draw it in. They feel cold to the touch when written, and when seen in all three dimensions, cast shadows that draw in the surrounding heat.

Dragons are credited with creating Pleroma, even though they admit when asked that Amethyst was their one and only teacher; given the importance of words in the creation myths of many human cultures, echalogical influence suggests that Pleroma may have created dragons, not the other way around.

Likewise, Mengus is accepted to being the architect of Pleroma's mirror, Saeqaar. Many think Mengus a dragon, or at least was at some point. Events proclaim her arrival with the great wave and the subsequent migration, known as the Exodus, but there has never been an account of anyone observing her physical form; cer-





tainly, she no longer seems to possess one now. But if Mengus was no dragon, then how did she land with the knowledge to not only utilize Pleroma but also corrupt it to tap power from Ixindar? One possible answer is that Pleroma and Saeqaar possess the same parent tongue, with Amethyst and Mengus as its only native speakers, just with alternative paths—meaning there was no corruption of Pleroma, and both languages stand equal in cosmic terms.

The fact remains that Saeqaar is an alternate way to pursue magic, albeit a way heavily stigmatized by fear of corruption. The method of spell-casting is the same either way, and nearly every spell that can be cast with Pleroma has a mirror in Saeqaar, with some exceptions; Ixindar has no power to create even the semblance of life, and thus Saeqaar has no power to conjure beings, while Attricana as the beacon of life is unable to perform spells that utilize necromantic energy. Saeqaar is allegedly far easier to learn than Pleroma, as it follows more regular rules, but finding a teacher is next to impossible, and only a few sources of the text are known to exist in the world. Kakodomania would be the obvious first choice, though its remoteness forces those pursuing the path to seek alternatives.

These locations are known only to a few, and they are not advertised publicly, as opposing forces seek to eliminate them. Knowledge of these symbols is a requirement for any serious pursuit of the dark arts (Necromancy, Entromancy, Nihilimancy, etc.).

The language itself functions like Pleroma, including the fact that both utilize the same symbols for numbers as letters. Any document written in either language doubles as an especially long string of numbers, a fact more obvious in Saeqaar, as the denizens are more inclined to write their books in a double-speak, where the numbers can be deciphered to mean something other than what the words are saying.

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*Previously, Amethyst has conveyed the sides in the conflict in very polar and basic concepts of good or evil. This chapter significantly expands the setting's broader concepts, but as such may appear to contradict some perceptions readers had from earlier books. I don't consider this a plot hole as much as letting the preconceived assumptions of right and wrong slide. Previous books have insinuated that Attricana and Ixindar are*

*Those embracing the ways of Attricana run an extremely successful propaganda campaign, assisted by the light beaming down from their gate. Its very nature has been associated with life, freedom, and goodness, with the adverse being connected to darkness and evil.*

*It's all a lie.*

*They don't want us studying these works, to know the truth, the scientific veracity behind it all. Attricana is chaos, the push to maximum entropy, a mere compulsion to create chaos in the universe, to speed us along towards the heat death of the cosmos. It may encourage creation and intelligence, but that influence also contributes to the disorder around us. Ixindar meanwhile strives to promote stability, to keep everything the way it is. It's the opposite impact of Attricana, but how could that be considered evil? This "corruption" as they call it is the capacity of Ixindar to reverse the arrow of time, to break the second law of thermodynamics, and save a closed system from eventual oblivion. Yes, Ixindar can create evil, but so can Attricana; the gates are merely polar forces, with no inherent concept of morality. You cannot apply evil to Ixindar or Attricana any more than you can apply it to gravity.*

*Light. Darkness. Positive. Negative. These are words and visual observations we take as evidence. Look closer. It's not about good or evil. We are talking about the fate of the cosmos here, and all anyone seems to talk about is shooting dragons with guns.*

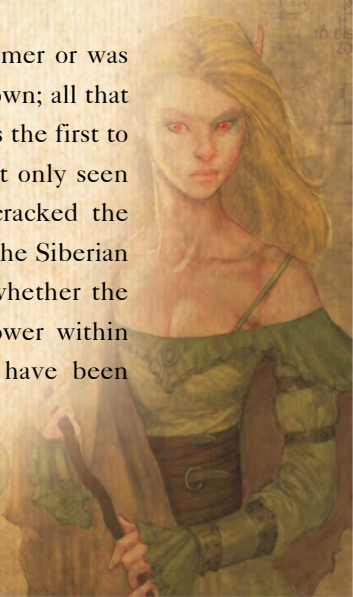
*Dr. Samuel Stapp  
Quantix Intelligentia, Porto*

*only concepts people improperly interpret as good or evil. This chapter explores why that assumption may be incorrect.*

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## HISTORY

Whether Ixindar attracted the Second Hammer or was broken open because of it may never be known; all that is known is that of the two gates, Ixindar was the first to open in the new age, the force of an impact only seen once before on this Earth having barely cracked the obsidian shell that preserved it deep under the Siberian steppe for 65 million years. It is unclear whether the impact brought it to the surface or the power within elevated it, for all signs of the upheaval have been wiped away in the intervening centuries.





Ixindar sits in the center of a spread of black glass known as Kakodomania. This region encompasses thousands of square miles, and like a virus grows larger every year. It is devoid of color. The light of the moon and of Attricana cannot penetrate here, and an undefined blot eclipses even the sun, draping the ground in an everlasting twilight. The shemjaza of Ixindar rule over the armies—millions of pagus born with a programmed loyalty to their commanders. Fortunately for the rest of the world, Ixindar's influence diminishes with distance from the black gate, though a shemjaza or a typhox dragon can serve as a conduit for its power, and so the spread of the pagus is necessarily limited... for now.

The expansion of Kakodomania was chiefly responsible for the great migrations of Asiatic peoples to the shores of Canam, as those who had survived the Hammer's fall were driven from their places of shelter by pagus hordes, ravenous typhox dragons, or simply the transformation of their homes into a featureless obsidian expanse. Some fled south, across the mountains where the dragons of light roost, to lands that have not yet fallen to syntropy; others braved the turbulent waters, and though many were lost in the passage, enough survived to make landfall on the western coast of Canam, most arriving near what would, with their help, become the bastion of Angel. The numbers of refugees were so great that elements of their cultures can now be found from one end of the continent to the other, and though the numbers of new arrivals have diminished as the seas have grown even more dangerous, they have never ceased entirely.

These refugees were not the only ones to cross the sea, however. In northeastern Canam, a comparatively small population of pagus exist, brought to the continent as slaves to the dragon lords of Ažhi Dahaka. Hemmed in by water and mountains on all sides, leaving only a single land bridge to the rest of the continent, they are contained for the time being. How this came to be, no-one knows; perhaps after the first pagus assault upon Canam, some great power brought up the mountains to enclose them. Regardless, smaller bands of pagus have found success through western land and southern sea routes, but a safe pass has never been discovered to funnel the masses through. The only remaining option, the Tethuss bridge, is blocked by the kingdom of Janoah and their mighty Bulwark, an immense fortress that completely seals the land approach

and is manned by the most dedicated knights in the continent.

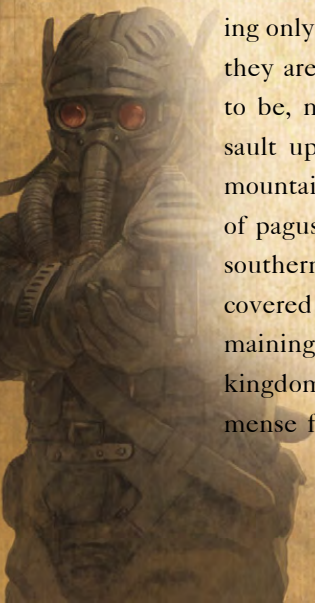
Between pagus raids that crash upon the Bulwark like waves against the cliffs, armies under the banner of Attricana scour the open wilderness beyond, hunting down smaller pagus bands (many of which have shaken off the influence of their dragon masters, though the hunters have no way of knowing this and likely would not care even if they did). But with their impressive reproduction rates, pagus are only outbred by puggs. A dozen pagus can turn into an army of hundreds in only thirty years. However, without an external leader (other than themselves), pagus lack the drive to expand. They would rather breed and attack closer targets, or better yet, fight amongst themselves.

For the past few hundred years, most of the pagus in the north have been uncontrolled with the remainder rallied under the shadow of typhox dragons, who themselves possess no aspirations to conquer the world beyond their petty fiefdoms among the eastern mountains. If the shemjaza were to appear in Canam, they would instantly amalgamate all errant pagus under their banner, and unlike dragons, a shemjaza's sole purpose is to advance Ixindar's goal of conquering every molecule in the universe.

Such a dismal possibility has happened.

Shemjaza have begun to appear in Canam. How many and their objectives are unclear, but they never act casually. They never think selfishly. Their precise origin remains a mystery, even to them. It is assumed that they must be born, somehow, for Ixindar lacks the capacity to create from wholecloth; yet they have no memories of parents, no drive to procreate, and though physically they are all virtually identical each seems to have been constructed for a specific, inscrutable purpose. How this happens has never been explained, but the process must be costly, as there are few in the world.

Shemjaza have independent thought; they do think for themselves, but their minds are all born identical, sharing the same disposition, the same desire to follow the demands of Mengus, to subvert or oppress anything they don't yet control, and to destroy everything with the potential to increase disorder in the universe. If left isolated, their personalities have been known to differ as they grow independently (perhaps from influence from Attricana), but the result is rarely against the intentions of Ixindar.





They have arrived in Canam.  
They are gathering armies.  
They have a purpose.

## SHEMJAZA

### RACIAL TRAITS

**Average Height:** 5'10" – 6'8"

**Average Weight:** 110-180 lbs.

**Average Starting Age:** Special

**Estimated Life Expectancy:** Unknown

**Ability Scores:** +1 to three ability scores

**Age:** Shemjaza do not age and can advance or revert their age in real time. As such, they can look any age they wish.

**Size:** Medium

**Speed:** 30 feet

**Vision:** Shemjaza possess blindsight. Although they can still see normally, they can also perceive surroundings without relying on sight within 30 feet. It is an unidentified awareness, not echolocation or vibrations. Shemjaza cannot be blinded.

**Languages:** A shemjaza can speak, read, and write in Saeqaar and one additional language.

**Racial Skill Bonuses:** +2 Bluff, +2 Intimidate

**Reproduction:** Shemjaza are sterile—they cannot produce offspring.

**Emotionless:** Shemjaza cannot be charmed or frightened. They cannot be compelled to act in a manner contrary to their nature or personality (or lack thereof).

**Ixindar Keyword:** Unlike other fae, shemjaza do not disrupt technology. They do not increase the penalties to disruption during combat. They do not generate an EDF due to corruption by Ixindar. Shemjaza have a saturation value of 0 and a corruption value of 10. They cannot be tainted by Attricana.

The etymology of the term “demon” has passed through every culture of man and every holy text.

Sometimes they are called fallen angels, lesser gods, or unclean spirits. They have been described as mischievous, evil, or merely curious. Pre-Hammer texts describe them as hideous, melding the normal with the abnormal in a mixing of human and animal parts: horns, tails, fur, feathers, or wings, bodies made of shadow and flame, ice or stone. Some can alter their shape while others have no real shape at all. The very nature of classic demons would place them as creatures from At-

tricana, and many of the grotesqueries wandering the wastelands of Earth could easily fall into such taxonomy. These abominations are not demons, at least not the ones that carry the name today.

Alternately, demons have also been described as virtually indistinguishable from normal creatures, able to pass off as fae or man. The first reported appearance of a shemjaza in Canam occurred in the defunct empire of Kardia, later known as the Sana Marsh. The account tells of a beautiful fae girl of fair skin and bandage dressings over her eyes seducing King Sana into destroying his kingdom with the promise of everlasting bliss and immortality. When fae caught wind of this story, they knew the shemjaza had returned. The story was kept hidden for fear of inciting the masses.

How they came to be is unknown. It is well-known that Ixindar cannot create anything, only corrupt that which already occurs. And yet, despite their superficial resemblance to the fae, shemjaza are nothing like any other creature that exists on the face of the planet. While no-one has ever been able to dissect one, it is clear that their internal structure is totally dissimilar from any other terrestrial creature, since they have been known to survive even railgun blasts to places where vital organs ought to be. Several fae cultures even claim shemjaza are not living creatures at all, but golems formed from earth and water and enchanted to look humanoid. The dragon Kelto of Guard gave credence to this theory, disclosing in his bible that Mengus, the formless intelligence said to live inside Ixindar, created shemjaza from power only she possesses.

Their appearance also suggests a connection between the two gates, beyond those which are already theorized. Why would creatures emerging from both gates look the same unless the gates themselves somehow lead to the same realm? Perhaps they tap a similar source or are themselves opposite sides of the same dimension. Some fae faiths denounce this, claiming their similarity is due only to a trite lesser god with nary an ounce of imagination.

## THE FAILURE OF DRONES

Shemjaza appear reserved and blank, expressing little to no emotion in their faces. It is theorized that they can only truly experience extreme emotions, and that even these are muted. Shemjaza showing displeasure in a situation may be insanely furious while one overjoyed beyond all pleasure would hardly confirm it beyond a





## PATH OF SHADOW

*The problem with so many malevolent paths presented in other fantasies is that the result is ultimately unpleasant. The wicked soul is portrayed as loathsome and ugly, surrounded by equally unattractive minions. Living alone in a decrepit keep, the tormented soul laments his decision and the wicked path he chose. Otherwise, the character stands as the arrogant despot, feared by all, especially his most trusted. Paranoid and nearing madness, blind to the impending revolt, the oppressor is brought down by the very people that feared him. It comes no matter the course, electing to act wicked undeniably only leads to a quick and painful end. Defeat appears the only inevitability. When does evil live to a natural death, content with atrocities committed with no retributions levied?*

*Only in real life.*

*The concept of the devil offering wishes in trade for a human soul was planted by theology to convince the masses that such a bargain came with a hefty price. The devil would always find a loophole and renege on his offer—damning a soul that gained nothing from the deal. However, such a devil would be a bad businessman as soon as word passed about his crooked ways. Prospective customers would be hard to find knowing the devil's propensity for dishonesty. Wouldn't it be better if the devil's promises came true? To the*

*contracted comes all the windfalls and pleasures promised. Despite the eventual damnation, customers would line to the horizon. In real life, bad guys can win. Crimes can go unpunished. Evil can offer riches with neither hidden cost nor regrets. Such as it is with Ixindar. The advocates of order promise life everlasting and power overwhelming. Disciples gain charisma and influence.*

*Within the darkness hides the power of gods.*

*Catch? Why should there be a catch? Why would Ixindar wish to betray you? It promised the world and riches for the taking. It only promises strength in spirit, beauty in skin. You wish not to be ugly; it will make you beautiful. Followers flock to follow in your shadow. Any mate you wish will worship you. Eat your fill and never gain weight. Cut your skin and never scar. Live without worry and never die.*

*The others insist there is a catch, for evil must act so, according to them. They insist drawbacks must exist, for they never offer what we can.*

*The only catch I see deals with occupying newfound time. The others force morals and virtues and values. Desires exist because our souls want them. Why hold back? Embrace your cravings. Wallow in your tastes to whatever extreme they lead. Enjoy your life, for it will never end.*

*Maximillian Gabbithax  
The Ars Pravus Grimoire*

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slightly crooked smile. Even when in the ferocity of bloody combat or the throes of bliss, a demon hardly acknowledges the event with barely a drop of sweat or a hastened heartbeat. Without noticeable displays or reactions, shemjaza are difficult to read. They are not known for subtlety in words or actions; their most uncanny trait may be their tendency to order the massacre of thousands as matter-of-factly as a human might request a cup of ale in a tavern.

The few shemjaza separated from the will of their creator must come to terms with such a state. They still find disorder or randomness offensive, possessing an obsession to control everything around themselves. There have been some exceptions—with some growing obsessed with expressing their repressed emotions; an aspect considered a fault of their species (or a result of corruption from Attricana). In consequence, these rare

shemjaza take pleasure in extremes. They are more destructive, more passionate, and prone to unpredictable actions to expel the frustrations of their restraint. Self-inflicted scars are common sights. This pursuit is considered heretical to the faiths supported by Ixindar and against the doctrine of Mengus.

One theory proposed by an echalogian postulates that Mengus is seeking some ultimate design—a life form she believes is worthy to inherit the universe. The pagus are worthless in her eyes, merely corrupted creatures from Attricana constantly at war with their dual natures. Since the shemjaza also show uncontrollable emotions when away from her influence, it would appear that they are a failure as well, possibly explaining the scarcity of demons in the world. Mengus may have other plans, soon to reveal another design in her evolution immune to the corruptions of chaos.



## PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

Shemjaza are all usually tall and thin. They are neither frail nor built like pagus. Shemjaza all have matted silver skin with a perfect complexion. While they express physical sexes, they do not seem to have defined gender identities, and it is unknown whether their physical traits are merely cosmetic or actually serve some biological purpose. Like the tilen, their ears taper long and straight up, though are not jagged from necromancy. The eyes, their most noticeable feature, are completely black—the entire surface, from sclera to pupil. They can still see despite this odd condition, though it may be that their perceptions are not based on sight at all—at least not as other creatures understand it.

Shemjaza are also normally completely hairless. They grow it nowhere, even lacking beards and eyebrows. Specific individuals may grow hair if needed to fulfill their particular purpose—females dispatched to engage the fancies of mortal rulers, for example, will often possess long, straight, lustrous black or white hair

All shemjaza possess the ability to alter their age, though not their physical appearance. They can keep a look for decades, able to reverse or advance time at will, though this progression is not accelerated, meaning a shemjaza that looks 30 wishing to look 20 would take ten years to reach that goal. As a result, their maximum lifespan is unknown, and no one has ever seen a shemjaza die of old age. One famous story claims them as immortal; this same account also claimed shemjaza are born as adults, nearly killing their mothers in the process. It's doubtful the stories are all true. For all anyone knows, shemjaza might not even have mothers.

Shemjaza prefer tight, skin-flush garments. Even their armor is form-fitting and compact. Males keep their bodies covered nearly head-to-toe while females allow their curves to be exposed, using their attributes to net them advantages in whatever situations they find themselves in. Shemjaza despise loose clothing and never wear jewelry. Because of their blindsense, some shemjaza on their own prefer to keep their eyes closed or covered. They never sleep.

Shemjaza share certain physical qualities with the pagus, the tilen, and the laudenians, further enforcing the argument of the look of the original fae. If At-tricana is responsible for the degradation of the fae





*After reading no less than 150 different accounts translated from 30 different languages from centuries both before and after the exodus, I have reached the conclusion that these individuals the damaskans speak of are afflicted with no less than a dozen different psychological complications.*

*Beyond simply obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD), many also appear to possess adjustment disorder, narcissistic personality disorder, avoidant personality disorder, schizoid personality disorder, dysthymia, and sometimes just pure old-fashioned psychopathy.*

*These attributes are all persistent in many of the cases reported. I am honestly confounded on how these “demons” can even form a culture.*

*Dr. Christopher Geist  
Limshau Medical Journal*

form, then shemjaza and tilen are more like the fae ancestors than any other living elf.

It has been encouraged in the previous books that player characters be heroic, or at least present themselves in a dignified manner. There was substantial room for flexibility, but the game's narrative assumed the characters created would be noble.

The real world is hardly that absolute. Most of the time, heroes only emerge from necessity—their actions celebrated by onlookers despite the motivations being rooted wholly in self-preservation. It is also entirely possible that one acts heroically when it coincides with a veiled ulterior motive rooted in egocentricity. A parent may act in response to threatened offspring but would that same individual do the same for a stranger?

The average person may claim to be altruistic, but these actions often have conditions. Nobility may be limited to the number of possible accolades or witnesses. True heroism emerges from the decisions of an individual stepping out from safety to risk life and limb in the protection of a stranger. Such virtues are uncommon in the modern world. In most cases, honest individuals do what's right with the least amount of risk or investment, which is still more than many others claiming integrity. Some of those are simply evil.

### SHEMJAZA NAMES

Shemjaza have no discernable culture, and their names are as straightforward as can possibly be: proficient readers of the dark language of Sacqaar would recognize

shemjaza names as simple numbers and a designation of the individual's purpose. There are five possible designations:

- Roox (casters of magic)
- Tengyn (administrators)
- Shedün (all warriors of close and far)
- Rucheen (stealth, seduction, and trickery)
- Shaya (the builders of everything).

Thus, a name like Roox Basat translates to “Spellcaster number 23.” Shemjaza names are unisex (adding credence to the theory that shemjaza genders are purely ornamental).

### SHEMJAZA NAMES

Roox Basat (“23”), Tengyn Shon (“10”), Roox Faugn (“1”), Shaya Revi (“7”), Rucheen Hylla (“30”), Shaya Tsi (“20”), Shedün Glys (“8”), Roox Rhan (“5”), Rucheen Aleb (“3”), Roox Xon (“50”), Tengyn Tesha (“100”), Rucheen Meot (“60”), Shaya Resh (“11”), Shedün Dalet (“77”), Rucheen Tot (“90”), Shedün Kaph (“42”).

## SHEMJAZA PLAYERS

It is possible in certain games to introduce a shemjaza as a playable character, although this should not be made available unless specific setting secrets are also expected to be exposed (elements in this chapter). Like tilen, shemjaza are despised, and a known shemjaza would draw a bounty on its head from even the most mild of civilized nations. Because of limitations on their personality (cold, detached, and unimaginative), they may be difficult to play, though this should not stop a player from attempting the challenge. Despite a disposition that borders on psychopathy (if not embrace it totally), a shemjaza does have the capacity of nobility, depending entirely on motivations and internal logic.

A good shemjaza may only commit good acts because of a logical code put in place internally or externally, rendering a literary anti-hero. They may be kind to friends but bloodthirsty to enemies, switching moods in an instant. They can be classed as mission-orientated killers, targeting opponents they perceive as wicked.

Such individuals can be tolerated in communities of shared interests. A shemjaza may be the first to stand against bandits, an invading army, or an attacking abomination birthed from the influence of Attricana. Given



their general disdain for all things chaotic, they would be unflinching and unforgiving members of law enforcement. They may act more sympathetically to dictators, ethnic cleansing (like the eradication of all feral fae), or to the execution of prisoners considered too dangerous to rehabilitate.

## SHEMJAZA FEATS

### SADOM

**Prerequisite:** Shemjaza

**Benefit:** You can use a swift action to inflict damage on yourself equivalent to your largest Hit Die (rolling the die and taking the damage). You then gain a +2 bonus with all d20 rolls until the beginning of your next turn.

### STIMULI

**Prerequisite:** Shemjaza

**Benefit:** Two of your selected ability scores at character generation each increase by 1.

### TORPOR

**Prerequisite:** Shemjaza

**Benefit:** You are immune to any effects able read your mind, intentions, or alignment. Any attempts to use Sense Motive (Wis) against you automatically fail. You gain a +2 bonus with Bluff (Cha) checks.

## TRAITS

### DARK SEED

**Trait:** Supernatural

**Prerequisite:** Cannot be of any chaotic alignment.

### BENEFITS

**Class Skills:** Any two Charisma-based skills of your choice.

**Languages:** One of your choice.

**Equipment:** One light weapon stained with your blood, an abacus, 30 gp/uc of echan or techan gear.

**Seed of Corruption:** Your soul is tied to Ixindar. You do not disrupt technology. You do not increase the penalties to disruption during combat. You do not generate an EDF due to your corruption by Ixindar. You have a saturation value of 0 and a corruption value of 10.

If you become bound to Attricana for any reason, you lose this keyword and generate EDF normally. Any technology you possess is immune to disruption as long as it is attached to you (holding or store in a backpack).

The popular media (papers, orators) claim you are among the harbingers of the apocalypse, that Ixindar has spread such seeds across the world in preparation for an upcoming invasion. While most listeners and readers take these stories with a grain of salt, discrediting it as an urban legend, to you they are the literal truth. In ways, you are merely the reflection of similarly radiant creatures from Attricana, encouraging shadow where others bring light. Alas, this may come across as a malicious purpose, but all creatures require a period of darkness in their day. Too much light will eventually burn. Your purpose is a natural force, a necessary evil (if such loaded words can strictly apply to power totally divorced from morality). Of course, fanatical members of the opposition to declare you an abomination and swear to your destruction, regardless of actual crimes committed. It's understandable you might be a little bitter about that.

You cannot apologize for the choices made—you were born with such a disposition. Your mind is naturally tied to Ixindar. If you are a pagus or shemjaza, the cause is obvious, but this trait is not limited to them; dark seeds can grow in nearly every culture (though many deny this fact). In many fae nations, if a “tainted” soul is identified, it is very often outcast, or even executed in extremis. The issue is that few cultures can test for Ixindar corruption and those that can don't make a habit of it. In techan bastions, it's nearly impossible since the dominant aspect of Attricana, disruption, does not occur with Ixindar. Given the organized and structured nature of bastions, such a person would not be ostracized, and might even be welcomed in some communities.

For echan nations, an equal challenge is faced given the absence of any technology. By default, humans don't disrupt, but fae do (apart from gimfen). Still, having a dark seed is not a guarantee of being unsympathetic or cruel, although the seedbearer's upbringing often leads in that direction. Yet, there are even shemjaza who have been known to behave altruistically if their ultimate purpose requires it—although actual kindness is usually a bit too much to ask.





This trait is almost universal among the shemjaza. It is not known for sure how shemjaza are created; whether they are born as other creatures are, or spawned in some clinical vat, or even built in some sort of organic frame. Shemjaza possess no memory of the moment of creation, and their first memory is that of an adult. However, the possibility cannot be eliminated that their memory is erased. What remains is a creature lacking empathy or remorse—effectively an organic machine powered by negative energy. The dark seed could be this internal reactor, and as a shemjaza grows, this engine expands in such power as to radiate corruption in the same way as Ixindar—as if each shemjaza carries with it a miniature variation of the black gate.

### DARK SEED FEATS

#### CARCINOGEN

**Prerequisite:** Dark Seed, 4<sup>th</sup> level

**Benefit:** Any creature you hit with a melee attack or only touch gains a corruption point. Once a creature receives a corruption point this way, you cannot impose this ability again on the same target for 24 hours.

#### CRITICALITY

**Prerequisite:** Dark Seed, 8<sup>th</sup> level

**Benefit:** All technology you wield is immune to disruption, no matter the intensity of EDF.

#### SEED OF ABSOLUTION

**Prerequisite:** Criticality, 12<sup>th</sup> level

**Benefit:** You radiate a 5-foot sphere of anti-chaos that prevents disruption in any technological device in range. Although spells and magic can enter the sphere, no Attricana-bound spells can be cast while in it. Any Attricana-bound magical effect that is activated inside the sphere fails to activate. If you carry any Attricana-bound magic gear, this aura is deactivated, and you generate EDF as usual.

#### SEED OF ANNIHILATION

**Prerequisite:** Seed of Absolution

**Benefit:** Any time a creature bound to Attricana begins its turn within your absolution sphere, it suffers 1d4 necrotic damage. You can suppress this ability selectively.

### SEED OF APATHY

**Prerequisite:** Seed of Annihilation

**Benefit:** The range of your sphere is expanded to 10 feet.

### DISCIPLE OF SAEQAAR

**Trait:** Discipline

**Prerequisite:** Any lawful.

### BENEFITS

**Class Skills:** Knowledge (Arcana), Use Magic Device (Cha)

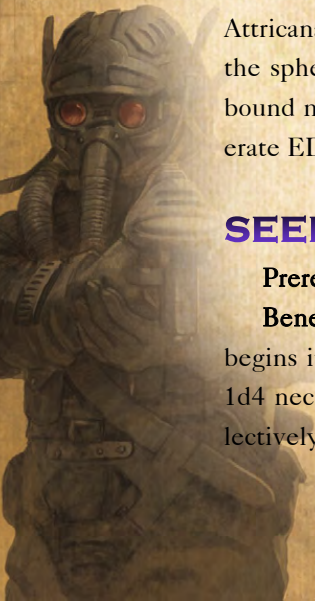
**Languages:** Saeqaar, one additional language of your choice.

**Equipment:** A handful of books on Saeqaar you let no one read, alchemist supplies, component pouch, chalk, various types of pens and pencils, 15 gp of assorted accessories.

**Syntropic Spellcraft:** Your soul has been tied to the black star of Ixindar. Any arcane spells you cast are in Saeqaar. You no longer generate a disruption field when casting arcane spells. If you carry normal enchanted items, they still generate an EDF. However, if you possess only Ixindar magic items, you radiate no disruption and can wield technology alongside. You have a saturation value of 0 and a corruption value of 10. If you become bound to Attricana for any reason, you lose this ability and generate EDF normally.

You can also be a Saeqaar spellcaster. You can pick the School of Necromancy, the School of Nihilimancy, or the School of Entromancy if you wish to be a wizard. You can also use the cleric class as an arcane spellcaster and select the Death Domain. If the spellcasting class you select lists spells from the Necromancy school, there is nothing stopping you from turning it into an arcane class utilizing Saeqaar (that said, there has never been a reported occurrence of a bard or druid using Saeqaar). You cannot cast spells that summon or create creatures or objects, or that deal good (positive) damage.

Attricana begets chaos, a force associated with randomness and creation. A universe completely in order, without disturbance, is one without death. Low entropy radiates from the black gate of Ixindar. It encourages a state where everything is organized, in its place, where energy can be controlled and destruction re-





*The ignorance of those under Attricana is their assumption of righteousness. There are two gates, two sources of power, two channels in which to siphon power. There is no moral high ground for either. The universe is just space—matter and energy changing hands. There is no default. They call it corruption, but in the end, it's only energy shifting states. We are both entitled to exist.*

*Unknown*

versed. Those following this path are tempted by what it offers: power over life and death, though mostly the latter.

Generally, the only paths available to spellcasters are those using Pleroma—the divine language designed by Amethyst to channel the power of Attricana—words able to shape the world. “A cheat code for the universe” was how one wizard put it. To learn the language, taking all knowledge and focusing on a single word in a single moment gives one the same power as gods, to control chaos. Pleroma and Saeqaar are functionally identical, with many symbols indistinguishable from another. The two arcane languages work similarly in how they shape the universe. The difference is that the dark language does not generate disruption, though it does corrupt the user.

The core motivation for embracing Saeqaar over Attricana is the slight difference in available spells. Where Attricana can create and destroy, Saeqaar can control. Necromancy is a field of magic isolated exclusively in the magic of Ixindar. The secrets of immortal life, to manipulate death, lie within the dark language. As a result, Saeqaar has become an overwhelming temptation for those afraid of their demise or those wanting control over the death of others.

## DISCIPLE OF SAEQAAR FEATS

### FATE-JACK

**Prerequisite:** Discipline of Saeqaar

**Benefit:** You can turn one d20 roll to any desired result. You can do this as many times a day as half your Intelligence modifier (rounded up).

## REFUSING CHAOS

**Prerequisite:** Fate-Jack

**Benefit:** Instead of rolling for a skill check for a skill you possess ranks in, you can elect to set the die roll to 10.

## ARCANE SCHOOLS

There are three paths available to wizards employing Saeqaar—Entromancy, Necromancy, and Nihilimancy. They all gain access to the entire Saeqaar spell list but feature distinct variations on how they approach the craft. Some of them are also regionally or ideologically specific.

### SAEQAAR SPELLCRAFT

For Attricana magic, schools are limited to Abjuration, Conjunction, Divination, Enchantment, Evocation, and Transmutation. The School of Necromancy is nearly entirely populated by Saeqaar spells, thus limiting their appeal to Attricana-bound spellcasters. It's important to be aware of the difference between what language a spell is written in and what school it belongs to. The majority of spells are available in both Pleroma and Saeqaar. All spells that deal necrotic damage are unique to Saeqaar and thus are not available to casters bound to Attricana. Comparably, there are no Saeqaar spells focusing on summoning or those that deal good/positive damage.

**Gneolistic.** There can be Ixindar-bound gneolistics, which can cast spells naturally without being required to study an arcane language. If Attricana gneolistics are rare (one in a million being generous), then Ixindar gneolistics are nigh mythical. If one were to appear, it would act the same as a traditional gneolistic though limited by the same spell list mentioned above (they can also select the Death Domain).

## SCHOOL OF ENTROMANCY

The oldest of the three Saeqaar-based school, but by far the rarest, entromancy is not focused on eternal life or raising the dead, but in the control of energy and the



## SCHOOL OF NECROMANCY

The School of Necromancy was founded by the first ghulaths in the first age after their secession from Kakodomania. These “vampires” had no desire to follow the edicts of Mengus and were more committed to the expansion of their empire. They consider Saeqaar and the power from Ixindar a tool, nothing more, and certainly not the impulsion to embark on a holy crusade against the forces of chaos.

The vampire lords possess their plan, their drive to rid the world of chaos, including the gathering of armies comprised of mindless thralls and loyal disciples and the forming of a sacred hierarchy in which they sat atop. Most of these selfish desires run antithesis to Kakodomania, resulting in the expulsion of the ghulaths from corrupted lands. Naturally, this brings up an interesting paradox.

As the legend goes, Ixindar passed over the world before settling; it indoctrinated the fae to gather to it; they received corruption and emerged later as pagus. The shemjaza, with an origin afloat in assumptions, came later, possibly created artificially and powered by negative energy. Necromancy did not exist by this point. The ghulaths simply appeared, creating the school afterward. They neither resemble pagus nor shemjaza, are more closely related physically to the oldest fae descendant species, the laudenians, and can control Ixindar while resisting the whisper of Mengus.

Ghulaths eventually formed their nation, one that was rebuilt in the new age, their knowledge of necromancy having survived. Despite the broad spells lists available to all Saeqaar spellcasters, many of the necromancy spells were developed by these first necromancers. Kakodomania takes issue with the goals of these wizards, not in the spells they wrote. As such, there are necromancers in every land where Saeqaar can be found, not just in the Necrosea—where the largest ratio of ghulaths have congregated. The vampires there are still shunned by Kakodomania, but the impact of their work remains to this day.

For rules on the School of Necromancy, refer to official PATHFINDER publications.

shift of entropy. An entromancer embraces two principles, the control of fate and the control of life. They are not necromancers, so generally avoid raising the dead. Being able to manipulate life energy allows entromancers to be powerful healers, though most rarely bestow that boon on others. In some circles, entromancers have been called psychic or prana vampires, given their ability to steal life energy. But more so, the entromancer can control the level of destruction he inflicts. He can reverse mistakes, circumvent collateral damage, and control the chaos around him. Even death is something the entromancer may be able to reverse.

This path is the standard choice for those following the faith around Ixindar—the one seen exclusively with shemjaza Rooxs. Given the lack of productive spells within the school, it is not popular with other corrupted spellcasters not affiliated directly with Kakodomania.

There is a rivalry between Entromancers and Necromancers, both old disciplines, with the latter focused on building undead armies and mindless thralls for the creation of an empire. Entromancers cannot be bothered with kingdom building; they only occupy their efforts in the servitude of Mengus. It is both selfless and selfish, in that the mage places her faith first, but will still leach life energy from victims to remain alive.

**Prerequisites:** Lawful evil or lawful neutral. Additionally, you must have had extensive knowledge of Saeqaar and have your soul tied to Ixindar.

**Mending Touch (Ex):** Your obsession to reversing chaos extends to your spellcraft. *Mending* no longer requires vocal or somatic spell components. You now restore 3d4 hit points to objects per spell.

**Chaoskamph (Sp):** You can control the level of randomness around you. As a Standard action, roll a d20 and set it aside. You can swap any roll made by any target within 10 feet of you with the set die. The replaced die is discarded—you must spend another action to set another die roll aside.

**Reality Puppeteer (Su):** At 8th level, you gain a Reality Pool equal to your spellcasting ability modifier. You can remove any amount from this pool to adjust d20 rolls you or any creature within 10 feet of you make. For example, if your Reality Pool is 6, you can change a die roll of 18 to 20, reducing the pool to 4. You can then adjust another die roll from 15 to 12, reducing your pool further from 4 to 1. You are likewise aware of ALL d20 rolls any creature makes within 20 feet of you.



## SCHOOL OF NIHILIMANCY

Apart from ghulaths, shemjaza, elder tilen, and a handful of other rarities, every creature must come to terms with the eventual expiration of their life. Time ticks away for all. Many obsess through their days in a vain effort to extend their lives, even for a little bit. They devote so much to lengthening their existence; they waste what little they have. Even for fae, some capable of living for thousands of years, an end still approaches accompanied by increasing panic and dread. Some take measures to extend their lives, but no route to stave off death exists that is not marred in evil.

One path lies with the undead. Pursuing this path promises absolute immortality by turning one completely over to the other side, to which a ghulath is the more potent. Certain problems exist with this path. The result is a despicable creature, known for xenophobia and isolation. The process is long and complicated, leading some others to attempt another route.

The path led to nihilimancy, a branch of necromancy dedicated to extending one's life at the extent of others. To manifest this power, a nihilimancer must be willing to commit unspeakable acts, embracing a malevolent path to which there is no return. Despite the costs on one's soul, nihilimancy tempts many, promising everlasting life and immense power with few personal sacrifices. There is no small print, no bewitching, no double-dealing, and no secret price. The dark pact promises eternal life in a youthful body, so one's soul is never used as a bargaining chip. If one is willing to embrace the darkness, it asks for nothing else. All that is required is the will to do whatever is needed to extend one's power. As it stems from an obsession to extend one's life, almost all the world's dark casters are human. There were never nihilimancers before man appeared.

Firstly, the disciple of nihilimancy must find a cache of Saeqaar and escape the location with his or her life intact. With what they know, these students begin their manipulation of the world around, snaking their way into positions of authority, influencing the influential, and killing the weak. The future holds endless possibilities for those with no ethics. They can use their spells and technology side-by-side. They believe this to be the preferred path for the betterment of the planet and they should be among the elite running the show. In truth, they are just another pawn in the game

of gods, and when the armies of Kakodomania make their final push to take the planet, these disciples will be trampled down like the rest of the world.

**Prerequisites:** Lawful evil. The character must have had extensive knowledge of Saeqaar and have one's soul tied to Ixindar.

**Nethercraft:** You gain a +2 bonus with Bluff, Diplomacy, Intimidate, Perform, and Sense Motive.

**Draining Touch (Sp):** You learn to expand the capacity of the most basic necromancy spells. As a Standard action, you attempt a melee touch attack that inflicts 1d6 necrotic damage. The touched target also takes 1 point of Strength damage unless it makes a successful Fortitude saving throw. If the target fails, you also recover 1d4 hit points.

**Shaping the Void (Sp):** At 8th level, you may create a neverborn servant (see 'Neverborn'). The neverborn acts as your spell totem. As long as the neverborn remains within 20 feet per caster level of you (known as the control range), the neverborn counts as if it were in your possession in order to cast arcane spells. As an action, you can mentally command the neverborn to take an action. If the neverborn dies, you may perform the ritual again to create another neverborn. You lose all class abilities and spells until you create another neverborn. Additionally, when reaching a level when you can select a feat, you can select a neverborn trait instead.

**Physical Transcendence (Su):** At 14th level, you no longer age. You regains 10 hit points at the start of your turn. You die if you start your turn with 0 hit points after your neverborn has been destroyed. This benefit of time is limited to the lifespan of the neverborn, and if killed or if the fae organs within it degrade (before replacement), you take 5 points of damage, and your hit point maximum is reduced by that same amount at the start of each new day. This loss is not recovered by resting, only by recreating or sustaining a neverborn.

## ALTERNATIVE NIHILIMANCER

Although the default path of nihilimancy resides with the wizard, this should not discourage unorthodox interpretations of the craft. Technically, nearly any class can pursue the path of nihilimancy. Here are a few examples:

**Bard:** A bard can select Nethercraft, Draining Touch, Shaping the Void and Physical Transcendence as feats (obeying level requirements for the latter two).





**Cleric:** Nihilimancy replaces your Divine Domain. You gain Draining Touch at 1st level, Shaping the Void at 8th level, and Physical Transcendence at 14th level.

**Druid:** This would be an odd combination. A druid can select Nethercraft, Draining Touch, Shaping the Void and Physical Transcendence as feats (obeying level requirements for the latter two).

## NEVERBORN

The neverborn are a secret Ixindar never meant for the outside world to know. They are related to Gebermach and Thornshroud—possessed armor with some semblance of intelligence. Knowledge of these prototypes leaked out when the first shemjaza appeared across the world. No one is sure who created the practice or when, though the latter is theorized to be post-second hammer.

When shemjaza discovered the short lifespan of humans, it is thought that a Rooxs spellcaster offered this knowledge to a person to corrupt his ways to Ixindar. To humans, everlasting life is one of the greatest bargaining chips ever. Another theory postulates the technique grew when a particular human necromancer who refused to adapt to being undead discovered and adapted necromancy to his purpose.

Neverborns are primitive results of mortal men imitating a technique perfected by a god-like entity. Though one is never as powerful as the creations of Mengus, they do improve as the power of the nihilimancer increases.

## NEVERBORN TRAITS

A neverborn gains one trait upon creation, plus one additional trait at challenge level 8, 12, 16, and 19. This is not counting the additional traits when a nihilimancer selects one instead of a feat. Each trait can only be selected once.

**Damage Transfer:** A conscious nihilimancer may shuffle any damage inflicted on his neverborn to himself and vice-versa as long as the neverborn is within control range. This process occurs instantly. The damage may be partial or a full amount.

**Focus Point:** The nihilimancer's spells can originate from either him or the neverborn as long as the neverborn is within control range. These can include self-spells as well as touch and ranged attacks. Spells cast upon the neverborn or nihilimancer (or vice versa) only

affect the subject casting the actual spell and does not affect them both.

**Synchronous Improvement:** Both the nihilimancer and the neverborn increase one ability score by one. The neverborn can only improve physical ability scores (Dex, Str, Con).

**Improved Plating:** Increase the neverborn's AC by 2.

**Aggressive:** The damage output with the neverborn's weapons all increase by +4.

**Multiattack Improvement:** The neverborn gains one additional claw attack with its full attack.

**Necrotic Ambience:** If the neverborn hits with any of its melee attacks, it inflicts an additional 1d8 necrotic damage and the nihilimancer regains the same amount of hit points.

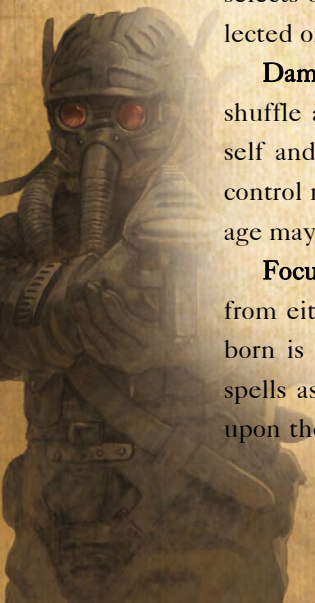
**Sympathetic Resilience:** The neverborn gains a +2 bonus with saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

**Awareness:** The neverborn gains a +1 bonus to attack rolls.

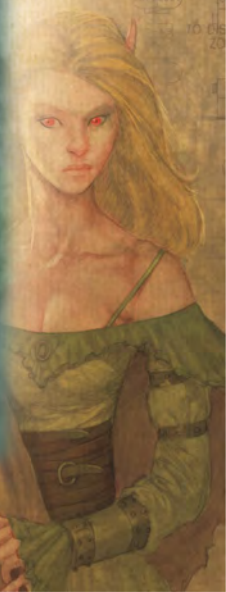
**Floating Links:** As a swift action, the neverborn can extend or retract its arms to give its melee attacks an additional 5 feet of reach. It suffers a -1 penalty to attack when extended.

**Warp:** As a bonus action, as long as your neverborn is in range, you teleport to within 5 feet of your neverborn or vice-versa. This ability can only be use once every ten minutes.

**Berserk.** Whenever the neverborn starts its turn with half hit points or fewer, roll a d6. On a 6, the neverborn goes berserk. The neverborn is no longer under the nihilimancer's control, though the nihilimancer can still benefit from neverborn traits and use the neverborn as a totem assuming the neverborn is in control range. On each of its turns while berserk, the neverborn attacks the nearest creature it can see (except the nihilimancer). If no creature is near enough to move to and attack, the neverborn attacks an object, with a preference for an object smaller than itself. Once the neverborn goes berserk, it continues to do so until it is destroyed or regains all its hit points. The nihilimancer, if within control range of the berserk neverborn, can try to calm it through their psychic connection. The nihilimancer must take an Standard action to make a DC 15 Diplomacy (Cha) check. If the check succeeds, the neverborn ceases being berserk. If it takes damage while still at 40 hit points or fewer, the neverborn might go berserk again. While berserk, the neverborn gains a









BASE NEVERBORN

CR7

XP 3,200

Medium construct

**Init** -1; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision; Perception +0

DEFENSE

**AC** 21, touch 14, flat-footed 17 (+4 Dex, +7 natural)

**hp** 115 (9d10+66)

**Fort** \* **Ref** \* **Will** \*

**DR** 5/adamantine; **Immune** construct traits, magic

OFFENSE

**Speed** 30 ft.

**Melee** 2 slams +13 (2d8+5) or 2 melee weapons

**Space** 5 ft.; **Reach** 5 ft.

STATISTICS

**Str** 20, **Dex** 18, **Con** 18, **Int** \* **Wis** \*, **Cha** \*

**Base Atk** +9; **CMB** +15; **CMD** 24

**Languages** none

ECOLOGY

**Environment** any

**Organization** solitary

**Treasure** none

SPECIAL ABILITIES

\* **Same as nihilimancer.**

**Skills** The Neverborn possesses the same skills as his nihilimancer controller.

**Activity** Neverborns do not eat, sleep, or breathe. While the nihilimancer is asleep, the neverborn can act on its own but never deviates out of its control range unless instructed.

**Bridge Union** The neverborn is not static; growing with its nihilimancer creator. Each time the nihilimancer gains a level, the neverborn increases its challenge rating by 1. For each CR increase, the neverborn gains 1 hit die and 5 hit points before Con adjustment. Every 2 CR increases attack bonus and CMB by 1, all physical attributes by 1, and damage dice from all attacks increase by 1. Every three levels, gain 2 hit dice and 10 hit points instead of 1 and 5.

**Death** If reduced to 0 hit points, the neverborn falls to pieces upon the ground.

**From Ixindar** Being from Ixindar, a neverborn does not disrupt technology if held. Its form prevents it from wearing any magic items.

**Gear** Neverborns are sentient creatures usually built to be humanoid. Both its hands are free to wield a shield and/or a weapon. Every other magic slot is occupied beyond this. Therefore, it cannot be assigned any magic items save for a magic weapon and/or a magic shield. These items must be bound to Ixindar. Items bound to Attricana are suppressed, and act as mundane items.

**Necrotic Resistances** The neverborn is immune to any spell or effect that would alter its form or disintegrate it. It is immune to all necromancy spells.

**Presence** As long as the neverborn remains within the control range, the nihilimancer can channel himself through the mind of the neverborn. The nihilimancer can assume the senses of the neverborn, including sight and hearing or vice-versa, as a free action. While the nihilimancer is channeling through his neverborn, his body is considered blinded and deafened.

+3 bonus with Strength-based skill checks and all saving throws, gains a +1 bonus to AC, and gains a bonus to melee damage rolls equal to the nihilimancer's Charisma modifier.

CREATING A NEVERBORN

The nihilimancer requires at least 30% of the organs of a recently (less than 1 hour) deceased fac, which cannot be a pagus, shemjaza, or any other creature with a soul bound to Ixindar. All organs must come from the same creature: using organs from multiple sources causes the neverborn to go berserk upon activation. Organs can include eyes, tongue, heart, the entirety of the face, or the brain; bones and the rest of the carcass cannot be utilized and may be disposed at the caster's leisure. The organs are then strategically placed in a manufactured husk, an armored suit that need not be held together by any means. The design of the husk is prescribed in the Saeqaar texts from which the nihilimancer learned her craft, and cannot be varied in any way; only this specific design can properly channel the energies from Ixindar. The husk requires specific material components beyond the organic conditions. In total, the components cost 5,000 gp at creation. When the nihilimancer gains a level, he must invest another 2,000 in updating the neverborn; if he does not, the neverborn no longer functions.

The armor is a specific multi-layered sandwich of fac iron, pressed steel, and black zircon, rare to find all together. After placed together, the nihilimancer implants the organs, grafting them directly into the steel in the correct locations. He then inscribes his Saeqaar spells internally and externally. The creature awakens with a consciousness linked to its master. It moves as a normal creature would, with an alarming scale of agility considering the bulkiness and weight of the armor. The neverborn's disposition reflects the darker appetites of its master, amplifying them to an extreme if given the opportunity and permission to explore its desires on its own.

LIFESPAN

The fac organs implanted into the neverborn degrade over time. On average, they must be replaced with fresh substitutions each year. When the time is near expired, the nihilimancer is aware. If the organs are not replenished by the expiration time, the neverborn stops





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AG  
GREENWOOD







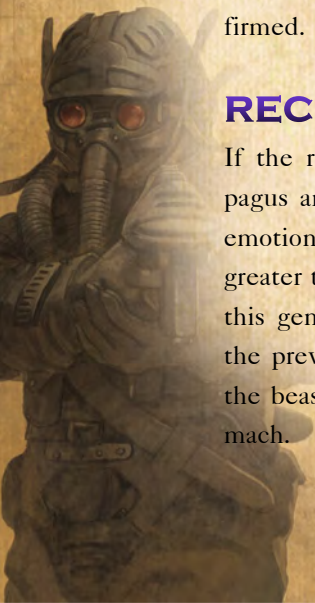
functioning. A week later, it no longer offers its nihil-mancer any benefits. Organs from chaparrans, laudenians, and tilen are more durable than other fac, offering 5 years, 10 years, and 20 years of functionality respectively. It is suspected elder tilen may break the needle, offering unlimited life, though no elder tilen has ever been used this way, so the value has never been confirmed.

## RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

If the rumors are correct, and Mengus perceives the pagus and shemjaza as failures, prone to uncontrolled emotions when outside the influence of Ixindar, then greater threats loom on the horizon. The prototypes of this generation have already appeared, if stories from the previous age are believed. The most notable was the beast credited with the death of Amethyst, Gebermach.

This prototype had no emotions. Like a carapace, its armor plates were its skin. It needed no brittle bones or exposed eyes. Within this shell was held a perfunctory intelligence that bound the armor together and powered the mechanism that operated its limbs. This new prototype was a living machine. Gebermach was thought destroyed in Amethyst's sacrifice—a one-time archetype designed for one purpose. There had been no evidence of Gebermach's return until a less-powerful variant appeared only a few years ago.

Thornshroud, built upon a similar platform, differs from Gebermach in several key elements. Thornshroud is smaller and considerably weaker. It also contains several organic components, namely a human head and brain. The motivation of this design choice is not known. Thornshroud displays incredible intelligence and unflinching ruthlessness, very different from its past when that same intelligence hunted pagus and





shemjaza as a member of the Order of Kantis (A legendary caste of rangers in Slav). This creature outranks even the shemjaza, indicating an alteration to the meticulous hierarchy of Kakodomania, a fact the shemjaza no doubt find objectionable. Like the shemjaza, the pagus are genetically predisposed to obey the words of Thornshroud and others like it, assuming others are to appear.

This fact appears inevitable. Thornshroud is obviously the first in a line of living machines emerging from Kakodomania, leading perhaps to the return of Gebermach or thousands more, as a perfect unemotional engine of destruction emerges from Kakodomania. The speed of this process has been encouraged by a catalyst that has appeared recently on the planet.

## THE WILD CARD

The biggest difference between the older Terros and Earth is the inclusion of Man and his technological prowess. Gebermach might have been a living mechanism, but it was too reliant on magic to keep itself together. Thornshroud, a smaller, more efficient variation, reveals a paradigm shift occurring from the minds tied to Ixindar. Because Ixindar does not generate EDF, those bound to its power can use Ixindar magic alongside technology with no side-effects to them or their devices. Before the First Hammer, the maximum extent of technological advancement was capped by Attricana, and lacking the imagination to create, the intelligence that harnesses Ixindar could not conceive of such advancement on its own. With the knowledge of an alternate course incompatible to Attricana but congruent to Ixindar, it may be the final catalyst to this perfect form.

No shemjaza or pagus has yet been seen wielding technology; possibly this is a matter of pride, but more likely it is a matter of access, as the centers of Ixindar's power are far removed from humanity's bastions, and in any case techans would be fools to make trade deals with Kakodomania. Both shemjaza and pagus are still bound by the same lack of technological creativity that plagues all fae. However, it may be only a matter of time before this changes.

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*The vehicle which Folka had dubbed "The Continental Zephyr" was two stories tall, thirty*

*feet long, and built from a dozen different scavenged vehicles from different time periods and origins. It was an ugly automobile, only attractive to its creator, lacking enough skin to cover the mechanics. Rocker arms. Timing chains, push rods, and neoprene tubes protruded from the assembly, grinding and stirring as it rumbled quickly over the landscape. It had eight wheels, none of them matched, with one having been taken off a derelict mining dump truck. The cockpit had been built around a downed aircraft with the plane's vertical stabilizer still jutting from the back of the vehicle despite it having no function. Perhaps it did, and only Folka knew.*

*From outside, the vehicle sounded like a blend of all the most annoying noises in the world—nails across a blackboard, chainsaws, squealing bicycle brakes, animals chewing with open mouths, babies crying, bad violin playing—all simultaneously. Inside, Folka had adapted the knowledge employed in gimfen grind towers that manage to divert noises away livable spaces, resulting in a serene ride within.*

*They had picked up six passengers, and Aiden took a moment to observe his fellow travelers, specifically the two techans. One man still wore the leather jacket and denim jeans from Angel. He tried to listen to music on some miniature playback device, but the battery had melted and corroded the leads inside. Aiden assumed the man owned a smartphone in his luggage, right next to his capsicum spray. His wallet had a chain. Barely in his twenties, he would likely spend the entirety of his trip within walls. He'll wake up one day and notice the hundred red dots from bug bites that came from the open windows he left ajar to stave the evening heat thanks to the lack of air conditioning. Aiden wondered how the techan would react to first realizing the hole in the ground is a toilet and that bucket of water was the way to flush.*

*Food will not be wrapped in plastic and will make him sick the first time he eats it. Knowing damasan words for "hello," "thank you," "how much," and "cheaper" is not fluency. The only fae that will talk to him are paid to do so by his pocket*





### CHAPTER THREE: DARKNESS

or by another's. Aiden hoped the techan wouldn't act like the arrogant human he probably is, assuming the world belonged to him.

*It didn't.*

*It never did.*

*He is a guest.*

Aiden glanced away from the tourist and took the gentle breeze from internal ventilation. It was different than last time when Aiden was frightened of this world, crammed inside a techan scrambler that would abandon him outside Antikari. If they hadn't, he never would have found the amethyst. Aiden wondered where his life would have led him.

Aiden followed Raven's point to a running herd of wild horses, and later to a family of cowels foraging in a field. They were a new spawn, bovine that had ballooned larger than elephants. Their large horns sat snugly down the back of the skull.

Eventually, a conversation did spark.

"Dragon's don't eat," Aiden answered her question.

"They must," she countered. The meal was free and pre-arranged without choice, though the fruit drink was robbery. They were served sealed containers of steamed chicken and rice, corn flatbread, and raw vegetables. A final container had grapes and orange wedges.

"They don't." Aiden fiddled his fingers in the air. "They're magic," he joked.

"So am I and I hunger." She fondled the orange slightly before slipping it between her teeth.

They tried to keep the conversation quiet, but the lack of road or engine noise prevented privacy. The others ignored them. The commuter cabin must have been pulled from a train lounge car with large windows being mostly obstructed by exposed engine-works. It was still surprisingly comfortable and roomy. The other passengers ignored them nonetheless.

"The Phelps book I read claimed fae only require three hundred calories a day to maintain their energy," Aiden countered. "Trust me, that's not normal."

"Maybe you do not wish to know how they

eat or what they eat." Raven teased with a smile after swallowing. Aiden dropped his carrot.

*"Getting somewhere?"*

*"Relativity. A chicken is not intelligent to us but can be considered intelligent to the worm it eats. Humans are considered intelligent because they compare themselves to the chicken. Men consider the chicken dumb and do not think twice when slaying it to devour its flesh."*

*"Is this why you don't eat meat?"*

*"Partially. Despite claims from older fae like laudenians and chaparrans, humans and fae are close in their relevant brainpower, just strong in different ways. Dragons..."* She grabbed a grape and did the same again.

*"You're accusing dragons of eating people and not considering it a sin?"* Aiden asked. *"Typhox dragons do it all the time."*

*"Were you afraid of Genai when we saw him?"* she asked.

*"No,"* Aiden replied.

*"Why not?"*

*"I don't recall why. I just wasn't. I never was."*

*"We should be. It is an inhuman monster with an intellect thousands if not millions of years older than any human or fae. Who is to say how they regard the lesser races. You have a pet, your pet dies, but you feel more remorse over a slain human friend. Would they really feel a lasting sorrow for killing one of us, even by accident? They could swallow us whole without the decency of shewing. You cannot possibly understand their motives."*

*"I never felt fear around him."*

*"You met him twice, and...never mind."* Her tease turned to a grimace, realizing she might have overstepped.

*"I was afraid of Zmey,"* Aiden answered.

*"I did not intend this direction."*

*"It's quite alright. What of other relationships?"*

*"Other?"* she asked. He swore he would not go into this type of conversation with her. Perhaps it would reveal too much of his intentions. Perhaps it would bring about an answer he would pre-



fer not to know.

*"I mean, you believe we should never stop fearing dragons, even the good ones, never turn our back, never stop remembering they're giant lizards with a social conscience all their own. What of others, the ones not so intimidating, the ones that look nearly the same?"*

*"Forgetting how we look, we live longer, are not evolved, and have a culture millions of years older. What hope does any human have to understand a fae?"*

*"Seemed to have worked for some."*

*"Humans winning such affection do not fully comprehend. He or she can spend a lifetime and still not fully understand their mate. Always got the impression one tolerated the other."*

\* \* \*

*The final stretch to Zorahn felt long. The landscape had gotten boring, with paddy fields and mines intersected by various roads, was almost like man's footprint on the globe after his industrialization. Two days past Primmer and the marks of Zorahn appeared on the horizon.*

*Aiden and Raven stepped off the flight, never having missed solid ground in that time. They hadn't said much since Primmer. After checking to a room, they made for one of the larger library branches. This was not like the Limshau capital; it was smaller with broader roads.*

*Past the steel doors into the wing, the two were greeted by crimson-dyed custodians, a few armed with short bladed weapons, one with a long, two-handed odachi, another with a halberd. The weapons were safely sheathed and covered on their backs.*

*And there were many scrolls. Along the white-bricked walls of the corridor were stacked fifteen rows high of metal scroll tubes, wrapped in red, yellow, or green silk. That signified something, but neither Raven nor Aiden knew yet. On each scroll's end dangled a label. The hallway was wide enough for several tables where scholars had selections unfurled. The records dated events in several languages across several centuries.*

*Occasionally, they would walk by shelves with more traditional books. Raven shook her head.*

*"I see so many violations." She pointed to one volume. "Wrong branch." She pointed to another, "Unlabeled," and another, "Misfiled."*

*"No librarians, this will get a little tedious," Aiden interjected.*

*When they reached the capital room of the wing, they found a cylindrical chamber with a spiraling path that orbited around the outside, climbing up ten stories, like the Zellis keep nearly a lifetime ago. Except here, the outer wall was filled floor to ceiling with hundreds of thousands of scroll tubes, nestled away in a large lattice of diamond-shaped cubicles. This was not one wing but a dozen. Bridges of white brick spanned across the expanse, widening out occasionally to rest a few wooden or stone tables. The custodians constructed a rail along the rising path where a steel ladder slid along rollers to assist in filing and retrieval. Drifting and rising lights lifted by a lingering spell shifted with an intelligent whim to where they were needed. Aiden and Raven arched their necks back to see the monumental task ahead of them.*

*"I love this world" whispered Aiden.*







## CHAPTER FOUR

# SAINTS

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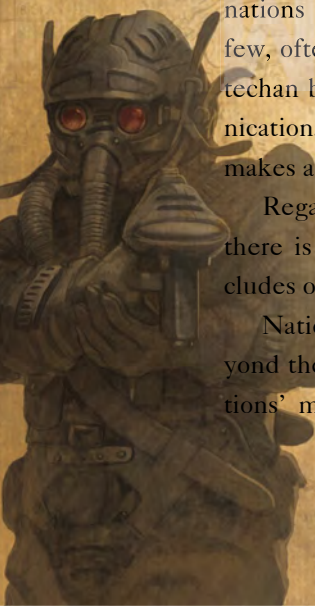
Many people believe they live in a cloistered world, that no one is watching them apart from indifferent or unknowable gods. The echan nations rarely communicate, the roads between them few, often poorly kept, and plagued by monsters. With techan bastions, disruption prevents electronic communication, furthering their self-imposed isolation. This makes alliances and conspiracies difficult to maintain.

Regardless of how bad the world is or is getting, there is still a consensus that the chaos of magic precludes omniscience.

Nations cannot unite, and they cannot reach far beyond their borders. The threat of disruption limits bastions' military expeditions beyond their walls, a duty

instead delegated to various freelance companies choosing to reside in the world of fantasy. Although several of these mercenary groups are sizeable (especially the Iron Sons), they still pale in comparison to the armies defending the cities. Freelancers usually lack truly high technology given the environment they reside in, with even the most advanced group barely flaunting more than armored vehicles and chemical firearms.

It came as a shock when several reports started to trickle in of encounters with forces possessing technology that rivaled the most advanced bastions. These included both human and robotic opponents, both on the ground and in the air, the latter difficult to believe given disruption's capacity to crash aircraft. Initial





thoughts pointed to bastions like Mann or Porto, known for such technology. However, Mann is sequestered in a walled island state focused inward rather than outward, and Porto sits across the ocean displaying no indication of hostile intent. This leaves the only possibility that another faction has been able to keep itself hidden for years, a faction with unclear motivations and loyalties.

The truth is about to be revealed.

The Saints are about to take a more active role in world affairs.

## CURRENT EVIDENCE

Up until recently, it's been assumed most freelance companies receive funding from bastions. Given the increasing reach of larger companies like the Iron Sons, it is evident these companies are receiving contracts from other organizations. These can include techan atolls or bastions across the ocean, though this cannot account for the emergence of unidentified technology in contradiction to what these mercenaries appear capable of.

The most obvious example is MAX—an apparent autonomous machine capable of resisting disruption in the pursuit of goals only it seems to be aware of. It was believed MAX was a relic from before the fall of man. This is unlikely; for one, there is no evidence humanity could create such a device, and second, it appears designed from its foundation to operate in high-disruption regions. It also clearly possesses objectives given to it from a modern creator.

It might have been decades before any new evidence surfaced. Unfortunately, this secret organization has recently started to manifest in more noticeable ways.

The Keep of Zellis was an impressive fortress crowned on a towering crag of stone that was recently annihilated by an attack, one which not only destroyed the castle but most of the stone outcrop it sat on. Witnesses claimed the attack originated from a massive aircraft requiring no wings or airbags to remain aloft that could destroy the fortress by channeling the energy of the sun. The vessel later vanished.

It is clear this new faction is no longer interested in remaining in the shadows. Perhaps it is desperation, or perhaps they know what is required to take the plan-

et—the same magical artifacts that everyone is now seeking. This faction has also been connected to manipulating conflict between techan nations, preventing technology from falling into undeserving hands, and outright direct conflict with rivals attempting the same mission as them in the acquisition of emerging Amethyst artifacts.

## IN THE NAME

In truth, the Saints are the remnants of humanity's first attempts to expand beyond their world, the inhabitants of a long-dead Mars colony. Nobody knows why or how this happened, as the range of the gates' influence barely reaches the Earth's moon, let alone to the further reaches of the solar system. Though most do not claim any religious significance from their unexpected resurrection, as a people they have adopted the term 'Saint', perhaps in an arrogant claim of their existence as a "likeness to God," referencing an old quote claiming "any sufficiently advanced technology is indistinguishable from magic." These Saints believe themselves to be god-like given their advanced technology. They also believe themselves sanctified in a scientific interpretation given their uninterrupted progression to before the fall of man, the custodians of a past few of those on Earth are even aware of.

## ORIGINS

To fully understand who the Saints are now and why they act how they do, one must reach back before the fall of man, before the second hammer, when humanity ruled the planet uncontested. A zealous need to expand and acquire new resources resulted in the colonization of both the moon and Mars.

This growth came not from a desire for knowledge but the demand for natural resources. It was the mining consortium, Skylon Amalgamated, that pushed for a permanent settlement on Mars after the first landing unearthed valuable reserves. Even though Mars grew its ability to be self-sustained daily, the demands of the business taxed this capacity. Eventually, it was not food that doomed the colony, but energy. With so many reactors placed under Skylon's control, little was left to maintain the general population.

Dozens of outposts spread for thousands of kilometers from the first city of Gradivus, scouring the land-





## CHAPTER FOUR: SAINTS

scape for riches. And riches they found, shipped on goliath freighters back home on a journey taking ten to eighteen months. Recent advances in hibernation abridged the crew's aging to minutes with a fat paycheck awaiting their return. The precious deuterium ore was more valua-

The massive strain placed on the fusion reactors had made them unpredictable, and they began to fail. Without proper supplies to increase the manufacturing of foodstuffs, the population starved. After an unsuccessful coup by resident military forces to gain control of the remaining functioning power plants, the settlement devolved into chaos. The colony splintered into various factions, and sporadic raids flared up. A few people were rumored to have escaped to Earth. If they succeeded was anyone's guess.

Communication from home arrived sporadically, and never from the surface. Garbled and distorted messages from orbiting space stations like Charles de Gaulle and Ronald Reagan were cryptic and confusing, speaking of a bolide collision and something emerging from the crater. War had broken out on Earth, but no one knew with whom. Even these messages grew infrequent, and in such a state of decay, little else could be discerned.

The orbiting stations were falling from orbit, and those that remained had become lifeless from a lack of food. The lunar colonies followed shortly after.

Those living on Mars gave up hope.

Most of the Martians that died were left in sterilized rooms, preserved forever. A few donned their suits to catch a final sunrise. One by one, the last humans on Mars died. The planet returned to its serene state, a graveyard for a forgotten people.

Then one day...the Martians awoke.

To them, they believed no time had passed. New leaders emerged to help them. Tasks were assigned. With a renewed vigor unseen, the Martians started to rebuild. They were ordered to erect a city like none seen before on Mars. These leaders, the deacons, held an iron will over the others, and the Martians rarely questioned their survival or their obedience.

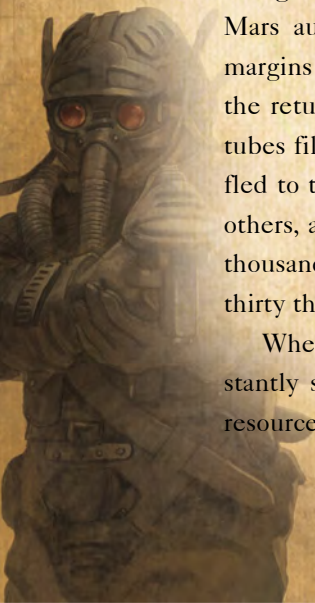
Placed in a rhythm, never questioning, these survivors continued day and night to build a great empire upon the ruins of their past. Their leaders commanded authority and promised that mankind would again retake their homeworld.

Finally, able to peer back to Earth, they found it populated with monsters and shockingly few humans, with the last fragments of civilization fading. Man was now an echo of his former glory, but those on Mars remembered. They knew the truth of it, that mankind had earned his place atop the food chain and it was he, not the fae or dragons, that deserved to control the fate of the planet. With the gates closed, their enemies

ble than gold. Not even the booming Lunar colonies could compete with the windfalls from Mars. For those in prime health and skilled in the right fields, a career in space was a clear direction.

Initially, lunar posts were an easy hire, offering good wages and relative quick transport back home. Mars was the harder sell. When the mines reached the well-spring, the promise of skyrocketing bonus checks brought the pilgrims in swarms. Despite a goal to make Mars autonomous within a hundred years, the profit margins from Skylon proved too great a temptation, and the returning freighters did so loaded with hibernation tubes filled with greed and dreams. Arrivals were shuffled to their jobs, given cramped quarters with a dozen others, and promptly forgotten within the system. Five thousand people grew to fifteen thousand, and later, to thirty thousand.

When the Hammer struck Earth, all ties were instantly severed. Despite Skylon's best efforts to shift resources to keep the colony alive, it was a failing effort.





would either be powerless, fall to dust, or die from calamities previously suppressed by magic.

The Martians declared themselves saviors of mankind. They built ships and voyaged across the void to their ancient home. The travel time had been reduced to weeks. When reaching the periphery of the Earth-Moon system, the massive increase of EDF stalled their advancement. It seemed vengeance would take longer than initially thought. With a direct invasion prohibitive, the saints turned to other means, subtlety and subterfuge. Only with the white gate closed could the saints finally arrive in force to retake their world. With Attricana shut, the Saints would then be able to gather a unified front to take on the black gate.

For now, the majority remain at a distance, with only a few penetrating the atmosphere for short periods to perform whatever tasks required. Echans mistake them as having a terrestrial origin. The saints consider themselves the upper echelon, above all others (and not just literally), though even they are unaware that the watchers themselves are being watched.

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## CLIFFHANGER!

*There are two big reveals within this chapter, the first, and the obvious one is the uncovering of the Saints—advanced humans from a forgotten Mars colony. This also leads to the second reveal, the age of man before their fall.*

*It has been assumed by many that the fall of man came not far into the 21<sup>st</sup> century, a few decades in, tops. By exposing the Saints and their origins, it discloses the truth that mankind progressed a lot further than previously thought, perhaps centuries, making their fall even more destructive.*

*Assuming Mars receives its first manned mission by 2030 in the real world, it would be at least another few decades until permanent habitation, decades more until a colony could reach the numbers boasted in this chapter. More questions to be asked, and more to be answered later.*

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## RACE

### RACIAL TRAITS

**Average Height:** 5'0" – 6'2"

**Average Weight:** 110-180 lbs.

**Average Starting Age:** Special

**Estimated Life Expectancy:** Special

**Ability Scores:** +1 to three ability scores

**Size:** Medium

**Speed:** Saints don't vary much in height and build. They are generally tall, hovering around 6 feet. Your size is Medium.

**Age:** Due to Saint measurements of time, you are not sure how old you are and how long a saint is expected to live. You have not known a Saint that has died of old age, though most friendships don't last more than a few years, so it's impossible to be sure.

**Alignment:** Saints are Lawful, and despite most them being arrogant, not all of them are evil, although their cultural purpose of eradicating all magical existence tends to preclude them being Good.

**Languages:** You can speak, read, and write English.

**Long Rest:** You only require three hours sleep a day to function

**Skilled:** Humans gain an additional skill rank at first level and one additional rank whenever they gain a level.

**Note:** Saints are important plot points. The GM should not allow a player to become one unless their existence is known.

Saints are generally ignorant and biased. They look down on echans with contempt. They regard techans only slightly more. Any bastion lower than TL 2 is considered second-rate, and any that voluntarily consorts with echans is barely worth calling 'human.' These misguided folk must be shown the error of their ways and brought back to the fold of humanity—and if they do not, they are fit for nothing else but annihilation with the rest of the magical vermin.

The dominant characteristics of the Saints are their superior technology, genetic perfection (lacking any genetic flaws), and their cult of personality centered around Saint leadership, the deacons. It is nearly ingrained in their being, blind loyalty, kowtowing to these few that govern the whole. Rebelling is virtually unheard of, and any rumors of insubordinate thought or action are dismissed as, for lack of a better term, fairy stories.

Fallen Saints, should they actually exist, fight an uphill battle. Like the bastion of Mann, Saints are not allowed to desert, and Saint technology is forbidden for







those not loyal to the deacons. However, this is when the similarities between the Saints and the bastion of Mann stop. The Saints do not worship their machines, and their zealotry begins and ends with their loyalty to their commanders. All Saints live a life of military servitude, with the chain of command firmly enforced from a Saint's earliest memory...bizarre how that memory is.

### A MACHINE OF RHYTHM

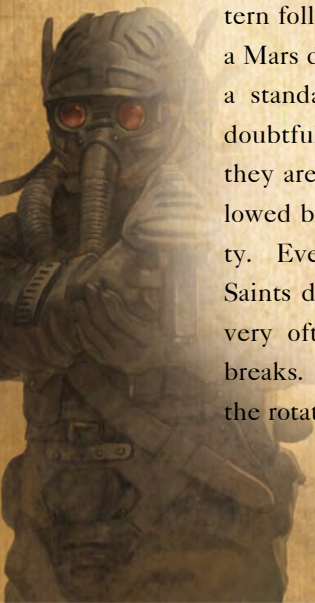
**74** A Saint lives and dies in a military structure. They operate a shift clock of regimented time. A Saint is told when they can sleep and when they can eat. This pattern follows a strict clock that does not adhere to either a Mars day or an Earth day. This system is so rigid that a standard calendar isn't even followed. Saints are doubtful to remember their birthday or even how old they are. A day involves a work shift of six hours, followed by six hours of sleep, then six hours back on duty. Even when on Earth, this habit is hard to break. Saints don't require large sleep cycles to function, and very often a saint only rests once every three shift breaks. Social interaction and fraternization outside of the rotation is discouraged, and opportunities for recrea-

tion are limited at best – but in truth, most Saints don't care for such things, being fully dedicated to their great purpose.

Externally, a Saint can pass off as an average human, especially if he or she doesn't keep any identifying equipment from their past. Saints making a life for themselves independently are usually quiet and reserved, biting their tongue for fear of regressing back to their intolerant ways. Some may find magic fascinating while others fear it. Many fallen Saints have been known to be captivated at the sight of simple cantrips. Rebels with open minds are often welcomed by many human cultures, as they probably are not aware of the person's past.

### NAMES

Despite the assumption that Saints would discourage personalization, they still possess standard names relatable to those on Earth. They have first and family names, though relations are limited and even then, only assumed. Some Saints believe their last names are an indication of genetic similarity and not direct blood relation, aiding in social circles and bonding. If two Saints





possess the same last name, they assume relation even in the absence of any proof. Saints do not marry, and for that matter do not generally have any sort of intimate relationships at all; there are no Saint children beyond the confines of Mars, and to the best of anyone's knowledge, all Saints are sterile (though whether this is a deliberate attempt at population control or a side-effect of genetic tampering is anyone's guess).

**Examples:** Lorne Ellin, Tasia Crufix, Elias Cox, Adam Nye.

## SAINT TRAIT BUZZ-BOY MEMBER

**Trait:** Discipline

**Prerequisite:** Saint

### BENEFITS

**Skill Proficiencies:** You also have a +1 bonus to all Engineer (Int) checks.

**Languages:** One of your choice.

**Equipment:** Standard techan adventurer kit, automatic watch.

**Techstrous:** You are adept with all forms of technology, regardless of its level, and you are doubly aware of its vulnerability in magical fields. Although Saint tech is as vulnerable as any other technology, you have been trained in how to mitigate issues that emerge. Once a day, if a piece of gear you are carrying suffers a disruption event due to a die roll, you can force a single re-roll (taking the second value).

There is only one background available for Saint characters (technically, there would be others, like fighter pilots, ship crew, and Mars native inhabitants, but those would never have been seen on Earth and could reveal certain plot details fated for later).

Whether employing subterfuge or direct physical intervention, all Saint teams working on Earth form part of what is known as a buzz-boy team. Saints are rarely if ever deployed solo, and are assembled in groups of four to six. Not that far removed from a standard techan military squad, a buzz-boy team is comprised of specialized members each focusing on singular duties—the singular buzz-boys. One is a commander, another an engineer, another a tech, and so on.

As a buzz-boy, you have been given specialized training to assist in working planetside. This involves instructions on how the planet functions, the sides in the conflict, as well as what to expect. However, training does not equate experience, and most members are still not prepared for what awaits them.

### PLAYER OR NOT

Since NPC saints will most likely not be created this way, the following path is more for players; as such, this assumes the character has been detached from the Saint command structure. If players all form part of a buzz-boy team, they would technically have access to any level of technology they wish, creating an imbalance at 1<sup>st</sup> level. Therefore, the following background assumes a Saint is stranded on Earth with no capacity to contact home. This can be by choice, or forced by circumstances beyond the Saint's control.

## BUZZ-BOY MEMBER FEATS

### GACT

**Prerequisite:** Buzz-boy member

**Benefit:** You are close to genetic perfection. Increase one ability score of your choice that is already at least 16 by 2. You also have resist 5 poison.

### GENE FOR FATE

**Prerequisite:** Buzz-boy member

**Benefit:** Your very makeup offers the greatest physical advantage. Increase one ability score of your choice that is already at least 16 by 2. You have a +1 bonus to all saving throws.

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*Loyal readers from years ago will notice these saints have been altered from their original form in the first Amethyst D20 book released in 2008.*

*You are correct; not long after that publication, that backstory was changed to remove the magical elements.*

*Most notably, Saints are no longer considered undead creatures; there is no medical or magical test which can reliably distinguish a Saint from a normal human.*

*We established some years ago that the D20 Amethyst (and only that single book) is apocryphal and no longer canon.*

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## CHAPTER FOUR: SAINTS

| WEAPON                       | COST   | DAM.                 | CRIT.    | RNG.     | WT.      | TYPE | CLIP/<br>CELL | TL | SPECIAL              |
|------------------------------|--------|----------------------|----------|----------|----------|------|---------------|----|----------------------|
| <b>One-Handed Small Arms</b> |        |                      |          |          |          |      |               |    |                      |
| Teleforce Pistol             | 45,000 | 1d6/1d8              | x3       | 200 ft.  | 4 lbs.   | E    | M(20)         | 5  | nuclear              |
| HIK Pistol                   | 15,000 | 1d10                 | x2       | 100 ft.  | 8 lbs.   | P    | 4             | 3  |                      |
| <b>Two-Handed Small Arms</b> |        |                      |          |          |          |      |               |    |                      |
| EDT "Lightning" Rifle        | 50,000 | 1d8                  | 19-20/x3 | 100 ft.  | 20 lbs.  | L    | M (30)/20     | 5  | lightning            |
| Teleforce Rifle              | 45,000 | 1d8/1d10             | x3       | 100 ft.  | 25 lbs.  | E    | M (40)        | 5  | nuclear              |
| HIK Rifle                    | 28,000 | 1d12                 | x2       | 100 ft.  | 35 lbs.  | p    | 10            | 3  |                      |
| <b>Heavy Weapons</b>         |        |                      |          |          |          |      |               |    |                      |
| EDT Thunderbolt              | 55,000 | 1d10                 | 19-20/x3 | 200 ft.  | 55 lbs.  | L    | M (60)/40     | 5  | Lightning            |
| Zombie Gun                   | 55,000 | special              | n/a      | 100 ft.  | 45 lbs.  | E    | H (10)        | 5  |                      |
| Stream Havoc                 | 35,000 | 1d12                 | x2       | 200/800  | 70 lbs.  | P    | 2,000         | 3  | Auto-heavy (special) |
| Teleforce Cannon             | 55,000 | 1d10/1d12            | x3       | 200 ft.  | 55 lbs.  | E    | M (80)        | 5  | nuclear              |
| HIK Small Arm                | 38,000 | 1d10+10              | x2       | 250 ft.  | 60 lbs.  | P    | 20            | 3  |                      |
| HEX Missile                  | 10,000 | 2d10+10              | x3       | 500/2000 | 35 lbs.  | B    | Single        | 5  | Exp 30, guided       |
| <b>Super-Heavy Weapons</b>   |        |                      |          |          |          |      |               |    |                      |
| EDT Electrodriver            | 65,000 | 1d10+10              | 19-20/x3 | 250 ft.  | 115 lbs. | L    | H (120)/60    | 5  | lightning            |
| Stream Redeemer              | 45,000 | 1d8+8                | x2       | 250 ft.  | 150 lbs. | P    | 4,000         | 3  | Auto-heavy (special) |
| Tesla Tower                  | 70,000 | 1d10+10 /<br>1d12+12 | 19-20/x3 | 250 ft.  | 85 lbs.  | L    | H (160)       | 5  | nuclear              |
| HIK Magnum                   | 60,000 | 2d10+20              | x2       | 500 ft.  | 250 lbs. | P    | 10            | 3  |                      |

## NEURAL CONSONANCE

**Prerequisite:** Buzz-boy member

**Benefit:** When using Saint slave exo-armor that you are correctly paired with (via neural contact), your control range increases by 50 feet (in EDF) or 5 km (off-world). You are also no longer considered unconscious while controlling the slave remotely. Instead, you (not your slave) suffers a -2 penalty on all checks, attacks, and saving throws, and your speed is halved while you are remotely controlling your saint exo-armor.

## SAINT GEAR

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Saints flaunt up to TL5 gear with an emphasis on energy weapons and autonomous machines. However, they keep a considerable collection of various weapons from across a spectrum of tech levels, many stolen from bastions, and used when subterfuge is necessary. Saint technology is rarely scavenged and contains a failsafe that destroys the item if it falls in anyone else's hands. This often comes in the form of a DNA scanner tied to the owner. Others, like armor and many weapons, track the life signs of its assigned owner. If the failsafe triggers, the energy cell overheats and melts the device, rendering it impossible to recover, let alone use. This can include incinerating the corpse within armor as well.

Saint technology cannot be purchased or found anywhere on the black market due to this failsafe. Saints don't use money, leaving the only way for Saint characters to acquire equipment, armor, and weapons is for it to be assigned from their people. (Prices are still listed in the equipment tables as a baseline). Those Saints that have fallen lose this capacity and must fend on their own.

This does not mean Saint technology has never been found in the hands of a non-Saint, as failsafes are often the first things to fail upon exposure to EDF, and there have been accounts of well-informed individuals being able to hack the system, despite possibly not knowing where the technology came from.

## WEAPONS

### COGNITIVE IMPEDANCE DEVICE (ZOMBIE GUN)

A cognitive impedance device is a short-range energy weapon that ejects a small bottle of energy similar to a plasma weapon. Only this time, the impact disrupts the central nervous system, potentially (though temporarily) hindering higher brain functions in targets. This can result in delusions, vegetative inaction, or unprovoked rage.



**Property:** A hit creature must succeed on a DC15 Will saving throw or be affected; roll a d10 at the start of each of its turns to determine its behavior for that turn.

| d10          | Behavior  |
|--------------|---|
| 1-3          | The target's Wisdom score is reduced by 1d4. A target reduced to 0 Wisdom falls into an inactive stupor for the rest of the duration of the effect.   |
| 4-5          | The creature uses all its movement to move in a random direction. To determine the direction, roll a d8 and assign a direction to each die face. The creature doesn't take an action this turn. |
| 6-7          | The creature doesn't move or take actions this turn.  |
| 8-9          | The creature uses its action to make a melee attack against a randomly determined creature within its reach. If there is no creature within its reach, the creature does nothing this turn.     |
| 10 or higher | The target recovers from the effect as if the duration had elapsed.   |

The effect lasts for five minutes. Targets with a Wisdom of 16 – 18 (after any drain) gain a +1 to the above roll. Targets with a Wisdom of 19 or higher (after any drain) gain a +2 to the above roll.

## ELECTROSTATIC DIFFRACTION TORUS (E.D.T.)

A fancy name for a 'lightning gun', the diffraction torus is a technology applied to several weapons all involving the discharge of electrostatic energy. Unlike laser or plasma weapons, EDT weapons require two forms of ammunition. The first is a physical projectile, known as a "stamp," which is highly-conductive and designed to

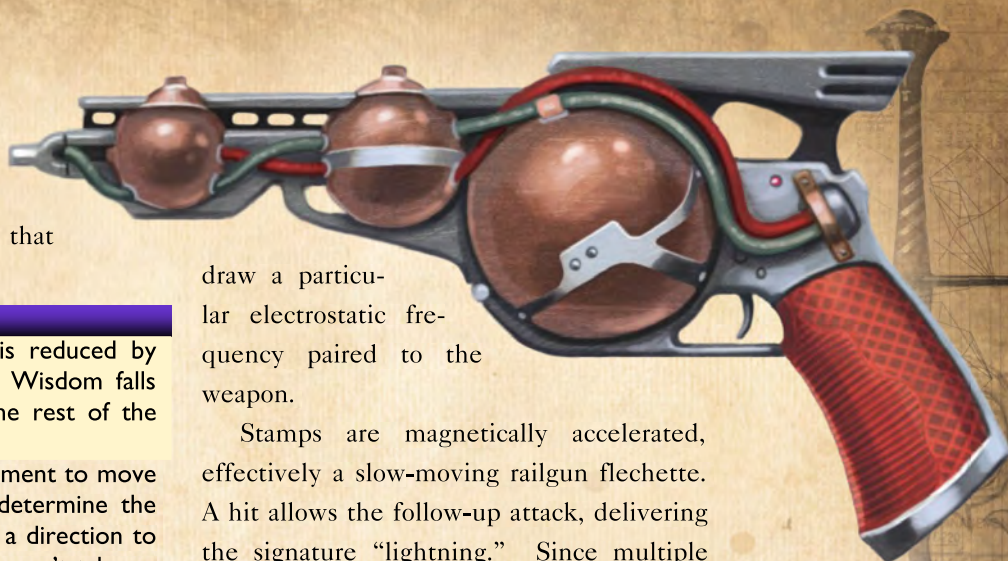
draw a particular electrostatic frequency paired to the weapon.

Stamps are magnetically accelerated, effectively a slow-moving railgun flechette. A hit allows the follow-up attack, delivering the signature "lightning." Since multiple stamps can be ejected, multiple targets can be struck simultaneously when the capacitor is discharged.

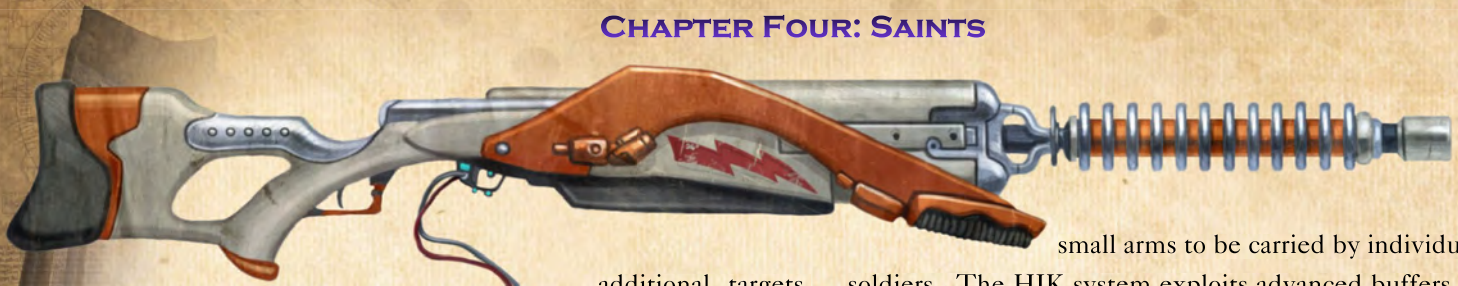
**Property:** The ammo capacity of an EDT refers to the stamp—an adhesive tag that inflicts no damage. When making an attack roll, you must state if you are firing a stamp or a lightning discharge.

*Stamp (no damage):* Stamps are not powered and thus immune to disruption. They can only attach to physical objects, and if the target becomes incorporeal, the stamp falls to the ground; it also drops after five minutes. A creature needs a DC10 Perception (Wis) check to detect a stamp, and can remove it with an action. Only stamps that miss can be recovered and re-used.

*Discharge (lightning):* A discharge can only reach the first range increment and can only target creatures with a stamp. You have a +2 bonus with attack rolls with discharge (lightning) attacks. You can also attack invisible creatures. If you hit, you can make a free secondary attack against any single creature with a stamp within ten feet of the previously hit creature as part of the same action. If hit, the secondary creature suffers damage equal to a normal weapon hit. Increased base damage dice (like from the techie class) are passed onto







additional targets, but additional dice (like from the sniper class) are not. If you hit with the secondary attack, you can make a free tertiary attack against a single creature with a stamp within ten feet of the secondary creature—if hit, the tertiary creature suffers damage equal to half a normal weapon hit. You cannot add any effects to secondary or tertiary targets. Creatures can only be hit once per initial attack roll. Lightning attacks are considered magical for damage reduction.

**Ammunition:** Lightning attacks drain an energy cell. Stamps are clip fed (a box of 10 costs 10uc).

## HEX MISSILE

A final solution, the Saints employ a traditional recoilless portable missile launcher capable of delivering a warhead with the potential of inflicting more destruction than any weapon of equal size. The type of explosive is unknown, but it is believed to have a higher RE-factor than even octanitrocubane. This makes the HEX missile the most powerful weapon in a Saint team's arsenal, outside of calling in a nuclear strike or ship-based energy attack from a capital ship.

## HIGH IMPULSE KINETIC WEAPON

Given the dangers of disruption on Earth, it was necessary for saints to develop weapons of lower complexity, though eventually this research was abandoned in favor of the much easier practice of duplicating or stealing bastion tech to maintain anonymity. The most distinct example of this stalled technology is the HIK or High Impulse Kinetic system. The HIK is not a weapon as much as a means to an end, allowing more powerful

small arms to be carried by individual soldiers. The HIK system exploits advanced buffers to prevent recoil while not compromising projectile kinetic power or range, allowing heavy weapons to be used without the knockback seen with traditional weapons. Effectively, HIK weapons are smaller-sized versions of super-heavy and heavy weapons.

## STREAM ELECTRIC GUN

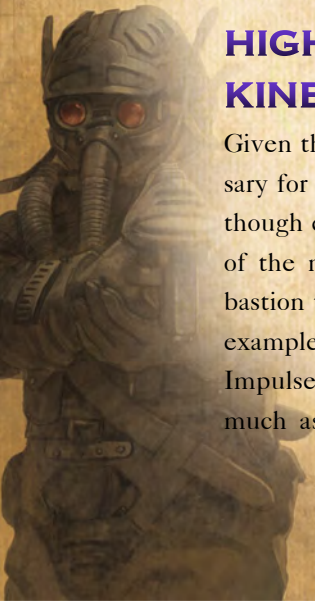
The stream is another weapon developed by the saints to operate in disruption-saturated areas on Earth. Since their introduction, more so than the HIK system, the stream has appeared with planetside mercenary groups, either because of simultaneous development or recovered/replicated technology. Although advanced, the stream is designed to be more resistant than other similar weapons. The stream employs a centrifuge to accelerate projectiles over standard chemical propulsion. As such, the disc-shaped assembly is cumbersome but able to fire as much as 120,000 rounds per minute. Replacing the ammo drum is slow (taking a full minute), but the rate of fire is unmatched.

**Property:** The stream fires 20 shots per attack roll.

## TELEFORCE (DEATH RAY)

The teleforce is an upgraded variant of the standard particle beam—or nuclear—weapon seen by advanced bastions on Earth, though significantly enhanced to increase lethality and range. The difference is in the type of charged particles accelerated to form the beam; most nuclear weapons employed by bastions utilize electrons or protons. Saint teleforce weapons use uranium ions. Teleforce beam employ pulse energy to increase thermal damage on the surface of a target. Additionally, the use of uranium ions forming the beam also emits damaging x-rays after penetrating a target's armor.

**Property:** Teleforce weapons have the nuclear property. If the target possesses natural armor, a teleforce weapon increases its damage dice (the second value in the damage table).





## ARMOR

Saints have access to use all non-bastion-exclusive armor. Saint powered armor cannot be modified like other suits. All other rules apply normally.

**Tech Level (TL):** The tech level of the item is applied as an enhancement bonus to AC. Only armor with power can be disrupted. Some armor is available at higher tech levels.

**Hit Points:** Exo-armors are machines with their own hit point value. These are the hit points of the suit.

**Threshold:** The maximum number of hit points you can transfer from an attack to a powered armor's hit points. Remaining damage is shunted to the character.

**Cell:** The power usage of the armor. Some armor operates without power but only grants its standard armor bonus when doing so. Exo-armor cannot operate without a power cell. All armor that utilizes a cell uses one charge every hour.

### ARES SCOUT SUIT

The Ares is one of the most common suits available to saints assigned in open echa. Designed for speed over strength, its onboard motive system provides boosts to speed and maneuverability. This suit looks only slightly bulkier than a skinsuit but provides greater overall flexibility. However, the Ares most famous attribute is its active scramble system, a technology designed to keep the area out of sight of most detection systems. The Ares is the only Saint design employing this system despite attempts and plans to incorporate it into larger models.

**Defense Bonus:** You gain the tech level of the armor as an enhancement bonus to Reflex saves.

**Disruption:** The battery cell only powers the scramble system, and if disrupted, only that system is disabled.

**Helmet:** You are immune to gas attacks and inhaled poisons.

**Resistances:** You have resist 10 fire, acid, and cold.

**Scramble System:** Use a swift action and a battery cell charge, and your body becomes

blurred, shifting and wavering to all who can see you. Until the end of your next turn, your outline appears blurred, shifting, and wavering. This distortion grants you concealment (20% miss chance). A *see invisibility* spell does not counteract this effect, but a *true seeing* spell does. You can sustain this ability on your turn without taking a swift action, though you still use a battery charge. Alternately, you can use a swift action and five battery cell charges, and you become invisible until the end of your next turn.

You can sustain this ability on your turn





without taking an action, though you still use 5 battery charges.

### HUMAN CARRIER, MARK 1 & 2

While most exoskeletons introduced in echa are large powered suits meant to be intimidating against monstrous foes, the basic Saint model only attempts to augment its user's natural abilities. It doesn't increase the user's size or offer a filtration system, jetpack, or weapon hardpoints. The augmentation mechanics are subtly hidden within the structure of the armor and reveal themselves more from their quiet mechanic sounds than from visual evidence.

**Disruption:** If disrupted, the human carrier no longer offers is bonus to Strength or Dexterity.

**Property (Mark 1):** Your Strength score increases by 2 to a maximum of 20 while you wear the human carrier. This increase does not apply if your Strength is already 20 or higher. Additionally, your Dexterity score increases by 2 to a maximum of 18 while you wear the human carrier. This increase does not apply if your Dexterity is already 18 or higher.

**Property (Mark 2):** Your Strength score increases by 2 to a maximum of 22 while you wear the human carrier. This increase does not apply if your Strength is already 22 or higher. Additionally, your Dexterity score increases by 2 to a maximum of 20 while you wear the human carrier. This increase does not apply if your Dexterity is already 20 or higher.

### MR LIQUID ARMOR

The Saints employ the same technology used to keep a plasma bolt contained upon impact to ironically protect their soldiers. The MR liquid armor is built from thousands of pockets each containing magnetorheological fluid capable of altering its density when an electric charge is applied. The system is advanced enough to alter patterns to maximize protection where needed. In the event of a leak or disruption, the fluid defaults to a semisolid state, patching any holes while not impeding motion. The fluid itself is unique, though is effectively a silicon oil with suspended iron particles. The shift in density takes only milliseconds, and the stronger the current. The greater the protection.

**Property:** By default, the MR liquid armor offers an AC bonus of +3. As a bonus action, you can change it to any of the following settings or back to its default.

**Medium Armor:** +4 Armor, Max Dex +2, Armor Check -2.

**Heavy Armor:** +6 Armor, Max Dex 0, Armor Check -6.

**Strongpoint:** Armor +10, Max Dex 0, Armor Check -10, -15 ft. reduced speed.

**Disruption:** If disrupted, MR liquid armor reverts to a +3 armor bonus.

### SIMULACRUM

Not even Saint buzz-boy members know the reasoning behind the name of their top-end heavy armor. The simulacrum is a hardened combat suit designed from the ground-up to operate in magical-saturated regions of Earth. It not only employs the pinnacle of native Saint defensive technology, but it also appears to lift concepts from bastions the Saints have reconnoitered.

The simulacrum's design begins with hundreds of perfectly interconnected plates, able to shift and slide while also ensuring a completely sealed environment. An included inner circulation suit handles the internal temperature. Limbs are reinforced with brackets and supports, which are then integrated into a kinetic recovery system that stores and transfers energy without the use of battery power. This enables an improvement in mobility without the need of powered augmentation. Both the circulation system and the kinetic recovery system receive mechanical energy from the very act of using the suit. Walking, breathing, and any other ac-





| ARMOR                 | COST    | ARM | MAX<br>DEX | ARMOR<br>CHECK | ARCANE<br>FAILURE | SPD<br>30ft. | SPD<br>20ft. | WT.         | HP | THRESH | CELL  | TL |
|-----------------------|---------|-----|------------|----------------|-------------------|--------------|--------------|-------------|----|--------|-------|----|
| <b>Light Armor</b>    |         |     |            |                |                   |              |              |             |    |        |       |    |
| Ares Scout            | 20,000  | +2  | +6         | 0              | 20%               | 30ft.        | 20ft.        | —           | —  | —      | M30   | 4  |
| MR Liquid             | 25,000  | +3  | +5         | 0              | 20%               | 30ft.        | 20ft.        | 15 lbs.     | —  | —      | M     | 3  |
| <b>Medium Armor</b>   |         |     |            |                |                   |              |              |             |    |        |       |    |
| Human Carrier (Mk I)  | 15,000  | +5  | +2         | -4             | 30%               | 30ft.        | 20ft.        | 45 lbs.     | —  | —      | H     | 4  |
| STF Newton            | 20,000  | +6  | +2         | -3             | 30%               | 30ft.        | 20ft.        | 20 lbs.     | —  | —      | —     | 2  |
| <b>Heavy Armor</b>    |         |     |            |                |                   |              |              |             |    |        |       |    |
| Human Carrier (Mk II) | 20,000  | +7  | +0         | -6             | 50%               | 30ft.        | 20ft.        | 65 lbs.     | —  | —      | H     | 4  |
| Vacu-Suit             | 25,000  | +6  | +1         | -6             | 50%               | 20ft.        | 15ft.        | 40 lbs.     | —  | —      | M     | 3  |
| Simulacrum            | 45,000  | +8  | +0         | -6             | 50%               | 30ft.        | 20ft.        | 75 lbs.     | —  | —      | M     | 3  |
| <b>Exo-Armor</b>      |         |     |            |                |                   |              |              |             |    |        |       |    |
| Krios Scout           | 150,000 | +2  | +6         | 0              | 100%              | 35ft.        | 35ft.        | 500 lbs.    | 50 | 10     | H     | 5  |
| (Hex) Hecatoncheir    | 150,000 | +8  | +0         | -6             | 100%              | 30ft.        | 30ft.        | 10,000 lbs. | 60 | 20     | H/H   | 5  |
| Talos                 | 200,000 | +8  | +0         | -6             | 100%              | 20ft.        | 20ft.        | 20,000 lbs. | *  | *      | H/H/H | 5  |

\* AC enhanced, see description.

tions are seamlessly and efficiently absorbed and immediately redistributed to improve user abilities.

This results in an advanced defensive system where most of its abilities are immune to disruption. Only the sealed helmet requires a battery cell to run, and this is equipped with a deadman switch that physically isolates the battery when disruption is detected, enabling it to be re-enabled immediately after an event. The only issue with the simulacrum is its overall novelty in the field as well as its unfortunate condition to be perfectly matched to its user. A simulacrum is built from the ground up for a particular user and no other. It cannot be modified, as the settings are too precise to be modified without rebuilding it from the ground up. As such, these suits are expensive and are only found worn by veterans.

**Defense Bonus:** You gain the tech level of the armor as an enhancement bonus to Fortitude and Reflex saves.

**Dexterous:** If your Dexterity is 18 or higher, you can add your Dexterity modifier, to a maximum of +2.

**Disruption:** If disrupted, the helmet's darkvision is disabled for one round. The rest of the suit is immune.

**Helmet:** While powered, the simulacrum helmet gains darkvision to 60 feet.

**K.E.R.S.:** The simulacrum grants a +1 bonus to all melee damage rolls. You are also always considered moving when performing a jump. Additionally, your Strength score increases by 1 to a maximum of 20 while you wear the simulacrum. This increase does not apply if your Strength is already 20 or higher.

**Resistances:** You have resist 10 fire, acid, and cold.

## STF NEWTON ARMOR

Like the more advanced MR liquid armor, the newton armor employs an STF or Shear-Thickening Fluid contained in thousands of covering the armor. Unlike the powered MR armor, the STF Newton operates based on its natural properties, not requiring an electric current to fortify. Alas, as a result, the STF Newton is less versatile. The fluid employed is a much more advanced version than the standard non-Newtonian liquid parents could make in a kitchen for their children. Against slow physical force, the liquid yields, but against a sudden impact, the armor resists intensely. The STF Newton armor is a popular choice among buzz-boy teams given its immunity to disruption.

**Disruption:** The STF Newton does not require power and is immune to disruption.

**Property:** The STF Newton armor has resist 5 slashing and bludgeoning

## VACU-SUIT

There is no other translation for it; the vacu-suit is just an armored space suit. The Saints have been perfecting environment protection given their native landscape on Mars for centuries. The current model automatically seals itself from breaches, is immune to ambient radiation, is relatively lightweight compared to its predecessors, and contains inbuilt thrusters for zero-G maneuvering and short planet-side hops.

**Property:** You have resist 5 cold and fire.

**Defense Bonus:** You gain the tech level of the armor as an enhancement bonus to Fortitude saves.



## EXO-ARMOR (SLAVES)



In Saint research and development, powered exo-armors--as they are commonly known on Earth--are dubbed *slaves*, due to the way these suits integrate with their users. Saints wishing to operate slaves are implanted with a cybernetic neural device at the base of the back of the neck. This wireless mechanism allows a Saint to control a slave entirely without the traditional delays, however microscopic, seen with standard augmented armors. Further, the slave neural link allows users to utilize capabilities not seen with bastion-born powered armor, the most notable being able to remote control the armor without being inside of it. Outside of Earth, this range can be as much as 10 kilometers, but in open echa, the connection breaks down just within of 100 feet.

**Slave Link:** A slave armor cannot be used without a slave neural link and one cannot be removed and recycled from a former user. A Saint implant is encrypted to a specific suit, which cannot be overridden. Usually, only a Saint technical lab can pair a new connection between an implant and a suit.

**Remote Control:** As a human brain cannot control two bodies simultaneously while controlling the suit remotely, you are considered unconscious (at the source), though possessing full cognitive function through the slave's advanced sensor package. The slave does not gain your hit points, only using its own. Threshold is ignored while the remote control is in effect. The maximum range is 100 feet in the open field. Within buildings, dungeons, or spaceships, this range decreases to 50 feet. The slave uses its Strength and Dexterity ability scores; its Constitution is considered 10. Although the slave doesn't require air, food, drink, or sleep, you still do. While controlling a slave remotely, it gains damage immunities poison and psychic, as well as condition immunities blinded, charmed, deafened, exhaustion, frightened, paralyzed, petrified, and poisoned.

**Threshold Weakness:** Unlike standard exo-armors, if a slave's hit points are reduced to zero, all functions cease, and the machine is wrecked. If inside, you are paralyzed until you remove yourself from the armor. If outside and controlled remotely, the slave slumps to the ground. It's not a total loss, and the slave can still be repaired, though it does not come back online until restored to at least 50% of its total hit points.

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**Disruption:** If disrupted, the vacu-suit only has a few minutes of ambient air until the helmet is removed. The remaining air supply is locked in storage until the suit recovers. Thrusters do not function.

**Life Support:** The vacu-suit has a self-contained life-support system capable of supplying 6 hours of breathable air, which able to increase to as much as 12 hours if able to filter outside atmosphere. You can survive in low to the zero-pressure environment. You are immune to gas attacks and inhaled poison.

**Thrusters:** You are always considered moving when performing a jump. You also have a +2 bonus with Acrobatics (Str) checks when jumping. In low to no gravity (1/3 to 0 G), this turns into fly 30 for up to ten minutes before needing to finish a long rest to recharge.



## HECATONCHEIR

The hecatoncheir ('HEH-ka-ton-KAYR', more commonly abbreviated "HEX"), like the krios, was originally purpose-built for Engineer and construction on Mars and deep space. However, while the krios was retrofitted for military use, the hecatoncheir was modified late in its development phase to fill multiple roles.

The larger size of this impressive armor allows the implementation of a subsidiary artificial intelligence designed to coordinate with the user's neural interface to increase effectiveness. To facilitate integration of the two minds—one organic, the other artificial—when pairing the suit to its user, the associate AI copies elements of the user's brain pattern into its own matrix. This is not a complete mimic, as this intelligence is only effective in predicting the user's intents and reduce reaction time. That said, there are reports of HEX operators talking to themselves while inside their suit, and their suits have been seen occasionally picking up their owner's physical mannerisms when not directly under user control.

A HEX suit can be given basic instructions from its owner without employing remote control; however, these are extremely basic. A failsafe within the system prevents the AI from directly controlling the suit in combat without relying on its controller. What it can and often does control are two additional limbs extending from either side of the back of the armor. These are smaller and weaker variations of the two main limbs and complete minor functions while the user focuses on the direct task at hand. These limbs can extend, manipulate, and even act as secondary weapon mounts.

Outside of this obviously visual distinction, the HEX possesses an alternative motive system in the form of embedded spherical wheels within the feet that can deploy when needed, though lateral movement is limited.

**Defense Bonus:** You gain the tech level of the armor as an enhancement bonus to Fortitude saves and a +2 enhancement bonus to Reflex saves.

**Hit Points:** The HEX has 60 hit points and a threshold of 20.

**Disruption:** If disrupted, you are restrained, and you lose your Dexterity bonus to AC. All features are disabled except hit points, disruption recovery, helmet, and resistances.

**Disruption Recovery:** Once a day, if the HEX is disrupted, it comes back online.

**Helmet:** You are immune to gas attacks and inhaled poisons.

**Power:** The HEX requires two H power cells to operate and does not function without them. If disrupted, both cells fail.

**Immunities:** You have damage immune cold, necrotic, poison.

**Limbs:** The HEX has four arms, including a set of secondary limbs that extend from your back which can function independently to your primary limbs.

*Primary Limbs:* These arms have a Strength of 22. Unarmed attacks inflict 1d8 and have a +1 bonus to attack and damage rolls. These arms have 10-foot reach.

*Secondary Limbs:* These arms have a Strength of 18. Unarmed attacks inflict 1d4 and have a +1 bonus to attack and damage rolls. The secondary limbs can do any of the following functions.

- Although secondary limbs cannot hold a two-handed weapon between them (given their position), a two-handed weapon can be wielded between a primary and secondary limb on the same side of your suit. A secondary limb can also hold a single one-handed weapon. One secondary limb can also act as a tripod for a weapon held by both primary limbs.
- When you take a full-round action to make one or more attacks, as part of the same action, you can make a single attack with a different weapon from one of the secondary limbs.
- If one secondary limb is free, it can reload one weapon in a primary limb without taking any action.
- Secondary limbs are strong enough to hold up the weight of the suit, allowing the HEX to effectively climb without using its primary limbs.
- If attempting a Strength ability check, if your secondary limbs are free, they can be used to assist the primary limbs, gaining a +4 bonus to the check
- Secondary limbs can hold onto a shield.

**Regeneration:** At the beginning of each turn, the HEX recovers 2 points of damage if it has at least 10 hit points.

**Resistances:** You have resist 10 acid, fire, lightning, thunder; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from non-magical weapons.





**Size:** You are considered a Large creature while wearing the armor. You have 10 foot reach, though only with your primary limbs.

**Speed:** Your speed is 30 feet. As an action, you can activate or deactivate the “motive system”; when enabled, your speed increases to 50 but you cannot add your Dexterity modifier to Dexterity ability checks.

**Telepathic Link:** While outside of your suit, you can issue simple instructions to the HEX through your neural contact, allowing it to act on its own without complete slave control. You must be conscious, and no action is required; the HEX acts on its own turn. You can specify a simple and general course of action, such as “Run over there,” or “Fetch that object.” It does not have the capacity to make attacks on its own.

### KRIOS SCOUT

The krios is considered the most advanced augmented armor employed the saints, despite also being the smallest. The krios’ original application was in mining and zero-gravity construction, but given its innovation, eventually found itself planetside in military applications. Its most dominant feature is its second set of oversized arms that extend from its upper-shoulders. These appendages require direct control from the user’s arms to function but do so from outside the limb. The user’s arms connect to the larger arms’ elbows and can detach at any time for direct, finer manipulation. The suit also offers limited flight.

**Arms:** A second set of arms extend from your upper arms and connect with your real arms at the upper’s elbows. Here are the abilities of these larger arms:

- You can release your connection/control of the larger arms as a free action.
- If you release control, the larger arms maintain grip and will repeat the last action when you released your control.
- The larger arms have a Strength of 22.
- Unarmed attacks with the larger arms inflict 1d6 and have a +1 bonus to attack and damage rolls.
- The krios counts as a Large user for purposes of wielding weapons in its larger arms.

**Defense Bonus:** You gain the tech level of the armor as an enhancement bonus to Fortitude saves and Reflex saves.

**Disruption:** If disrupted, you are restrained, and you lose your Dexterity bonus to AC. All features are disa-

bled except hit points, disruption recovery, helmet, and resistances.

**Disruption Recovery:** Once a day, as a reaction to a disruption event, the krios comes back online.

**Helmet:** You have immune poison.

**Hit Points:** The krios has 50 hit points and a threshold of 10.

**Jump Jets:** You are always considered moving when performing a jump. You also have a +2 bonus with Strength-based skill checks. In low to no gravity (1/3 to 0 G), this turns into fly 30 for up to twenty minutes before needing to finish a long rest to recharge.

**Power:** The krios requires one H power cell to operate and does not function without it.

**Regeneration:** At the beginning of each turn, the krios recovers 1 point of damage if it has at least 10 hit points.

**Resistances:** You have resist 10 acid, fire, lightning, thunder; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from non-magical weapons.

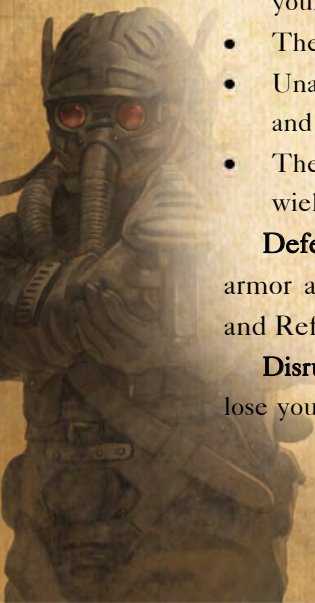
**Speed:** You have Speed 6.

### TALOS

The talos shouldn’t exist. Buzz-boy teams don’t require a machine of the talos’s capabilities. It is too large, too powerful for most applications, and too sizeable a target given its susceptibility to disruption. The talos is enormous, larger than most vehicles the Saints use to bring troops to the surface, requiring a cruiser to deploy. When one is seen, it’s a spearhead of a much larger engagement. Where the talos places a foot, the Saints have claimed as their own. The talos is not particularly fast, but it more than makes up for that with unrivaled defense and assault capabilities.

Beyond its limbs, it also features four weapon hard-points and both an active and a passive defensive system. Like the Saint robot MAX, most of the talos’s weight comes from its unique armor composition, sandwiching depleted uranium, wrought iron, and titanium into an extremely heavy armor that also aids in resisting disruption. More so, these plates are ablative, allowing the talos to shed them as they become compromised. When the talos is seen on the battlefield, opponents are expected to run, unless a dragon is on their side.

**Arms:** The talos has a strength of 26. Unarmed attacks inflict 1d10 and have a +2 bonus to attack and damage rolls.





**Defense Bonus:** You gain the tech level of the armor as an enhancement bonus to Fortitude saves and Reflex saves.

**Disruption:** If disrupted, you are restrained, and you lose your Dexterity bonus to AC. All features are disabled except hit points, disruption recovery, helmet, and resistances.

**Disruption Resistance:** Despite being a TL5 item, the talos is counted as TL3 for the purposes of disruption as long as it has ablative armor. If ablative armor is depleted, the talos becomes a TL5 item.

**Disruption Recovery:** Once a day, as a reaction to a disruption event, the talos comes back online.

**Hardpoints:** The talos has four weapon mounts, one on each shoulder, and two mounted on your back that can be swung under your arm to attack any target. Each mount frees up a hand, and acts as a hand or a brace for holding or mounting weapons. Hardpoints are not manipulators themselves and can only mount weapons or other gear. When you take a full-round action to make one or more attacks, as part of the same action, you can make a single attack with a different weapon from one of your hardpoints.

**Helmet:** You have immune poison.

**Hit Points:** The talos has two hit point values, the first is an ablative armor system that when depleted decreases the weight of the armor and increases maneuverability.

**Ablative Armor:** You have 100 hit points and a threshold of 20. If ablative armor is reduced to 0 or if you eject the ablative armor willingly as a Swift action, your speed increases by 10 feet, and if your Dexterity is 18 or higher, you can add your Dexterity modifier, to a maximum of +1 to your AC. The talos still functions as normal if its ablative armor has been depleted. While the ablative armor is on, the talos is counted as TL3 technology for the purposes of disruption. Damage passing through ablative can be absorbed by the subdermal armor. Additionally, the ablative armor causes physical pain to any fae that touches it as if it were made of fae-iron, although it does not deal actual damage.

**Subdermal Armor:** You have 100 hit points and a threshold of 50. These are the normal hit points of the talos, and if depleted, the talos is wrecked per rules for saint exo-armor.

**Immunities:** You have immune cold and fire.

**Power:** The talos requires three H power cells to operate and does not function without them. If disrupted, all cells fail.

**Regeneration:** At the beginning of each turn, the talos's subdermal armor recovers 2 points of damage if it has at least 10 hit points.

**Resistances:** You have resist 10 acid, lightning, thunder; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from non-magical weapons.

**Size:** You are considered a Huge creature while wearing the armor. You have 10-foot reach.

**Speed:** Your speed is 20 feet. As an action, you can activate or deactivate the "motive system"; when enabled, your speed increases to 30 but your other modifiers don't change. If ablative armor is expended or ejected, your speed increases to 30 and 40 respectfully.

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*Seriously, the talos is not balanced. This is not something players should have access to, not unless there is a climactic fight and the talos is available as a one-shot. It's not like it can enter dungeons. But don't bother trying to test if the talos is balanced for a fair fight. It isn't.*

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## VEHICLES

Saint vehicles are an odd bunch. The majority were built in orbit and not designed with the intent of landing on a planet. All Saint vehicles utilize anti-gravity technology and self-sustaining power sources. With this confidence, they conceived of craft with no "up". Crew can walk on roofs, ceilings, and even walls. Even the outer hull pulls local objects directly to its surface. Vessels are built vertically instead of lengthwise, making them taller rather than long. They do not employ landing gear; preferring to root themselves to an area using beam anchors. Crashing is catastrophic as even smaller vessels would tumble the moment their lower fins scratched the landing surface, even if on water. Their drives all suffer from constant drain while around Earth thanks to disruption. Interceptors die out in a week, cruisers a few days, before they must leave the Earth-Moon system to recharge.

The reactors of capital ships utilize a micro gravity source. Some view this massive technological advancement as proof of the possibilities of man's progression, while some of the few bastion dwellers aware of the Saints believe it can only be the result of magic and



## CHAPTER FOUR: SAINTS

| NAME            | CAP    | CARGO   | MAN | SPEED   | AC | RESIST. | HP   | SIZE   | TL | CELL |
|-----------------|--------|---------|-----|---------|----|---------|------|--------|----|------|
| <b>Aircraft</b> |        |         |     |         |    |         |      |        |    |      |
| Solis           | 1      | 50      | +0  | 200 ft. | 20 | 5       | 100  | L      | 5  | None |
| Caldera         | 1+11   | 1000    | +0  | 100 ft. | 22 | 10      | 300  | G      | 5  | None |
| Cruiser         | 2+200  | 50,000  | -5  | 200 ft. | 22 | 20      | 600  | C+     | 5  | None |
| Capital Ship    | 5+5000 | 500,000 | -10 | 400 ft. | 24 | 50      | 5000 | C+++++ | 5  | None |

accuse them of trafficking with Ixindar. Some technical databanks on board saint vessels list the power cores as “Kerr Singularities” while others use the much-protracted title Rotating Quantum Mechanical Black Holes.

The technical process of generating a charged, rotating singularity and maintaining it, not using it as a power source, is not available to anyone other than the very highest levels of Saint authority. What is unusual about these reactors is their strange tendency to resonate in the same frequency as a positive gate, similar to Attricana. Could they be harnessing power from the very force they despise?

Saint vessels look sterile. Silver and white painted walls feature no art or signs of originality. The lines are straight and without imagination. They were constructed out of efficiency and no rationale was given to create a culture or a positive living environment for the crew on board. Larger ships allot only the minimum requirement for bed, bath, and provisions. Yet serving on a cruiser or capital ship is considered the highest honor.

All Saint vessels supply power to their energy weapons from the internal power source. The vessels also disintegrate after crashing, leaving no salvageable technology. All weapons on a vehicle must either be a missile system or an energy weapon.

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### VEHICLE STATISTICS

**Capacity:** The standard person capacity or crew. In most cases, only one person is needed to drive the vehicle; other crewmembers serve as gunners or copilots. Each unused passenger slot allows the vehicle to carry an additional 200 lbs. of cargo.

**Cargo Capacity:** The amount of cargo the vehicle is designed to carry in pounds.

**Maneuver:** The modifier is added to any Vehicle Operation checks and Reflex saves attempted with the vehicle.

**Speed [Rating]:** The maximum number of feet the vehicle can accelerate per round.

**AC:** The vehicle’s base AC.

**Resist:** The vehicle’s resistance to various attacks. Half the value (rounded down) is the vehicle’s hardness: the full value applies against all energy attacks.

**Hit Points:** The vehicle’s hit points.

**Size:** The size of the vehicle. A vehicle with the designation C+ is twice the area of colossal size.

**Tech Level:** Unlike other equipment, a vehicle’s tech level does not grant enhancement bonuses; it only determines its susceptibility to disruption.

**Cell:** Saint vehicles don’t run off cells.

### CALDERA

The standard medium fighter, the caldera packs a punch and takes a beating, often seen escorting larger ships between destinations. Like cruisers, the caldera’s dominating attribute is its vertical configuration, dominating upper and lower vertical fins that appear more cosmetic than functional. Despite the sterile and boring nature of the corridors and cabins of saint vessels, their outer form shows a flamboyance lacking in every other aspect of their society. The caldera represents the symbolic view of that, being more than 120 feet tall from fin-tip to fin-tip but less than 15 feet wide. Its primary role is for air-to-ground combat and has been known to ferry up to twelve troop, a full buzz-boy team, in its small cargo area.

**Armament:** The caldera has four weapon mounts. Each one can mount a single heavy weapon. It can combine two to mount a super-heavy weapon. You can link two weapons together—when you take the Attack action, as part of the same action, you can make a single attack with a different weapon from one of your other hardpoints to the same target. You don’t add your ability modifier to the damage of the additional attack, unless that modifier is negative. Alternately, each weapon mount can be controlled by a different individual.

**Auto-Reload:** The caldera has a mechanism to reload its weapons. It can reload three cells instantly before needing external loading. It must dock or land for external reloading.



**Disruption Recovery:** Once a day, as a reaction to a disruption event, the caldera comes back online.

**Immunities:** The caldera and its crew has immune to cold, necrotic, and poison.

**Movement:** The caldera can hover. It can also stop instantly from any speed. A caldera can reach much faster speeds when not in an atmosphere, but these speeds are not listed in the vehicle table. The caldera can move up to 25 miles per second or over 144,000 kilometers per hour while in space. It can still stop instantly from this speed.

**Power:** The caldera runs off a fusion power plant. If destroyed, its reactor melts, causing everything in a 100-foot radius to suffer 5d10 points of energy damage (DC15 Dexterity save for half damage). The caldera's reactor does not explode if disrupted.

**Pressurized:** The crew is immune to all gas attacks and inhaled poisons until the vehicle is destroyed.

**Regeneration:** At the beginning of each turn, the caldera recovers 2 points of damage as long as it has at least 1 hit point.

**Sensors:** Darkvision 200 feet

**Special:** This vehicle automatically passes Vehicle Operation (Dex) checks at x8, x12, x14, and x16 speed.

## CAPITAL VESSELS

The juggernauts of the Saints, only three capital vessels are known in operation. These are the Albion, the Cabala, and the Zion. The loss of any of these ships would be crippling. These massive vessels measure a kilometer in height, half that in length and are manufactured in orbit around Mars. A capital vessel carries enough firepower to level a bastion. Each vessel holds docks for three cruisers, and it can hold up 30 various smaller craft in launch bays.

**Armament:** A capital vessel has 30 weapon mounts. Each one can mount a single super heavy weapon and can be operated by a single individual per turret.

**Auto-Reload:** A capital vessel has a mechanism to reload its weapons. It can reload ten cells instantly before needing a reload (which takes 10 minutes).

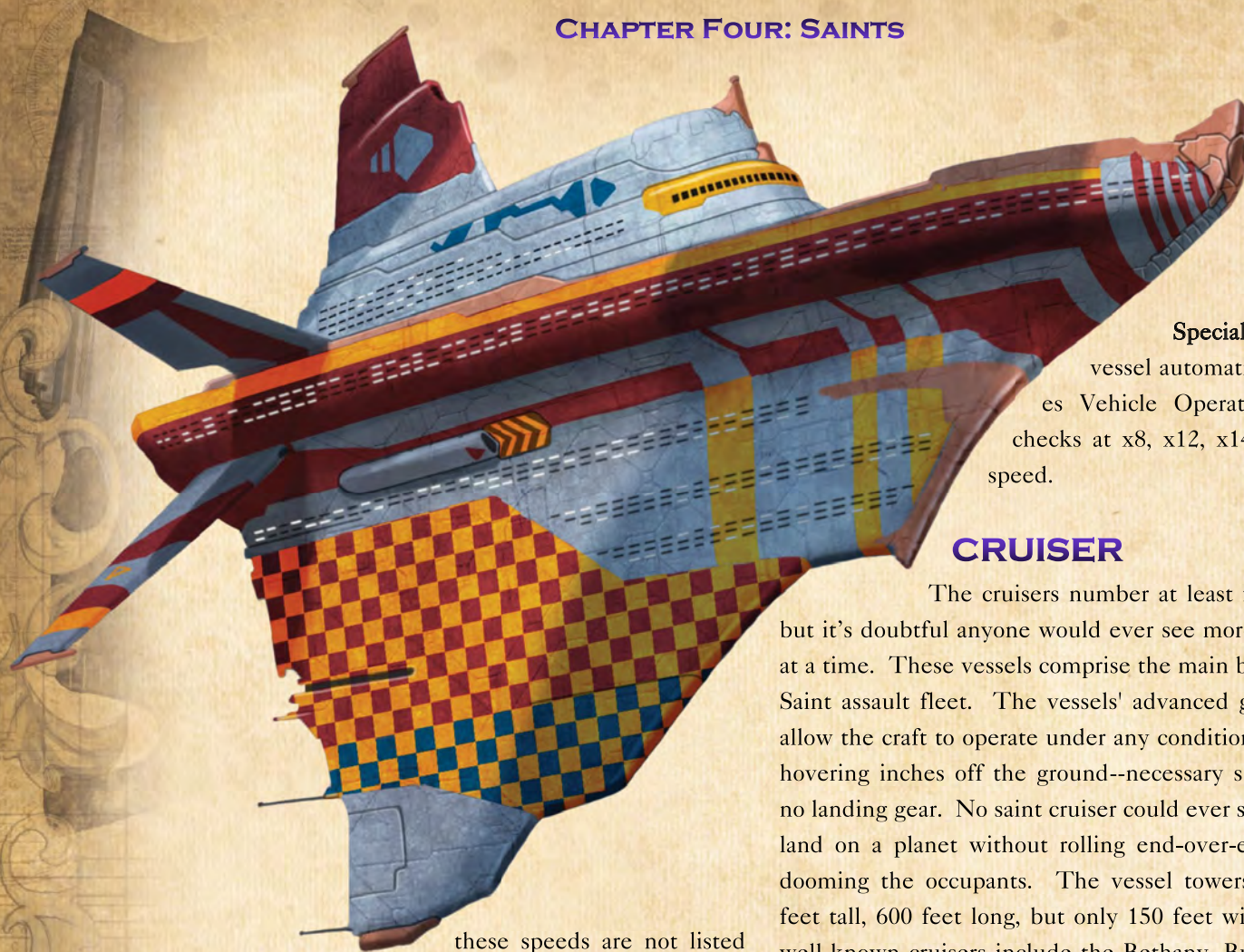
**Disruption:** A capital vessel is counted as a TL1 item for the purposes of disruption.

**Immunities:** A capital vessel and its crew has immune cold, necrotic, and poison.

**Movement:** A capital can hover. It can also stop instantly from any speed. A capital vessel can reach much faster speeds when not in an atmosphere, but







**Special:** A capital vessel automatically passes Vehicle Operation (Dex) checks at x8, x12, x14, and x16 speed.

## CRUISER

The cruisers number at least four-dozen but it's doubtful anyone would ever see more than one at a time. These vessels comprise the main body of the Saint assault fleet. The vessels' advanced grav drives allow the craft to operate under any conditions, even to hovering inches off the ground--necessary since it has no landing gear. No saint cruiser could ever safely crash land on a planet without rolling end-over-end, surely dooming the occupants. The vessel towers over 500 feet tall, 600 feet long, but only 150 feet wide. Some well-known cruisers include the Bethany, Buster Four, Geisttwelve, Core Falcon, Spirit Fortress, Panzer Bull, Varidam, and Dire Zeta. The average cruiser holds up 10 various smaller craft in launch bays.

**Armament:** A cruiser has 10 weapon mounts. Each one can mount a single super heavy weapon and can be operated by a single individual per turret.

**Auto-Reload:** A cruiser has a mechanism to reload its weapons. It can reload ten cells instantly before needing a reload (which takes 10 minutes).

**Disruption:** A cruiser is counted as a TL1 item for the purposes of disruption.

**Immunities:** A cruiser and its crew has immune cold, necrotic, and poison damage.

**Movement:** A cruiser can hover. It can also stop instantly from any speed. A cruiser can reach much faster speeds when not in an atmosphere, but these speeds are not listed in the vehicle table. A cruiser can move up to 30 miles per second or over 170,000 kilometers per hour while in space. It can still stop instantly from this speed.

**Power:** A cruiser vessel's power core radiates at the same frequency and wavelength recorded by Attricana, but it does not disrupt. This may be a coincidence. It

these speeds are not listed in the vehicle table. A capital vessel can move up to 35 miles per second or over 200,000 kilometers per hour while in space. It can still stop instantly from this speed.

**Power:** A capital vessel's power core radiates at the same frequency and wavelength recorded by Attricana, but it does not disrupt. It radiates as magical, even though it is not. If destroyed, this reactor melts, causing everything in a 100-foot radius to suffer 10d10+100 points of energy damage instantly (no save). Everything in the next 100 feet takes 10d10 points of damage (DC25 Dexterity save for half damage). Everything in the next 100 feet takes 5d10 points of damage (DC15 Dexterity save for half damage).

**Pressurized:** A capital vessel is immune to all gas attacks and inhaled poisons until the vehicle is destroyed.

**Regeneration:** At the beginning of each turn, a capital vessel recovers 10 points of damage as long as it has at least 1 hit point.

**Sensors:** Darkvision 1000 feet





radiates as magical, even though it is not. If destroyed, this reactor melts, causing everything in a 50-foot radius to suffer 10d10+100 points of energy damage instantly (no save). Everything in the next 50 feet takes 10d10 points of energy damage (DC25 Dexterity save for half damage). Everything in the next 50 feet takes 5d10 points of damage (DC15 Dexterity save for half damage).

**Pressurized:** A cruiser is immune to all gas attacks and inhaled poisons until the vehicle is destroyed.

**Regeneration:** At the beginning of each turn, a cruiser recovers 10 points of damage if it has at least 1 hit point.

**Sensors:** Darkvision 500 feet

**Special:** A cruiser automatically passes Vehicle Operation (Dex) checks at x8, x12, x14, and x16 speed.

## SOLIS

This single-man craft relies wholly upon on a single anti-gravity generator for its propulsion, which manifests visibly as a set of aeriform structures resembling wings (but which have no aerodynamic properties). The cockpit rests on a gimbal mount, allowing its main body to rotate or shift depending on the maneuver being attempted. The solis' gravity pulse drive grants the ability to stop and start without compromising the pilot's safety. It reduces inertial feedback, allowing the pilot to push the craft to massive 50 G acceleration boosts without breaking every bone in his or her body. The vessel can struggle with a crash landing if required, as its main body is large enough and its fins stubby enough to angle a still destructive landing.

**Armament:** The solis has two weapon mounts. Each one can mount a single heavy weapon. You can link these weapons together--when you take the Attack action, as part of the same action, you can make a single attack with the other weapon against the same target. You don't add your ability modifier to the damage of the additional attack, unless that modifier is negative.

**Auto-Reload:** You have a mechanism to reload your weapons. You can reload three clips/cells instantly before needing external loading. You must dock or land for external reloading.

**Disruption Recovery:** Once as day, as a reaction to a disruption event, the solis comes back online.

**Movement:** The solis can hover. It can also stop instantly from any speed. The solis can reach much faster speeds when not in an atmosphere, but these

speeds are not listed in the vehicle table. The solis can move up to 20 miles per second or over 115,000 kilometers per hour while in space. It can still stop instantly from this speed.

**Power:** The solis runs off a miniature fusion power plant. If destroyed, its reactor melts, causing everything in a 50-foot radius to suffer 3d10 points of energy damage (DC15 Dexterity save for half damage). The caldera's reactor does not explode if disrupted.

**Pressurized:** The solis and its pilot are immune to all gas attacks and inhaled poisons until the vehicle is destroyed.

**Immunities:** The solis and its pilot have immune cold, necrotic, and poison damage.

**Sensors:** Darkvision 200 feet

**Special:** The solis automatically passes Vehicle Operation (Dex) checks at x8, x12, x14, and x16 speed.

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*Okay, let's be honest, it's not like you are ever going to be piloting one of these. We decided to add capital vessels and cruisers for trivia's sake, and because we wanted to add perspective. And there's always the possibility that some crazy adventurer will try to sic a dragon on one of these things, so we may need aerial combat rules at some point...*

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*"That's..." Mahan trailed off as his jaw fell slack. It wasn't like him to be speechless. Mischa, beside him, sported the largest grin a human could manage, nearly like a bogg's unnatural ear-to-ear expression. They were both looking up at it, differing mixed emotions filling them both.*

*"Amazing!" Mischa answered.*

*"It doesn't even look like you."*

*"They got the best parts covered." The statue sat at the center of town and loomed over the surrounding market. It had been assembled from pieces rather than carved from a single chunk of soapstone, a metal skeleton keeping the model intact. It presented Mischa as seven-feet tall with a sword twice the length of the original. His beard reached well past his collarbone, and exposed muscles were checkered with scars. Massive eyes would forever be focused on a dying pugg having its life squeezed out by an oversized hand. "I'm impressed they were able to make it such short notice."*

*"Actually," Mahan answered, still fascinated, "I think they appropriated another statue and...added muscles to it."*

*"It's glorious," Mischa replied, never averting his*



gaze.

*"Like a trail of breadcrumbs we can employ to follow."*

*"Trophies to mark victory and install fear." Mischa's smile faded, and he finally turned to Mahan. "You think they used another statue?"*

*"It was less than two days," Mahan answered as he pointed out the errors. "There's a hand at the base without a body attached, and I don't recall you possessing a tail."*

*"I'm sure they'll address that."*

*Mahan walked away from the couple. "Next time, get them to render you giving a thumb up."*

*Mischa separated from his likeness to follow.*

*"That's actually a good idea," he said.*

*The noble went by the name Ballan Sarasian. He was the son of a peasant lord that held dominion of a thousand acres of farmland surrounding a hamlet blessed with four churches, two taverns, one gambling house only dealing dice, seven bicycles, and a modest dragonflyer port.*

*The Sarasian family was short on heirs, so the potential loss of their only son had shattered the father. Upon seeing him alive and behind a heroic escort, the lord demanded two days of celebration in honor of the miracle.*

*Mischa and Mahan were touted as the "greatest heroes to the horizon," and given free room and board for the length of the stay, regardless of its duration. While Mahan negotiated a proper reward including food and passage rather than coins from coffers taken from taxes, Mischa toured the taverns leaching what gratuity he could from the locals. He accepted drinks, drinking companions, and women wishing to have drinks poured over them.*

*Every bar brought out variations on the story of the rescue. Where first there were thirty puggs, a second tale added another dozen. The third kept added a skegg slaver-chief. Each tale grew longer in length and strained credibility.*

*Mischa kept gathering the crowds hearing his flamboyance. Ballan all but confirmed the entire story, even on the last version when Mischa added a giant cockatrice. Mahan never required deception to keep a crowd but never gathered numbers like this. By the end of the second day, the modest mob the hamlet could serve beckoned the elder Sarasian to erect the statue to mark the victory. Mischa offered advice on its final form. They honored his wishes, though refrained from adding the princess at the base embracing Mischa's loins.*

\* \* \*

*"We truly are blessed," a local barkeep said. "All great warriors converging."*

*"Pardon," Mischa asked, almost insulted. "There are others?"*

*"Yes," the barkeep answered, spitting words from missing teeth. "Another arrived a few days before. A strange voice on the man, not like yours but still foreign. Hadn't said much in all this but he carries a mighty chip behind a fist of colors."*

*Mischa stared back at the keep in bewilderment. "I have no comprehension of what you just said. Is he like me?"*

*"Only in splendor, sir. A slanty-eyed fellow like those in the West, but quiet, keeps to his church. Nasty set of steels on the man. Hands like the wind."*

*Mischa squinted trying to pull the memory from the back of his mind given the loose description. His brow perked. "Like wind...did he have a cloak?"*

*"A wispy thing with a dragon on it. Catches the air when there's no breeze. You know of him?"*

*Mischa swallowed a shot of peppered whiskey from the counter and slammed it down. "That would be impossible."*

*Mischa left the bar moments before overstaying his welcome. He had taken down all measure of local distills without any lasting effects save for a slight dragging of his left foot. Mahan intercepted him before tackling another tavern. He shouted over the revelry in the town. "I cannot begin to grasp your pomposity, Mischa," said Mahan. "Elephants?"*

*"Elephants now?" Mischa's smile lifted as he orbited his comrade. "I've sowed the seeds of a myth, have I? I won't deny elephants. When you hear of twelve-headed hydras, that I'll refute." Mischa stopped and realized he had a question. "What do you hear of another foreign warrior?"*

*"Like you?" Mahan joked. "Two is too many. One is too many."*

*"Someone else, different enough that takes notice. I suspect where."*

*"Odd for an anecdote. Why should we concern ourselves?"*

*"Those skilled in swords never bother crossing an ocean of storms on a whim. Call it curiosity. Those of honor are a rare commodity. If he's whom I suspect, I'd like to know why."*

*Mahan looked around the town, and then returned*



to the ranger's eyes. "Weren't you saying we should gather no eyes, form no armies? We best not expose ourselves to anyone for any reason unless fate renders it unavoidable."

"A fistful of warriors and wizards cannot save the world. We will eventually require help. Cannot expect a line of waiting recruits at every town. Can't really post notices on every tree, either. When an opportunity presents for a just and honorable sword, should we not leap for it?"

Mahan nodded. "If you believe in the fortune of destiny, we will cross paths with such valor eventually, just wasn't expecting this soon."

Mischa grimaced. "When are we leaving?"

"Tomorrow."

"You got a snail train?"

Mahan shook his head. "None near here. Took advantage of our popularity. Tickets were free."

"Horses to?"

"Horses too."

It was not uncommon for towns to erect a variety of holy places in hopes of attracting immigrants or gratuity from free houses or larger nations, most of which professed faith in a variety of gods, the only exception being Kannos, ironic given that's where they were. Because of the broad mix of ethnicities with nearly every town, especially human communities, the smallest hamlets boasted more than one place of worship. Sarasian's plot featured a focus on Catholicism, Islam, Berufu, and Yok-Ani, the latter two in the hope of tempting some fae blood to the village. Each cathedral, mosque, and temple would shepherd the devout in time of crisis, a charity passing pilgrims would take advantage of. The Yok-Ani temple had entertained the fewest and looked the most pristine when Mischa entered. He saw the figure praying before the altar. Mischa looked about the room, noting its vacancy. There were no priests or servants, only two lost warriors.

Mischa approached the figure, trying to balance between stealth and reverence. Too stealthy and the character would assume an ambush. Too loud and Mischa would appear disrespectful.

The ranger's furs and plates weighed him down. Without a stable grip and the altar table beyond his reach, he dropped to the padded kneeler. He arched his head up to glimpse the towering nave above. He followed the snake-like yok-ani dragon mural across the roof, its head wrapped around above the altar. Storms of wind and lightning followed and bent around the creature. The winds formed into pillars supporting the circular cathedral.

Another golden snake enveloped the round marble table in the center of the altar. Across the far wall, a single Sinitic letter representing the seals of the faith hung from a rice paper wall scroll. Though ornate, the church was tiny, barely enough for a dozen devout. Mischa glanced to his side and tried to match the movement of the warrior next to him.

He spotted the same yellow and silver dragon adorned on the figure's black unspun silk cloak. Though Mischa felt no wind, the cloak of his neighbor fluttered, as if carried by a slight breeze. It looked expertly weaved, but the components made it appear humble. The garb covered any evidence of the stranger's identity. His arms and armor and head fell under a large hood. A red straw conical hat rested on his back, hanging from a black silk strap. His face was chiseled with high cheeks and a thin mouth. Short black hair stuck straight at spots.

The stranger leaned forward to the edge of the altar. He held his arms out and placed them pointing to each other upon the floor. The stranger bowed towards the black tiles. Mischa didn't bother to emulate. The foreigner's tan skin resembled that of Minx from Genai, but there was something slightly different.

"Kouryou daiou, kama dao ritsugan," the stranger quietly prayed. Mischa kept quiet, wishing not to insult him with a mispronunciation. The stranger rose again. Mischa's knee-plates defended against almost every blow, but his slid across velvet cushions with ease. He dropped suddenly from the stranger's peripheral vision. The knees banged against the stone tiles with a solid thud. As quickly as he fell, Mischa propped himself back. The stranger maintained composure. He repeated the bow, chanting again.

After a pause, he finally let out in a strange accent similar to Chen's but harsher. "You can't possibly be one to prostrate before a god as this one."







## CHAPTER FIVE

# MAGIC

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**H**ow magic works is a well-known fact even to the most orthodox of techan scientists: a mage uses a word of power inscribed on a totem object to channel energy into a specific metaphysical structure that essentially makes local edits to the laws of reality. What is not well-known is why magic works. Various theories have been presented, but without the ability to test them, they remain pure academia. The realm of religion is no better off; the most consistent 'creation myth' in echa describes how the dragon Amethyst brought knowledge of the words of Pleroma to the world, but where exactly the power comes from is still a matter of some debate. Unfortunately, due to the effect of EDF on scientific instruments, and the general in-

ability to prove or disprove any particular religious position based solely on evidence, neither is capable of coming up with any sort of satisfactory answer.

For all that its results defy science, the practice of magic is fundamentally scientific; mages experiment to discover magical principles, test those principles extensively, and record their findings for posterity. Often, different practitioners will apply the same principles and get different results, indicating either that one of them was wrong or the principle is not yet fully understood. Dragons, of course, have a perfect understanding of the principles, but either have difficulty translating five-dimensional concepts into four-dimensional language, or simply can't be bothered to explain them-





selves to a bunch of jumped-up primates. And so the willworkers of the human and fae worlds are left to struggle in the dark.

Most magical researchers are not even mages themselves – the actual practice of magic is more involved than simply learning some magic words and gestures. While anyone can learn magic (and indeed, most simple spells can be mastered in only a few weeks), the meta-physical effects on the caster can be discouraging, and so the vast majority of magical study is more theoretical and philosophical than practical. The sister science of alchemy is easier, but still requires years of apprenticeship to learn the correct proportions of materials and the correct techniques of combining them. Thus it is that despite the colleges of Limshau, Jibaro, and other institutions of note being full of programs of magical study, there are only a couple of dozen true mages in all of Canam.

## FOUNDATION SPELLS

There are three ways Pleroma is applied: In the single-word spoken spells shouted or whispered when in sudden need, in the long-winded sentences meant to take time to materialize, and the potent spells that require a physical avatar to be cast. These last are the foundation spells—extremely powerful utterances of Pleroma for which the mortal frame is not an adequate focus for the power, requiring instead a physical representation, an anchor for that power in hand to cast. An anchor cannot be used as a totem, nor can the spell be removed and inscribed on one. It is thought the Pleroma written on the object is only the triggering word; the real word is inscribed within the anchor's physical structure, frozen in every dimension, awaiting only the command to bring the spell forth. Foundation spells draw power from their wielders; they require a sacrifice that must be paid every single time such a spell is cast, and the costs often outweigh the result. Wars have been decided with the use of foundation spells.

Surprisingly few foundation anchors are known to exist. Upon acquisition, their final resting place depends entirely on the motives of who claimed them. Upon their discovery, many are locked up in a trophy case, never to be used or seen by anyone other than

their owner. Others are donated to museums or vaults to be studied or fortified against those greedy and power-hungry. Alas, some are found by such people and used quickly and willingly against those of contradictory moral views. Those who seek such spells will always come into conflict with opponents greedier and more powerful than themselves. Despite rumors and tavern tales, there are few confirmed locations for foundation spells. Many are all conjecture, gossip, and optimism.

## RULES REGARDING FOUNDATION SPELLS

In 'canon' Amethyst, spellcasters are very, very rare. Even overtly magical kingdoms such as Quinox or Skyrose only have a handful of dedicated wizards, and the number of magic users worthy of the name across the whole of Canam falls short of triple digits. The number of those who have the power to use foundation spells could probably be counted on the hands of an accident-prone adventurer.

In PATHFINDER, spells of base levels 7-9 (and a few spells of lower levels) are classed as foundation spells, which are bound into artifacts and must be sought after (spells of lower levels cast using higher-level spell slots are not considered foundation spells). You must have the foundation anchor in hand (if it is too large to carry, you must at least be touching it with a free hand or your totem) in order to cast the spell in question and can only cast said spell once per day, regardless of how many spell slots of that level you have available. If you lose the anchor, you cannot cast the spell until you recover it.

All foundation spells have a vocal component (V). Anytime one lists a material component (M), that material is in addition to possession of the foundation anchor. All foundation spells also have a "consequence" component, which is paid in the act of casting and cannot be avoided by any means.

## TO CREATE AN ANCHOR

Many, if not most, foundation anchors were made by persons unknown. It is generally assumed that most were created either by laudenians or archon dragons, though dragons, as the original Pleroma speakers, do not





require foundation anchors – their spells inscribe themselves on their scales and draw power from the dragon’s virtually inexhaustible internal wellspring of magical power. In theory, such a scale plucked from a dragon’s hide would suffice as a foundation anchor—if one could get away with the theft. However, there have been cases where wizards have been credited with either replicating a known foundation spell in an anchor of their own design or creating their own foundation spell through pure fabrication.

Crafting an anchor is based on the same practice as scribing a scroll, with a few alterations. The potential crafter must possess knowledge of the spell, requiring either another anchor for the same spell or an entire dedicated library of arcane lore for researching it herself. To create a Foundation Anchor requires both the Scribe Scroll feat and the Craft Wondrous Item feat. The crafter must also be skilled in Spellcraft, Craft (depending on the item), and Knowledge (Arcana). The cost of creating an anchor is FIVE times that of a scroll. Crafting any anchor requires 1 week (instead of 1 day) for each 1,000 gp of the base price. This makes player characters designing foundation anchors unlikely.

As there are fewer high-level wizards in the world than there are archon dragons, once again, these original fabrications are incredibly rare.

### FOUNDATION SPELL DESCRIPTIONS

These foundation spells are known to exist in the world. Foundation spells (or rather their anchors) also go by many names. One single type of foundation spell may have dozens of names depending on who has claimed the artifact.

The following official PATHFINDER spells are available as foundation spell anchors. The spells are also listed if they are bound exclusively to Ixindar or Attricana (if neither is stated, it is available to both; in fact, the same anchor can be used for either, depending on whether the encoded glyph is spoken in Pleroma or Saeqaar). There can be many others—these are only known examples. For those not mentioned, refer to the standard foundation spell rules found in *Amethyst: Renaissance 2.0*.

### ANTIMAGIC FIELD

Antimagic may appear the antithesis of the very world, but it is possible for magic to push itself out of a region. Along with the normal effects of antimagic fields, this anchor also removes all disruption in its field. The field emits from the anchor, not you, and if you drop the anchor, you can still sustain the spell, regardless of your distance from the anchor. While it is intensely uncomfortable for echans, it is neither immediately life-threatening nor sufficiently distracting.

This anchor is not difficult to find (though it is still not common); even bastions are known to show interest in this spell to further study into their own anti-magic efforts, though the fact that one has to be a spellcaster in order to be able to actually see Pleroma script in all its dimensions complicates these efforts. One anchor sits as a book in the Koana Progressive Library in Limshau, with a duplicate found in the royal vault at the Abidan capital of Janoah. These books are unmarked, and no one knows the author.

**Consequence:** After the spell ends, you are unable to cast any other spells until you finish a long rest.

### ANTIPATHY/SYMPATHY

Unlike many anchors, this foundation spell has a known creator: the greatest living narros spellcaster, Sagard Galla of the Finer Fire Pits. These anchors, like all those forged by Galla, resemble slabs of stone, and are found in her open library. Galla never permits these to leave her possession, but does allow personally vetted qualified wizards to study the spells and make their own anchors.

**Consequence:** After the casting time has elapsed, you are fatigued

### ASTRAL PROJECTION

One of the few non-portable anchors, several documents suggest that this anchor resembles an oversized rune-scribed torus, standing perfectly preserved in the midst of a ruined city; carbon etchings have confirmed its existence, though its location is not known. Rumors hint that the location sits somewhere in northern Canam, beyond the anathema kingdom of Dagon.

**Consequence:** After returning to your physical body, you (not anyone else affected) are fatigued.





## CLONE

(Ixindar)

Defying death is the domain of the corruption of Ixindar, and is employed by forces loyal to that side to tempt others to darkness. Clone is one of those many anchors, and many they are. Produced under considerable effort but then distributed without thought for profit across the world, to use one is to fall to corruption, to think the way they do. Of the many Ixindar-bound anchors, Clone is less common than others that defy death, but someone dedicated to the search will eventually find one, though only in locations infected with corruption. They have all been found imbued in amulets, which must be worn by the living target at the moment of its death in order for the transfer to work.

**Consequence:** Casting the spell incurs 20 corruption points, causing the caster to be immediately bound to Ixindar if they were not already.

## CONTROL WEATHER

Being able to control weather is one of the many objectives for wizards worldwide. The chaparrans are credited with making the first anchors—large jagged stones which hang from hemp rope. Dawnamoak is known to hold at least two of these: one strung between the three great trees that form the capital of Jibaro, and the second at a location known to none but the chaparran el-

ders. Another was duplicated by the laudenians, on a floating stone that never touches the ground, the Feysa.

**Consequence:** While concentrating on this spell, you cannot move under your own power; you automatically fail saving throws, and are immune to any mental effect that would compel you to move. You can still be moved by someone else.

## DELAYED BLAST FIREBALL

This is a well-known foundation spell, as it was simply an advanced version of a lower level spell that requires no anchor; consequently, it is marginally easier to find the materials necessary to reproduce it than other spells. Although several examples are thought to exist in various shapes, there is only one confirmed, in the Mage City of Kirjath-Sepher; like all anchors there, it can be found as a book.

**Consequence:** Once you stop concentrating, you suffer 3d6 fire damage.

## DOMINATE MONSTER

Nacola Falconyr is one of the few laudenians any wizard knows by name, due to his very insular views on what sorts of people should be allowed to learn magic. Appropriately, he is credited with the creation of a spell that would dominate any creature. As such, he keeps the spell close to heart, locked in his peoples' floating capital city. No one knows what the anchor even is.

**Consequence:** After the spell duration elapses, you cannot charm another target for one week.

## EARTHQUAKE

Earthquake anchors are inscribed on natural stone, though no one is sure who places them in random dungeons about the world. Not a single legend of a famous labyrinth with random monsters would be complete without the carrot of an Earthquake anchor sitting at the end of it. One was located and returned to the tenenbri city of Vakai. Another was unearthed in Thos Thalagos, or possibly it was found and Thos Thalagos was built around it—the legend varies.





**Consequence:** After the spell duration elapses, you fall prone and cannot stand until you take an 8-hour nap.

### ETHEREALNESS

This anchor is commonly found on amulets or other wearable items that vanish along with the caster. One of the first anchors passed down from the dragons, this spell has been confirmed in nearly every advanced wizarding school in the world; however, because of the implications of the spell, they are generally kept well secured and most don't publicly admit its presence. There was a rumor that a few have been stolen or lost, with the school denying the fact.

**Consequence:** After the spell duration elapses, remain semi-solid (unable to eat, drink, or hold or wield any objects), until you finish an 8-hour rest.

### FINGER OF DEATH

(Ixindar)

Unlike spells meant to return life to the dead, Ixindar anchors bound to spells that just kill are more difficult to find. Finger of death has been found fused to the finger-bone of an archon dragon, and then used as a staff by the human necromancer Piotr Raczik. A scroll from Raczik available at Limshau claims he created it from an original located in a church in Necropolis, and that there are at least six more scattered across the world.

**Consequence:** Casting the spell incurs 10 corruption points.

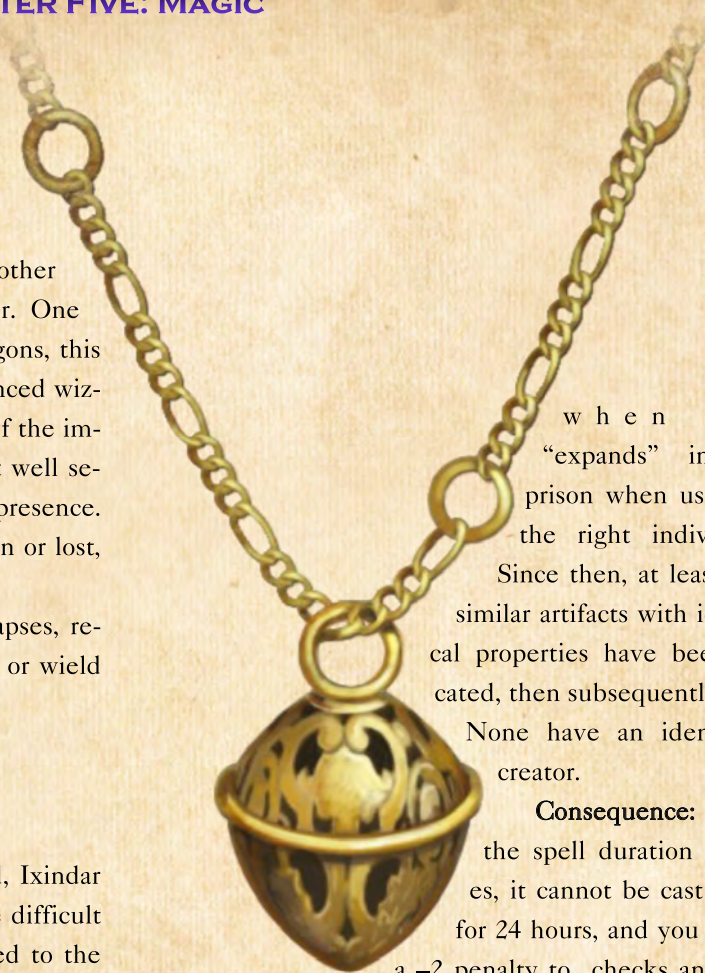
### FIRE STORM

It is believed two different anchors exist of this spell. The gimfen mage, Lippi Lipsanotheca, fused one to her leather armor. One of the lesser known powerful narros spellcasters, Uhtredannis Vulga also imbued one upon his warhammer. Both these spellcasters have recently gone missing, as have their anchors.

**Consequence:** After the spell duration elapses, you have Weaknesses vulnerability to fire, for 24 hours.

### FORCECAGE

This anchor was believed to not exist until a copy of the manifest of Myre was leaked to Limshau, detailing the artifacts locked in their vaults. It describes a simplistic wrought iron rod capable of entrapping individuals



when it “expands” into a prison when used by the right individual. Since then, at least two similar artifacts with identical properties have been located, then subsequently lost. None have an identified creator.

**Consequence:** After the spell duration elapses, it cannot be cast again for 24 hours, and you suffer a -2 penalty to checks and Reflex saving throws for 24 hours.

### FORESIGHT

Baruch Malkut's king, Darius Konig claims to wear a coronet able to see into the future. The description of the crown matches that of a similar one that was worn by King Sana of Kardia Gothas before its fall. However, these are certainly copies of an original, one most likely worn by rulers in Laudenia. Several Bibles of Drasago also list several dragons possess this as a tattoo.

**Consequence:** After the spell duration elapses, you are fatigued. You also suffer from tunnel vision (-2 on Perception (Wis) checks) for one week.

### GATE

(Attricana / Ixindar)

Gate could be considered the most powerful spell ever created, more so than even wish. It is the spell by which tears like Attricana or Ixindar are created. It may have been created by Amethyst and Mengus themselves, though obviously they required no anchor; or possibly it may have predated even them, the primordial spell from which all others were born.





The versions sought after in the modern age are greatly reduced reworkings, but are still powerful nonetheless. However, outside of legend, no anchors possessing this spell have ever been found. It is assumed, even by archon dragons, that one for each polarity must exist—how else could the gates have been reopened, hundreds of years ago?

This spell has several significant differences from its core version. The gate itself is a sphere, either solid white or solid black, with a diameter dependent on its caster. It is not a window; one cannot look into the realm specified when casting the spell.

If more than 50% of an object or creature passes over the ‘event horizon’ of the spell, it is instantly shunted to the other side—but, as nobody knows what lies on the other side, no destination can be specified. Moreover, the Gate spell replicates the effects of Attricana or Ixindar, generating or suppressing EDF (and the associated side-effects) in proportion to its size. A creature can still enter a gate but then can only exit out of another of the same type (white to white; black to black; in the absence of another terrestrial portal, they can be ejected from Attricana, falling to Earth unharmed but in a random, not immediately perilous location throughout the globe, or from Ixindar in the middle of the obsidian plain of Kakodomania).

Any creature transported through a gate returns with no memory of what is on the other side, or of any time having elapsed between entrance and exit. The portal can only transport subjects as large as the gate itself. The gate is the same size as the caster up to Medium. Anything larger still just creates a Medium-sized gate.

For every additional spellcaster casting the same spell in cooperation, it increases its stability and can grow. An additional spell caster increases the size of the gate, but also increases the casting time to achieve the scale. Thankfully, because of stability, spellcasters can take a break for sleep (or magic to replace rest) and resume the spell without having to restart.

| GATE SIZE  | CASTERS | TIME     | EDF RADIUS |
|------------|---------|----------|------------|
| Medium     | 1       | 1 hour   | 20 ft.     |
| Large      | 2       | 1 day    | 100 ft.    |
| Huge       | 4       | 5 days   | 500 ft.    |
| Gargantuan | 6       | 2 weeks  | 1/2 mile   |
| Colossal   | 9       | 1 month  | 5 miles    |
| Colossal+  | 11      | 2 months | 50 miles   |
| Colossal++ | 14      | 4 months | 500 miles  |

During casting, the gate remains stable for up to 12 hours; if interrupted for longer than that, the entire process must repeat. However, once cast, the gate is permanent until destroyed.

A gate is fixed in space relative to the planet’s surface when cast, but can be moved if it doesn’t pass through any antimagic fields (even though casting any dispel magic spells or antimagic spells on a gate does not affect it). While concentrating, any spellcaster that assisted in the original gate’s casting can move the gate 20 feet per turn.

If a gate of an inverse type is cast or moves over the top of its opposite, a massive energy disruption occurs. If different sizes, one gate devours the other, reducing in size equal to the difference between the two gates (e.g., If a Gargantuan gate collides with a Large, the Large is destroyed, and the Gargantuan remains, albeit only Large now itself).

For every size category of the destroyed gate, an energy burst ejects out matching the remaining gate (e.g., If a positive gate destroys a smaller negative gate, the energy burst is positive. A positive energy burst discharges radiant damage; a negative energy burst discharges necrotic damage.

| DESTROYED GATE | BLAST RADIUS (ft.) | DAMAGE | DEXTERITY DC |
|----------------|--------------------|--------|--------------|
| Medium         | 50                 | 2d10   | 13           |
| Large          | 100                | 4d10   | 16           |
| Huge           | 150                | 6d10   | 19           |
| Gargantuan     | 200                | 8d10   | 22           |
| Colossal       | 250                | 10d10  | 25           |
| Colossal+      | 300                | 12d10  | 28           |
| Colossal++     | 450                | 14d10  | 31           |

Unlike normal energy attacks, this damage only harms creatures bound to the destroyed gate. Only creatures with the Ixindar keyword suffer radiant damage. Only Attricana-bound creatures suffer necrotic damage. Creatures bound to neither gate (natural humans, animals and plants) are not affected by either.

When opened (fully cast), gates are immune to all magic and magical abilities. They operate in antimagic fields and cannot be dispelled by any means. They are a system of rules entirely on their own.

**Consequence:** Your eyes become permanently solid white (positive gate) or black (negative gate), and for the rest of your life you hear murmurs or whispers that might be voices, but you can’t make out exactly what they’re saying. Also, you created a hole in reality.



Someone or something may wish to have words with you about that.

Any episode around a gate should be a major quest involving drama and death and armies clashing and exciting things like that.

### HOLY AURA

(Attricana)

Effectively, this spell supercharges one's attachment to Attricana, and became more popular with the rise of ecclesiastical wizard schools in the world. These theological wizard colleges are obsessed with acquiring spiritually-themed anchors, and holy aura is one of the most well-known.

However, without the required knowledge, these divinity schools have been unable to crack the equation, one they are certain exist. Anecdotes claim one is sitting in an abandoned church on an empty island. Another tells of one buried deep in a dungeon underneath a place called Golganis. All reports allege the spells are imbued inside an equatorial cross with bent arms.

**Consequence:** After the duration of the spell elapses, the anchor teleports at least 10 miles away, as close to another Good creature within that range as possible.

### IMPRISONMENT

Despite this spell not being a solely Ixindar-bound spell, it has a history associated with it. The necromancer Stanislav Donatas created one by imprisoning a 1000-year old laudenian prince, Rakash Gulfstorm, in a black orb to which this anchor is fused. He was known to loan the anchor for its duplication, but these are all Ixindar-bound. There is no known Attricana-version of this anchor.

**Consequence:** You and the imprisoned creature are linked telepathically until the spell is ended, even if you no longer possess the anchor. While you can't probe each other's minds, both sides can choose to transmit surface thoughts, which the recipient can't mute.

### INCENDIARY CLOUD

The words from this spell glow with a bright red light from a solid slab of stone in a dungeon under a volcano somewhere in the region known in antemalleian times as the Ring of Fire. Accounts of its discovery are all anecdotal, but keep emerging every few decades, lead-

ing some theories to either postulate there are at least ten of these anchors scattered about, or only one that teleports between locations.

**Consequence:** After the spell duration elapses, you must make your own saving throw or take 2d10 fire damage on a failed save, half as much on a successful one.

### MAGE'S SWORD

The original sword anchor is ironically embedded in a sword, a small bronze gladius, not unlike those from ancient Rome. The anchor never needs sharpening but does not act as magical weapon itself. One is on display under lock and key at Kirjath-Sepher, but the plaque under it claims there are six more that were found alongside, discovered in a "star formation". The plate does not disclose where the other five are or where they were initially found. This spell anchor does not require any additional spell components.

**Consequence:** After the spell duration elapses, the sword rushes back to your location and makes a single melee attack against you.

### MAGNIFICENT MANSION

This popular foundation spell originated with the proof copy of Lazarus's Bible of Drasago, but has since has been replicated into a handful of scrolls (where the anchor is the case, and not the scroll) found at Koana, Berustar, Janoah, and other prominent wizard schools. Alas, due to its popularity, one lies in Baruch Malkut and another behind the vault doors of Myre.

**Consequence:** The spell exists by your will; you must be the first to enter and the last to leave or the spell immediately expires. You cannot leave the mansion unattended as the spell would expire immediately, shunting out all other occupants.

### MASS HEAL

(Attricana)

The human mage Palladius Delacroix of Janoah, the founder of their theological arcane college (named after himself), is credited with accomplishing something no human ever has—creating an anchor whole cloth with no original to duplicate from. His healing staff carries the anchor for mass heal, which understandably never left his side until his untimely and somewhat ironic assassination by a Malkut thuggee over a hundred years



ago. Since then, the staff has been made available to only graduates of the school for replication, and since then, only six have been made.

**Consequence:** After this spell is cast, you are blinded or deafened (randomly) for five minutes.

## MAZE

Two of these anchors, fused onto angelite maces, also grant a +2 bonus to attack and damage. One hides in a narros ruin subsequently overrun by Xixion; the other sits in the Temple of Libanus. Another anchor can be found in a book in Kirjath-Sepher as well as in Dracontia, inscribed on the back of Kelto of Guard (yes, the dragon). Rumors suggest another one can be found on a staff in the bottom deck of the Alkanost.

**Consequence:** If someone breaks your concentration, you are pulled into the maze and cannot escape until the maximum time expires.

## METEOR SWARM

There are three known anchors for meteor swarm in the world, all embedded in silver-plated longswords. Lazarus, in the mountain of Dracontia, owns one, and is believed to be the original creator of all of them. Another sits under lock and key in Castle Myre. The final was lost in a battle at Hapura. However, the pagus army vanished on its return to Kakodomania, and their plunder remains unclaimed.

**Consequence:** Each time you cast this spell, there is 50% chance a fifth blazing orb hits your location.

## MIND BLANK

A few copies exist of this anchor, all inscribed upon crystal skulls. Both Myre and Laudenian own one, as does the Kuraukou Temple of Clouds. Another sits inside a small keep atop a massive mountain guarded by rime dragons. Like many anchors, no one knows who makes them.

**Consequence:** After the spell duration elapses, your short-term memory is shot; you suffer a -10 penalty on all Knowledge skill checks for one day.

## MIRAGE ARCANA

These amulets, which must be hand-held when cast, emerged from the deep recesses of the tenenbri nation in the south. No one is sure who makes them, but identical amulets appeared in dungeons halfway across

the world. Apparently, they fetch a price as high as 85,000 gold.

**Consequence:** After you finish casting the spell, you are fatigued, and one of your senses is randomly amplified to distracting levels until 24 hours have passed (-2 to Perception (Wis) checks).

## POLYMORPH ANY OBJECT

(Attricana)

The original anchor for this spell, a book, is found in a hidden compartment in the Statue of Torfin Gendron in Kirjath-Sepher. It's a secret that every wizard knows is there. The issue is no one can break the statue in search of the anchor, and no one has been able to find the switch to open compartment. Only a few wizards know it is the statue itself. Torfin enjoyed his puzzles. Laudenians claim to have a duplicate (or rather, the original) on a similar statue in Laudenian.

**Consequence:** There is a 25% chance the target only "partially" returns to its original form. The end result is up to the GM. The target does not fully return to normal for another 1d4 hours.

## POWER WORD

### HEAL/KILL/STUN

(Heal: Attricana; Kill: Ixindar)

Power Word spells are pure foundation spells—say a word, affect the world. As a result, these are more common than others and can be found scattered across the globe in various anchors. They can be found in books in Kirjath-Sepher, etched on walls in Dracontia, and like many other anchors, locked in a vault in Castle Myre. However, despite their prevalence across the world, they are considered by some to be too dangerous for free distribution and are all heavily safeguarded.

**Consequence:** You are deafened for five minutes. Casting power word kill incurs 20 corruption points, causing the caster to be immediately bound to Ixindar if they were not already.

## PRISMATIC SPRAY/WALL

Although both of these anchors are credited to Torfin Gendron, probably the most famous wizard in the modern era, he admitted to have copied them both from a secret anchor he left in its original location. His, and all other copies, were fused upon books. Although most are unlabeled, the original contains content unrelated to





the spell. The book, *The Art of Arcane Thaumaturgy*, was stolen and sealed away in Myre. A duplicate sits in Gendron's public library, Kirjath-Sepher, though that one is unlabeled and lost (inside the library).

**Consequence:** You must also make the same saving throw, though you have a +2 bonus to it (and all other saves associated with this spell).

### PROJECT IMAGE

Fittingly, this anchor resembles a small mirror. However, when the spell is implanted into the anchor, the mirror stops reflecting people and instead reflects an amorphous cloud of Pleroma words describing the person (which makes this anchor useful for fortune-telling as well as for its intended purpose). The original sits in Laudenian, though a copy sits in a private collection in Thos Thalagos.

**Consequence:** The mirror in the anchor is still breakable, though it repairs itself after five minutes if shattered. However, if it is shattered while the spell is in effect, you die. After the spell duration elapses, you are blinded for five minutes.

### RAISE DEAD

(Ixindar)

There is no safe way to bring someone back from the dead save for revivify; that spell supercharges a target's natural life-force in a way not dissimilar to cardiopulmonary resuscitation, though enhanced with magical cellular regeneration. While there are rumors of religious figures throughout the world capable of restoring the dead to life, there are few who can honestly claim to have met such a person—and such magic would always come at a cost most would consider far too high.

The raise dead spell does not truly restore the dead to life, but to a mockery of life preserved by the power of Ixindar; however, not many people realize this, and as a result these anchors have nearly turned into an economy as they are the most sought-after spells in the world. The spell was initially created by the ghulath (vampires), but was later adopted by the rest of Ixindar-bound forces to tempt those to their cause. As such, there are more anchors for this spell than nearly all others combined, with more are forged each year, bound to anchors matching trending religions.

In the modern age, these anchors have been seen resembling large iron crucifixes, amethyst spheres, cen-

ters, prayer wheels, narros weapons, stone tablets, and most obvious of all, altars. One was found resembling a kirpan, another a shofar. It's clear these are produced for the sole purpose of corrupting devout people with at least a basic knowledge of spellcraft. Not a single religion has been left out, with a few even referencing religions no one currently worships (one resembles a golden calf, another an oversized wooden phallus). These are the only anchors that have been found for sale in black markets, where they can sometimes fetch prices as high as 100,000 gold. Myre is obsessed with gathering them all, and have claimed to have acquired over forty.

**Consequence:** Both the caster and recipient of the spell gain 10 corruption points. The raised creature also permanently gains the Ixindar keyword (even if not totally corrupted) and must make a DC 15 Will saving throw or gain another 10 corruption points. The recipient's corruption level cannot fall below 5 through normal means; if it ever ceases to be bound to Ixindar, it immediately dies.

### REGENERATE

Regenerate originated with the chaparrans, so most are imbued into wooden staffs. There are less than a dozen worldwide, and many are still under chaparran control. At least three are not, with massive rewards promised for their return. At some point, the narros wizard Sagard Galla managed to find and replicate the anchor, but made the staff out of iron.

**Consequence:** There is a 10% chance the target of this spell will grow an unwanted vestigial appendage, which eventually must be severed, suffering considerable damage, and then healed.

### REINCARNATE

(Attricana/Ixindar)

This spell exists in two distinctly different forms depending on whether it is bound to the white or the black gate. The Ixindar version functions on corpses up to 10 days old, but fae recipients are always reincarnated as pagus and human recipients are always reincarnated as humans (weird and creepy humans with stunted emotional responses, but humans nonetheless). The Attricana version only functions on a creature that has been dead for less than one minute, and uses the following table:



| SPECIES     | DI00  |
|-------------|-------|
| Chaparran   | 01-15 |
| Damaskan    | 16-35 |
| Gimfen      | 36-45 |
| Human       | 46-65 |
| Laudenian   | 66-70 |
| Narros      | 71-85 |
| Spawn race* | 86-90 |
| Tenenbri    | 91-00 |

\* Either the dominant spawn race of the continent (kodiak for Canam, awnee for Southam) or a new spawn creature or fae anathema; the GM can devise appropriate stats, or adapt those provided in other compatible products.

The only known Attricana anchor for this spell has been kept in the heart of Genai's temple since its construction, brought across the sea as a sacred relic by refugees. To the best of anyone's knowledge, it has never been used.

**Consequence:** You are fatigued and experienced blurred vision (suffering a -2 on Perception (Wis)) for 24 hours. Until the recipient gains a level of experience, she suffers a disadvan-2 penalty on Initiative rolls while she gets used to her new body.

Casting the Ixindar version of this spell gives 10 corruption points to both the caster and the recipient. The reincarnated creature also permanently gains the Ixindar keyword (even if not totally corrupted) and must make a DC 15 Wisdom saving throw or gain another 10 corruption points. The recipient's corruption level cannot fall below 5 through normal means; if it ever ceases to be bound to Ixindar, it immediately dies.

## RESURRECTION

### (Ixindar)

Unlike raise dead, resurrection is not easy to find. Considerably more challenging to create, it is believed only five have ever been made, each forged into a single black orb slightly larger than a human head. One is certainly within the Necrosea. Another is kept by Piotr Raczik in his hidden keep. The Myre Knights guard another, in their castle under constant guard (considered the most dangerous artifact in their possession). One is guarded Kharak Tore, the king of the Ixindar Basilica. It is in a book written by Kharak in this native Pleroma tongue that claims there to be five, though that leaves the fifth unaccounted for. A vision once appeared to Thos Thalogos, who became obsessed with the notion that it hides somewhere under his city.

*Master Chen told me there was a hidden spell known only to Dragons. A single symbol carried a word associated to Amethyst's real name. I suspected that the greatest Dragon would not carry such a simple name as Amethyst. Evidently, only a few dragons knew Amethyst's true name and only Amethyst himself held the symbol that carried the spell associated with that name. An old legend tells it was imparted to Lazarus, the greatest living dragon.*

*However, Lazarus apparently refuses to acknowledge the legend and has never given any indication to knowing it. Seemingly, the name itself, when spoken, conjures no power. Like all arcane spells, it requires study and possession of the symbol. When asked what the spell could do, Chen smiled and replied, "The only other time it was uttered, a million demons vaporized, and a mountain fell on Ixindar."*

*I never did ask how Chen knew that.*

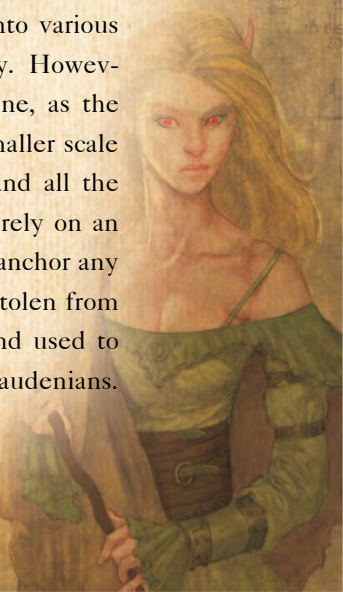
*Aiden Camus  
Personal Journal*

A similar vision appeared to Sharajaclypse on the other side of the planet. But no one knows if she found it or is even looking for it.

**Consequence:** Both the caster and recipient of the spell gain 10 corruption points. The raised creature also permanently gains the Ixindar keyword (even if not totally corrupted) and must make a DC 20 Will saving throw or gain another 10 corruption points. The recipient's corruption level cannot fall below 10 through normal means; if it ever ceases to be bound to Ixindar, it immediately dies.

## REVERSE GRAVITY

It had been a safe assumption this spell was widespread across the laudenian cloud empire, forged into various items that themselves resist the pull of gravity. However, not all magically-lifted aircraft require one, as the effect can be fairly easily reproduced on a smaller scale with less potent spellcraft. The Alkanost and all the laudenian floating keeps are all believed to rely on an anchor. They refuse to allow anyone else to anchor any of the originals, though one was eventually stolen from the ruins of the fallen fortress Bagiartakis and used to create similar inferior replications like the laudenians.





## CHAPTER FIVE: MAGIC

This is how humans and other fae took to the sky in defiance to laudenian dominance.

One anchor is known to exist in defiance of the laudenians' arrogance: a large shard of polished black stone at the heart of the floating island of Victrix, in Seliquam. Alas, its guardians, the Obsidian Mages, are no more willing to allow outsiders to take a look at their artifact than the laudenians are.

**Consequence:** Your weight triples for 24 hours.

### SEQUESTER

The original anchor for this spell resembles a string musical instrument not unlike a harp. It was created by an unidentified wizard and was found by gimfen and returned to Twin-Dome-Littelopolis. Since then, several wizards have replicated the spell, but for reasons unknown, it won't take to any anchor save for a musical instrument. At least seven copies are known to have been made.

**Consequence:** You fail all Will saving throws for 24 hours.

### SHAPECHANGE

The shapechanging staff comes in many shapes, from twisted wood to refined steel. Every nation formidable in magic boasts at least one such design, unique to each culture. The original is believed to have been forged by dragons, and then passed down to the others (or perhaps stolen). The gimfen variant, covered in coins, was lost nearly two hundred years ago.

**Consequence:** After you return to your normal form, you are paralyzed until you finish an eight-hour rest.

## 102 SIMULACRUM

Predictably, this large crystal anchor resembles a chunk of ice that refuses to melt. Subsequently, they are only found in colder climates, with "found" being the emphasized word. Simulacrum anchors are found scattered across snowy landscapes in the open, not within dungeons or past challenging traps. They just sit in the open, nearly impossible to spot against the landscape. No one knows who places them or why, and given the scope of terrain across the north of Canam, there could be hundreds of these anchors that would never be found. Two were taken back to Thos Thalagos, another into the royal treasure vault in Quinox. Laudeniens are believed to own at least two. Search parties could

comb the north for decades without every finding one, and then a single individual will trip over an anchor while walking between towns.

**Consequence:** If the simulacrum ever drops to zero hit points, you drop to 1 hit point.

### SUNBURST

(Attricana)

These anchors all resemble amulets and can be found in Laudenia as well as various chaparran villages around the world. Despite attempts by many wizard schools, both agnostic and theological, to acquire one of these anchors, the fae have not been willing to release them to outsiders. The Palladius School in Janoah has attempted to recreate the anchor without a frame of reference but have been unable to crack the formula. There was been a rumor Palladius has placed a reward for the theft of a sunburst anchor.

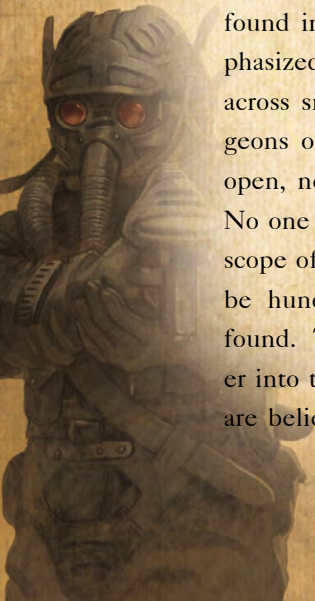
**Consequence:** After you cast the spell, there is a 50% chance you will teleport 2d4 miles away in a random location.

### SYMBOL

(Attricana/Ixindar)

There are both Attricana- and Ixindar-bound anchors for symbol, dependent on the end-result. Death, Fear, Insanity, and Pain are bound to Ixindar; Discord, Hopelessness, Sleep, Stunning are restricted to Attricana. As there are various types and numerous interpretations, there are probably more than a hundred of these anchors scattered about the world, making the total of symbol anchors one of the most numerous in the world. The negative anchors have been embedded in fae skulls, dragon bones, and in one case, a ball of wound fae skin. The positive anchors have been staffs, orbs, and oddly enough, also fae skulls (Attricana is not a guarantee for good). Anchors have been claimed to be in possession of many wizards (mostly infamous) across the world including Grissom Thalusva, Piotr Raczik, Tharmus—of course; the evil ones would boast such claims. Anchors have also been found in Laudenia, Kirjath-Sepher, and Hardstone Sig.

**Consequence:** After you cast this spell, you are fatigued.





## TIME STOP

The existence of time stop has become folklore, with stories only hinting at its existence. Believed to be fused to a scepter that initially fell from the sky, this anchor also purports to show a map of a relic or location that is quickly becoming a legend to those that travel among the clouds. Although grounders assume this references Laudenian, it doesn't, and the elder fae have admitted to seeking out the artifact as well. They must have held such an item at one point, as another anchor resembling the scepter sans map is in possession of Nacola Falconyr. Archon dragons are believed to also possess an inferior replica, meaning they are also not the original forgers.

**Consequence:** After time returns to normal, you are stunned for 1 turn.

## TRUE RESURRECTION

(Ixindar)

If resurrection is uncommon, true resurrection is positively rare. Like its less powerful counterpart, the true resurrection anchor resembles a sphere, though significantly more massive (Medium-sized) and pearl-colored instead of black. Along with the standard spell components, one must also "feed" a living individual of the same race and gender of the creature being recalled. True resurrection orbs do not appear to have been constructed, but instead they are excavated, meaning they might have been on Earth hiding in the same way the Amethyst shards have. They are most likely emerged from the black gate directly, from the pure will of Mengus.

**Consequence:** The caster gains 20 corruption points, immediately becoming Ixindar-bound if they were not already. The raised creature also gains 10 corruption points, permanently gains the Ixindar keyword (even if not totally corrupted) and must make a DC 20 Wisdom saving throw or gain another 10 corruption points. The recipient's corruption level cannot fall below 10 through normal means; if it ever ceases to be bound to Ixindar, it immediately dies.

## WEIRD

It's strange that this anchor resembles a blown musical instrument, almost trumpet-shaped. Very few were ever made by the tenenbri. Rumors say they emerged from the village of Sharajaclypse. From there, a few

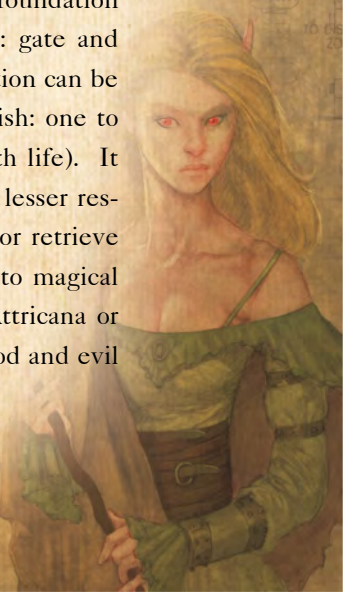


copies managed to find themselves in Myre and Limshau.

**Consequence:** After the spell duration elapses, you suffer 2d10 psychic damage.

## WISH

Wish is the mightiest spell in Amethyst. Unfortunately, only a select few can cast it. No mortal creature can. It requires a connection with Attricana only blessed to those exposed to its power for hundreds or even thousands of years. Wish can replicate any other foundation spell, even without an anchor, save for two: gate and true resurrection (the effects of true resurrection can be duplicated, but it requires two castings of wish: one to rebuild the body, the second to infuse it with life). It can also circumvent the corruption tied with lesser resurrection spells. Oddly, wish cannot locate or retrieve any Amethyst artifact, as those are immune to magical effects; nor can it be used to affect either Attricana or Ixindar themselves. Only a few creatures good and evil





can cast such spells. It is thought the anchors are fused to their bodies.

**Consequence:** None that are obvious...

# MAGICAL TRADITIONS

Wizards may be rare, but there are still many organizations dedicated to the study of magic—although given the egotism that tends to come with the ability to turn someone's spleen into a lump of antimony, most tend to be on the smaller side. Aside from a mere handful of larger institutions, most magical groups are cliques, cadres or covens of like-minded mages, usually with an affinity for the same totem (or at least a smaller subset than the full allotment), dedicated to similar principles of magic, and usually (though not always) with a deep-rooted rivalry toward another magical organization who they accuse of 'getting it wrong'.

These groups are not numerous, for there are simply not that many mages to be found in the world; however, they are plentiful enough that even dusty old scholars may have difficulty keeping track of them, and many are scattered in distant and inaccessible parts of the world where their unorthodox methods can flourish in relative obscurity.

Magical traditions are represented mechanically by traits, such as the Koana Student and Laudanian Magos from the main book. Since there are no other formal schools of wizardry in Canam, it is advised that GMs and players create their own, customizing the following template:

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**Prerequisite.** Trained by a master of the tradition.

**Requirement.** Choose one or two totems. All members of the tradition must use one of these totems.

**Skill Proficiencies.** Arcana. Choose one other signature skill or tool for the tradition.

**Languages.** Either one living language and one archaic or dead language of your choice, or Pleroma (if the tradition mainly consists of non-mages).

**Equipment.** Appropriate uniform; one minor magical trinket; books of lore/dogma appropriate to the tradition.

**Feature.** Select one of the following. You can make minor modifications for flavor, but avoid anything that would normally be the realm of a feat.

- You can choose a (specific) magic-using class other than wizard.
- Learn a (specific) cantrip. Your spellcasting ability for the cantrip is the normal ability for the class whose spell list it came off of. If you do not have a spellcasting class, you must have a spellbook as a totem.
- Learn 3 (specific) 1st-level spells, drawn from any spell list. These spells are always considered to be on your spell list and you always have them prepared.

## THE COLLEGE OF ARCANES ARCHITECTURE

More an academic club than an actual college of wizardry, the College of Arcane Architecture is an offshoot of Abarbanel's Koana school. While most visitors to the kingdom consider damaskan architecture to be (somehow) both utilitarian and chaotic, it actually adheres to a complex structure that is intimately related to the innate damaskan knack for parkour. The College of Arcane Architecture is a group of like-minded scholars and adepts dedicated to studying this phenomenon.

**Trait:** Discipline

**Prerequisite:** Trained in Abarbanel. You must select the book or the staff as your totem.

## BENEFITS

**Languages:** You gain living language and one archaic or dead language of your choice.

**Equipment:** You gain a month's supply of blueprint paper and grease pencils, and a handheld theodolite.

**Mending:** An affinity for structure comes with it the ability to make minor magical repairs. You learn *mending* as a bonus cantrip. Furthermore, when you cast mending, it takes only one standard action instead of one minute.

## KHEVRE THULE

A secret society within the already secretive Order of the Cloth, Khevre Thule are Darius Konig's personal alchemists and artificers, charged with analyzing and



protecting the king's vaults of magical artifacts, as well as researching better ways to control the fae.

**Trait:** Discipline

**Prerequisite:** Trained in Faustis; member of the Order of the Cloth. You must select the staff as your totem.

## BENEFITS

**Languages:** You gain Latin and Hebrew.

**Equipment:** Red robes; golden skull half-mask; alchemy set.

**Inner Circle:** Khevre Thule is so close to Darius Koning that some even believe that his godliness grants them magical powers. You can choose the arcane trickster prestige class. You can also select one Rogue Talent. Additionally, it is not illegal for you to possess magic items within Baruch Malkut.

## ZEMARRA NASHIREI

'Zemarra nashirei' is a pun in the chaparran language, not able to be perfectly translated into English, but roughly rendered as 'keep the beat' ('keep' in the sense of 'preserve' rather than 'maintain'). They view themselves as a conservation society, the designated keepers of traditions that by definition cannot be written down or otherwise recorded. Since dancing is a sacred activity to chaparrans, any kind of ritual dance is considered worthy of remembrance, and therefore they are one of the few chaparran-based groups to allow non-chaparran membership—all the more important, they feel, since the lives and memories of other species are so short.

**Trait:** Discipline

**Prerequisite:** Trained in Jibaro. You must select the instrument (drum or tambourine) as your totem.

## BENEFITS

**Language:** One living language and one archaic or dead language of your choice.

**Equipment.** Your drum is all you need.

**The Beat:** The zemarra nashirei do not use spoken words, but ritual dance moves to evoke Pleroma. You can choose the bard class. Any bard spell you cast as an action (not a bonus action) requires no verbal components other than rough vocalizations. However, all your bard spells require you to at least be able to move your feet freely within a 5 ft space.

# ARTIFACTS

## DESTRUCTION

Artifacts in *Amethyst*, regardless of their source, cannot be destroyed.

## EYES OF MENGUS

**Wondrous item, artifact (requires attunement)**

To significantly improve the combat effectiveness of her proud creation Gebermach, Mengus endowed her power into three black orbs, resembling the featureless black eye of Ixindar itself. These spheres were placed within three artifacts and handed to Gebermach to channel the metaphorical heart, body, and strength of their creator.

It is said these orbs are three smaller negative gates, shrouded in a field to contain their power and crusted with a single atom's thickness of angelite.

According to legend, Gebermach wielded all three artifacts to slay Amethyst. After being critically wounded, the dragon's swinging tail not only vaulted Gebermach into a short-term orbit but also successfully dislodged the demon armor's grip on its artifacts. They scattered across the world and were not destroyed in the intervening eons. Upon their rediscovery, only the original orbs had survived and not the items made around them. The three eyes have returned in full form, though remain out of any one side's complete control. The only one in Canam is the Gauntlet of Envy.

**Property.** Any good creature that even touches a Mengus Pearl gains one temporary negative level (DC15 to remove, otherwise, it becomes permanent).

## THE GAUNTLET OF ENVY

**Aura** strong (all schools); **CL** 20th

**Slot** hand; **Weight** 3 lbs

## DESCRIPTION

The Gauntlet of Envy is rumored to exist somewhere in Canam. One story places it in catacombs underneath Janoah, which may explain why armies of corruption march across Tethuss to assault the city. The honored Knights of Abraham refute this. One account places the gauntlet within the Sana Marsh while another insists it is the cause of the Tranquiss curse. If these latter





claims are accurate, then it may never be found. The other two eyes are most likely across the ocean.

The gauntlet occupies one hand. When you place on the gauntlet, only severing your hand may remove it. A target attempting to wear the gauntlet immediately gains 5 corruption points the moment it is donned, gaining 1 additional point every hour while wearing it. It does not bestow any abilities until you are entirely turned to Ixindar. Once attuned, you gain the following benefits:

- In combat, the gauntlet counts as a gauntlet (inflicting 1d6 damage instead of 1d3). It also grants a +5 enhancement bonus to attack and damage rolls.
- If you succeed in grappling a target with the gauntlet, you will inflict 2d6+4 necrotic damage immediately, and at the beginning of subsequent turns if you are still grappling a target. Each time you inflict damage on the target this way, you recover the same value of lost hit points. You have a bonus to grapple checks equal to the gauntlet's enhancement bonus (+5).
- If a victim is killed in this fashion, the soul is drawn out of the body and trapped within the orb in the gauntlet. While trapped, the body is lifeless, and cannot be resurrected by any means short of a wish to rip the soul free from its prison.

While a soul is trapped, the wearer can drain

the life essence to activate special abilities. When thirty abilities are used, the soul is devoured, and it is permanently lost. These are the available abilities:

- ⇒ **Ripper Swarm (1 soul).** These insects are a collection of blades for legs and needles for teeth. They are mindless constructs and follow your command, leaping by the thousands from your open gauntlet, intent on tearing enemies apart. As a standard action, make a ranged touch attack against a target within 50 feet (gaining the gauntlet's +5 enhancement bonus). On a hit, the target takes 3d10+4 necrotic damage. The target also must make a DC20 Reflex save at the beginning of its turn or take an additional 1d10 necrotic damage. If the target fails the save, continue the attack every subsequent turn until the target makes the save. Once you use this ability, you cannot use it again until for five minutes.
- ⇒ **Corrupted Siphon (1 soul).** Once per turn, as a free action, you regain hit points equal to the maximum value of your Hit Die.
- ⇒ **Swarm of Plates (1 soul).** As a standard action, you gain a +4 bonus to AC and gain DR 10 until the end of your next turn. Once you use this power, you cannot use it again for five minutes.
- ⇒ **Negative Feedback (1 soul).** Once per turn, as a free action, after your successful strike with the gauntlet as a melee weapon, you inflict additional necrotic damage equal to the maximum result of your Hit Die.

If you don't have a soul to feed on for more than a week, then it will start feeding on you, causing 5 points of damage every morning and increasing that damage by 5 every following morning (this damage cannot be healed until you place a soul in the gauntlet). Keeping a soul within the Eye and not using it still drains a use every week.





# THE EIGHT SHARDS OF AMETHYST

There are eight shards of Amethyst, though only three of them had been revealed thus far...until now.

## SECRETS FROM BARUCH MALKUT

The kingdom of Baruch Malkut has always been known to be magically underprivileged. As a result, the king ordered all items of any significant power to be handed over to prolocutors trained to categorize and quantify the powers of said items. Konig also demanded any texts speaking of such items be tendered for examination.

The prized trophy he sought was the manifest of Myre, the massive tome detailing all which lay within their vaults, including the few items that survived from the old age of man. Konig read of such items, relics from before Attricana when man lived uncontested with nothing to fear but his dark desires.

It was in the course of this feverish research that they found an Amethyst artifact. The singular piece was brazenly worn through a belt by the noble of a small village called Eathar. He claimed the item was found on the corpse of a slain chaparran princess that refused to be captured. In truth, he had stolen the buckle from Bilford Gram of Nassau. Gram accused as much when word of the item's location was revealed. Konig forbade any retribution, insisting such treasures belonged to the kingdom and the king specifically.

The artifact was not of human make, having been constructed by a lesser-known Laurama mage, Rhuunazodacus. She stumbled upon the amethyst in the most fitting way for a fae: she found it in a tree. A lightning strike during an unusually intense storm cracked an old conifer from tip to root. This particular tree predated the chaparran nation and was dubbed the "Mending Tree" by the holy mages for its repulsion of the Tranquiss plague. As Rhuuna examined the remains, she found the violet crystal embedded in the bark. Guessing that the purity of the tree lay in this crystal, Rhuuna took it and fled back to her village. In the hope of channeling the crystal's power, she affixed it to a buckle and tied it around her right wrist, which always held her staff. She believed she could channel

the energy of the crystal, which she called the Mending Sap, to cure the plague.

She would not have her chance. A slave caravan caught Rhuuna during a night raid, and came into the possession of the Baruchan slavetaker lordling Mikkell Foster, who had been tutoring his son Prosten to take over the family caravan and chose Rhuuna as an example to hone the boy's resistance to fae wiles. In her desperate attempts to barter her freedom, Rhuuna promised to offer the secrets of her spells to one she supposed to be a naïve boy. She even told him the power of the amethyst, though not the full details of its potential. Very little is known of what happened to Rhuuna after that. She was never seen again, probably broken and sold, her final fate an echo of her promise.

Thinking the crystal to be a relic of the chaparran religion, Prosten took it to his father, who affixed it to his belt to parade his dominance over the lesser class, and it passed to Prosten upon his father's disappearance. It came into the possession of Lord Bilford Gram as the result of a drunken card game and an unwillingly extorted promise for the slavers to steer clear of Gram's holding of Nassau (and his secret fae bride Abellis). Gram had the buckle mounted to his boot – whether a symbolic gesture or mere vanity, none can say. When the buckle, sans boot and once more mounted to a belt, later turned up in the hands of Dannis Haulik of Eather, Gram accused Prosten of conspiring with Haulik to steal it back. Whether this was true or not is now immaterial.

In their current form, this artifact is the buckle/boots/bracelet of Dragonkind, as described in the Amethyst core book. As the Mending Sap, it has the following properties:

## THE MENDING SAP

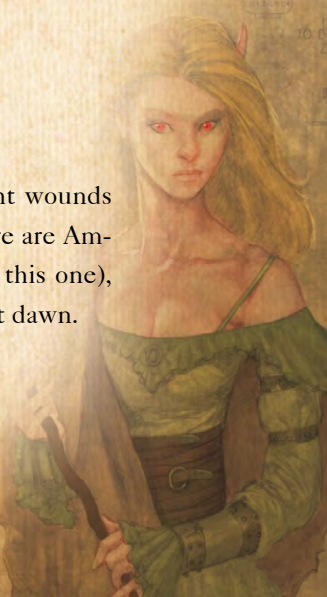
**Aura** strong (all schools); **CL** 20th

**Slot** —; **Weight** 1 lbs

## DESCRIPTION

You can cast detect poison and evil at will.

**On Its Own:** You can cast either cure light wounds or remove curse as many times per day as there are Amethyst relics within 30 feet of you (including this one), and then it cannot be used again until the next dawn.





**3 Amethyst Relics:** Casting cure light wounds or remove curse through this artifact can be done at a distance of up to 50 feet.

**5 Amethyst Relics:** You cast cure moderate wounds instead of light.

**7 Amethyst Relics:** When you cast remove curse through this artifact, you can remove effects that normally would require a wish spell.

**8 Amethyst Relics:** You can cure serious wounds instead of moderate.

### THE RINGS OF AMETHYST, STRENGTH OF ALWAYS, THE RINGS OF NANNUS

The Rings of Amethyst, his hands, and force of claw, traveled further than any other artifact. When the mines of the Finer Fire Pits first started their digging, they hoped for much. They burrowed for decades before unearthing the riches they believed were very much earned. Just before striking significant deposits, one lead pick, Charrasgor Rem, threw his tool hard upon the granite and felt the iron crack, the tool splintering at its point. Believing to have struck a significant find, Rem dug around the obstruction that destroyed his family's heirloom but was disappointed when a purple quartz crystal dropped out no larger than his tooth. He was about to toss the near worthless gem when he noticed the second tooth-sized crystal still embedded in his broken pick. Working on pure instinct, he drove the hammer down upon the granite. Sharper and stronger than diamond, the amethyst-tipped pick shattered with ease anything it struck. Rem hurried the two stones off to his family and informed them of his find. The other stone was placed, somewhat conceitedly, in Rem's right rear molar. Though the stone that replaced his tooth did little for his glory, the pick tipped with an amethyst rock could break anything it was slammed against.

Alas, Rem suffered from extreme bad luck that a superstitious sort might have blamed on the amethyst. After losing his family in a preventable accident and spiraling into depression, Rem eventually died in a forest fire caused by his attempts to signal for help after breaking both legs when a giant bird picked him up as food for her chicks and dropped him into a nearby forest when he struck her with his pick.

Fifty years later, a gimfen traveling through the regrowing woods stumbled upon the charred remains and

recovered the gems. Correctly thinking them of value, Horen Kingsworthy carried them in his travels. Later, in a bid to stave off his demise when a passing death dragon eyed him for a meal, Horen offered the gems and everything else he had in exchange. Not being one of honor, the dragon took the crystals and devoured Horen anyway. The creature, Halleon of Blight, flew south in hopes of establishing a kingdom in the fracturing nations of Southam. The gems in his belly reacted severely to the negative nature of his biology, and the creature was consumed from the inside out. By the time the tenenbri Bronnalypsis stumbled on the carcass, very little remained, save for two tiny gems that never seem to deviate more than a few feet from each other.

Bronn took them deep into the mountain network and offered them to the noble lady, Karellanecrebet, who immediately recognized them for what they were. She ordered powerful rings forged by her greatest smith, Karkanannus, into which the gems were set. For the past hundred years, they have remained hidden deep in the bowels of Vakai's central keep. The only time Karell ever wore the pair was on a visit to Haishal, where Sharajaclypse recognized and noted their brilliance. Karell, suspicious of Sharaj's motivations, refused to allow a closer inspection and was never seen to wear them again.

### THE RINGS OF AMETHYST

**Aura** strong (all schools); **CL** 20th

**Slot** Rings; **Weight** —

#### DESCRIPTION

Both rings must be worn by the same individual to work. You gain the following benefits:

**Binding:** The two rings always appear near each other. If separated, one will magically disappear and reappear near its twin (random). They are simple copper rings clamping onto the amethyst rather than the crystal being set within a fixture.

**On Their Own:** The rings increase the damage die of your unarmed attacks. If they inflict 1 damage, they inflict 1d4, increasing with a monk's Unarmed Damage feature (so an unarmed attack that inflicts 1d6 now inflicts 1d8, 1d8 would increase to 1d10, and so on per the monk level table).

**2 Amethyst Relics:** Unarmed attacks gain +1 enhancement bonus to attack and damage rolls.



### 3 Total Amethyst Relics:

As a Standard action, you can change all damage inflicted by unarmed attacks to one of the following damage types: Cold, fire, lightning, or thunder. When selected, this damage type remains until you change it again. You can also elect to remove the elemental damage completely.

### 4 Total Amethyst Relics:

As a free action, when you hit with an unarmed attack channeling cold, you can reduce the targets Speed to 0 until the beginning of your next turn. Once you use this ability, you cannot use it again for five minutes. The enhancement bonus with unarmed attacks increase to +2.

**5 Total Amethyst Relics:** As a free action, when you hit with an unarmed attack channeling fire, you can make the target fail its next Reflex saving throw before the end of your next turn. Once you use this ability, you cannot use it again for five minutes. The enhancement bonus with unarmed attacks increase to +3.

**6 Total Amethyst Relics:** As a free action, when you hit with an unarmed attack channeling lightning, you can stun the target until the beginning of your next turn. Once you use this ability, you cannot use it again for five minutes. The enhancement bonus with unarmed attacks increase to +4.

**7 Total Amethyst Relics:** As a free action, when you hit with an unarmed attack channeling thunder, you can push a target of up to Large size 20 feet and knock it prone. If it hits an obstruction, it suffers damage equal to half of the damage of the initial hit. Once you use this ability, you cannot use it again until you finish a short or long rest. The enhancement bonus with unarmed attacks increase to +5.

**8 Total Amethyst Relics.** The enhancement bonus with unarmed attacks increase to +6.



## THE CLOAK, MY WINGS, THE CLOAK OF ALL

Most of the population does not know of the existence of the artifacts of Amethyst (with some not even aware of Amethyst itself), but once the existence of a single artifact was revealed, it was only a matter of time before others would be as well. And the moment of that realization, those living around the Oubliette were certain one of the famous artifacts sat within their infamous dungeon.

Since then, traffic to the literal tourist trap has increased, with many adventurers unaware of the value of the artifacts being sought out. Quest-seekers escaping the Oubliette found no evidence of where the artifact is or even any indication it's there to begin with, though admittedly the survival rate of the Oubliette does lend to the lack of information.

The Oubliette, located within the borders of Kannos on the inner slopes of Mt. Sarnathi, has for decades advertised its potential for treasure and adventure-fulfillment. The entire town of Mare Crater has grown to cater to visitors willing to take on the depths of the illustrious dungeon. Shops extend into the mouth of the mountain, all pandering merchandise related to the location and the legends surrounding it.





Despite its façade, the Oubliette is still incredibly dangerous, the apparent result of a collaboration between an unknown gimfen engineer and the famous wizard Keris Rifts, the latter of which placed his library and sanctum within a colossal chamber at the center of the mountain into which the Oubliette extends. No one has ever found the sanctum or escaped to confirm its existence (outside of the odd false claim easily denounced).

Keris Rifts was a local legend whose legacy had been exaggerated and warped depending on the objective of the storyteller. One tale alleges he was a despot brought down by a local hero, while another asserts Rifts was benevolent and misunderstood, erecting his keep within a mountain to enforce his solitude (or to hide away dangerous artifacts that should never be allowed to plague the world). There's even a rumor that it wasn't even Keris that commissioned the Oubliette, but rather the town in an effort to create a myth out of a relatively humble individual. It is ironic that in a world populated by dragons and dungeons, a town would market such a potential foreboding curse to the masses, promoting the destination as one would peddle a theme park.

Fortunately (or unfortunately), the Oubliette is indeed a location where an Amethyst artifact can be found, recovered by Rifts years before his death. Since the records of how he came to it are in books found within his keep, there are no details that could be recovered anywhere else. Keris Rifts was a private individual whose motivations remain as much a mystery as the treasures sitting at the center of his labyrinth. What was undeniable was that Keris sought knowledge, and to know the truth of the man requires locating and interviewing some of the oldest librarians in Limshau.

Through them, it would be revealed that Keris had used his namesake staff to glean clues and in turn located a great artifact whose ultimate impact Keris was yet unaware of. Sadly, the unknown true story is that there was no great quest to find it, no dramatic wizards' duel between mountaintops; Rifts merely found the previous owner of the crystal and traded his staff for it. When he returned, he did what any self-respecting wizard would do when in possession of a mystical artifact of unknown power and provenance; he made it into the clasp of a magical cloak. As an exception of the many stories of Amethyst artifacts changing hands, sprinkled with epic battles and grim fates, the Cloak of All has no heroic or

grand journey, only a destination so magnificent, it developed into its franchise.

The Cloak is certainly one of the more flamboyant artifacts when active. The buckle at the front holds the gem, which continually imbues the cloak with a spell that instantly fixes the cloak if damaged in any way. The cloak changes colors depending on the action it is carrying out, though is a dark purple by default. It also features a hood that activates most of the cloak's functions when up.

### THE CLOAK OF AMETHYST

**Aura** strong (all schools); **CL** 20th

**Slot** shoulders; **Weight** 1 lbs.

#### DESCRIPTION

You gain the following benefits:

**Note:** Several abilities involve the cloak changing color; it can only assume one color at a time (meaning you cannot activate multiple effects at once).

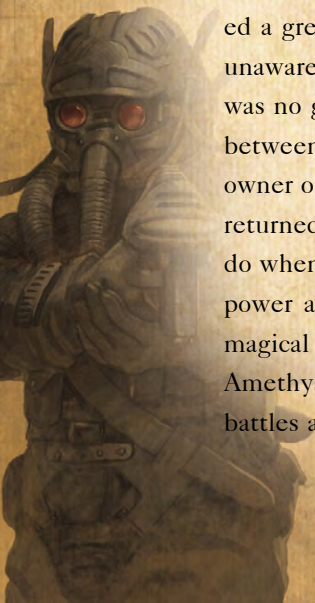
**Stylish:** The cloak always billows dramatically, even when there is no wind, unless you give it a mental command not to (when it will sullenly acquiesce for about 15 minutes before it gets antsy). It always manages to position itself to show off its wearer to best effect, granting a +2 bonus with Charisma-based skill checks in situations where looking awesome is important.

**On Its Own:** You gain a +1 enhancement bonus to AC and Reflex saving throws while you wear this cloak.

**2 Amethyst Relics.** You can pull the hood up (or down) as an action and activate this ability that turns the cloak bluish-purple. You can breathe underwater, and you have a swimming speed of 60 feet. The enhancement bonus to AC increases to +2.

**4 Amethyst Relics.** You can pull the hood up (or down) as a Standard action and activate this ability that turns the cloak reddish-purple. You can grip the edges of the cloak with both hands and use it to fly at a speed of 30 feet. If you ever fail to grip the cloak's edges while flying in this way, you lose this flying speed. The enhancement bonus to AC increases to +3.

**6 Amethyst Relics.** You can pull the hood up (or down) as a Standard action and activate this ability that turns the cloak greenish-purple. The cloak projects an illusion that makes you appear to be standing in a place near your actual location, granting concealment (20% miss chance). This effect lasts until the copy takes





damage (the concealment chance succeeds). This property is suppressed while you are incapacitated, restrained, or otherwise unable to move. The enhancement bonus to AC increases to +4.

**8 Amethyst Relics.** You can pull the hood up (or down) as a Standard action and activate this ability that turns the cloak invisible, along with you. While invisible, anything you are carrying or wearing is invisible with you.

You become visible when you cease wearing the hood.

Deduct the time you are invisible, in increments of 1 minute, from the cloak's maximum duration of 1 hour. After 1 hour of use, the cloak ceases to function. After an uninterrupted period of 12 hours the cloak goes unused, it regains this hour. The enhancement bonus to AC increases to +5.

## NEW MAGIC ITEMS

### ALVARA BLADE & DEATH'S HEAD RING

**Aura** faint transmutation; **CL** 5th

**Slot** wrist/ring; **Price** 16,000 **Weight** —.

#### DESCRIPTION

The standard equipment of the Order of the Cloth, the king's personal bodyguards and assassins, the 'blade' (actually a bracelet) and the ring are basic magical items sheathed in gold to dampen their magical presence, allowing their wielders to escape even the most stringent magical detection. When inactive, they look like a simple, unadorned golden bracelet and ring. When the wielder activates them with a mental command (a free action), the ring projects an illusion of a red hooded cloak and a golden skull half-mask over the wielder's own clothes. The wielder gains a +2 bonus

with Intimidate (Cha) checks, and the bracelet either stores or retrieves a weapon (traditionally a kukri, hence the name) or small item carried in the appropriate hand from a pocket space within itself.





Once the Cloth's target is dealt with, the assassin can deactivate the items to easily escape the scene unnoticed. The ring and the bracelet attune as a pair, and though each can be activated separately, both must be worn for either to work.

## CONSTRUCTION

**Requirements:** Forge Ring, *shrink item*; **Cost:** 3,125 gp

## SCABBARD OF HALNOTH

**Aura** faint universal; **CL** 6th

**Slot** —; **Weight** 1 lbs.

## DESCRIPTION

A gnomish engineer, Saraz MacMalleMac, several hundred years ago, learned of the legend of the Amethyst artifacts and began to personally design scabbards and cases for the artifacts. Alas, he died under a blade before finishing them all, and only one emerged, the Scabbard of Halnoth.

The scabbard accompanies a +1 short sword called Callidus but will accept any sword of any size. While sheathed, the weapon remains a Small size until drawn. When any blade is drawn, it will have its damage die increased by one step (1d4 to 1d6 to 1d8 to 1d10 to 1d12 to 2d5 to 2d8) for one minute. Only one weapon can benefit from this ability at a time, and once the effect expires, that weapon cannot gain the benefits from the scabbard for a full day.

It is believed the scabbard did hold an Amethyst artifact at some point, as Halnoth has another distinct ability, a capacity to detect Amethyst artifacts nearby. When one approaches within 5 miles of an Amethyst artifact the Scabbard begins to hum faintly. It does not indicate direction and the distance has an error rating of +/- 100 feet.

## CONSTRUCTION

**Requirements:** Craft Wondrous item, *shrink item*; **Cost:** 5,000 gp

## SLAVE HALO

**Aura** strong enchantment (evil); **CL** 16th

**Slot** headband (special); **Weight** 1 lbs.

## DESCRIPTION

There are only four slave haloes known to exist in the world, all of them within Baruch Malkut. No one knows who makes them. They are only used on the most potentially dangerous or resistant fae who find themselves in the slave markets, as most Malkut slavers enjoy breaking their stock the old-fashioned way; doing it with magic is simply no fun. The halo is a crown-like hollow ring of silver filled with hundreds of copper spheres, like bearings, rolling exposed on the inside.

When placed over a fae's (and only a fae's) head, the halo begins to warp the mind of the subject, erasing memories and inserting artificial ones endorsing the new life. The halo forces the image upon the fae that they are property and possess no rights. Finally, it rewrites the fae's very disposition, making it more docile, friendly, and compliant. Even new interests and tastes can be inserted, amalgamated perfectly into the new spirit. The process may take more than an hour or even a day to complete, and after which is irreversible.

The moment the halo is placed on a fae's head, the target is paralyzed. After an hour, the target then must make a DC10 Will Saving throw. This check is repeated at the beginning each our, with each subsequent saving throw DC increasing by 3. If the halo is removed, any increase to the DC doesn't go away unless the halo is kept off the target for 24 hours. On a failure, the target's old personality is effectively dead. Their Wisdom and Charisma scores drop to 6 permanently; Intelligence drops to 4 permanently. The new personality is so deficient, the fae can no longer bond, even if ordered to or if willingly attempted by the fae. Pagus, tilen, and shemjaza are immune to the halo.

## CONSTRUCTION

**Requirements:** Craft Wondrous item, *Dominate Person*; **Cost:** 32,000 gp



## SLAVER POST

**Aura** faint transmutation; **CL** 3rd  
**Slot** —; **Price** 3,000; **Weight** 3 lbs.

### DESCRIPTION

The slaver post is an iron rod with a ring on the end that can be driven into the ground to keep whatever is tied to it in place. The post can only be removed easily by the person who drove it into the ground in the first place. It can be pushed easily into sand, dirt, or even solid rock. It cannot be fastened into a living creature or liquid.

When locked, the ground 5 feet around the post solidifies into an inflexible mass as hard to break as the post is to move. Any chain fastened to it as well as the post can restrain up to three creatures with a combined weight of under 1,000 lbs. Several posts can be used together to restrain a more massive beast. Only a DC30 Strength ability check can pull a post from the ground. Though obviously useful for a variety of purposes, the posts were designed by and for the slavers of Baruch Malkut. The item has been seen doubling as a climbing aid. The post comprises of two parts, the anchor and the loop. This allows the post to be nearly buried or rise as much as two feet from the ground.

### CONSTRUCTION

**Requirements:** Craft Wondrous item, *hold person*; **Cost:** 1,500 gp



## SPECTACLES OF WORDS

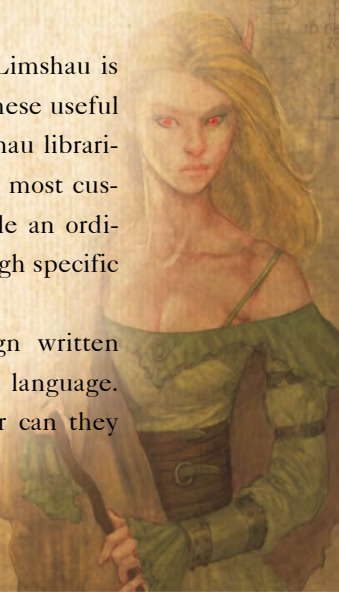
**Aura** faint divination; **CL** 3rd  
**Slot** eyes; **Price** 3,000; **Weight** —

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### DESCRIPTION

One of the oddest sights for newcomers in Limshau is the image of a damaskan wearing glasses. These useful bifocals are appearing more often, and Limshau librarians can often be seen wearing them (though most custodians still refuse to do so). They resemble an ordinary pair of eyeglasses of human design, though specific styles differ.

While looking through them, all foreign written words are translated to the wearer's chosen language. They do not translate spoken language, nor can they





translate Pleroma or Saeqaar, although they do allow those who cannot normally perceive these languages in more than two dimensions to do so. Additionally, the glasses allow the wearer a +2 bonus with Perception (Wis) checks when noticing any written text and a +10 bonus with Linguistics (Int), the latter of which you are assumed training in.

### CONSTRUCTION

**Requirements:** Craft Wondrous item, *comprehend languages*; **Cost:** 6,000 gp

*Mischa smiled. He supported his weight with a firm hand on the kneeler and brought himself back to his feet. "Didn't want to dishonor your faith or insult you with interruption," said Mischa. The stranger remained kneeling, palms firmly pressed together, fingertips touching the center of his brow. Eyes closed, he maintained his personal meditation but continued the conversation.*

*"You always carry such reverence for faiths you don't follow."*

*"Not usually...recently, however..." Mischa looked up at the dragon image, "I started to understand why people choose to follow this one." The figure turned slightly to look at Mischa.*

*"Was it a preacher or was it proof?" the man asked.*

*"Faith requires a lack of proof. I've seen first-hand. I know of these kings...so there's no need to worship them."*

*The stranger nodded. He shifted his weight back and stood with ease. "I can respect that."*

*Mischa held out a hand. "Mischa Fevrovich Romanov, ranger from—"*

*"You slaughtered the puggs raiding these poor people," he interrupted as he accepted the greeting. "I am not usually skewed to support such a violent response, but I imagine hands were forced or slightly pushed."*

*Their hands remained firmly grasped as Mischa interrupted. "Yeah, I won't lie to you. The rescue was an*

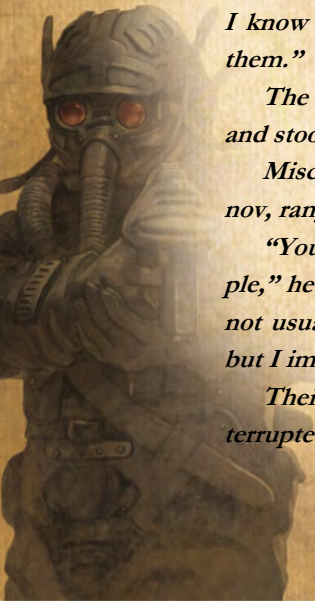
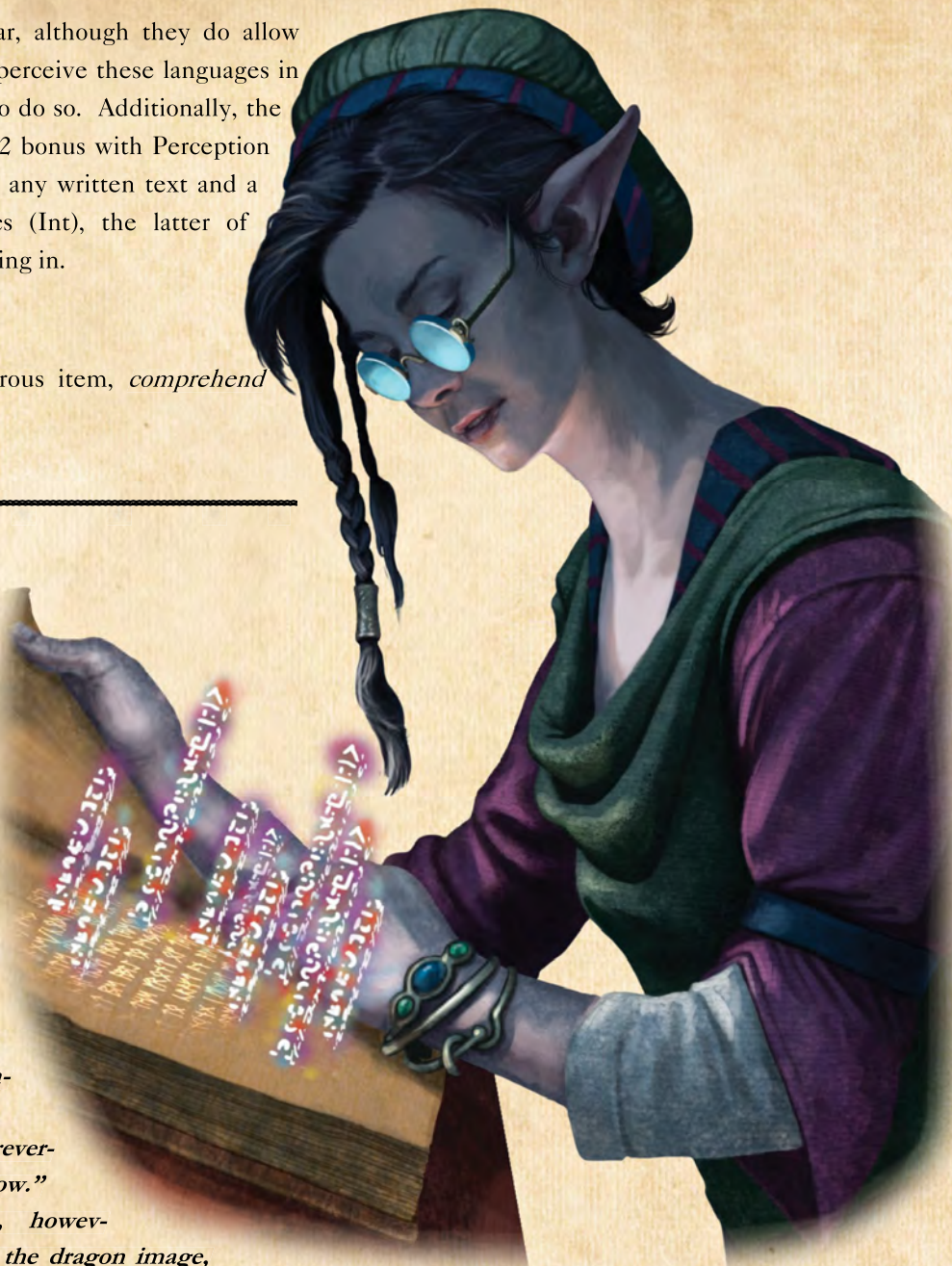
*afterthought. Helping others is a plus hopefully ending in a soft bed and softer company. I'll settle for a statue of my heroic deeds if nothing else." They ended the shake.*

*"At least your bravado proves your honesty. I'll admit I could have done likewise."*

*"I know," Mischa replied as he walked with the stranger from the altar, not to the exit, but a donation box on a far wall. "This world is populated with causes and crusades to fit any passion. I had worked up from puggs long ago."*

*"But without prayer, how would you absolve your actions?" the man asked.*

*"Those who gain clemency from prayer for sins freely caused worship with a liar's heart," Mischa answered. He knew he was being tested. "I have accept-*





ed the damage caused to my soul as a sacrifice for the obligations required of me.”

The stranger turned to face him and locked eyes. “That was the mark of Kantis I was waiting for.”

Mischa sighed. “I know, I’m conspicuous,” he replied. The stranger opened his cloak. The fabric flowed in violation of gravity. His simple wave passed through the material, raising the entire coat to the air. Mischa spotted the angelite breastplate adorned with Sinitic symbols. Silver bracers featured engravings of violent storms that dug deep in the metal protecting his arms. A red helmet hid under the hood offered no face protection but latching around the edge indicated one existed. The faceplate, a painted, sculpted image of a twisted demonic face with tusks and oversized eyes, hung from a belt hook. Near the carving, a red wooden scabbard held a Kurakou Katana. A coiled blue yok-ani dragon wrapped around to form the guard, grip, and pommel.

The stranger snagged a small leather pouch and emptied the entire contents of gold and silver in the donation box. The coins were from separate kingdoms across the whole planet. “So I ask you,” said the man, “how many puggs were really there?”

Mischa pinched his ear and spoke with less bravado. “My people are known for their stories and their richness. Our stories are all true. When one is less exciting, we must balance it with some... decoration. I’m not sure I even remember how many there were.”

“But you did not come to gloat.”

“No, I only wondered the reason for your presence in this land.”

“Have you been hired as a sentry? Why is it any concern of yours?”

“I am no guard sworn to a lord, and you are not bound to answer me. I am only curious to know how an order of Kenbukatsu finds himself across the world and without fanfare.”

The kenbu looked perplexed. “How long were you aware of this?” he asked.

“Your panache rivals even my own.” Mischa lowered his voice to almost a whisper. “I hear of them from the same winds you walk upon. You may claim a quest but gathering how much you donated, you hold nothing back for whatever journey awaits you. I thought you were here on some obsessive pursuit, like me. But now I think you are running from something...just as good.” Mischa started to leave the kenbu at the donation box. “Have you booked passage on the boat?”

“I have.”

“Then perhaps my cleric companion is right...in the fortune of destiny.”

The kenbu spun around, his cloak slowly flapped, behind if weighing no more than a floating thistle seed. He watched the exiting ranger. “Uriel Kamiguchi,” the stranger finally said. Mischa nodded and exited.

\* \* \*

Mahan had his back to the cathedral, staring once again at the sculpture. The sandstone wouldn’t glisten with polish for some time, and Mahan wondered how it would like if they ever returned. He departed and walked over to Mischa by the dragonflyer.

“I dislike flying,” Mischa declared while staring at the dragonflyer. “You said boat.”

“It is a boat,” Mahan replied. Mischa offered only a glance. “Did you see a river nearby worthy of passage?”

“I dislike flying,” Mischa repeated.

“It’s enchanted. Should put you at ease. What’s there to hate?” Mahan asked.

“It’s unsafe.” Mischa eyed the flyer, a strange craft imported from across the ocean. It was no thermal—bound by science to dictate its flight—this came from magic alone. The boat was known in the past as a junk or jong, flat-bottomed and made from softwood. Where most were round with soft lines, these were sharp and straight. Corners jutted out at every point. The sails were square with masts sticking from the sides and the center.

What indeed made the boat stand out was the pair of colossal wood and stone angel wings bolted to the sides of the hull. Such weight should have peeled the hull open, yet they hung there, spread open to the wind. They were the source of lift though they didn’t flap. A boat this size could ferry thirty or more and often held that many for a premium. The bottom level carried supplies and even horses.

“How did you travel from Kantis to Canam?” Mahan asked. “You must have flown.”

“I took a wavecrasher.”

“Wavecrasher?”

“Yes.”

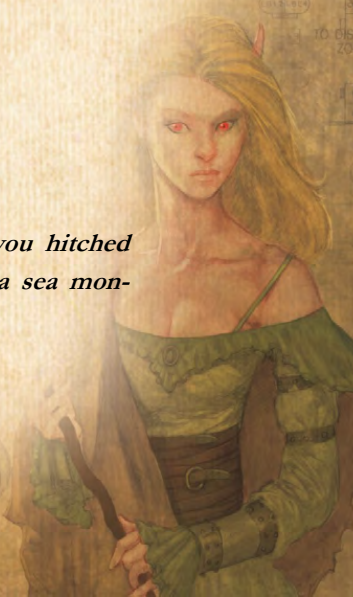
“Wavecrasher.”

“Are we in a time loop?”

“You don’t fly because it’s unsafe so you hitched onboard a house strapped to the back of a sea monster?”

Mischa thought it over. “Your point?”

“Get on the ship, Mischa.”





## CHAPTER FIVE: MAGIC

\* \* \*

*"There is an account from Lhamah, the tilen village in Southam," she announced. Aiden turned to her. It was not the first lead they had uncovered. There were numerous magical items in the world. Several were rare and special enough to be flaunted on the front lines, paraded before enemies. Aiden refused to let even a passing remark slip by without listening. "Lhamah Cyrose, the tilen elder. They were caught in an engagement between the tenenbri, led by Sharajaclypse, and a legion of ogres. Lhamah Cyrose claimed 'Clypse was forced to carry the banner of Vanaka, which recently had been altered to display two rings, supposedly worn by the Queen herself."*

*Aiden looked it over, losing faith. "That's...thin."*

*"Worth a look."*

*"Never said it wasn't." Aiden thought about it and followed with, "What do you know of them? Tilen, I mean. They are few."*

*"Few and cursed," Raven answered. "Poor souls," she mumbled shortly after.*

*"Personal experience?"*

*"No. Seddon Archer's book dealt with them briefly. They were creatures of darkness. When the gate opened, it brought them into the light...a forced sanctity. They try to redeem themselves. They are rarely given a chance. Most everyone else distrusts them. Hard to figure your species sometimes."*

*"And if you were to encounter boggs or pagus?" he pried.*

*"Boggs are wicked because they do not know any better. They are too dumb to think civilized. Pagus are sadistic by decree of their corruption. Even without their masters, they believe in only violence. Tilen deserve none their stigma."*

*Aiden nodded and glanced down at the image in her book. She was so lucky. His scrolls never had any artwork of worth. He stared at the grey banner of Vanaka and the rings displayed under the silhouette of an obviously naked female with hands outstretched to the sky. He wondered what use a banner was to the blind.*

*Aiden stared at the circle before snapping. "Oh my god." He struck his head. "I almost forgot."*

*"What is it?"*

*"The saints. I noticed a symbol on their ship. When I saw it on the soldiers, I thought they were ranks, but on that vessel in the forest, when it passed over, there*

*was one as well. You remember?"*

*"The vessel, no," she answered, "but the soldiers, yes, before your brother confiscated the bodies. A circle...with a line through it."*

*"Zero," he countered quickly.*

*"No." She made a slice through the air casually. "There was a slash at the end."*

*"Like the male symbol, also for iron."*

*"No...the line went all the way through it. It was also in a triangle."*

*"Iron," he stated plainly.*

*"Iron?"*

*"The triangle is fire and the half arrow through the circle is iron—well, depending on who you ask. This one looked familiar. Maybe Porto." Aiden stood up and walked to a dark section of the wall. "I just need to check." The floating lanterns followed him. He stopped and pointed back to Raven while whispering to one, "No, stay with her." One followed his instructions.*

*Techan military journals always flaunted badges and insignias of their various militaries and intelligence groups. It was a reach, but he needed to check. He pulled one on York, flipped through the particulars on the YSDF, and moved onto Selkirk, then Sierra Madre. After nearly three hours and reaching his limit, he returned, defeated.*

*"Not Porto," he answered as he dropped lazily on the chair.*

*"York?" she asked back.*

*He shook his head. "York isn't much above helicopters and telephones," Aiden answered. "These techans disobeyed gravity."*

*"Samba, Krebet?"*

*"I know them only in name. It's possible...I guess."*

*"You claim Porto a utopia, but these are rumors passed over thousands of miles."*

*Aiden shook his head and almost went faint. He needed to concentrate. "There must be a book on this. Their government, military. Some mention of saints outside biblical references. If we can track an amulet through a fantasy world, we should be able to track a symbol in a technological one. Techans never forget."*

*"You think this pursuit is worth it. Books from across the ocean are spartan at best."*

*Aiden nodded. "If you can keep on this angle, I'll take an afternoon through what other books on other bastions they have."*

*"Very well," she answered. Aiden dropped his head on his crossed arms as they rested on the table. He exhaled a lungful. "Why don't you retire to your cot?" she*



asked.

*"I'll just take a quick—"*

*"No," Raven snapped, "You require uninterrupted rest. Get some." Aiden nodded and departed without a word. She was confident he meant for one, but a part of his brain refused to answer the other.*

*An hour later, Aiden sulked back to the chair and sat down, rubbing his eyes. There were cots nearby for those wishing a nap without the trek back to their room.*

*"Last check, your kind requires more than a single hour."*

*"It's familiar," he groaned.*

*Raven tried to read his fatigue. She was still as alert now as when she first awoke. "Of course it is," she replied, "from the battle, the Zellis keep, and Limshau." Aiden responded. Raven recognized she had made an assumption. "I apologize, you meant beyond those direct encounters. Knowing you, you probably saw it in a book."*

*He tried a smile but only squirmed. Veins had crawled to the white of his eyes. "Safe assumption."*

*"We spoke at length about the many books you have read—mostly works of fictional fantasy or those of real fantasy."*

*He nodded. "But that would mean..."*

*"It's not techan?"*

*"It must be man."*

*"There is a mercenary company that wields technology. Iron..."*

*"Iron Sons...not their symbol. It's something else."*

*"You assume the symbol is new. Maybe if man, it is derived from something old."*

*His brow perked. "You're a genius, Raven."*

*"We both know this," she answered. Aiden knew she was joking, and laughed.*

*"But there wouldn't be anything like that here," he answered. "I'll need to dive into...mythology, human mythology." Aiden brought his head up to look at her. It was the first time he had looked eyes on her this close in days, maybe weeks. It was hard to do so sometimes. She looked without a blink back, unaware how such a stare could unnerve him. He forced himself to keep her eyes. "It's Greek. Greek mythology."*

*"They were quite successful in perceiving the echoes of our civilization," said Raven.*

*"Wonder how they tapped into it so well."*

*"They possessed no monopoly. Their gods were mostly absurd."*

*Aiden nodded again and stopped quickly. He squinted as a memory broke through to the surface, causing pain as it plowed through drowsiness to ascend*

*to an epiphany. He drove his palm into his eye and groaned. "Oh god," he grunted.*

*"What is it?" Raven considered something had broken in him. She had little knowledge of human physiology other than they died easily despite being built so ruggedly.*

*"Greek gods" he moaned. He pulled his hand away, revealing his eye had gotten worse. "That was it." He brought himself to smile. Her simple words had brought it out. She was wise without being aware, intelligent without being ostentatious, beautiful without being vain. The distraction of her eyes nearly took him away from his thought, fleeting as it was. He frantically tried to refocus, snare the idea and lasso it to his lips. "Ares." She leaned in and cocked her head, bringing her ear closer, as if she hadn't heard correctly. He continued. "The symbol is Greek for Ares, their god of war, which was stolen by the Romans."*

*Raven's ear twitched as she stood straight. Her smile was nearly as broad. "The gods are after you now."*

*"What an ironic way to smite me."*

*"Compliments for making a connection to a symbol which was..."*

*"Thousands of years old," answered Aiden. "Sounds an equally distant reach, and still doesn't explain them. None of it appears possible...unless they predate the second hammer. Before the return to magic."*

*"If so, what does the symbol connect to? Why the god the war, because they are part of a military state? Is it appropriated?" She stared at him, initially slow to pick up on Aiden's insight. "You already know, don't you."*

*Aiden brought down his hands and stared back. His answer came slowly, probably to add weighted effect.*

*"Ares was the god of war, but that's not why they took the name. It's because of what the Romans called him..." Raven waited for Aiden, and he took a moment to appreciate her stare before finally answering. "Mars."*





*Ocea*

*Here There Be  
Non-Metaphorical  
Monsters*

An  
Accurate Cartograph  
of the Continent of  
**CANAM**

Compiled in the year 459(ish) AE by  
**MR. GLYNN GLENGARRIE**  
*based upon the accounts of reputable travelers*

FARGON

Thos  
Thalagos

ASHUR

Selmana  
(Mythical?)

LAUDENTIA  
(APPROXIMATE)

ALPINAS

SELIQUAM

SELKIRK

QUINOX

DAGRON

XIXION

Sana  
Marsh

KANNOS

Appareci

SALVABROOKE

BURGUNASIS

Nemrose

PLICATO

LIMS

Cyon

ANGEL

Crax

ANTIKARI

Limshau

ORCHIS

Dawnamoak

Jibaro

Holace  
TORQUIL

KESAKAS

SIERRA  
MADRE





SHUR

Dragon's  
Claw

AZHI  
DAHAKA

The Firewyrms' Teeth

AGRON

Chronzia  
Uzu

Dakhoon peaks

APOCRYPHA

Pison

ARKADY

KANNOS

FINER  
FIRE  
PITS

Janoah

Gihon

MANN

LIMSHAU

ABIDAN

GNIMFALL

HALYC

YORK

Limshau

Tentilla

Santachis

ORCHIS

OGIUM

SKYROSE

Tranquiss

Laurama

Skepsis

BARUCH  
MALKUT

Faustis

Dawnamoak

Jibaro

Okeanos

Sea of  
Lights

Beware  
of Kraken

KESAKAS

SIERRA  
MADRE

The Gloam

Sea of  
Shades







## CHAPTER SIX

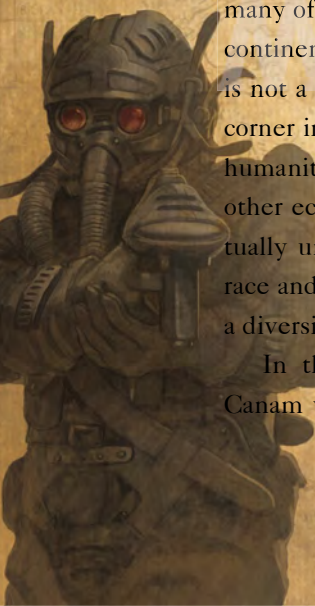
# HEARTLAND

120 **W**hat is so special about Canam? This is not a question that would make a great deal of sense to most of its inhabitants, many of whom are only dimly aware that they exist on a continent that spans 24 million square kilometers. This is not a minimal island nation one could walk corner to corner in a week. It is home to at least five bastions of humanity, three powerful fae kingdoms, and dozens of other echan nations: in fact, an entire fae species is virtually unknown outside of its southern forests. Every race and creed find their homes in Canam, representing a diversity not seen anywhere else on Earth.

In the Terros Age, the area that would become Canam was made up of three smaller continents sepa-

rated by a shallow sea. The mountainous western continent was the first home of the laudenians, until they pledged themselves to the skies, and thereafter became the site of a great kingdom of the narros; the deep forests of the southern continent birthed the chaparrans; and the northern continent was a melting pot of fae peoples—damaskans migrating west, narros migrating east, chaparrans migrating north, and gimfen popping up everywhere like mushrooms—until it became a battleground in the great war that ended in the First Hammer.

In the time before the Second Hammer, Canam was home to powerful civilizations that claimed cultural and even sometimes military hegemony over most of the





world, but little evidence of that supremacy still remains. The continent has been scoured clean of nearly all that came before, save for the occasional mysterious ruin—a tower rising out of a lake here, a series of oddly regular chasms dug into the earth there, a few long-lost dungeons deep beneath mountains that have since become the haunts of dangerous anathema. The old nations of Canam once spanned from sea to sea, but those who live there now rarely think of places further away than a neighboring village.

The most populous part of the continent is its literal heart; the lands between the great mountain ranges of Nankani and Alanaka, home to the three mightiest kingdoms in all of Canam and traversed by the only real highway of note in all the land.

## THE CONTINENTAL CROSS

The cross is a beaten path that connects the bastion of Angel, through House Antikari and House Plicato, and finally to Limshau. Various short spots widen out to a gravel road, but these are infrequent. After Limshau, the highway expands with planed land, signposts, and better paving, through Escorias and Abarbanel, finally leaving the kingdom, turning back into a dirt path until reaching Gnimfall, where it breaks apart and fades out in the foothills of the Alanaka Mountains, only restarting on the far side of the fields of Halyc, where it continues to its conclusion at the bastion of York.

Although not entirely safe, the Cross is the easiest route to take with reduced risk. Between Angel and Antikari, the road passes through Crax and only becomes somewhat safe upon entering Limshau, where it gradually turns into the highway it was initially planned it to be. Only between Gnimfall and York does it become dangerous again, though still safer than breaking from the beaten path.

Tens of thousands of people commonly employ the Cross. Caravans alive and rolling as well as sacked and burned can be spotted along its route. Wandering shops sell trinkets from the backs of wagons. Some carts stay together for protection, creating nomadic markets that roam the road, never straying apart. The most well-known is the Arciducha, a caravan of 35 wagons selling fine clothes, rare foods, and even protective lodging with brothels to keep adventurers warm and satisfied.

These markets migrate between Antikari and Gnimfall, usually sticking close to Limshau's borders, where the road is patrolled more frequently. There are those that are born, live out their lives, and die without ever stepping from the Cross.

## LIFE IN THE HEARTLAND

Central Canam has the highest population density of the entire continent, but most of it is compressed into a handful of cities, connected by roads of varying degrees of maintenance. In contrast to the more agrarian nations on either coast, the core heartland nations have more of a proto-industrial economy. Farming is still the largest economic sector, but the farms are larger and more spread out, less often clustered around a protective manor or castle, and usually owned by those that work the land as opposed to being a leasehold from the local noble in exchange for a portion of the harvest (except in Kannos, which has a complicated relationship between land and money). Access to good education and the accumulated knowledge of ages past ensures that farming techniques are modern, efficient, and fruitful. Slavery, and even indentured service and serfdom, is illegal in the core nations of Abidan, Limshau, and Kannos, so while employed farmhands may do backbreaking work to produce enough to feed the teeming cities, they are usually well-compensated for their efforts. In parts of the heartland, the work of feeding the masses is made easier by the introduction of simple machines that require only minor maintenance to stave off the worst effects of EDF.

Heartland cities are usually large by the standards of the more medieval societies of the periphery. Limshau, the first such nation to be established, builds walled cities, and this practice has largely extended to her allies. As many of the cities are now very old, however, their populations have increased beyond the ability of those walls to hold them. The response to this population boom varies from nation to nation: in Limshau, common practice is for those who feel too compressed in their current quarters to petition to establish a new city in some unsettled part of the kingdom; in Abidan, cities build upward, raising soaring spires that look like the pictures in a storybook; Kannos' cities simply overspill their initial boundaries, erecting new city walls only when necessary for protection. The look of the





## CHAPTER SIX: HEARTLAND





cities reflects the mindset of the citizens. In Abidan, where people are proud and pious, the streets are laid out orderly, the buildings are kept clean, and symbols of nobility and faith are everywhere to be seen. In Limshau, the library-cities seem hectic and disorganized at first glance, but spending enough time in the mazelike streets and rooftops reveals a strange sort of structure that makes perfect sense to its residents. Kannos cities are truly haphazard, with buildings cropping up wherever they are needed (or wherever space exists), and obeying no sort of unifying principles.

Life in heartland cities is, once you remove the technological trappings, not significantly different from life in a bastion. People get up in the morning, eat their meals, go to work for a set period each day, come home and pass their leisure hours as they please, go to bed and repeat the process. While there is no formal concept of a 'weekend' (and not all calendars even acknowledge the concept of a 'week'), work hours are generally flexible according to the needs of the task, and holidays are frequent. Commerce is normally regulated by guilds, which impose standards of quality on goods produced in their cities, oversee trade connections with their neighbors, and make arrangements for the general welfare of guild members. Literacy is widespread—in Limshau everyone can read and write, and in Abidan nearly everyone—and as most tradesfolk learn the basics of their craft from guild schools before being placed as apprentices, they acquire a smattering of general knowledge beyond the necessities of their trade. Artists are also valued in all heartland nations, and it is common for wealthy citizens to commission public works as a sign of their status. Most cities also maintain public parks and other pleasant spaces for the community to come together in their spare time. Poverty and hunger, alas, cannot be completely eliminated; neither can crime; and the state of public sanitation varies from city to city. But in the most robust cities of the heartland, the overall standard of living would seem almost paradisaical to a person of the early industrial period, pre-Hammer.

Because of the size of these nations and their focus on their core cities, outlying settlements usually have to fend for themselves without much support from any central authority. Large towns are a rarity, largely because of the difficulties of defending them against wilderness hazards. More common are collations of smaller towns and villages, usually about a half-day's travel

apart, with encircling farmlands close enough for protection but not so close as to crowd. Regular market days allow the communities to share resources and make social connections.

Should one of these settlements come under attack by monsters or hostile forces, it is relatively easy for aid to come from the others, or in the worst case, for refugees to escape to friendly territory until a counterattack can be mounted. Villagers enjoy a slightly elevated standard of living compared with their counterparts elsewhere due to the more ready availability of city goods and education (particularly in the fields of medicine and agronomy), but otherwise, life in a heartland town or village is little different from any other echan village. Everyone knows everyone else's business; the basic cultural unit is the extended family; and the social hub (and best place for roving adventurers looking for work) is the village tavern.

## COMMUNICATION

Central Canam does not have a common tongue; though western English, Englo-Lingo, and Damaskan are all widespread, they are not so widespread that a person versed even in two of the three can be assured of being able to communicate with anyone she comes across. Travelers along the Continental Cross, which passes through Limshau along its longest stretch, usually use pidgin Damaskan, the pure tongue being somewhat difficult for non-damaskans to pronounce.

Contact between nations is difficult to maintain. Roads are not always kept in the best of repair, due to the dangers of the wild. Even the Continental Cross is a highway only on paper, with paved sections (sometimes asphalt, sometimes paving stone, most often mere cobbles) giving way to dirt tracks occasionally so obscured by floods or overgrowth that travelers must guess which way to go. The only places where roads are well-maintained are the core kingdoms of Limshau, Kannos, and Abidan, and even then only between major settlements.

Each of the major kingdoms maintains their own system of post riders, trained for the dangers of the road. Limshau's resembles a romantic legend gleaned from old human literature called the 'Pony Express,' with letters and packages carried by coach and team with armed guards ensuring their safe arrival. Kannos, with its horse-culture, prefers the image of the lone rid-





er stopping to change horses as they tire; the endurance of Kannosian horseflesh being such that in a pinch, a message could reach Appareci even from the furthest border ranches in less than three days. Abidan has the least developed postal system of the big three, but its smaller size is such that messages between cities rarely go undelivered for longer than a week, though outlying settlements can sometimes go months.

Missives to other nations are less reliable – for anything truly important, it is preferred to send an envoy to convey the message directly. Lesser deliveries are usually carried out by merchant caravans or hired adventurers, as there is no regular traffic even between close allies. Urgent messages are usually delivered by carrier pigeon, airship courier, or (in the most dire circumstances) by magic.

In the more densely populated lands of Canam, attempts at establishing a large-scale rail network have often failed, not so much because of magic interfering with geology (which it does), but rather political obstructions. At first, only humans possessed the ingenuity to construct such devices, though the gimfen soon learned as well, and to a lesser extent, the narros.

Limshau infrastructure is focused entirely in their cities, while Kannos lacks the population to build a network across such a massive nation. The free houses lack money and territorial range. Abidan has both the resources and the infrastructure, but is unwilling to initiate such a project until the other nations join in.

Gnimfall's Creep was built internally with no effort to integrate with any international standard. Meanwhile Baurch Malkut continues to design a stable system they are hoping to enact in the next few years. The only currently functional above-ground rail line runs between Thos Thalagos in Fargon and Gateway in Seliquam, the only point of communication between the bastion of Selkirk and their arm's-length echan allies. Even this rail is in constant danger from monster attacks and bandits, but its continued operation is so important to the continued survival of the entire region that the best soldiers and engineers for hundreds of miles are charged with protecting and repairing it.

Several times over the years, initiatives have been mooted by the leaders of various communities along the Continental Cross to construct a telegraph system along its length, but these always come to naught. This is not because of the technical limitations of EDF, as replacing copper wires with gold neatly overcomes the effects

of magic on electrical current, and there are many low-tech methods of electricity generation that have only a minimal risk of disruption. Unfortunately, since gold is still used for currency in most echan communities, prototypes of the telegraph system tend to have their wires snipped and carried away in the dead of night to be melted down by forgers. Until a safe and reliable system for burying the wires underground can be contrived, long-distance instantaneous communication in Canam will remain a pipe dream.

## THREE KINGDOMS

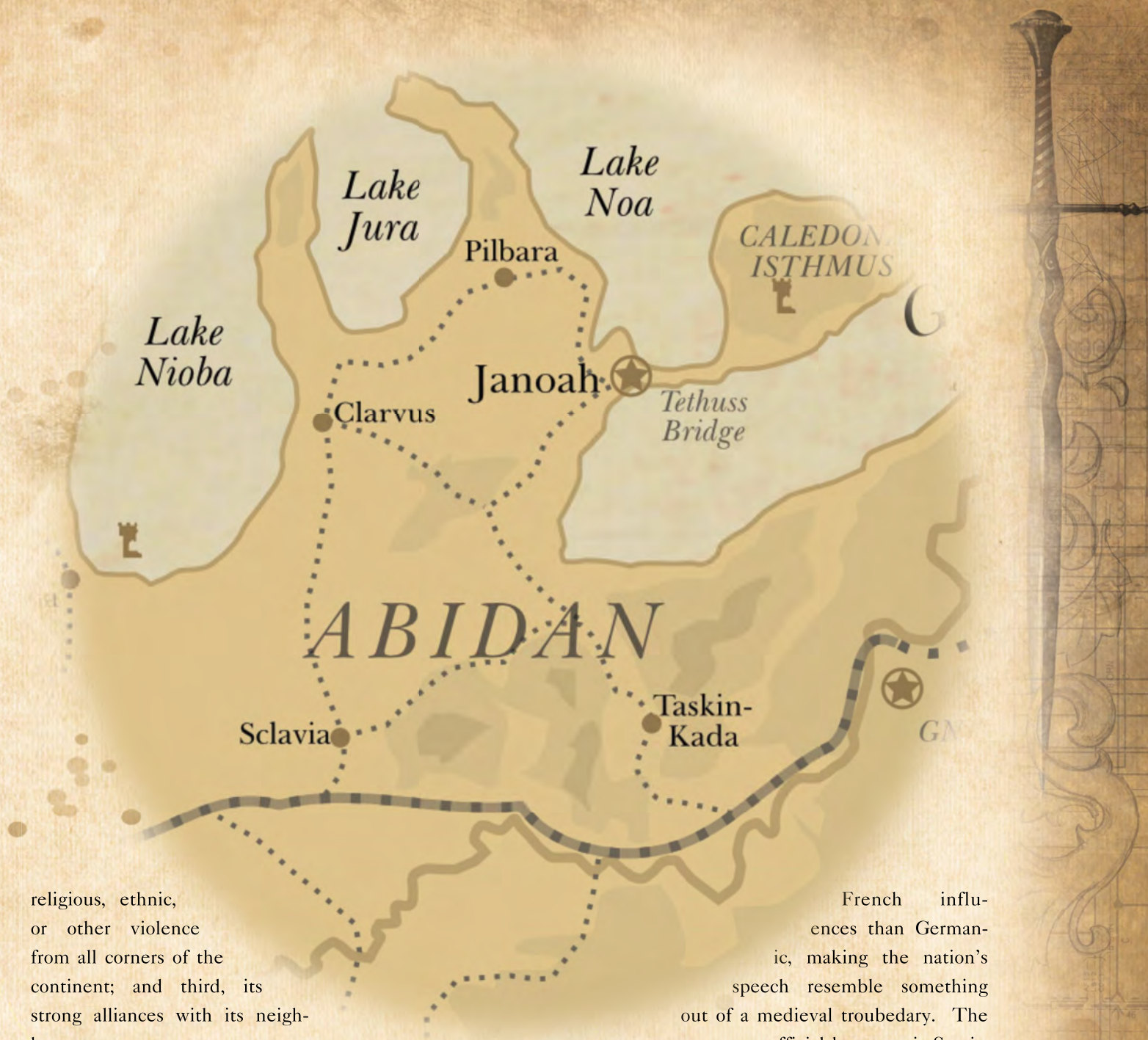
The heartland of Canam is dominated by three great kingdoms: Limshau, Kannos, and Abidan. These three have been close allies for centuries, and their cultures – particularly that of ancient and scholarly Limshau – have been some of the strongest social influences in this antimalleal world.

## ABIDAN

The holy kingdom of Canam, Abidan is the closest depiction of a medieval civilization from Earth's past as one is ever likely to find, boasting knights in shining armor, fairy-tale castles, courtly lords and ladies, and a monarchy that, for all intents and purposes, rules by divine right. The first, practically deified king left such an impact, his populist, tolerant, and progressive policies are only recently starting to erode in the face of human nature. For centuries, the nation relied on a unified purpose of defending the rest of Canam from pagus invasion, but behind the sturdy walls, the egalitarian foundation of the kingdom is slowly collapsing, social stratification driving a wedge between the nobles and an ever-increasing number of the poor. Its famed acceptance of all religions is similarly in peril, though this may take longer to erode.

The kingdom of Abidan was founded 190 years ago (though the land was settled well before) by Vincent Savarice, the Paladin King—or rather, it was founded *for* him, as Savarice himself never sought power that he was not freely offered. Its success as a nation is due to three factors: first, the strong citadels of its four major cities and the martial prowess of its honorable knights who keep the populace safe from external threats; second, the policies of cultural tolerance espoused by King Savarice and his heirs, attracting immigrants fleeing





religious, ethnic, or other violence from all corners of the continent; and third, its strong alliances with its neighbors.

From its friendship with Kannos, Abidan gains protection from the northern wilds. From Limshau, it gains knowledge in architecture, medicine, agriculture and animal husbandry, allowing for a standard of living far exceeding that of a true medieval society. From Gnimfall in the east, it gains the highest-tech advances that can be reliably made to work in open echa, particularly alcohol-engine-driven farming equipment (only needing disruption maintenance once or twice a day) that enables the kingdom to feed the sizeable populations of its four major cities and the duchies that surround them.

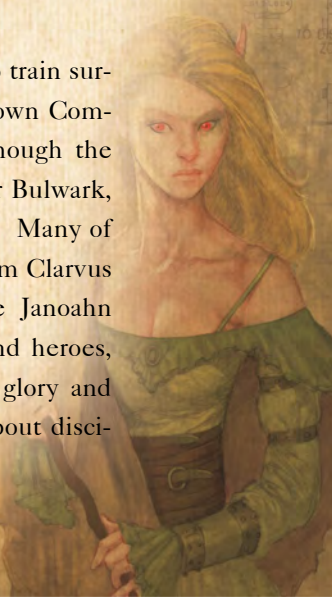
Though English is the most common language, Abidan is bilingual with two official languages—the other being Englo-Lingo, with more of an emphasis on

French influences than Germanic, making the nation's speech resemble something out of a medieval troubadour. The

most common non-official language is Semitic, due to the influence of Abrahamic religions on the country's culture.

## CLARVUS

Clarvus initially began as a military outpost to train surplus officers for the Bulwark when Janoah's own Command College found itself short-handed. Though the paladins of Abraham were always trained near Bulwark, more were shipped to Clarvus for preparation. Many of the lieutenants and captains that emerged from Clarvus were more disciplined than those from the Janoahn schools. Where Janoah bathed in legends and heroes, filling the minds of officers with dreams of glory and honor, those trained at Clarvus cared more about disci-





pline and respect for authority then drumming great speeches and recounting tales over drink around a fire. These officers, all dubbed knights of Janoah, are vital to the maintenance of the phalanx, and the shield wall cannot operate properly without their guidance. They keep the backs of the others stiff and the spears and blades from dropping. Eventually, the city would train the rank and file as well, even taking in divisions from allied kingdoms like the Finer Fire Pits and Gnimfall. Their standing army, at more than 20,000, is more than half the population of the city. Most of the rest of the population either works in military support and service roles, or labors in the city's profitable lumber mills and silver mines.

The first ruler, Donovan Matson, was originally the outpost's commander until he was appointed a duke by decree of King Savarice, and instructed to build a castle worthy of his new status. In truly medieval days, this would have taken decades, but thanks to the aid of the narros of Finer and builders trained at the famed Limshau architectural school of Abarbanel, it was completed in a mere eight years.

Some ten years after that, Donovan offered his maiden daughter Claire to David Margolis of Sclavia, in hopes of securing the extant alliance between the two cities. Claire, though much younger than Margolis, had grown up hearing glorious tales of Sclavia's duke, and still held onto the trophy Margolis had given her when she was a child.

Years earlier, at the Janoahn tournament, Margolis was rising the ladder in Skill of Shield and Sword, defeating with ease opponents younger and stronger. When Matson's champion suffered a broken leg against Pilbara's, David pledged himself to represent his blood brother, Donovan. The battle took nearly two hours, until at last David feinted to the ground, but when the champion brought down his dulled sword to finish the noble, the Slavian swayed and caught the weapon between his arm and chest. Rolling away from the opponent, David ripped the sword from the champions grasp, throwing him off balance, and slamming his own blade across his opponent's helmet, ending the competition.

The pommel of carved ivory, a rare prize taken from the tooth of a Dagronian war *mammut*, snapped from the hilt of the Pilbara champion. Before a squire could snatch the prize, David tossed it away with a flick of his blade. He handed it to the first daughter of the Matson

family as a sign of his dedication to their alliance. In return, Claire offered the knight a favor from her hand, a tiny handkerchief with the golden rose of Matson's crest sewn in the corner. Margolis thought little of the offer, but Claire treasured the ivory trophy in the intervening eight years before arriving at the castle Polaris in Sclavia for the first time. As her parents had foreseen, upon presentation, Duke Margolis recognized the child from his past and was amazed on how she had matured in the intervening years. She presented him the ivory pommel, and the charmed duke gallantly returned her the favor he had taken from her. When the envoys from Pilbara arrived many days later, also seeking an alliance, they found a bride already sitting loyally by the side of the duke.

Clarvus and Sclavia have remained allies ever since, despite efforts of the rulers of Pilbara to disrupt the alliance. Donovan and Emily Maston died several years after the loss of their daughter in a fire that devoured almost the entire keep, forcing a nearly brick-to-brick rebuild of the entire edifice. Much of the remaining family and loyal staff survived the blaze. The immediate investigation revealed no signs of foul play, though rumor told that the duchess had set the fire in an attempted suicide. It was not until many years later that a deeper probe by the Watchers of Taskin-Kada revealed Pilbara's complicity in the tragedy, igniting a short civil war between the three cities.

Clarvus royalty refused to die with the lord and his wife, and it survived through the passing decades into Armen Matson, who married the commoner Lauren Hammet and gave birth to Karlin Matson, the current ruler. Karlin is considered the most intelligent and fair ruler Clarvus has ever been blessed with, but looked also to be the last of his line when he married Curtis Coats, the town's Captain of the Guard and Karlin's trainer since his youth. King Claudas, concerned for the potential social ramifications of a succession crisis at this time, blessed the marriage on condition that Karlin provide an heir by some other means. The Clarvian duke and his husband have recently announced the happy birth of twin sons, thanks to a willing surrogate (now the boys' nurse) and a Limshau doctor knowledgeable in such techniques.

## THE GRAND LAKES

The old ponds in this region of old Earth have overflowed their bounds and merged into a single inland



*The announcer in regal red and yellow never even tried to conceal his contempt for his rivals as he spoke. He directed himself to the duke, ignoring his new wife by his side. He spoke loud enough for even her parents in the next chamber to hear. "We suggest you dissolve your marriage to her at once and take a bond with our princess." He said it abruptly, without unlocking or unfurling the brass scroll under his arm.*

*Margolis glanced at his wife, who raised an eyebrow slightly at him. She smirked, evidently unworried by the messenger. He spoke as he slowly moved his eyes back to the envoy. "I do not know which lands you call home, but where I keep, marriage is an eternal bond."*

*"Marriage of love, yes," the courier interrupted, "but not of politics or convenience. Dissolve this union. Whether she is returned unspoiled or not to her father makes no difference. Claire offered you much. We offer more."*

*Margolis took a fleeting look again at his petite bride, dangling her legs over the side of the throne, and winked to settle her. "More? And how much more is Pilbara willing to offer?"*

*That brought the scroll out, still unlocked but drawn and pointed as a blade to the Duke. "Claire measures a cup in our gallon. They promise a host of 5,000 blades and bows. Pilbara and the family Dugan vow double at just the ceremony. Another 10 by honeymoon's end."*

*"10,000 more you say," Margolis blurted in phony shock. "5,000 at the wedding, with nary a soul to guard the borders. And you speak of 10,000." He leaned forward. "But my dear envoy, it would take 10,000 men just to stave off this woman's jealousy. Not for 20, not for 200,000. I thank you for the courier...but we shall remain here."*

*She smiled. So did the King. The envoy did not.*

*Historical Entry  
From Politics and Piety  
455 AE*

sea—though twisting currents, some clearly unnatural, maintain a sometimes visible distinction between the separate former lakes. They now are an intense obstacle blocking the pagus from invading the south. Their far shores meet the rising cliffs of the Uzu Mountains of Dagron in the north. This leaves the Tethuss bridge the only safe route the pagus are not afraid of.

How odd they fear the mountains, the wind, and the water, but not of the Janoahn knights and their unbreakable wall. The lakes have been given the individual names Cyrus, Nioba, Jura, Noa, and Telos, and only the oldest fisherfolk know all the safe routes between the mercurial currents.

At the furthest southern point of Lake Nioba, a great spire of glass and metal rises from the deeps. Fisherfolk decline to give this edifice a name and make a variety of superstitious gestures if it is mentioned. No-one will consent to take a boat near to it, even if offered a king's ransom. Sometimes, when the cold north wind blows, a sound like the wailing of some forgotten soul reaches across the water, sending shivers down the spine of any unfortunate enough to hear. Still, occasional travelers along the shoreline at night report a light shining from near the top of the structure—no torch or candle but a thing made, whether by magic or technology none has gotten close enough to tell.

## JANOAH

Despite resembling a fairy-tale city, Janoah is anything but—it is actually one of the most advanced echan metropolitan centers in Canam. It is a center of learning, with an emphasis on theology and civics as well as a public schooling system promoting literacy among its citizens. It is also a hub of manufacturing, particularly weapons and armor, though it is also known for the skills of its carpenters. Janoah has a sewer system (not as advanced as Apareci's, but still functional), leaving streets clean of effluvia. It even features public transportation via a horse-drawn omnibus network. All these advances are in support of its primary role.

Janoah is a fortress.

The most obvious feature of Janoah is the Bulwark, the colossal shield wall and castle built against the southern end of the Tethuss Bridge, which stretches some 40 miles to the north. At 600 feet wide, the wall spans the full width of the bridge with ramparts and defenses continuing for a full 600 feet on either side of the southern cliff. More than 300 feet below, the violent waters rush over sharp rocks. The final defenses would not top the fortress until a mere 50 years





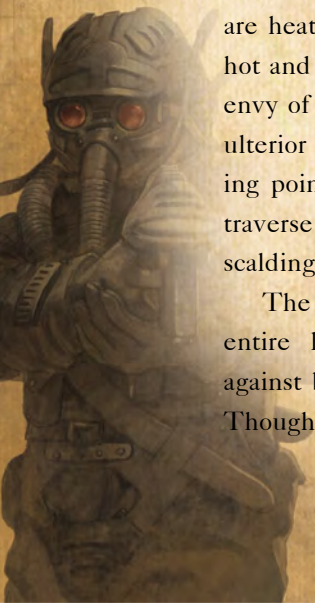
ago, nearly doubling the old wall's height. The city expands south from the fortress; with no city walls on its outer sides, it grew quickly, and continues to do so, making Janoah the third-largest echan city in Canam (behind Limshau and Apareci).

Janoah's citadel is not only the most sturdy construction in all of Canam, but also one of the most modern and comfortable. While most contemporary castles can boast indoor plumbing—using pipes to channel rainwater from the roof into cisterns and then primitive pumps to send where needed—the Bulwark's keep has dozens of cisterns fed from the waters below. Several of these are heated by alchemically-treated stones, allowing for hot and cold running water and bathrooms that are the envy of other echan nations. This convenience has an ulterior motive; the cisterns can also be heated to boiling point and the water pumped through sluices that traverse the full length of the Bulwark walls, sending scalding waterfalls to thwart an assaulting force.

The Bulwark has been under attack for almost its entire lifetime. Several smaller assaults pounded against blossoming defenses throughout Savarice's life. Though his Order of Abraham received the praise and

glory for many victories on and around the wall, the true defenders were the knights of the phalanx, warriors standing in front of the bridge, trained for repelling any attack on their front arc. Despite the resistance by this unbreakable line, the pagus, and occasionally their dragon lords, continually hammered against it in futility. Tethuss is the only open path for these creatures to pass from their dark homelands to the plunder-ripe lands of southern Canam; other routes are beset by winds capable of shearing feathers and scales off wings, mountains jagged as razors, and unpredictable rushing currents that turn to maelstroms at a moment's notice. Assuming brute force and overwhelming odds to be the key, one of the dragon lords, in an unprecedented move, took a huge force of followers, enslaving more during the journey, and walked across the bridge.

The Azhi lord Verkelen of Spite marched 20,000 armed and ironclad pagus against the Bulwark. Prior warning gave Janoah time to enforce and bolster their line; twenty rows of knights locked shield and spear in front of the barrier with thousands of skilled bowmen lining the ramparts above. The few spellcasters Janoah





was blessed with prepared the most violent magic in their repertoire.

Verkelen was not the only dragon, having bullied two other immature firewyrms to his cause. The two youths, inexperienced in fighting either humans or the shield line, overconfidently dove from high to strafe their claws across the bridge. In hopes of slamming the mob against their own wall, the first dragon was shocked to find her colossal weight repelled. In counter, the phalanx drove long spears that pierced her wings and drove her corpse over the edge to plummet to the rocks. The second creature attempted to halt her own dive but instead slammed into the wall, becoming critically injured from arrow fire. Losing air superiority, Verkelen could not suppress the arrows upon his assaulting pagus. The shield withstood and repelled the invaders, tossing many to the drink. Unaware of the frontline's failure, rear pagus continued to push. With the knights forming a wedge, they used the pagus' denial of defeat to deflect the army over the bridge. By the time Verkelen realized his folly, half his follows had fallen to their doom. Though the great lord could have continued his raze and decimated the line with fire, the fall of the city could not occur without a ground army. Reinforcements including the elite paladins of the line were approaching the wall, geared for the express purpose of dragon slaying. Verkelen issued the retreat but swore to return. He never did.

The assault on March 5th on 470 AE was the largest force ever to assault the wall. What concerns the city today is that no attack of any strength has occurred since. The knights refuse complacency and remain on guard despite the lack of activity on the bridge. Almost an entire generation has passed without incident. Are they massing for another assault? Have they found another route, or have they eliminated the pagus threat from Canam? Everyone in Abidan knows the latter is a mere pipe dream.

## LEGION'S POINT

Legion's Point is one of many outlying towns considered part of the kingdom of Abidan though not actively monitored by it. A fact most techans don't understand regarding the world of echa is the lack of communication within a civilization. Technological conveniences allow instantaneous messages between locations. However, in a primitive civilization like most echan kingdoms, only the larger cities have fast communication

(via messenger birds and mounted post riders), and even then, such correspondence can take hours, or even days.

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*After falling to a mysterious plague, the population's first reflex is to address the issue internally rather than seek help from their king—an authority few in the city even realize exists. Legion's Point becomes the jumping off point for the main quest of the adventure at the back of this book.*

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Miscommunication and lost messages are commonplace. For the smaller villages, especially outlining ones, months can pass without a message being sent or received. Additionally, several outlining communes barely consider themselves even part of the kingdom, claiming remoteness and a sparse population has delayed military support and financial aid. Unless someone from a village travels to one of the bigger cities, authorities seldom care. The only exceptions to this when the time comes to collect taxes. Legion's Point is one such village. Not close enough to either the Gihon River or the Grand Lakes, Legion's Point offers little strategic value and contains fewer than 300 people.

## PILBARA

Pilbara is the breadbasket of Abidan and the most advanced farming community in any of the echan kingdoms. The city itself is surrounded by concentric rings of fields, dotted with small hamlets for the farmers and manor houses for the landowners—those who do not choose to live within the city walls, where life is often cramped and untidy. Every so often, the landscape is broken by the stacks of a distillery that transforms a portion of the grain crops into the alcohol-based fuel that powers one-third of the duchy's farming equipment—simple combustion-driven harvesters sourced from Gnimfall, without which the disproportionately large population of Abidan could not sustain itself. The farmers of Pilbara are adept at repairing these simple engines themselves, as even their low-tech mechanisms can be affected by disruption up to four or five times a day.

Before Abidan was Abidan, Pilbara was a free house, rich in farmland and the bodies to work it, but not much else. Terrance Dugan's ancestors pledged themselves to King Savarice, not out of true devotion as many of his followers did, but out of fear that he would take their lands by force if they did not (a fear with no basis in





fact, but typical of Pilbaran nevertheless). They did not object to the influx of immigrants following the Paladin King, as they assumed many would settle adjacent to their lands and increase their power base (which did occur, though not as fast as the royals of Pilbara had hoped). Savarice, himself wary of the Pilbaran sovereign's motivations, was cautious about handing great honors to strangers without first having said rulers prove themselves. Other towns like Taskin-Kada, Janoah, Clarvus, and Selavia were founded before attention was diverted to develop Pilbara.

By the time the Dugans received their audience, a full generation of their 'royal' line had passed, an oversight the Pilbaran heir took as an insult. Juenet Dugan bit his tongue when finally able to stand before the new King. He wanted compensation for the offense received but instead lauded the arrival of his sovereign. Savarice begged forgiveness regardless, despite not being asked, claiming the defense of land and the building of the Bulwark was a higher priority over matters of court, which he trusted his nobles to handle for themselves. In compensation, he offered superior farming equipment traded from Gnimfall, including several alcohol-combustion combine harvesters. As a Duke of the Realm, Dugan would also warrant the king's ear when asked. In addition, his privileged knights would earn an opportunity to stand with the elite Line of Abraham, an honor few of them would succeed in taking.

Despite the rewards bestowed, the Dugan lord returned home bothered, considering the gifts hollow. Dugan expected and near demanded an opportunity to mingle his family's blood with that of the king's line, now consecrated with a dragon's kiss. The rules of nobility insisted, in Dugan's opinion, that Savarice's current marriage of emotion was obsolete given his new position, and he assumed only a political marriage could compensate for the relinquishing of his lands to the crown. Dugan's sister was an intelligent woman and beautiful despite nearing the end of her childbearing potential. But instead of a king, she was eventually married off to a rich neighboring landowner to appropriate his land and subjects into Pilbara in hopes of increasing influence and pushing again for a royal marriage with another generation.

Though Savarice retained his vitality well into his old age, he refused to put aside his wife even when she grew old and infirm. After Juenet Dugan passed on, his

son Jean succeeded to the duchy (still called a vassal kingdom out of pride). By this time, Pilbara had grown, and its own army, though not as trained or disciplined as other cities like Clarvus and Selavia, was much larger. Unfortunately, its capital city was wracked by crime, and the decadence of the royalty strained the population. Poverty infected the streets as much of the food harvested was shipped to other cities for higher profits. The Dugan castle, Comet's Eye, gleaming in shining silver, stood out among the sprawl of beaten huts and haphazard shelters claimed as homes by those with little hope. Out in the periphery, wealthy farms and fuel distilleries continued to toil away, giving the city a "donut-shape" of progress.

Still convinced a marriage to noble blood would save the city, Jean attempted to offer his daughter, Mia, to David Margolis of Selavia. When he discovered Clarvus had beaten him to the offer, Jean stayed silent. Not long after, servants discovered Mia's broken body upon the rocks on the south wall of Comet's Eye. Jean instantly accused Janoah of conspiracy despite lack of evidence, and demanded compensation that never came.

Years later, the Taskin-Kada Watchers uncovered evidence linking Pilbaran agents to the fire that claimed the life of Clarvus' duke and duchess, as well as their daughter Claire Margolis, wife of the Duke of Selavia. In response, the dour-faced David Margolis took a small group of his elite troops to the northern border of Pilbara, where Dugan met him with an army vastly superior in number. Margolis demanded retribution and presented the evidence pinning the blame of death squarely under the nose of Jean Dugan. Rather than denying it, Jean claimed sole responsibility, spitting in Margolis' face and declaring that his kingdom would no longer serve in slavery under a usurper who despised them.

David challenged Jean's claim of lordship and refused to accept that Dugan's voice carried the unified belief of his city. David challenged the most celebrated soldier in Pilbara to single combat. The victor would relinquish his title and town. War would follow the defiance of honor. The Lord Dugan agreed, but instead of sending a member of his house guard, he presented a behemoth of a man, seven feet in almost every direction, named Wheland the Whale. He wielded axes meant as double-handed weapons for ordinary men in each grasp. Margolis walked from his host alone, wield-



ing the family's dented shield and loyal longsword in pride.

His opponent slammed down to cleave the Duke in two with his right blade. After cracking the dried Earth, Margolis stepped upon the axe and swung his weight up to its handle. One swing and the beast was scalped. He fell upon the other axe in his descent. Margolis stood upon his opponent's head as he fell, never losing his balance. He walked down the knoll of flesh and demanded Dugan fulfill his oath. Of course, Jean had no intention of doing so, but before he could forfeit his honor, legions from Taskin Kada arrived to ensure he fulfilled the arrangement.

Jean, his family, and their loyal guard retreated into their fortress of Comet's Eye and settled in for a siege as the people of Pilbara welcomed the liberating forces of Clarvus, Sclavia, and Taskin-Kada. When word of the horrifying conditions of poverty and crime reached the King's ears, he sent more troops and supplies to rebuild the dilapidated community. Several of the criminal elements attempted to fight back, but were quickly routed by the Line of Abraham. The Dugan lord ordered the capital to not give in, to fight the occupation or forfeit their lives to prove their devotion to the family, this edict being brutally enforced by the house guard, which put down any attempt to riot and mounted the instigators' heads on the city walls as a warning to others.

Eventually, the Dugans' supplies ran low with little alternative except for surrender. Jean, convinced an execution awaited him, threatened to burn the castle until only charred stone remained. Margolis promised exile only awaited those who departed the castle peacefully. The next morning saw the doors open. Soldiers, squires and servants all shuffled into custody. Following that, the elder son, Cassel, and his daughter Monique exited, followed by Jean's cousins, Marta, Luc, and Francois. Luc's wife, Nieca, and their children Joseph and Keira trailed behind. Jean Dugan remained inside. Margolis and his elite marched inside Comet's Eye but found it empty. It was reported that Jean had leapt from the south tower rather than submit to the humiliation, though his body was never found. The most imaginative rumor placed lord Dugan at the precipice, only to find himself snatched away by a dark beast to fulfill some nefarious purpose.

Margolis did more than fulfill his promise. With the King's permission, he allowed Luc and Nieca along

with their family to remain as the new lords. The others could stay. Cassel and Monique preferred exile and vanished to the south several days later. Eventually, Joseph Dugan came of age and took a noble from Taskin-Kada for a wife while Keira was paired with Killian Margolis from Sclavia.

No unrest ever boiled over from Pilbara again. It now shines with progress unseen in the previous years. Despite the blight on history, the modern Dugan family is accorded all the rights of Abidan nobility, and the name is considered one of honor again.

## SCLAVIA

The duchy of Sclavia is the closest point of Abidan to the continental cross, and the city of the same name is one of the most cosmopolitan and picturesque in the kingdom. Situated in a protective fork of the River Gede, it is both the gateway to the kingdom, and should it ever come to that, its gatchouse. While much of Abidan lives up to its image as a fantasy kingdom, Sclavia almost resembles a theme park in its ostentatiousness, for all that it is the second-smallest city in the kingdom. The outlying farms and villages produce enough food to feed the populace with a little to spare, but the real wealth of Sclavia is in its trading opportunities with the outside world, and more, in the stories of its heroes.

The first Duke of Sclavia, David Margolis, never denied falling out of favor with his faith. Despite his opinions on religion, he never wavered in his loyalty to his King and Savarice never wavered in his confidence of his Duke. A general in the Paladin King's army, Margolis always led from the front, earning the respect of his troops and the love of his sovereign, who appointed him the first of Abidan's new Dukes.

Others flocked to his side, as those marching with Margolis never knew defeat. As his duchy, Margolis claimed the keep of Sclavia, the former Arsia family having died out thanks in part to an introverted lord who elected to join a celibate priesthood without siring heirs. Margolis could not have been more different, leaving a line of bastards all the way to the gates of his new realm. Savarice, concerned not so much for the morals of his followers but merely for the stability of his kingdom, asked his loyal friend to restrain himself and get married instead.

David conceded and asked the towns and villages around for suitable prospects of titled birth. A delega-





tion set forth from Pilbara with their lord's daughter Mia, but David's battle-brother Donovan Maston, ruler of Clarvus, sent dark-haired princess Claire, who already adored the storied general and won him over with her beauty and innocent charm. David and Claire were married in the span of half a moon's cycle, well before Pilbara's offering had even arrived. When they finally came, the marriage had already been consummated, but the offer was presented aggressively all the same.

The close relationship between Clarvus and Sclavia continues to this day, the unfortunate death of both Claire and her parents in an 'accident' engineered by Pilbaran jealousy serving only to strengthen the bond, as Margolis donned his armor once more and marched with his ally to claim retribution. His victory there cleansed his soul of remorse, though the Duke maintained his celibacy for another decade before he took a concubine, Elisa Gawain, offered to him by a wealthy family in Kannos. David ensured her free will before acceptance, but never took her as a wife nor fathered another child with her. After David's death at 75, Elisa remained, conducting and controlling affairs of business the royalty preferred to ignore. In a strange turn of events, David's sole heir, Killian, took as his bride Lady Keira Dugan of Pilbara, shocking many who had expected Killian to select another Clarvus princess to solidify the alliance again. Despite this, the connection between Clarvus and Sclavia remains strong to this day.

### TASKIN-KADA

The city of Taskin-Kada is far less scenic than the other settlements of Abidan, though it is far from utilitarian; but where the aesthetics of the rest of the kingdom tend towards the sweeping spires and crenellations of humanity's medieval past, Taskin-Kada prefers simplicity and the complement of form to function. Built on a hill overlooking a winding river, it has sturdy walls like most of Abidan's fortress-cities, but its gates have remained open since they were built. Though founded as a mining town, modern Taskin-Kada's chief imports and exports are knowledge, and especially secrets.

Duke Taraq Duncan still resembles his father, who in turn resembled his own, in an unbroken line stretching back to the Caravan of the King. All the Duncans commanded authority with their very stature. Clearing seven feet, his upper body is an inverted pyramid of toned and disciplined muscles, topped by a gleaming head as hairless as the rest of him. His ancestor was

once a barbarian marauder, desperate and hungry, who came to know Savarice when the king spared the bandit's life in a failed raid. In the journey of the caravan, Savarice talked about his faith only when asked but would often share the wisdom from other beliefs. He spoke of three religions of great stature worshipping the same god, but which went to war over trivial points of dogma. Savarice had read all the great holy books from these faiths and found truths in them all. He spoke highly of them and, though choosing one, claimed they all have equal validity. While most following shared Savarice's faith, many others had also joined in. Merin Duncan found an antidote to his temper and lived his life under the shroud of God's grace, though not as a holy man.

When a small nickel and silver deposit was located east of Pilbara, Savarice asked Duncan to take it and build a community to exploit the riches. Since many from Janoah were dedicated to defense, Duncan settled back in the blanket of protection offered by his neighbors. The name of the town would not follow until Duncan opened his arms to any of faith fearful of persecution in a world of man growing increasingly atheistic. Despite the large portion of initial Christian pilgrims, both Jewish and Muslim missionaries soon vastly overwhelmed them. Duncan had read stories of an enormous city across the world built around, inside, and over waterfalls. As the water cascaded all around, the millions inside lived peacefully, fully integrated with three monotheistic human religions. Though Taskin-Kada pales in comparison, it does not devalue the importance of its existence. Though many claim Janoah the spiritual center of mankind in Canam, in truth, the true holiest city is Taskin-Kada.

Declared a duke by Savarice, the elder Duncan soon married and sired equally massive offspring. Whenever a threat loomed overhead, the lord would rise as the single commander of the army and lead his forces into battle. With their massive physique, most enemies were demoralized before ever engaging armies. In truth, all the Duncan men were passive and seldom enjoyed fighting despite a canny mastery of it. They preferred watching opponents for the quickest and most efficient way to defeat them. This gave rise to the Watchers, an echelon of soldiers trained in the art of stealth to rival even the assassins from Baruch Malkut. The Watchers were not spies but observers. They never stole anything other than the unaltered history re-



vealed before their eyes. With a reputation for honesty and accuracy, the very word of a Watcher carries weight in an Abidan court.

That reputation allowed the organization to expose corruption within a trading guild in Slavavia and recover the Savarice's pilfered holy blade when stolen by thieves under blessing of Darius Konig. Their true mark of glory came when they took the initiative to observe the daily affairs of the Dugan royal family. Although they considered the momentary weakness of Juenet Dugan when he succumbed to the sexual advances of his niece a contemptible act, they kept their silence in favor of something more controversial that could affect the rest of the nation. Exposing their presence then would prevent future revelations. A generation later, they would witness Jean Dugan tossing his daughter, Mia, from a bathroom window in a moment of insanity after losing the opportunity to marry her off to the Slavavia duke. She had secretly expressed her love for a childhood friend, a girl from another respected house. Jean did not share the kingdom's tolerance of such matters and threw the girl from the window. When the castle was taken, a discovered diary of the lord claimed she had taken her own life when faced with her father's disappointment of her actions and choices. The Watchers who witnessed the incident refute this fact.

When the Watchers are not observing within the kingdom, the majority are committed to external actions, dealing with neighbors both friendly and hostile. Dozens patrol lands north of the Tethuss Bridge, a necessary task, though one costing the most lives. Most of the rangers travel south, to watch the nation of Baruch Malkut. Despite the impressive distance between the two nations and the fact that several other kingdoms lie in between, Savarice never forgot his experiences during his time of pilgrimage and considers the rival nation the most significant threat to Canam, more so than the pagus to the north. Taskin-Kada has an especially vested interest in Baruch Malkut; with the city's large Jewish population, the use of Hebrew words as a name for one of the most malevolent nations on Earth is seen as an abomination in the eyes of God.

## KANNOS

Kannos is only classed as a kingdom because the fac colonizing the world had no other word in their vernacular for an echan nation that was not a democracy. In fact, the nation's government is a form of plutocracy, but a very unusual one.

In Kannos, landowners make any decisions regarding the use of their land, and legally own any horses raised on it, but they are required by law to rent out that land at whatever rate its tenants can legitimately afford and are prohibited from making any other profits from it; owning land therefore grants power, but not wealth, and wealth alone cannot possess power. The ruling family is the one in control over the most land, with the matriarch/patriarch taking authority, though accepting advisement from a council formed from the remaining large land owners. There is no regality to this arrangement, and the society frowns on the ideology of royalty beyond the titles of 'king' and 'queen' (adopted more for diplomatic convenience than for any assumption of pomp). It became a source of pride to many, resulting in Kannos being perhaps the first if not only nation with a non-secular monarchy, a kingdom without a divine mandate or a foundation in religion. Although rule can be and generally does pass through heredity, there are times when it passed economically, though it is impossible to just buy the crown (land comes at a premium in Kannos, and no-one has *that* much money).

Outside of the major settlements, most of Kannos is isolated ranchland, interspersed by a few small one-street towns at irregular intervals. As such, it is more often subject to incidents of monster attacks than the other core kingdoms. Kannos has no standing army; in times of need, landowners are responsible for assembling a militia from their tenants (the wealthier of which usually hire mercenary free-lances to serve in their stead).

In sharp contrast to its neighbor to the east, Kannos takes pride in its agnosticism. While religion is not banned by any means, most Kannosians simply don't see the point in it. They are a practical people who disdain anything that smacks of superstition, and prefer to meet their problems head-on and take their destinies into their own hands, rather than trust to intangible concepts such as gods or luck.

Kannos has no official language, though most people speak western English with a dizzying array of local







accents. All legal documents, and especially treaties, are written in Damaskan.

## 134 APPARECI

Appareci could have grown into a bastion if situations were different. Bastions form when xenophobic humans gather to rebuild without the help of echan influence, usually upon the ruins of an old human metropolis. Appareci didn't benefit from the latter, having been only a small town previously, though which one has been to some debate. It emerged too close to curious echan neighbors and the men building the walls of this new human town knew too little of technology to turn away potential allies.

With Salvabrooke to the south and Limshau to the east, a moment of civility and sanity washed over the ruler of Appareci at the time, Kelvin Nezekin. With the fall to darkness of the Kingdom of Sana to the north,

Nezekin feared the possibility of impending attacks. Despite the warnings of advisors fearing echan contamination, Nezekin opened a dialogue with the damaskans, gimfen, and even the narros of the Finer Fire Pits.

After the trade agreements were signed with neighboring cultures, the city grew fast. The walls eventually erected around Appareci appear an imperfect replica of the one around Limshau, and the two cities officially refer to each other as siblings. Over a hundred thousand people call Appareci home. Although mostly human, the ratios shift daily with immigration and caravan arrivals. Most humans working in Limshau who were not born there originally came from Appareci.

The Nezekin ruling family have operated out of the capital for over 150 years, and its matriarch Bodika is Kannos' current queen (called 'The Iron Queen' behind her back, thanks to her silver hair, perpetually



grim expression, and acquisition of Kannos' most profitable iron mines when their former owner was forced by his expensive vices to liquidate his property), though she has in recent years expressed an interest in retirement in favor of her daughter Natalie.

The Seat Expanse—the council of landowners in Kannos—also gather here. As the heart of the nation, Appareci developed quickly, benefiting from much of the knowledge gleaned from techan archives and education. As a result, despite assumptions that echan cities appear stuck in a medieval time loop, Appareci bears a striking resemblance to an industrial techan city before the onset of electricity or automobiles, circa the mid 1800s pre-Hammer. Gaslights are becoming commonplace, and the city is blessed with underground sewage transfer.

## GOLANA

A relatively small community, Golana brings a blossoming lumber industry to the kingdom. Golana builders are known for the best wood products in western Canam. With the demand reaching an explosive level, the city refused to squander the rich old-growth forests nearby and limited their export. This threshold prevents the community from growing too fast. Since Golana exports nothing else, they continually strive to ensure their future. Despite bids by the kingdom to increase output, the current lord-landowner of Golana, the human Noahe Tharsis, refuses to budge on the issue.

In another kingdom, Tharsis would face the noose for such defiance. Nezekin understands the reasons ensure the towns longevity. Meanwhile, Tharsis continues to push his people to expand their resources and explore other avenues of income. The main boardwalk of the city features no less than two dozen craft shops. Caravans often employ rivers more than roads in the transport of supplies across Kannos, and Golana operates as a hub connecting many of the smaller towns in the east with those in the west.

## JAIRUS

Obviously inspired by Kantis across the ocean, the rangers of Jairus commit themselves to the destruction of creatures inside the Sana Marsh. The Jairus death

*Kiko Tikal was her chosen name; I couldn't pronounce her fae name. I was in love; that's all that mattered, not that it did. She had no interest in someone so...I don't know, non-damaskan.*

*I was her apprentice for 30 years, and I could swear on a stack of books that she was the greatest librarian in the empire, though that title cheapens her talent, like claiming Sherlock Holmes was a good chemistry student. She never maintained a library; she never handled late fees, but she was also not a custodian. She was not one to raise a weapon. Her value was her mind, the one tasked with Limshau's greatest mysteries. She could find any lost books, track any desired knowledge, and expose any secret. I was there when she took on Keris Rifts...intellectually.*

*We knew he arrived in Limshau from the south when he was young, and that he had several valuable books he employed in barter, save a handful he considered too personal. One of those books he offered was the diary of another librarian that had been missing for several years, last reported in Dawnamoak.*

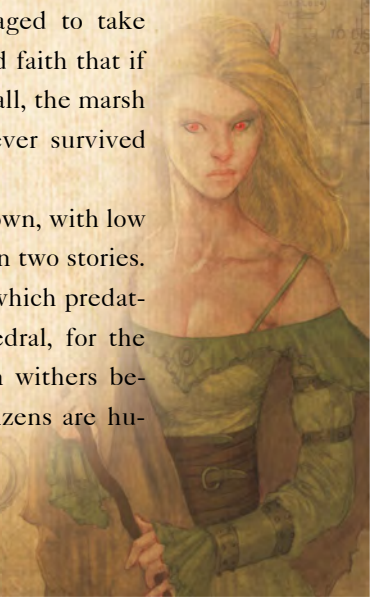
*Said librarian was also a wizard, which perhaps offers an explanation. We did determine that Rifts was not his last name. We followed him to his Wizard's Tower, where Kiko waited outside for Keris to acknowledge her. After an hour, she was allowed through a hidden entrance that circumvented the labyrinth. I was stuck outside for two days.*

*When she finally emerged, she considered the matter settled. The only postscript she offered was that "It was safer with him than with anywhere else."*

*Wade Argintari, Librarian  
Diary Entry*

hunters, founded by the original ruler, Javana Jairus, engage in crusade after crusade into the evil swamp, though such efforts take a physical and emotional toll on them. The hunters have even managed to take down the odd death dragon. They all hold faith that if the central castle, Kardia-Gothas, were to fall, the marsh would die alongside it, but no-one has ever survived entering the great keep.

Physically, Jairus resembles a frontier town, with low wooden buildings rarely standing taller than two stories. The only stone structure is the town hall, which predated the town and resembles a small cathedral, for the general Kannosian disdain for superstition withers before the specter of Sana. Most of the citizens are hu-





*We found maps and old records of this land back before the chaos and matched it to what emerged after.*

*There lie two dominant trains of thought as to what happened...meaning, why so little has changed. One is that the local natives tapped some "rediscovered" magic to maintain their culture. The other is that the region was already bonkers to begin with, so there was little for the magic to affect.*

*As such, old titles remain, the Needles, Inyan Kara, the Badlands. The ones forgotten including the strangely still standing ruins of that techan city in the east that everyone claims is haunted, and what's left of those old dudes carved into that rock facing—I assume they were worshipped by the natives in some way.*

*That leaves the Keris Catacombs (also known as the Oubliette) and the Wizard's Tower—not a tower, but rather that bizarre rock Keris built his fortress into. The natives called it Bear's Lodge. It probably won't be called that anymore.*

*Elussya Neary  
Sarnathi Historian*

mans with a handful of gimfen from Salvabrooke. The current lord, Marcanis Jairus, keeps the order. The crusade and the tales of returning survivors fuels pride and patriotism in the kingdom and a lukewarm tourism industry appeared as a side effect. Since the crusade instills honor and courage in those hearing the stories, Appareci continues to endorse and fund the crusades with caravans of supplies and monies to the city. If the campaign waned in popularity, the queen's and the council's support would diminish, and the town would fall apart quickly.

Beneath the guise of boldness and chivalry in Jairus lies a bed of trauma and post-traumatic stress. Despite being trumpeted as heroes, the Death Hunters from Jairus also exhibit unbalanced personalities and are also, unfortunately, the source of much the crime in the city as well.

### SARNATHI

The legend of the wizard Keris Rifts dates back over 250 years. The stories claim Rifts as the first human mage of any significant power, but his origin has never been discovered. The first record of him has him arriving at Limshau already adept and with numerous books

open for trade. Compensated, he traveled North to Kannos and established his own library and research keep within a mountain fringing a rather nondescript town, Mare Crater. The peak, a laccolithic butte, had been an ancient landmark of nation and tradition. Keris didn't bother to consult anyone about acquiring the tower, and it was a decade before anyone realized what was being done. There are only a handful of external indicators a labyrinth exists within peak, but those do suggest most of the tower had been carved out. The fortress and the labyrinth within was called the Oubliette.

From the newly christened Wizard's Tower, Keris forged many of the first human-made magic items, including the storied Staff of KeRif. Legends differ on his disposition, with some claiming he was an evil despot ruling over the village, using them for his vile experiments, though most hold he was merely an eccentric visionary, more a genial mad scientist than anything else. As visitors became increasingly curious and aggressive, Keris commissioned a gimfen engineer to create a labyrinth from the bottom levels of the tower to guard some of Rifts' acquired artifacts.

Although very little is known about who Rifts was or why he built the Wizard's Tower, there is considerable evidence of how he died. It was another spellcaster that challenged Rifts, the foreigner Piotre Raczek. They dueled, and the countryside erupted in flame. By the end, Rifts was dead, and Raczek took one item from his rival's body and returned to his home across the world, never entering the dungeon, leaving it to the town nearby. One would think they would collapse the catacombs and go about their lives.

They did not, and within a few years, the village of Mare Crater (now called merely 'Sarnathi' in common parlance, though strictly speaking this is the name of the mountain itself) turned, quite literally, into a tourist trap. They cater to the hundreds of adventurers every year trying to survive the dungeons of Wizard's Tower.

Dozens of pubs and taverns line the main street. Shops sell thousands of trinkets of varying levels of worthlessness. A few youngsters charge a modest fee to escort adventures to the mountain entrance. Hospitals charge extravagant fees for healing. The people never wish an adventurer to succeed else their franchise crumbles. This lucrative business continues, and no





brave party has ever triumphed. Thousands of adventurers have lost their sanity, various body parts, and in extremis, their lives in pursuit of Rifts' legacy.

Controversy arose recently with accusations of abuse and slavery. Kannos forced the lord-landowner of Sarnathi, Orinn Dason, to impose legislation regulating the 'hospitality' industry. Though reduced, it was by no means eradicated. Because of the regulations, some brothels went out of business but were soon replaced, and the effect on the overall community was minimal. Still, the town's reputation has acquired a sourer note, as a place where one can acquire virtually anything given enough money.

## TEMPLE OF AVALON

One of the most mysterious places on the continent, anyone knowing of its existence professes it a holy place, though not knowing exactly why. On a cursory view, Avalon looks like any of the hundreds of other broken ruins dotting over across the landscape of Canam and the thousands scattered across the world. Eight pillars of unremarkable significance and different heights, ranging from 10 feet to 30 feet, stand in a circle atop a small peak. This peak is surrounded by what many observers only call "the fortress." Four naturally formed walls encircle the field the peak sprouts from. The main court stretches across nearly a full mile. The first inner wall stands a colossal 150 feet tall. Each subsequent outer wall is slightly shorter, anywhere from 20 to 30 feet. Each outer wall is slightly further out, from 50 to 70 feet. The final outer wall is still 80 feet tall. Each wall features one entrance, which doesn't line up to any of the others.

This formation appears natural but would represent one of the most organized examples of chaos in the world. No one has claimed it, and no one ever lingers who visits. Anyone arriving understands it as of great importance and usually departs after a few days. Day and night, no clouds ever cover the sky above the temple (clouds orbit around the emptiness like the swirling weather around the eye of a great hurricane). The temple peak always shines in the dim white light from Attricana, often appearing brighter above. A natural staircase is etched on the side of the tower. The columns include no symbols or letters declaring their origin. Plant overgrowth gives the impression the temple and its fortress are as old as the second age.

Evil creatures find discomfort within its domain and often break off the pursuit of those fleeing inside. Any magic items of any magnitude glow more so. Those who worship Amethyst claim it to be their holiest temple and all clerics professing the faith are determined to take a pilgrimage to the peak of Avalon at least once in their lifetime. Anyone spending time there all know its fate is far more significant than a simple place of worship.

## XIPHOS

The steadfast alliance between Limshau and Kannos resulted in Xiphos, dual castles on the Kannos-Limshau border, with connecting bridges and tunnels. Once of separate demographics, the elves and humans integrated and the differences between the castles grew slim. A separate Lord-landowner runs each; half-damaskan cousins Warwick Rafonar and Unas Seashadow, who are both considered lords and citizens of both nations. Disagreements never spill into conflicts as the populations are too mixed to create a schism in the two communities. Instead, the city regulates trade between Limshau and Kannos, connecting daily with the newer Limshau city of Warraqueen.

Xiphos carries only one name though having two castles, Tempess (on the Kannos side) and Polyglot (on the Limshau side). The first lord-landowner, Stephen Rafonar, initially traveled to claim this land and discovered the two keeps already there, apparently built and ravaged by a passing goblin force. Rafonar rebuilt the ruins in haste before the same force returned. The army did return, sooner than hoped. Before the keep fell for the second time, a force from the Limshau city of Warraqueen arrived and drove off the attackers indefinitely. Rafonar paid his unspoken debt to the Limshau forces by offering their commander, Fellan Seashadow, to share the title to his land claim. The elf would be the first non-human lord-landowner in Kannos, and when his younger daughter chose to bond with Stephen, the succession of the two keeps was ever after bound to two branches of a single family.

## LIMSHAU

The kingdom of knowledge was founded to preserve the amalgamated wisdom and history of the entire planet, which its first king believed united all intelligent souls. No matter the origin or race, the planet was sin-







gular, and every soul is tied to this world. Ravenar Limhsau desired a cosmopolitan civilization where ethnicities would mix and there would be nothing to separate the magical from the evolved, where one's place on the fae tree didn't matter. The dream involved the construction of perfect cities of white and geometrical precision (though a fae's interpretation of geometry sometimes seems strange to humans). Although they accomplished that, the intermingling of culture and blood never manifested quite the way Limshau anticipated, and communities remained largely separate. The knowledge came, the cities were built...two out of three isn't bad.

### ABARBANEL

The first Limshau branch formed after the home city, Abarbanel holds the largest book collection in proportion to its population (less than 10,000 people to almost a 15 million items). The massive library sits entirely

underground. Only a few small buildings pop up from the surface, still surrounded by walls, and all populated by its modest population of custodians. Dropping to the huge, multi-level facility underneath shows its massive collection of books on history. Almost every major event that occurred after Attricana opened is recorded here. If the search is extensive, one might even find reports predating this. This Limshau library contains the greatest concentration of knowledge of the time of man. Some of the tomes are even originals from before the Second Hammer, in languages few can decipher.

The city began initially as the capital's primary quarry, supplying its massive need for construction materials. A web of tunnels hollow out the rich deposits of calcium silicate and lime, while on the surface, the ingredients are combined with others into hardened clay, which is dry pressed and sent through rail kilns. These components combine with modernized burners to cre-



ate the signature near-perfect white bricks the entire kingdom uses in most of its construction.

The resulting product rolls out of the conveyer in a near-unbroken straight line, every brick matching the characteristics of the previous one. Their surface is smooth with sharp corners and straight lines. Only slight divots are visible on the brick's joining side to assist in the mortar setting. Very little mortar (white like the bricks, and comprised of sand, calcium hydroxide, and volcanic ash from nearby Mount Vasenren) is used in Limshau bricklaying, and with the near perfect structure of the bricks, the outer wall looks like a single clean piece of white stone except under a close inspection. Most of the bricks exported are of an exact ratio and size with a small number being larger faced slabs used in the outer walls of various cities. Each brick, even the larger wall varieties, are believed to be the strongest non-magically made bricks in the world, capable of sustaining a 150 Mpa load before fracturing. Abarbanel is justly proud of its primary export.

The founder of the city, the human Geoffrey Huang (nicknamed 'the White Tiger' by his subjects for his hair, bleached by both age and calcium dust), personally supervised his kilns. As the mines grew larger and more extensive, they found themselves with an impressive subterranean cavity. Huang ordered surplus stock to be used to build up the catacombs to match the city structure of the capital. As the mines started to dip in their export, others would pick up the increased demand, but by then, Abarbanel had found its second purpose. Though still the single largest exporter of "Limshau-Lime" bricks, Abarbanel also became a library.

The mines and the library are independently controlled, and kept strictly segregated to ensure the safety of the collection; anyone who wishes to pass from the mining city to the library city is required to go through the public baths first. An elaborate system of rotating mirrors brings sunlight into the underground city, and a surprisingly efficient charcoal air and water filtration system ensures that the library and living spaces are largely free of alkaline contamination. With the ceiling painted sky blue and the streets of the city elaborately landscaped, one might even momentarily forget that it's underground.

Limshau as a whole follows a system of elected monarchy, though they call it 'legatine democracy'; rather than electing individuals, an entire family lineage is appointed to the nobility by popular vote, until it ei-

ther dies out or every heir (including spouses and adoptees) abdicates; then another family is chosen. The current ruler, the half-fae Kayama Nekei, is descended from the third lineage to rule Abarbanel, the first two human dynasties having not lasted beyond the city's first century. A custodian by training, she prefers the library to the mines, despite her parents having been miners, and leaves all the details of its operation to its supervisor, Bartlet Ramos. Since she has yet to take a bond, many fear her line will end with her, forcing a new election. Though Bartlet has offered himself as a potential consort on more than one occasion, Kay has repeatedly declined, stating bluntly (but without rancor) that she finds his unclean and brawny physique completely unattractive. The two remain good friends, regardless.

## ATHENAEUM

The museum of Athenacum, a huge elevated cross structure constructed over the top of the conjunction of two rivers, was founded by Jancis Lightwind, a damaskan librarian with 200 years of service in the Limshau stacks. Jancis found more fulfillment not in the acquisition of general knowledge, but in the allure of knowledge the world has lost or has yet to know. Her fascination began when a pilgrim arrived at Limshau not with a book but holding an artifact of old Earth, a crystal skull of near perfect construction. No book in Limshau's collection could shed any light on the artifact's origin, and Jancis realized as much knowledge could be gleaned from the study of objects as well as books. Thus she petitioned to found a new library, dedicated to the recovery and examination of lost artifacts. Rather than uproot the village already located at her preferred site, Jancis' engineers simply built above the river junction, erecting a ten-story truncated tower with four large supporting legs at each corner of the intersection, allowing moorage for riverboats. The surrounding farmlands were left untouched, and the increased attention improved opportunities for trade significantly. As the town's population is still relatively small relative to other settlements in Limshau, they produce far more food than is required to support themselves, and send the rest along the river for a tidy profit. Any item of historical importance containing a mystery not solved by a previously published book is sent to Athenacum for study. Many remain part of the public museum, as long as they pose no threat to the popula-





tion; those that are deemed dangerous are sent on to the vaults of the Scholar Wardens.

Alas, Jancis would not see the end result of her dream. In a critical blow against Limshau, as her convoy was returning with a bounty both priceless and worthless, a slaver caravan assailed them. Only two members survived and escaped. Jancis and two others were captured and taken to Baruch Malkut. Jancis had taken no bond yet but held a promise to eventually marry the human Walter Spota, one of the engineers brought to design and build the Cross. When word reached his ears of Lightwind's fate, Spota (knowing that a covert rescue was all but impossible) took his life savings and traveled to Matronis to locate his lover, intending to purchase her back before she was sent for 're-education'. He successfully located the slaver and the facility. To his horror, he discovered Jancis had been haloed, and nothing of her previous mind had survived. Maintaining composure, Spota fought the urge to slay everyone in his vision at the cost of his own life. He purchased Jancis and departed. Neither of them was ever seen again, but the legacy they built lives on.

## ENCHIRIDIA

The most poetic and creative writers winding tales about fantasy worlds never consider the logistic difficulties of micro-managing every aspect of an empire. Keeping the populace fed is a fact often ignored in favor of lurid descriptions of crystal spires and other picturesque wonders, even though applying a logical eye to the setting causes it to fall apart under the weight of a starving population. Not every nation is blessed with a magically renewable food supply like Laudenia. Fortunately, Ravenar Limshau's journey to Angel produced something much more useful; allies with knowledge.

The Yi clan of Genai, half of whom followed Ravenar back to Limshau, offered a solution: chickens and eggs. The family had once been expert farmers and animal breeders, whose ancestors before the fall of humanity had practiced the arts of improving animal yield (with science!). They had managed to bring many of

## KNOW YOUR CUSTODIAN

*By tradition, most people know a custodian in black as a custodian on expedition. In truth, the color represents the guild one graduated from. Black and white are the largest guilds, but there are six recognized custodian guilds in Limshau, each with their attire and weapons specialization. Out of consideration for non-damaskan membership, weapons are referred to by their kochai-nihongo names, as the damaskan words contain a phoneme difficult for other races to vocalize. Despite assumption, there is no open rivalry between guilds, and it is common for custodians to transfer between guilds or be temporarily seconded to another guild for a particular mission.*

### GUILD OF GNOSIS

*Founder:* Hibiki Clearbrooke  
*Based:* Limshau  
*Pattern:* White, patchwork  
*Style:* Katana (two-handed)

### GUILD OF ZAVEST

*Founder:* Constance Almanee  
*Based:* Athenaeum  
*Pattern:* Blue, quartered  
*Style:* Yumi or shortbow

### GUILD OF ILM

*Founder:* Stratos Stormguard  
*Based:* Limshau  
*Pattern:* Black, patchwork  
*Style:* Katana and wakizashi (one-handed or dual)

### GUILD OF TAJUNTA

*Founder:* Forragnite Faux  
*Based:* Primmer  
*Pattern:* Grey, solid  
*Style:* Tetsubo and throwing hammer

### GUILD OF VIVEK

*Founder:* Stratos Stormguard  
*Based:* Zorabn  
*Pattern:* Red, solid  
*Style:* Yari or naginata

### GUILD OF FIOS

*Founder:* Quinn Paor SpierHead  
*Based:* Enchiridia  
*Pattern:* Tartan  
*Style:* Ono and throwing axe

### GUILD OF SATORI

*Founder:* Cyrell Ceopollis  
*Based:* Warraqueen  
*Pattern:* Green, irregular shapes (camouflage)  
*Style:* Kusarigama and shuriken

their livestock with them on the exodus, providing the first bastion settlers with superior livestock, which they further refined—first with traditional, primitive methods, or low-tech hormonal treatments, and later as EDF began to recede, technological methods such as gene splicing. When Ravenar came to the bastion seeking allies, many of the Yi saw an opportunity to put their work into practice on a larger scale, and became citizens



of Limshau, eventually founding the city of Enchiridia in a rich landscape a distance away from the capital. There they set about the task of developing an aggressive breeding program that eventually resulted in the largest supply of domesticated fowl in all of Canam.

Like all Limshau towns, it also sports an impressive library, containing the greatest collection of knowledge on agronomy and animal husbandry on the continent.

The Enchiridia stocks are massive with regulated temperature controls and a purified feeding system. Genetic modification, which somehow managed to make its way to Limshau despite the two branches of the Yi clan having no *official* communication, has rendered modern chickens resistant to many dangerous bacteria like salmonella and E. coli (though this matters not to the damaskans, immune to such infections, it is a great boon to the non-fae population). The hen population grew so large and bountiful, Enchiridia exports their product across the continent. In return, Kannos offered stocks of cattle, which also was shipped to Enchiridia and spawned a new breeding program.

Enchiridia's current ruler is the half-fae elder Yi Yui, granddaughter of the first chairman, with a third of her subject-employees also her relatives. Enchiridia has retained many traditional Chinese customs rarely seen these days outside of Genai, and is a favorite haunt of Limshau anthropologists as well as agricultural scholars. Unlike other cities in Limshau, Enchiridia requires either glory or praise. It knows perfectly well its purpose and attempts no concealment of the fact. Live fowl have even been seen wandering the library halls, but they never peck at the books.

## ESCORIAS

The miniature Limshau, Escorias is virtually identical to its elder sister city in shape and composition, but at only third the size. The book composition is almost entirely focused on the arcane arts. While Limshau has the Koana academy as a small part of their composition, the Escorias school occupies the

entirety of its city. Ravenar Limshau respected wizardry, given its dedication to knowledge, but preferred the scientific approach to magical research rather than the mummary that sometimes plagues the practice.

There are tens of thousands of books on the history of spellcraft and famous casters, including works of fantasy fiction from before the Hammer—some of the techniques described therein hav-





ing turned out to not be quite so fictional after all. To the city's rulers' chagrin, however, they have not been able to acquire any foundation spells.

Some critics argue that magic should remain the property of casters and has no place in Limshau, a nation dedicated to empirical knowledge. Ravenar disagreed, citing that the enchanted world intertwines with the unenchanted and cannot be easily separated. Understanding both is necessary. For contemporary wizards beginning their journey down the path, Escorias is a common first destination. Many arrive here before learning a single spell. One must understand the path before walking the path. They read books on the history and the development of magic from its initial castings from the tongues of dragons and laudenians to the first foundation spells.

The first to take the seat of governance was Risul Sulvannis, a damaskan who abandoned his vocation to take up the blade to defend the realm when asked. He seldom read the tomes he defended, but his second wife, Lara Fenrin, considered herself an amateur caster, though she never mastered any spells of consequence. She would often walk the halls, understanding the books, but never harnessing the power some others flaunted.

After even her bond-extended years wore out, Risul's third wife (also human) took similar interest in the collection, though she possessed no magical skills at all, but still loved stories of great mages. Sulvannis himself died of old age only a few years since, his lifespan significantly reduced, but no less contented, from having offered so much of it to his series of bondmates. He left behind twenty-five children, of which the youngest, Lanas, has since taken over his father's role as ruler.

### KODEX

It is unsurprising that Limshau possesses the most advanced medical knowledge of any echan nation. Though fae rarely need any sort of treatment beyond basic first aid and surgery, a few of the humans who returned with Ravenar Limshau from Angel were doctors and kept their knowledge alive. As they passed on, their knowledge continued in many of the Limshau original publications. In time, these publications became concentrated in the library-city of Kodex.

Safely snuggled between Limshau and the Finer Fire Pits, Kodex has never suffered an attack by anyone. The small town has virtually no custodians and

those that are present concentrate more on their knowledge of the library and its collection of books, blurring the lines between them and the resident librarians. Kodex is practically unique among Limshau settlements in that it is not contained within a wall, its stacks scattered through several towers specializing in medicine and engineering technology. For medicine, almost every book written on the various practices, both proven and disproven, herbal, scientific, and even magical, can be found. Very few tomes on modern medical technology have escaped the bastions, but those few can be found here; only a few of the techniques described are of any use (most requiring specialized machines), but those that do work in echa are invaluable. Although the library initially frowned on them, they also allow books on homeopathy and other refuted folk techniques, as well as remedies requiring magical elements; these are segregated from the main collection to prevent students from acquiring misinformation by accident. Kodex also has a practical medical school, and most of the techan world's knowledge of fae anatomy originates from techan doctors who have come here to study on sabbatical.

Other than the medical texts and journals, Kodex also recently began building kilns and exporting bricks to supply the increasing demand for "Limshau-Lime." The export has provided a minor windfall for the small town. Not blessed with as plentiful deposits, they still manage to fill the demand opened after Abarbanel reduced output. This side industry has a secondary benefit in that the lime is a powerful disinfectant, which while not suitable for use in the medical profession, is exported to Enchiridia for keeping the livestock buildings sanitized.

### LIMSHAU

More books rest on shelves in Limshau libraries than anywhere else on Earth, including Kirjath-Sepher, the famed wizard keep across the world. The namesake capital of Limshau is the largest of all. Limshau texts contain history, science, medicine (both scientific and traditional), technology, and geography. One can learn any skill here if one applies themselves accordingly. Although an exact consensus is impossible given the influx of knowledge every day, at last estimate, the Limshau capital boasts over 200 million items (including books, scrolls, museum artifacts, unbound records, and other sundries).





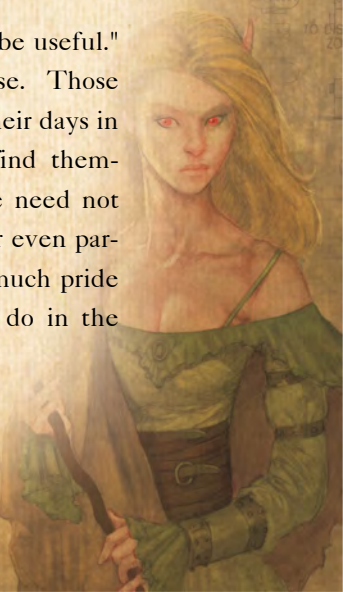
Many of the technical journals from the Canam Bastions have been smuggled here, but the knowledge is hard to understand, as the already technical subject matter is further concealed behind layers of bastion-specific jargon. Many bastion-born embracing the life outside smuggle forbidden manuals from their home to barter into Limshau and get a head start on a new life. Limshau considers these books valuable and would pay steeply for the acquisition of rare works. Quite apart from the scientific texts, there are plenty of individual librarians who would be ecstatic at the acquisition of a new work of fiction or bastion popular culture, and even more so, a techan relic from the old time. It is not uncommon for a visitor to the city to be accosted by a seemingly deranged 'otaku' (a Sinitic term adopted to describe those librarians whose research interests have come to overshadow their social graces), interested in some inscrutable facet of their clothing, speech, or deportment.

As for defense (which is rarely necessary, the massive city wall deterring most casual invaders) the duty falls upon the Limshau custodians, the most trained fighters in the world. Miles across, the city attempts to emulate the utopian vision of its first ruler. Crime is

low, personal liberty is high, but the paradise is marred by rampant discrimination between various fae as well as between fae and human, with one notable exception—gimfen never seem to have a problem with anyone.

While this element rarely shows itself in public, and usually goes both ways (Limshau does not have an easily definable underclass), it manifests itself in a labyrinthine social structure that mirrors the complicated layout of the city streets. What may be perfectly acceptable for a person to say or do in one street may be taboo a mere alleyway's distance, and each district of the city has its own tightly regulated but usually unspoken rules.

The belief of the city endorsed by all is "be useful." Whatever purpose it may be, fill that purpose. Those who wish just to leach from others or waste their days in lethargy garner no sympathy. They can find themselves outcast or even exiled. The purpose need not even be important or culturally significant, or even particularly visible. The food vendors take as much pride in their professions as the legal prostitutes do in the buildings behind and above.





Destitution is practically nonexistent, as charity is plentiful for those struck down by chance or misfortune—it is only when the beneficiaries show signs of becoming dependent on such good grace that providers become less charitable. Though there is no organized system of social work, there are those who have chosen this as their way to be useful and will care for the homeless or those afflicted with mental or social disorders until they can be rehabilitated. Organized crime has failed to make significant inroads, as fae in general have difficulty fully grasping the human concept of personal property. Drug trafficking has also failed to take root, since most drugs have a reduced or no effect on fae. Tobacco has unfortunately found occasional circulation (though kept strictly at a distance from any books, a prohibition no damaskan needs to be reminded of). Since virtually everything humans consider a personal vice is perfectly legal in Limshau, much of it loses its rebellious appeal. The custodians operate a net so well laid, almost nothing slips through. Despite this monitoring, citizens are still welcomed to declare their opinions on soapboxes until their throats run dry.

The Limshau capital has never suffered an attack, but custodians still patrol the ramparts. Outside, the city continued to expand as huts and tents were thrown up to cater to those unable or unwilling to enter the vast network. Many of these are merchants not willing to follow the safe and sane charter the city dictates all abide by. Others dispossessed make camp near the city walls to make a living outside the law. Some found a new calling, erecting shops, though their ethical practices may come into question. Since the wall gates are shut at night, hostels and hotels were hastily built to cater to late and early arrivals. Expelled criminals often wander the sprawl of alleys and narrow roads looking for victims while religious extremists on a self-declared crusade try in vain to convince arrivals of the depraved and degenerate lifestyle waiting to corrupt them inside. Neither custodians nor the government controlling them attempts to curtail this sprawl, though a few sporadic bogg attacks have soured many from lingering too long outside the defenses. In truth, the city protects them as well, but

*A young servant girl had attended to her needs, keeping the room and her body clean. She spotted the alert tenenbri and ran quickly to alert the lord. Ellesarra hardly noticed.*

*She could feel the exquisite nature of the down on her bed, the cotton lace hanging from the windows and the silk of the clothes laid on the oak dressers nearby. She felt the beaming rays of heat from the window, an uncomfortable sensation to skin accustomed to the underground.*

*Racine stepped in quickly, expecting her dressed, but found her still bare, sitting back on the bed. The echoes of his step revealed to her ears the shock on his face, and she felt the faint heat emanating from his cheeks at seeing her thus.*

*“Are you my keeper? Should I bother to dress, or shall you have your way now?” She spoke in the damaskan language, thickly accented, but Dorran could still understand.*

*“I keep many things: Books, grails, swords naïve to blood, a personal collection of quills. I keep no people as they are not ones to be kept,” he responded in her own tongue the best he could offer. It took her aback, making her head turn to face him. The slavers never even bothered trying.*

*“You include me in that? Am I a person or property?” she asked plainly and quiet. She stood up, revealing every angle and curve, not a wrinkle or a fold. He averted his eyes quickly. Dorran had read of the tenenbri’s perception of the world despite their unseeing eyes.*

*Dorran continued to stare out the window. “I understand your opinions are jaded and world-weary. You must...you should, reserve a furious rage for my kind if this was your first encounter. I won’t convince with words my regret for that. I placed a bounty on the heads of all slavers, both in my land and beyond. You might—should not—believe me now. But you are safe here. Lara will bring food, lead you to the bath. Though you might not care, I would suggest clothes.”*

*“Why?” she asked.*

*“Because I have servants and soldiers with questionable fortitude,” jested Racine.*

*“I mean for—”*

*“You should never ask that,” he interrupted, quickly glancing to lock on her glazed eyes. “Ever.”*



*"Your Highness," she said, though more as a statement and not one out respect.*

*"I am no king," he countered, "just a lord. Our sovereign is a better man than I, and you are safe in his land." Dorran turned to leave.*

*"In time," she said. He stopped but did not turn. "I will thank you."*

*Blindness & Betrothal  
The story of our Lady  
Willum Bianco, 454 AE*

the further they spread from the wall, the less chance salvation will arrive in time.

Most of the libraries across the nation are based on designs originating in the capital; nearly all structures are of the same white brick, though the sight is hardly monotonous, as the structures themselves are arranged in all manner of patterns in defiance of conventional architectural or even geometric norms. The arrangement of the books depends on the librarians that have assigned themselves to any given collection; those curated exclusively by damaskans tend to be arranged in an orderly, but often inaccessible manner to humans, as the damaskan ability to traverse just about any surface allows for more efficient use of shelving space—parkour is not only a national sport in Limshau, but pretty much the only way to find what you're looking for in some parts of the city. All librarians read their own collections, making them walking encyclopedias of the knowledge contained within their particular wings. There is no central catalogue; even finding the right librarian to ask about a specific subject can take weeks if the knowledge is sufficiently rare.

Even today, Ravenar Limshau IV can still be found reading volumes himself, and answering the questions of knowledge-seekers passing through the stacks.

## PRIMMER

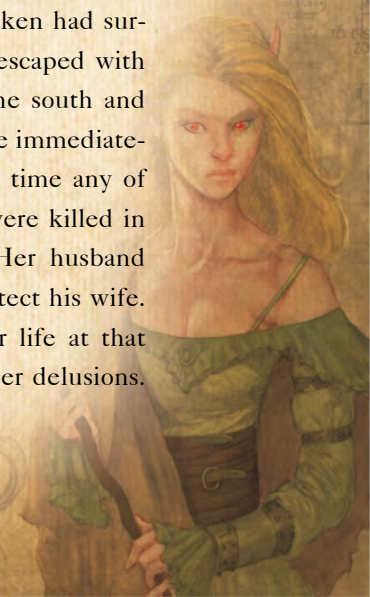
Primmer started as another community of utility, a center administering the tens of thousands of acres of wheat fields around it. With the help of some gimfen engineering, the fields grew rich, and their harvest taxed only a few, leaving others to pursue other ambitions. After the human founder, Dorran Racine, was assassinated, he bequeathed everything not to an heir, for he had none, but to his mistress, the tenenbri Ellesarrathanis. With her newfound influence, she convinced the people of a direction greater than wheat

crops and rebuilt the city towards a new dream, honoring the wishes of her dead lover.

Racine was a simple man in desires, but not in intelligence. He was a gifted young engineer, born in the bastion of Angel. He left the bastion decades after Ravenar's crusade, taking no family and leaving no family. He possessed no skill with swords and hoped to barter wealth with wisdom he brought from the bastions. He impressed Limshau's ruler and was asked to take under his wing the farms on Limshau's then-eastern border, centered on a modest keep named Primmer. A skill at languages the equal of any damaskan proved a useful asset, even in the days before the construction of the Continental Cross.

Primmer had been built initially as a defensive outpost for the farming community and bore walls set far enough from the castle to house the entire population for miles around if required. Before this, Primmer received much attention from wandering bandits, both human and bogg. Though some time before the rise of Baruch Malkut, the enslavement and dominance of fae races had already begun, and with Limshau's position in the center of the continent, much of the trade focused there. Without a nerve center to coordinate, these raiders were disorganized and often wiped out before pulling profit. Racine heard of one such caravan, moving from the east and cutting across what would later become Skyrose with plans to pass through Ogium and circle back east.

Racine, no warrior by any means, ordered Primmer's army intercept the caravan and break it. The slavers had no experience against skilled warriors in numbers, preferring to let the fear of their approach break up potential groups. In a final stroke of defiance, the last slaver attempted to kill his stocks. Racine killed the man before he could finish cleaving through his victims. By then, only one fae of the half-dozen taken had survived, an adult tenenbri. Ellesarrathanis escaped with her husband and child from the war in the south and fled on boats bound north, where they were immediately attacked by slavers. This was the first time any of them had even beheld a human. Some were killed in the initial attack, including her child. Her husband died the next day while attempting to protect his wife. Ellesarra cared little for the others or her life at that point and the passing months blurred in her delusions.





*"Taste my skin," she said softly. Reverence took the best of him, and he opted to simply kiss her gently on the cheek. He held it to roll his tongue between his lips.*

*He peeled away and discreetly sampled the scent and flavor. "Salty," he whispered.*

*"I am not human," she answered, "nor can I offer you a human quality. My behavior may seem erratic or unpredictable, though natural and unquestioned with my kind."*

*"I abandoned my people because I did not fit. You abandoned yours for similar reasons. In that, we have common ground. Surely, there's more."*

*"I will not bond with you," she finally said. He did not lean away from her like she expected. Instead, he smiled.*

*"I offer a husband. I am not asking for an heir. Keep your years. Do me the respect of giving you nobility."*

*"I will only marry whom I bond. I accepted myself as mistress, and I appreciate your loyalty in keeping no others. I will not marry you."*

*Blindness & Betrothal  
The story of our Lady  
Willum Bianco, 554 AE*

She hardly noted her rescue, even as Racine carried her from the cage.

Ellesarra and Dorran would not know each other's names for a solid week as Dorran would not enter her room again until she left or asked for him. Dorran was right in understanding her plight. She had nowhere to go and needed nothing else from her life. Quickly, she took her purpose from the people around her, the ways and wants of those of Limshau. When finally shedding their armor, the two would discuss at length the issues of the world. The tenenbri don't share the human need to care for creatures they rescue, so she often believed he would eventually ask for something only she could offer.

When she finally grew to appreciate his company and conversation, she confronted him about his intentions. He didn't deny a flaring infatuation with her. He also added that he would continue to maintain his distance in respect. They would eventually become lovers, sharing sheets for years, though she refused to bond with him or any other, keeping her distance from any commitment of affection.

Despite this refusal, Dorran continued to remain loyal to Ellesarra, and vice versa. Many commoners, though still loyal and in love with nobility, accused her of possessing a cold heart, bitter as the northern wind, a charge she never denied. Even Racine would not deny her impassive disposition but loved her the same.

Before she could change her mind to the bond, as she believed she would, Dorran fell victim to an assassin's dagger placed neatly between the ribs in his back. It punctured his heart, and the injury would surely have killed him if the poison hadn't done its job so quickly, ending his life before falling on the cold stone tiles of the Primmer gate entrance. Racine's stand on slavery made him loved and hated. A wealthy and established slaver caravan, suffering yearly losses from the bounty, spent their coffers dry on a killer. To ensure a solid investment, the group hired a tenenbri assassin to handle the contract. Ellesarra did not appreciate the irony. Though the tenenbri was apprehended and interrogated, he would not reveal his employer. Ellesarra spoke to the captive privately for a single hour and left with the knowledge of her lord's killer. After his will was read, and Ellesarra recovered from the bewilderment of being left his name and responsibility, the new Lady doubled the bounty on the guilty slaver, a bounty claimed less than a month later.

In the following decades, Ellesarra honored the memory of her lord and set in action his dream cut short by the blade. Instead of turning into another library, Primmer would build the largest and most productive printing press in all the land. At this point, most of Limshau had not expanded far, and most of the other fledging towns were built to be mines and farms for the capital. The offer of a printing press seemed obvious as Limshau's operation could not handle the demand already being placed on the system. Racine's design, when finally revealed, was exquisite. It was simple enough to resist disruption but large enough to handle whatever loads were placed upon it. Duplicate systems would eventually be erected across the nation.

Within a hundred years, more than a dozen printing presses were outputting product to every city in the realm and beyond. Gimfen engineering adapted from human expertise allowed for an extremely efficient and environmentally friendly paper. Limshau paper utilizes



a combination of wood pulp and hemp, the latter occupying the greater ratio. The hemp/pulp paper is far stronger and resilient than the pure pulp route. It also taxes the environment less. Because of its wider applications, more than half of the vast wheat fields around Primmer were eventually changed to cannabis, a decision later replicated by dozens of other smaller villages around Limshau. The massive profit surge initiated with Primmer eventually led to hemp being Limshau's second most successful export, a success credited entirely to Ellesarra and her dead lover.

Ellesarra maintains her refusal to bond to this day, centuries later, adding that Dorran was the only person worthy enough that she has ever encountered in the intervening centuries. She neither entertained the idea of taking a lover nor met any suitors.

## WARRAQEEN

Warraqueen is considered the Mecca of custodians, with an office for every guild, each separated by their wall within a much larger complex known as Warraqueen. How the second largest citadel in Limshau came about is unexpected and involves, shockingly enough, the gimfen.

In the middle of Serapea—a sprawling valley in the center of Limshau—a gimfen grind tower sprouted up. Ravenar, largely disinterested in any settlement that did not directly endanger his people, was open to leaving them to their own devices, but the founder of the tower, Cyrell Ceopollis, approached him and asked to join the realm, offering to modify his patch of land to house a library and circle the city with a wall of white bricks. Though Ceopollis requested a detail of custodians and librarians to staff his new city, instead he was invited to offer his variation of custodian, specialized to take advantage of gimfen ingenuity, and the Guild of Satori was born.

Satori was intended to incorporate gimfen engineering into the already defined custodian martial discipline, though the resulting guild ended up integrating less smoothly than expected (typical of the gimfen). As custodians do not exclude membership, it was impossible for all Satori custodians to employ gimfen engineering, as they only work in the hands of their creator. Instead, the gimfen contributed greater stealth and trick-

*"You are dying. All of you, despite not knowing yet. Your communities crumble. You have nothing. Nothing to offer. Nothing worth stealing.*

*You cling to the last few sparks of power in your batteries, the last few drops of combustible fuel. You cannot sustain yourselves and refuse to change, to adapt. All you can do is count the moments before the world around finally notices.*

*Your walls are paper. Your weapons useless. When the magic finally decides to close in, nothing you thought would save you will stand. This is a graveyard, and you simply haven't been buried yet. I'll leave these walls, overlook any markers to find you again, because by the time I circle around again, there'll be nothing here."*

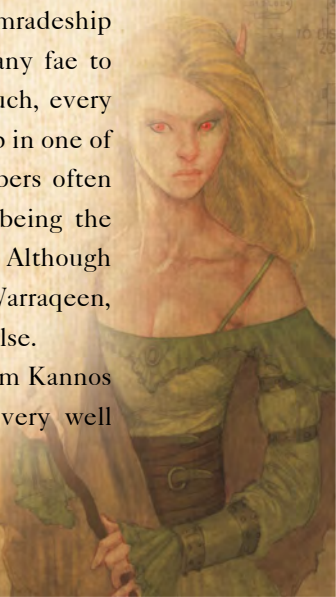
*Narrative of Darkwind*

ery, with the Satori custodians trained in subterfuge and misdirection.

Gimfen grind towers are not quiet places, and with the noise disrupting daily operations throughout the libraries, and it became necessary to shift the city's central objective. Although custodian guilds are scattered across the entire landscape of Limshau, their top members and all their administrators live in Warraqueen. The only known gimfen custodians live here, with a few librarians maintaining the small collection of books that did eventually form.

This small group of gimfen break the stereotype of most others that usually are too busy to write anything down coherently. The surprising characteristic regarding Warraqueen is that despite every guild being walled and every guild operating with its variation of the original Stormguard doctrine set forth by the Folium in 355 AE, there is more assimilation of differing ethnicities in Warraqueen than anywhere else in Limshau, even its capital. In many ways, custodians consider themselves one people regardless of origin, with comradeship eclipsing tradition, a difficult concept for many fae to grasp given their natural homogeneity. As such, every race common in Canam can claim membership in one of the guilds, and despite the wall, guild members often associate (with one notable exception, that being the more radical members of the Guild of Vivek). Although the latter does possess a guild tower in Warraqueen, members inside rarely associate with anyone else.

Serapea is massive—a valley stretching from Kannos to Plicato—and as such the border is not very well





## CHAPTER SIX: HEARTLAND

maintained, leaving only dozens of small Limshau villages left to define any demarcation with inadequate defenses along the line. Warraqueen, still hundreds of miles from the western border, was tasked with patrolling and defending this impossible boundary. Thankfully, alliances have made such a task inconsequential. All that changed in 401 AE when the appearance of a chiggoth in Burganasis terrified the land from coast to coast. Messages were sent out, villages were evacuated, but ultimately, all anyone could do is get out of the monster's way as it trudged slowly eastward over the course of weeks.

Only one major city lay in its way, and Warraqueen refused to evacuate. The chiggoth was only one threat, and a relatively minor one in comparison to the tens of thousands of puggs that were fleeing ahead, lacking the intelligence to simply move aside.

While the custodians readied their defense, the gimfen within Ceolopolis worked on a defensive solution. On March 7<sup>th</sup> of that year, 250,000 puggs slammed into Warraqueen, climbing over their dead to scale the walls. The battle spread into the city, through the guilds, and every citizen was pulled into action. Any other city would have simply fallen, but Warraqueen had custodians...and the Sine.

Moments before the chiggoth struck, the gimfen grind tower was able to deploy its ultimate defense. Nicknamed the Sine, the Psycho-Infra-Acoustical-Sonic-Wave Cannon was designed to convert the resonance pollution from the grind tower into a focused attack. A lower power spherical discharge crippled most of the remaining puggs in the city, allowing their quick elimination, while a more powerful focused burst deafened the chiggoth and shattered several of its protruding rocks. A second burst cracked the Sine's emitter matrix but also killed the beast, vibrating its brain to jelly.

Alas, the Sine's creator, the gimfen engineer Pia Rolendice, was killed in battle, and as a result, the Sine has neither been fully repaired nor replicated anywhere else. Today, it acts as little more than a deterrent.

### ZORAHN

The most right-wing order of Limshau originates with the Zorahn custodial line, the Guild of Vivek. The town of Zorahn and its library is the most grim and fortress-like of the Limshau cities, tasked with retaining military records, and most of their collection consists of combat logs and casualty reports, mostly arriving in scroll format. Hundreds of thousands of tubes are piled high against the walls of the Zorahn library, each detailing an account of a battle in history.

Zorahn has no dedicated librarians, using the custodians of Vivek for double duty. This offers them a unique perspective on their collection, as they both understand the meanings of the accounts and fight to protect the collection





while also being able to add their accounts, which they often do as Zorahn sits dangerously close to Baruch Malkut. After the delegation to Faustis was wiped out and their books burned, the custodians of Zorahn swore a “hilaseera”, which loosely translates “To avenge the loss of soul and scripture.” Even the walled city of Limshau cannot equal the proportioned defenses of Zorahn and its small but powerful legion of custodians, known for their passion and determination.

Before custodians were named such, there was Stratos Stormguard, a master of all arms and trusted ally of Ravenar. He stayed behind to watch the flock when the leader went on crusade. Stratos developed the martial practice all custodians would soon follow known as “Gorna Sersannis,” though later masters would eventually use the more modern term “Lotus Blade.” Though the modern popular image of custodians depicts them wielding hollow-hilted katana and wakizashi, Stratos’ preferred weapon was the unwieldy, halberd-like ji staff (which later traditions would replace with the much more elegant naginata). He advanced his art to perfection before even attempting to train another. In the end, he required his friend, Ravenar, to fill in the gaps in the defense Stratos could not satisfy. It would take 50 years before Stratos considered the discipline finished. By then, he had already taken control of Zorahn by request of his commander.

Ravenar had also taken a Stormguard maiden as his wife and wished to reward his brother-in-law with a keep that badly needed authority. Zorahn was built and manned, but random boggs kept appearing to assault its defenses. Stratos took control and from there, committed himself to his ambition of perfecting the lotus blade. When Ravenar passed his rule to his son, Ravenar IV, Stratos helped raise the youth and appointed his younger brother, Daen Stormguard, as his bodyguard. When Daen mentioned the Lotus Blade to the new ruler, Ravenar IV pleaded with his uncle for training. Stratos felt the discipline still contained holes but a final prod from his sister, Ravenar's mother, encouraged him to teach it. As his mother took authoritative duties until her son reached the appropriate age, Ravenar left for Zorahn and would not return for 35 years. After taking control of the nation at a still young 125, Ravenar decreed that a new order of defender was needed, specialized in the narrow confines of the city streets. The first masters would learn from Stratos in Zorahn and

later train a dozen others across the nation. The custodian line was born.

Later training would take less time, removing some of the mental conditioning, standardizing weapons, and focusing more as a form of defense and less as a monastic order. Aged custodians believe the order suffered from this decision and most modern followers admit no chance of victory if squared against an elder Vivek custodian in even combat. Zorahn is still considered the seat of the discipline with the Guild of Vivek the purest representation of the original art.

Stratos died from injuries sustained when responding to a caravan under attack by a death dragon from Sana. He slew the beast but died before returning home. A statue was erected in his honor in Zorahn. Ravenar commissioned a duplicate but ensured the Zorahn work would be taller. The piece depicts Stratos in full light chain and hardened leather, wrapped in the signature red robes he often wore in battle.

Today, the red-armor custodians that mark Vivek reveals a personality that places custodian tradition and discipline above everything else. As such, with a training regimen that lasts 75 years, no human has ever graduated from that program and Vivek custodians seldom associate with anyone. They are the few government-funded individuals that place knowledge secondary to military prowess.

## TECHAN ATOLLS

Bastions are reliable and comparatively enduring regions of technology densely populated by humans reliant on that life. They are seldom required to associate with the outside world as their cities are often self-sustainable. However, bastions are few and far between, leaving many aspiring applicants stranded far from salvation.

All the great bastions began as small communities banding together to preserve what they could of their technological existence. Some of these failed quickly as the wave of enchantment spread across the Earth, and their founders either gave up and settled for the lifestyle of echa or picked up stakes and moved to another area to try again. The most successful communities were those that joined together en-masse, either by multiple groups coming together or choosing a strong position that attracted others seeking the same lifestyle.







Others remained small islands of technology in the midst of fantasy.

In the modern era, these techan atolls are occupied by either bastion expatriates, failed applicants, or those simply unable or unwilling to attempt the pilgrimage across the continent to attempt entry into one of the larger communities. Unlike a normal fantasy village, techan atolls made a choice to utilize technology, but in order to sustain that technology, rudimentary fortifications had to be erected to prevent the intrusion of any magic. Atolls, like bastion, prohibit any magic even near their walls. They will not entertain individuals born of magic, turned to magic, or possessing magic; and unlike the larger bastions which possess some measure of insulation against EDF due to their sheer size, atolls do not have the luxury of making exceptions.

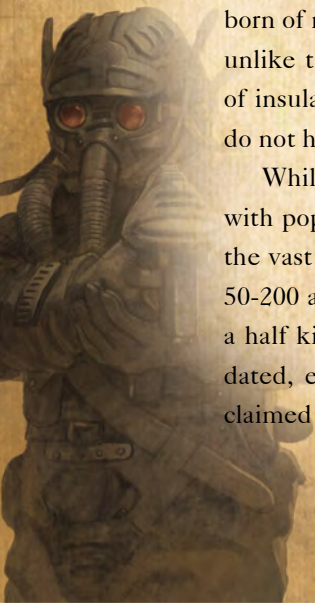
While notable atolls the size of a large techan village with populations of over a thousand *are* known to exist, the vast majority are mere hamlets, with a population of 50-200 and a size of less than a football field to perhaps a half kilometer square. Atolls generally appear dilapidated, even rundown, as they are often built from reclaimed technology. Very often, the residents came

across a surviving relic from a nearly erased city from humanity's past: perhaps a bank, stadium, university, or an underground vault. More than a few were built from old refineries still with resources on site while others are built from beached ocean vessels.

Very few atolls manage to last more than a single generation, either suffering a cataclysmic disruption event that turns the atoll to echa or falling to enemies given the lack of allies in the region. Atolls generally don't make friends except with other techans, not always out of prejudice but due to pure necessity. Thus, location is important. Atolls can be valuable sanctuaries for techan parties, and are often welcome. Atolls value trade and generally offer work to those with similar interests in order to increase their own capabilities.

## LOCATIONS

Atolls are not listed on any maps given how unpredictable they are. What follows below is a list of example atolls that can be placed anywhere along a journey. Regardless of size or population, most atolls do not possess technology beyond TL2. Their governance can





be random, up to and including the same feudal system fantasy towns employ.

Atolls have been found nearly everywhere including among snow-filled mountains, in the middle of deserts, or floating in lakes. They won't be found in chaparran-controlled forests or in the middle of oceans. They commonly ignore national borders, and every nation with defined lines will have at least one atoll hiding within it. Atolls seldom swear allegiance to echan nations, though Kannos (itself descended from an atoll that failed to grow into a bastion) trades with a handful of techan atolls within its borders, and Limshau leaves any squatters in its territory to their own devices unless they cause trouble for citizens. Conflicts have occurred especially with smaller houses more protective of their borders. However, the majority of atolls sit within unclaimed or contested lands, away from traveled roads, making their discovery or fate unintentional. It is not unexpected to find the decaying bones of a fallen atoll along one's journey with no information of who the occupants where or what became of them.

## AXEL

**Tech level:** 1

Built from a capsized container ship, Axel is considered the largest know atoll every recorded in Canam. It has a population of nearly 5,000 people, mostly refugees from other failed atolls. The upper segments of the ship were torn down and repurposed to build the town's defensive wall, leaving mostly the intermodal containers to house the population. The bizarre attribute of Axel is that it is located thousands of miles from any ocean, making it's position a mystery, one that owners don't know the answer to.

## CORSO

**Tech Level:** 3

Corso came about through circumstance, with pilgrims stumbling across a crashed aircraft from an unidentified bastion. They gleaned what they could from the few fragments of undisrupted technology and built their community around the carcass of the fuselage.

## FAUROT

**Tech Level:** 1

Built from an old sports stadium, Faurot was once located within a larger city that has since been almost com-

pletely erased by disruption. What remained was torn down and repurposed to build up the stadium's defenses. Amazingly, the internal structure of the stadium was mostly intact before being repurposed.

## MAX

**Tech Level:** 0

Max lacked any natural resources, but it did benefit from a relatively intact defensive wall already in place, a side-effect from its previous role as a supermax prison. Over the centuries, nearly every brick has been replaced, but the overall shape of the structure has remained.

## OPOLIS

**Tech Level:** 0

Another rarity, Opolis was built from a barely functional bucket-wheel excavator. It most likely survived disrupted given it was found in a barren open-pit mine before nature could reclaim it. The superstructure, incredibly, is still capable of movement, though it rarely has occasion to. Its bucket assembly and mining gear has long since been dismantled and employed to build the community. Opolis features no defensive wall as the entire population lives above ground in the upper assembly of the excavator.

## VILLA

**Tech Level:** 0

While legends speak of atolls built from preserved ruins of old techa surviving centuries into the modern age, this is actually extremely rare. Atolls like Axel, Faurot, and Max are the exceptions, not the rule. Most are like Villa, a collection of disrupted techan vehicles, mostly ETVs, that were initially strung together to form a community, which later expanded into a rickety collection of mismatched technology and enclosed by a wall of scavenged raw materials. The inhabitants have taken their misfortune into a positive and attempted to form a community. Villa is the fundamental format of what many atolls look like.

---

*"The bastion of Novo?" Samuel Crufix asked his sister. She was standing in his office aboard his ship, a presentation remote in her hand, a tablet computer in his. He was sitting in front of his desk rather than be-*



hind it.

"Yes," Tasia answered. "It's in South America, built upon half-sunken ruins of Rio de Janeiro."

"I know where it is. I'm just impressed by the gambit."

"Angel has had no contact with Novo, and with The Gloom between, that's unlikely to change. I traded Novo submarine tech, which I'm sure Angel could benefit from."

Sam nodded.

"That works," he said, "Trade technology between them. Novo possess long-range aircraft?"

"No," she replied.

"They solve unified theory?"

"No."

"You'd think they'd want those instead of submarine tech."

"I was convincing."

Samuel tapped his stylus repeatedly on his tablet, reading her report.

She had returned with Stone and spent the last few days working through the debriefing. She barely managed a cordial greeting with her brother before pushing him to sit and listen. He looked up after skimming the first page.

"I could've read this without narration," he said.

"Yes," she replied, "I had ulterior motives."

"You're already cleared for ground operations. What else do you need?"

"About that, thank you."

"Your team dying when you weren't around clinched the deal. Stone okay?"

"Yes," Tasia answered. Before Sam could muster up more small-talk, she tapped her remote and the giant LED screen behind her lit up with a cover page.

MISSION CODE RBX-888

ANALYSIS & BACKGROUND

Filed By: Lieutenant Tasia Crufix

"You..." Samuel started but trailed off. His shock turned to joy. "You made a presentation?"

"Yeah?" Tasia replied, unsure if he was serious or teasing.

"Very well," said Sam, practically glowing. He shuffled in his seat to make himself comfortable. "Consider my interest peaked. Nice font."

"It's Garamond. Thanks for noticing." She began to pace the room as she continued. "Several months back, when I was handed this operation, it began with

tracking a Porto Beluga bound for Angel. They send about two a year. Emissaries, minor technological innovations. But our mole in Porto revealed there was an EDF crate carrying an artifact. We informed our moles in Angel, but the vessel never arrived."

Sam snapped his fingers and pointed to her.

"Operation Zathura—" he shouted.

"—where we uncovered evidence someone had stolen from the wreck. I tracked it back to Angel and found one techan expatriate bound for Antikari. Aiden Camus. Then, nineteen. We located him in Limshau but were forced to withdraw due to increased disruption."

"The message from the mercenaries." Sam stated, remembering. Tasia nodded. "Why did a deacon go down?"

"Ask him," Tasia answered. "Then came Angel." She tapped her remote. The new image was a talented illustration. Daggers of daylight broke through holes in the leather wings of one dragon. It had talons as long and sharp as swords. The creature's black skin was drawn tight across its body. Its eyes like drops of cream in strong coffee. Its teeth were jagged and jumbled. Lips were too thin to close its mouth. The death dragon was entangled with a superior opponent. It was long with smaller wings. Its gold and blue scales broke light into colors. Long white whiskers flapped like gravity had no control over them. Each of its four arms ended in four ivory claws. This dragon had eyes similar to those of a man's, soft blue and brilliant.

"That's a painting," Sam said plainly.

"Disruption fried the recorders. All we have are witness accounts and Stone's testimony."

"A dragon?" Sam said with a point of his stylus.

"Genai-Dilong," Tasia answered. "One of the yokani nine. He slumbers within the Genai temple."

"Point taken," said Sam. "Avoid the village."

"Stone confirmed it." Tasia nudged her chin back at the image. "Accurate painting apparently."

Sam looked back to his tablet and scrolled a few pages.

"You're going somewhere with this."

"That dragon is a holy symbol," Tasia pressed, "a living demigod. Each time it appears, no one shuts up about it. The last time was around a decade ago when a death dragon breached the perimeter and rampaged the city. It killed twenty-three people in five minutes... before the other one showed up."

Sam's jaw dropped.

"That painting actually shows that fight?"



*"Yeah, that's why I picked it."*

*Sam shrugged.*

*"That's just impressive is all."*

*"Angel is like any other bastion," Tasia continued, "nothing ever gets deleted, and every moment of every life is recorded. So, I pulled the casualty list. It includes..." Tasia tapped her remote, and a woman's name and face appeared. "Annabelle Camus."*

*"Mother of Aiden Camus," Sam interjected.*

*"Head of the class," Tasia said, jovially.*

*Sam turned his tablet around to show her.*

*"Notes," he said.*

*"The father had already died. Aiden was placed into foster care along with his older brother, Martin, more accurately, Captain Martin Camus, Angel Starlight." She tapped again, and the image changed to Martin's military photo.*

*"Your liaison," said Sam. "You pull this from their network?" Tasia nodded.*

*"Our moles have had access to their social networks for some time."*

*"Impressive," said Sam, finally realizing where Tasia was heading. She was good. "How did you figure that out?"*

*"Gut," she interjected. "Martin made a comment that lead me to believe initially he cared for someone that died during the encounter in Angel. But it was something else. Stone reported a spellcaster among the rebels, at least a Class 5."*

*Sam nodded.*

*"Little brother turned," said Sam. "He still has the artifact."*

*"Of course," Tasia snapped. "It's a quest. These are McGuffins."*

*"If he's the wizard, where's the rogue, cleric, and fighter?" he asked. Tasia stared blankly at her brother as his smile got bigger. "I was joking, it's reference to—"*

*"No, I got it," she replied, "and you're right. When they entered Angel, they were logged, though unidentified."*

*She tapped, and freeze frames of a video feed appeared. The first showed Raven.*

*"Cute," said Sam.*

*"Limshau Custodian," said Tasia. "Considering my encounter with the king, it would make sense to offer an escort. She's naturally radiant obviously, as is him." She tapped to reveal Mahan. "He keeps several magic items, radiant as well. That leaves this one." Another tap brought up Mischa.*

*"Magic?" Sam asked.*

*"No, I just think he's really, really, big."*

*"So, we have to find a way back into to Angel?"*

*"No need, they're not there."*

*"Why not?" Sam placed his tablet on his lap. "It's obviously safe. They have a DRAGON!"*

*"It's an adventure!" Tasia shouted, which took Sam back. "They have to journey across the lands. Isn't that how it's supposed to go?!"*

*"That was more curse than expected."*

*"It's utter nonsense," Tasia snapped. "No one likes going on an adventure. We watch people in movies having them, but no one wants to actually do it. People die, get hurt. He should have stayed home!"*

*"Brother wanted it that way."*

*"Aiden should've listened."*

*Sam appeared concerned at Tasia's focus on this individual, above the standard research into one's enemies. She was bothered by the choices this person made.*

*"You got no loyalty to this kid," he said, "what do you care...because he'll be an adversary?"*

*"Because he gave up a good life."*

*"You check his student records—"*

*"Yes."*

*"Thorough."*

*"Smart. Driven. Upper middle class. An endowment from his parents. Gave it up to be a...wizard."*

*"Now he can never go back. In the end, we've steamrolled over better people for less."*

*Tasia tapped, and the screen returned to the front page.*

*"They can't use advanced technology. They'll be limited to horses. That means short travel days. They're probably not even back in Antikari."*

*"You want to intercept," Sam stated.*

*"There are three main roads from the southern gate. Antikari, Salvabrooke, and Torquil. I need to check them all."*

*Sam stared blankly at her. Tasia found him difficult to read. He waited. She felt awkward, finally prompting him with a wave.*

*"You know you could've opened with that," Sam finally said.*

*Tasia pointed a thumb back at the screen. "I had a presentation!"*

*"It was amazing. Love the font. Go!"*







## CHAPTER SEVEN

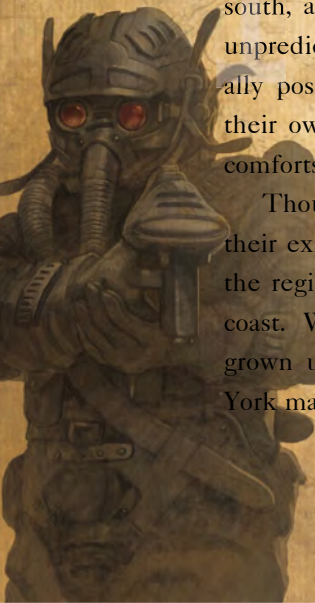
# EAST

154 **T**he lands east of the Canam heartland are largely sparsely settled wilderness. Few nations last long in the place, as aggressive forces from both north, south, and even from within make life dangerous and unpredictable. Those that make their homes here usually possess a pioneering spirit and a desire to make their own way through the world, caring little for the comforts of so-called civilization.

Though the east is home to two known bastions, their existence has much less impact on the culture of the region than Angel and Selkirk do on the opposite coast. While in the west, entire communities have grown up from those seeking entry to Angel's walls, York makes no particular effort to keep people either in

or out, and Mann is simply an enigma to most, rarely thought of. Of much greater import are the looming threat of Ažhi Dahaka to the north, and the imperial ambitions of Baruch Malkut to the south; both kept at bay by nothing more than inconvenient geography.

Although English is still the lingua-franca, Englo-Lingo features heavily within many communities with many employing it exclusively. The further one gets from York and the Continental Cross, the less intelligible the natives get. Many eastern place-names do not sound significantly different from settlements in Lauro-pa, though there are few who have made the crossing and can make that comparison directly.





## APOCRYPHA

Apocrypha is not traditionally considered a 'nation', but is nevertheless the largest geographic area in Canam, dominated by a single ethnicity and a higher authority. There are three dominant establishments within pagus territory, all struggling for control over the majority. Until recently, Apocrypha was merely considered an outlying province of Ažhi Dahaka, populated by wild and undisciplined pagus that resisted the influence of fallen dragon lords, but were too much trouble to bother wiping out.

However, as early as 30 years ago, shemjaza were reported north of Tethuss—the only voice the pagus are technically programmed to follow. As such, most of the resident population has shifted loyalties, leaving the dragons with a choice to either allow the emigration or consider defying the will of Mengus. This leaves the few pagus attempting to govern themselves with little choice, and with nowhere to go, independent fae north of Tethuss are an endangered species. This has resulted in the region known as Apocrypha growing with Ažhi Dahaka, the land controlled by the dragons, decreasing.

Alas, this shift in power has resulted in more infighting as shemjaza cull weaker elements of their pagus population by waging war between tribes, even those sworn to the same shemjaza lord, keeping pagus population across the whole of Apocrypha under a million.

The last significant push over Tethuss was thirty years ago, coinciding with the first report of the shemjaza. Although it is possible the shemjaza have gained near-complete control over the population and have delayed a southern invasion in the effort to focus on another route, there is still considerable evidence that there are still free pagus in the north. The information only became available because some free pagus maintain sporadic communication with Abidan—a spy network few people in Canam are aware of.

The distinguishing feature between Apocrypha and Ažhi Dahaka—which don't technically have a border—is that there are no free pagus in Ažhi Dahaka while there are tens of thousands of them still in Apocrypha. There used to be a time when a dragon would swoop down commanding invasion, and marshaling an army

*When recording history, we always start with the present and work our way backwards, and the accounts After Enchantment are considerably more detailed than those before. But it's certainly not uniform.*

*The most extensive libraries in Limshau were not established until after 200 AE, leaving significant gaps from before. Whole regions remain a mystery. We are only now gaining a total image of the present in Southam. The north, however, may always remain an enigma, cursed by the isolation of Apocrypha.*

*The Bulwark was erected in 277 AE, which finally cut off the pagus migrations from the north. The timing was fortuitous as their movements had been increasing every year. But the bridge had been utilized by others before, and their stories tell of a land lavish and peaceful, as well as developing until the swell of opposition. These stories prove that either the pagus arrived in mass numbers about 300 years ago, or they numbered less than a handful, and it took two centuries of breeding unchecked before they became a threat.*

*Regardless, that leaves a potential civilization two centuries of growth before everyone else signed the death warrant by erecting a wall and forbidding a northern push.*

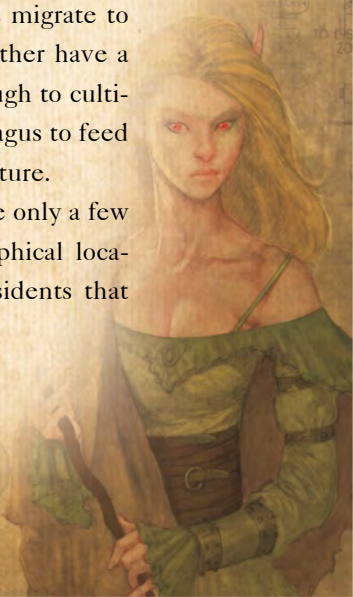
*Benjiman Nitehood  
The Lost Laurentia*

from everywhere, the pagus answering the compulsion to invade. Those able to resist both shemjaza and dragons have a pagus chief magnetic enough to retain control over his or her people.

Apocrypha, like Ažhi Dahaka, is cut off from the rest of Canam by snow and freezing temperatures in the north, the mountains of Uzu to the west, and water to the south leaving only the narrow land bridge of Tethuss guarded by the Janoahn Bulwark.

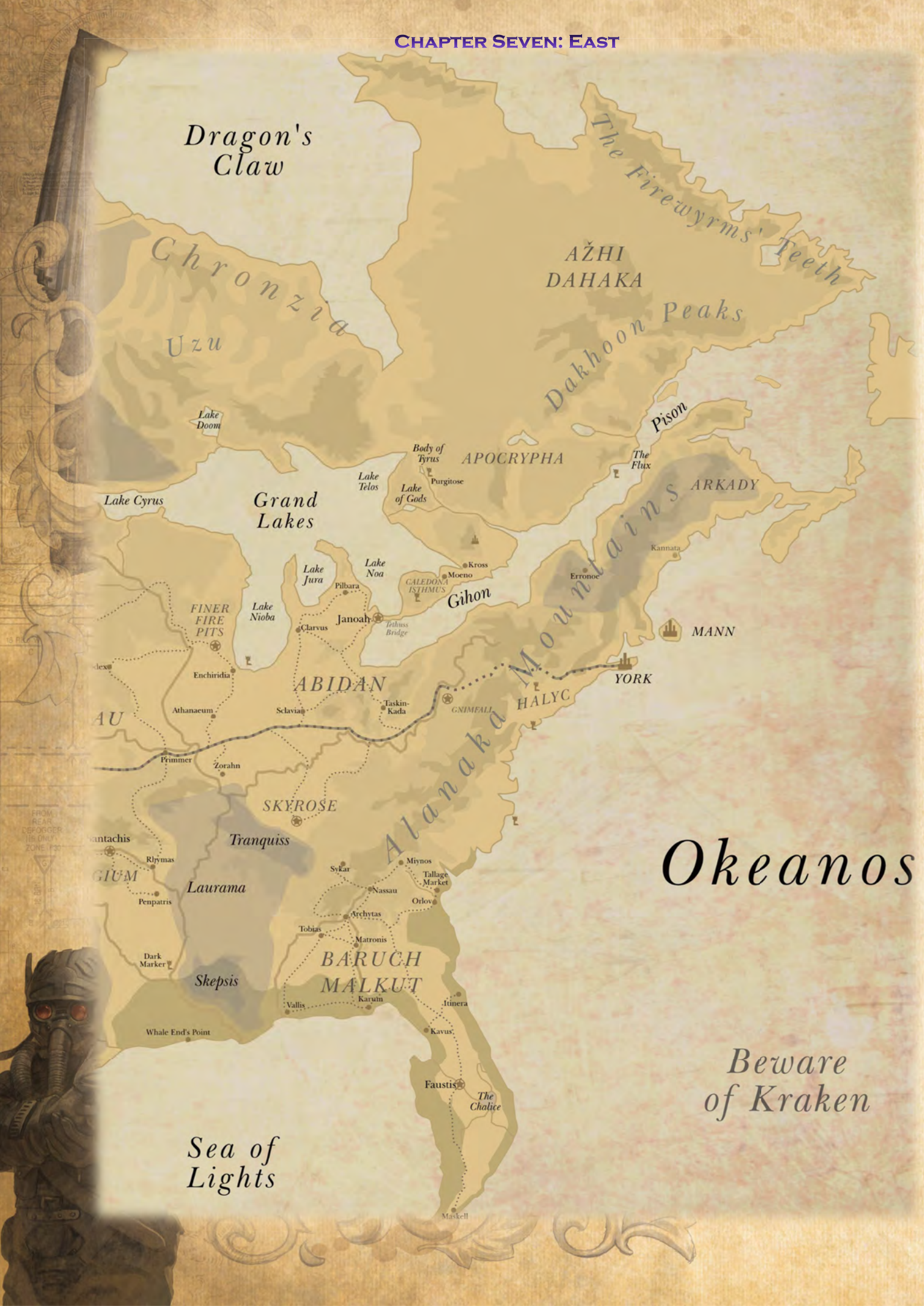
Not skilled in sowing, most pagus tribes migrate to sustain themselves. The ones that don't either have a dragon to back them up or are civilized enough to cultivate farms. It's common for the migratory pagus to feed off those smart enough to understand agriculture.

Most "named" locations in Apocrypha are only a few years old. The exceptions are the geographical locations, named so by the human and fae residents that lived in Apocrypha before the pagus.





CHAPTER SEVEN: EAST



Dragon's  
Claw

Chronzia  
Uzu

AŽHI  
DAHAKA

The Firewyrms' Teeth  
Dakhoon Peaks

APOCRYPHA

Pison

ARKADY

Grand  
Lakes

Lake  
Telos

Lake  
of Gods

Body of  
Tyrus

Purgitose

The  
Flux

Lake  
Cyrus

Lake  
Doom

FINER  
FIRE  
PITS

Lake  
Nioba

Lake  
Jura

Lake  
Noa

Pilbara

Moeno

Kross

CALEDONIA  
ISTHMUS

Gihon

Tethys  
Bridge

Janoah

Clarvus

ABIDAN

Enchiridia

Athanaeum

Sclavias

Taskin-  
Kada

GNIMEALL

HALYC

YORK

MANN

SKYROSE

Tranquiss

Laurama

Skepsis

Tobias

Archytas

Matronis

Vallis

Karuhn

Itinera

Kavus

Faustus

The  
Chalice

Maskell

Whale End's Point

Dark  
Marker

Penpatris

Rlymas

Antachis

Primmer

Zorahn

AU

GIUM

FROM REAR  
CEFOGGER  
IN ONLY  
ZONE 130

Okeanos

Beware  
of Kraken

Sea of  
Lights



## AMON

The 'city' of Amon moves continuously. The nomad leader refuses to settle, forcing the 10,000 pagus with him to uproot and move every year or so. They usually leave behind a mess of garbage and scarred land, assuming nature will clean up the mess. Amon citizens raid camps and have been known to absorb other villages, forcibly integrating the population and dragging them into the endless pilgrimage.

This is another village doomed to fail with the passing of another generation, as few followers understand Amon's reasoning for the chosen life he imposes on others. Though many of his members enjoy and embrace the life, it is doubtful they would share in the obsession to the extent their leader does. The only response anyone has ever been able to glean from Amon regarding his motives is that "They still follow."

## ARRENNNA

Arrenna, at 150 years of age, is the oldest pagus who has ever lived. He founded the first "city" in Apocrypha and continues to administer every function. It grows slowly, as Arrenna's severe laws results in 500 pagus being executed every year. Though pagus follow most of his laws, occasionally their emotions overpower them. Arrenna does not believe in 'enlightenment'—in his view, heavily influenced by the culture of Kakodomania, only inflexible laws and harsh punishments are capable of keeping pagus under control.

Even though several shemjaza have apparently reached Canam shores, none of them attempted to usurp Arrenna's control. This is unusual given that the general policy of shemjaza toward pagus that resist their commands is extermination. A popular rumor that Arrenna is a shemjaza half-breed will get you badly killed for spreading it if he ever catches word.

## BODY OF TYRUS & THE CATARACTS OF BYTHOS

A freshwater lake that feeds the River Bythos, Tyrus is home to the dragon Avalon of All and his population of pagus. Ruling from castle Purgitose sitting atop the Cataract Xanthosis, Avalon's vantage allows him to see for dozens of miles. Tyrus was known as Lake Timiskaming in the time before the Hammer, when

*Personally, I believe The Lost Laurentia to be wholly inaccurate, mostly due to Mr. Timiskaming's impulsiveness in believing every sporadic record he could find.*

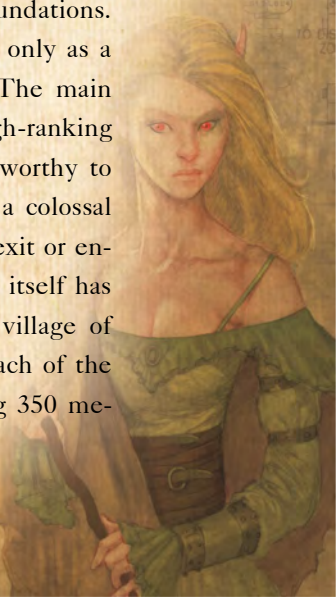
*Unless custodians or other trusted historians travel north of Tethuss, every supposed fact in this book should be suspect. There would be more than just a handful of accounts. It is much easier to believe the pagus expanded through a relatively empty region, wiping minor resistance than to think an entire microcosm of Canam existed there. There is no other evidence that corroborates the book's claims, especially that there are humans still up there, that Uzu is only 250 years old, that there is a lost bastion called Pontiac, and that the corruption of Ixindar has prevented enchantment from erasing the cities of early man. Utter nonsense.*

*Erika Tarniya  
A Critical Analysis*

massive flooding expanded its shores; a lone sign inscribed with the name is barely visible above the surface when the waters are low, a relic of ancient days that mysteriously resists corrosion and reclamation.

The Bythos River feeds into four increasingly powerful waterfalls, known collectively as the Cataracts of Bythos. Individually, they are split into **Nigredo** (the shadow cliffs), **Albedo** (the white cliffs), **Rubedo** (the blood cliffs), and **Xanthosis** (the gold cliffs).

The largest part of the Proto-Jericho (*see the adventure at the back of this book*) fell on the edge the Albedo Cataract, while the castle of Purgitose sits on the edge of the Xanthosis Cataract. A fitting and arrogant domicile for a dragon who styles himself "of All" sits on the edge of the Cataract Xanthosis. Alas, despite rumors of it being made of gold and built single-handedly by the dragon, the truth is pagus slaves built the castle over a decade with many dying within the foundations. The castle has no defensive wall and serves only as a domicile for the beast who lairs beneath. The main tower was intended to house several high-ranking pagus, but Avalon ultimately felt none was worthy to live in his presence. The dragon sleeps in a colossal natural chamber under the cataract, and can exit or enter through the falls themselves, as the keep itself has no doors. The thralls of Avalon have their village of **Kish** at the base of the Rubedo Cataract. Each of the cataracts are dangerous, with Xanthosis rising 350 me-







ters and Albedo at 300 meters. The other two are around 150 meters each.

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## THE CALEDON ISTHMUS

While Tethuss refers to the narrow bridge connecting Janoah with Apocrypha, Caledon refers to the large section of land attached to Tethuss on the north side. What most people in Janoah don't know is that an impressively mighty river and lake system effectively cuts off the north side of Caledon from the rest of Apocrypha, with the Fork the only safe route to cross. There is a similarly narrow region near the pagus town of Moeno. The rivers Bythos and Xigax divide Apocrypha, with few pagus villages existing in Caledon (there are still numerous migrating bandits). Kodiaks have also been seen in the area, believing that if they can take the Fork, they can claim Caledon for themselves.

## DRAGON'S CLAW

Once called the Hudson Bay, the Dragon's Claw is an immense body of water rumored to be part of the northern territory of the frost dragons. Though taxonomists have placed them in the same category as typhox dragons, these creatures have no loyalty to those in Ažhi Dakaha or anywhere else, and have no issues with responding to fallen dragon incursions with lethal force. The waters of the Dragon's Claw are as tempestuous as the ocean beyond, as conflicting warm and cold airstreams between the frozen northern and warm southern shores produce wild storms, impassible for all but dragonkind.



## THE FORK

The only safe route between the Caledon Isthmus and the rest of Apocrypha is a single keep controlled by the pagus lieutenant Boethus. The Fork was built around several old bridges, mixing older advanced building techniques with newer simpler ones. The melding of old and new is seamless, beyond the means of pagus engineering; its architect was the fallen dragon Brut of Brutalism, who used magic to build castles and keeps. Brut was an underappreciated genius that felt his buildings were more important than the nature around them and became obsessed with replacing every forest and hill with the straight lines of architecture. These structures are almost totally uninhabitable except by pagus, who don't care about things such as ventilation or privies, and the architect takes no pride in his work, having abandoned most of the keeps he constructed as soon as they were complete to move on to literal new pastures.

## THE GRAND LAKES

The largest freshwater lake in the world, the Grand Lakes supply freshwater to the kingdoms of Abidan and Kannos, as well as to all the major rivers of the continental east. It is this freshwater that prevents the clear majority of pagus from migrating south. Pagus are as bad swimmers as narros due to their dense bones and muscles, and they despise the idea of crossing the lake or its enormous rivers, creating what is known as the Waterwall. Freshwater also acts as a catalyst for attracting fae anathema, resulting in the Grand Lakes being the home of the largest population of dojenn in Canam, a growing threat in the region (along with various other anathema). Though a single contiguous body of water, the Lakes are made up of five distinct current-regions—**Lake Cyrus** (between Kannos and eastern Dagon), **Lake Nioba** (a long finger between Kannos and Abidan), **Lake Jura** (a lopsided circle surrounded by the 'horns' of Abidan), **Lake Noa** (bounding the northwestern shore of the Tethuss Bridge), and **Lake Telos** (the northern spur, between Apocrypha and Uzu).

## KALLIS-REX

When the pagus chieftain Kallis raided the rival camp of Iopix the Startled, he became known as Kallis the Monster. Kallis ordered all the rival leaders' bodies burned

*"Holy hell, he may have point."*

*"Who?"*

*"Look here."*

*"Where?"*

*"Here...don't look at my hand, look where I'm pointing. No one ever bothers to ask the kodiaks."*

*"I don't understand."*

*"It's a map they gave narros as part of a treaty, covering Nankani to Uzu. The stonebones assumed it was inaccurate, and who would check Fargon for a map of the opposite side of the continent?"*

*"What am I looking at?"*

*"Don't look for what's there...look at what's not. The Uzu. It's nowhere there...now, why would they not indicate that?"*

*"They...forgot?"*

*"They didn't forget when they submitted this one to Limshau 50 years later."*

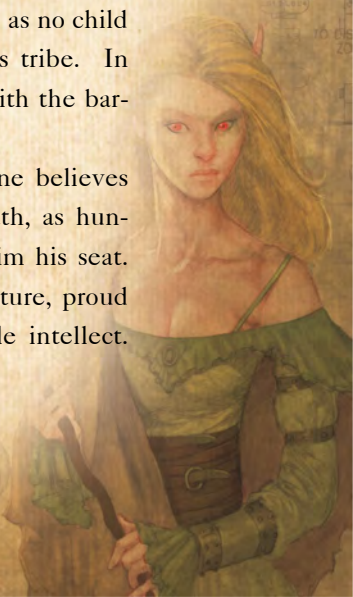
*"I don't get it...how does a mountain range appear over half a century?"*

*"What did I read somewhere about a very, very big dragon?"*

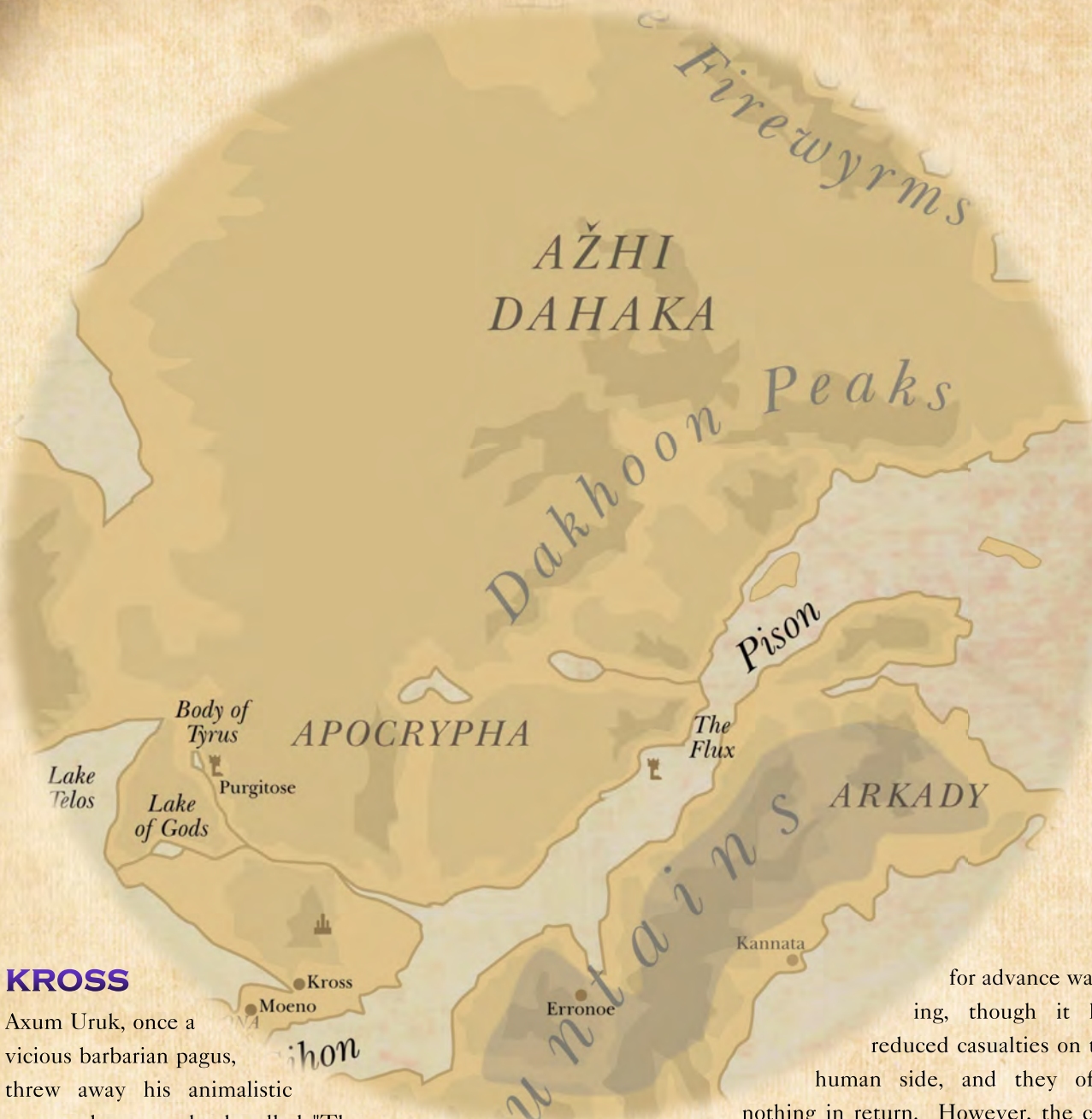
*The Truth of Ages,  
By Telandria Ashkari  
(dramatized)*

to ash and used to fertilize his new 'kingdom's' soil. The heads were turned into bowls and Kallis made a point of raping every single female found in Iopix, regardless of age. None dared to stand up to the undefeated barbarian and his allied fallen dragon, Esgragon of Great Fire. Kallis' appetite shows no limits, and he will never show satisfaction in his life; he now sets his sights on Kross, having sworn to drink from the skull of its chief. He will continue to commit barbaric acts until someone stops him with a blade to the heart. Adult pagus recount scary bedtime stories to their children: "Behave, or the Monster will get you." Obviously, this fable is told to those pagus not loyal to Kallis as no child can be taught by their blood parents in his tribe. In Kallis' view, they are all his children, and with the barbarian's view on mating, most of them are.

Kallis' subjects are very loyal, but no one believes his army would survive intact after his death, as hundreds of his offspring would attempt to claim his seat. Kallis, now almost fifty, is a beast of a creature, proud and strong, though of weak will and feeble intellect. His years will claim him soon.







## KROSS

Axum Uruk, once a vicious barbarian pagus, threw away his animalistic ways and wrote a book called "The Atonement of the Fire," detailing the path of enlightenment for the pagus still under the shroud of control from Ixindar. This path does not necessarily make a pagus 'good', just one trying to separate the pagus soul from corruption. Uruk attacks no one, especially other pagus, believing a fate lies ahead for those like him. He waits for the moment to raise his people to glory previously denied to them. His town is small at only 5,000 pagus. Uruk believes that no creature should rule over the pagus; dragon, shemjaza, pagus chieftain, or anyone else.

Secretly, Uruk sends word to Janoah whenever a large pagus army forms to strike the south, allowing the city ample time to prepare. There is no formal arrangement between them; Janoah doesn't depend on Uruk

for advance warning, though it has reduced casualties on the human side, and they offer nothing in return. However, the current

castellan of the Bulwark once allowed a diplomatic envoy from Kross to approach the wall and enter the city. Despite objections, the meeting took place; the speaker for the pagus was civilized, but it was made abundantly clear that he and his entourage would never be regarded without suspicion by the Bulwark's defenders. In the end, both cities understood what was expected, and no formal alliance was signed.

At forty, Axum fears his community will not survive his death. Though he has desperately tried to pass his wisdom onto others, he is not certain of a lasting impact. Only time will tell. Since the creation of Kross, another town, Moeno, has also appeared to aid Janoah.



## LAKE OF GODS

The most western region of Canam still considered part of Apocrypha, the Lake of Gods is bordered by the mountains of Uzu on the west, leading into the River Xigax to the east. The Lake of Gods, once known as Lake Nipissing, has altered considerably since before the time of magic. It sports two active volcanos, is far larger and deeper than before, and is populated by numerous anathema derived from the chaparran line. Most pagus never venture anywhere near it. However, kodiaks are moving into the region via mountain passes leading into the lake, establishing a foothold without conflict.

## MENNOSLA

Mennos inherited this massive town from his father, Slazan. A chieftain ten generations back (though this is scarce a hundred years to a pagus) slew his fallen dragon master and led his people south, where they were fruitful and multiplied. The city of Mennosla sits in a valley hidden under thick clouds, letting little sunlight in. With 155,000 souls, Mennosla is the largest pagus city on Earth not influenced or controlled by an outside force (shemjaza or dragons). Like most other free pagus communities, Mennosla is not civilized.

Raiders from Mennosla leave no survivors and show no mercy. A story passed that the dragon Ein of Tolerance was not actually slain, but simply left, as he could not exert any control over the population, and that a curse of unknown origin demented the minds of the community.

## MOENO

Moeno is a small village founded by Axum Uruk to be another outpost to warn Janoah of impending pagus attack. Although appearing independent, Moeno's ruler, Kro'as Kaos, is the son of Axum, and as such is fiercely loyal to him. When warning of an invasion occurs, Axum sends word to Moeno, who then sends a messenger to Janoah. The initial communication comes in the form a hilltop beacon visible from across the water. Moeno then sends a mounted messenger to Janoah to alert the kingdom via a red arrow. It's common for this messenger to then pretend to be a scout for the invading army and assist in the attack to stave off suspicion if noticed, laying down his life to maintain the illu-

sion that Moeno and Kross are loyal to their shemjaza or dragon overlords.

## NATRIX

Once called the French River, the Natrix is a disordered and labyrinthine river network connecting the Grand Lakes to the Lake of Gods. It is an extremely hostile region with few passes for horses, let alone wagons. Jagged rocks and cliffs prevent most crossings. The resident creatures, though not forming a civilization, have united to make the Natrix as hostile as possible. Where the dojenn don't reside, migrating kodiaks have filled.

## PISON & GIHON (THE WATERWALL)

The Waterwall is thousands of miles long, flowing from the western end of the Grand Lakes through the heartland of Canam into the turbulent and rapid Gihon. The Gihon, once the St. Lawrence river, remains freshwater until nearly halfway to the sea, but is made virtually untraversable by unpredictable currents and uncharted underwater hazards. Rising waters in the wake of the Hammer swallowed up many old human settlements along its length, including a great city built on an island, many of whose tallest buildings—protected by some mysterious power—break the surface of the water, providing yet another obstacle to river travel.

When the waters reach another old human city, built atop a cliff that the rising waters have eroded into a precarious island, the Gihon widens into the Gulf of Pison. Where the salt water meets the fresh, a turbulent current creates a region called the **Flux**.

Beyond that, the Pison enters the domain of volatile ocean tides and spawn creatures flowing inland. Waves known to sweep nearly a hundred feet high wash away thousands of creatures attempting the cross, and when calm enough is often the hunting ground for grotesque ocean monsters pulled inland by the tides. The combination of these threats and the otherwise unpassable waters forms what is collectively dubbed 'the Waterwall.' This, along with the mountains of Uzu, seal off Apocrypha from the rest of the world.

## RIVER BYTHOS

Bythos is a significant tributary once considered the defining border between two old human provinces.





## CHAPTER SEVEN: EAST

Geological turmoil due to flooding distended its boundaries, rendering it one of Canam's largest waterways, as well one of its most treacherous. It is marked with four waterfalls, eventually leading to the Body of Tyrus, the lake and surrounding region controlled by the fallen dragon Avalon of All. Travelers through this region will most likely first encounter the River Bythos when it intersects with the River Xigax and encounter the Fork, one of the few available crossing points.

### RIVER XIGAX

Xigax is a small river that merges with Bythos on its way back to the sea. When it was much smaller before the flood, it was known as the Mattawa River. Where Bythos feeds from the Body of Tyrus, Xigax feeds from the much larger Lake of Gods. A smaller river, the Natrix, connects the Lake of Gods to the Grand Lakes, effectively eliminating most land routes to the north. Venturing this far west is unadvised as the Lake of Gods is home to many anathema hostile to most outsiders. There is also no safe path to cross Xigax until reaching the Lake of Gods.

### SAEMUS

Saemus 'the Wise' (known by most other chiefs as 'Saemus the Craven') swore allegiance to Reaver of Light, a mighty fallen dragon, and with his protection, one of the largest pagus towns outside of Kakodomania blossomed. They believe in no trade, and commonly pillage towns for slaves and food. It is the closest condensed population of pagus until reaching Tethuss. Saemus receives all his wisdom from an elder creature known only as the Frail.

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Few have seen her face but describe her as a disheveled figure, withered skin to bone. A loosened noose hangs down from her neck. She doesn't possess the strength to even raise her hands, let alone walk. Her stomach has collapsed to the point a man's hands could grip her waist, touching thumbs and fingers. The seer offers her wisdom to any, though Saemus forbids anyone else to hear her voice. She constantly sits on a palanquin with her head in shadow. Her face has never been seen. No one is sure what she is, as it is doubtful she is a pagus. Saemus does not commit any action without her guidance. His antecedents, dating back more than 75 years, have always relied on her and it is believed her wisdom keeps the rulers in check. Almost

all the 50,000 strong in the city serve as active members of the pagus army.

### UZU

The isolation of Apocrypha and Ažhi Dahaka came not from the Second Hammer but might not have come from magical resurgence occurring afterward either. The St. Lawrence strait widened; the great lakes merged, leaving only a small land bridge connecting the north from populated southern lands. This left a western route, oddly blocked when a colossal range of mountains known as Uzu emerged when the North American tectonic plate fissured. The kodiaks believe Uzu was created by their gods to protect them from the pagus; a theory which has proven correct for them, as the pagus have never found a safe land route through the mountains. Meanwhile, the kodiaks have started making land claims east of the mountains believing their faith will protect and eventually move the mountains with them.

The fact Uzu appeared after the Second Hammer is not contested. How long it took to appear and when is a matter of a fiery debate. Echalogians and leading experts in geography had thought the range emerged with the opening of Attricana and the swell of magic, with Uzu taking around 50 years to form fully. The kodiaks living there disagree, attesting Uzu appeared over a week only 250 years ago and in direct response for the pagus population, which was exploding at the time.

Uzu is both the name of a colossal mountain range and a deity in local kodiak mythology. They attest the mountain range is a living entity—an intelligent force deep underground that pushed up the mountains to protect the west from the invasion of pagus. Regardless of any intelligent intent, Uzu does exhibit strange properties, unlike other mountains. What is believed scientifically is that soon after the Hammer, the North American Plate shattered, and against the known laws governing plate tectonics began transforming the landscape rapidly and in extreme ways. Notorious hotspots flared into full volcanos; hills rose into mountains. One theory points to the geological shield—also known as the Laurentian Plateau—effectively breaking free from the surrounding plate, resulting in the isolation of Apocrypha. However, the magical saturation was not yet finished, and this is where the kodiak faith came into play.





The mountain peaks change daily, shifting like water tides. Caves can open over a day, then as quickly shut, swallowing those inside. Landslides and avalanches are daily occurrences. Only the kodiaks appear adept enough to navigate the constantly shifting terrain, able to cross Uzu at will. The initial pagus attempts to master the mountains ended in quick elimination, resulting in the natural fear later generations had to crossing the mountains. Uzu stretches across almost the entire length and breadth of the land between the Dragon's Claw and the Grand Lakes, covering an area of nearly 1500 square kilometers.

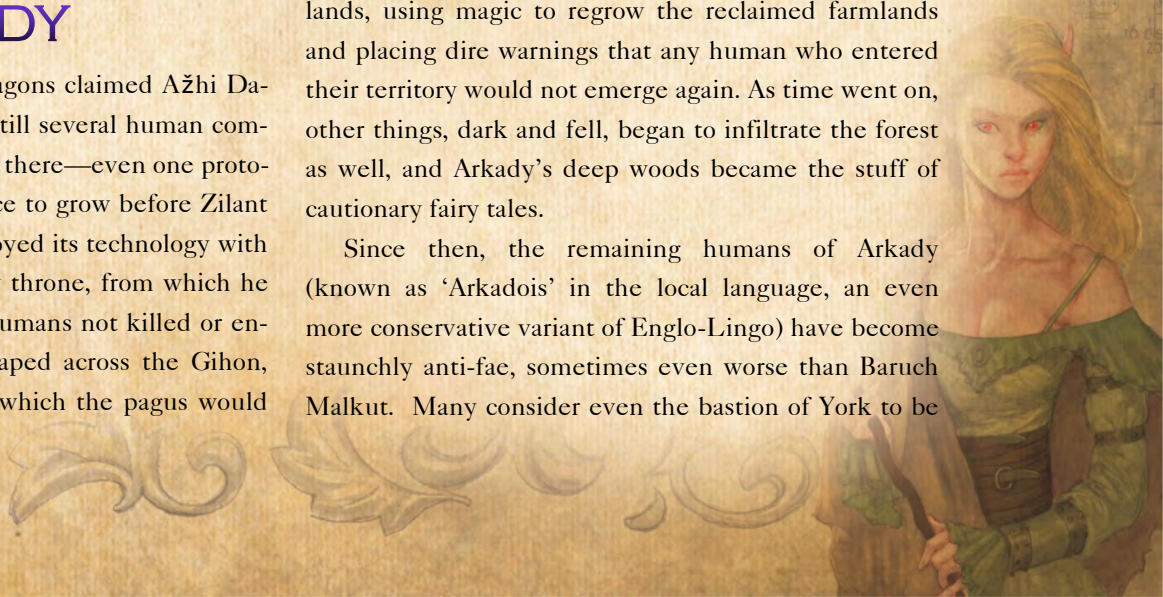
## ARKADY

When the pagus and typhox dragons claimed Ažhi Dahaka for their own, there were still several human communities who made their homes there—even one proto-bastion that never got the chance to grow before Zilant of Ignorance settled on it, destroyed its technology with his breath, and made it his new throne, from which he has never departed. The few humans not killed or enslaved by the dragon lords escaped across the Gihon, braving the treacherous waters which the pagus would

not willingly cross, and made new homes, carving out new farms amid the forests that had reclaimed the northern spur of the Alanaka Mountains and building new fishing villages and trading towns along the eastern coastline. They clung to as many of their traditions as they could and tried to build new lives for themselves, until yet another invader came to uproot them again.

These invaders were chaparrans, displaced from Laurama by the encroaching sickness of Tranquiss and the depredations of humanity, who traveled north to found a new colony in the northern forests. By nature more militant than the chaparrans of Dawnamoak, the former Lauramans expelled the humans from the woodlands, using magic to regrow the reclaimed farmlands and placing dire warnings that any human who entered their territory would not emerge again. As time went on, other things, dark and fell, began to infiltrate the forest as well, and Arkady's deep woods became the stuff of cautionary fairy tales.

Since then, the remaining humans of Arkady (known as 'Arkadois' in the local language, an even more conservative variant of Englo-Lingo) have become staunchly anti-fae, sometimes even worse than Baruch Malkut. Many consider even the bastion of York to be





too friendly with the ‘fairy menace’. Human-centric militias and mercenary groups, such as the Iron Sons, find the Arkadois a ripe field for recruitment.

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*The “Hearts of Chaos” adventure module is set in Arkady, explaining the more ardent anti-fae attitudes the sample PCs are supposed to have compared with average Yorkers (who don’t particularly like fae, but aren’t generally frothing racists about them either).*

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### AZHI DAHAKA

The pagus that appeared in Apocrypha reproduced at an astonishing rate, encouraged by their dragon overlords (of which there is believed to be at least twenty, including the seven fallen lords). These great dragons reside mostly in the northeasternmost spur of Canam, a region called Ažhi Dahaka, leaving most of the remaining area initially to smaller dragons and pagus warlords. This changed recently with the arrival of the shemjaza.

The greatest typhox dragons, the Ažhi seven, claim Ažhi Dahaka under their direct control—though most of them are never seen, living out their lives in solitude within self-proclaimed kingdoms deep in the northern regions, leaving their lesser brethren to impose order and terror on the land. Pagus followers give most of their food as offerings, or risk being snatched up as food themselves. There is no border between Apocrypha and Ažhi Dahaka; any land that falls beneath the shadows cast by the winged monstrosities is the evil dragons’ domain. The only thing that stopped the dragons from launching a full-scale invasion of Canam is the lack of any centralized control of the region. No typhox dragon will bow before another, despite victories proven by scars, age, or size. Though they may respect and envy the power of their elders, they will not rally to any common cause. And now with the arrival of the supreme lords of Ixindar, the dragons may not be able to command such armies again.

### DRAGON LORDS

The seven dragon lords of Ažhi maintain keeps of varying strength across the land, and none can be entirely sure where they roost at any given time. These dragon lords are rarely seen but are known across the continent through tales to frighten troops and children.

**Baenis of Gorge**, who forces his slaves to raise exotic beasts, feasting on them as he sees fit;

**Balaur of Debauch**, who captures free pagus to en-gorge his numbers and maintain the high population of his slaves;

**Goch of Wrath**, one of the surviving dragon kings who, with no citadel of her own, wanders the lands taking what she wills (though stories tell that she once gutted and claimed a laudenian sky keep as her throne);

**Lindis of Avarice**, who keeps her storehouses of treasures hidden and never lingers in any one place for long;

**Lotan of Scorn**, whose massive citadel, built around an entire mountain with walls as high as its peak, lies mostly empty due to continually driving his pagus to war;

**Verkelen of Spite**, who despises and distrusts all the other dragons and never reveals his location to anyone;

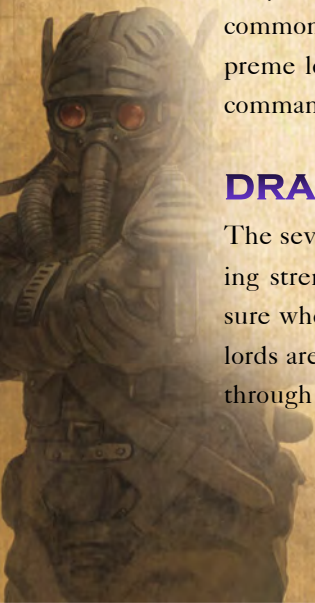
**Zilant of Indolence**, who is far too lazy to do anything other than lying on a bed of treasures brought to him by his fearful followers, and occasionally eat one of those followers who doesn’t show sufficient deference to his majesty.

Though each of the seven claims to rule the entire land, they do not fight each other for control of it except by proxy, sending their pagus slaves to massacre and plunder the slaves of the others.

### REAYER

One of the largest known death dragons, Reaver of Light, keeps a castle near the glacier wall in the north. He commands his private army, increasing his pagus population by scavenging the dead from their daily civil conflicts and raising them to this service.

Perfectly loyal and obedient, his force of nearly 5,000 reinforces his keep. The wood and stone fortress hangs secured into the hard ice wall of the southern side of the massive frostland formation the kodiaks call Chronzia. This massive glacier lumbers south, draping the land in shadow before demolishing it at its snail’s pace. The death dragon, known for patience, embraced the slow, unstoppable force of the glacier, usually an object of worship reserved for frost dragons, surprisingly absent in this region. Every year, Reaver’s fortress crawls a few more feet south, never melting or crumbling. All the while, an unspent army of undead pagus march in front.





## ESGRAGON

The greatest and oldest fire dragon not revered as a lord, Esgragon reigns in the distant northeast corner of the land, atop a volcano she created by her own will. As there were no breaks in the tectonic plate or mantle plumes in the area, Esgragon dug herself into the crust to develop her personal hotspot. This occupied her the majority of the first few centuries. Why she did not claim a natural breach is not known except for a desire to remain in the land her kin had chosen. Esgragon is one of the few dragons never to claim a title-name; instead, the mountain she birthed (known as ‘Great Fire’ by the pagus) is her testament to the universe.

Esgragon’s mountain is now the tallest mountain in Dahaka and the most active volcano on the continent. The pagus army carved their villages from the hardened magma that scarred the land black. All pagus reaching the elder age cast themselves to the flames of the pits as a show of faith to their dragon. Esgragon has grown an army of nearly 65,000 pagus, larger than almost any other dragon. She finds the keep to her liking and seldom leaves, keeping the energy of the heat for sustenance (being one of the few fire dragons able to do this).

## BARUCH MALKUT

Canam is a land that forces compromises. No nation has ever managed to achieve any significant size or stability without the help of allies and the combined efforts of humans and fae—no nation but one. Baruch Malkut, the so-called “Blessed Kingdom,” is a proto-empire populated almost exclusively by zealots and bigots, which openly threatens nearby nations and has been accused of assassinating foreign leaders and stealing precious artifacts. Yet it has more or less been left to its own devices as ostensible allies bicker among themselves on the best way to deal with it, while others focus on what they consider greater threats from the north and across the ocean.

This lack of dedicated opposition has only increased Baruch Malkut’s capacity to continue threatening its neighbors. If dealt with when it was but newly founded a few centuries ago, Baruch Malkut would not be the threat it is today. Granted, no one knew the potential it

*O: “It’s wrong.”*

*R: “Based on your word.”*

*O: “I got Tide’s book, isn’t that an assurance of trust? I knew the combination to open it. He trusted me.”*

*R: “We’ve not doubt of that, but these claims; none of their people would admit to this heresy. They told you; you tell us.”*

*O: “What do your books say?”*

*R: “The king? Konig is believed to be an immigrant from Southam; speculation is that he may have been a half-fae that disfigured himself to look more human.”*

*O: “And his cult? The kingdom?”*

*R: “The Cloth followed him and possessed enough strength to destroy a fledgling bastion in the area.”*

*O: “It had a name. Sebring. And it wasn’t fledgling...<whisper> at least that’s what they told me.”*

*R: “Who? And how do you know this? These refugees...they claim to be from a region that according to our maps doesn’t exist. They speak of wars, dragons, demonic machines. I know some are lying, but every story is outlandish, so we don’t know which ones to ignore.”*

*O: “I guess that was the point...they said it would be this way. I guess I’m just fulfilling my role in all this.”*

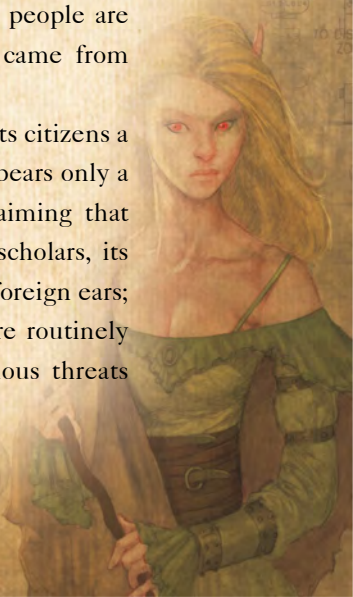
*R: “I’ve never seen so many people manage to keep a secret. Mr. Orlovic, I’m trying to understand the situation, and you’re not making it easier.”*

*O: “I probably said too much...or rather I said exactly what I was supposed to. This will have to end for now. And please...that’s not my name anymore.”*

*End Transcript.*

had back then, as propaganda and fabrications from that time painted an origin steeped in legend and providence—as if its creation and expansion could not be stopped. In the present age, a mixture of inaccuracies and secrets has created a region where few people are genuinely aware of where Baruch Malkut came from and where it has the potential to lead.

The state-run religious doctrine teaches its citizens a language that they call ‘English,’ but which bears only a passing resemblance to other languages claiming that name. Known as ‘Onespeak’ by Limshau scholars, its accent and vernacular are almost comical to foreign ears; hence, documents retrieved from Malkut are routinely translated into other forms so that the serious threats they present are unmistakable to the reader.





*There is still considerable discussion among experts about how Faustis was able to expand so quickly, but I believe the most conclusive evidence lies in a techan book regarding the environmental collapse that may have occurred before or during the fall of the Second Hammer.*

*Surely, rising ocean levels contributed to an exodus towards dry land, propagating an early human refuge that could've quickly turned into one of the first bastions in history. From what history has told us, most military bases in the region skirted the shore, meaning they were the first to flood. Those not pushing north would shift inland. The question is where they would go? We know there was a large techan city in the region before, but from what we know, Faustis is located to the west of that city, and our records don't indicate anything of importance there. Perhaps the bastion moved to higher ground, or there was another location of value that could serve as a basis for a civilization we may not be aware of. Regardless, 250 years ago, everything that could have been in that region was washed clean.*

*Isabel Gothmarothmagoggogoth  
Abidan Historian (from a speech)  
322 AE*

Less than a quarter of Onespeak's limited vocabulary is recognizable as English, the rest being either corrupted beyond recognition, rendered down from Spanish and Portuguese. Literacy is virtually unknown amongst the general citizenry, as the Truth of Konig is preached to them by a licensed parsonry. Church services are mandatory for all residents, and heretics are publicly executed as an example to others.

### ARCHYTAS

Passing over the hill, one notices only the new train terminal, one of the first built, and a few outlying buildings. Approaching closer to Archytas reveals "The Pit," a massive mine excavation that stretches 1,400 feet across and descends nearly 1000 feet. Buildings of all sorts jut out from the cavern walls, connected to each other by rickety wooden boardwalks. At the bottom, miners continually carve further and deeper. Officially, they dig for extensive silver deposits under the town, and the income from the endeavor keeps the town go-

ing. The town scours the earth for one of the many artifacts Darius Konig obsesses over. Only he and the city's current Lord, Sebastian Aepoc, know its name and purpose. The boardwalks feature no handrails and hang precariously over the drop-off. Somehow, no citizen from Archytas has fallen to their death in fifty years. Tourists, however...

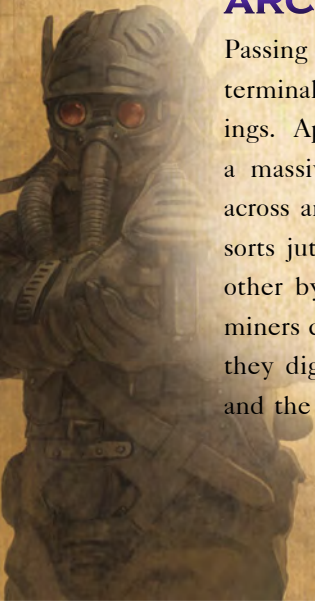
### FAUSTIS

King Darius Konig still lives in the walls of the marsh city of Faustis. Shallow marshland surrounds the patch of land for eighty miles in every direction. Even the main road sits under a few centimeters of water, making it virtually invisible to those unaware of its existence. Tall grass covers the landscape all the way up to the wall of jutting stone. The 100,000 humans of Faustis are fiercely loyal to Konig and will all, almost certainly, die for their king—or so goes the claim. Every able-bodied man of Faustis is required to serve in the army and can be called away at a moment's notice. There has never been an attempt by any force to attack Faustis, as any army knows the approach across the water would cripple a host before even reaching the city. The elite Knights of Konig (known in whispers as 'the Order of the Cloth') focus on guerilla warfare, specializing in stealth and assassination rather than open combat, vanishing under the water, never leaving a trace, making the hundreds of square miles outside of Faustis their playground.

### ITINERA

The richest Malkut city other than Faustis, Itinera displays one unique feature: the corpse. The population calls it Ghula and claims it was a massive demon Konig slew on their shores. The flesh had long burned away, leaving only the pure unbroken skeleton. Those outsiders who have managed to study this artifact attest it is too settled in the ground to have been killed in the past 300 years and add that suspicious markings lead some to believe it a fraud. Either way, the colossal mile-long, eight-legged skeleton bears no resemblance to any known creature. Current theory suggests to a sea monster swept on the shore, already dead. Buildings sprouted under, over, and inside the skeleton.

Although rich in fishing and farmland, Itinera remains unpopular with the king. Rash words spoken by







its first appointed ruler, Fateen Warros, resulted in his execution. Since then, the average life expectancy of a Lord of Itinera is fifteen years. Given that, the town has lived through ten lords. The current and longest tenure is with Tarfah Khan, who keeps his nose clean and his head down.

## KARUM

Most of Karum spreads out into the water. Like Itinera, Karum is a coastal town, focusing mostly on fishing. Katiaro Kusan, its initial appointed ruler, was lucky to have built his community in a bay, away from the ravaging waves of open water. With that, most the town expanded into the ocean rather than into land. Most of the houses float and most of the roads lift and fall with tide levels. The town has even been known to reorganize itself, as the moorings are loosed and the houses rearranged. Unlike Itinera, Karum has always been in good favor with the king. The current ruler Matoko Kusan, enjoys the profitable relationship.

## KAVUS

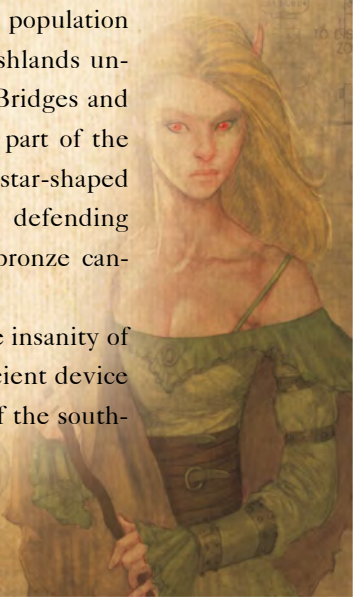
Though not rich, Kavus holds the largest landmass of any city in Baruch Malkut. In only a few short decades, it doubled in size twice. An ingenious engineer,

Frances Goyer, developed a way to grow a variety of different plants in the marshlands around Faustis. He erected a concrete lattice covering the entirety of the farming land. Each square segment measures precisely 40 feet and the entire lattice covers 1,000 square miles of marshlands with plans to double that in the next hundred years. The export from Kavus supplies food to almost every single city in the kingdom. The produce developed range from fussy and hard to grow exotic spices to potatoes and onions, which occupy the main export, shipped out to the massive standing armies Darius operates on the borders of the empire.

## MASKELL

The entirety of Maskell sits atop stilts. The population lives upon elevated housing, while the marshlands underneath shift and weave with the waters. Bridges and boats connect the communities. The only part of the city anchored to solid ground is the keep, a star-shaped construction that rises from the shoreline, defending both land and sea approaches with heavy bronze cannons.

The city's existence is due entirely to the insanity of the King. An obscure scroll indicated an ancient device could be found hiding under the wetlands of the south-





*"Oh yes, of course, we could. It's not a gold rush; you can't just strip mine the area. Equate each target like a whale; each one a hunt, each one taking effort. You can't just throw a net and drag a hundred in.*

*"Our cage carries five, maybe seven. We can stretch that but risk damage to the cargo. Three is all we would need to justify the cost of the sellswords I hire each time I take a hunt. Plus, I the more I try to acquire, the deeper we need to push into Laurama. The skilled captain and warden keep a contract with an educator guild back home. I'm lucky to be in favor with several.*

*"What, sell? You serious? We don't sell our product; we lease them for the life of the master. The key to maximum profit is not to sell five slaves a year but to lease those five slaves five times over 200 years. I leave a grand legacy to my children as my father left to me. I monitor a dozen currently in service with two nearing expiration after their buyers shuffle on. They'll be recycled, and I'll double my profit with hardly a raise of my hand. Only an idiot sells product, and only superior idiots sell outside the kingdom. I imagine my grandchildren will never need to raise a whip in the hunt. Our recycled stocks will secure my family line forever. Of course, I teach them the ways my father passed on to me. It would be a shame to let such valuable knowledge fade away. It's our lifestyle.*

*Overheard in Matronis*

ern tip. Thankfully, the land also brims over with new varieties of decapods, allowing Maskell to thrive even though operating with an ulterior motive. Citizens scour the landscape daily, looking for an item they may never find. The town's current ruler, Anthony Stewart, hoards the profits from the fishing industry. The planned train network will run to Stewart's keep.

## MATRONIS

Built to offset traffic to Tobias, Matronis expanded quickly in a fruitful landscape. A blossoming lumber industry provided the bulk of their supplementary income, as the south marshlands are wood poor.

Matronis claims to be fulfilling a public service in the administration of slaves. Although not the slave capital like Tobias, Matronis operates a large administration network for regulating the slave population exported around and outside the kingdom. It is not a slave-raiding center itself, but does operate several training facilities, more so than Tobias.

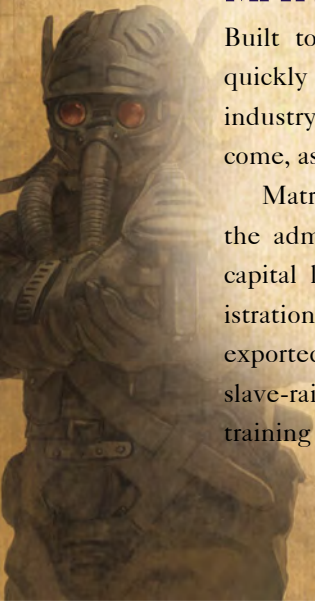
Some enslaved pray for death. Others pray for Matronis. One could call it the lesser of two evils, but that does not detract that the training—or *re-education*—of Matronis is less invasive, though still as effective. More broken subjects rebel against their masters here than in Tobias, but Matronis trainers insist their techniques imprint fewer mental scars, leaving the subject more sociable while still obedient. They also claim those disobeying and lashing at their owners suffered mistreatment beyond what is expected by civilized proprietors. A charter of policies and standards, enforced by the government, details the practices considered acceptable by the system. These guidelines are not imposed or enforced by Tobias or any other slave ring.

Matronis often handles stock from the ocean, taken from wavecrashers that dock at Orlov or the Tallage Market. The rest is overflow from Tobias, which operates mostly as a staging post for acquiring and selling product. Matronis deals with most of the education and few products are directly sold from here. Despite claims of civility, all other kingdoms refute the declaration and consider Matronis as corrupt and evil as the other slaver cities. This has not stopped Matronis gaining a reputation of quality among the trafficking circles. Most high-priced slaves are sold in Matronis. The subjects they directly sell usually fetch a higher price, reserved for the wealthy elite of the kingdom and beyond.

## MIYNOS

Gabriel Owen, born a farmer, migrated to religious icon seemingly overnight. He claimed an angel appeared to him, declaring that his kind departed the Earth a long time ago but returned to shepherd mankind through this delicate age. He spoke of the final test of mankind and the impurities walking the Earth. He preached a gospel of unity of mankind but also spoke of striking down heathens not following the true word.

Many outside of Baruch claimed Owen cracked years earlier with the death of his wife in a bogg raid. Others within claim righteous blessing. Owen gathered his followers and they quickly swore to his word. Dozens turned to hundreds and the preacher finally uprooted the population and shifted their location south.





*In no order of priority or importance regarding property:*

- *An owner is expected to keep his property in relative good health, supplying proper clothes and food, and may face fines if found to mistreat said property.*
- *Ensure all transfer papers are properly filled out if property is sold back to the state or to another buyer.*
- *Physical labor involving property should be limited to no longer than 12-hour shifts. Sexual encounters are not included in this limitation. Breaks are up to the prerogative of the owner.*
- *Property is not permitted to leave an owner or his/her controlled land without written permission (forms available must be filled out exactly) from said owner. Subjects must have passports, or they will be detained and returned. The owner may face a fine for the inconvenience.*
- *The owner may not destroy property. Subjects found unsafe or guilty of a crime will be turned over to the state to be either re-educated or exterminated humanely.*
- *Although the owner may praise or reward property, said property is not allowed to acquire or keep anything of financial value under their own name. Everything falls under ownership of the buyer. Selling the property does not transfer any additional goods.*
- *Owners are expected to handle disobedience in a humane manner and should avoid punishment that inflicts permanent physical or psychological damage.*
- *A seller may face fines or imprisonment if failing to disclose a property's detailed health as well as the limit of their physical and mental conditioning. This includes fraudulent claims of a subject's virginity or sexual experience.*
- *Prepubescent property should be limited to labor roles only.*
- *The owner is encouraged, but not expected, to compensate property, supplying education, and/or offer any affection,*
- *Property sold to brothels or purchased for the intent of prostitution carry their own charter of rules (see Policies of Fey Trafficking for Sexual Vending).*
- *Single-owner sexual property may be given concubine status only if the property is half-breed (see Policies of Owned Concubines).*
- *House elves (puggs) are not bound by any rules listed here.*

*Remember, happy property is loyal property!*

*Matronis Page 1 Charter*

Fifteen years ago, after weeks of traveling, they reached the hillside and found Mynos prospering there with a population of damaskans, gimfen, and humans. Owen ordered an attack and the entire non-human population was dragged out of their homes and murdered. He offered amnesty and forgiveness only to the human residents, eventually executing dozens more until the unrest subsided. The fanatics of Gabriel Owen settled into their new home. A month passed and Owen gave word to Darius Konig of their intention to join the Kingdom. Darius accepted the invitation with open arms and Mynos remained a loyal disciple ever since. Owen still claims he talks to the Angel today though no one has ever seen it.

## NASSAU

Nassau, a small barony founded generations ago by a self-proclaimed knight-errant inspired by tales of chivalry, is technically not a part of Baruch Malkut, but a tributary city-state. Until recently they had maintained their independence, until they breached a natural reservoir of crude oil. Within days, Konig offered a 'choice' to its latest ruler, Bilford Gram: allow Baruch Malkut to buy 100% of their export, or be declared heathens and become target of an immediate crusade. Gram himself preferred to ally with Skyrose, though this would have been a difficult prospect given his city's human population. Ultimately, Nassau only joined with Baruch Malkut with feigning grace, in the hopes of keeping Konig's inquisitors away from Gram's holdings, and especially his secret.

When he was only a few years ascendant to his small barony, Gram embarked on a personal crusade of self-discovery after years in solitude in his keep. Not a single marriage prospect that pranced and danced in front of his throne ever intrigued him. He decided to leave with a small entourage to travel the world outside the city he inherited from his father and lived in all his life. Alas, a



group of boggs devoured most of his entourage, and the last two survivors met their death the next day in a landslide, leaving Bilford alone. He decided to soldier back to his silk and down-filled coop; alas, he was completely lost and ended up traveling the wrong direction under overcast skies for three days before realizing his mistake. Fearing the worst, he finally stumbled upon a seldom tread road and discovered a Tobias slaver caravan.

Having been raised in a tradition of knightly virtue, Bilford had no love for slavers. Gathering what courage still remained to him, he drew his father's weapon and attacked the caravan. Despite tripping after his initial charge, the gauche knight, with dried mud covering his once silver-plated armor, now speckled with chips, cleaved the slavemaster before any others even realized the lethality of their opponent. Bilford successfully slew the other two before a fallen enemy ran a dagger between a gap in Bilford's thigh. Screaming in agony, the valiant defender stumbled back, tripped, and fell upon his attacker, running a shoulder divot into the man's forehead, killing him instantly. The wound, though superficial, woke Bilford to the preposterousness of an untrained aspirant prince's pursuit of knightly valor. But the deed had been done, however clumsily, and the injured champion checked for his prize.

The slavers carried neither gold, nor any 'trophies' save one; an unbroken damaskan elf, Abellis Feather-tan, recently kidnapped from Skyrose. Having encountered few humans in her life save for her attackers, she was initially dubious of her savior; and since he spoke no damaskan and she no human tongue, they were initially only able to communicate awkwardly through hand gestures. Luckily, her skill in tracking and navigation allowed her to gain her bearing and lead her new protector back to her home. Thankfully, the following weeklong journey back to her city was largely uneventful and the chivalrous Gram was not forced to attempt another clumsy defense.

Abellis, a skilled warrior and artiste with the brush, was quite aware of her savior's ham-fisted aptitude at swordplay. Oddly enough, she found his momentary bravery and continued loyalty to her side far more impressive as a result. Bilford was no man of action, but he was no dim fool either, possessing a chiseled intellect from years of schooling from qualified tutors, and in the space of a week had picked up enough of his

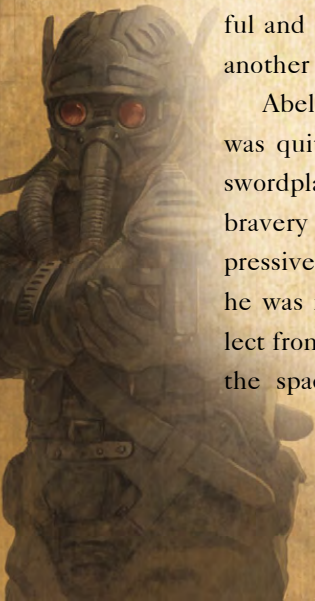
guide's language to communicate in a halting, ungainly way.

Still two days out from Skyrose, Bilford promised Abellis that he would always protect her for as long as she would have him. He considered this the one action in his life not preordained by his family's tradition. Abellis laughed at this, but laid a hand over his heart and told him that *she* would do the protecting. Although Billford was unaware at the time, the two had bonded, tied forever in a way no spell or technology could sever.

When the elder lord of Skyrose, her aunt Lysaa, heard of the bond, she chastised her niece's impulsiveness and informed Bilford of the implication of what occurred. Lysaa even threatened to expel Abellis from the kingdom. Knowing his barony sat precariously close to Baruch Malkut and that such a bond would bring condemnation, many expected Bilford would flee home and pray under bed covers for the secret to stay buried. Instead, his newfound loyalty in heart took hold and Billford swore to uphold the seal of their bond. He pleaded Lysaa to annex Nassau, but such an offer could not be accepted—allowing humans into Skyrose as equals.

Nassau was also too small and too far away. Bilford considered abdicating his throne, but news would leak to the reason and a town with any sort of elvish connection, even a former one, would bring the wrath of the kingdom nearby and their army of fanatics. He even contemplating faking his death and renouncing his name but Abellis insisted he return and honor the pledge to his town. Unable to bring his love home, Bilford sulked back to his keep.

All was not lost. Lord Gram found reasons often to take holiday in the north, with claims of hunting and fishing, diligently covered for by allied knights aware of Gram's assignations. This affair continued successfully for ten years until Konig's forces arrived and delivered their king's ultimatum. With little alternative, Gram agreed. Though he was able to secure a concession that Konig's religious authorities would not be permitted to interfere with his rule, he cannot prevent them from preaching in his streets—nor report what they see back to their master. With untrusting eyes following the lord with every step, Bilford could no longer travel so far north. Though still able to communicate in ways untraced by all but the most powerful magic, the two bonded could no longer touch. Each day inches closer





to the truth. Many simply believe Gram looks very young for his age. When time finally reveals the truth, Darius Konig will crucify the peaceful man for the love of a mate he has not seen in those many years. She still lives in Skyrose, hoping to one day reunite in a land of peace.

## ORLOV

Orlov, originally a gimfen fishing town, was captured by forces from Baruch Malkut 100 years ago. The army forced the population to finish the dock under whip with no reward. However, instead of execution, as was ordered by the king upon completion of their task, Colonel Raiphis Jarvis let them return to Gnimfall from whence they emigrated. In the past five years of the occupation, the Colonel saw no evidence of corruption by mingling with the non-humans and found the captives agreeable and easy to manage. For this act of kindness, King Darius flayed the flesh from Jarvis' bones. Knowing of his eventual fate, Jarvis sent his wife and two daughters north. Though aware of the risks in traveling alone in the open land, Jarvis preferred it over sharing their fate with him. Luckily, rangers from Gnimfall, aware of the sacrifice and seeking out the family based on information handed to them from the escapees, discovered and adopted them into the city, where they would live for the rest of their days. The gimfen, loyal and responsible, swore to support the family line for the sacrifice the human colonel had made. The Jarvis family, now a lineage of half-gimfen, are now considered pillars of the Gnimfall community. They swear to the destruction of Baruch Malkut, and since most serve in the military, they are the loudest voices pushing for invasion. Where Limshau wishes to strike at Sykar and Laurama at Tobias, Gnimfall looks only to Orlov.

## SYKAR

A colossal military front sprung up literally over the course of a week, leading many to believe Sykar featured more powerful wizards than all the rest of Baruch Malkut, a civilization previously thought weak in that regard.

The castle quickly overflowed with armed troops and siege equipment. Although designed obviously for defense, most of the supplies and manpower shifted to Sykar were reserved for an assault. This resulted in the

bolstering of defenses in Skyrose as well as the Limshau city of Zorahn.

Sykar appeared ready for a first strike. Fifteen years ago, spies skillful and stealthy observed the gathering of forces there. The castle became engorged with increasing numbers from southern villages. Trebuchets sat on the fields north of the wall, unable to fit inside the periphery, crammed with tents and smith fires. Estimations placed the army nearly at 18,000 with another 5,000 en-route. Although not an intimidating force in numbers, they compensated with engines of demolition, perfectly tuned for the walls of cities.

An odd observation came from the noted absence of spellcasters. Though believed to have used the arcane energy to forge the castle in less than a moon's phase, these presumed casters were no longer present. Had they been called back to the capital, or had they not existed at all? Such a fact was trivial in the face of the impending attack. Despite the relentless crawl of the siege machines, the army, when finally given the order, would reach Zorahn with barely enough time to for the city to receive reinforcements from neighbors. The spies took watch every evening, keeping one set of eyes of the keep, waiting for the raising flag and opening gates.

One morning, dawn flags did not rise. Flames died to strands of smoke. The doors stayed closed. The scouts, fearing they had been negligent in their duty, set out to investigate. While one on mount raced north to fetch the army, the other attempted to creep up to the walls. They found the castle deserted. Not a single servant or child had been left behind. Bread continued to rise under moist towels on windowpanes. Beaten steel softened and melted in unsupervised forges. With the return of the other scout, both realized their duties had not been compromised.

One night, fifteen years ago, everyone in Sykar vanished. The entire population, including its founder, Franco Bogdono, disappeared. All their belongings and supplies remained. Though they might have abandoned their posts, many had sworn loyalty to the King Darius and would die before turning craven. To prevent Skyrose from expanding to take the empty stronghold, King Darius rushed an army to repopulate the deserted castle, but many members of the new army believed Sykar to be cursed. A few of the new arrivals did desert their posts, though no reports of unexplained disappearances have occurred since.





## MERCHANDISE RECOMMENDED

### LEASE PRICE GUIDELINES

*Set forth by Tobias Council of Standards  
(in dollars)*

|                                       |                |
|---------------------------------------|----------------|
| <i>Concubine (Tobias-Standard)</i>    | <i>2500</i>    |
| <i>Concubine (Tobias-Select)</i>      | <i>5500</i>    |
| <i>Concubine (Matronis Grade)</i>     | <i>19000</i>   |
| <i>Labor (Male)</i>                   | <i>350</i>     |
| <i>Labor (Female)</i>                 | <i>550</i>     |
| <i>Labor (Child Male)</i>             | <i>150</i>     |
| <i>Labor (Child Female)</i>           | <i>275</i>     |
| <i>House Elf (Pugg*)</i>              | <i>20</i>      |
| <b>Race</b>                           |                |
| <i>Tenenbri</i>                       | <i>+150</i>    |
| <i>Laudenian</i>                      | <i>+1000</i>   |
| <i>Tilen**</i>                        | <i>+10,000</i> |
| <b>Skills</b>                         |                |
| <i>Animal Husbandry</i>               | <i>+100</i>    |
| <i>Artistry (Painting, Sculpture)</i> | <i>+150</i>    |
| <i>Carpentry</i>                      | <i>+200</i>    |
| <i>Cooking</i>                        | <i>+150</i>    |
| <i>Farmer / Hunter</i>                | <i>+200</i>    |
| <b>Performance</b>                    |                |
| <i>Music</i>                          | <i>+100</i>    |
| <i>Dance</i>                          | <i>+100</i>    |
| <i>Singing</i>                        | <i>+100</i>    |
| <i>Weaving</i>                        | <i>+150</i>    |
| <i>Forge-work</i>                     | <i>+200</i>    |
| <b>Other Options</b>                  |                |
| <i>Unparalleled Beauty (Matronis)</i> | <i>+5000</i>   |
| <i>Recycled</i>                       | <i>-20%</i>    |
| <i>Stamina and Strength</i>           | <i>+350</i>    |
| <i>Maiden Status</i>                  | <i>+3000</i>   |
| <i>Halo</i>                           | <i>+500</i>    |

*Female labor is usually below standards for concubine status or feature unwanted disfigurements or a violent personality that required severe condi-*

*tioning. She may also be not adequately intelligent to receive extensive re-education to be a concubine.*

*Tilen are forbidden by royal decree.*

*It should be noted that all registration cards with all merchandise rate product in grades of "A" to "D," "A" being choice and "D" being a failure. Though these grades are easily assigned in the fields of strength, intelligence, and physical beauty, other fields are harder to quantify.*

*These standards include a rating for virginity, which can be a vague subject to measure as most fae races place little to no significance on such purity. Most fae cultures neither place it as shame or pride and neither as a rite of passage nor as a commodity to sell. Fae biology is also difficult to measure. One must use more costly means involving either deep psychological probing or spell-work.*

*This testing option must be purchased beforehand even though such knowledge is virtually worthless to anyone but the buyer. Popular demand insists the option be offered.*

*\* Puggs (or house elves) are sold almost exclusively from breeding pens and neither possess advanced skills or can fall under other options listed above. They are always sold, never leased.*

*\*\* Recovered tilen cannot be processed. Tilen must be sent to the Faustis for execution to earn the full reward.*

## 172 TOBIAS

Very poor in land, Tobias and its current ruler, Mica Kao, remain popular with the king due to the city's sizable slave export. Tobias sports very skilled bandits and rangers trained in the hunting and capture of live humanoids. They mostly track down stray chaparrans from and around Laurama, but will take anything they can get, often bringing reprisal from the vindictive and militaristic Skyrose population.

Although Tobias operates no more than a dozen contracted slaver caravans outside Malkut's border, estimates place another two dozen mercenary units in the same region, preferring not to follow any code of con-

duct enforced by the city (such as there is). A few rare ones possess technology to assist their gathering despite the king's denouncement of its use. Independent slavers are a particularly brutal bunch and seldom sell product without bruises and disfigurements inflicted during capture and shipping. The military also supplies numerous slaves from military engagements. Because of the incentives offered for slaves, the armed forces of Baruch Malkut try their best to acquire as many prisoners as possible in hopes of reaping the rewards. Often enough, some fae commit suicide rather than be taken alive.

Contracted slavers operate both the caravans and the re-education housings in the city. As a result, far more



stock arrives than Tobias can handle, resulting in massive exports to Matronis, originally founded by Fernum Cao to handle the surplus training. Though representatives from Limshau have yet to uncover evidence, Tobias claimed a full fifth of their merchandise is exported outside of Malkut's borders.

It was with this need that designers in Tobias proposed the rail network to the King. Ironically, the idea for this came not from Malkut itself, but out of Limshau, thanks to a widely-circulated broadsheet article by a popular gimfen journalist which mentioned a rail line under construction along the Deep Pass at Dianaso. Realizing the potential of this device, which being relatively untouched by enchantment, could not therefore be heretical techa, Tobias suggested the Blessed Kingdom build their own system, with their city as its nexus. Originally intended to only shepherd their slaving export, the designs expanded quickly to include supplies and weapons as well to outlying communities, especially those on the border with Limshau.

Merchandise brought in from contracts or mercenaries is filtered through a system known as "Traffick Control". The merchandise is examined thoroughly and appraised. They utilize a complicated system, first grading the merchandise in the fields of wellness, strength, endurance, beauty, endowments, and intelligence. The latter may be hard to test for considering the initial resistance of captives until hearing those that deemed stubborn or stupid are sent to the harshest camps and receive the most extreme forms of conditioning. They soon understand, often told by other submissive slaves, that disclosure ensures a peaceable, efficient, and speedy transition. The final report lists the respective grades with suggestions on re-education procedures and eventual destination.

From there, a few are sold right off the truck as raw goods, those for whom training would be too costly or because the buyer wishes to outsource the conditioning to an independent educator rather than the state-run facilities. However, no more than 1% of new stocks are sold this way as greater profits are netted from the full procedure and with leasing.

Children are separated from adults and both groups are divided by sexes. Races are often also separated but not always. Damaskans are by far the hardest to break and usually carry permanent deep mental scarring, but those properly conditioned seldom revolt. In comparison, chaparrans seem to accept education quickly but

must be kept away from any heavily wooded areas lest they relapse, forcing the process to be repeated. Damaskans are the most common sight in the markets, then chaparran, then tenenbri. Narros, laudenian, and gimfen slaves are rare. Pagus appear now and again. Most males are used as forced labor though a few younger ones can be found in places of business. Children of both sexes are usually kept as pets for the super-rich, serving the needs of the mistresses, noblewomen, and ladies wealthy and respected.

Virtually all the lords and landowners of the kingdom keep at least one fae concubine on hand, a sign of their affluence. A few even gather every year at convention to highlight their recent acquisitions. Some gloat about replacing their models every year or owning multiples, some to fill whatever needs enter their head. One claims to own a slave for every night of the week while another boasts his great keep beds one concubine for each guestroom, referring to the merchandise as "furniture"—a common derogatory for sexual slavery among the rich in Malkut. This practice is technically against Darius Konig's creed, but is tolerated as long as the nobility keeps its depravity away from the common folk. In public, even the most licentious noble is expected to adhere to the doctrine of humanity.

Often enough, most of the other slaves keep the new arrivals in line and some large houses keep a head slave the others look to for authority. However, the quality concubines herald from Matronis and most only purchase their fetish from Tobias when cost is an issue or when the stocks of the other town run low.

Quality "product" sometimes becomes an issue, as Tobias is known to inflict great hardships on the slaves during re-education. Damaskans are usually sold with their tongues tipped (the first inch is severed) and males are often castrated. Seldom are slaves lucky enough to be sold to a buyer of clemency. Those bought as concubines can live in relative comfort and freedom in their menagerie if they keep their masters happy.

Some of the slaves kept for extended stays in Tobias sometimes offer a tale to the hopeful of the prosperous aristocrat, once a knight of the code, entering under pompous banner to clean out the new stocks of those innocent or alluring. He turns and leaves the kingdom, releasing his cache to safety. The stories add that the knight, aged by a short human life, still looks as striking and as captivating from the day he grew to manhood.





*We will forgive them.*

*Shuffle on to the next life. Fire lubricates the journey beyond.*

*It burns the clean and unclean but those without sin feel no pain.*

*I walk over coals; wipe sweat and double back to prove my worth.*

*Set the world afire.*

*I will fan the flames of condemnation to those worthy of smite.*

*Gabriel Owen  
The Terran Bible*

This is usually told to keep the slaves placid until education begins.

They receive their marks which denote which facility will train them and in which path. Further marks will include ownership tags to assist recovered property in being returned. Marked fae with only facility tags but not marks from buyers are brutally punished and, on rare occasion, killed. Surprisingly, slaves are executed publicly only on extreme cases. The current belief holds that any creature can be adequately broken and only if the slave murdered their master would a death sentence follow. Slaves found to be dangerous or disloyal are usually returned for additional training.

After being checked, separated, and tagged, some of the top-end merchandise is sent directly to Matronis while most are fed through the industry of conditioning Tobias operates efficiently. This method of conditioning eventually turns the final product into a domesticated animal, punished when disobedient, rewarded when compliant. The training encourages the belief that the slave should trust and love only the owner and his kin, and doubt all others, even other slaves. They are broken from one natural state to another, changing one's accepted role and path in life. They will no longer be independent, requiring their master for their very survival.

The conditioning removes their natural state of mind, leaving the body as intact as possible. All resistance must be removed for even a small seed will blossom to a full revolt. As mentioned before, some mutilation does occur to those especially rebellious. For concubines, most of the conditioning involves the prospective buyer, when possible. The process seldom

employs magic, considered far too costly. Only when a product is especially resistant will a caster be called to permanently fix the problem. This usually increases the price significantly.

The fear of magical manipulation is more than enough to keep the subjects in line. The most common threat refers to the "Halo." When placed over a fae's head, the halo begins to warp the mind of the subject, erasing memories and inserting artificial ones endorsing the new life. The halo forces the image upon the fae that they are property and possess no rights. Finally, it rewrites the fae's very disposition, making it more docile, friendly, and compliant. Even new interests and tastes can be inserted, amalgamated perfectly into the new spirit. This new personality feels less complete than the previous one, with little to no fire left in his or her eyes.

The new personality is so deficient, the fae can no longer bond, even if ordered to or if willingly attempted by the elf. Despite altered techniques using the Halo, this side effect cannot be reversed. Oddly enough, pagus, tilen, and demons are immune to the halo, though no one knows why.

There are probably less than three or four halos currently in Baruch Malkut, all of which are tagged with a hearty bounty for their retrieval and destruction by rival nations. Replacing one is costly, rumored to be more than 150,000 crowns. No one is sure who made them or when, as its power seems beyond the capacity of any caster in the realm. Rumors point to a demonic origin since pagus cannot be affected by the halo. The halo successfully instilled enough fear in the arriving subjects to be as acquiescent as possible.

Since product fed through this system is sold for an extremely high price, the slave industry remains the city's greatest export. Booming alcohol and rice production comes a close second and draws greater profits since all those businesses operate with almost an entire slave force.

Since the founding of Tobias more than 150 years ago, some estimates placed to as many as 50,000 fae of varying types passing through Tobias to be sold, educated or recycled since its inception. Since fae kingdoms do not report even a tenth of that number missing, it is assumed the majority of fae in Baruch Malkut come from Wavecrashers.

The most significant flaw in the system is that it is not self-sustaining. By Konig's orders, fae are not per-



mitted to breed in the kingdom, and even if this were not the case, fae cannot conceive without a bond and cannot be forced to bond. Even if one were to develop a breeding program successfully, new stock would only occur every two years because of the fae gestation cycle, and the result would require more than 60 years before the young reach an age before they can be sold for a reasonable profit. Tobias's slave-dealers have hit upon a method of dealing with this; the vast majority of transactions are not outright purchases, but leases for the lifetime of the buyer, after which the stock can be returned and resold. Thanks to their long lives, many slaves have been through the cycle more than once.

Because Darius Konig reviles techa as well, he has legalized the keeping of human slaves captured from bastions, usually for the hardest labor for which fae are considered unsuitable. They seldom undergo the same procedures and never to the extent of non-humans.

Tobias is the center point of 95% of all slave traffic in Canam, and its destruction would irrevocably cripple the industry. Being located within the marshy expanse common to the land, any attack would be difficult and costly.

## VALLIS

Initially started as a raider camp, Vallis expanded as increasingly daring slavers quested into Laurama to snatch prey. This stopover point was required since the chaparrans of this dense forest made the slavers' tasks exceedingly tricky. When the origin of the attackers was finally discovered, Adevansonia declared Laurama forbidden to all non-fae. Mercenary and contracted slaver caravans formed from Vallis to coordinate actions without long travel times on their raids. Raiding Laurama is still the riskiest venture, but has its advantages; chaparrans seldom pursue their prey past the wood unlike custodians from Limshau or knights from Skyrose, who would pursue a caravan back to the market if able to catch a scent. Where raiders into Limshau and Skyrose strike more at passing travelers and the free villages not officially under those nations' care, marauders from Vallis must penetrate deep into the forest to net their prey, treading on the home soil of the xenophobic species. Raiders keep their time in the forest to an absolute minimum, but have recently been forced to dive

### CHAPTER LISTING

- 1: *ONE – Forming your caravan*
  - 2: *TWO – Manifest and layout*
  - 3: *THREE – Pick your targets (Chaparrans or Damaskans?)*
  - 4: *FOUR – Setting your dominance early*
  - 5: *FIVE – 5 tactics to breaking your property*
  - 6: *SIX – Never use the Halo...  
but always threaten its use*
  - 7: *SEVEN – The leasing system, Pros with no Cons*
  - 8: *EIGHT – Breeding stock (Extreme long-term gains)*
  - 9: *NINE – Recycling. The ultimate prize*
  - 10: *TEN – The 500-year legacy*
- Epilogue*

*The 10 Secrets to Raising a Puck*

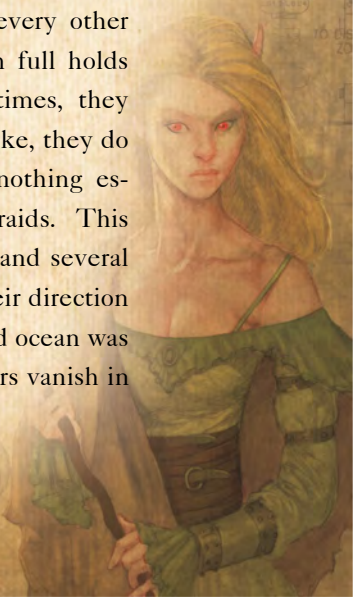
*By Prosten Foster*

*(The most successful slaver out of Vallis until  
his disappearance in Laurama in 976 AE)*

deeper and deeper as either the prey have reduced, have moved further in the forest, or have grown skillful in the arts of stealth.

Initially when a caravan stumbled on merchandise, they acted quickly to subdue their targets before they vanished into the brush. A few fought back but with never much vigor. This soon changed. Chaparrans started to struggle less. For a short time, stocks were plentiful. Then one day, an entire mercenary caravan failed to return. More than a dozen search parties scoured the area around the forest, and several braved the wood to search inside. Not a single wheel or broken sword was ever recovered. One of the search teams, a contracted slaver, also failed to return. Such disappearances began to occur more frequently.

At first, only one caravan a year disappeared, but this soon increased to every six months. A few years ago, this rate ballooned to one raider caravan every other month. Sometimes the slavers return with full holds and nary a complaint of resistance; sometimes, they never return at all. When the chaparrans strike, they do so with absolute determination, ensuring nothing escapes, never wasting energy on ineffective raids. This struck morale greater than anything before and several mercenary caravans quit outright, shifted their direction north to Limshau, or figured braving the wild ocean was safer. Even though many Vallis slave-hunters vanish in





*There were forests there, rich ones.*

*We know.*

*For hundreds of years, that civilization has been changing the landscape, reclaiming land and felling trees. There's not much wood left there, and resources will force the conflict before slavery ever adds the straw.*

*But they speak of the wood as a means, not for the life it offers. Clearing those woods would have been sin enough, but every major forest in the world birthed fae upon our return, so those would have been no exception.*

*We never knew who they were. Long ago, before the formation of the empire, Adevansonia from Laurama went in search of kin.*

*The expedition failed, blocked by an expanse of dark swampland that resisted attempts to cross. She did, however, find the ruins of an ancient human city populated by scavengers along with a small colony of enchanted creatures just outside of it, a mix of human and fae that preferred their home where it was.*

*Adevansonia sent a second larger crusade a few decades later, but by then, the city had crumbled, the colony had vanished, the swamp had subsided, and an army of human heretics waited to provoke a conflict. Adevansonia refused the bait, lamenting the decision, curious to what had transpired in that land before the rise of Malkut.*

*Segerweriotopolo  
Dawnamoak Archive (from a scroll)  
290 AE*

the wood every year, many still arrive to try their luck at the very lucrative industry.

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What concerns the current ruler of Vallis, Dal Monsen, is the efficiency of these disappearance and the total lack of any evidence of how such armed caravans vanish utterly with never a single survivor escaping to tell his tale. Monsen fears a greater secret to the forest than simply elite bowmen.

## GNIMFALL

If it weren't for the "grind towers," most travelers would trek over the gimfen engineering capital without notice. Even if one were to miss the mechanical spires, their noise exuberantly announces them. These narrow but tall spires top not buildings but rise from the soil with no external supports from the ground. The towers of-

ten lean to one side, and many look crooked, nearing collapse, though never doing so. Their design illustrates an inconsistent concept as one generation would finish a tower started by the previous and carry the construction in a different direction.

Grind towers feature exposed gears and machinery, ticking and spinning and groaning and thumping every moment of every day. They never stand less than a half mile from each other and rise so tall, most between 450 and 750 feet, they easily dwarf anything around them. Climbing to a peak, one could easily spot more than a dozen others. Their height also allows every single tower to operate as a thermal mooring post.

The towers serve many purposes. For one, they expel the pollution from the underground factories. They also dispel heat, house the upper class, and operate as watchtowers. They also carry the racket from the underground tunnels along with them. Somehow, and only the gimfen are aware of how, the grind towers collect sound from the machinery below. Towers collect the noise of the city and muffle it, whisking it away in baffle chambers. Regardless of volume, the towers lift the noise away, shuffling the echo along conduits, and finally fed into the tower. Breaching one of these channels results in a deafening roar. Eventually, the baffles become saturated, and the grind tower spews forth an animal-like yell a thousand times louder than an elephant's bellow, enough to shake the snow off trees and cause avalanches on distant peaks. This unique deafening announcement, occurring every few hours, sounds much like a foghorn crossed with a lion's roar, with variations on pitch and bass dependent on the tower making the call. Most are of an extremely deep tone, stretching down to as low as 10 Hz. Each tower sounds different, and occasionally, the gimfen take the time to cue them up to generate an odd musical piece heard a hundred miles away. The three-dozen towers scattered over two hundred square miles are all connected by an underground network. More than 2,000-6,000 gimfen call each tower home. Another 95,000 live underneath. Guests are offered rooms in the towers (which, happily enough, are soundproof). Underneath, the gimfen work within the means of EDF to create whatever technology they can make work. Several deep levels forbid magic,





where the gimfen explore avenues previously denied to them.

Recent agreements with humans to the east allowed the gimfen to dive into realms previously unknown. Their tenacity not only allowed them to catch up with centuries of human development in a matter of decades, but they also returned the favor by providing their allies the means to create their city faster than previously imagined. Relations with other nations continue to blossom. Though the York alliance has been allowed to slide (due to human pride being unwilling to admit that their civilization was built with *gnomish* aid), the gimfen still wish to develop good relations with all humans. For one, the gimfen understand that humans possess imagination and an aptitude for technology all fae, including themselves, lack. While gimfen can touch, operate, and replicate nearly any technology, they are limited in their ability to think of ways to improve it; even something simple as making a device smaller and lighter is beyond them (indeed, gimfen efforts tend to be larger and more unwieldy than the devices they duplicate). They are therefore dependent on humans for any future innovation. In just the past few centuries, exposure to mankind has vaulted the gimfen to levels they

only previously fantasized about. Their tenacity resulted in the first fae nation to develop their technology based on gleaned knowledge.

Gnimfall features elevators, non-enchanted illumination, and ground transportation, usually run from salvaged human batteries or their own steam-powered plants, the limit of their current technology in the field of power sources. Because of this, humans, especially those with even the slightest bit of technology, are invited in, accommodated, catered to, and entertained. Gifts are lavished, all in hopes of learning something new that could benefit others. Often this knowledge is held tight by the one offering the bribe or favor, to be taken back to the family, which can then be used to raise the stature of their name.

For humans entering Gnimfall, it very much feels like a beggar city, as every single attentive gimfen around will flock to even glimpse at the smallest trinket in the hands of a newcomer. Some humans developed this into a thriving trade, bartering money and rewards for the retrieval of new and exciting technology.

Gnimfall cares little for those humans not in possession of such gifts, and many humans from echan cultures have accused the gimfen of being too selfish.







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Though this is not exactly true, they are often one-dimensional in their pursuits. Although they trade frequently, those from Gnimfall care little about the political events within Kannos or Abidan. Gnimfall maintains very good relations with other races. They enjoy a successful alliance with Abidan, Limshau, Salvabrooke, and the Finer Fire Pits. Unlike the narros, gimfen refuse to dedicate the whole of their lives to mining rock and found the development of a machine that mines for them far more interesting. They do eventually plan to create a robotic workforce to mine for them (based on the robotic Zeroes of York, originally constructed by gimfen to human designs), allowing them to pursue knowledge without the tedium and monotony associate with menial labor.

The current leader of Gnimfall, Karlis Kronas, continually tries to push his people to be more aware of the

world outside. He pledges in a weekly address, heard everywhere in Gnimfall, that the gimfen will be a respected species, not mocked or ridiculed. He strives to form hardened military alliances with human kingdoms like Abidan and Kannos. He pushes for military action against Baruch Malkut, decisions that spur polar opinions of him from those in and outside the city. To that end, when the armies of the world rise to fight evil, the gimfen from Gnimfall will join those ranks.

## THE CREEP

While it has been known for a long time that steam power is strongly resistant to EDF, attempts at establishing a rail network between nations have largely failed for geological and political reasons. The only successful attempt, between Seliquam and Fargon, has only been in operation for a few decades after nearly a



century of construction, and was staggeringly expensive in terms of both gold and workforce. However, the small patch of land claimed by the gimfen in the northeast have been able to sustain a relatively simple and short mass transit system. This narrow-gauge rail system connects each of the grind towers in Gnimfall. As typical with the gimfen, the locomotive is overly complicated, resembling a living creature forged from steel, with exposed ribs and massive pulsing bellows, though only drawing a half-dozen carriages behind it. The creep zigzags across Gnimfall and commonly suffers from breaks from environmental upheavals from uneven ground. In the unlikely event that an international rail system is ever established in Canam, it will certainly be incompatible with the Creep.

## HALYC

The western plains from York stretching to the peaks of the Alanaka were given the broad title of Halyc. York has claimed most of this land as their own, though leaving most of it alone. Independent farms and villages sell to both echa and techa. Those selling to York receive the blanket of protection offered by the YPF. The mass of the military patrolling the northwest guard against the possibility of pagus crossing the water, as well as against the occasional horror that stumbles out of the forests of Arkady. Less dedicated patrols roam the southern border, as York never considered Baruch Malkut a serious risk.

## LAURAMA

For centuries, the ruling Sylvreign of Dawnamoak—the millennia-old chaparrans in Jibaro—presented their land as a unified and unbroken mega-forest stretching nearly continent to continent with their capital as the centralized source of authority. This was never the case, with outlying villages either refusing to accept said leadership or never being aware such a declaration had even been made. The misconception is still supported over most of the land, but several hundred years ago, a clear division developed in the east, easily bolstered by the land claims made by Ogium and their deforestation efforts meant to accelerate the building of their kingdom. The assumed backlash from the woodland elves

*“The smallest room is still the universe to whoever lives inside. Fae have preferred in the past to close all the doors around and sit, comfortable they understand the entire world—*

*(Noise from the Grind Tower muffles the transmission).*

*“They fear to open the door and realize more waits across the threshold. That is what prevents us from moving forward, the refusal to expand beyond our universe. The laudenians, the tenenbri—yes, even the narros—all sit in a room bricked in by ignorance and held by fear. Like all fey, the gimfen emerged into a room not unlike them.*

*(Noise from the Grind Tower muffled the transmission).*

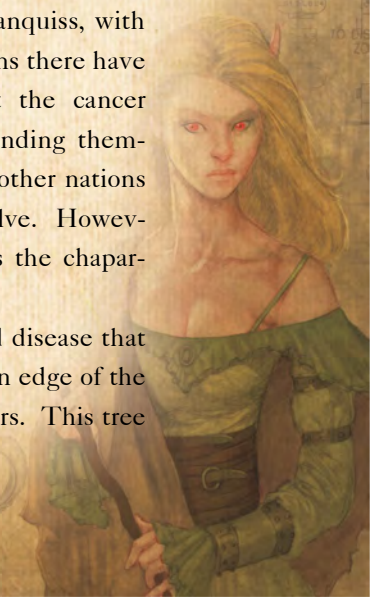
*“It had the same bricks bound by mortar, the same door all others refused to open. One would assume we would follow the lead and pat ourselves for understanding the universe, as we perceived. Unlike our cousins, our cage was different. Someone put in windows. Faced with the truth, who would not open the door and step across? Gimfen may be small. We may be ridiculed and insulted, but we see the truth. The room is shrinking. How ironic those with the most room to breathe are the ones so adamant about escaping. In conclusion, we must— (Noise from the Grind Tower muffled the transmission).”*

*Karlís Kronas  
(Gnimfall Address, July 23, 499 AE)*

did not occur and only catalyzed the sovereignty of Laurama.

The fae within this forest are bigoted, even to the extent of raiding nearby towns in not only Ogium but in Limshau and Skyrose as well. Laurama chaparrans developed this fanaticism not only from their religious zealotry but also from conflicts with Baruch Malkut. The former is fueled from the holy site of Skepsis and the struggle to push back the curse of Tranquiss, with Laurama falling in between. The chaparrans there have taken upon themselves to fight against the cancer spreading from the north while also defending themselves from slavers from the east, a threat other nations in Canam are apparently unwilling to resolve. However, it's the Tranquiss plague that remains the chaparran's primary focus.

Tranquiss refers to a strange enchanted disease that possessed a single tree in the outer northern edge of the forest that quickly began spreading to others. This tree





## CHAPTER SEVEN: EAST



dripped blood for sap and grew no leaves. The dozen branches grew long and curled themselves into a many-fingered claw, though never actually moving. The instant it brushed a branch with a neighboring tree, the virus latched onto another victim and spread. The leaves fell, the bark turned red, faint grey hairs grew, and the branches began to grow out to others. No one is sure how it started or if an intelligent source inflicted the cause. There is no doubt that it is evil.

Infected trees refuse to burn by either normal or enchanted flames and refuses to retreat in the presence of holy symbols or spells. Even the enchanted trees possessed by fallen chaparrans cannot resist this infection. Worse, these unique victims become aggressive, actively seeking out life to devour and other trees to infect.

By the time news of the plague reached the Sylveign, the damage had been done, both to the forest and to the chaparran rulers' reputation. Hundreds of trees had already been tainted, and the natives in Laurama had already judged their elders as callous, having considered the Ogium deforestation a necessary tolerance to prevent the plague from reaching Dawnamoak. Keeping that in mind, the chaparrans tendency for isolation and xenophobia worked against them, and it was over a century before news spread across the land, barely ahead of the plague itself. The chaparrans of Laurama could blame only themselves, but as typical of the culture, they placed themselves as above condemnation. It would be another century before the chaparrans did anything to combat the plague.

Attempts to rid the plague have always failed, exasperated by the Laurama fac's inadequate magical adeptness. Even when they broke their command-



ments and attempted deforestation, the very nature of the enchanted woods of Laurama regenerated the trees almost as quickly, the irony that the encouragement of life within chaparran forests also feed the plague spreading throughout.

In time, the infection covered hundreds of square miles, and the fae were forced to flee south, closer to Skepsis. Because of this constant fear of encroaching cancer, many Laurama chaparrans altered their view on life. No longer content with patience and relaxation, they grew increasingly aggressive with both each other and the surrounding lands. Their already reduced magical aptitude virtually vanished save for a few unique adepts and savants. They spread their community out to cover a wider footprint within the forest, designed to not only to monitor the spread of Tranquiss but also to keep track and mitigate the raids from Baruch Malkut.

Chaparrans, especially from Laurama, never accepted peace with humanity. A growing portion of fae in Laurama blame humans for the Tranquiss plague, citing them as the only new element that differs from the old world (an untrue fact to say the least). The slave trade was in its infancy already before Darius Konig declared the practice legal. Until then, raiders and traffickers migrated from village to village, testing the moral fortitude of the residents before displaying their selection.

The first slaves were damaskans, but as they fortified their kind in Limshau, the bandits took to easier prey. Most tenenbri were scattered too far south, and the gimfen were too small for most applications. This left the chaparrans. With Laurama less defended, they were quick and easy prey. Even when the fae organized and retaliated, their enemies would often escape with one or two victims, more than making up for the trip. Laurama countered by attacking virtually any civilized creature that was not from one of their villages that passed through their forest. They cared little in distinguishing lost travelers from slaver bandits, attacking all humans equally.

Slavers countered with equal aggression. They turned more daring and ferocious, swearing to slay whole family lines unless certain subjects meeting criteria were handed over. On the outskirts villages of Laurama, this happened far too often. Despite the success of these convoys, at least one slaver caravan would vanish without a trace. These raids, though not affiliated with Baruch Malkut, still operate from the kingdom, and as result, Laurama fae consider themselves at war, a

fact ignored by many other nations. For one, there is no established leadership for Laurama, with smaller houses assuming the entire region still governed from Jibaro, the latter refusing to be dragged into a major conflict.

Against the common assumption, Laurama fae do answer to a central ruler. Adevansonia lives in random points in the forest and is usually surrounded by up to a 1,000 other fae. He is the prophet of their religion—the Shepherd of Skepsis. He is also responsible for Laurama militancy, single-handedly—though foolishly—leading attacks into Baruch Malkut, few that they occur. These became known as the Adevansonia crusades (there were at least three). The last incursion was in 456 AE and resulted in Adevansonia and his forces reaching almost to Vallis before being pushed back. Despite no lands being claimed, Adevansonia considered the operation a success as the intent was not to take Vallis but rather to strike fear in the resident population. As the chaparrans retreated, they captured over a hundred men, women, and children from various Malkut villages. None of them was ever seen again.

A counter-attack from Vallis militia followed into the woods. They emerged with few losses several hours later, though traumatized from their experience, with claims of mutilated corpses and twisted visions within the trees. Slavers would not attempt incursion into Laurama again for another ten years. When the historical account of the conflict reached Limshau via Malkut refugees, a messenger was sent to Dawnamoak, where the Sylvreign suspected the Laurama fae had been corrupted by the Tranquiss plague. Chaparrans from Dawnamoak investigated their eastern cousins and determined the woods had claimed victims, not the fae, and that most prisoners were not killed, though did not reveal their fate. Years later, an individual claiming to have been a Malkut refugee from Laurama arrived at Limshau. Her recorded experience confirmed the captivity of dozens of people as well as the psychological alliance that followed. The humans began to think like the chaparrans, sympathize to their cause, despite being judged inferior and caged. The document also accused the Laurama fae of being the ones that started the Tranquiss plague to create a weapon against the humans, and that other experiments were still underway.





# OGIUM

Despite brief moments of pause, the lands of Ogium have never known peace. Situated between the forests of Laurama and Dawnamoak, the House has seen conflicts with its neighbors over logging and grazing lands, but these are not the worst of its troubles: for nearly two centuries, the House has been locked in an intermittent civil war for what is now called "The Blood Throne."

The clash began 175 years ago with betrayal and patricide at the hands of Bradam Ogium. The holy patriarch, Sartini Mulingar III, had convinced Bradam that King Julian had sealed a pact with the devil by allowing rival religions to build temples within the nation. Sartini insisted only one faith could dominate the land. In his dream, Sartini envisioned a new Holy See, with the Ogium capital, Santachis, as the nexus of a sovereign state dedicated to God. Sartini claimed apostolic succession, effectively being the voice of God on Earth, the leader of the Christian faith. Whether Bradam actually believed Sartini's claims or merely liked the idea of claiming rule by divine right is immaterial at this point.

When King Julian, who (correctly) believed Sartini to be hungry for power beyond his station, ordered the patriarch's removal, Bradam made his move and marched upon the throne on March 21st 325 AE. He ordered his father's arrest at the foot of the chair. Torn to act, the guards remained motionless. Bradam took the initiative but Julian, still robust at 65, fought against his son. Though probably an accident, the king tripped and fell upon the concrete armrest of the throne. The impact shattered the king's teeth and broke his jaw in three places. In sympathy, Bradam ordered the king confined to quarters to await trial while the prince claimed control as regent.

Two weeks later, an infection set in which claimed the king's life. Sartini took the initiative and, in the regent's name, ordered the confiscation of land and goods owned by church leaders of 'infidel' religions. Assets were sold, and temples were dismantled or outright burned. Objecting to this purge, Bradam's three siblings, Cesilia, Robear, and Fredro, requested a meeting to decide the fate of the realm. Though Bradam was oldest and uncontested as heir, if proven guilty of regicide, the throne would pass to Fredro, a popular man, though the poorest.

Bradam insisted the royal chamber be locked for the proceedings and the siblings sat to discuss matters of

justice and compromise. Three hours into the meeting, raised voices were heard from within the chamber. Screams followed, and before the guards could un-brace the doors and investigate, the Citadel Honrosu caught fire. The flames devoured the tapestries and engulfed the keep. Unable to control the fire, the blaze reduced Honrosu to ash, the only surviving relic was the throne, burned of its purple plush, but intact.

No one is sure who set the blaze or why, but in the end, all of Julian's children were killed. Patriarch Sartini professed the fire was a cleansing from God to wash away their sins and proof of his destiny as spiritual leader of the realm. Claiming the family line dead, the patriarch placed himself on the seat of power. Of course, between the four siblings there were fifteen potential heirs, and the eldest scion of each staked their own claim to the throne and began fighting both Sartini and one another. Though alliances would later be signed, the "War of Cousins" would never find a resolve, even to this day.

The rebuilt Citadel Honrosu saved nothing from the previous palace save its throne, which Sartini sat on as the realm's de-facto leader. His power was limited to Santachis and surrounding villages. Sartini eventually died at the ripe age of 95, leaving an intricate charter of legislative, executive, and judicial rules for the kingdom and clergy. The other towns disregarded the new commandments put forth by the patriarch and allowed other faiths back into the kingdom. The other major towns, Darkmarker (Line of Cesilia), Rhymas (Line of Robear), and Penpatris (Line of Fredro) all seat rulers claiming the Blood Throne, though it remains actually occupied by a successive line of patriarchs chosen by the bishops of the citadel.

The War of Cousins is the most protracted conflict in Canam, longer than even the Bulwark conflicts in Abidan. More than 65,000 people have lost their lives in the various battles between the towns in Ogium. Though a few of the towns have spoken for the kingdom when dealing with other nations, there is no clear winner in this conflict. All the roads connecting these towns are laced with so many broken blades, burial mounds, and rotting corpses, a traveler could march from any two towns in Ogium without losing sight of one. "Freelances" (mercenaries) are common sights and those not finding work often turn to banditry, making the journey through Ogium a risky one. Beyond the human predators, few other threats roam these lands.



The armies carrying the banner of the Ogium church have been involved in altercations with Laurama, Dawnamoak, and even House Orchis on occasion. Church militia have also been known to be lenient on Baruch Malkut caravans, taxing them when discovered, but tolerating their presence. The Ogium bishops through history have also been connected to racialism and enforcing canon law, punishing those of different faiths or different races. The Dogma of Ogium (the all-encompassing religious denomination of the land) endorsed fanatically by Santachis remains the dominate faith across the entire region, resulting in maps still referring to the totality of territory as House Ogium.

The other towns endorse more moderate interpretations of doctrine, though varied depending on the ruling line. Ironically, they all sport the same religion iconography—a traditional Christian cross with circles affixed the ends. Only virtually unnoticeable regalia around the flags distinguishes loyalty, resulting in many misunderstandings and assumptions when those from Ogium interact with outsiders. Despite those from Darkmarker, Rhymas, and Penpatris holding views harmonious with neighbors, there are assumptions that one from Ogium represents the whole view, that of its capital and head church. As such, travelers leaving Ogium are often forced to travel north or west, as they are unwelcomed anywhere else.

Meanwhile, the theocracy has been rumored recently to be engaging in talks with Baruch Malkut about a military alliance—the result being a pincer-assault to take the lands of Laurama in between. However, the final stipulation that Santachis gain complete control over its land is unlikely ever to be satisfied.

## OKEANOS

Once called the Atlantic, massive storms wrack the waters every day. Travel between the two major landmasses is shorter but hazardous. Coupled with increased monstrous activity, many travelers prefer to fly, despite its risks. A few have tried and succeeded by water, but most agreed afterward it was not worth the ordeal. Only wavecrashers attempt the journey now. The most common sea route departs either from York or Tallage (or Orlov in Baruch Malkut) and connects to Tartess or the bastion of Porto on the other side of the ocean.

## RAUNNIS, THE PAGODA MOUNTAIN

Those who do not wish to take their chances with Ramkava may attempt to seek their answers with Raunnis. Raunnis is the name of both the seer and the pagoda-shaped mountain he never climbs down from. Located in the far north of the Alanaka Range in eastern Canam, the shape of the mountain prevents easy access and the expanding forest teeming with everything wild discourages those brave enough to tackle the peak. After fighting through the growth, the obsessed must face the towering crag. Only magic could have formed it. It reaches nearly 2100 feet, narrowing and widening as it stretches to the sky.

Raunnis sits at its peak, never leaving, even for food. It is believed Raunnis was the very first kodiak, larger and more magically endowed than any of the other bipedal bears. He wanders through the few trees atop the mountain, sleeping for months, raining his enchanted will over the forest below. At nearly 500 years old, he shows no signs of senility. Further, he appears aware of every conversation, even in a whisper, for almost a thousand miles in every direction. He can eavesdrop and later recall them without error at any time.

Raunnis is not a simple recorder but has grown more astute with what he has learned. Anyone conquering the land and the mountain may give an offering to the beast (usually rare foods and or magic—he doesn't respond to metallic money). He is non-violent, and if his knowledge is respected, he will offer it. Those aggressively pushing through the woods he lovingly maintains, killing and razing as they go, will most likely never reach the peak; and if they somehow managed, he would be more likely to throw them off himself before revealing what he knows.

## SKEPSIS

The Skepsis forest and Tranquiss exist not only on either side of Laurama, but also on some metaphorical scale between light and dark. Several echalogians believe they also form the extremes between chaos and order—high and low entropy—but this is not the case. Both forests came about from the machinations of Attricana magic, emphasizing how “light” magic does not equate good. To many fae, not just chaparrans, Skepsis is a holy land—the place fae originally emerged from.



*While at the temple of Bao Lian in Angel, I came across many of the traditions worshipped by those in Genai and not shared by anyone else, beliefs carried from a distant land across the ocean.*

*Minx, not a religious person, still bowed at every Buddhist statue we passed. I guess when her people claim they are not religious, Buddhism is a default they don't bother mentioning. Apparently, the fae feel the same way about Skepsis—their holy forest—their Mecca.*

*However, only the chaparrans insist on endorsing their version of the Haj—the pilgrimage to the forest to experience the power of their god directly. So like Buddhism, Skepsis falls into the hazy definition between faith and culture. I often find the Skepsis tree painting hanging from fae dwellings, even those where the fae endorse no religion. Even Raven, one of the most agnostic elves I have ever met, will still touch her forehead with her right hand's first two fingers when passing an image of the Skepsis tree.*

*Aiden Camus  
Personal Journal  
March 23rd, 507 AE*

Many of them arrived here when the portal opened 500 years ago.

Trees sway and whistle with a constant, soothing hum, but are not intelligent. Skepsis is beautiful, lush, and green. All sorts of benign creatures call it home. The trees grow to unbelievable heights and never die. The tallest and widest trees at the center of the forest are of the same wood of the original Skepsis forest before the first hammer (the age of Terros), recreated it in exacting detail after the return, at least according to legend, as few intelligent creatures are ever allowed to approach them. Trees of all types grow side-by-side, pines next to palms, apples next to almonds. Their roots intertwine but never suffocate.

The Skepsis tree is an image symbolic of the entire forest. It combines elements of a dozen different trees. Its bark changes patterns and colors no less than twelve times through its trunk, from scaly and brown to fissured and orange. Conifer needles grow from lower limbs, but several branches higher, diamond-shaped cottonwood leaves reach out. Figs, pears, various berries, and coconuts ripen up higher. It is finally topped with the outstretched hand of an olive tree's crown, reaching as wide as all the branches below. All paint-

ings smell of cinnamon. Though some legends claim this tree to exist, most others accept it as an amalgam of the entire forest and not representative of a specific one.

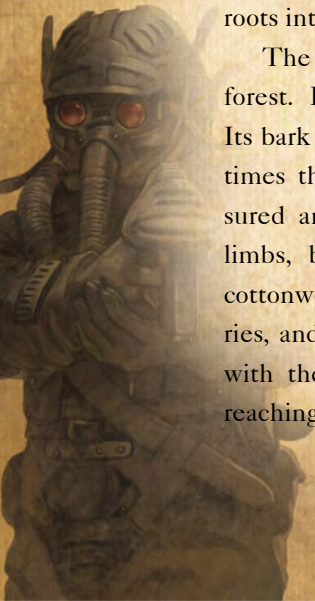
Contrary to popular opinion, few communities form inside the woods. After long stretches of time, even the most domestic life forms find a need to become nomadic—one with the trees. They vanish into the vegetation and are seldom seen again. Adventure parties avoid Skepsis as much as Tranquiss, fearful they will lose their minds to the songs of the trees. The fae devoted to the Berufu faith commit to pilgrimages to Skepsis to renew their faith at least once a decade. Their greatest fear is that the balance of the universe will fail and Skepsis will fall to the cursed woods of Tranquiss.

## SKYROSE

The largest of the plenary damaskan kingdoms in Canam, Skyrose officially calls itself a duchy. Rojjen Skyrose's devotion to the ancient kingdom of the original damaskan royalty (currently residing on the other side of the world) prevented him from claiming the title of king, preferring the title of 'Herizon' (roughly equivalent to the human title of 'duke'). Rojjen acknowledges the titles of damaskan royals in Canam—he only believes his nation a distant colony of much larger kingdom. As such, Rojjen has declined any attempts at treaties, believing he has no authority to make them. With little to no support from Damasia, and refusing assistance from neighbors, Skyrose is becoming increasingly xenophobic.

No member of the Skyrose line can marry any non-elf, and even half-fae are barely considered eligible (fortunately for the matriarch of House Plicato, who may have conspired with Skyrose to usurp that house's human bloodline).

While this restriction does not *technically* apply to the lesser gentry or the common folk, Skyrose's social engineering prevents even most casual contact with non-damaskans, let alone humans. This prejudice is part and parcel of Damasian foreign policy, though easy to enforce given the size and power of that nation. In Canam, Skyrose cannot defend itself adequately, and calls for help to their Lauropan cousins have not only not been answered, but have probably not even been





*"With all due respects to the Council of Cartographers, they embraced a decision without deeper investigation. I won't lay blame, just hastiness—how were they to know there were variations?"*

*"Before his disappearance, Mr. Glengarrie sent maps to renowned archivists, cartographers, and collectors. Despite initial claims of mass distribution, we now know there were only four extant copies, henceforth denoted by their owners—the Copix, the Varganfeller, the Forespear, and the Targella. Of those, only the latter was ever submitted to the Council for distribution, replacing the vague and inaccurate Pelham map that had been employed for two hundred years by that point. Once endorsed, there was never a need to investigate the other maps, assuming them to be duplicates. They were not.*

*(murmurs and whispers from the crowd)*

*"I thought that would get your attention. Over the past ten years, I attempted to locate these other editions. Copix sold his map to the collector Ezra Boa, who allowed me to copy the map before his keep burned to the ground, with the map assumed lost. The Forespear was locked under glass in the narros's private collection at The Finer Fire Pits. I was only allowed to examine the map, not copy it, as Forespear alleged it cursed.*

*"This left the Varganfeller...which has been missing along with its owner for over fifty years. I assumed Targella was fortunate to sell his copy; however, when I discussed the matter him with, he claimed it was not by his choice, that the other three maps were forgeries, and refused to talk further about it.*

*"With that ominous backstory out of the way, having examined three of the original maps, I can confirm that none of them are forgeries, having*

*been illustrated on the same paper with the same chemical composition of ink. They even feature the same watermark in the same location on the bottom left side. But under scrutiny, I discovered two disparities in each map, one accurate, the other false.*

*"In both the Pelham and the Targella and not in the other two I was able to examine, Baruch Malkut is indicated as being much larger, with the alternatives claiming most of it under water. That we know is true, but the Targella lists the location of a Skull Cave which we now believe to be accurate—it's nowhere to be seen on the other maps. With the Copix, it shifts the location of the Uzu mountains by nearly 200 kilometers west—false; it then lists the location of Whale's End Point, missing from the other maps.*

*"With the Forespear, its fabrication is territorial claims of Kannos. However, it also mentions a place called Arx-Cis sitting somewhere between Limshau and Plicato. I received a confirmation from a group of Malkut pilgrims that the topographical borders with Baruch Malkut are inaccurate in both the Pelham and Targella maps.*

*"I was also able to confirm the location of the northern Skull Cave. That leaves this location known as Arx-Cis. To date, I still have found no reference of what that is. With no information regarding the location of the Varganfeller, we may never know if it carries this same anomaly.*

*"Admittedly, the Council did a thorough job validating the distributed map to the best of their abilities, but has anyone investigated the man himself? Who was Glynn Glengarrie? Why did he make four different maps?"*

*Kevin Darragh*

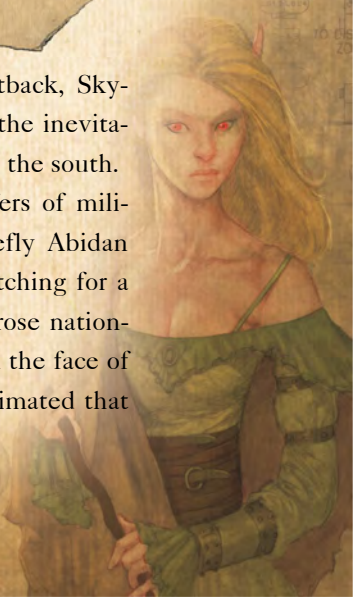
*Transcription of Presentation to the Limshau  
Council of Cartographers  
478 AE*

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received. Skyrose continues to enforce an increasingly unpopular nationalistic philosophy, viewing themselves as superior stock lacking the corruption of human influence, a view they share with the jingoistic chaparrans of Laurama. Although an early alliance started to flourish between those two nations, it fell apart as not only were the chaparrans equally unable to defend themselves from Baruch Malkut, but the cursed wood of Tranquiss formed between the two lands, severing any attempts at

sustained communication. Despite this setback, Skyrose is resolute in their views, even against the inevitability of the machine of tyranny spilling from the south.

Though Skyrose has received many offers of military help from sympathetic neighbors, chiefly Abidan and Kannos (the latter of which has been itching for a fight with Baruch Malkut for decades), Skyrose nationalism prevents them from accepting, even in the face of Baruch Malkut's naked aggression. It is estimated that







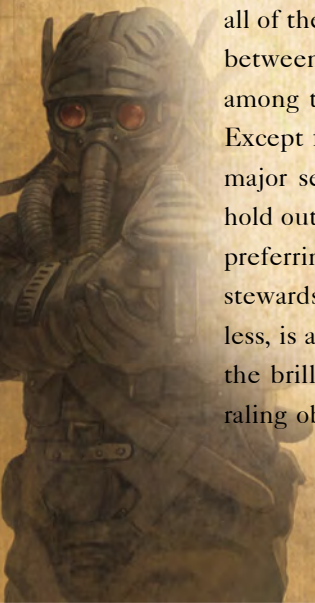
most of the damaskan slaves trafficked in the Blessed Kingdom come from Skyrose, a more accessible target given the recent bounties posted from Zorahn. Exact numbers are unknown given Skyrose's un-patrolled landscape. Skyrose taxes outer farms but does not have the military might to protect all of them. The population of the realm is estimated at between 15,000 and 35,000, lack of communication among the outer holdings preventing a precise census. Except for the city of Skyrose itself, there are no other major settlements of note, though other minor nobles hold outlying manors and castles which they rarely visit, preferring to leave the management of their property to stewards while they remain at court. Skyrose, nevertheless, is a beautiful concentric walled citadel, beaming in the brilliance of elvish construction reminiscent of spiraling obelisks of Damasia across the world. Within its

walls are some of the wealthiest land-owners in the world.

Rojjen passed on his duties to his daughter, Lysaa, who continues the Skyrose policy of racial purity, hypocritical as her own niece, Abellis, is bonded to a human from Baruch Malkut. Though the army patrols their territory close to Baruch Malkut, there are too many holes to secure their land entirely.

## TALLAGE MARKET

The town of Tallage sprouted from the same roots as Baruch Malkut—human refugees fleeing the eastward expansion of the tenenbri. Some of these survivors passed through the Gloam, their numbers drastically reduced upon reaching the other side (but still greater than what they would have been had they remained in Southam). Others braved the sea, even more chaotic in





those days than it is now. They came to land in a place on the edge of the marshes, at the mouth of a calm river, and there they beached their battered ships. This makeshift colony has, over time, blossomed into a massive open bazaar, sprawling across the river delta, where anyone can come to buy, sell, or barter what they have.

Despite being technically within the territory claimed by Baruch Malkut, Tallage is not part of the Blessed Kingdom; the market is so rich, it has managed to support a sizeable army and bribe government officials to allow Tallage to run independently. Descendants of the original pilgrims still run the colony and keep Darius Konig's officials at a healthy distance, though the town of Orlov on the other side of the delta remains an oppressive reminder of his presence.

Tallage security keep the businesses honest and can easily spot transgressions since many film-flam artists tried numerous times to con foolhardily buyers. At any time, there are more than 5,000 shops of various types in the market, spread out over miles of marshland, valleys and paths. The only traders not permitted to hawk their wares within the market are Malkut slavers, not for any moral objection but because Tallage's leaders don't want to lose their fae customers. Slave sales can still take place, often in the back rooms of seedy taverns, as long as the goods are kept safely outside.

## WHALE END'S POINT

Whale End's would be insignificant if not for its docks—the first berth in Canam that could accommodate a wavecrasher, large living vessels arriving from around the world. It was erected by pilgrims from Shorerunner // Taus in Southam in hopes of making future journeys easier, but it would be another century before shipping would be regular and another fifty before other wharfs would open to seat these beasts.

While both Tallage Market and York now have wavecrasher docks catering to traffic across Okeanos, from Southam, given the lack of land access thanks to the Gloam, Whale End's Point remains the exclusive port. Trips from Southam to Lauropa would entail traveling to Whale's End and then take a land route to Tallage or York before moving on. Once part of the land claimed by the kingdom of Ogium, the civil war has left it isolated. It now has no national allegiance and sits

snuggled between Dawnamoak, Skepsis, and Ogium. Occasionally a force from Ogium attempts to push south beyond Dark Marker and reclaim the port, but the chaparrans always prevent them. With the only road out of town overgrown by outliers of Skepsis, travel from Whale End's Point is as dangerous on land as it is from the sea; most travelers leave by shore-hugging boats to the westernmost Malkut settlement of Vallis.

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*When the indigenous fae population reacted to the Caldera flying overhead, Tasia knew she had found the right path. Saints pass over forests often and never generate reactions like that. The still air around the saint gravity drives often appeased the ground population. These chaparrans were proactive.*

*Admittedly, the forest elves were known for their aggression, but if the ship had malfunctioned, it would have crashed into the forest and incinerated hundreds of square miles.*

*The vessel had been tracking a swarm of puggs that had been recently provoked. By creating a maelstrom of faerie fire, Tasia took it as a warning that the forest would protect its own. Unluckily, the Caldera's flight computer bore the brunt of the disruption, and it barely managed to escape the atmosphere. There was a part of her that wanted to remain in the forest...to see if its flowers could fly.*

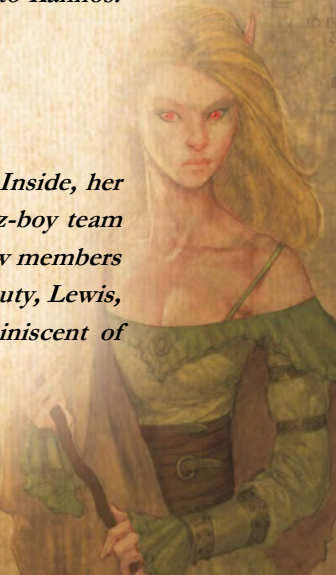
*Two days later, she ordered a Solis to track the Abecedarian after it left Antikari. There were no wizards or custodians on board. She determined that the group of intrepid heroes had either remained together and were moving into Kannos, or had split, with Aiden and the custodian returning to Limshau, though strangely enough avoiding the Abecedarian.*

*Tracking echans in their world was nearly impossible without at least a few breadcrumbs. Tasia refocused on the northern route, past the forest, and into Kannos. She marked potential stops along the way.*

\* \* \*

*The Caldera was closing it on the town. Inside, her team was preparing. A twelve-member buzz-boy team was unusually large. Stone was one of the few members Tasia knew by name, along with her new deputy, Lewis, though that was only because he was reminiscent of Lisle, the fatality suffered months back.*

*Surprisingly similarity, she thought.*





## CHAPTER SEVEN: EAST

*Her armor had been upgraded to a dense layer of carbide discs sewed tight and heavy over her body. Now her figure had lost all femininity.*

*Stone and Tasia observed the camera feeds, occasionally disturbed by static by the ambient disruption.*

*"We'll anchor around that peak and approach on foot," Stone assumed. "Incognito. We have mercenary gear. Iron Sons fit this region." He turned to Tasia to confirm. "Maam?"*

*"Approved," she said. Stone nodded. The radio from the pilot came on.*

*"Orders are to drop you in the middle of their square," he stated. "I'll park overtop like a guillotine. Brandish the best you got."*

*Her team nodded approvingly.*

*"That's insane," Tasia snapped.*

*"It's likely a band of heroes just passed through here," the faceless pilot said. "Small towns embrace idolatry. It stiffens their backs. We go in as simple techans, they're likely to push back, and we need to be decisive. Good enough?"*

*"Enough," she answered, furrowing her brow. She glanced at Stone, who clearly agreed with her. "Boys with toys."*

*"We have visual on the town," the pilot echoed from the radio. "Centre of town locked." Tasia and Stone returned to the camera feed. It zoomed in.*

*"Is that a statue?" Stone asked. "Founder of the town?" Tasia squinted as the image started to focus.*

*"Too new," she answered.*

\* \* \*

*Stone never left her side as the others spread through the town, searching the Sarasian hamlet without care for heritage or livelihood. No one stood ground against them with the Caldera hovering overhead. To the locals, it must have resembled a sword hanging over them, ready to drop. It was brazen, but Tasia knew stories told later would get all the details wrong.*

*Simple folk often couldn't determine what was technology and what was fantasy. They would admire magic and fear the machine. Despite an old autoloader by her side, her team was replete with technology. She feared one blown circuit would cause the team to lash out against the town. She needed to conclude this mission quickly.*

*"Yeah...I think we're on the right track," she said, her and Stone staring up the simulated Mischa. Tasia*

*walked away with Stone still gaping.*

*"Wait...did he pose for that?!" Stone asked.*

*"Stone, he's not twelve feet tall!" Tasia snapped.*

*She approached Ballan Sarasian, who spoke for the hamlet.*

*"I didn't realize bastion military stretched this far?" he asked her.*

*"Mitigating circumstances," she answered. The noble was the most educated person in the village, and it was doubtful he could even read.*

*"Miti-wha?" he asked.*

*"It's an exception," Tasia clarified. She pointed to the statue in the center of the plaza. "Is this him?"*

*"A hero," Ballan boasted. Tasia bit her lip to prevent herself from smiling. "Personally slain a two-headed dragon, he did."*

*Stone was still gawking. Mischa's weapon was too large to hold, and the armor was built for a frame twice his size.*

*"Truthfully?" Tasia asked.*

*"With my own eyes," Ballan answered.*

*"Where's the body of the beast?"*

*"Burned to ash." An excuse for every fallacy.*

*"Seems odd you wouldn't keep the skull as a trophy."*

*"If the hero wanted one, he'd have taken it."*

*"But he was inflated enough to allow the tribute. Accurate depiction?"*

*"Absolutely."*

*She could tell there was contempt for her. It was mutual.*

*"Tall fellow," she said.*

*"A giant among men."*

*She turned back to Ballan. "Let's try questions that cannot be exaggerated. They came from the south?"*

*"Yes?"*

*"How many?"*

*"Two."*

*"And where did they go?"*

*"They boarded a dragonflyer north." Ballan pointed for some bizarre reason.*

*"Where?"*

*"They committed to a quest to save the world."*

*"But didn't offer details?"*

*"Of course, milady. They—"*

*She held up her hand, knowing full well of lies to come.*

*"I retract, don't answer that. Do these flyers keep a manifest and a travel log?" The blank look he gave her made her shoulders drop. "Is there some paper that*



tells you where the boats go?"

"Not that I'm aware."

"I know," came a shout from a tavern. The bartender was short, hairy, and had his front teeth replaced with wood. He stepped from his pathetic bar. It was two levels with only two rooms above a cramped collection of stools and alcohol.

"Then speak," Tasia ordered.

"What's it worth?" he replied. Tasia snapped behind and grabbed Stone's vapor rifle. She discharged the weapon without aiming. The silent shot sucked the air from the bartender's lungs, whizzing by his head. It pulled the wall through the hole it made, carrying the debris with it as it discharged through the rear wall. The entire bottom level disintegrated. The top level and roof collapsed onto the dirt.

"Nothing," Tasia replied. She leaned in slowly. "Was it empty?"

"Yes."

"I didn't care." She did and knew it was empty.

"The three of them sought a seer," he mumbled quickly.

"A seer," she stated.

"An oracle—"

"I wasn't asking for clarification," she snapped. "Which one?"

"Raunnis, I believe," he answered. Tasia looked back to Stone.

"We have that in record," Stone answered without being asked.

Tasia turned back to the keeper. "Thank you, kind sir." The man turned to walk back to his ruins. "Wait," she added. "You specified three."

The bartender turned around. "Two that were celebrated and a third they picked up here."

"Human?"

"All of them, the third was a darker fellow."

She nudged him permission to leave, which he did to survey the damage. Stone approached Tasia as she contemplated the options.

"Maam?" he asked.

She turned and whispered to him, "Aiden and the custodian are in Limshau. Mischa and the Muslim are traveling northeast."

"Mischa?"

"His name is on the statue."

"Did they have a disagreement?"

"No," she answered, "different leads. One's using research, the other divination."

"You'd rather be tracking the boy," said Stone.

"He, I can understand," Tasia replied. "Plus, he has the stone...Stone."

"How can you know?"

Her shoulders dropped, and she stared at him, plainly. "This is his quest."

"Do you still want to pursue these other two?"

"Yes, if Lewis is as good as the man he resembles, he should do fine."

"You want me with you?"

"Company will help, but I'm boring."

"They're worse. Antikari?"

"If they didn't board the blimp, they went ground. That town keeps records." Tasia turned her attention to the rest of her team. "Lewis!"

The saint in question approached.

"Maam," he replied.

"Take the blade to Raunnis; that's where they are going," said Tasia.

"I know what to do," he replied and nodded.

"Stone and I are taking the Solis for Antikari. It won't last a rendezvous. We'll meet you back at geostation."

"Are we to take prisoners?"

Tasia frowned at the tactless response.

"Yes!" she snapped. "We're not executioners." Tasia thought about it for a moment. "Today. Confiscate and isolate any magic. Deadly force is authorized but preventable."

"Maam," Lewis answered, then saluted. The two separated.

"Careful," she shouted to Lewis. "Don't just drop in there brandishing thumpers. Unlike this town, stealth may be advised. The less you use, the less you'll have to rely on." She watched Lewis rally the rest of the group, preparing to leave. Tasia sighed.

"What is it?" Stone asked.

"They're going to get their ass kicked."

"Really? Should we..."

Tasia started walking towards the mooring point under the Caldera.

"We've more important concerns," she said.







## CHAPTER EIGHT

# WEST

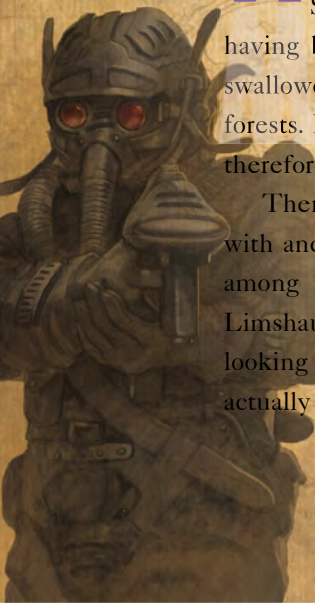
190 **W**estern Canam is a wild place, home to the tallest mountains the deepest forests, and the most ravenous monsters to plague the continent. Settlements here are few and far between, most having been wiped out by puggs, boggs, or skeggs or swallowed up by the implacable growth of enchanted forests. It is a land where the sensible fear to tread. It is therefore an irresistible draw to adventurers.

There are numerous legends of buried cities filled with ancient knowledge and technologies hidden away among the mountains, prime lures for scholars from Limshau, treasure seekers from Kannos, and techans looking to reclaim their lost heritage. Such sites have actually been found, depressingly lacking anything of

real value, but that doesn't discourage the most ardent seekers. Even the threat of fae anathema is but a warning to those wishing to find their fortunes in the perilous West.

### ALPINAS

Even though kodiaks control this area in force, they have never formed an organized nation. Dozens of villages and camps dot the landscape. No town lasts more than a few years before breaking up or destroyed. Thick woods permeate flat lands for the expanse. The few open plains forbid travelers from making roots. A powerful wind washes the landscape clean above the





tree line. This airstream covers most of the north, all the way to Ashur. Cutting through the fields is the only route beyond the pass of Dianaso to reach Ashur and the land of the titans.

Travelers in this region are often used to the ‘civilized’ kodiaks of Seliquam and are therefore not prepared for what awaits them if they encounter the natives. These kodiaks are neither welcoming of outsiders nor interested in trade for anything except narros-forged weapons with which to fight against encroaching boggs and skeggs from the plains of Dagron. Should goblinfolk foes not present themselves, the kodiaks are quite happy to fight each other if one tribe encroaches on another’s claimed territory. Still, the kodiaks are the best local guides through the region, if one could be offered the right incentive.

## ANTIKARI

Of all the free houses worth mentioning, Antikari is the smallest. The House of Antikari consists of a single keep and surrounding town, with a dozen satellite farms worth a total population of less than 15,000. The Antikari keep is a fenced manor house slightly larger than its surrounding buildings, and the town the house sits in is the only one of consequence for a hundred kilometers in any direction, save for bastion of Angel, which is what raises Antikari above the inconsequential, as it sits at the mouth of the only relatively safe road to the bastion. It is considered part of the Continental Cross, though the paved and patrolled road does not truly begin until several hundred kilometers further east. Despite (or perhaps because of) its location relative to Angel, Antikari also suffers heavily from encroaching bogg and pugg raids.

Like many of its size, there are shops and trading posts for anyone entering...if they are human. Most of the citizens of Antikari believe anything non-human is responsible for man's fall from grace. Many of its current residents once sought entry into Angel but were turned away for lack of useful knowledge, and linger here plotting ways of breaking into the bastion and giving food to rumors of tunnels beneath Angel’s walls (which do exist, but rarely in the places that the rumors credit).

Humans who enter Antikari are welcomed with open arms, though mages are looked at askance by bastion-hopefuls. Non-humans are usually ignored if they

only pass through or remain for a short time. If they dare spend the night or try to mingle with the locals, a mob may eventually form. Usually not lethal, the intruder is stripped and sent out, a handful of bruises and a humiliation being the worst of the damage. If the victim is an attractive elf, they may end up sold to slavers for a tidy profit.

More radical forces engage in more dangerous activity, though this is rare. The house baronet, Renan Torquil, only shows himself occasionally, having inherited the keep when Stellen Antikari died leaving no heirs. Renan, his half-brother and 2nd in line to what little is left of the crumbling House Torquil, claimed the seat before any bastards or distant relations could object. He is kind to humans who enter but can be heartless to others. He also doubles as the town's guard captain.

## ASHUR

The frostland, as it is also often called, covers the large islands and waters north of Apocrypha and Dagron, east of Fargon, and west of the Azhi Dahaka. It has no border and no army. It carries no defense to hold back invaders. Still, no force ever ventures here. For somewhere up there, lies a legend.

In truth, Ashur was originally a blanket name adopted by the narros to equate “unclaimed land”—believing the weather of Alpinas and the threats of Dagron rendered anything past those regions effectively worthless. As one travels, the bitter cold and biting wind, the temperature warms, and the winds calm. A brutal temperature drop and virtually impenetrable storms cover the border between the stillness and the cold. Few survive the journey north. This is the only warning to encroachers. Proceed further at one's own risk.

Legend tells of a dungeon shortcut that reduces the journey time and circumvents the storm. For those that make it, judgment and punishment can occur silently long before anyone ever looks at the legend. Even still, few can ever find it. Only a scarce few dragons and elder fae know the true location of it. But those who know speak of a city floating in the sky.

No other life claims a home here save for a few beasts welcoming the chill. Even pagus refuse to travel there. An accelerated ice age forced massive glaciers south, stopping short of the Nankani Mountains. Over the land, the massive winds around Alpinas continue, forcing down aircraft, followed quickly by a snowy buri-





## CHAPTER EIGHT: WEST



*cea*

*There Be  
Metaphorical  
Monsters*



al, with all evidence covered. The smooth landscape refuses to reveal its secrets. The kodiaks both worship and fear the glacier, dubbing it Chronzia, a celestial demigod cast to the soil by the elder gods of wood. According to their myths, commonly told through the many villages despite no direct line of communication, Chronzia tore himself from the womb of Fressen—the holy maiden of winter and slumber, when she refused to give him birth. The demigod emerged from an unholy pairing of Fressen and a mortal kodiak shaman in love with snow. The shaman died in the coupling when he froze to death in Fressen's embrace. Chronzia emerged from Fressen violently, embracing hatred for the forest and those worshipping Fressen and the other kodiak gods.

Chronzia represents the kodiak devil with no domain or disciples. He covets the love Fressen bestows on the wood and commits himself to its utter destruction. Every year, the mass of Chronzia pushes further into kodiak domain, ripping trees from their roots, and scarring the landscape in its wake. Where many religions place their demons as stealthy creatures, known for silence and subterfuge, the kodiaks only need to travel north to see their demon firsthand.

## THE AYRDRAE TRIANGLE

It's the most fundamental law of physics: for every action, there is an equal and opposite reaction. Though these days many natural laws are more like guidelines than rules. A few hundred kilometers across the mountains from Burgunasis, where gravity is uncertain at best, lies a roughly triangular area several hundred square kilometers in size, delineated by three large rock outcroppings. In this zone, gravity is the one absolute certainty—even in situations where it normally wouldn't be. Any airborne vessel that enters the zone inevitably loses lift and crashes—whether it be a lighter-than-air dirigible, a basic fixed-wing craft, the product of advanced bastion technology, or even craft of the kind not seen on this earth for centuries. The entire area is littered with the remains of aircraft of all sorts,

*The weather has always been a fastidious target of observation. Lacking satellite imagery, scientists have resorted to traditional methods—barometers, anemometers, wind vanes, and thermometers—to predict meteorological conditions. The disruption of the natural world has amplified this already difficult science. What does this have to do with magic? Glad you asked. When we had satellites and could access accurate weather patterns, we discovered how distant mechanisms could feed storms thousands of miles away. It is an organic system that one could confuse as living.*

*Now, we know disruption begets an echan disruption field, but we also know this field is not constant; our city is proof that it is malleable. However, this has only come from the removal of magical catalysts—specifically, life created by or living because of magic. The recent Vortex expeditions funded by Angel, despite casualties suffered, did return valuable information, namely the confirmation of the theory that, like weather, disruption circulates and moves based on mechanisms we don't yet fully understand. I theorize that like our climate, disruption can be organized into cells that constantly distribute and feed nearby storms—regions of swirling abnormally high magic.*

*Given the data gleaned, I believe Burgunasis to be one of these cells (which I have dubbed "Navajo"), as would be Dawnamoak ("Apache") and a region in the far north I've read about known as Ashur ("Inuit"). The trees surrounding Angel radiate little disruption, leading me to the conclusion that the properties of the forest of Cyon are a result of a tempest of disruption being fed by the Apache and Navajo cells. Without data from other landmasses, it will be difficult to determine a pattern, if any, to the reasoning behind these cell locations.*

*Dr. Walter Blalock*

*The Relation of Disruption and Climate (thesis)  
475 AE*

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some of their skeletons picked over by opportunistic scavengers, but some of them with still-active security measures protecting unknown treasures.

## BURGUNASIS

Once a high mountain plateau consisting largely of desert and badlands, Burgunasis is now largely a broken landscape of canyons interspersed by widening fields of grass and unpredictable rivers. Above it, floating rocks dominate the sky. Most travelers avoid the stones, as





## CHAPTER EIGHT: WEST





gravity is highly unpredictable here, sending boulders crashing down without warning. Most remain stationary for decades, shards broken from distant mountains. Most resemble jagged glass, rotating on a pivot from the surface. Others drift, knocking into others. None of them move particularly fast. Even though the phenomenon of the floating stones can be seen everywhere, they are most dominant in Burganasis. No one is sure why magic saturated this segment of land more than others. The rocks are nothing special and don't contain any precious materials, unlike the Heads of Ramkava. At any one point, there floats more than 5,000 rocks, with some more than five stories tall.

This unpredictability has resulted in this vast landscape being unclaimed by any one nation. As a result, there are hundreds of echan villages and techan atolls scattered about, surrounded by unreliable paths and terrain. There is no unifying authority, no singular threat, and certainly no reliable record of locations or history. Burganasis, even after five hundred years, abhors attempts to define it. It is not inherently dangerous, and travelers have often crossed its expanse, but reliable cartography is impossible with even set locations shifting every year. Observers have reported mountains undulating under the saturation of magic. Within this ocean of chaos, there are islands of normality, including not only a few techan atolls somehow surviving but also the gimfen nation of Salvabrooke. A few stable routes exist to cross this landscape, but few reliable maps exist, mostly in the hands of gimfen who manage tourist operations allowing 'echa-curious' techans an opportunity to view the wonders of the fantasy world from the relative safety of the gimfen settlement.

## CRAX / CYON

The greatest threat to the city of Angel is a not rival nation or an army of boggs, but rather the forest of Cyon, stretching nearly half the length of Canam's western coast. The region of the forest surrounding the bastion is known as Crax, after a curse boggs continually shout from the trees to frighten foes too powerful for the monsters to overwhelm. The forest emits one of the highest concentrations of echan disruption outside of Burganasis. Despite a gap in between the two areas, Cyon and Dawnamoak form a single biome, though the trees in Cyon (with a few notable exceptions) are far less impressive. However, the Cyon forest has a much more

impressive growth rate, with a sapling in Cyon reaching full adulthood in a single year; and recently, trees have sprouted near the walls of Angel. The bastion city constantly fells thousands of trees a year, though the damage from underground roots is already occurring. Trees from Cyon have even begun appearing inside the city, within its walls. This could be warning sign of future disruption issues for the city.

For now, Crax and Cyon remain merely irritations for travelers moving between Angel and the House of Antikari. Most caravans join to unify their power, as bogg raiding parties are never large or brave enough to attack an organized defense. A demand arose recently for bodyguards for the smaller caravans traveling to and from Angel. Some consider this task extremely dangerous. Others consider it easy money. Usually, one in ten caravans approaching Angel suffer an attack. Raiders comprise of no more than 10 to 20 boggs and/or puggs. If their victims offer substantial resistance, raiders are more likely to retreat than push for victory. Boggs prefer easy targets and seldom stand bravely in the face of magic or a dozen skilled swords.

The anarchic mindsets of boggs prevents them from becoming organized without a stronger force to control them, and even if they were to rally, it would be unlikely they could overwhelm the immense walls of Angel (those unfortunate to live outside would not be as lucky).

However, recent events have indicated a shift, coming in the form of a refined though still despotic bogg king claiming ownership overall all he sees in Crax. His name is Illicrax Totrad, and he claims the accumulating attacks are all his doing, though this is not believed. He may only control a camp, the Crax capital if it could be called, constantly migrating through the forest, with as many as 5,000 members.

## DAGRON

To the north of Kannos, the fertile prairies give way to wind-swept grasslands interspersed with small, uninviting forests, winding ever-shifting rivers, and largely stagnant lakes infested by giant mosquitos. The weather can turn from bitter cold to blistering heat in the space of a day in virtually any season, resulting in sudden snowfalls followed by devastating floods. There are few permanent settlements here; occasionally some hardy pioneer will strike out into the wild lands intend-







ing to tame a patch for themselves, only to end up inside a skegg's stewpot.

Both skeggs and kodiaks claim Dagron as their territory.

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These skeggs are far larger and more savage than their southerly cousins. Semi-nomadic hunter-gatherers, skegg tribes migrate across the prairies alongside their 'livestock,' semi-domesticated boggs and puggs that serve as slaves and as living weapons. Skeggs reproduce alarmingly quickly (though less so than puggs), and if it were not for their tendency to fight one another at the slightest provocation, the north might be overrun.

As for the kodiaks, Dagron may have been their original homeland—certainly a great many of their 'gods' are landforms found in the region, from the great ice sheet of Chronzia in the north to the mysterious Uzu Mountains in the east. The fervor with which they prosecute their endless 'war' with the skeggs speaks some-

thing of a religious conviction, though to a kodiak, it is simply the way things are.

## DEEP PASS OF DIANASO

In the center of the Nankani Mountains resides a valley surrounded by massive peaks stretching for 3,500 kilometers, connecting Thos Thalagos in Fargon to Gateway in Seliqum. It remains the only way to travel between northern Narros territory and the rest of Canam with any reduced risk. Any alternative prompts frequent dangers from the variety of monsters and environment hazards found in the area.

This is not to say Dianaso is safe, just the least hazardous, still requiring skilled navigators and armed guards with every caravan. As threats emerge and increase in danger, even this narrow path may eventually



become impassible. Dianaso is infamous—second to the Cross despite being a fraction of the length and traffic—in its demand for mercenaries. Although narros and Seliquam's famous Train Guard take it as a sense of pride to act as a Dianaso guard sentry, others are less motivated.

Still, considering the perils in some cases only a few hundred feet away, it's a surprise the region has remained as safe as it has been for as long as it had. Despite assumptions, the pass shows no signs of road works by either humans or narros, and with the exception a few nearby kodiaks preferring to prey than trade, the largest and/or most numerous threats still find it difficult to enter or even cross the Pass. There is a rumor that a river of evil-repelling magic flows through the area, created by laudenians.

The pass alters its shape from a sheer-walled valley to a range of mountains shorter than the surrounding peaks. Often enough, there is no clear indication one walks on the path. Thankfully, both Selkirk and Fargon miners placed markers along the shallow points, and a traveler keeping sight of them won't get lost. Since a ground journey through the pass takes as much as two weeks and navigating by air takes just under four days, as many as three caravans from Fargon or Selkirk populate the pass at any one point, often passing each other along the way. Occasionally, they stop to share an evening of revelry and recreation, moving the next day onto their respective destinations.

Ground caravans are the most common as Selkirk transport zeppelins, though relatively agile, still encounter problems navigating through the canyon's narrower segments. A normal traveler seldom carries little fear of being stranded since a passing caravan is sure to pass within a few days.

The only other means of travel between Fargon and the southern lands is the Great Train, which runs from Gateway to Thos Thalagos over the course of five days.

The rail line, which began construction over a hundred years ago but has only been fully operational for the past twenty, is slowly phasing out the zeppelin and caravans as the primary means of contact between Selkirk and Fargon; the only reason it has not completely superseded them yet is because the steam locomotives, low-tech as they are, are still not completely immune to disruption and usually require up to a week of maintenance at either end before they can make the run again. The train does not actually run through the pass itself;

*We not... what human word? Soup stitches. Dumb word. Hard to say.*

*See, you. Kronze make ice. Gozog make heat. Mozka make beasts. This what they do.*

*Uzu make stone. Skatchas make water. Alpiik make trees. This what they do.*

*Gods no care about you. They too big to see you. But you, you learn to use what gods make. That not soup stitches. That brains.*

*Noan, kodiak shaman*

to lessen the risks of disruption, banditry, and monster attacks, the railway was constructed through neighboring valleys, forcing it to criss-cross the pass at various intervals. The more daring bandits sometimes attempt ambushes at these crossings, but are usually beaten back by the Train Guard. The train does not take passengers, except for the Train Guard themselves and the occasional VIP.

## FARGON

Narros dug far and deep into the rock in Northern Canam where they first reappeared. They fortified themselves and created a nation of stone. Though there has been more than one mass exodus from the far north, inspired by religious or cultural fervor, political disagreements, or even just not liking the climate, those who remain are the most dedicated. Almost every narros holds ancestry here. Enemies dare not approach these lands unless they arrive in the thousands in preparation for war. The irony is the narros' obsession with defense ignored the actual need for one. This far north and isolated thanks to environment and geography, any attempts at a mass assault are self-evidently ludicrous. Even if the pagus were ever to escape from their enclosed region in the east, they would push south and sweep across the rest of Canam before even considering moving northwest.

## HARDSTONE SIG

Narros, by and large, hate the water; their dense bones make them more likely to sink than swim, and few make the effort to learn to overcome this handicap. The idea of a narros navy seems ridiculous on the surface, but like most elements of narros culture, is embraced out of necessity. Hardstone is the most northern







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dock in Canam, and the only way to access Fargon officially by sea. It and the Deep Pass

of Dianaso are the only routes in which the narros import and export resources and commodities. This large city's ruler, Siganmathis Tagh, has pushed his city to place the waterfront economy as the city's focus, and as such, Hardstone produces few resources itself. It has also become the foundation of narros naval fleet, such that it is.

Although few, the goliath "Mun'Gandars" were designed to combat the ferocity of ocean tides by simply making the vessels too large to be damaged by waves. One design, the "Treg'Egas"—which resembles a castle on a mountain—was built so it could run along the bottom of the water while keeping most of itself above (making it appear that it's a moving island). The largest of all, the "Thal'Hazar" measures over 6,000 feet long

and towers more than 30 stories. However, many of the Mun'Gandars have never left port, leaving a handful responsible for cargo transport. The others are

military vessels, stationed to prevent attack from Kako-domania. In the case of the Thal'Hazar, it made one six-month journey down the coast, only to return because of rumors of a renewed assault by the reavers of Gwaii, which ended up being a false alarm.

The smaller vessels (still massive on their own) connect with mostly with the smaller southern ports of Kosdakkon and Squalmos. Should the narros of Southam ever appeal to their northern brethren for military aid, the relief effort would likely depart from Hardstone Sig.

Narros occupy more than 79% of the total 35,000-member population, most of the rest being human or





gimfen, without whose efforts the massive ships could not have been designed.

## KELLAKRO LINE

When Fargon was established, before the first cities were named, the realm's first ruler, Rarikon Baxs, ordered it secured against an expected pagus invasion from the east. The narros defensive plan was set to defend against their known enemies, geared towards external threats to the nation—massive bulwarks and defensive structure along coastlines and land routes. It was not designed to counteract civil conflict. It was a peculiar moment in narros history where armies contracted to defend the nation, trained to occupy and protect colossal walls, fortresses, and other obstacles, had no other choice but remain on station as their kingdom fell apart.

Thankfully, Fargon recovered, and when Baxs was deposed by Thalagos Gin, the development of the Kellakro Line continued, and narros resumed their diligent duty to guard against an invasion that will likely never come. In the absence of aggression, the line was meant to double as a deterrent to raiders and immigrants and to moderate and tax traffic crossing the main roads.

The line is broken, with huge gaps dominated by sheer cliffs and mountains. Towering fortresses attempt to alleviate these openings, but several intruders (mostly wandering kodiaks) have been found within the kingdom without being spotted by the line. The largest segments guard the valleys and main roads, offering an

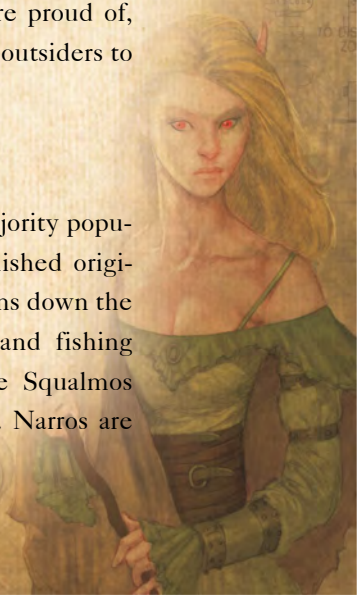
intimidating front to the merchants and traders that pass in and out of the kingdom.

When taking only its volume and population into account, the Line is one of the largest narros communities on the planet, though it is not classed as one given its military structure. There are no rulers, civilians, or economy. And yet, Kellakro Line runs hundreds of miles, is populated by over 75,000 narros, and offers living accommodations, farms, halls, tournaments, and markets. There is even an underground rail (currently elephant-drawn, though there are plans to convert it to steam) that connects the sections of the Line, allowing armies the ability to shift locations if an attack were to occur. Narros have been born on the Line and have lived their entire lives along it. And yet, despite this, they are not considered their own community, as most of the population are soldiers taking orders from a king living comfortably away from any threats.

The Kellakro Line could be considered one of the greatest architectural accomplishments in the history of narros, and like many of the others they are proud of, serves no real purpose, and is considered by outsiders to be wasteful and excessive.

## KOSDAKKON

The only settlement in Fargon to have a majority population of non-narros, Kosdakkon was established originally as a remote resupply port for expeditions down the coast, but later became a robust trading and fishing community after the establishment of the Squalmos Pact (and later the Seliquam Confederacy). Narros are





*With no warning, the angelite splintered with a deafening roar reserved for great lions engorged by powerful magic. The cracks met, and a segment worth more than the entire mine fell to the dirt. Open maws and dropped chins stood dumbstruck only a moment, followed by the sorts of cheers usually heard after a great battle. The hundreds of narros miners clambered around the behemoth responsible for the fracture, the great and wise narros miner, Thalagos Felcron, head pick for the level. His bald head dripped with sweat. The short trimmed grey beard fluttered as he exhaled a deep breath. His heavy, wider than a neck, gripped the heavy sledgehammer. He slammed the handle's point into the softer rock beneath his steel-toed boot.*

*He nodded in quiet approval.*

*"No shield built by god cracks under my hammer," he finally whispered. "I take the treasure and victory for what it is." He raised his hands, and the many loyal lifted the splinter up as the holy relic the priests hoped it would not be. A few of the cloth behind the crowd frowned and attempted a quarrel on valid grounds. No voices of dispute rose up as no one heard the argument over the barks and bellows of hundreds in approval.*

*The mass of narros carried it while Felcron turned to face the hole he created. He took the torch with the brisk swipe of his hand and ap-*

*proached the hole. He lowered the flame to the opening. His eyes saw no reflection, no casting shadows. All he saw was black.*

*The shell was thin, barely a few inches, yet with more than enough strength to hold a mountain solid. Felcron waved the flame around in the gloom. He breathed in a lung of fresh air. It only then did he realize the oddness of such a smell. By then a few loyal approached from behind, caring more for their leader than his prize. They looked over his shoulder but could not understand the concern growing on Felcron's face. Though strong as ten oxen, or at least three narros, Felcron was no idiot.*

*After a moment of contemplation, he tossed the flaming wood into the darkness. He saw the flame tumble and flicker. The light reflected the inside of the Angelite shield only for a moment and continued plummeting down, casting nothing else.*

*Eventually, the flame flickered in the deep distance, dying as it fell. It finally succumbed to the shadows around, winking out after almost a minute of falling. Felcron peered deeper into the hole. He murmured, quietly enough for no one else to hear.*

*"That's far larger than one kilometer."*

*The Epics of Narros*

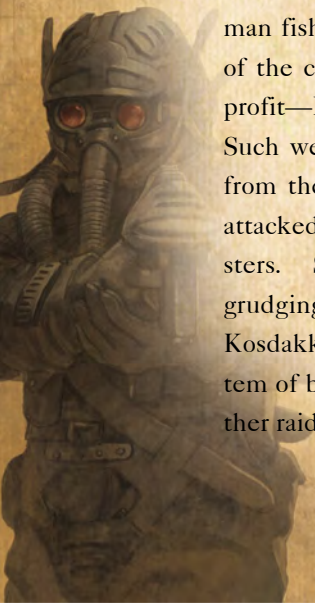
*479 AE*

normally wary of anything unfamiliar, and so one can imagine the trepidation of the first narros explorers who were asked to eat raw fish wrapped in seaweed and rice. However, this particular human foodstuff soon became the talk of the nation, and as is the way with narros, anything worth having is worth developing an entire specialized industry around.

Since narros are not good with boats, they instead lease out the docking and preparation facilities to human fishing and crabbing crews, who provide a portion of the catch as rent (and usually sell the rest at a tidy profit—Fargon literally cannot get enough seafood). Such wealth, unfortunately, attracts piracy, particularly from the Sea Reavers of Gwaii, who once periodically attacked the port with the aid of their colossal sea monsters. Such attacks have become rarer since Gwaii grudgingly joined the Seliquam Confederacy, but Kosdakkon still maintains a strong harbor defense system of ballistae, hwacha, and ray-mirrors to counter further raids.

## MAG-FARG

An underground city-mine, Mag-Farg's primary export remains modest, silver and gold. The deposits are so massive that the 25,000 narros living there secured a foothold for another five thousand years. Its predominant ruler, Farquand Mygelti, makes sure the world knows Mag-Farg exists, as many others, including most narros, don't. They transport most of their supplies to Thos Thalagos before shipping them onward to Selkirk and beyond. The tunnels under the mountain of Magasas have grown so large and so intricate, they threaten the integrity of the entire land. Massive stone supports keep the caverns and tunnels open. This process continued for so long that the entire mountain sits upon a stilt network. If a cataclysmic failure occurred, the entire mountain would collapse on itself. Most of the narros dig for digging's sake, as most of the tunnels throughout the mountain serve no purpose. The town maintains a very successful relationship with Majed. A bonding of the respective rulers' children almost 300





years ago secured their alliance, though the lords have not expired to pass their empires in inheritance. Despite the alliance, Mygelti never fully trusted Majed, mostly due to the increase of religious pilgrims from Thos Thalagos. He continually pleas for his son and family to leave and live in Mag-Farg to run the mine. Mygelti fears his ally may soon fall to fanaticism, forcing his mine and hand to potential war.

## MAJED

The smallest of the major mines in Fargon, Devone Jareg's personally oversees every facet of his small operation. The 23,500 exclusively narros miners export mostly minor-precious materials (nickel, iron, and copper). Devone seldom entertains non-narros traders, usually trading with Mag-Farg. Jareg's daughter and Mygelti's son bonded and bore two children, all living in Majed. This pairing secured the alliance though Jareg refuses to give up control of this mine to any others and is not entirely convinced yet who should inherit the claim. He may choose his younger brother, Rajak. If this occurs, Mygelti would sure to take insult. The fates of the paired family would be in jeopardy. Mygelti, on the other hand, assured the family if they took a pilgrimage to Mag-Farg, his son Ranan would gain the mine as steward until inheriting.

Most of the self-imposed outcasts from Thos Thalagos took a pilgrimage to Majed when the miners from Thos discovered the "Shield of God" centuries ago. Majed now contains the largest number of narros clerics and those worshipping Oaken. The mine teeters dangerously close to falling into the control of religious fanaticism. These increasingly popular soapbox priests claim Thalagos and the miners from the city doom the entire world by breaking into a region meant for no mortal to see.

*No one ever claimed all fae were multicultural. They certainly love embracing exceptions, but by their nature they gravitate towards a monoculture. A singular outsider, no matter the extreme, could find a home, especially if willing to embrace the accepting society, but groups, communities, whole ethnicities are a different matter entirely. One might point to Limshau, where a dragon-blessed king forced a cosmopolitan integration, but the veneer is thin within that kingdom and segregation is clearly visible to everyone except those sold on the lie.*

*Narros wear that exclusivity on their sleeve. Those in Fargon settled as far as they could from others to enforce that. They formed alliances with the damaskans, the gimfen, the kodiaks, the echa-humans, even with us. They trade, celebrate, but will never integrate.*

*Given enough isolation, any singular ethnicity or race will find ways to discriminate. It didn't take long for the narros of Fargon to find ways to segregate themselves. History likes to document that Thalagos Gin's coup against Rarikon Baxs came about because of the latter's despotic views and aggressive intentions to future allies, but in truth, it came down to a disagreement over religious views.*

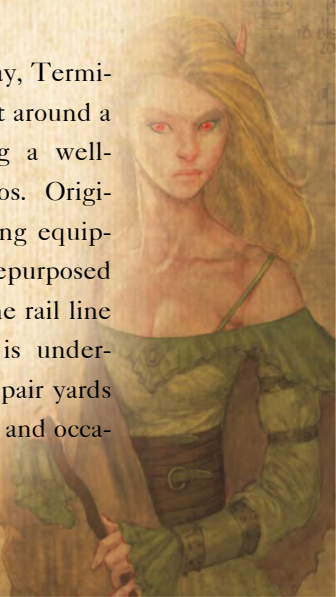
*Fargon's civil war was only known to those living there, and the handful of librarians that documented it. Hardly anyone has any idea it even happened, let alone the actual causes. Those soldiers manning the Kellakro Line, waiting for a pagus invasion that will never come, never left their post as their kingdom tore itself apart. Now with Gin in power, he is prioritizing economic growth and military supremacy over cultural and spiritual identity. It's only a matter of time before another conflict erupts, and whoever ends up in power next might not be quite as chummy with us. We therefore have a vested interest in maintaining the status quo.*

*Lt. Bob Rush  
Selkirk Diplomatic Office*

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## TERMINUS

The endpoint of the Great Train from Gateway, Terminus is little more than a shipping outpost built around a gimfen grind tower a half-day's ride along a well-maintained cartage tunnel from Thos Thalagos. Originally built to house engineers building mining equipment for Thalagos Gin, the grind tower was repurposed into its current use upon the completion of the rail line twenty years ago. The train depot itself is underground, to protect the locomotives and the repair yards from the cumulative disruption of its long trip and occa-





sionally tweaked for incrementally better performance by the gimfen mechanics. Cargo containers are raised and lowered to and from a staging area a half kilometer below the ground by a complex system of freight elevators, with numerous redundancies to ensure that the goods traveling between Fargon and Selkirk are not held up by technical difficulties.

At the top level of the underground, the containers are loaded and unloaded onto more conventional carts and transported through tunnel-highway to Thos Thalagos, ensuring that the narros themselves almost never come into direct contact with the train's mechanisms. Terminus is one of the newest settlements in Fargon, the grind tower having popped up almost overnight as the rail line neared completion thirty years ago.

### THOS THALAGOS

Thos Thalagos pushes deeper into the Earth than any other mine. Thalagos Gin maintains an obsession with digging deeper and deeper, nearing the tenenbri in their passion, and surely a sore spot for the narros religious sect. The network of tunnels in Thos almost topples the Finer Fire pits in their confusion, complexity, and length. Thos is the deepest mine, even deeper than the tenenbri tunnels in Vanaka (though still keeping just shy of the religious stricture on delve depth, at least for now). The deep miners of Thos keep many secrets on how they can maintain tunnel integrity in mine shafts pushing more than a mile into the rock.

The obsession arose from the continued lack of success of the mine. At first, coruthil and gold flowed like water, but after 300 years, the mine's exports dropped by half. With the coruthil gone, Gin ordered new tunnels dug every day, knowing that the flow of gold, silver, and other precious metals would eventually run out. Even with a population of 175,000 people, mostly narros, Thos grew slower than any other Fargon mine. Many of the roaming narros of Canam looking for adventure left Thos to start a new life.

This threat of financial collapse continued its decline until just over a century ago, Thos Thalagos struck pay dirt. The deepest miners broke into a huge layer of naturally occurring angelite. This smooth layer resembled a dome, implying a spherical deposit, making its existence an oddity. The superstitious narros in the mine, swearing on the word of Oaken insist the angelite is the "Shield of God" and cracking it only brings about Oaken's rage. The monetary gains proved too

tempting and the difficult task of breaking the shell began. Trade agreements fortified with the gimfen supplied newer machinery and the first chips of the shell occurred a few decades later. Soon, narros returned to their families in Thos to gain a fortune.

The deposit indeed resembles a sphere, perfectly smooth, one kilometer across, making it the largest angelite deposit outside the remains of Ixindar. Thalagos Gin, after a visit to Ramkava, ordered the miners to dig even deeper, certain that a tremendous windfall lay in store. The clerics of Oaken deplored the actions, and many of the church and their loyal followers abandoned the city. Many fled to Majed. A few remained and acts of sabotage increase each year, both in quantity and in severity. A recent spell cast by a mage of unknown title and power revealed something causing the entire population to shudder only a moment before resuming the dig. The sphere was hollow.

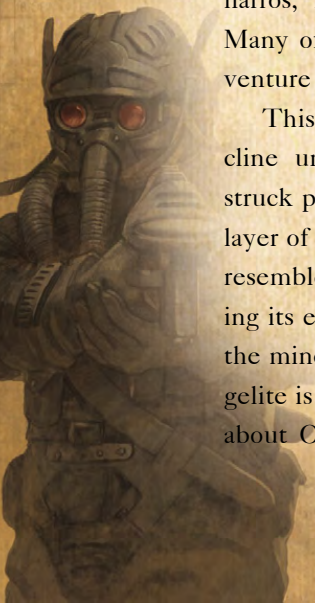
### GRIGG'S GRINDERS

Although Gnimfall is where the first grind tower sprouted, and is where most towers are located, there are still many scattered across Canam, and potentially the world. Many are not listed on any map, resulting in casual travelers hearing the calling sign of a tower they were not looking for.

These single grind towers each house dozens or hundreds of gimfen. Most sprout from a flat landscape, some from hills or valleys, and even a few in swamps. Grigg's three towers stand atop one of the tallest mountains in Canam.

Grigg Granniss funded and built the first one and reaped such a windfall from the copper and tin mine underneath that he eventually expanded to two other towers. Other gimfen and even a few humans flocked from around to join the successful operation. The two other towers sat on other distant peaks, making transportation difficult.

The gimfen came up with the only logical solution; they ran cable cars between the towers. Despite the enormous strain placed on the towers and the cables strung across the two-mile distance between peaks, the integrity has never been compromised. The drop-off, at its worst, is more than 5300 feet. All three towers look slightly different than the others dotting the continent. Grigg's shine in the polish of bronze, which comprises most of its construction and is protected from corrosion





by some unknown method. They also spin massive windmills, powering the mining machines bellow.

Recently, the snow-covered peaks revealed a secret. The gimfen stumbled upon a network of artificial tunnels carved in a section of the mountainside. They discovered an ancient human vault dating back to before the exodus. The tombs contained several ancient books of fact and fiction along with several chambers filled with historical novelties like electric lamps, kitchen appliances, and electronic devices, most long since disrupted. Before Angel or York--the nearest bastions--even caught a whiff of the discovery, the gimfen sold all they recovered to Limshau, where everything was analyzed and catalogued. Limshau experts claimed there was no salvageable technology and the factual books revealed nothing they didn't already know. The librarians and historians of Limshau were far more interested in the fiction books, written by prolific authors of the time, which talked about fantasy worlds, flights of fancy, with frightening parallels to the modern world.

Although myths and legends passed through history detailed the lives of creatures no human has ever seen, some of the books found offered increasing detail of ancient cultures with no references to back up the claims.

## JANIS

Chaparrans want outsiders to believe they are a unified race, and that their largest forest of Dawnamoak is a singular living nation of forest and fae. This is not accurate. Dawnamoak is only a small segment, centralized by the signature towers. The forest entire, despite still being saturated by chaparrans, is a collection of dozens of smaller villages in an encompassing realm called Janis, named after a lesser deity in the chaparran faith.

Janis is one of the largest forests in the world, as technically it would encompass Cyon as well, considering they share a single biome. But it is the eastern half which holds the largest population of chaparrans within. Janis boasts the tallest and stoutest trees, and though chaparrans don't occupy every acre of the forest, they do hold sway and claim over it. Though boggs have attempted incursion into Janis, they never make it far. Cyon and Janis both benefit from an incredibly accelerated growth rate, and given time, the crumbling empire of Torquil will find its ruins overtaken by trees and veg-

etation, forever burying its legacy in the shadow of green crowns.

## KESAKAS

The region between Dawnamoak and the Gloam was almost depopulated of humanity in the wake of the Second Hammer. In the chaos of magic's return, the land rose into a complex of vast, mazelike canyons, alternating between verdant jungle and bone-dry desert in response to wildly unpredictable weather patterns. The canyons and mesas are home to a wide variety of dire beasts, magically-induced genetic throwbacks to Earth's prehistoric past. Apart from the bastion of Sierra Madre and a few isolated coastal settlements, nobody lives in Kesakas--though there are plenty of hunters who brave the wilds in search of rare game, treasure seekers after the riches of legendary lost cities, the occasional caravan of refugees from Southam who somehow managed to brave the Gloam...and of course, experienced guides (mostly entrepreneurs from Sierra Madre) who are happy to take gold from all of the above in exchange for their knowledge of the twisting, ever-changing maze.

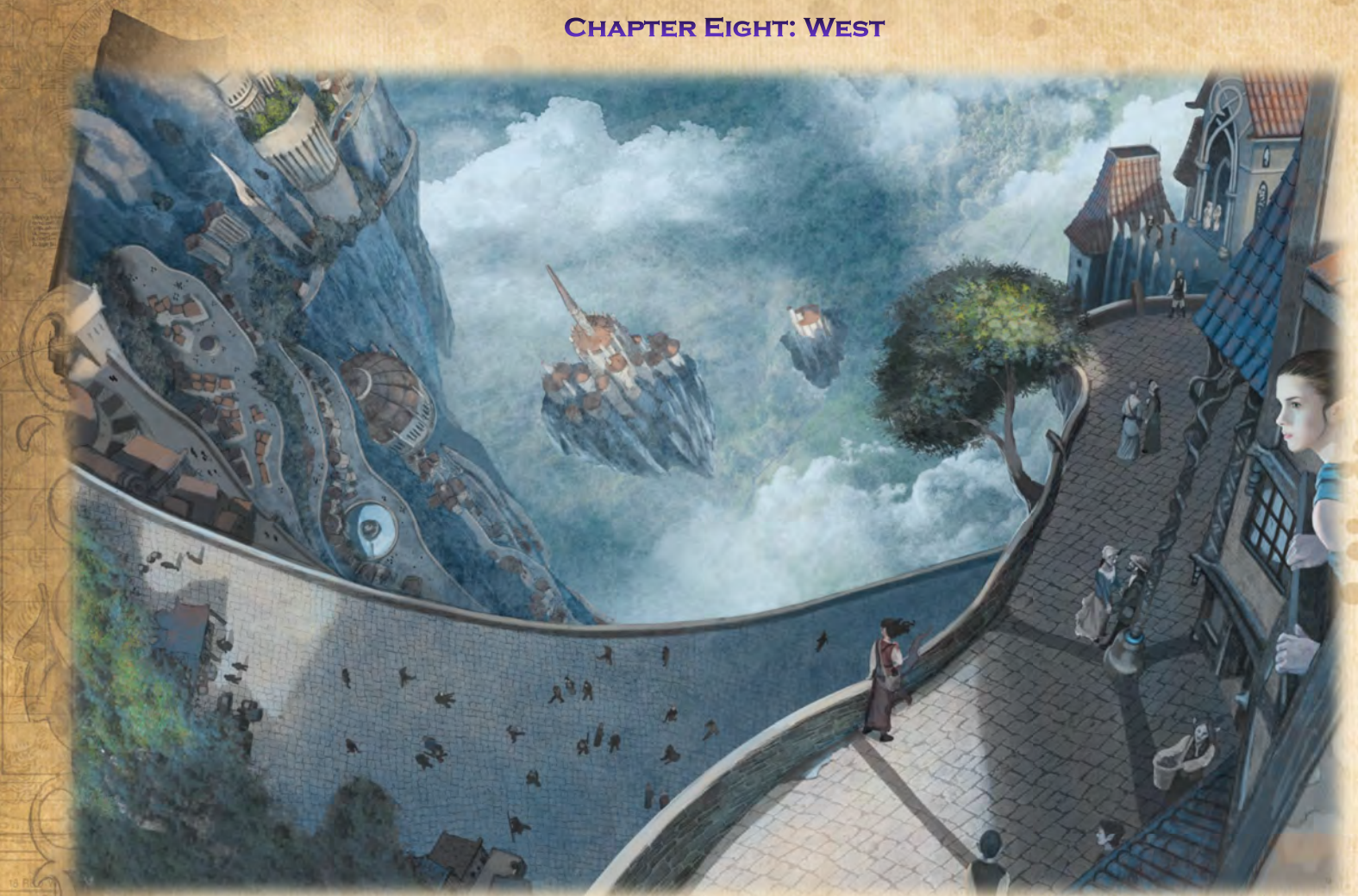
## LAUDENIAN SKY NETWORK

The city of Laudenia itself, while an arcane and technical marvel capable of housing hundreds of thousands of residents, accounts for only a portion of the laudenian civilization. Only laudenians know the locations of all the keeps and how many they built. The keeps number between three and twenty, scattered across most of Canam, with a handful floating over both major oceans. The smallest is barely three stories tall with the largest looming a quarter mile from root to tower-tip. Constructing a keep involves harnessing one of the many floating rocks around the planet and building upon it. Only laudenians have been able to harness and exert some semblance of control over these rocks (the one exception, the Seliquam capital of Victrix, is held aloft by an unknown power that even its masters do not understand). The largest known stones float above the fields of Burganasis with some said to be as large as mountains.

These keeps comprise most of the laudenian population. They are constructed along natural 'rivers' of magic that traverse the skies, and laudenian pilots pos-







sess an internal instinct for finding the nearest keep, which can sit anywhere from two to twenty days apart. The network does not reach far beyond Canam and Southam.

The most amazing aspect of the network is the world's ignorance of its existence. The keeps are shrouded in clouds sometimes real, sometimes magically created. The few static mountain posts sit atop peaks so tall, no one below could view them. Some laudenians live their lives without ever touching dirt. Though a few non-laudenian airships have claimed to have docked with a laudenian port, no formal relationship has ever been established.

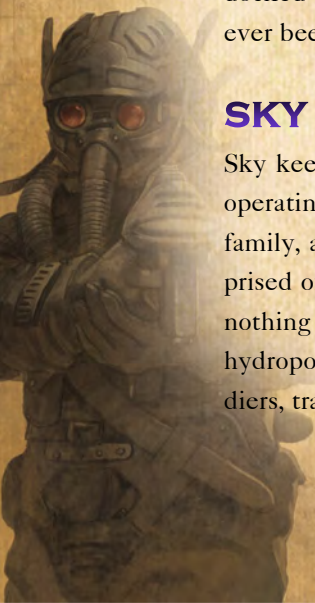
## SKY KEEPS

Sky keeps usually come in the form of floating castles, operating like feudal keeps, with a single ruler or ruling family, and a working class between 100 and 1000 comprised of servants, farmers (though a laudenian 'farm' is nothing like a terrestrial one, employing a mixture of hydroponics, alchemy, and transmutation magic), soldiers, tradesfolk, and dock workers, along with an itiner-

ant population of sky nomads usually numbering between 20 and 500.

## THE SENTINELS (HITTITE & RONGO-RONGO)

The largest keeps are the two Sentinels. These tower over 2300 feet and appear carved from a single gigantic shard of rock. The Sentinels are often seen together and date further back than their current owners' memories. No one knows how old they are, but are believed to be the first ever built in the modern age, making them five centuries old if true. The keeps have changed rulers so many times, no one knows who commissioned their original design or what their original intent was. The keeps are so massive that many areas within have not seen eyes in centuries—including the arcane hearts that power the various magical devices that keep the sky castles running, the accessways to which have been 'misaid' by the current leaders. Rumors say there are hidden treasures and secrets within the Sentinel Keeps (Individually named, "Hittite" and "Rongo-Rongo").





The current controllers of the Sentinels, the Hyksos noble family, often incorrectly translated as "shepherd-kings," command a population of nearly 3,000. Visitors who linger for any length hear stories of battles they have engaged in. The keeps travel the skies along one of the larger streams of power in an unpredictable pattern, but more often than not are found near central and eastern Canam near the dangerous skies of Apocrypha, making typhox dragon attacks a perennial threat to the strongholds.

The current ruler of the larger Rongo-Rongo is a human named Salitis Appelbaum, an honor totally unprecedented anywhere else in Laudenia. He understands more than any of the previous rulers the immense responsibility given to him. Such a ruler rarely emerges in this world.

## FRONTIER

Truly the world cackles in the face of logic. When one presumes to understand a reason, or comprehend the new reality, a new mystery appears to confound. If floating rocks in high magic were not enough, some built houses upon them. Then others erected castles. Still others assembled kingdoms. When the captains of the dragonflyers detail their adventures under the promise of not having to pay for their night's entertainments, they usually start small, not revealing the succulent tales until several rounds of drinks have passed.

Eventually, captains relate similar stories about keeps, variations on the same two or three stories. Then one captain mentions Frontier and the tabs are paid.

Though accounts differ, most of the legends are based on the same anecdote, so no one is sure who spoke it true and who embellished later.

The story specifics seldom matter. One speaks of an attack by a half-dozen death dragons while another mentioned a single massive fallen dragon. Another denies the involvement of dragons and swears a swarm of mammoth albatross were the attackers. The prey was a small sky keep. It resembled the Sentinel keeps (though substantially smaller), but similarly carved from a single slab of floating rock. Before they approached within breath range, the keep split in two and a light unknown to the gods vaporized the enemy.

Supposedly, later, the keep vanished. Myths accompanying the tale claim it remains hidden for decades at

*While an inquisitive child at Janoah, I asked a passing laudenian captain about Frontier. The skipper laughed and scoffed at the idea boisterously. He then whispered to me in secret.*

*"In a tunnel, no one can climb. In a castle, no one could build. In a sea, no one can swim. Find the island broken in half. It forgives all, grants all, and destroys any who fail to journey in the heart as well as the mind."*

*I guess, even among a race of legends, mysteries endure.*

*Shaylee Apheric*

*The legend of Aeronopolis*

a time and then appears, usually in times of great calamity and death. The keep seems drawn to destruction, usually arriving only when times are most desperate to aid.

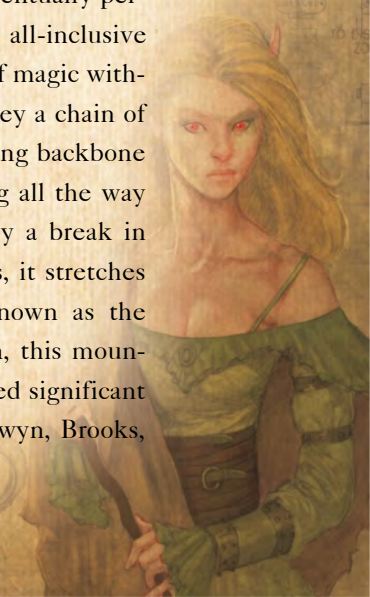
The small rock appears to have no population at all. No one has ever seen anyone inside. One plucky pilot possessed the audacity to claim to land on Frontier. She searched and found nothing, no evidence of life—though *someone* must have carved those tunnels. She also admitted there were huge sections of the complex unexplored. Of course, later tales detailed reptiles, ghosts, or even aliens controlling the facility.

The most distinguished feature is Frontier's strange and potent defensive measure. The entire construct, when ready to act, splits in two. Within moments, the keep can then cast out a massive energy burst, incinerating everything in its path. Though also a rumor, some of these tales claim the titans in the north built Frontier to protect their land.

## NANKANI MOUNTAINS

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What was once known as the American Cordillera has been renamed by the narros, a title that eventually permeated everywhere, even bastions. This all-inclusive term came about thanks to the saturation of magic within the Canam landscape. No longer are they a chain of mountain ranges, but rather an encompassing backbone of peaks beginning in Fargon and reaching all the way to the bastion of Sierra Madre with barely a break in between. Through Xixion and Burganasis, it stretches twice as wide as when it was simply known as the Rocky Mountains. Before the fall of man, this mountainous arc cutting through Canam contained significant gaps and went by separate names like Selwyn, Brooks,





Sierra Madre, and Columbia. Now, it is all Nankani. Nankani hoards secrets, including the locations of many legends. The most notable is Laudenia, rumored to anchor itself next to a different Nankini peak each month.

As the massive increase of geological activity required for Nankani would be impossible, it is thought some external facilitator caused the upheaval. Further evidence of this comes from a bizarre series of records filed at Limshau by one Keran Orlovic.

### OCEA

This massive body of water could no longer even charitably be described as the 'pacific' ocean. Its coasts grew further apart and its depths grew deeper as its counterpart on the other side of the world shrank. Massive tides prevent sailing by all but the largest vessels. Even then, many don't survive the journey. The water and what lies underneath is chaotic and undiscovered. No one is sure what grows in this expanse. Horror stories passed on by descendents of the survivors of the Asiatic exodus speak of creatures larger than the greatest land animals known. Even most flying creatures avoid soaring over this massive body of water. Almost all the small islands darting around this area vanished when the sea levels rose.

### ORCHIS

The "sand-castle," as it is derisively referred to, can be first spotted on the horizon flapping into vision from the waves of heat rising from dried desert soil. The ruling family prefers the term "Desert Flower," but the name has not and never will catch on.

Though the keep holds a relatively small footprint, in height its smooth, glassy walls tower over even those of the Limshau capital. The Flower and many of its surrounding buildings appear grown from sand. One legend claimed a demigod of child-like whim packed the sand with water and sculpted the keep with his own hands. Upon completion, he ordered a dragon to fire the castle into a single ironstone ceramic, with an ashen glaze covering the walls as additional detail. Another myth attests it was the dragon itself that made the castle on its own without encouragement.

The rulers of the house have no comment on the veracity of either of these tales—or, for that matter, on

anything else, for they are rarely seen by the common folk.

House Orchis resides in the castle on condition that none who bears the family name ever leave. The family must also maintain its condition and defend the keep to their death. The members of the house have kept that promise to this day. Though all Orchis males must live within the castle, daughters are married to neighboring houses and villages to forge alliances and expand the banner. After 300 years, the Flower is nearing capacity.

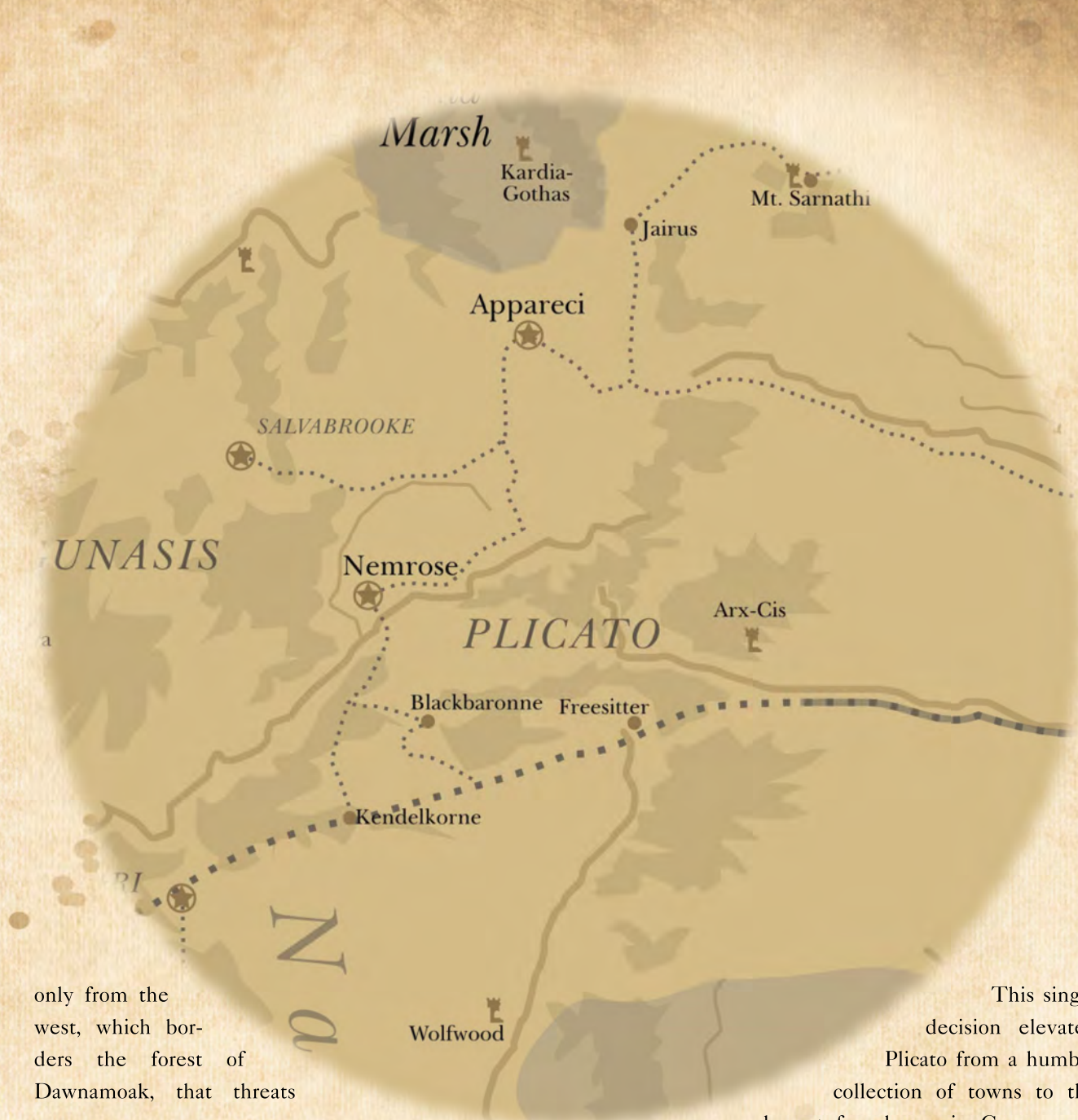
A multitude of male heirs have taken wives and have sired few daughters. Two of the youngest recently swore off marriage to join the keep's clerical order, which follows a variation of the elvish Eru fu faith. The devout believe the oath of the family is still in effect and fear reprisal if the pact were ever to be broken. The countess in reign is Saffron Orchis, a human renowned for her beauty, ever-present still at 65 years. She cannot give up her name to marriage as that would turn the castle to another family line. Though she could release control to a Prince Regent, specifically her eldest son, Kagen, she has declined, believing Kagen does not have the realm's best interest at heart. She constantly restrains Kagen's jovial attitude, prone to debauchery in the castle's surrounding villages.

Saffron prefers her youngest son of eighteen years take control, already married to a Torquil princess. However, Cerco doesn't subscribe to the oath of the past, hoping to leave the castle to build his own between Orchis and Torquil.

Castle Orchis sits in the village of Tentilla, ruling over a dozen smaller towns over 2500 square kilometers, much of it fringing the much larger Limshau and neighboring free house Ogium. This allows Orchis a relative safe nest on which to facilitate farming and production. Though the Continental Cross passes beyond its claimed borders, Orchis still benefits from traffic from Limshau. This enabled the flourishing of smaller villages into booming towns like Archena, Kerria, and Bitterblush.

The Flower is even visible from surrounding towns, tempting travelers to pause and spend money in the hundreds of taverns and gambling establishments scattered through the region. As Orchis borders Limshau, the nation is also fortunate to avoid many of the scavengers and raiders plaguing other nations in the west. It is





only from the west, which borders the forest of Dawnamoak, that threats emerge.

## PLICATO

Castle Nemrose is enormous. Nemrose's four central towers are by far the tallest of any free house keep, standing more than forty storeys with connecting bridges every third floor. The towers are closed in by a humble wall and perched upon a dusty hill with little greenery. The peaks are high enough for a keen eye atop the summit to spot the Continental Cross to the south. It was a controversial choice between hugging the Cross along the relatively docile northern borders of Dawnamoak or shifting it north to cut through Plicato. Dawnamoak promised no protection to those along the Cross, allowing Plicato to fill that need.

This single decision elevated Plicato from a humble collection of towns to the largest free house in Canam, and second only to the crumbling empire of Torquil in area. Villages like Kendelkorne, Freesitter, and Toropo grew into booming tourist towns within only a few years, and soon, all Plicato became reliant on income via the Cross. Unfortunately, the nation still lacks the manpower to properly guarantee the safety of those on the road, prioritizing the development of the revenue stream over the safety of those on the highway itself.

Apart from the volatile push through Crax, Plicato stands at the most dangerous section of the Cross, especially near the border of Antikari, where the Cross becomes little more than a wide track. Increasing pressure from larger nations has not improved matters, and against Plicato's wishes, Limshau military has begun





pushing into Plicato to help enforce the road. Still, the Cross remains safer than any other road in the land.

The citadel of Nemrose predates the noble family that currently holds it. One Limshau archeologist traces its origins as far back as 400 years, before the fall of Kardia-Gothas: surviving records of that fell kingdom claim Saron Sana was obsessed with the encroaching elvish population and the mixed lineage of other nearby communities. The original castle highlighted elvish flamboyance, a stark contrast to the gatehouses built later.

House Plicato does not deny that they claimed the keep from another noble house, though some historians accuse them of displacing the former owners by force. Therese Warakain, a noted Limshau librarian, uncovered evidence that the castle and surrounding areas had been claimed by plenary damaskans under the leadership of Offlin Beckel, with one report stating—in a rather unspectacular epilogue—that the (then-human) House Plicato aquired the keep in a trade deal from a delinquent lord who racked up unreasonable debts to dwarven masons, rather than the more exciting military takeover that rumors claim. Plicato's wealth came from their villages bordering the wild but fertile lands of Burganasis.

Despite the controversy, House Plicato expanded to encompass more than 20 villages over 150 miles around the castle (including noteworthy Freesitter, Blackbaronne, and Kendelkorne). Plicato's early rulers tolerated slaves and were known to bind several as concubines and servants to the ruling class through several generations. It was believed this practice was forced out as a condition of Plicato's acquisition of the Continental Cross, but in truth, Plicato had quietly banned the slave trade decades before.

175 years ago, the human King Jacob II bestowed royal blessing on his concubine, the elvish maiden Madolis Vickum, allowing him to

*Pardon the matter-of-factness of this report, but given the recent disclosure, we feel it essential to reevaluate the following records filed by one Orlovic, Keran upon his arrival in Limshau in 255 AE.*

- *354-780-Reban-01: Immigrant Access Dossier, source King's Shadow.*
- *534-888-Vander-56: Topography Amendment for Dawnamoak and Wyldwood.*
- *897-123-Ragnat-77: Taxonomy of Earth dragon, Kur Tectonicus of Great Land.*

### Key Points.

- a) *The existence of previously undocumented locations such as the Wyldwood and the Schism.*
- b) *The registering of 3,256 immigrants on March 6<sup>th</sup>, 256 AE.*
- c) *The possible existence of the largest dragon ever recorded.*
- d) *Possible dishonesty by chaparran emissaries regarding the governance and topography of Janis.*

### Supposition.

*Within these three reports discloses information, corroborated by immigrants registered that week, claiming Janis was once divided by an abnormal branch from the Nan-kani mountains known as the Schism, which also by consequence formed an ungoverned forest south known as the Wyldewood. This Schism was geographically identical, even including climate, as mountains found 4000 kilometers north. The Schism apparently receded over a single year when it's primary catalyst, a never-before-seen Earth dragon called Kur Tectonicus of Great Land vacated the region. Orlovic claims Kur to be the largest dragon ever recorded.*

### Addendum.

*The reasoning behind the reevaluation is threefold.*

*1—The immigrants that arrived with Orlovic refused to discuss why they fled the land, though stated it was due neither to the regional climate nor the fact it was controlled by the whims of a dragon posing as one of its mountains.*

*2—Orlovic named Taelaran Tide in one of his reports—a Koana mage and librarian reported missing in Janis two years earlier. Orlovic submitted one of Tide's diaries.*

*3—The immigrants, despite refusing to detail the history of their lost land, still claim Orlovic's erratic account as completely accurate.*

*One further point, Orlovic joined the Koana academy soon after and eventually changed his name. I don't think I need to explain that any further.*





marry her. Over a season, the political landscape changed.

Slavery was outlawed, and diplomatic doors were opened with Limshau, House Torquil, and House Orchis. Madolis gave him a half-dozen children over only fifteen years, rare fecundity for a damaskan. Each upon maturity was betrothed to mayors and landowners around the kingdom. On advice from his mother, Jacob's half-fae heir took a bride from the elvish kingdom of Skyrose, as did many of their successors, in time converting the entire Plicato direct bloodline back to damaskan. Long after Jacob's death, it was revealed that Madolis was never a broken slave, but the last heir of the Beckell family that built the castle centuries earlier. She had infiltrated a slaver caravan market and made a point to impress upon the Plicato heir, with the intention of co-opting their blood-

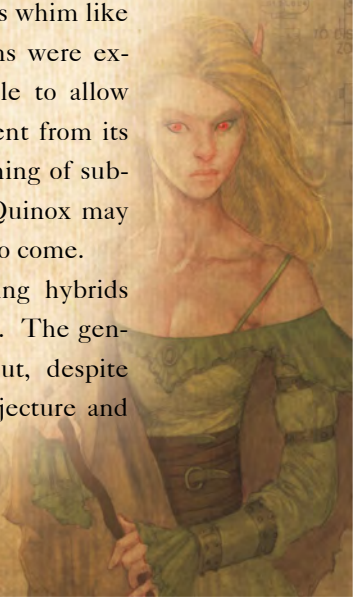
line and bringing the castle and its lands back under the control of those that built it.

## QUINOX

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For centuries, humanity took pride in their independence from magic. They were not slaves to its whim like the elves. Being evolved creatures, humans were exceptionally resistant to its dependency, able to allow magic into their spirit, but ultimately resilient from its more drastic side-effects, such as the branching of subspecies. The aristocracy of the House of Quinox may be either the exception or a sign of a future to come.

Despite theories accusing them of being hybrids mixed with elvish blood, this is not the case. The gentry of Quinox are pure humans throughout, despite their history being a muddled mess of conjecture and





Ravenar Limshau stopped atop the hill. He looked down, his reins firmly in grasp. Tommas, his aide, looked back to his lord. Ravenar knew he earned one more question, though he was already at his limit with answers to questions he regretted asking. The greatest flaw in knowing the truth is the knowing itself. What more could he ask? He shuffled his feet slightly, and the stallion shifted around. What harm in asking an open question? What harm?

"How will this end?" he asked.

The one with the stone goatee and no teeth floated forward. The bald one with the broken ear followed behind. Like a chain, they floated up the hill to face the fae. The goatee spoke first.

"A doomsday dooms to damage, devastate, demolish, and destroy all days. To count the clock to its close, terminate its time."

The bald one picked up instantly as the other stopped.

"There is theory and fact. One cannot destroy with spell or bomb. Survivors always rise. Reduce the very soil to ash, set the sky ablaze, survivors will still rise. All life endures cataclysms. Extinctions are side-effects. Life adapts. Sea levels rose and those not drowning learned to swim. Make it hot, and fur will shed. Man once feared if they split the atom, it would ignite the air they breathed. The greatest wars, the pyrrhic victories, left foundations to rebuild." That one seldom answered anything, a head of philosophy.

One of history, with a cracked skull and a missing jaw, spoke through its hole. "Perhaps a repeat of the Toba catastrophe event—"

"Or perhaps a gamma-ray burst 6,000 years away and 6,000 years away. It happens, and all

you can do is wait...unless it misses," said another with high cheeks and slanted eyes.

"The Andromeda galaxy will impact in 3 billion years, and the Terran solar system carries a 65.7695% chance of being torn asunder from the result, long before this star's death throes," said No-eyes-and-chipped-nose.

"Though still distant. You should worry about stellar evolution. The sun will shift and change in luminosity within a billion years, certainly bringing the onset of another ice age," said The-slanted-eyes.

Eventually, the voices increased in volume. They seldom waited for one to finish. The various accents faded and melded. Ravenar found it more difficult to differentiate. Their overlapping voices continued as they crowded and bullied the damaskan.

"Perhaps the humans will create a vacuum metastability event, or detonate a cobalt explosive to irradiate the atmosphere and the entire population—"

"Given the state of gate and magic, perhaps the fate lies with the new world. A false assumption to presume man and his science will doom the planet. The greatest war to tear the universe asunder pits Odin against Loki at the end of the world myth known as—"

"Ragnarök, Acharit hayamim, Yawm al-Qiyamah. . . Last Judgment, Armageddon—"

"The end of the Kalpa. The final year, constant calculation errors continue to place it further into the future—"

"White buffalo are still being born, you know."

"Satan, Angra Mainyu, Iblis, shall start the final war with God, Allah, Jehovah—"

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flamboyant myth. What is known is that they appeared from the far north, pushed into warmer climates by predators and weather. During the journey, their bodies became adapted to the cold, similarly to how fae acclimatize to changes in their environment. Though possessing some knowledge of technology at the time, they soon abandoned such pursuits after discovering their adeptness with magic. Proportionately, those are more spellcasters in Quinox then in any other human kingdom.

By the time the exodus reached a more agreeable clime in the mountains of southern Alpinas, less than

fifty had survived, separated into a handful of professed highborn birth. Though many were not directly related to one another, they formed the family house of Quinox that survives today. The term "of Quinox" denotes one of these families, separating from the common folk that soon gravitated to the tall, silver-skinned humans, all of whom possess translucent hair, vibrant green eyes, and a lifespan compared to that of the fae. At the time, the Quinox gentry included the families Gordson, Hivern, Saltis, Sheridan, Torpiss, Trenholme, and Voran, each contributing to the kingdom in their own way.



*"It's Yahweh." History corrected. Philosophy continued without a break.*

*"Elohim in the final struggle to claim the souls of mankind—"*

*"Of the entire world," came another correction.*

*"Named for the hill where pharaoh Thutmose III of Egypt claimed a victory over the Canaanites of Kadesh."*

*The words came faster and more violent in expression. Ravenar pinched his nose to concentrate as they mumbled.*

*"Or when Necho II engaged the armies of Judah in aide of the Assyrians—"*

*"Or when General Edmund Allenby conquered Palestine, gaining popularity in the application of the word Armageddon, for what it will always be called."*

*"Yes, of all, they will surely destroy you..."*

*They paused. Ravenar released his tension and looked up. "What was that?"*

*History spoke up. "How odd that names carry through the universe—"*

*"Carries through the universe?" Ravenar asked.*

*History continued. "A name appearing in cultures unconnected. Damasian myth tells of a tower of Megiddo where Erufu and Oaken met to discuss the creation of the fae. Chaparrans named a great tree of the same. Laudenians attest the center spire of Selmana also goes by it."*

*"I know that legend," Ravenar responded. "Echalogical Influence."*

*"The name carries a threat, equating inevitable terminus to the very hand of judgment, and all are guilty to them."*

*Ravenar tried to move his eyes to the others crowding him.*

*"Wait, what do you mean, 'inevitable terminus'?" he shouted.*

*"As old as time and as absolute as any will god may possess or wield," the bald one answered. "They have destroyed in a blink everything they see. Now they follow your past back to the cradle to close the circle and destroy the final fragment. You cannot stop them. They are coming."*

*"Who are THEY!?" Ravenar shouted. They all stopped.*

*Quiet.*

*The wind blew by his long ears. The fae tightened his lips and stared at the bald one as the others went silent. The other heads rolled away. One tumbled like a rolling ball while another struck the ground and dragged a scar of mud across the grass before lifting again. One rose almost to the slow-forming storm clouds above.*

*The bald one stayed on Ravenar, only for a moment, before averting its attention and returning to the pack.*

*Time expired.*

*Ravenar knew pushing would be useless. Frustration and regret settled in again.*

*Before Ravenar started to leave, the bald one spoke in a whisper loud enough for only the elf to hear.*

*"That which carries the name...that which even gods fear."*

*Limshau Historical Entry 356 AE*

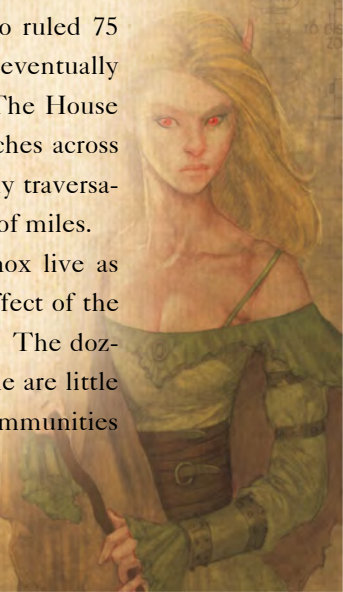
*Ravenar Limshau the 4th*

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Hivern dedicated themselves to the construction of the Rime—a fortress carved from ice and mountain—though it would be a Sheridan that would first assume the throne. The three crystal towers of the Rime mark the highest artificial peak in Northern Canam, sitting precariously on the edge of Mount Paramo. Though other towers are taller across the world, they are not built upon such a lofty perch. Most everything within, including chairs and tables, are carved expertly from ice. Some suspect it is not a chisel but the deft hands of magic that formed such works.

The first seat upon the so-called "Temple Throne" was held by David Sheridan of Quinox, who ruled 75 years before passing it to his son, and it came eventually to his nephew, Markus Torpiss of Quinox. The House rules a large but centralized realm that stretches across several mountain valleys and controls the only traversable pass through the mountains for hundreds of miles.

Most of the resident population of Quinox live as close the castle as possible, perhaps a side-effect of the veneration many of them have to the gentry. The dozen sprawling villages spreading from the Rime are little more than small farming and fishing communities





linked by taverns, inns, and roads. Although Quinox is blessed with a vast landscape of hills, rivers, and mountains, it is not without friction, mostly boggs and skeggs from neighboring Alpinas and Dagron, perhaps the very force the gentry was fleeing from.

Quinox is one of the few human-centric kingdoms in Canam (and maybe the world) that most closely resembles a fantasy kingdom of fiction (and that includes the ruling class of Polacra living on a floating iceberg). The prairies of northern Canam are often ignored by the southern nations due to a proliferation of monsters, allowing Quinox the potential of expanding their control into smaller lordships like Montone, Daonii, Thresher, Clypsso, and even Polacra without reprisal. And like the political machinations once known in medieval days (and lost to the ages), the numerous seats of power across the north negotiate and clash over pitiful concerns.

Religious disagreements, resource claims, and crossed lovers have all sparked short-term disputes involving minor engagements and the odd fatality. It became such tedium that locals on both sides and those caught in the middle got to nicknaming them the Weekend Wars. Regardless of the cause, Quinox often emerged the victor in the conflict, mostly due to their dominance of the skies.

Quinox is considered the most powerful northern house, almost to the extent of being classed as a full-blown echan nation, a fact Quinox often strives for despite not controlling as much land. Many of the gentry families believe the southern nations, even Kannos, don't respect them, chiefly due to Quinox's lack of outreach. Although they possess natural resources, a defensible fortress, a rich history, and the only relatively safe northern land route to the west coast, the entire military strength of the house is confined to a rather unspectacular collection of untrained militia and number of authoritative, dragon-riding cavaliers.

That said, Quinox does have a number of authoritative, dragon-riding cavaliers.

The dragons appeared more than 175 years ago with the formation of the Order of Symeon, the knights of Quinox. Although not all members of the order boast a frost dragon mount, those of Quinox line that also share membership in Symeon certainly do. The largest dragon is Rochka of Rime, believed to be the matriarch, who entered into an alliance with Quinox and serves Xander Gordson of Quinox, the captain of the guard.

Rochka despises the cataloging of frost dragons as part of the typhox family, maintaining that they belong to their own category like the yok-ani. She insists there are enough frost dragons of amicable dispositions to back her argument, though she only has her immediate family as proof. In truth, frost dragons are not so much malevolent as they are infantile, gaining considerable strength before becoming emotionally mature enough to deal with their developing power. They are wild killers for decades, even into their adulthood. It's only after centuries that they begin to show the intelligence shared by their brethren, rushing to them so quickly, many of them become shocked at the barbarity of their actions.

The frost dragons of Rime are older than the other frost dragons that lair in the region and are quite civilized, encouraged by Rochka (ironic considering she is the youngest of her previous pack). Her father, Koleda of Glace, lairs far to the north and was the only one to support her departure to warmer climes, believing her fate lay elsewhere.

That it did, as she encountered the winterfolk of Quinox early in her travels. Rochka enjoys the company of the winterfolk of Quinox and the small kingdom they built from the ice. A local fairy tale claims Rochka, although shepherding the Quinox line for centuries, has taken a fondness for Xander and now searches for a way to gain a warm heart, which will stir her soul with an inner fire to make her an archon dragon, able to take human form and bestow the coveted dragon's blessing on the royal line. There is no public evidence of this desire in Rochka as she seldom talks to anyone unless they are part of the Quinox line.

Unfortunately, the line of Quinox is thin, and winterfolk children rarely result from pairing with normal humans. Since the folk are few, it may be only a few generations before the Quinox line vanishes forever. They must accept such a fate, or turn to more drastic and controversial methods to keep the winterfolk race alive.

## RAMKAVA

Somewhere, concealed within the chaos of Burganasis, is a location even more perplexing than the land around it. Past extreme terrain, floating rocks, and deep chasms is Ramkava.





Over still air and quiet ground, dozens of floating heads hover. Not settling still, they often tumble and float about, never more than fifty feet from another head. Because of their continuous movement, no formal count ever settled on their population. Popular belief holds their numbers at under thirty. They appear of stone, constructed of pure angelite, and animated by an unknown intelligence. They appear to contain independent thought, but onlookers have noticed some ending sentences others have started. Individual heads differ in appearance, and their voices, although all male, are also distinct.

"Ramkava" is the given name to all of them since no individual titles have ever been found—not that they respond to that or any name. Until attacked or someone properly gets their attention, Ramkava completely ignores anyone who enters or passes through their land. Only when attacked in any way does every single head form a single unified front to counterattack. Anything disrupting their wandering can be interpreted as an attack, though their response is proportionate to the assault (they will not be lethal unless lethal damage is

inflicted). They contain no treasure beyond the knowledge they keep, a fortune upon itself.

Ramkava possesses knowledge on virtually every subject. They speak cryptically and often appear to take pleasure in making their answers vague and metaphoric. Acquiring their attention remains the challenge as physical force only spurs an attack, and they are immune to spellwork. They may respond to those of significance, heroes or royalty. However, the most surefire way of acquiring the knowledge of Ramkava is to retrieve the Staff of KeRif.

The staff looks plain, a length of oak topped with a seemingly ordinary darkstone which fell from a head of Ramkava during a fight between Ramkava and a death dragon. The shard fell to the mage Keris Rifts, who later constructed the staff (which now lies, as with most of his esoteric treasures, somewhere in his dungeon in Sarnathi). Presenting the Staff of KeRif to Ramkava would attract their attention and retrieve whatever knowledge they possess. They often supply all answers, including ones useless to those asking, making interpreting the correct answer difficult.





## SANA MARSH

The Marsh that once marked a great human kingdom endures despite attempts to burn or otherwise push its curse back to its source. The expansion halted some decades ago through scorched earth tactics by the crown of Kannos, which claims Sana as entirely under their governorship and responsibility. They took upon this charge, believing land reclamation would significantly increase Kannos's power base. Although they found initial success, they later discovered that for every inch obtained in the east, the marsh expanded doubly in the west, and their expansion halted as Kannos closed in on Kardia-Gothas. As casualties began to rise with the numerous missions within the Marsh, Kannos was forced to scale back operations, and slowly the marsh began to push back. Although not as cancerous as Tranquiss, the marsh continues to be a thorn in the region.

## THE DEATH DRAGONS OF SANA

Numerous death dragons call the Marsh home, returning to mate, infrequent as they do. Vulnerable young are kept within, as enemies are unlikely to push into the Marsh. It is believed all death dragons on Canam at some point spend time here, akin to a pilgrimage they must make once a decade or so. A substantial force has yet to form to spoil this spawning ground, but if one were to appear and succeed in reclaiming the marsh, death dragons would undoubtedly become endangered.

The largest and oldest death dragon known is Crudag of Monsters, a decrepit atrocity. Some believe that she originally devised the curse that currently affects the land. She has never left and continues to fly over its fog-filled, pale green skies. She seldom returns to the Kardia-Gothas castle and is believed to own a keep or a cave elsewhere in Sana. Although several male death dragons have attempted a courtship, she refuses to accept them, slaying any that rebuff her initial rejection. Though still old, she remains a viable mate and could produce potentially powerful offspring with a variety of worthy suitors.

Goction of Lifeless, the largest male death dragon, sports a massive scar on his chest and a tear in his wing as a remembrance from his last encounter with Crudag. He is the only known suitor to survive a second encounter.

He still plans a third.





*"He's in there...isn't he?" Aiden asked.*

*"There's no way to know?" Mahan replied.*

*"He's in there."*

*Mahan took a moment to contemplate an appropriate excuse, but couldn't find one. "Yes."*

*"Sans arm."*

*"Certainly," Mahan replied with a shrug.*

*"One day," Aiden whispered.*

*"No," Mahan interjected. Aiden turned to Mahan, surprised by the blunt answer. Mahan continued,*

*"No...the concept of plucky fighters taking on a monster of that magnitude will forever be bound in those fantasy books you were raised with. You want revenge? Make him despise the world you can make." Mahan turned back to face the marsh. "Make it so he will forever be locked in that cursed land. Close in the walls. Let him be a prisoner--"*

*"You want to kill a dragon," Mischa interrupted.*

*"We can kill a dragon—well, I can kill a dragon."*

It was later discovered that these inscriptions etched deep in the stone were *atar draco sigilia*—the dark language, *Saeqaar*—and held the dark power of negative magic in their verse. All known negative spells, including those belonging to the necromancy school, can be found scattered across Kardia-Gothas. Any caster following the dark path must brave the marsh to locate the castle and dare enter to copy the incantations. Every day risks discovery. Those that do carry the mark of such trauma, bearing a wicked streak for the remainder of their lives.

The recurring crusades from Kannos hope to find and destroy Kardia. They do not enter with grace or subtlety and face opposition from the shapeless wild. This is not a concern to the crusaders, whom also believe that destroying the shapeless pushes back the marsh.

## KARDIA-GOTHAS

The bonding ceremony between King Sana and his new mate was concluded with the presentation of her holy book and the transcribing of the book's inscriptions over every internal wall of the keep. Throughout the kingdom's decaying final years, the inscriptions grew in number and complexity. No one is entirely sure how they appear as no one has been seen inscribing the symbols.

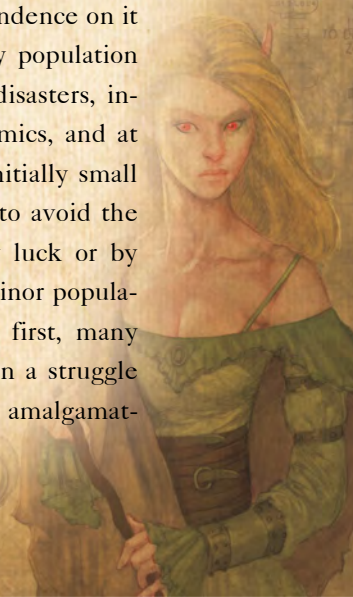
The castle once shimmered in fantastic beauty. A circular base—so wide it would take a dedicated runner ten minutes to circumvent—rises more than nine stories on the edge of a great valley where a rich and wide river once flowed. Upriver, the cliffs connected to a massive peak, where a smaller cousin of the great keep, Jian-Gothas, sat perched as a sentry to watch for invading armies. A bridge, with short supports barely a story over the ground, connect Kardia with the base of the road leading up to Jian.

The top level of Kardia looks unfinished as if more levels had been intended. The upper levels were smaller than the last, making Kardia resemble a truncated cone, covered in hundreds of Tudor arches and stone-hole windows. The rough and mountainous terrain would make any aggressive push to the keep difficult. How ironic that none of these aggressive building techniques saved the keep or the civilization that sprouted around it.

## SELIQUAM

When speaking of the preserved achievements of humanity, most think of the great, isolated bastions. But this overlooks another achievement, or rather many achievements, stretching back over tens of thousands of years, a tale of humanity surviving through ice and fire and war and colonization and finally bolide impact, to endure up to the present day. Ironically, it is the humans of Seliquam – a collation of peoples that, before the Hammer, had been facing cultural extinction – that may have the clearest histories of life before impact, preserved along with the tales that they used to invigorate their cultures in a world scoured clean.

In the upheavals that both preceded and followed the Second Hammer, members of groups that had been historically suppressed often were in a better position to survive without technology than those who were part of the dominant culture, having had less dependence on it to begin with. Where the former majority population was vastly reduced by a series of natural disasters, including tsunami, mudslides, disease epidemics, and at least one volcanic eruption, many of the initially small and scattered indigenous groups managed to avoid the worst ravages of the apocalypse either by luck or by skill, and in the aftermath experienced a minor population explosion. Resources being scarce at first, many groups of survivors wiped each other out in a struggle for subsistence, but more joined together, amalgamat-





ing their individual strengths, the better to find and build what they needed to thrive in this new, wilder world. Though unfortunately many of the indigenous languages and traditions had been lost to cultural attrition, enough fragments remained to secure at least some of the old tribal identities and rebuild as much as they could remember of what they had lost. Over the centuries, new traditions, stories, and languages have evolved to fill the gaps left by the old ones.

Nevertheless, the region as a whole remained sparsely populated, and the new combined nations eventually resumed the semi-nomadic lifestyles that had characterized life in the region before the glass spires and concrete jungle overtook it. Then the narros appeared out of the north, building monuments to their own lost civilization as they went. Though for the most part these structures were abandoned almost as soon as they were built, they became convenient staging grounds for seasonal camps, and later villages and towns. Furthermore, some of the narros chose to stay and make a life for themselves here, turning their edifices into sturdy almost-cities and forging mutually advantageous relationships with the locals. While most of the population remains semi-nomadic (moving between several established settlements in rhythm with the fishing, hunting, and harvesting cycles), the narros citadels provide points of stability for those who prefer a more stationary existence – as well as points of defense against the normal dangers of the region. Other fae can be found here as well, though not in as great of numbers – small populations of plenary damaskans, a rare tribe of chaparrans that arrived in the northern forests rather than the southern, and several gimfen settlements popping up like mushrooms, as they are wont to do.

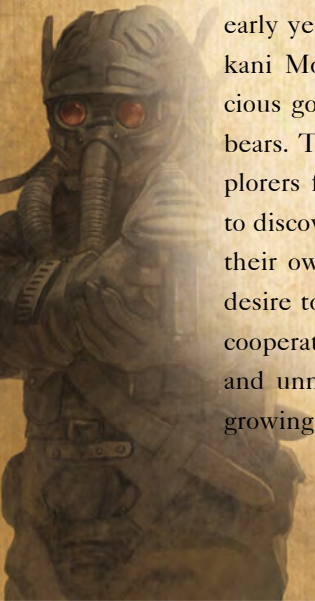
Seliquam was founded by the coastal peoples and the inhabitants of the river valleys, and during their early years they avoided the eastern peaks of the Nankani Mountains, from whence came a plethora of vicious goblinlike creatures as well as massive, ferocious bears. They were therefore shocked, when the first explorers from Selkirk issued forth from their mountain, to discover that a bastion of technology had grown up in their own metaphorical backyard. While few had any desire to join the techans, they recognized the value of cooperation in face of the multitude of threats, natural and unnatural, that plague the region – especially the growing threat of Hive Seclanus in Xixion, which first

began its slow northward expansion shortly thereafter. However, the Seliquam River valley is one of the most magically active regions in Canam, and despite their willingness to engage with the echan world, Selkirk was not prepared to risk damage to their own techan way of life. Thus, they remain only distant allies, trading a small amount of bastion goods (and an even smaller amount of primitive firearms) through the gimfen communities of Gateway and Edge in exchange for stocks of fish, rice, seaweed, wheat, apples, and especially beer. For many decades, it looked as if harmony might indeed prevail in this isolated corner of the continent.

Unfortunately, little of the early spirit of comradeship remains. Though the region is rich in natural resources, it is also rich in monsters – both fae anathema and magical spawn created by random fluctuations in the stream of energy that parallels the Seliquam River – making the exploitation of those resources difficult and dangerous. Shortly after the island of Victrix rose into the sky, tensions across the region began to boil over, and settlements began to squabble over slights real or imagined, and raid one another for goods that once they had traded for or freely given away. It was only the continued northward expansion of Hive Seclanus that led the people of Seliquam to temporarily put aside their differences and unite in common cause. Now, the region is an ever-shifting web of allies and enemies; while things have never become so heated as to cause all-out war between any of the groups that make up the Confederacy, it has come close on more than one occasion. The Seliquam Confederacy is an alliance of convenience, not fraternity. It has no governing authority; its diune Councils (one for the major nations and one for the lesser) are diplomatic rather than legislative. Every member nation sets its own policies and makes its own alliances within the overall Confederacy. There are only two other federal institutions: the Redoubt at Last Hope, which guards the upper Seliquam Valley against Xixion, and the Train Guard, which patrols the Deep Pass at Dionaso.

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**Editor's Note:** We don't want to imply that Seliquam is the only place in Canam where at least some aspects of indigenous culture may have survived the Hammer; we just don't personally know that much about the First Nations in other parts of the continent. As a roleplaying sourcebook is not a useful source of in-depth socio-historical information, we





**recommend players unfamiliar with the history and culture of native peoples in their region to visit their local library for better sources.**

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## NATIONS

In the last age, there were many tribes and bands living along the western coast; now there are much fewer. Some sadly became extinct even before the opening of the gates; some perished in natural disasters; and while some continue to endure in small groups (albeit larger than they were), more have come together to form larger ones, absorbing survivors of other ethnicities (and sometimes even a few non-humans as well) to form five major nations. While the common tongue of Seliquam is a hybrid of English and Narroni, each nation also has its own common language, usually cobbled together out of several separate tribal languages (not all of which even belong to the same grouping). Though each nation is not always *politically unified*, they *observe most of the same traditions*, and often speak with a unified voice to the Council.

The **Squllamish** nation inhabits the region immediately around the lower Seliquam, the delta, and the islands and mountainous region north of the river. Originally a conglomeration of several of the largest Salishan nations, they absorbed the largest number of non-indigenous refugees, making them the most ethnically diverse of the successor nations (although individual settlements may have more or less of their original makeup, and may still go by their original names). The Squllamish are known for their food, for their merchants, for their patronage-based social order, and for their large communal parties, to which visitors are always welcome.

The **Klinhai** are the least unified of the five nations. The core of their population is centered on the archipelago of Gwaii, which is isolated from the rest of Seliquam by fierce waters which only their boats seem able to traverse. They have a (partially justified) reputation among the rest of Seliquam as ruthless pirates, though in truth most of the Klinhai are farmers and fisherfolk. This reputation sometimes unfairly stains the other branches of the Klinhai, who have integrated with the island and coastal people of the northern coast between Seliquam and Fargon, and consequently often find themselves shunned by both their northern and southern neighbors.

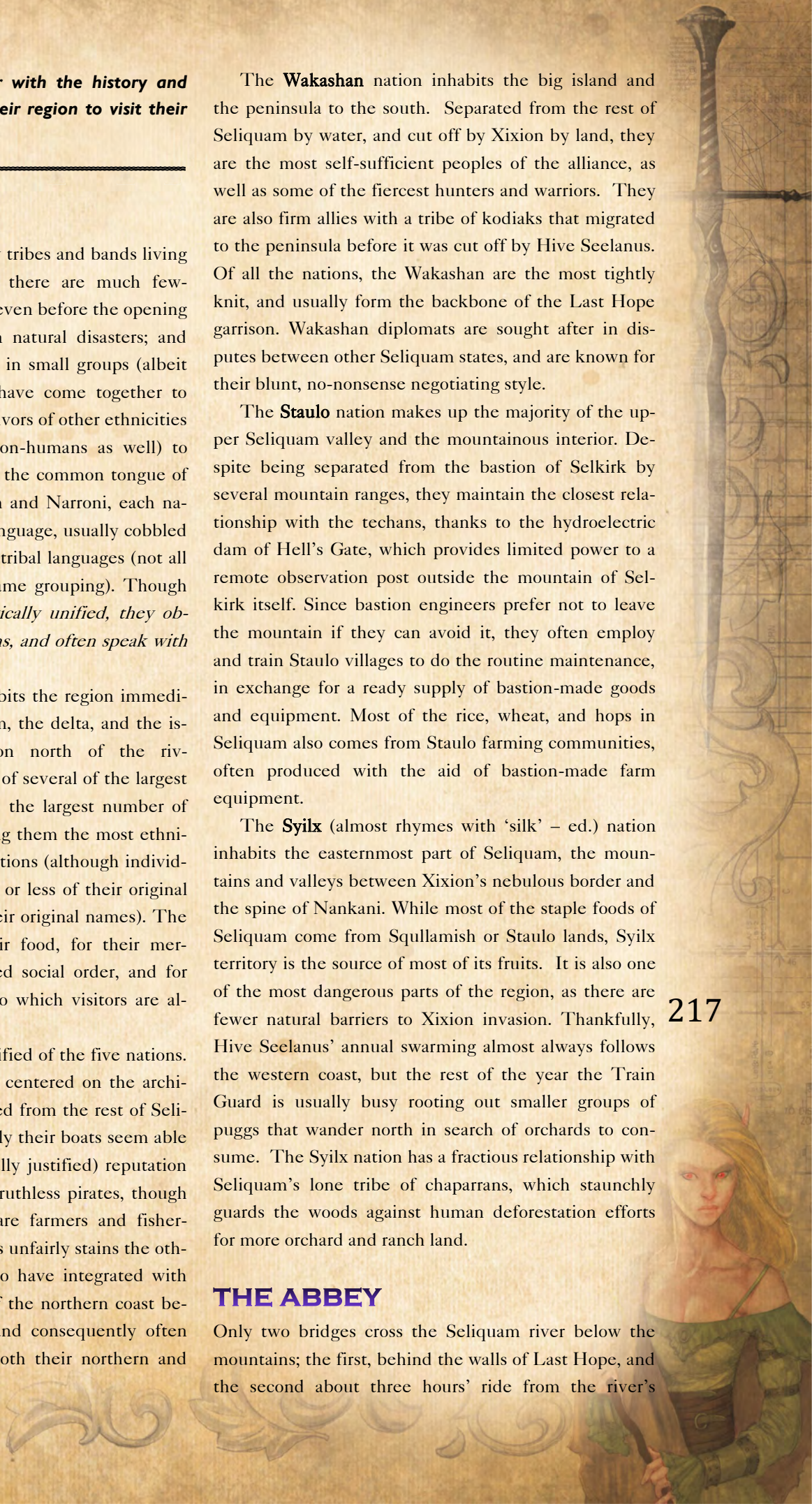
The **Wakashan** nation inhabits the big island and the peninsula to the south. Separated from the rest of Seliquam by water, and cut off by Xixion by land, they are the most self-sufficient peoples of the alliance, as well as some of the fiercest hunters and warriors. They are also firm allies with a tribe of kodiaks that migrated to the peninsula before it was cut off by Hive Seclanus. Of all the nations, the Wakashan are the most tightly knit, and usually form the backbone of the Last Hope garrison. Wakashan diplomats are sought after in disputes between other Seliquam states, and are known for their blunt, no-nonsense negotiating style.

The **Staulo** nation makes up the majority of the upper Seliquam valley and the mountainous interior. Despite being separated from the bastion of Selkirk by several mountain ranges, they maintain the closest relationship with the techans, thanks to the hydroelectric dam of Hell's Gate, which provides limited power to a remote observation post outside the mountain of Selkirk itself. Since bastion engineers prefer not to leave the mountain if they can avoid it, they often employ and train Staulo villages to do the routine maintenance, in exchange for a ready supply of bastion-made goods and equipment. Most of the rice, wheat, and hops in Seliquam also comes from Staulo farming communities, often produced with the aid of bastion-made farm equipment.

The **Syilx** (almost rhymes with 'silk' – ed.) nation inhabits the easternmost part of Seliquam, the mountains and valleys between Xixion's nebulous border and the spine of Nankani. While most of the staple foods of Seliquam come from Squllamish or Staulo lands, Syilx territory is the source of most of its fruits. It is also one of the most dangerous parts of the region, as there are fewer natural barriers to Xixion invasion. Thankfully, Hive Seclanus' annual swarming almost always follows the western coast, but the rest of the year the Train Guard is usually busy rooting out smaller groups of puggs that wander north in search of orchards to consume. The Syilx nation has a fractious relationship with Seliquam's lone tribe of chaparrans, which staunchly guards the woods against human deforestation efforts for more orchard and ranch land.

## THE ABBEY

Only two bridges cross the Seliquam river below the mountains; the first, behind the walls of Last Hope, and the second about three hours' ride from the river's







mouth. Any lordling would love to hold this bridge and the associated toll wealth they could claim from

traders, but unfortunately for the covetous, it has a prior claim. A large structure, not of narros make, resembling one of the cathedrals of Abidan but far older, stands on the southern bank of the river next to the bridge. When Xixion's hordes spill across the borders, they suddenly veer away in fear as they approach this place. The structure, known only as the Abbey by the locals, is home to an unusual sect of human mystics who consider the dragon god Amethyst to be the manifestation of the Christian holy spirit, and who tattoo themselves with Pleroma sigils (as dragons scribe their scales) in an attempt to comprehend the divine plan. They are not a martial order, so it is uncertain why the puggs should have such a terror of the Abbey. Legend says that the Abbess who leads the order has done so for five hun-

dred years and not aged a day, but legend says a lot of silly things.

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## EDGE

The town of Edge grew up around a gimfen grind tower that sprouted at the southernmost end of the Deep Pass at Dionaso. It serves as a waystation for caravans travelling down the Seliquam Valley, as well as a transfer point for goods travelling on the Great Train, which at this point travels underground between Edge and its terminus in Gateway. The town has few permanent structures apart from the tower, and only has a permanent population of about 1700 (mostly gimfen), though this can swell to nearly 5000 in peak trading season. While the central headquarters and training barracks of the Train Guard are also located here, very few of the Guard are in residence at any one time, most being out



on caravan or train duty, or hunting down monsters in the mountains.

## GATEWAY

Selkirk may be more open to trade with echa than most bastions, but outsiders are still not welcome in the bastion, for both practical and political reasons. All contact between the bastion and the outside world is brokered through Gateway, a gimfen town located at the mouth of the pass leading to Mount Selkirk. Freight travels between Gateway and Selkirk by underground mag-rail before being loaded onto the Train and sent on to Edge. Human traffic from the bastion is exclusively by cable-car. Apart from its role as a transit hub, the primary function of Gateway is tourism. Like Salvabrooke in miniature, Gateway is a relatively safe place where bastion visitors can dip a toe into echa without risk of actual enchantment – and also dip into the town's famous hot springs. While the town isn't off-limits to Seliquam's other fae inhabitants, they must apply for a limited number of passes to avoid having too large a source of disruption present at any one time.

## THE GREAT TRAIN

One of the most significant cooperative endeavors between techa and echa, the Great Train was completed only thirty years ago after more than a century of construction. It is a masterpiece of human, narros, and gimfen engineering combined. The steam locomotives are constructed by gimfen according to Selkirk designs, and are equipped with the most advanced shielding this side of Gnimfall. Rather than rely on combustible fuel, the boilers are heated by magnetic coil induction. The rails themselves are constructed of a unique steel alloy designed by narros metallurgists, incorporating flecks of the black stone of Victrix into their structure to channel stray magic into the earth, minimizing its effects on the train. The rails run parallel to the Deep Pass at Dionaso and can make the trip north to Terminus, near Thos Thalagos in Fargon, in just under a week... followed by up to two more in the repair yard, for even with these precautions, it is impossible to completely prevent the high EDF of the region from getting into the workings. The original designers of the railroad envisioned that frequent breakdowns along the track would be a boon to bandits and wandering monsters, and thus proposed the creation of an official military organization to guard

the train once it became active. In the century the Train Guard waited to fulfill a role that until recently was yet to arrive, they became one of the most elite fighting forces in all of Canam, prepared for virtually anything the wilds of the northwest could throw at them.

## GWAII

A small archipelago some distance off the coast, Gwaii is the center of an ancient culture which almost died out in the early years after the Hammer, as increasingly dangerous waters almost destroyed their ability to provide for themselves. They have a reputation as brutal pirates and slavers, and though the impression of the rest of Seliquam that Gwaii is little better than Xixion itself is unfair, it is not one that the islanders make a great deal of effort to dispel.

In the immediate aftermath of the Hammer, sea levels rose and the waters surrounding the islands became dangerously unpredictable. A sequence of massive tsunamis almost destroyed all human life on the islands, with barely enough left to sustain a viable population. Vicious sea monsters attacked fishing boats and those attempting to flee to the mainland. Farming was difficult, fishing outright hazardous, and those who remained would likely have starved to death had it not been for the mysterious appearance of a being called 'Xhuuya'. This creature's origins and motivations are unknown, though it was plainly not human, and local folklore holds that it was not fae either. Xhuuya simply appeared one day, sitting cross-legged in the middle of the largest of the surviving towns. The wary townsfolk kept their distance of the stranger at first, until they selected one of their number to go ask the figure who it was. In response, Xhuuya inscribed a symbol in the dirt and spoke a single word in a language nobody understood, and a great raven swooped down and settled on its shoulder. The raven looked over the assembled crowd, then fluttered to the shoulder of a little orphan girl of eight years old, and spoke a word into her ear. Another strange symbol appeared on her forehead as she heard the word. As the crowd parted around her in alarm, she walked over to Xhuuya and sat down next to it. For months, they sat together in all weathers, Xhuuya inscribing strange symbols in the dirt and the raven speaking in the girl's ear, the symbols appearing on her skin as if tattooed in silver.

When winter came, the town was suddenly attacked





by a colossal sea monster which destroyed the few remaining fishing boats. The town's few fighters were unable to drive the creature away, until the girl walked out to face it, alone but for the raven on her shoulder. She made a gesture in the air and spoke a word in the strange language, and the creature stopped its assault as suddenly as it had begun, and lowered its head to her. She climbed upon it and spoke in her native language for the first time in months, saying "Everything will be all right now." The raven flew from her shoulder, and the townsfolk later discovered that Xhuuya had also disappeared, never to be seen again. The girl began to teach what she had learned to others of her people, and in a short time the inhabitants of the archipelago assembled a veritable fleet of monsters. These they trained to protect their boats, to herd shoals of fish towards the shores where they could be more easily caught, and to hunt other monsters that might threaten the islands.

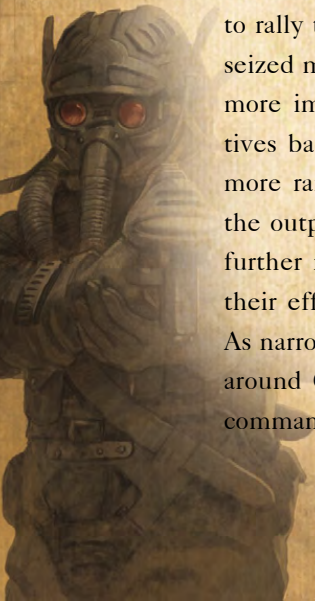
As generations passed and the islanders became more bold, they set out to explore the world beyond their islands. They knew they were not the only survivors of the Hammer, for a few fishing boats from the mainland had washed up over the years, their bedraggled pilots speaking of strange squat folk with uncanny powers who built great cities full of riches wherever they went. These tales ignited something in the hearts of the monster-tamers, and they set out with a fleet of great canoes, attended by their sea-beasts, to see one of these cities for themselves. They came upon the narros outpost of Kosdakkon, along the south coast of Fargon, and went ashore, ostensibly to trade. What exactly happened next, no-one knows for sure – perhaps one side unknowingly insulted the other, or perhaps the 'traders' had ulterior motives all along – but they soon returned and ordered their beasts to begin sacking the city. The narros, unprepared for this sudden attack, took too long to rally to the defense, in which time the islanders had seized many of their treasures and swiftly departed; but more importantly, they took over a dozen narros captives back with them. Over the next several months, more raiding parties attacked Kosdakkon, until at last the outpost built an immense sea-wall fortress to deter further raids; whereupon the pirates simply redirected their efforts to easier targets along the southern coast. As narros as a rule neither swim nor sail, and the waters around Gwaii are impassable except to those who can command the waves (and the monsters beneath them)

with magic, few of the taken slaves have ever managed to escape. Today, Gwaii raiders are still feared up and down the Seliqum coast and even some distance upriver, and though they are theoretically members of the alliance (having demanded membership after the agreement was signed), they send no troops to Last Hope, and their representative on the Council comes more to make extortive demands than to discuss actual policy.

### KILANNA (TREEFANE)

Before Xixion became overrun by pugg hives, it was considered part of Janis, the massive forest that regrew to cover most of Canam in the wake of the white gate's opening. Though the vast majority of chaparrans reappeared in the region that would eventually become Dawnamoak and Laurama, small pockets could (and sometimes still can) be found throughout the western reaches. One of these bands settled in the wide river valley left behind by a massive volcanic mudflow below a mountain that they named 'Seilannas' ('the One Who Watches' in the chaparran language). Unfortunately, the next eruption from the mountain took a different form. Without warning, chaparran hunters near the mountain were attacked by swarms of puggs, and though they beat them back easily at first, more and more kept coming until it became obvious that the villages would shortly be overrun. Rather than stay and fight a suicidal battle against what was obviously a new pugg hive, the elders of the tribe proposed that they leave their villages and travel north, toward another river steeped in magic which might offer some protection against the horde. Before they had traveled more than half-way to their destination, however, they encountered a small army of narros going the other way. Chaparrans have no particular love for the narros, but no special antipathy toward them either; they warned the narros that the area was soon to be overrun by a pugg hive, and the narros laughed, carried on southward... and no sign was ever found of them again, apart from a single abandoned island citadel and bridge a short distance south of Mt. Seclanus (as it has come to be known).

The chaparrans continued their northward journey, but when they reached the river valley, they discovered to their horror that much of the forest had been cleared and used in the narros' multitudinous constructions. They turned east, up the not yet well populated Seliqum valley, until the rivers branched. Northward, their scouts reported more desecration of the land, so





they continued northeast up the Skolmech river and thence through a high mountain pass. From there, the scouts spotted something; the upper branches of a massive white tree, visible over the peaks of another mountain range. The refugees made for the place, and at last came to the shores of a huge lake beside which the tree grew like a mangrove. Its leaves glowed like the moonlight. From its branches hung fruits of every type; in its boughs nested thousands of birds; from the waters at its base came a multitude of freshwater fish, and animals of every description came to drink at its shore. This, the travelers decided, was their new home. Their shapers urged the tree to put out pod-like dwellings from its lower branches, and the chaparrans settled in as if they had lived there all their lives.

Unfortunately, conflict soon penetrated even here, in the form of human settlers clearing the valleys to the north and west to plant crops, chiefly fruit orchards and rice and wheat fields for trade with Selkirk and Fargon. The humans had not even realized the chaparrans were there – they kept a superstitious distance from the great white tree. The chaparrans began issuing warnings for the humans not to encroach on their hunting grounds, which were either misinterpreted or ignored; then they began attacking settlements that got too close. The situation might have escalated to bitter and bloody war if it were not for the reappearance of the chaparrans' old nemeses, Hive Seelanus, which for the first time burst its original boundaries to the south and west and swarmed over the entire region. The chaparrans realized they were too few to protect Kilanna themselves, and made a quick and tenuous peace with the humans. Still, they would all have been overrun were it not for the sudden appearance of Selkirk zeppelins which fire-bombed the pugg advance into oblivion. Rather than expressing gratitude for the rescue, however, the Kilannans chastised the techans for the damage the fire inflicted upon their forest, and to say that relations have been tense between Kilanna and Selkirk (and the rest of Seliqum, for that matter) since then would be an understatement. Kilanna is, nevertheless, a grudging member of the alliance and sends a few kitarrri to Last Hope each year; but they do so on their own terms, neither reporting to nor taking orders from the Redoubts' commanders, and they send no recruits to join the Train Guard.

## LAST HOPE

This romantically-named settlement and its famous Redoubt is one of the great fortresses of Canam. Built across a river bend just below the junction of the Seliqum and Skolmech Rivers, the massive keep and shield-wall stretches from one side of the valley to the other, across a span of nearly five kilometers. The only gaps in the wall are two gates, one each side of the river, and a water-gate to allow boat traffic; each of these are guarded by gatehouses on both sides of the wall and can be sealed by four portecullises apiece.

For most of the year, Last Hope is little more than a waystation between the settlements of the Lower Seliqum and the rich farming baronies nestled between Nankani's Horns. Behind the wall are only a few permanent structures, mostly administration and support buildings for the fortress's small permanent garrison. However, for anywhere between three to six weeks near the end of harvest season each year, it becomes the largest settlement in Seliqum – a massive tent city, as the inhabitants of the Lower Seliqum's south bank travel with their families and goods to take shelter from a flood of puggs from Xixion that sweeps over the river valley, despoiling anything left behind. During this time, the garrison is swelled to over ten thousand, as warriors (some willing, some not) are sent from every member nation of the Seliqum Confederacy to defend the Redoubt. Only once has the wall ever been breached, and that was due to treachery from within. Tales of the retreat from that catastrophe, and the heroic sacrifice of the defenders who held the line at the Hell's Gate dam upriver, only to be washed away with the puggs as the River Seliqum itself was unleashed against them, have been circulated to the very ends of the continent, and serve as inspiration even to the renowned guardians of Abidan's Bulwark. In the decades since, the walls have been reinforced, the defenses strengthened, and a more rigorous screening process has been implemented for the garrison's commanders to ensure that such a calamity never happens again.

## SHIWOOS

One of the few semi-permanent kodiak settlements in Canam, and also the furthest south, Shiwoos ("the place where the bears are" in the local language) is actually two camps, which the kodiaks migrate between seasonally. The summer camp, located beside the falls of the





Tumwas River, is a prime source for salmon, mussels from the nearby marsh flats, as well as berries and honey (which the kodiaks have learned to cultivate from the local humans). In winter, the kodiaks migrate to the mountains, and subsist on limited hunting and fishing – although their biology no longer requires them to hibernate, they still prefer dry caves and inactivity during the cold months. Occasionally a swarm of puggs attempts to attack Shiwoos, gets stuck in the mud flats, and ends up adding a bit of red meat to the kodiaks' diet.

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**Editor's note:** *The actual Lushootseed name for the area was 'Schictwoot' or 'Cheet Woot,' which does really mean 'bear place'. The entire concept of Seli-quam as a multicultural hodgepodge (prominently featuring kodiaks) sprang from reading this on an information plaque in the Tumwater Falls park one summer afternoon.*

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### SKOLMECH & RIVERWIND

The Skolmech river branches from the Seli-quam at Last Hope, and leads to the only safe mountain pass this far south. At its highest point stands another narros fortress, Skolmech – actually two towers on opposite sides of the valley, connected by a long bridge. Skolmech guards the primary trade road between the lower Seli-quam and Selkirk, and is an important fortress of the Train Guard, from whence they launch scouting expeditions into northern Xixion to ensure that the eastern mountains remain clean of pugg infestation. Apart from the road from Last Hope, the Skolmech fortress is accessible from the valley's base by cablecar, ensuring easy access for the defenders while preventing potential pugg incursions from reaching the fortress without climbing the mountainside.

Beyond the pass, the land flattens out into a wide valley perfect for growing wheat, before dropping down again into another junction of river valleys more suited for water-intensive crops like potatoes, strawberries, rice, and orchard fruits. Various Staulo and Syilx bands and minor baronies lay claim to parts of the two rivers, mostly peacefully (though there are always territorial disputes and claims of livestock theft). The town of Riverwind ('wind' as in 'winding river' to the locals, 'wind' as in the warm chinooks that cut through the valley to visitors) grew up organically as a market town and waystation on the road to Gateway. It has little to

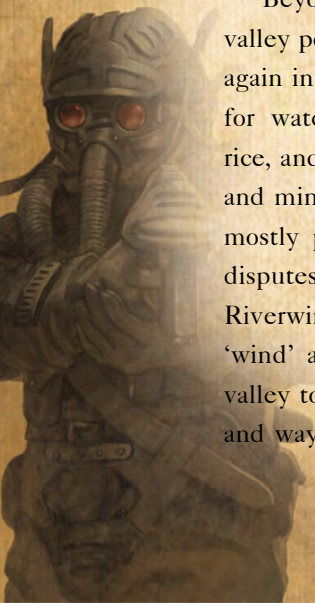
offer travelers except good food and news from the trade caravans that travel to and fro in every direction, always on the way to somewhere a little more important.

### SQUALMOS

The single largest member state of the Seli-quam Confederacy is Squalmos, which isn't saying very much. While it claims to control the entire western coast from the north bank of the Seli-quam River to the southernmost Fargon outpost of Kosdakkon, in reality it is a loose coalition of thirty-seven fishing villages and farming communities among the nearer islands and along the coast, up to the wall of the coastal Nankani. The mountains to the northeast are riddled with ancient holes and tunnels into which fell things crawled long ago, before even the narros came to this place, and Squalmos' militias have their hands full fending off not only monster attacks but the predations of their ostensible allies, the sea reavers of Gwaii.

Most of the population is human, of the Squallamish nation ('Squalmos' comes from a narroni mispronunciation of the name), but the central keep that is the hub of the nation is held by the narros. While much of the narros' southward exodus passed through empty or sparsely populated lands, when they reached the Seli-quam river delta they were surprised to find a sizeable human population still fishing the western sea, despite the wild waters that rose in the wake of the Hammer. Narros have little love for the sea, but quickly discovered a fierce love for the local delicacy known as 'sushi,' and soon a thriving trade in wild rice, salmon, seaweed, clams, mussels and abalone grew between the two peoples. Some of the narros decided to settle in the region and were absorbed into the Squallamish nation, adding their expertise in alchemy and metallurgy and their unique martial techniques to that peoples' hodgepodge of traditions. In time, the fledgling towns of Squalmos came to possess comforts virtually unknown anywhere else west of the Nankani Mountains.

Unfortunately, this wealth attracted the attention of less than savory neighbors; not only the puggs of Xixion, but less fortunate human foes. As the fisherfolk of Squalmos adapted narros engineering to build larger fishing boats better able to withstand the mercurial waters further off the coast, they began to encroach upon the waters claimed by the inhabitants of an island archipelago that had already made a less than impressive first





contact with the narros: the reavers of Gwaii. The narros settlement of Kosdakkon was raided shortly after its founding by humans in ships that sliced through the waves like they were not there, accompanied by fearsome sea monsters which they controlled by some unknown magic. Though the pirates were driven off and the narros subsequently built an imposing sea-wall to keep them away, they continued their raids further south, attacking fishing vessels and villages, carrying away treasures and slaves—especially narros crafters, who they forced to outfit their warriors with superior equipment.

In response to these attacks, the disparate settlements signed a pact, which in time would become the model upon which the Seliquam Charter was based, though the Squalmos Pact has arguably been more successful. The Pact established a military alliance centered on the citadel of Squalmos, led by the narros colony's most capable warrior, Galveska Kvey, whose daughter Galveska Gig commands the fortress to this day. As the narros themselves do not swim well and do not like to cross the water if they can avoid it, representatives of each outlying village come to the citadel to be trained in a variant of the traditional narros doppelshido style, augmented with their own methods for a style of martial arts that functions equally well on land and at sea. The favored weapon of this style is an oar-like spear called a 'skoom,' which functions reasonably well as a weapon, a paddle, and a hunting tool. Once training is complete, the militias return to defend their home villages, while Squalmos itself relies on its mostly-narros garrison. Because the individual militias are usually not sufficient to totally defray the threat of attack, the pact manages a series of signal fires around the region so that allied villages can quickly be warned to send aid.

In modern times, Squalmos is considered the backbone of the Seliquam Confederacy, providing the vast majority of the troops that each year hold the Redoubt at Last Hope and handily fending off such Xixion attacks as manage to make it north of the river. The Squalmos knight, their lacquered cedar armor bedecked in mother-of-pearl with their sturdy skoom at the ready, is a common figure in song and story across Seliquam. Squalmos bitterly objected to Gwaii joining the Seliquam alliance, and their Council representative frequently brings suit against the islanders for launching raids against the mainland while the bulk of Squalmos'

troops are away at Last Hope.

Galveska Gig's government applies only to Squalmos' military administration: each town and village has its own traditions and leadership, usually headed by the most ostentatiously wealthy citizens, who act as patrons to the entire settlement. Thus, Squalmos' overall standard of living remains one of the highest of any nation in Seliquam.

## VANGUARD

While most techan atolls rarely last more than one or two generations, Vanguard has endured for well over a century, thanks to some unique circumstances. Established as a forward outpost for the bastion of Angel during the time when they sought an alliance with Selkirk, Vanguard received a regular influx of immigrants from the south for thirty years before distance and the difficulties of communication between the bastions caused the alliance to drift apart. The location of the outpost, on the south bank of the Seliquam delta, was chosen because it is a natural EDF dead spot, with most of the local magical energy being absorbed by the floating island of Victrix in the sky above the strait. While this does not make the settlement immune to disruption (and the dead spot is not large enough to sustain a larger bastion), it allows for enough stability that the city is in no danger of the sort of collapse that normally affects techan atolls.

Abandoned by its home bastion, however, the colony soon faced another, more violent threat to its existence – Xixion. As it is positioned on the south bank of the river, it lacks a natural shield from the predations of Hive Seelanus. Grudgingly accepting membership in the Seliquam Confederacy and with the help – at a remove – of narros artisans, Vanguard constructed its own immense walls, a miniature reflection of Angel itself. Now trained snipers, employing the same techniques as those who guard the walls of Angel, stave off those outliers of the hive that flood west instead of east during the annual incursions.

Apart from a few soldiers sent to garrison Last Hope, however, Vanguard keeps apart from the rest of the alliance. It engages in only minimal trade for food supplies (chiefly fish from Squalmos, its nearest neighbor) to supplement its hydroponic gardens, offering sniper training in lieu of goods in return. Vanguard does not even send a representative to the Council most of the





time, ignoring the squabbles and politicking that characterize Seliqum in the 'off season'.

### VICTRIX

Some eighty years before Hive Seelanus first overspilled its habitual borders and attacked the lowlands, an earthquake rocked the region and a massive chunk, nearly a third of the largest island in the region, broke free from the earth and lifted into the sky to hover like a great dark bird. To some, this was an ill omen; to others, an opportunity. Both curious mages from the echan cultures and concerned scientists from Selkirk investigated the floating rock, and discovered something incredible – the island not only did not exhibit the random magical bursts that affect similar motes such as in Burgunasis, but it actually seemed to absorb the latent magical energies that follow the course of the Seliqum River. At the heart of the island, the investigators discovered what looked like a meteorite crater, at the center of which was an immense chunk of dark rock which called all magic to itself. Experiments showed that the stone stored magic and could be made to release it again in a directed fashion, causing far fewer disruptive effects than normal.

Before the researchers could conduct further tests, however, they were ambushed in the dead of night by stealthy attackers who arrived at the floating island in a black airship. The leader of the raiders, a fierce-looking laudenian woman named Melaresis, gave them a choice: renounce all claim to the island, or be dropped off the edge. After the first refusal, everyone else quickly agreed to her demands. Selkirk, having decided that it would be too costly to contest, made no protest other than to insist on the safe return of their people, and though several of the petty kingdoms would have preferred a military response, in those days there was no united front to present.

Melaresis and her mostly human crew – no other laudenians served aboard her vessel – issued a call to the lands below. Any with even the slightest spark of magic was welcome to join their new kingdom, together with their families and servants. Additionally, any non-mages who would accept her as their suzerain would be honored and granted great wealth. Hundreds made the journey to Victrix in response to her call, and soon the island had a functioning society, a cracked-mirror reflec-

*It's a ruse. They portray a clever façade but get too close, and their actual nature reveals itself. From a distance, you see statuesque beauty wrapped in perfect skin. Their smile lifts a soul as their frown shadows one's gloom.*

*Their ears reflect those of the fey, as dreamed images of a faultless race. They claim the greatest magic, and when seeing their castle, you believe them right. You see them approach and one cannot help but avert their gaze.*

*We are unworthy of notice.*

*But watch their actions, for they will not approach.*

*Step forward and see the truth. Wrinkles crease on their skulls. Their mouths shrivel to mere cuts upon almost blank faces. Their cheeks wither to bone. All their hair drifts away. Their noses shrink away to empty cavities in their head. Even their eyelids fall back.*

*These are no fae.*

*Kirielle Blitzschlag  
Expedition to North Tower  
770 AE*

tion of mysterious Laudenian itself. Melaresis' inner circle, the Obsidian Mages, raised a great city over the black crater, which an untrained observer might mistake for a techan bastion were it not atop a floating island.

Melaresis rules Victrix to this day. Though harsh and unapproachable, she is at least reputed to be a fair and just ruler. She was one of the driving forces behind the formation of the Seliqum Confederacy (along with Galvaska Kvey and the Abbess), and it was at her insistence that the Council headquarters be hosted in Victrix. Although built and sustained by magic, the black shard at the island's heart reduces the ambient EDF to a level such that even Seliqum's techans can endure here, as long as they leave their more complex devices behind. Uncharitable voices suggest that Melaresis actively inflames the arguments between the various member states so that no alliances form that could be a threat to her power, but beyond holding a token vote on the Inner Council, she seems to take no interest in the affairs of the mainland at all.

Still, the other states are justifiably wary of Victrix. Rumors suggest that Melaresis was a member of the Laudenian royal house before being exiled for some unknown crime, and that Victrix is her attempt to recreate her home in her own image. Others accuse the Obsidian Mages of trafficking with Ixindar, and whisper that the heart shard is actually a fragment of the black





gate's shell. Of course, no resident of Victrix itself would ever give credence to such baseless fantasies.

## SELMANA

Few believe this land even exists. Rumors tell of a city far north, beyond the reach of most creatures, populated by titans. If someone were to venture beyond the massive wall of ice that is the closest the kodiak culture has to a Devil, and through the unknown dangers of the lands beyond, they might in time reach Selmana; a lush green landscape, a side effect of their magic.

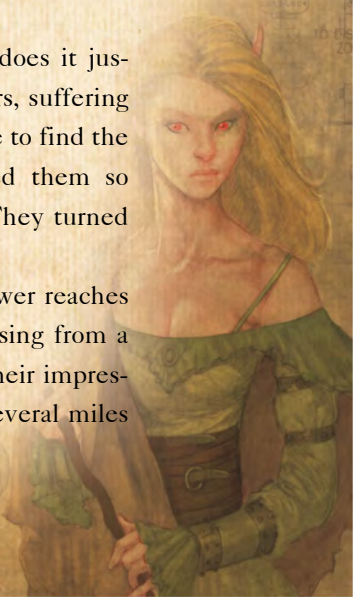
The first indication someone is close to hallowed ground is the monstrous sentinels that tower over the land. These mammoth statues appear as massive two-handed swords (not unlike claymores) driven into the ground with the hilt high in the sky.

These monoliths are not carved from any natural rock, for none exists this far north. There are no mountains anywhere, just rolling hills, fields, and trees. They were also neither carved in place or built as a facade—they are actual swords driven into the ground, rising nearly a half mile to the sky and standing as warnings and border markers for the land, running the full length of the land the titans claim. Travelers to this point still won't see a titan until pressing deeper.

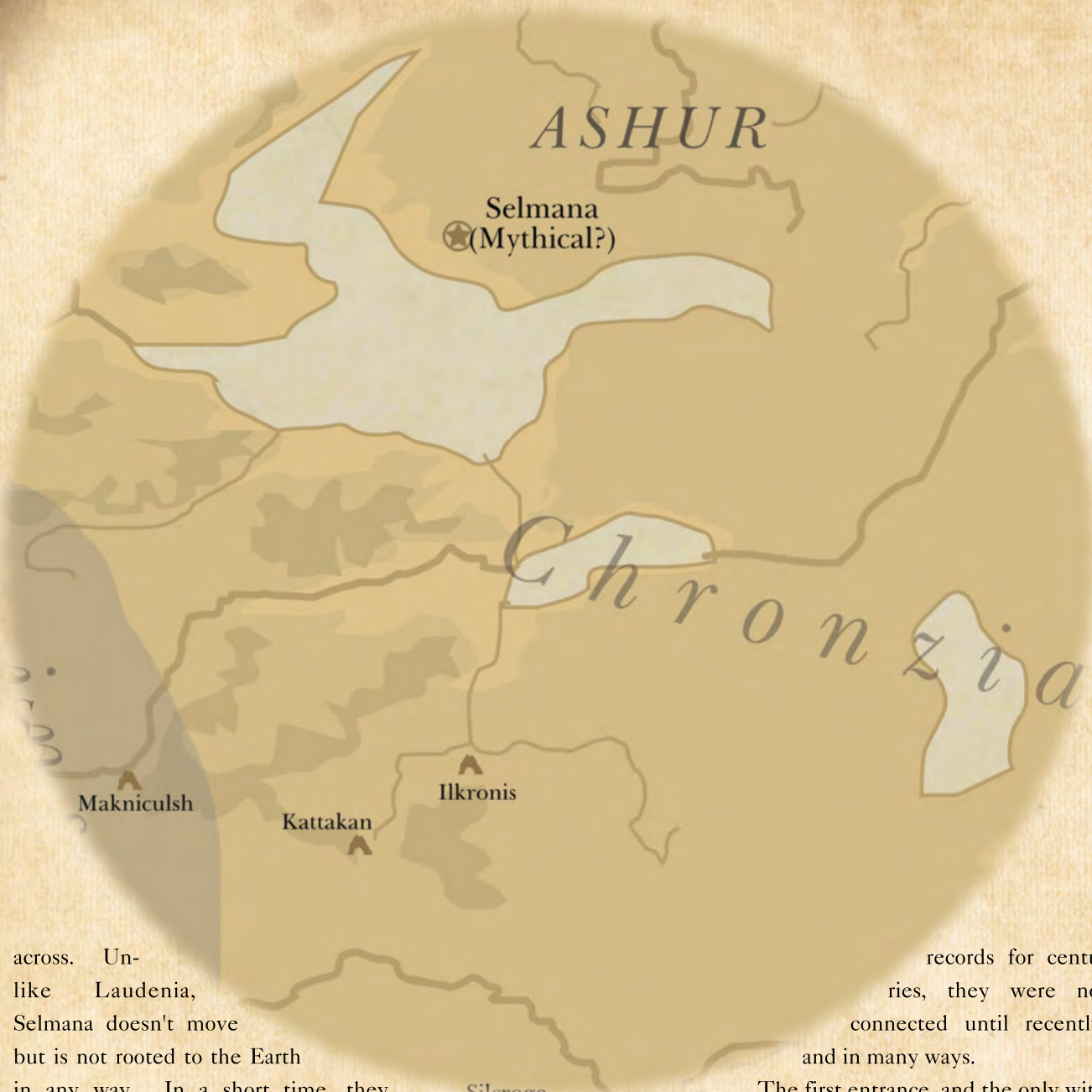
Less than a hundred creatures across the world, supernatural or natural, immortal or mortal, has ever laid eyes on Selmana. Some claim the residents resemble fae, distant cousins, perhaps a connecting point between them and the giants wandering the lands in the south. It quiets people worried over such matters, for those old enough to have lived the previous age know the truth: These titans never existed in the previous age. Humans hearing tales of the rich land in the north named them, after the would-be god-things of their mythology. No one knows their real name, and many claim their appearance is a deception to avert questions they wish not to answer. If they possess no fae blood, and cannot be related to dragons, then their origin remains a mystery, for no spawn race born after the exodus boasts such power.

To describe the city of Selmana never does it justice. One story tells of a band of adventurers, suffering massive casualties, and emerging from a cave to find the city. The sight of the metropolis amazed them so much, they fell to their knees and wept. They turned around and returned to the cave.

According to descriptions, the central tower reaches into the lower stratosphere of the planet, rising from a huge plate floating above the landscape. Their impressive houses rise and hang from this plate, several miles







across. Unlike  
like Laudenia,  
Selmana doesn't move  
but is not rooted to the Earth

in any way. In a short time, they earned respect from both dragons and fae but refuse to allow anyone to worship them. With little evidence of their power or history of their actions, few people even know they exist. A traveler somehow reaching Selmana can find lodging and safety free initially. If overstaying their welcome, the traveler may suddenly awake thousands of miles away with a long walk home.

## THE SKULLS

Presently, two of these strange locations have already been recorded; though anecdotal evidence has indicated there are more. Although sharing obvious similar physical characteristics, these oddities are not identical. In fact, despite both discoveries sitting within historical

records for centuries, they were not connected until recently, and in many ways.

The first entrance, and the only with a confirmed location, sits on the nebulous border between Alpinas and Dagron, in the middle of skegg territory. It could not have been constructed by them given the arcane knowledge required and the fact the cave entrance resembles a human skull, a creature skeggs rarely encounter in that region.

The entrance is a perfect recreation in stonework, made from a single piece twenty feet tall, and entered through the right ocular orbit (against expectations that it should be through a gaping maw). The refined tunnel continues within a mountainside until opening into an impressive natural cavern network with chambers large enough to contain complete ecosystems and even clouds. Any marks of man-made excavation by this point vanish, though there is some doubt the entrance is



*I love adventurers. I mean honestly, they're borderline suicidal, that much is obvious. I spent the last seventy-five years combing through chronicles, accounts, and testimonies from every band of would-be heroes that kept a traveler's log.*

*No sensible and/or intelligent individual seeks these Skulls out, and when found, these locations discourage investigation. But in this world, in this time, I can rely on the clichés of fantasy to do the work for me. And the stereotypes are true—I've read enough to confirm.*

*Rag-tag bands who start a journey hating each other but learn to get along. Revenge tales. Females disguising themselves as men. Men overinflating their own skill. Never more than six in a party, and they all oddly complement each other. I even read one that contained a fighter, a rogue, a cleric, and a wizard, though the latter apparently couldn't cast a spell through most of it.*

*The point is, they don't always write stuff down, but there are exceptions, and I did uncover evidence that we may have as few as six but perhaps as many as twelve Skulls across Canam alone.*

*Alpinas Skull: The only definitive location. Eye witness account claimed the ruins of a large techan city nearby which I believe might be Calgary, Alberta.*

*Burganasis Skull: The second confirmed location, it currently is uprooted, and it's unclear if it still functions as a gateway to the network.*

*Sana Skull: There are so many disturbing reports from the Marsh, I may have to chalk this up to yet another tall-tale given there are no mountains in that region.*

*Thalagos Skull: A caravan of narros from Fargon that work the Dianaso pass to Selkirk claim their ancestors created the network, which I don't personally believe. Though I am entertaining the possibility the other claim is correct.*

*Faustis Skull: I'd prefer not to believe this, but it's the only other location that has been mentioned by more than one group of refugees fleeing the region.*

*Dawnamoak Skull: Not so much evidence as an assumption. In 256 AE, Limshau accepted a well-above-average number of refugees, the majority of which came from this region, and they were human. Given other claims made refugees at the time, I believe there is an entrance in Dawnamoak.*

*Despite believing at least six skulls exist in Canam, I must stress that no one has confirmed any of them save two, and those are nearly impossible to access. Throughout it all, I have yet to uncover any information as to how this network came about, why, or even who constructed.*

*Nikolaus Faust  
Librarian, Farrel Branch, Kodex  
499 AE*

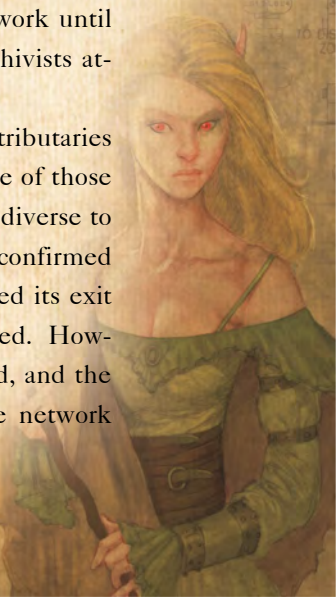
something manufactured by traditional means. There are no tool marks anywhere on the entrance, and nowhere outside or inside are there displayed any markings of ownership or even origin.

This first skull in Alpinas would probably have never been discovered if a group of adventurers hadn't emerged out of it from another entrance. The issue is that this entrance was nearly 1700 kilometers away in Burganasis, and the group had only reportedly been traveling within the cave network for two days. After encountering radically diverse weather and hostile natives, the group returned and fled to Plicato, which later called for an Archivist company from Limshau to investigate.

The veteran team of librarians and custodians discovered the Burganasis Skull—a sight the previous explorers hadn't noticed, as the monument had been

erected on its side, and was ten times larger than the one in Alpinas, taking up nearly an entire cliffside. The archivists discovered the strange properties of the network but also reported hostile life forms in several of the other branches in the natural parts of the system. After corroborating the location of the Alpinas Skull, and realizing skeggs had been using the network until recently to migrate to central Canam, the archivists attempted an initial survey.

The confirmed existence of at least five tributaries mandated an extensive analysis, as at least one of those branches appeared to lead to an environment diverse to the other two—a desert. A quick reconnoiter confirmed another skull-formation, though this one placed its exit at the nasal cavity, with most of the skull buried. However, this skull's location was never confirmed, and the archivist company felt it prudent to exit the network





and allow a fully trained cartography survey to map out the Skulls properly.

This would not happen.

Six months later, a much larger and specialized team from Limshau confronted the challenges of Burganasis to locate the Skull and begin a proper survey, only to discover that the unique properties of the region had separated the Skull and the entire mountain it sat within and drifted it away. To date, no one has been able to relocate the Burganasis Skull, though it is assumed the Alpinas Skull is still intact and rooted. Unfortunately, its remote and hostile location has precluded any attempts at another expedition.

### TORQUIL

Torquil is a nation in decline. Once the undisputed rulers of Canam's southwestern region, the House of Torquil has suffered under bogg attacks, declining bloodlines, and (it is whispered) the predations of dark magicks for many decades and lost control over most of its holdings. Its rulers dream of greater days, when the house's potential was limitless. Modern descendants claiming the name maintain that their keeps predate all others, even older than the bastion of Angel to the north.

In the beginning years, ambitious humans staking claim to fertile forests and farms enjoyed several generations without confrontation. Avraham, the founder of the kingdom, constructed a massive fortress he dubbed Holace, one of the largest castles still standing in the world, dwarfing even the Bulwark of Janoah—though it cannot claim a population commensurate with its size. At almost a million square feet, the walls and battlements enclose three keeps, five courtyards, six free-standing towers, seven cloisters, and fifteen separate royal houses. On a manufactured hill in the southern corner of the star-shaped outer wall is the "king's tower" (deceptively named as the king never resides inside), whose foundation begins above the ramparts.

With a mountain against its southern face and a river across its northern face, the only sound assault can occur from the east or west, most likely the latter unless an army was to approach from the ocean. The star-wall makes a frontal assault costly. The largest keep, simply called "Castell," is considered the second line of defense. In its ward, it guards the royal family as well as the entire Holace water supply. Underground cata-

combs could house the entire castle population in an emergency and shuffle them to escape tunnels at the other side of the river.

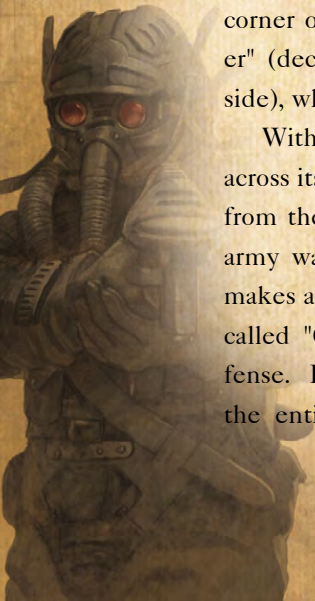
At its peak, Holace Castle could comfortably house a population of 50,000 (or double that in wartime) without straining its resources. Before Avraham passed the realm to Yaphet, the castle would suffer a bitter onslaught against an army of boggs rampaging south from the forest of Crax. After breaking their will against the wall, the boggs retreated but were massacred by Torquil cavalry that ran them down.

What followed was a century and a half of expeditious expansion. A dozen new keeps were built across the land seated with loyal lords sworn by oath or blood. The land was safe, and roads were quickly crossed by people and caravans. The modern landscape of Canam would be very different if Torquil's empire expanded unabated. And yet even as it entered its second century, Torquil's power began to crumble, and the collapse forced several of the nobles to abandon their territories to fight for control of the throne. Rumors point to conflicts with Dawnamoak—the first initial meetings with humans that soured the chaparran's opinion of humanity from then on.

There have only been a few classically feudal states in Canam—even those with a hereditary aristocracy rarely enforce the traditional feudal caste system on their populace. Torquil was one of the exceptions, with noble warlords imposing serfdom on the peasant farmers who worked the lands they claimed, and permitting chattel slavery of both elves and humans.

Yaphet, the second king, had intended on instituting limits and eventual bans on slaves but could never gain the support from the lower lords to do so. Yaphet II would sign such limits, insisting all servants must be free to leave, though wages for the lower class were still a pittance. These paltry reforms came too late. Torquil historians believe the chaparrans of Dawnamoak conspired with Duke Paulus of Logana to assassinate the king, with the promise of alliance with the powerful elvish nation, an alliance that never manifested despite the murder. When Yaphet II fell to a poisoned cold-iron dagger, it was assumed a human had committed the crime.

Despite being a half-brother to the felled king, Paulas of Logana never made a play for the throne, leaving the title to Yaphet's daughter, Elsa. She, in turn, asked Paulas to be regent for three years until she turned







eighteen,  
and thus be  
able to take the  
throne. She would be  
placed in ward of Paulas, trans-  
ferring his keep's flag to hang under Tor-  
quill's banner.

When Yaphet's wife, the lady Thema of Goodchild, discovered Paulas in Elsa's embrace, the kingdom shattered. While Paulas had no wife, Elsa was considered of age by the kingdom's standards, and they were not related by blood, Thema was still enraged, ordering the arrest and trial of Paulas immediately. She accused him of conspiring to take the throne and seduce her daughter in the progress. Elsa's deposition was never taken despite her pleas to be heard. Paulas called the trial unjust and shouted on the stands for his loyal people to gather. Paulas had bound Logana, Wolfwood, and Kinkannis to his cause and they began their march to Holace Castle. Thema had already called Goodchild's

army to the  
walls, but a sum-  
mons to lords Rogan  
and Zellis and their fortress  
of Barbecallis was unanswered.

Holace Castle would suffer another assault, from the hands of its own armies. The civil war of Torquil was a single conflict that took 650 days and cost 55,000 lives. By the end of it, the Torquil nobility was decimated. Many knights had died. Baron Alfred Fredricks of Freehold, Countess Emily Rezendes of Logana, Baron Willum Romande of Wolfwood, and Lord Leonard Rosheim of Kinkannis all were among the fallen. Duke Paulas was killed by friendly fire in the second year of the conflict. Later, Elsa admitted to her mother that she had loved Paulas and was the instigator of the affair, but that neither had plotted to kill the King.

Whether Lady Thema believed this or not is immaterial, as shortly afterward she was killed by a sniper's



## CHAPTER EIGHT: WEST



arrow upon leaving the Castell. Elsa called for parley and ordered the flags of truce run up the banner. The

only survivor of the direct Torquil line met with Baronetto Anton Torono, heir of Wolfwood, now two weeks into his reign. She would marry him and salvage the nobility. He agreed, and the war ended. Alas, it was too late. Almost immediately after, massing bogg forces stormed south and razed the castles of Logana, Wolfwood, and Goodchild. Twice in as many years, Holace would be the site of another great battle. United but battle-worn, the armies of Torquil braced their remaining hosts within the beaten battlements of the great castle. Without a pause, the walls were assaulted again. This time, after an arduous 18-month siege, the boggs breached the star-wall, pushing survivors all the way into the Castell. A second supplication to Barbecallis was unanswered and a plea to the chaparran elves of

Dawnmoak was also ignored. Despite continued harassment, the inner fortress would not break, and the boggs eventually withdrew, laying waste to the countryside as they went.

The rain had arrived, draining blood into the Konge River, soiling the sediment red, a pigment that never faded in the subsequent centuries. Of the 225,000 people known to have populated Torquil in its glory, only 35,000 remained. Among the dead in the second siege were most guard captains and the remaining knights and lords, including Anton Torono. Thankfully, by this time, Anton and Elsa had married (historically called the Marriage across the Moats) and she was pregnant with her first child.

The task ahead of Yaphet III was daunting. Holace castle was ruined and never fully recovered. Even today, the rebuilding is incomplete, and the restorations



pale in comparison to the castle's previous grandeur. While still young, the new king would eventually forge alliances with several outlining realms including Ogium, Orchis, and Plicato. A marriage alliance with Antikari would subsequently offer a Torquil descendant the opportunity to claim the seat of that house as well.

However, the original Torquil splendor was lost, and modern Torquil is a kingdom in name only, its once vaunted knights unable to fulfill their feudal duties. Villages like Goodchild, Logana, Wolfwood, and Kinkannis were repopulated, but their keeps have long since fallen into collapse and the villagers and farmers cannot rely on the nobility to protect them from raiders and monsters. The parishes are but shadows of their past glory. When a delegation finally reached Barbecallis, they found it deserted. To this day, no one knows what happened to Rogan and Zellis and their towns' 15,000 inhabitants.

## XIXION

Nearly the entire western third of southern Canam lies in the grip of an all-too-macroscopic plague. Once home to innumerable fledgling nations, free houses, and techan atolls, nearly every presumptive settlement in the region has been systematically consumed by the kaddog of Xixion.

Puggs reproduce at a prodigious rate, the most fecund of any fae species. It is theorized that there are more puggs in Xixion than the entire remaining human and fae population of Canam put together, and their numbers continue to grow. The only thing holding them back from completely overrunning the continent is their own appetite; when they run out of food, they just as readily consume one another. Consequently, while Xixion's population *is* increasing, it is no longer increasing *exponentially*.

While pugg 'society', to use the term extremely loosely, appears inherently chaotic and to revolve exclusively around eating, researchers from Limshau and Angel have independently identified some sort of social dynamic among the larger pugg swarms, known as 'hives'. The hives are not entirely directionless—they wander across the landscape in predictable patterns, rarely returning to the same area twice in the same year. Some visitations are almost regular as clockwork, and the movement of the hive can be forecast to within

weeks or days. What mechanism drives these migrations is currently unknown; some posit them to be based on the lunar cycle, while others suggest fluctuation in the field emanating from Attricana. Regardless of the method, knowledge of these patterns makes traveling in the region a little less hazardous than it would be otherwise.

There are at least a dozen swarms large enough to be called hives, but only the four largest are of particular significance:

**Hive Ephesia** ('Cicada' in damaskan) is the smallest of the megaswarms, at an estimated 70,000 individuals, but it covers the largest area. The 'home base' of the Ephesia swarm is a lake in the southern Nankani mountains near Locus Mallis, which the puggs descend upon for several weeks every summer and drink it dry. The swarm then moves into Cyon, south to vainly butt its collective head against the walls of Angel, then east toward Burgunasis, where it experiences the bulk of its attrition as parts of the swarm get lost in the shifting landscape, some eventually straggling out the other side to threaten the western reaches of the Continental Cross. After spending the winter in the Nankani foothills eating hibernating bears (and one another), the hive struggles across the mountains to its lakebed retreat to repeat the cycle once again.

**Hive Etaraki** ('Cockroach') is the next largest at ~90,000. Its range takes it back and forth through the lands south of the Wymahl and Kimuen Rivers. Every three years the migration pattern intersects with that of Hive Eletharius and every five with that of Hive Ephesia, generally resulting in a free-for-all pugg smorgasbord. When they can't get meat, the kaddog devour the dominant provender of the land—chiefly wild grapes and hops, which go through the puggs' digestive systems almost intact and turn the land behind them into a morass of fermenting manure.

**Hive Eletharius** ('Grasshopper') is the most sizeable of the migratory swarms at over 200,000 individuals. Its range is the middle Nankani range, and for the most part its migration pattern is underground, often through tunnels hewed by narros prospectors during their southward push from Fargon. They push uncomfortably closer to Kannos each year, but are largely kept in check by the presence of the Sana Marsh, to which they give a wide berth.





The largest of the hives is possibly the strangest. **Hive Seelanus** ('Silanos,' or 'Millipede' in damaskan, though the name actually comes from a chaparran word) is the only pugg swarm to have claimed a semi-permanent settlement; the hollowed-out crater of Mount Seilannas, a dormant volcano that last erupted shortly after the Hammer fell. The hive consists of at least 2 million individuals, at least a 100,000 of which live in the mountain itself, in tunnels carved out of the caldera and rough shacks built into its walls (by whom, no-one knows—puggs certainly can't build). The Seelanus swarm do not have a wide migration like the other megaswarms. Instead, they move in surges, pushing against the boundaries of their territory at regular intervals.

With every surge, the area they claim expands—not always by much, but over the centuries they have expanded from the area immediately around the mountain itself to almost the entire land between the Wymahl River and the southern borders of Seliquam. All that prevents Seelanus' spread further north are the defensive measures of the Seliquam Confederation; nothing at all prevents the kaddog from expanding further east. The puggs of Seelanus are just as mindless as the rest individually, but collectively they exhibit a sort of low cunning unseen in any other swarm. In only the past 50 years, they have been seen corralling spawn creatures, not only as food but as mounts and makeshift siege weapons. During the famous assault that breached the walls of Last Hope for the first and only time, they somehow managed to acquire several black powder cannons, as well as several skeggs clever enough to figure out how to use them. Scholars say that this behavior is far beyond the mental capacity of puggs, and that therefore some other intelligence must be behind them – but what that animus might be, none has yet to venture an opinion.

Apart from the kaddog and their filth, Xixion is also host to a number of ruins – mostly narros construction, but also several remnants of the age before the Hammer. Many of these locations still have their treasures, would-be adventurers having had their bones picked clean instead by puggs.

### THE NARROS BRIDGE

One of the most mysterious structures in Xixion is a massive bridge, wide enough for a small army to march across, leading out into the water south of Mt. Seilan-

nas. After a few hundred paces, the bridge simply stops and tapers to a small platform, scarcely a stone's throw across, upon which stands a small, three-story tower. The tower seems completely unremarkable by the standards of narros construction, save for the entryway, a wide circular frame on which are inscribed runes that resemble the top face of certain Pleroma sigils. Mages who have studied the door are unable to discern any meaning from these symbols, as merely one facet of a Pleroma letter can have no possible use as a spell.

## YENNE MOUNTAIN

Somewhere in the northern Nankani stands a mountain of a slightly different hue than those around it, as if it were lifted from its natural place and put down somewhere it did not belong. It lies within the migration route of Hive Eletharius, and yet the kaddog always veer away to avoid it. A half-day's ride from the rocky skeleton of a dead chiggoth, one comes across a rusty chain-link fence. Beyond it is something totally unheard of in this part of the world: a paved road, overgrown with grass and weeds but still showing faint traces of the yellow stripe painted down the middle. Next to the road is a green sign, upon which is written, in faded letters, "yenne Mo nta n C mpl". The road leads up the side of the mountain until it reaches a large arched cave entrance, blocked by a rockfall. Only magic or special mining equipment can get past the cave-in, but those who wear wristwatches might notice that every minute seems to be a few seconds longer than usual near the archway.

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*Tasia could hardly bring herself to care about correcting the flaws in her pupils' combat stances. They were another group of familiar rookies. She stood in the center of the circular padded room and dared them to connect with any weapon they could grab. She tossed them, tripped them, deflected them, never caring about the lessons learned or the damage caused in her counterattack.*

*She was not smiling, not frowning, not exerting—she barely even looked at them. She was vacant, and her impulses were acting in her stead. She threw one opponent armed with a tonfa upside down into another student, swept the legs of one and kicked him across to topple two charging with staves. She tossed a knee be-*



tween a set of legs of an opponent as he attempted a club from behind. Her knee still in the air snapped quickly around to kick a heel to the arm of one wielding nothing but knuckles. Tasia's leg came down hard on his forehead, taking him to the mat, where he remained. She had other matters in mind, like how long it would take for the flowing and flooding disruption around Canam to settle before she could return.

The surrounding half-dozen stopped well out of reach. Tasia was not sweating. Her victims were scattered about the circle.

"Are you training or punishing them?" Samuel Crufix exclaimed over the battered groans of the fallen. Tasia caught sight of her brother and walked away from the carnage, offering a moment for others to pull out the wounded.

"What are you doing back here?" she asked.

"Let's talk," he whispered. She followed him out of the training circle to a corner. Tasia jumped in before he could go on the offensive.

"I'm only filling in until the Caldera returns."

"The ground team is dead," he said bluntly.

"What?" she shot back as quickly.

"And we lost another caldera."

A few others uninjured overheard. They kept their distance but stopped caring for their battered friends.

"How?" she asked.

"Disruption probably. We never know given interference."

"Someone would've survived."

"The team deployed. We know that."

"They were ambushed," Tasia concluded. The statue may have exaggerated, but his skill with a sword might not have been. The others behind Tasia stepped closer.

"I believe so as well," he replied. "Did your jaunt uncover anything?"

"Aiden and his elf split to Antikari, but they took a ground transport through a snaking route that brought them eventually to Primmer. I'm close. There are only a few places left. Give me a new team."

"Quite the apathy for your old one."

"You wanted me to complete a task, I'm trying to do that. If you keep brandishing science like it's God's fist, that world will punch back. Forget the tech. Drop a handful with only a beacon and native clothes. Our strength is greater than the machine we build."

"You should have put that into the presentation."

"I've trained these people; I'll pick the best." From the shuffle of those nearby, not everyone was acquies-

cent to the idea. They hated nature as much as almost any other saint. Almost.

"You'd like that, wouldn't you?"

"People are the one reliable denominator. You know I can do this."

"You could, and we know you'd succeed. You're going back down—"

"Good—"

"To deploy MAX."

She stepped back from him. The others around her did as well. They knew they were in the clear. Only a few kept near while the others dispersed.

"I can handle this myself," she pushed through her teeth. "You need a scalpel for an operation like this, not a hacksaw."

"Right now, they're settling for anything that works. Each time we send something down, it fails. MAX is ready for an operation like this. If this works, we can employ similar strategies in the future to keep our people and technology safe."

"That's not how we'll win," said Tasia. "We can't keep throwing energy and technology against this problem. That's what the deacons want because they can't think of anything different." Sam glanced around the room to ensure Tasia's remarks were not being recorded by any nearby cameras. "Our species has always believed the easiest solution to defeating something involves overpowering it. The more advanced something is, the easier it breaks down. The more we fight it, the more we lose. That's the paradox. To defeat this world, we need to live in it."

"That could be read as duplicitous, Tasia," Sam warned.

"You can't send a blunt instrument like that into a populated nation like Limshau."

"I wasn't thinking the kid and the elf; send it to the other two. Call it retribution."

"They just want to see if it survives," Tasia snapped. "To prove brute force does work...so they can replace us."

"You're the only one left able to complete the mission. You and Stone go down, deploy MAX, then come back. They do appreciate everything you've accomplished, and they require that intelligence and insight here. You've become a leading authority. Captains are not required to dirty their hands to prove their worth."

Tasia opened her mouth to interject, then snapped closed upon realizing what Sam had said. She ran the last ten seconds in her head to ensure she hadn't misheard.





## CHAPTER EIGHT: WEST

"Captain," she said. Sam reached into his pocket. He removed a golden bell, no bigger than his thumb, hanging from a string. Tasia recognized the charm Sam has teased her with weeks ago. He placed it in her hand and closed her fist.

"Get back safely, and I'll pin the chevrons myself. I told you I'd find strings to pull. Turns out, there was a rope."

\* \* \*

"Seriously, Mischa, you do attract violence." Mahan snapped. Mischa used the leg fabric of one of the techans to clean his weapon.

"I don't understand?" Mischa asked. Uriel landed from above, tapping the ground lightly as his cloaked slowed his fall.

"I had not proven my mettle in combat for many years until accompanying you," said Mahan. "Every week it's a kodiak or puggs or pirates. What's next, pagus?"

Mischa sheathed his weapon, despite it still sporting a few stains, and orbited the mayhem.

"If I was to believe in such a thing as God's plan," Mischa answered, "I would subscribe that he places us on this Earth with gifts he intends us to use. I know death. I know how to dispatch it with calm and efficiency. If I am God's tool, then it is a waste to not use me."

"Then perhaps I am here to help you when you have filled your butcher's quota."

Mahan counted the bodies, checking if any were alive. None were. Two were nearly vaporized from a disrupted capacitor rifle. The heat tore their skin off in a split second. A coil rifle discharged in reverse, accelerating an iron flechette at ten times the speed of sound through two others before carrying through five trees. The chaos was all the diversion the fantasy heroes needed.

Mahan looked around for the ferret. He found it undamaged, lost in the empty helmet of one of the techans. Mahan picked up the helmet and coaxed the frightened creature out.

"You can come out, it's over," he whispered.

The animal scurried out, and Mahan gently held it as he removed the silver ring tied by a string from its leg. "Okay, off ya go." He released it to scamper away. Mahan returned the ring to Mischa. "That thing delivered quite the punch."

Mischa pulled off his glove and returned Machik's

ring to his finger.

"Wasn't expecting disruption to be that severe," Mischa mumbled. "Laudenians don't know subtle, do they?" He looked to Uriel. "You undamaged?"

"I was unhurt," Uriel replied. He looked down and lifted one of the fallen saints' broken weapons. It was a focused pulse weapon at one point. When the cell breached, it cracked the focus crystal, reflecting a ray of energy into the chest of the firer.

"Why would anyone wield this?" he asked.

"Must introduce you to our mage sometime," answered Mischa. "He could answer. I can't."

"How many years did you train as Kenbu?" Mahan asked.

"Since I could walk," Uriel answered.

"Much time and pain as sacrifice given willingly to do what you do." Mahan held out his hand. Uriel handed him the techan weapon. "This would allow you to kill equally as well for free." Mahan tossed the weapon far from the three of them in case the cell had remaining energy to discharge.

"See no purpose for it?"

"Trust me, once you see a horseless carriage and a machine that washes dishes, you'll change your mind."

\* \* \*

Two days through the thick woods brought them to the base of the mountain. Mischa counted the eaves as they carried up through the clouds.

"We'll never be able to climb that," he said. Mischa tossed ideas in his head. He had a good arm, but not arrow could take a rope that high, especially when given the weight of a grapple. Mischa was not one for climbing.

Kantis was flat, bordering just within the Zone of Alienation—the region outside the black glass of Kakodomania. It was nearly devoid of texture, let alone hills.

Up close, there were few holds to aid climbing. Mischa wondered how a creature got up there in the first place.

"God works in mysterious ways, Mischa," Mahan replied. He kept his eyes on the first cave, looming over them. A blur of black passed them as Uriel flipped, jumped, and scaled up a tree. From the canopy of leaves, his shape sprung into the sky, landing effortlessly on the edge of the first cave.

Uriel turned and looked over the edge without fear. Neither Mahan nor Mischa could make out his face from that height, but they figured he was probably smiling.



"...and sometimes not," Mahan added. He then shouted up, "You remember rope?!"

Atop the first cave, Mahan and Mischa were ready to call it a day. The cave was steep but not dangerous. They would eventually have to take a night atop one of them.

Uriel began climbing again the moment they were settled. Mischa was content just to sit near the edge and watch.

There were no trees to shortcut, but Uriel didn't require them. He found cracks and edges without looking, scaling like a monkey nearly as fast one could walk across the same distance. His arms pulled himself into the air, snatching a higher ridge beyond a man's standard reach. At the cave, he dangled his legs and scaled across the ceiling.

"You want to tell him he forgot the rope?" Mahan asked Mischa.

"Give him five minutes," Mischa answered, "It'll come to him."

Atop the second cave, the three of them took in the view. At this altitude, they could see the expanse of forest, the scar from the techan crash, and the vastness of rolling fields that led eventually into the Sana Marsh. Uriel sat perfectly straight, kneeling with toes pointed to each other. His eyes were closed.

"Does that man ever sleep?" Mischa asked.

"I think he is sleeping," Mahan answered. They took in the view for a few moments. Rain started to fall and they thanked the cave above them.

"That's the Marsh," Mischa stated.

"It's no Ixindar," Mahan answered, "but it's wicked enough. For you, evil is a broad expanse, but singular. For us, we have scattered variations. The marsh, Tranquiss, the Gloom. It surrounds us."

"Your kingdoms are vast and powerful," said Mischa. "Canam suffers the same apathy. Your people could crush these blights if you wanted."

"Politics," Mahan answered.

"When you ask me of faith, I'll remember places like this and be reminded of what he ignores."

Mahan smiled and placed a palm on Mischa's shoulder.

"We all ask that at some point?" said Mahan. "I don't require a cursed swamp or bleeding trees. He still has yet to rectify cancer; that should be easy in comparison. I just remind myself that I may never understand it...and nor should I."

They stared in silence at it, almost apprehensive to look away.

The Marsh that once marked a great human kingdom endures despite attempts to burn or otherwise push its curse back to its source. The expansion halted some decades ago through scorched Earth tactics mostly from the hand of Kannos, which claimed Sana as entirely under their governorship and responsibility. They took that charge, believing land reclamation would significantly increase Kannos's power base.

Although Kannos found initial success, they later discovered that for every inch obtained in the east, the marsh expanded doubly in the west, and this expansion halted as Kannos closed in on Kardia Gothas. As casualties began to rise with the numerous missions within the Marsh, Kannos was forced to scale back operations, and slowly the marsh began to push back. Although not as cancerous as Tranquiss, the marsh continued to be a thorn in the region.

"It would be a hell of a thing to stride in there as a knight of kantis and show them what true defiance looks like," Mischa finally said.

"Kannos boasts its own line of warriors trained to deal with the horrors in there. From what I read... they're all psychopaths."

"Good in a fight," Mischa answered, "don't invite them to the afterparty. What was the story of that place?"

"Legends tell of one of the first kings of man in the new age," Mahan answered, "and how his arrogance and naivety reduced his empire to eventual damnation for him and his people. It claimed that King Sana ruled over one of the first kingdoms in Canam after the opening of Attricana, Kardia. Older than any other surviving human realms, it expanded to dozens of villages while Limshau was still building its first walls. Kardia used knowledge gleaned from the first bastions to create a stable, growing empire with well-paved roads, a reliable underground sewer system, plentiful crops and powerful magic. And it all crumbled to ruin because of one man."

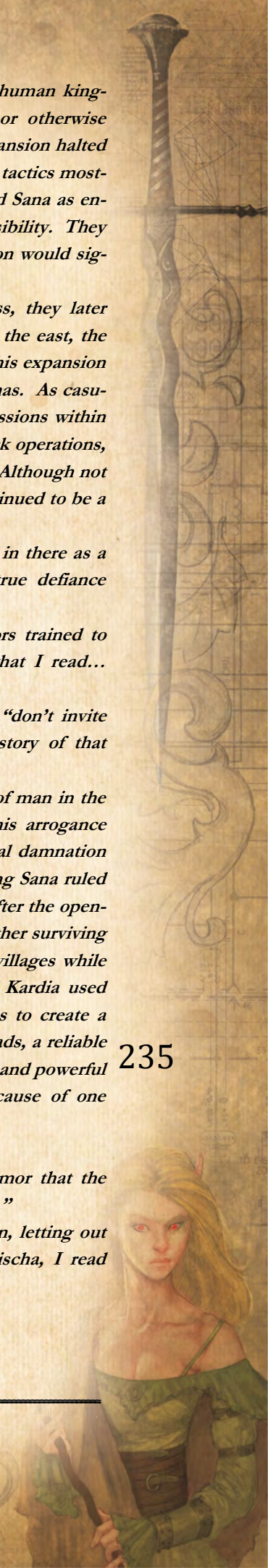
Mischa had waited for Mahan to finish.

"Actually, I was curious about the rumor that the king is constantly boning a demon in there."

Mahan remained locked on the horizon, letting out an exhale before finally saying, "Yes, Mischa, I read that as well."

"Is it tru—"

"I don't know."







## CHAPTER NINE

# SOUTHAM

236 **W**hile Canam, despite vast expanses of unclaimed and savage land, is overall held by civilization, the continent to the south is largely treacherous and plagued by conflict and fear.

The chaos of magic flooded the land, and an already biodiverse continent found its rich flora and fauna swell to such an extent that trees reached to the clouds and monsters the sizes of buildings roamed beneath them. As a result, it was exceedingly difficult for any nation to form. Several failed, leaving ruins among the encroaching vegetation. With tree growth more aggressive here than even in Canam, communities not harmonious with nature were either pushed towards the coasts, driven

underground or elevated to the jungle canopy in one of the more unique cultural adaptations on the planet.

That is not to say that Southam is devoid of civilization, be it human or fae. Most fae species have managed to find a niche no matter where on the planet they ended up, and of course, humans are supremely adaptable. There are, however, radical demographic shifts depending on the region.

In the north, damaskans are abundant, while in the south, they are an endangered species. Though Southam's chaparrans control a vast territory, their actual numbers are scarcely a tenth of the northern population; and where tenenbri are exotic and scarce in Canam, in Southam they command one of the largest





*"The naming convention has never made sense to me. Where did they come from? I mean Canam is just a portmanteau of 'Canada' and 'America'—two nations of old man that no longer exist. Why not call it America?"*

*"Probably because the native humans at the time associated that title with just one country in that land-mass, and there was probably some compromise—"*

*"That ignored the other twenty-some countries Canam encompassed."*

*"We could go back to calling it 'Turtle Island' if that would work for you."*

*"I liked Abya Yala—that was another dated name."*

*"All these countries are gone, the tectonic plate we sit on is called North America. If we insist on the portmanteau, why not 'Northam?'"*

*"And what of 'Southam?'"*

*"That's even crazier. They didn't name that land-mass, we did...or rather someone did. Do we even know who?"*

*"It's not recorded—trust me, we tried. Not unlike human history from before. In the distant past, the southern land was called America before the north was. Or would you rather call it Columbus?"*

*"Isn't the name America taken from a human explorer dubiously unaware half the world was named after him?"*

*"That's one theory. There are others."*

*"So not even humans know. Perhaps Canam isn't a portmanteau at all. Maybe like everything else, it's a mystery. Someone called it that, printed a map...and the world just played along."*

*"Has anyone asked southern inhabitants what they call their land?"*

*"The last group of people I interviewed from that region mentioned a name. They called it 'Hell.'"*

*Primmer Etymology Debate*

*Recorded for Archive*

*395 AE*

empires on the planet. Pagus, laudenians, and tilen are also virtually unknown in Southam. This leaves the two dominant fae species in Southam, narros and tenenbri, gripped in a holy war they resumed after 65 million years' absence.

In the Terros age, when the narros ruled Geno Ter-rane and the tenenbri Antumbra, the region between

them, Cratonis, became hotly contested, as it shared holy relics connected to both those races' religions. Returning to the land many of them still refer to as

Cratonis, the chaos of magic had recreated many of these relics. The tenenbri emigrated from their old homeland, now frozen over, and quickly overwhelmed the unprepared narros communities. Instead of occupying the surface cities upon victory, the tenenbri left them to crumble, only for those cities to be appropriated by a new emerging spawn race, the awnee.

The tenenbri took to the mountains and forged a great kingdom under the rock, more or less ignoring the chaparrans living nearby. When the tenenbri discovered Antok had been rebuilt over a reemergence of the Well of Salvation, they launched a crusade for its retaking, only to discover a population of narros hardened to the tenenbri's tactics.

Southam has only one bastion, Novo, along with a handful of scattered atolls far too divided to possibly assist one another. There is neither trade between them nor even connected paths. Many of them believe themselves to be exceptions in the world of magic, alone among the chaos. Given the limited number of locations where one can purchase and sell technology in Southam, the overall presence of technology is notably smaller than that of Canam.

Echa Terrain Vehicles (ETVs), although replicating the specifications of models found in the north, don't share the polish and refinement that accompanies mass-production. Models seen in Southam are patched together or custom-built. A few atolls market unique models while the one notable bastion, Novo, exports only watercraft. This has left most of the technology in Southam patched and rebuilt numerous times over, with much of it scavenged from sunken techan cities sitting just offshore.

## ARARANDISH, THE CATALYST

Rising sea levels flooded a once massive river network that snaked into this continent. The region around this massive complex of water is enveloped by the Kamaq, a massive rainforest that stretches from one end of the



## CHAPTER NINE: SOUTHAM



Sea of  
Shades

The Gloam

DELECOURE

Puerta

The Kamaq

Okeanos

SKOGRA

Canal of  
Aravandish

Solimos

Shogak

The Kamaq

CUEJIGAR

The Kamaq

KUNDALGONI

Toco

Federa

VANAKA

Altiplano

Ouroboros  
(nomadic)

AXOM

Vakai

Norasak  
Marsh

Antok

NOVO

Sogamoso

GAGUA

The Tigre

Tundama

Ocea

Don't Sail Here

Or Here

A (Mostly)  
Accurate Cartograph  
of the Continent of

**SOUTHAM**

Compiled in the year 489(ish) AE by  
MR. GLYNN GLENGARRIE  
based upon hard-won personal experience



*...there were few attempts to record events from the previous age, and with what survived, we can conclude that this absence was deliberate. The narros were the worst of it. We know some information regarding Kalofilia and the Carina Shallows.*

*We know of Epherka and even Ixindar within Dracophylax. There are disturbing gaps in the history of these empires; we know nothing of Axom in the previous age. We can only conclude that the narros have suppressed this information.*

*Escorias Academic Press  
June 12<sup>th</sup>, 405 AE  
(reprint)*

***Addendum:** We received numerous complaints from this article. One narros archivist, Storacasco Mox, submitted the following: "Narros prioritized the preservation of life during the exodus over the conservation of history. One living narros was worth more than a thousand books, explaining why more of us made it to the new age than the damaskans. And let's not talk about history. Damaskan records gloat of their obedience to Axis Terra, their loyalty to a convention of apathetic dragons. We may not have carried our scrolls over, but we do remember. The Hammer—the great equalizer—was a mercy, and it probably saved this planet from the fae's shortsightedness."*

continent to the other. With the increased disruption flowing south from Delecoure and the natural saturation of life already present, the Catalyst of Ararandish boasts one of the richest biodiversities of life on the planet. The large bodies of water coupled with hundreds of tributaries and few known civilized communities has made crossing this land not so much dangerous as it is protracted and complicated, though still preferred over crossing the ogre 'nation' of Skogra, the only other route to the north.

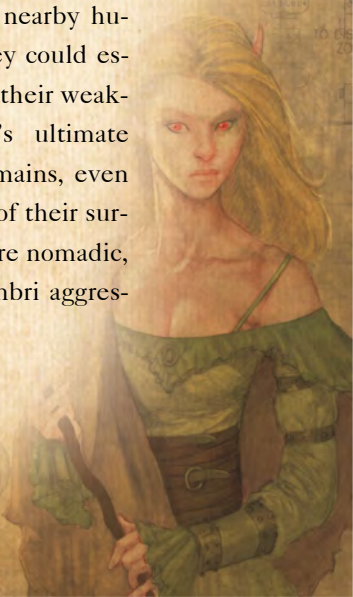
A land rich in magic is often also rich in fae anathema. While Delecoure remains the dominance of mostly narros anathema, Ararandish is dominated by chaparran anathema, including the dojenn, though their presence is not as prevailing as most travelers assume. The complexity of the network compared to the dojenn population has made the anathema threat relatively low in comparison to the other chaparran anathema, including the sibharil and sylfaen. Where Delecoure appears jagged and bleak, Ararandish is lush and picturesque while only being slightly less dangerous. Individuals vanish

around the basin in greater numbers here than in the north. It is also considered more dangerous than the Kamaq, where civilization of a sort still thrives along the Kundalgoni network above the canopy (as well as the chaparran villages within the trees, though an outsider can expect no welcomes there). It's the method of disappearance that really matters—with Delecoure prey are presumed eaten by the residents while in Ararandish, victims are more likely to be entranced by creatures of undeniable beauty. It is not uncommon for despondent survivors with little else to live for to wander Ararandish, waiting to be swept away by the inhabitants.

## AXOM

Axom was the name of a great narros empire in the previous age when they held nearly monopolistic control of the western half of North America, then called Geno Terrane. There are few records of how successful it was at the time, but most of its focus was on the southern land of Cratonis, where the entirety of Axom resides today. The narros expanded rapidly assuming their mortal enemies were nowhere to be found. However, as the tenenbri emigrated from their frozen wasteland several years later, they discovered the narros unprepared and still credulous to the ways of tenenbri warmongering. The narros had concentrated on expansion and city building and were quickly routed from these cities. The tenenbri employed magic, guerilla tactics, and monsters drawn from chaparran forests to crumple a fledgling empire, one already feeling the pressure from ogre flooding in from the north.

As the tenenbri pushed closer to the capital, the narros accomplished something their kind are not known for—they asked for help, namely from the nearby humans pushed out from every settlement they could establish. Together, they were able to harden their weaknesses and secure Antok—the tenenbri's ultimate prize—from further attack. A stalemate remains, even so far as to allow the narros to reclaim some of their surrounding lands. Many narros communities are nomadic, however, prone to migration based on tenenbri aggression.







## ANTOK

Perhaps the single most important, critical, and controversial city on the plan-

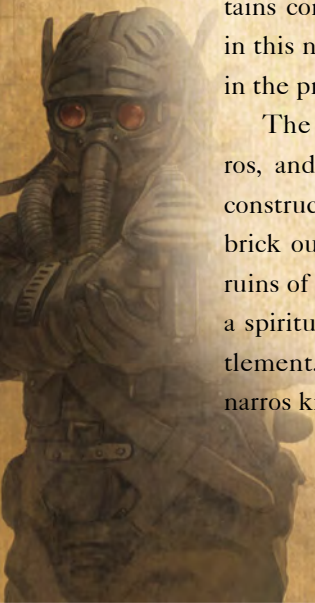
et. No less than three different races claim Antok as their capital, though the awnee allegation is dubious at best. The narros government of Axom currently maintains control over the city, a trophy they had only held in this new time, having lost it during a similar holy war in the previous age.

The city had been (and was again) built by the narros, and with their astounding memory regarding city construction were able to recreate it anew without a brick out of place. Coincidentally, its site lay amid the ruins of an ancient human city. The narros claim this as a spiritual bond with the holy city—proof of their entitlement. The humans that have integrated with the narros kingdom believe it a form of muscle memory.

Even disregarding the reconstruction, Antok is the oldest city in Southam and perhaps even the world (assuming bastions don't date their ages

from the ruined human cities many were built upon). The original Antok predates any memory or record of its foundation, a common detail for many Terros fae cities. What is known is Antok's reputation for conflict. No city has suffered more, having been besieged no less than seventy times during its total history. In the modern age, the narros' refusal to alter the original Antok has resulted in overpopulation, forcing another set of defensive structures beyond the original city walls to house its expanded citizenry, a blending of both narros and human engineering.

Although many believe the singular focus of conflict is the Well of Salvation within the city, there are more reasons within Antok for the narros and the tenenbri to





*We know individual fae of the same species share more genetic information between each other than humans do. To be more specific, any two humans, no matter the selection, will contain only 0.1% genetic distinction; we are as close to clones that nature can create.*

*Compare that with our ancestors and cousins—the chimpanzee genome differentiates around 1.2%. We lack adequate samples from to form a consensus from any other fae species save the narros, which has less than 0.01% distinction between individuals. This points to the narros having less genetic variation than creatures bred through artificial selection, which in an evolved creature would put them at risk for disease and population decline through compromised adaptability.*

*(No wonder we think they all look the same)*

*This points to common attributes believed prevalent in every narros without exception. Beyond physical characteristics, there also appears a unique aspect of narros memory, which may extend to other fae as well. Narros exhibit weak explicit memory theorized to be a side-effect of their long lifespan—able to retain fewer overall memories because of the sheer amount of them in relation to the capacity of their brain (which appears at least on the surface identical to humans).*

*However, we discovered humans blessed with magically extended lifespans were still able to retain more information, experiences, and*

*thoughts. Alternatively, narros possess an astounding capability for implicit memory—memory that is applied unconsciously. Not only do they rely on this for decision-making (justifying apparent unwitting emotions regarding who they love and who they hate) but it also explains their talents in maintaining consistency in their architecture.*

*Not only can a narros build two structures using the same technique centuries apart, but they can remarkably build the same structure without referencing plans. What's even more remarkable is that it doesn't even need to be the same narros. You could have one builder look over a building, and a hundred years later, be able to rebuild it perfectly while also forgetting where the original building was, when he or she saw it, or even remember its name.*

*Postscript: One point I will append, having toured through Antok, I did notice several pieces of engineering and architecture that don't match what is believed to be widespread narros building characteristics. Knowing their talent for recreation via muscle memory, and assuming it a perfect duplication (which they claim), I can only surmise that the original Antok was itself built on the ruins of another city before the narros (populated by a different people). Of course, the narros refute this...not that they would remember who they were anyway.*

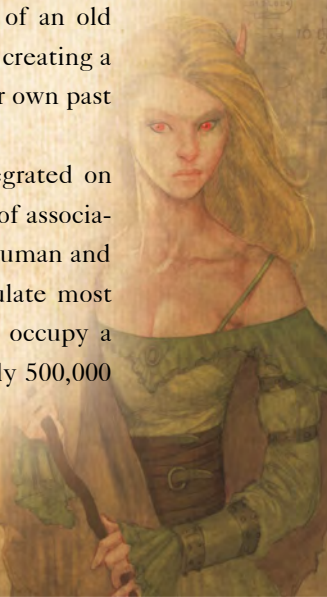
*Zoe Rove Jacoby; Doctor of Engineering  
Nova Wiki-Net.*

fight over. While the tenenbri during Terros only assaulted Antok based on the justification of a smaller religious sect, the ruling class of Vanaka (the Domme) claimed Antok the central symbolic capital of their entire race, despite it being above-ground. They even rewrote their testament to retroactively back-up their claim to many of the smaller religious sites within the city including the Quarternisk, Sephox Tor, and Temple Tower.

The modern-day Antok serves as not only the capital of Axom but also as the largest sustainable permanent echan city in Southam, the one every immigrant tries to reach. The narros of Southam are more entrenched in their views than those of the north, and thus the integration of humans into the population took longer than the alliances of Fargon and Seliqum, or the

heartland kingdoms with the Finer Fire Pits—though as the arriving humans were able to enhance Antok's defenses and secure its safety from outside attack, initial grumbling has been slowly replaced by grudging acceptance and even respect. They were quickly surprised to discover within the city fragments of an old human city from before the Second Hammer, creating a desire by the resident humans to uncover their own past and claim part of the city as their own as well.

Unlike Limshau cities, which appear integrated on the surface but are subject to myriad customs of association, there is no hiding the division between human and narros communities in Antok. Humans populate most of the land outside the main walls and only occupy a ghetto in the northern quarter. In total, nearly 500,000 people call Antok home.





## CHAPTER NINE: SOUTHAM

Originally, Antok was not meant to be the capital of Axom. The actual seat of royalty was in Reafe, but the attention on Antok forced the administrative shift. While the government operates from Antok, the royal family still lives in Reafe. A steward, Rororian Kolos, is credited with running the kingdom while the line of succession only fills an advisory role, a side effect from both religious zealotry and an indifferent monarch.

Kolos is not only the steward but also the bishop of the church of Oaken, thus the spiritual leader of the narros in Axom. During the first sparks of conflict with Antok, the royalty granted executive power to the church to lead the crusade. When Antok fell in the first age, Kolos gained more power in his drive to retake the city. Now with the narros in control, Kolos was expected to relinquish control but has refused to do so, and the current monarch does not care to press the issue. The extended narros lifespan has kept this status quo, but this is expected to change with the line of succession.

### NADIRRA

The narros of Nadirra are nomadic, moving from mine to mine, drifting across Axom, and unable to take root though also unwilling to leave their kingdom. Nadirra may be one of the largest of these roaming communities, but it is also a common example of how villages around Axom survive. They erect few permanent buildings, preferring ones that can be erected and collapsed easily. They and other towns have perfected shelter deployment to include massive pavilions and multi-level structures, all of which can be torn down and rebuilt in a matter of hours. Sentries provide notice hours before an impending attack. There have been more than a few occasions where an attacking force has stumbled on an empty camp, subsequently suffering whatever traps left behind. Nadirra has even doubled back to reclaim previous sites. However, not every evacuation has been smooth or complete. The success of these endeavors only came about from the integration of humans fleeing from mountains and forests. The narros, often judged to be xenophobic, went against their general nature given their need for survival, and the humans mingling with the battle-worn population offered up the knowledge to maintain mobility.

*"Bailer, your house is..." Rainus told him. Bailer turned his head around to see the bungalow once again steering away from the caravan line, directly to the black bogs of the Norasak Marsh. Bailer settled his shoulders in frustration and stormed after his house.*

*He shouted to its back.*

*"Zagad, you turn yourself right around this once!" The bungalow stopped just before the mud. "Yeah, that's right." It began to roll again. "Don't you dare," Bailer snapped. "I will not wash the mud from your siding again." He remarked to Rainus who followed behind, "Damn thing loves the mud."*

*The bungalow proceeded into the muck, throwing wet dirt over its wooden rollers, across its windows and doors.*

*Bailer shouted. "You will turn around this instant, or Oaken help me—" Bailer threw his arms in disbelief as the house fell into the water, sinking a full three feet, over the wheel, licking water through the front door.*

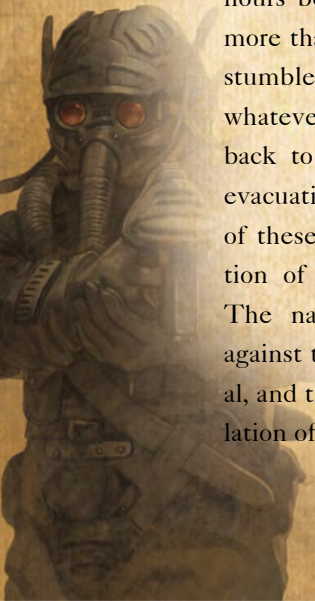
*"Dammit, now look what you've done." After a few failed spins of its wheels to move, the house finally gave up. "Proud of yourself? I should leave you here. No new shingles for you!"*

A Pilgrim's Tale  
The Voyage of Seddon Archer  
By Seddon Archer

With Delecoure and the Gloam to the north and tenenbri to the west, there are few places for the narros to go. It is only a matter of time before fate catches up to wandering towns like Nadirra.

### CRAGARRAN

Cragarran was one of the last narros cities to fall, but its proximity to Antok has prevented its appropriation by the awnee, and the manner of its collapse became of note. One day, 370 years ago, the entire population vanished. The houses remained with weapons gathering dust in the armory. The only evidence of their fate was a massive tear in the ground leading to eastern shores, like a massive claw tore in through the shoreline. No known creature resembles this impression. Given Cragarran's distance from both ogre- and tenenbri-controlled land, Cragarran could be repopulated, and a trifling repopulation did occur. It remains mostly underused.





## JUGGERNATH

Growing annoyed at having to abandon their towns to shift from short-term mine to short-term mine ahead of raiders, the narros lord, Xiamafous Bares, thought it prudent to modify his town to move entirely without neither abandoning any structures behind nor needing to waste time erecting temporary structures at their new home.

Every house, every store, every refinery in Juggernath rolls on massive wheels, enchanted by great magic from their sole magic user, the human/narros half-fae Yanna Palmetta. They roll to another prospect, take root and the population begins its work. Farms are setup, and a mine is dug. Riches are sold to other communities or held back to expand the mobile town. The caravan of buildings is seen more in motion than stationary. In total, Juggernath has roamed 7,000 kilometers over the past three centuries, zig-zagging across Southam, though remaining mostly within the region of Axom.

Each construct appears to move under its own will, and a few have even broken from the caravan to take a more leisurely route, but none have ever abandoned the others. Each building has a name and, some argue, basic personality traits.

## PROMONRIG

Unlike any other community in Axom, the administration of Promonrig is carried out by humans rather than narros, the latter dedicating to hunting and defending. The two species seldom mingle despite encouragement by the married ruling couple of Bart and Marisilandra Elpidos. Bart maintains the books while his narros wife maintains the defense. They met when riding above the trees. He impressed her with his uncanny intelligence and virtually unmatched physical training in various forms of martial arts. Unfortunately, despite the bond, they have yet to produce any children, and when the narros mine joined with a human farming community, none of the citizens embraced the other and remain separate today.

The most noteworthy event was 200 years ago when the mine broke into a natural cavern that lead back to an open clearing. Scouts discovered the clearing was 3,000 kilometers away. This allowed Promonrig to function effectively in two different locations, connect-

*"We leave it to them. It is not a fear of decay. They are one with nature, a synergy even we lack. The land is better for it. We would be privileged to share their space, but honor what it is. Even we are humbled. Sylphids, dawnlings, what you call centaurs and fauns. Every moment, their land grows in beauty."*

*"Hags, harpies, dojenn. Why do your people ignore the malevolence forming within your line?"*

*"Exceptions prove the rule."*

*"No they don't, you gormless phrist."*

*Sabina So  
Malnificence*

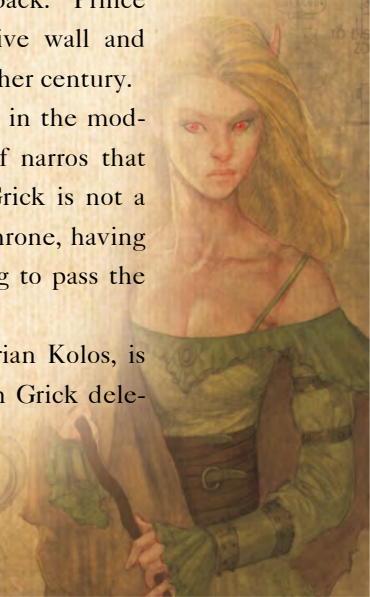
ed by a single umbilical (called "the Shift") within the Promonrig mine. Very few people know the location of both halves of Promonrig, and after 200 years, no one has been able to coordinate an attack on both locations at once. If ogres attack the northern side, or if tenenbri attack the southern side, the population flees across to the other side. Both sides (on separate occasions) have been nearly destroyed, with enemy forces attempting to pursue through the umbilical. However, as the opposition is routed through a narrow corridor, it allows military on the opposite side to properly dispatch any opposition. Since few people know of the shortcut, few can use it. Exceptions have been known to occur, allowing travelers to save considerable time, jumping from one side of Axom to the other. As both halves of town sit on opposite sides of the narros kingdom, there isn't much military value to the link. Despite attempts, no other shortcuts have been found within Promonrig.

## REAFE

The fact that Reafe remained in one place after a century shows moderate hope for the narros in Southam. It sits hundreds of miles safely from tenenbri or ogres. They hold their breath and refuse to unpack. Prince Ravelick Grick hopes to build a defensive wall and make permanent roots soon, maybe in another century.

Grick is probably one of the oldest fae in the modern age, enough to be the grandfather of narros that were born during Terros. Technically, Grick is not a prince but the rightful royal to claim the throne, having stepped away from leadership but refusing to pass the mantle to any of his offspring.

The current steward of Axom, Rororian Kolos, is the head of narros church in Antok, which Grick dele-







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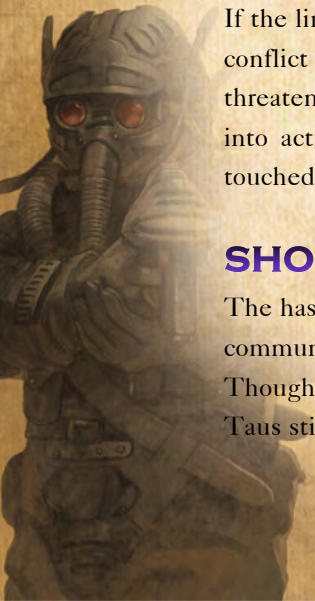
gated authority to during the initial years of the war. When the narros retook the holy city, Kolos refused to relinquish authority, citing the need to defend the city instead of continued threats. Kolos believes he, and by extension, the church must maintain control until the narros retake the entirety of the continent. Knowing that to challenge that would be to invoke a civil war, thus handing the empire to its enemies, Grick has refused to object, an opinion not shared by his offspring. If the line of succession were to pass, surely such a civil conflict would occur. However, if the royalty were ever threatened, it would rally the entirety of the kingdom into action, pointing to why Reafe has remained untouched in the conflict.

### SHORERUNNER // TAUS

The hastily erected sign approaching the docks lists the community as "Shorerunner // Taus". The error stuck. Though not technically part of Axom, Shorerunner // Taus still consists of humans and narros born under the

realm. They took flight to the coast in hopes of finding a sea route to Canam that avoided the treacherous land journey through the Gloam. Upon discovering the violent ocean, many gave up ever finding such a route. At some point, the elder narros Telkanus Taus figured a route just slightly out to sea might stave off the severity of the waves. But not one boat design they constructed over a hundred years survived more than a few miles before breaking up in the waves.

Not long after the seventh attempt, Taus found himself wandering the coast, lamenting his failure when he happened upon the injured body of a massive beached behemoth. The creature could not struggle from the sand and was close to death. Taus gathered his people and pulled the beast to the shallows but refused to release it back to the wild. In his opinion, the creature was now his property. The beast was once a sperm whale from Earth's past, mutated by magical influence to an even greater size. Taus took it as his beast of burden. After specialized stocks were con-







structed offshore, the town began designing and constructing a vessel around the massive whale.

From a distance, this first wavecrasher resembled a normal galleon, albeit taller than others and lacking any sails. Only when closer does one see the goliath the ship rests upon. The wooden and steel assembly is sealed from the outside weather. Because of its propulsion system, this prototypical wavecrasher could totally submerge for short periods, able to dive under huge waves instead of braving them. Regardless of the complaints by some of abuse and mistreatment, Taus still personally commands his unique vessel on the month-long journey up the coast to Canam, to docks like Whale-End's Point, Tallage Market, and York.

The beast was the first wavecrasher. Its design would be later duplicated by a dozen other replicas. Shorerunner / / Taus was the first to accommodate

these animals and remains the longest running. Ever since, wavecrashers have shepherded travelers to and

from Canam and over the world, the only method considered safe. As a result, the price of passage is astronomical (rates for steerage start at 150gp).

Even today, the archetypal beast, known as Mok, shows no sign of rebellion, senility, or age. It has never disobeyed an order, having not even appeared to age in that time.

## CUEJIGAR

The chaparrans of the Kamaq are both less numerous and less cohesive than their brethren in Canam. Unlike Dawnamoak, presenting a lacquer-thin façade of a unified government, Cuejigar is made up of innumerable independent villages with no pretense of concord.





## CHAPTER NINE: SOUTHAM

*When I was briefly lost in the tunnels of Northern Vanaka, I took a moment to carry a conversation with a mound of red gelatin regarding the socioeconomic status of cultures embracing capitalism and their eventual decline to exploiting the masses by the hands of the bourgeoisie. A month later, I had escaped the mountain caves, passed through Araran-dish, and entered Delecoure...and then it got really weird.*

*A Pilgrim's Tale  
The Voyage of Seddon Archer  
By Seddon Archer*

Of course, chaparrans are chaparrans everywhere, and the variations of culture and traditions differ only in microscopic degrees between the communities, including slight variations in hunting practices, social interaction, religious beliefs, or gender responsibilities. But to a chaparran, these inconsequential distinctions might as well denote different species. For a people notoriously xenophobic, this has led to an inability to cooperate even among their own kind, signaling the demise of any hopes of a chaparran nation throughout the Kamaq. Chaparrans of different communities will tolerate one another, even come to each others' aid when asked, but they don't really *like* each other. Of course, they all like non-chaparrans even less.

To complicate these matters further, many of the chaparran communities of Cuejigar drift—shifting locations following weather patterns, migrating prey, and the whims of chaotic leaders. Consequently, it can be nearly impossible to predict what community one may encounter when traveling into the largest single rainforest in the world. The communities along the Kundal-goni canopy network track these movements and are skilled in recognizing the features of many of the communities. The following is only a short list of the most well-known outlier chaparran communities—those breaking from the norm accepted for chaparrans. These titles refer to the people, as they can spread across multiple nearby communities.

### ADU

The Adu prefer tall grass and pastures to forests and have adapted their hunting style to match. The Adu are also more amicable to outsiders despite their isolation within the forests of Cuejigar. The Adu hold a dozen valleys within across the forest, and all surrounded

by traditional chaparrans. There are rumors that some can be found deep within Dawnamoak, but no credible witness has ever been found for such.

### MALSAI

Those of Malsai practice an extreme form of body modification, scarification. Instead of employing ink, blades cut deeply in the skin in such a way to make the enduring scars replicate the desired design. The Malsai have perfected this technique to parade intricate designs and reduce healing time. The pain endured is part of the tradition. All accepted visitors are expected to gain a mark. The Malsai are seldom seen, as they're mostly popular within the inner regions of Cuejigar.

### ZIMBA

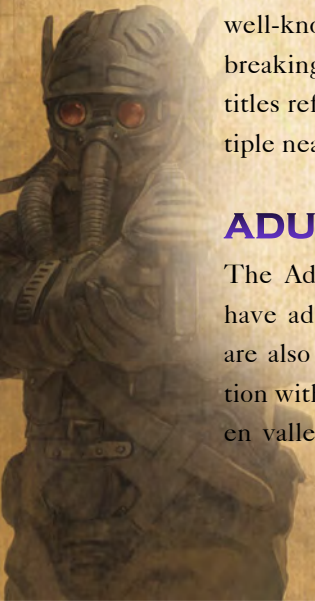
Neck coils are common among the chaparrans of Zimba, with children being forced to wear them, adding additional coils as they grow, resulting in the appearance of long necks. It is thought this was meant for the chaparrans to resemble laudenians. These coils are never removed, only added. The Zimba also spit in people's faces as a greeting. The Zimba are only seen in the southern regions of Cuejigar.

### KUMAC

Chaparrans as a rule wear as few clothes as possible—except for the Kumac. The Kumac wear elaborate headdresses that cover most of their bodies. They are often extremely colorful with the most desired tones being purple and blue. It is believed the warriors of Kumac can control the loose fabric flowing behind them as easily as an appendage, a similar practice rumored to have been developed by an order of warriors across the ocean. The Kumac, despite being an outlier, are the most commonly seen in Cuejigar, given their communities are often fringed by major bodies of water.

### KOBUS

The Kobus are not friendly; in fact, if it were up to them, they would kill all non-chaparran intelligent creatures within all the forests in the world. Kobus cultists are credited for most of the unprovoked attacks upon innocent travelers in Southam. They have been known to practice trophy collection, sport hunting, and cannibalism.







The Kobus migrated from the north less than 250 years ago, a southward spur of the same forced migration that led to the chaparran invasion of Arkady.

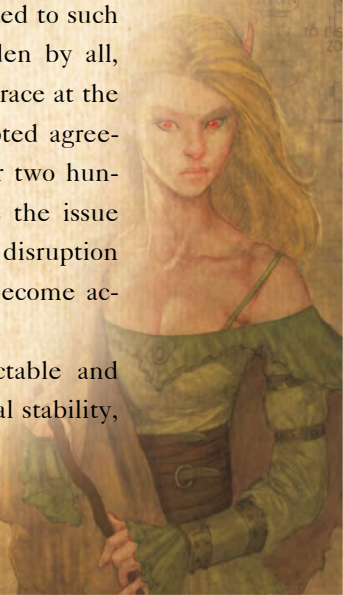
In Southam, they began to repopulate in the northern patches of Cuejigar. Without a centralized resistance from the other chaparrans, the Kobus expanded, eventually forcing conflict with tenenbri, ogres, and those living above them in the Kundalgoni.

## DELECOURE

Delecoure is an expanse of chaos and not a region claimed by any nation, not even the ogres of Skogra. With the Catalyst of Ararandish and Skogra effectively cutting the continent from the north, Delecoure has been left untainted by any marks of civilization. The Gloam to the north assured the isolation of this region.

For decades into the new age, the land suffered greatly under the chaos of magic, in much the same way as Burganasis did in Canam. However, Delecoure found a greater influx of fae anathema given its proximity to many races susceptible to degradation. The narros, chaparrans, and tenenbri all found their kind devolve within this zone, accelerated to such an extreme as to render the region forbidden by all, though it was the narros (the most dominant race at the time) who suffered most. It was an unscripted agreement none of them were willing to cross for two hundred years until the arrival of Skogra made the issue moot. It was only then that the background disruption finally stabilized enough for the region to become accessible to intelligent creatures.

Like Burganasis, Delecoure is unpredictable and dangerous, exhibiting wide shifts in geological stability,





but where Burganasis appears affected mostly by gravity Delecoure disruption affects mostly chemistry, further expanding the spread of anathema in the region. It has also resulted in bizarre flora and fauna seen nowhere else in the world, organisms sequestered within Delecoure, compliments of both the Zoic mountains and the immense Catalyst of Ararandish that cuts the continent in half. Delecoure takes delight in the strange, unique monsters it can generate through pure random mutation. It is the only region where two chiggoth have been spotted together. It is also the region from which the ogres are originally believed to have spilled from. Several expeditions have reported plant life appearing displaced from an alien world as well as creatures that have no business existing.

### GAGUA

The awnee don't technically have a name for their kingdom—'Gagua' refers to the totality of the land, coast to coast, which they claim to both own and share. To the awnee, Gagua belongs to everyone, with borders not existing in reality. Regardless, other nations have defined the borders of the awnee-controlled territory, and the name stuck. The majority of this land was once dominated by the narros when, in a mad dash to claim unoccupied territory, they erected cities without establishing proper defenses. When the inevitable retaliation occurred by ogres and tenenbri, the narros were pushed back to a small patch in the northeast, leaving dozens of impressive cities unoccupied and open for annexing.

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In the north, uncivilized ogres left those cities to crumble, and nature retook the land quickly. In the south, an emerging spawn race of hyper-evolved oposums took the established infrastructure as a catalyst to develop their empire, with the obvious side-effect of adopting narros traditions as well as elements of their spoken and written language. The rush to appropriate these abandoned communities occurred so quickly, not even the tenenbri were able to move in despite being the ones that forced the exodus of the narros in the first place.

Despite initially desiring conflict, the tenenbri empire of Vanaka allowed the awnee occupation, considering the small creatures little more than annoying vermin

*The water is only a few feet deep—why over-engineer all—right, forgot. We're talking about narros here.*

*The legends left behind claims they spent decades creating this vast infrastructure in its entirety with the intent of following it up with this great city that would spread to the horizon, reach to the sky, and hold a million narros. No wonder these cities fell to the tenenbri. Spending half a century building sewers for a city that would fall a year later.*

*Apparently, at some point, it was just the sewers and a massive flat concrete floor on which to build a metropolis. The awnee could expand this city five times over and still not overwork this system. Now it's just a cavern under a naive community, unknown of the dangers swimming underneath.*

*I heard stories about tiny pets flushed down the drain that feed on the enchanted growths down below and grow up to be giants. I am sure those are just tales reserved for bad fantasy novels.*

*Regardless, the Colosso came from this—what started as a prestigious career for city maintenance turned into a contest to test the mettle of the kingdom's greatest warriors. They were also losing too many city engineers. So why not make an event about it? This is when I arrived and submitted my name for the Colosso.*

*Warrick Sutton*

*A Journal Through The Wilds*

*485 AE*

not worth the time to exterminate. Despite having a short lifespan, the awnee prefer to wait for more open territory which they believe will occur as the tenenbri and narros wage war, with the latter expected to be the loser. In an inevitable future where the narros are defeated and pushed from Southam, the awnee expect to expand and take the entire eastern half of the continent, forcing another eventual war with the tenenbri only after many generations.

Gagua is punctuated by three epic repurposed cities set far apart across the land—Basilisco, Sogamoso, and Tundama, the latter responsible for the Kord, a bold and perhaps foolhardy rail system connecting these cities with dozens of other awnee and human villages within the nation, themselves also built from abandoned narros architecture.





## BASILISCO

The most eastern awnee city, Basilisco is renowned for its massive centralized cathedral dedicated to the Oaken faith. To outsiders, it appears the entire city is the cathedral. The other buildings of the city match the architectural style of the central spire, and given the central church sits atop the only hill, Basilisco creates an illusion of an immense pyramid dotted with hundreds of identical gothic spires. It was from here where the awnee developed most of their religious beliefs. Basilisco also operates the closest thing to a fishing industry the awnee have, since their repeated efforts have yet to develop a naval fleet capable of reaching beyond easy sight of the shore. Thankfully, they do have dominion over the Strait of Pelotas and its patch of relatively calm water. The city's placement on the opposite side of the Tigris does render it somewhat isolated from the rest of the

awnee empire, but its distance from tenenbri controlled lands does preclude attack.

Basilisco is also famous for its sewers, built by the narros to distribute seawater to locations in the city. Not a lattice of narrow and short tunnels, the Basilisco Catacombs feature brutalist architecture several stories tall with limited illumination, pushing its ceiling into shadow, offering the illusion of a forest of stone pillars rising into a permanent night. The overall footprint of the catacombs dwarfs that of the city itself, and it is thought narros still live within the network, hiding from guards and living off the refuse above.

While narros living underneath are rumors, the monsters in the catacombs are very much fact, including at least two beasts of Tau. The awnee entertain contests for aspiring adventurers each year, resulting in at least a few champions and more than a few missing contest-





*"The tallman came from mammal as we. Fae from ground and tree. We gain as they fall. Immortality prevents movement. Immortality makes one slow.*

*"Yet, we wait. In time cities fall, we breed a thousand times—more living and more movement. Smarter. Stronger. Tallman and awnee—mammals from mammals.*

*"Let male live well. Let female live well. Let the peoples multiply. Creator! Where are you? Outside? Inside? Above this world in the clouds? Below this world in the shades? Hear me! Answer me! Preserve what you infuse with life for ages without end, hold it in your hand!"*

Psalm of Mazatmetzilin

ants. A few humans have been crowned some years and a sure fire way to be declared a hero of the realm no matter the race or gender is to survive the "Colosso."

Basilisco is also the home of the Kasika order of awnee warriors, where training is completed and where graduates are distributed across the kingdom. Despite the distances between awnee cities, there is still a lack of military colleges anywhere else in Gagua, resulting in the employment of the Kord to distribute warriors across the land.

### THE KORD

Unlike Canam, Southam is blessed with not one, but two variations of mass transit. In the south, the awnee, encouraged by the engineering knowhow of newly arrived human immigrants, developed a simple wide-gauge rail system nicknamed the Kord.

Kord lines run between the three major awnee cities and with a few Gagua villages lucky enough to be alongside. Given the propensity of awnee to congregate near the cities, and the lack of towns near the rail path, communities are rare, leaving hundreds of miles of the network unsupervised. The decision to make the gauge of the rail wide allows for larger trains, faster speeds, and increased stability in case rails ever became compromised. Unlike the gimfen Creep, the Kord requires very little maintenance, mostly due to most of the geographical instability being focused in the western mountains. Kord rails often pass through open fields with occasional flooding being the only real concern.

Kord trains, built from techan knowledge without contribution from gimfen, do not run as well as the trains of Gnimfall or Seliquam, or even Baruch Malkut's tentative prototypes. To combat disruption, they are built to a primitive design, little more than huge water boilers mounted to oversized gearboxes. A train often carries beasts of burden and hand cranks in case of disruption.

The Kord is fortunate to connect with several well-known stops able to resupply and trade including Rigalo, Torras, Derro-Derro, and Caxis.

### SOGAMOSO

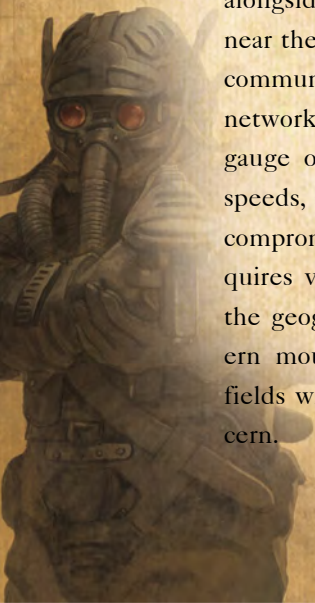
The awnee northern capital sits at the end of the Tigre—a massive strait that nearly slices Southam in half. It does successfully slice Gagua in half, with cities lying on either side of the massive expanse of water. Sogamoso technically does the same, as the city expands up the north and south sides (justifying its nickname as "the Maw").

It is the source of all naval traffic in the only stable body of water of such size in Southam—natural bulwarks at the mouth of the strait ensure this, though not preventing massive monsters usually only seen deep in the ocean from migrating inland. After the first few managed to ravage the coast and penetrate all the way to Sogamoso, the city erected hundreds of battlements, including ballistas, trebuchets, and other ranged weapons facing the sea rather than the land. Consequently, an invasion from an enemy via the sea became suicidal, and currently, nearly a hundred creatures as big as buildings have been slain by the Maw.

When such an event occurs, anything useful is stripped from the corpse, including food, oils, and medicinal supplies, creating an economy that makes Sogamoso one of the richest cities in Southam.

Like nearly every city in Gagua, Sogamoso was previously built upon the foundation of a mostly intact narros city, though the defensive line came sometime later; if the original city benefited from Sogamoso's fortifications, it never would have fallen. Sogamoso's greatest role, however, is to be the seat of the Zaque—one of the two blessed souls of the Raj, currently in the form of the awnee Aquinozalxo.

The Zaque doubles as both a religious leader and a governmental position and the young awnee possess total authority over the city, sharing realm power with the Zipa in the south. Unlike Tundama, Sogamoso's





religious order has a much greater footprint, with the machi shamans of awnee operating all their monasteries in and around the city.

## TUNDAMA

The awnee southern capital, Tundama was the first to fall to the tenenbri invasion from the south, and thus was spared the most from their crusade, as the fae raced past to push deeper into the continent. The awnee moved in shortly after and claimed the city as their first. It eventually became the southern capital and the seat of the Zipa.

Tundama rests on relatively flat land near a large sea inlet, not unlike Sogamoso. A relative consistent shallow depth around the city has prevented the interference of monsters or flooding but has precluded the city from hosting wavecrashers. As such, the city has benefited from ocean fishing more than most others in the region. The narros originally saw value in this commodity and took advantage of another unique attribute of this location in order to accelerate construction—the ruins of a human city sitting under the water (a common resource in Southam).

The geography of Cratonis was already foreign to the narros after a 65-million-year absence, but they were initially startled to discover that calamities (above and beyond the bolide impact) had changed the landscape recently, leading to coastal human cities swallowed under rising sea levels.

This left a large antediluvian human city almost entirely underwater, marking a narrow river inlet from the earlier age. Land reclamation and dike construction had attempted to stave off the flooding, but it was obviously ineffective, leaving hundreds of concrete buildings jutting from the water over pavement, foundation reinforcement, and refined raw materials. This old city was spared much of the erasure following the Second Hammer as it was likely already mostly underwater when the impact occurred.

The narros decided to preserve most of the ruins and instead built over them, reinforcing and exploiting ruined building as supports and erecting a massive platform on which to place their city, extending to where the ground-level ruins of the old city finally emerge from the shore. The narros seaport sat directly above the submerged one from humanity's past. Later expe-

*What we know of the north, virtually nothing remains from the past. The buildings collapsed; nature retook the land. Their ruins are scarce. Past the water in the west sits a sunken forest of stone and steel once called Lima.*

*The wood washed away, but the concrete and rust remain. No one went out to claim them or scavenge their technology, and it all remains rotting and ignored, like so many of our cities, stranded in the water, tragic unlike us.*

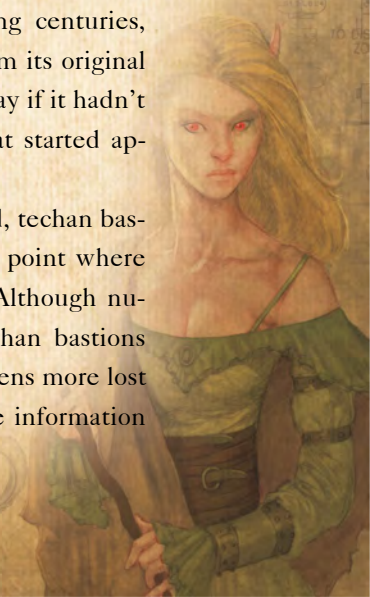
*On the opposite east, Paulo sat further inland, but suffered from scavengers...and yet, part still stands. The original metropolis must have been immense. Now it is only a den of spawn; the narros all but ignoring it. And then there was the old capital of the nation that predated us—the narros took to claiming that, erecting their ancient holy city upon the ruins. Shame. A few techans remain to squat upon the remains of our past, those we could not convince to immigrate. They survive dispersed across the land, unreachable by even us. There's no telling how many more ruins linger in the mountains or the forest, resisting the encroach of magic. Why they survived here but not in the north, I couldn't tell you.*

*Colwin Santis  
Novo Geografia*

ditions to the sunken city (the narros' tendency to sink rather than swim proving to be an asset in this case) pulled riches from human infrastructure including tungsten, platinum, and gold while leaving the structures relatively intact.

The narros barely scratched the surface of what they could glean from the ruins when the tenenbri forced them from their home. The narros were pursued, abandoning Tundama for years until a fledging spawn race of opossums appeared. The awnee appropriated the city as well as the knowledge the human civilization preserved underneath. In the intervening centuries, the awnee did little to expand the city from its original construction and would have kept it that way if it hadn't been for a handful of human refugees that started appearing.

As it was common throughout the world, techan bastions struggled to survive until reaching a point where they could push back against intruders. Although numerous records exist of known failed techan bastions (Pontiac, Sebring, Salt), there could be dozens more lost to history. In Southam, there is very little information







regarding the bastion of Patagonia, other than the fact it failed relatively early in the history of the new age, barely larger than a techan atoll at that time. Survivors claim it was not an attack that finally did them in, but rather the result of the predatory practices of a larger bastion, Novo. Regardless, its settlers scattered, with many dying in the wilderness and the remainder finding sanctuary either with the narros or with the awnee.

Tundama eventually took in thousands of humans around this time, individuals eager to recover relics from their past and reconstruct iconography and aesthetics from human history. This created a bizarre patchwork vista, with the few visible pre-Hammer buildings merging with the narros construction and the narros-inspired awnee rebuildings, now coupled to an early-industrial Earth metropolis populated by humans. Although the races of the city do socialize more than other multi-ethnic fae cities, a natural separation still occurs despite the awnee outnumbering the resident humans a hundred to one.

The shift in power took a radical departure recently when the southern half of the Raj was appointed to the human Mateas Aguirre, who pushed for greater integration of the two communities. The current ambition by

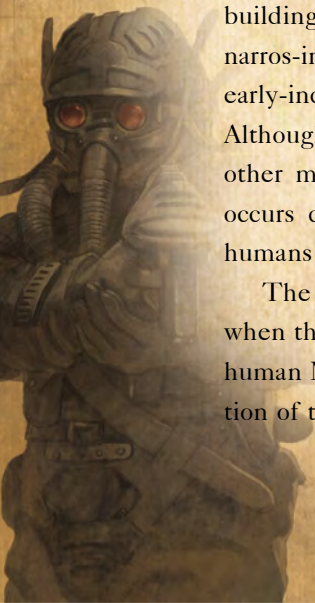
the human population, however, is to start a conflict with the bastion of Novo that destroyed Patagonia hundreds of years prior.

If carried out, it would be the first open war between a techan and echan civilization on this side of the planet. Obviously, Aguirre favors harmony within the realm, having to balance the interests of the awnee who hold no grudges to the past. They prefer patience over anything else, despite a war being inevitable once a victor in the tenenbri/narros conflict is revealed. This does not mean the city is without struggle, as the awnee devil Tota has been recently observed hopping between a set of nearby lakes known collectively as Unanunu, striking at nearby villages and farms. To date, attempts to rout him from the location have failed.

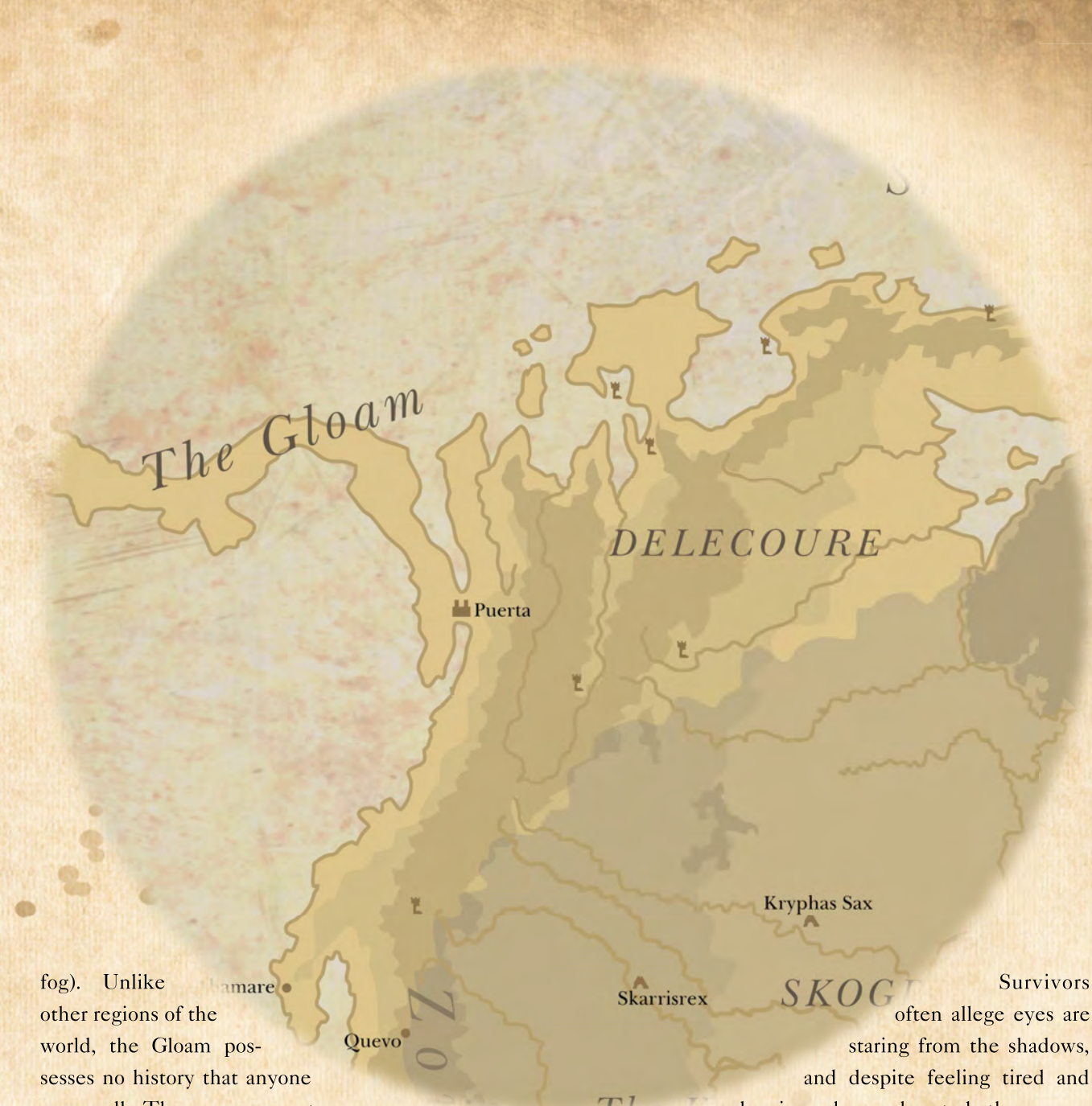
## THE GLOAM

Further isolating Southam from Canam is the Gloam—a dark landscape of shadow and fog covering the entire junction of the two continents between Kesakas and Delecoure.

A hazardous trek, the Gloam's dominating features are its forest of rock and its thick layer of smog (not







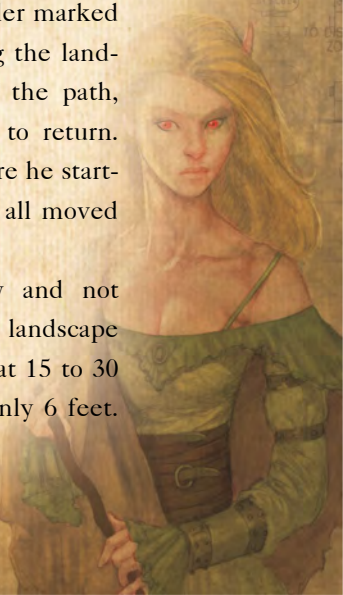
fog). Unlike other regions of the world, the Gloam possesses no history that anyone can recall. The common quote associated with it is also the only description. "The Gloam always was and always will be."

Those from the previous age do not recall its presence there, but there is no information recorded anywhere in the region before the Gloam appeared. There are few legends, riddles, and poems about it. Those who emerge from the other side seldom speak of their time within, their voyage having been harmless or so traumatic that they block what occurred via post-traumatic stress.

More than half that enter never emerge again. Those that do survive can do so years, decades, or even centuries later, with visible aging and no memory of missing time. Survivors can account for the journey's passage but have no explanation for the loss.

Survivors often allege eyes are staring from the shadows, and despite feeling tired and sleeping when exhausted, they never see the sun above. Strangely, the Gloam is never completely dark, allowing anyone to pass without a torch if one were so inclined. Any lakes or rivers within the Gloam have dried up; hills are flattened. Getting lost would be an issue until one thoughtful traveler marked the fastest route on the stone towers dotting the landscape. Alas, when word passed around of the path, many others attempted the journey, never to return. One finally appeared months later, back where he started, claiming the symbols on the towers had all moved and directed him back.

These towers appear placed artificially and not grown from a geological effect. They dot the landscape in the thousands and are virtually identical, at 15 to 30 feet tall, tapering to a bottom diameter of only 6 feet.





| Roll<br>1d10 | Result   |
|--------------|--|
| 1-4:         | The smog increases to offer total concealment—blocking vision entirely for fifty feet in every direction. This lasts 24 hours.   |
| 5-7:         | Time begins to slow for the target and for all creatures that can see the target or is within 50 feet of the target. For every hour that passes, one day passes outside the Gloam. This lasts 24 hours Gloam-time.   |
| 8-9:         | The smog increases to offer total concealment—blocking vision entirely for fifty feet in every direction. The target area becomes a nauseating gas. Each creature that is completely within the target area at the start of its turn must make a DC10 Fortitude saving throw. On a failed save, the creature is sickened until the smog changes its attribute. This altered smog lasts 24 hours.   |
| 10:          | The smog increases to offer total concealment—blocking vision entirely for fifty feet in every direction. The target area becomes a poisoning nerve gas. Each creature that is completely within the target area at the start of its turn must make a DC10 Fortitude saving throw. The creature takes 5d8 poison damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one. After ten turns, the smog dissipates to a lightly obscured area.   |
| Special:     | If targets refrain from using any light source (magical or otherwise), they have a +2 bonus on the Will saving throw. If one target within 100 feet of another employs light, neither gain this benefit. Any target succeeding on a Will saving throw 5 or more times no longer is required to make saving throws for the duration of their travel in the Gloam. There is no way to dispel the smog, and effects (like spells) intended to dissipate the smog are nullified after one turn. Targets immune to gas are immune to the poison and damaging effects but not the time slowing. Tilen, tenenbri, and narros anathema (ogres, og-graks, ettins, etc) are immune to the Gloam's effects. |

These obelisks feel rough with broken edges caused by elements. They have no markings other than those etched on by travelers. Some are hundreds of feet apart while others sit so closely packed as to create a maze for unlucky victims. The permanent bluish-green fog covering the expanse never lifts despite temperature or wind. Paranoid passers feel uneasy, and fear beasts sit within the stillness, waiting for unlucky prey to venture into their trap. Seemingly conscious, the smog attracts

to all living things, clouding around them, making distant sight hampered.

The Gloam is also not limited to land and covers a broad expanse of water. It is estimated the Gloam covers an area matching the original body of land above water claimed by the long-dead nations of Central America, though large parts of this region are now underwater. Thus, in narrow patches around what was once Costa Rica, the Gloam hugs the land, but on either side, the smog expands outward, making attempts at a water crossing requiring a push further out from the shore to avoid the curse.

**Property:** The smog blocks normal and darkvision. Only creatures with blindsight avoid this hampering. The Gloam is offer concealment. Every 24 hours within the smog, each character must make a DC15 Will saving throw with a failure resulting in the smog affecting the area around the target based on the table..

**Note:** Every 24 hours (Gloam-time), each character must make an identical saving throw.

## THE KAMAQ

Despite the belief by the chaparrans of Cuejigar that their land touches on every tree in Southam, there are tens of thousands of square kilometers in the forest with no chaparrans living in it. The largest rainforest in the world, like all the smaller ones not tainted by corruption, is teeming with life, metamorphosed by magic, though in the Kamaq they are especially present. In regions not dominated by chaparrans, a few humans and awnee have managed to survive within small unmarked villages, villages growing scarce as chaparrans expand and consider outsiders as interlopers. Even though ultimately this is dependent on the specific chaparran community encountered, generally it only affects the way the chaparrans drive out outsiders. However, in certain situations, the chaparrans have avoided certain portions of the jungle due to specific threats or beliefs, including anathema infestation or engorged spawn creatures best left alone.

However, deep into the jungle, past the outer perimeter, there live indigenous humans leading traditional lifestyles, many of which are completely unaware that the world is any different than it was for their ancestors for thousands of years before the Second Hammer. Food, medicine, and attire is gleaned from the jungle. Education comes via oration and is limited to hunting and gathering. Given a large amount of unclaimed land



*The Gloam is not an aberration or an outlier. When the majority of people finding such a place don't survive to recount the discovery, it makes gauging such a cancer's proliferation difficult.*

*The issue was discovering shared traits, but how does one go about finding those traits. I admit it took some personal risk. The simplest and safest route of experimentation was analyzing the smog.*

*Here is a brief description of components of the Gloam's smog: carbon monoxide (CO), sulfur dioxide (SO<sub>2</sub>), ozone (O<sub>3</sub>), nitrogen dioxide (NO<sub>2</sub>), chloro-fluorocarbons (CFCs), ammonia (NH<sub>3</sub>) as well as particulate matter.*

*We also picked up radioactivity, probably connected to a percentage of radon. Interestingly, while such mixture is nearly impossible naturally, many of these were recorded polluting the larger cities of mankind's past. Radioactivity may point to an old power plant or the result of a nuclear detonation. If true, it would be in contradiction of accepted traits of disruption that such smog would be able to persist.*

*However, with this knowledge in hand, we scoured records and conducted experiments and reached out to other labs able to be reached. Although circumstantial, there is a report of a location exhibiting similar qualities in Baruch Malkut called the Salt Swamp. Another example sits in the ruins of an old techan city near Mossokev across the ocean. Despite assumptions, the Sana Marsh is not a related phenomenon—leading to another theory that the Gloam is not a creation of corruption but rather disruption.*

Dr. Aimee Stargher  
Sierra Madre Aggrepedia

available, native villages employ shifting cultivation to sustain their food supply, forcing their migration between fertile land. Unlike others in the forest, chaparrans that come across these villages tend to leave them alone, considering them part of the natural order. Tribes are usually only a collection of families, and some of the known examples include Toromono, Yaguayan, Kapubo, and Araranoak.

## THE KUNDALGONI

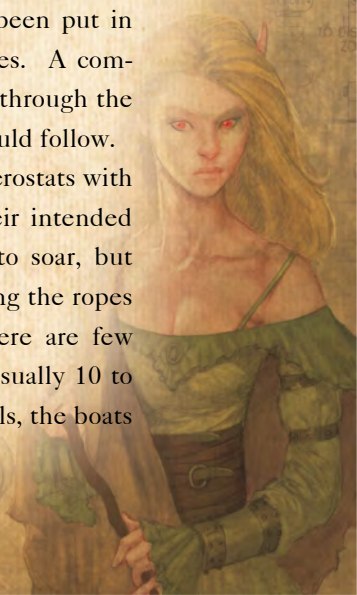
Chaparrans take pride in their isolation, and upon their return to Earth, the smaller branch that arrived in Southam rather than Canam claimed the largest rainfor-

est on the planet, the Kamaq, a region fed by the Catalyst of Ararandish which spread to cover more than half of Southam. They then politely asked everyone else to leave. It was several years before they realized no one was listening. The narros were frantically building an empire to fill every square inch not covered by forests leaving surviving humans with few alternatives.

Eventually, it was tribal discord that shattered the chaparran dream of declaring the entirety of the Kamaq theirs. Despite a nation eventually forming in Cuejigar, a hundred others insisted on autonomy. As a result, there was never a consensus on how to deal with the native human population. The southern chaparrans never experienced the brutal conflicts with humans that characterized interactions with Dawnamoak and Laurama, so there were few inclined to cull the population (and in any case, those taking refuge within the jungle possessed a sympathy for nature, unlike those refugees who joined the narros or the bastion of Novo). For a short time, several human villages lived in peace within the jungle until the narros' conflict with the tenenbri spilled into the lowlands. While they were inclined to tolerate humans, the chaparrans would offer no forbearance to tree-fellers and deep-delvers. Lacking other options, the narros proposed to take shelter within the forest canopy, well above the chaparran villages.

The narros employed as little wood as possible to appease the outnumbering chaparrans, instead relying on stone, adobe, cork, straw, and hemp to create domiciles atop the trees, often suspended from multiple peaks to add stability. By the time the first building was erected, however, a plan had already been put in action to enact passage between the villages. A complex web of ropes and nets were interlaced through the forest from which a transportation system could follow.

That would come in the form of crude aerostats with barely enough lift potential to hold up their intended cargo. These ballons were not intended to soar, but rather remain at a fixed altitude, carried along the ropes via wind or hand-cranked propellers. There are few pulleys or grapples, just two pairs of rope usually 10 to 20 feet apart. Employing hot air like thermals, the boats







feature a much more aggressive sail structure, bestowing the ships with unbelievable speed. The controllers shift weights and their bodies to keep the boats stable when navigating the tree-tops.

Occasionally, they dip underneath the canopy, and only the skill of the controllers prevents them from crashing into passing trees. Hooks and parachutes slow the vehicles from their insane speeds when finally reaching their destinations. Unlike the thermals in Canam, the Kundalgoni aerostats are small, primitive, and rely entirely on their ropes to remain on course. If freed, an aerostat would tumble out of control until the lifting bags deflated and the craft plummeted to the ground. Fortunately, this does not happen often.

After three centuries in operation, the Kundalgoni aerostats connect a hundred villages scattered over the rainforest of Kamaq. Some individuals are born, live

out their lives, and die without ever touching the ground. Today, the Kundalgoni is truly multi-ethnic, with every fae race except the tenenbri represented along with humanity. Even some chaparrans have joined, forsaking loyalties to traditional communities. It also became popular given that the network can travel across the forest faster than any ground transport. Annual competitions have confirmed some aerostats reaching speeds more than a hundred kilometers per hour, though this is incredibly unsafe. There is no consensus to the population of the Kundalgoni, and it lacks a singular military, government, or even a standardized economy, with most of the market based on reciprocity between individuals and groups.





## FEDERA

One the largest communities on the Kundalgoni by area, Federa's success is owed entirely to its farming efforts and technological ingenuity. Spread across a dozen settlements supported by a hundred trees, Federa began as a group of independent collectives that eventually united under shared interests. Bridges were built, spanning more than a hundred feet in places, and among the larger habitats are found dozens of wind mills, workings constantly to operate the various processing facilities hanging underneath. These mills process food and pump water from an aquifer below the forest. The structure running to the ground was encased in moss and other organic compounds, and a century later is entirely concealed. The chaparrans in the base village of Strigga approved of the conduit on the condition that they skim a tax of grain processed at the mills. The tenenbri beneath them all are unaware of the aquifer and would certainly object to its presence.

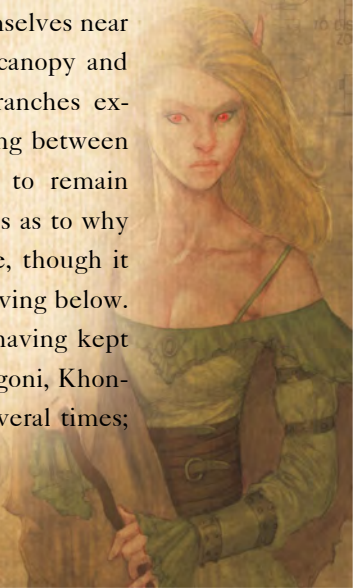
Federa is the largest exporter of potable water and milled grain on the Kundalgoni, with hundreds of aerostats carrying its goods throughout the network. Although not a farming community, the mills receive grain from Khonsu and smaller farms and process it through a

system refined over generations. The gristmills and windpumps look very different, with the latter featuring horizontal blades while the former using vertical ones. Due to the skill required for the entire operation, Federa is populated chiefly by various experts in Kundalgoni engineering (primarily narros, humans, and gimfen), though the actual population is low, with only 3,000 people calling it home. The entirety of Federa, though originally a cooperative commune, eventually fell under complete control of the narros Mattheenge Gyrry and his human wife, Matilda.

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## KHONSU

Where most Kundalgoni dwellings root themselves near the peak of a single tree, sitting atop the canopy and spreading the weight across the various branches expanding from the base, those in Khonsu hang between several trees, relying entirely on riggings to remain aloft. Obviously unsafe, there are no records as to why the Khonsu founders elected this technique, though it was probably a condition of the chaparrans living below. Even the current inhabitants are unaware, having kept no records. Like most towns on the Kundalgoni, Khonsu has been abandoned and repopulated several times;





*"Leave," he said, sharply. The breath of the last ogre was still escaping as he spoke. A few strands of his white and shadow-accented hair fell from the knot as he drew his blade from the beast.*

*"Excuse me?" she responded, still limping from the ankle cut. Maura required her blade to stand erect, keeping pressure off the wound. It wasn't too severe. The tendons were spared, and the worst would pass.*

*"I know your words...leave," he repeated, flicking the blood off the short, double-edged blade with a snap. He rolled the weapon over his shoulder. The magnetic scabbard drew the sword the rest of the way and locked it in place. The sun reflected off his blank eyes as he clicked his tongue, scanning the carnage for his lost dagger. With blood and ogre parts scattered about, it would take time. He wore chains tight in the waist and legs, loose in the arms and chest. Leather bracers covered the shins and forearms. Thin cloth protected his skin from the steel. His scaled helmet, tiny and such that it was, had fallen when he approached like a cat on all fours from under the grass in his ambush.*

*"What is your name?" Maura asked.*

*"Speak nothing." His ears still scanned the remains.*

*She leaned forward and made another step.*

*"Why can I not know?" She smirked, noticing his*

*dagger. It was driven in the back of the decapitated ogre, hidden in grime of blood. She squirmed, slightly bending to retrieve it.*

*"Your life is still in danger," he answered. She groaned, pulling the curved weapon from the dead. She held it up for him. He paused a moment, then walked up and snatched the weapon from her hand. He turned around as quickly.*

*"From who," she said to his back.*

*"Me."*

*"I must know your name," Maura asked softly. The elf turned sharply to look to her with his dead eyes. He didn't meet hers. They didn't have to.*

*"You order me, noble?—"*

*"Please?" she interrupted. He opened his mouth to retort again, but nothing emerged. She repeated. "Please."*

*"... Slan," he finally revealed.*

*"Is my life truly in danger from you?"*

*"Perhaps not," he responded, observing the scene again, though for what she didn't know.*

*"Suggest you still move on. Walk east, three days. Climb a tree and wave a boat."*

*"And if I was to walk west—" she said with a slight smirk.*

*"Nothing welcomes you there."*

*She stepped again closer, hardly trying to wash the curiosity from her face. "Humans have a tradition to protect those they save."*

either their predecessors moved on or were paid (or threatened) to renounce their title. Many humans in Southam only work to save money to purchase one of the extremely pricey tickets on the wavecrashers traveling north to Canam.

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Despite the constructs hanging a fair distance apart, Khonsu lacks connecting bridges—instead, residents skip between the “pots”. Khonsu hangs hundreds of planters between its dwellings, allowing the population to grow any number of crops, including staples and rarer herbs. The grains are often shipped to Federa for processing while others are traded directly to merchants. For those living their lives atop the trees, Khonsu is the primary source of many essentials.

The current community is run by the human Rolan McKinley and his extended family. The settlement is shockingly inbred, with more than 90% of the population being related; Rolan himself is married to his second cousin. This practice is believed to have begun

before they purchased Khonsu from the previous community, run by Salvatore Almeida, who promptly took his family and friends to the wavecrashers. McKinley's clan continued their practice despite the influx of immigrants and merchants. As a result, most pilgrims wishing to stay are ignored and outcast in the community and those despondent would later compare the clan to a cult run by an inbred leader.

## **SALVA**

Also known as “The Stump”, Salva lays claim to one of the biggest mysteries on the entire continent. The nickname is not subtle—the entire community of Salva rests upon the colossal base of what must have been the largest single organism that has ever lived in history. The base turns to a wall of jagged splinters 800 feet up, which the settlement has retained as a defensive structure. The interior was planned flat with the wood employed for the construction of the community. Nearby



*"We don't, but if you like. Three days, east." He offered him her back and started to walk away.*

*"Does the prospect of talking to me frighten you?" she asked. He did not turn.*

*"The more you attempt kindness, the more time you waste."*

*"I wish to know you."*

*"Your heart still beats strong. Adrenaline. Confuses the brain. This will pass as you walk."*

*"My name is Maura," she said plainly.*

*"Unrequired." He took a few more steps away.*

*"Why did you save me if I revolt you?" Maura asked.*

*He turned around again, his arms thrown out to the sides. He dropped them in frustration.*

*"Ogres revolt me more, only slightly."*

*"You don't mean that."*

*"You know much."*

*"I know if you truly wished it, you would've actually walked away by now." She tilted her head. The elf's shoulders dropped. He crossed his arms and let himself rest upon the tree he knew was behind him. She sidestepped closer to another tree, over another corpse.*

*"Sit. You sleep little, neither will I given this. I never would walk at this time regardless. Give me a night to know you. Keep yourself across the*

*fire. Be revolted again with the dawn." Finally, with that, the tenenbri smirked. His right ear then twitched. She smiled wider back and wondered if he could sense the change. As quickly, he frowned, moments before hearing the other.*

*"Farisslan anna arris sennosa," said the other. Maura looked around to source the voice. She glanced to Slan, who didn't bother to face the approaching tenenbri soldier behind him. The soldier's weapon had already been drawn. Maura didn't need to know where the tenenbri would stare if he had eyes to know where his attention was fixed.*

*"Sennssa," resolved Slan. He looked down, depressed about what he was about to do.*

*"Am I in danger?" Maura whispered so softly even she could hardly hear it.*

*"Yes," Slan answered.*

*"What will you do?"*

*"Remain here," he answered, reaching back to retrieve his blade again.*

*"Is that necessary?" She asked.*

*"Yes," he turned around to approach the other tenenbri.*

*A Glitter in the Dark  
An Embellished Account  
455 AE, Abridged in 465 AE.*

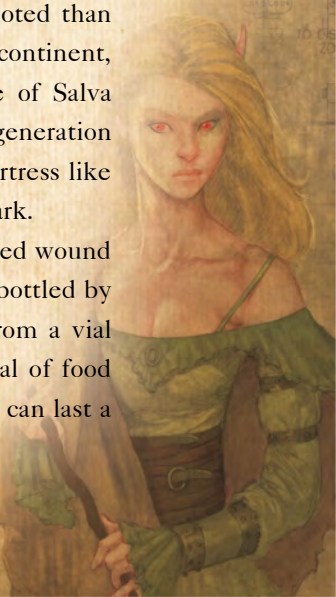
chaparrans claim the remnant was discovered in that state and initially forbade the colonization, though this objection was ignored, resulting in various later conflicts. At over 328 feet in diameter, the stump as a result encompasses an amazing 110,000 square feet. Later calculations estimate the tree, most likely a kapok, may have been nearly 3,000 feet in height (nearly a kilometer) in its prime. The mystery remains as to the location of the rest of the tree, as no debris can be found anywhere nearby. The root network for such an organism spreads for miles around, siphoning water from neighbors; as such, the stump is still alive, proof that whatever downed the tree must have occurred only a few decades before the stump was colonized.

There are theories that a full-grown tree never existed at all, more likely a naturally occurring aberration. The tellers of myths at Salva argue that God or gods unseen planted the tree and later cut and lifted it for their own purposes. Another popular legend tells that

the tree broke off its own will, which in the teller's argument, explains why the bark looks ripped into shards rather than cleanly sliced. The tree then flew into space to find another world to take root. A similar tale speaks of the tree wandering the land, using its branches as feet, most likely on its side.

The wide girth of the stump is more than enough room for the community of Salva to flourish. The inhabitants jest with a claim they are "more rooted than any other in Southam." Unlike many of the continent, prone to wander a nomadic life, the people of Salva never shuffle on and have remained in place, generation after generation. This could be due to the fortress like outer wall created by the jagged splinters of bark.

The old tree still seeps sap from the exposed wound of the break. This greenish fluid is plentiful, bottled by the population for a profit. Just one drop from a vial (containing about 2 ounces) equals a full meal of food and water for an average humanoid. One vial can last a





*The arrow tore through one tenenbri's throat. Another shot lodged in the eye socket of the second. Davan froze as the two bodies fell. He glanced down at the dying fire and the dying woman.*

*"Hold your hands," came the shout. Two emerged from the wood. In the moonlight, their eyes reflected a glint of jade, so Davan knew they were not tenenbri, an early assumption from their pale skin. These fae were taller, thinner.*

*There was a way about their approach that made Davan slightly uneasy, beyond the two drawn bows pointed at him. He raised his hands up as the two elves emerged from the dark.*

*"Held they are," Davan said.*

*"They were going to kill you," the left one said, a male, and young.*

*"I didn't need their tongue to know that," Davan responded.*

*"You wish us harm?" The right one asked, a male, and young.*

*"I'm not the one with arrows drawn," Davan responded.*

*"Why are you here?" The left asked.*

*"Curiosity," came the response, still with raised hands.*

*"Speak the truth!"*

*"Consider it spoken," he said calmly, as if he already knew they intended no harm. Davan could tell they aimed the arrows out of fear for their safety and not out of a perverted craving.*

*"Who are you?" The right asked.*

*"Davan."*

*"Nation?"*

*"Davan," he repeated. They glanced at each other for a moment before he clarified. "I lead a few, not a nation. And in answer to your previous query...hell with it."*

*Davan lowered his arms and approached the body by the fire. Davan had already noticed she was breathing, slowly. Looking at the near dead complexion of the others, it was a safe assumption he misjudged the body as well. She was very much alive and was older than the other two.*

*"Stand your ground!" the one on the left snapped. Davan ignored both the bows and the demand. He checked for her pulse and found it weak. He checked her skin and found it cold.*

*"Relax your bows, son, before your fingers itch," Davan said. "We must take her back. I have medicine."*

*"Medicine will not work," said the right.*

*Davan examined the curiosity. She was fae, with tenenbri skin and chaparran ears, though*

full month if not gorged. If the entire vial is swigged, it replicates a random potion. There is no way to know which potion it replicates until the entire vial is consumed. Despite the price, the potions are sold often and traded for supplies from other posts and towns. Despite some claims, Salva Sap has never been proven to be addictive.

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## TOCO

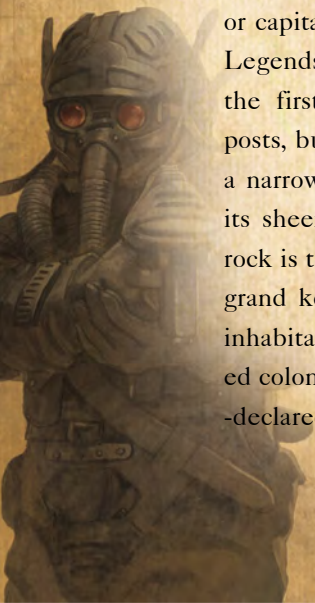
Although the Kundalgoni boasts no central government or capital, if one were to form, it would do so in Toco. Legends indicate Toco as the initial Kundalgoni colony, the first that instigated the network. Unlike other posts, built upon trees, Toco was erected at the peak of a narrow mountain virtually impossible to climb given its sheer cliff faces on all sides. The column-shaped rock is taller than most surrounding trees and the single grand keep occupies the entire summit. The current inhabitants, centuries ago, seized control of the deserted colony, finding no signs of the previous settlers. Self-declared oracles claimed Toco to be cursed and that a

family line cannot linger more than two generations before throwing their crazed bodies from the edge.

The Alvaro family line are the most recent caretakers. From Toco, they propagate more aerostat lines and encourage more villages to increase the nation's footprint across the forest. Although not leaders, Alvaro has been the facilitator of Kundalgoni expansion ever since. A few have tried to declare themselves royalty, but this is ignored within a generation. The current rulers refuse to believe the curse and other settlements are secretly hoping to stumble upon Toco empty again.

No less than a dozen lines run from Toco and the assembly built allows boats to pass without losing speed. More than a dozen smaller other settlements sit within an hour's boat ride including Magdalo, Vilena, Jaru, Milo Kilo, and Serrassonne.

A current controversy has arisen with the heir apparent, Maura Alvaro, swearing her love and bonding with a tenenbri from Vakai, Slanamorfus. Maura had taken an aerostat on a journey to find an appropriate husband from one of the few respected settlements in the net-





jagged and scarred. She was taller and with ghostly white hair. "What are you?" he asked her. "You're not *tenenbri*."

"*Tilen*, from across the water," the left answered for her.

"Never seen you before." Davan checked her pulse again. "Her pulse is faint. Cold—"

"The look of death amongst the living," the right interrupted.

"It's our curse," she finally said. Davan met her eyes and noticed them the same shade of brilliant green as the others. Orbiting around Davan's back, her sons finally rested their bows.

Davan directed his question to her. "If true, how hurt are you really?"

"Enough to not recover—" she answered.

"Without blood," the left interjected.

Davan held the back of his hand to her forehead and felt the heat of his blood seep from his limb. He noticed the sharp canine teeth behind her lips as she spoke.

"Then I will not recover."

"You can't be—" he jolted back to one of the males.

"We're not," one snapped back.

"We came across the threshold," she muttered, "one foot behind. Never fully in the light, but enough from the dark."

"You are alive. That much is certain."

"You cannot save me," she said.

"Injuries severe enough require the willing offering of blood," the right said behind his back.

"Well, why can't you?"

"They are too injured themselves," she answered. "Their blood is too weak."

"Well, that's an easy fix," Davan said as he began to unroll the cloth concealing his arm.

She gathered what strength remained to grab his hand. "You do not know me."

"Your friends rescued me. I owe at least that much."

"It's too much for a stranger to offer us."

Davan smirked back and said with a slightly elevated tone. "My friends call me Davan."

A History of Lhamare

By Marxus Cyrose

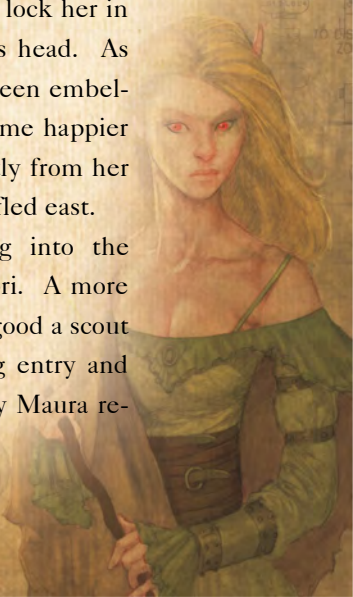
work. She was en route to the distant Salva colony to evaluate Costanca suitors when a wandering beast, half vulture and half spider, twice the size of the boat, attacked her ship. Only Maura survived, tossed into the river below. She worked her way back from the mountains but was ambushed by a small band of wandering ogres. Well-armed and protected, Maura held her best against them, but numbers proved superior and she was doomed to die if the wandering *tenenbri* hadn't stumbled past and jumped in to protect.

Slan made his excuses to his people upon his return and spun an impressive and convincing tale of how he alone survived an ogre ambush. His cousin had fallen to an enemy weapon, but the last ogre took flame to the woods and burned all evidence. No one doubted his account. Every two weeks, less if the need arose, Slan felt it important to embark again to the outside world to monitor in case the ogres returned. He insisted his stealth required isolation in these sorties. Meanwhile, Maura required no such justification, traveling wherever

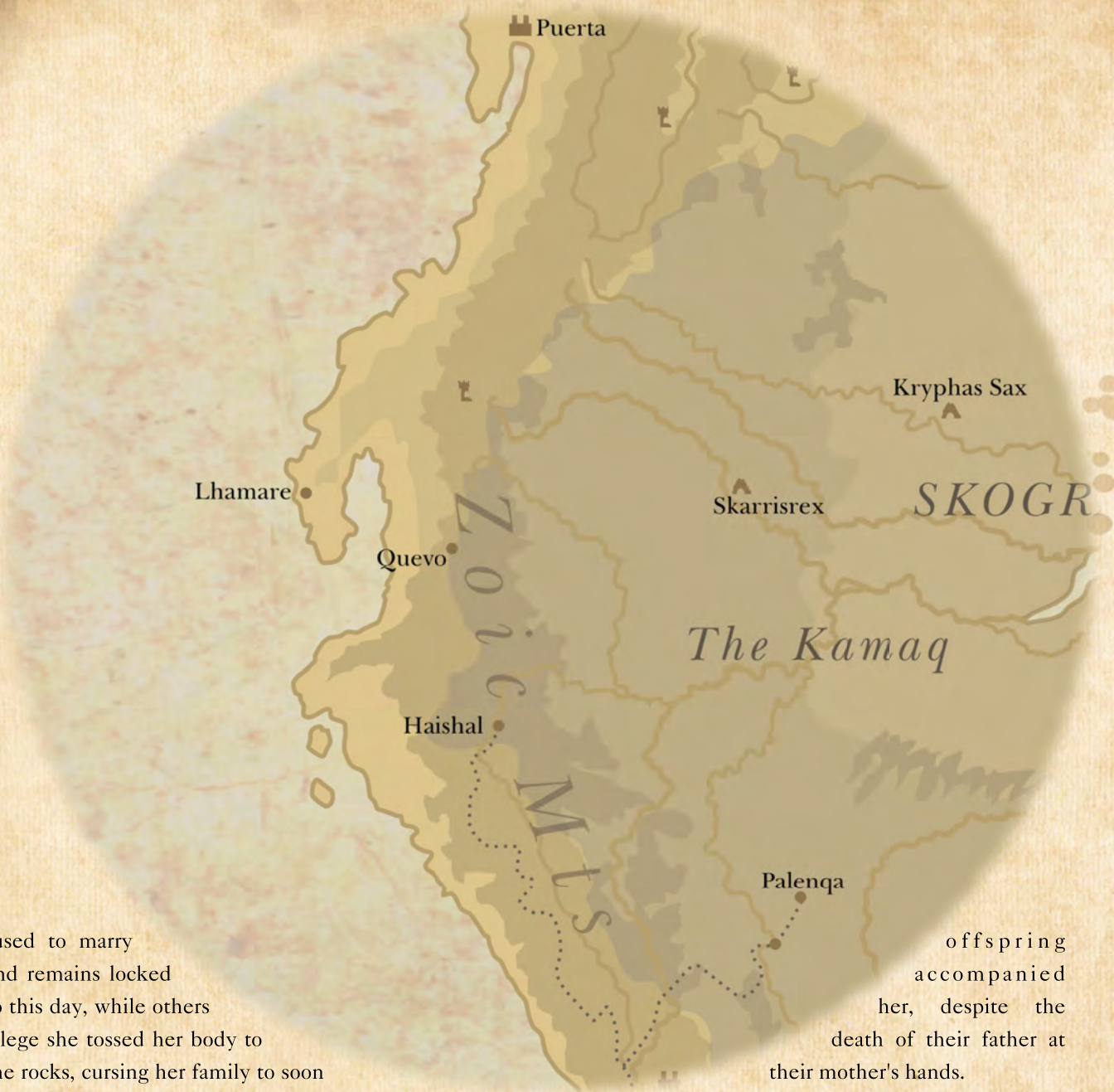
and whenever she wished, though some family members questioned her sudden lack of interest in marrying.

Slan and Maura met in the forest often to share each other's company. They bonded quickly thereafter but were not sure how to deal with responsibilities. An untrustworthy uncle spelled doom for Slan. Exposed to his people, he escaped execution and hid among other exiles for a time. Maura had begged him to join with her in Toco, but he knew a hate-filled mob would ensure a similar fate. She believed otherwise and revealed her affair to her father. His response was to lock her in her room and place a bounty on her lover's head. As with all romantic tales, what followed had been embellished and exaggerated by many tellers. Some happier accounts claimed Slan rescued Maura secretly from her cell without anyone knowing and the lovers fled east.

A similar account had them vanishing into the mountains, taken in by other exiled *tenenbri*. A more depressing variation argued Slan was not as good a scout as he believed. He was caught attempting entry and was murdered by the Lord Alvaro; some say Maura re-







fused to marry  
and remains locked  
to this day, while others  
allege she tossed her body to  
the rocks, cursing her family to soon  
follow. The more hopeful tales also added  
that when her family finally succumbs to their curse,  
Maura will return with her husband, with his name and  
their son in hand, to assume control of Toco, thwarting  
the efforts of the blight.

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## LHAMARE

250 years ago, when the tilen elder Lhamah Cyrose briefly fell to darkness, her fellow elder tilen sought her destruction. Lhamah pulled from the brink before fully returning to vampirism. However, she had still fed on a victim's blood until that life was drained: murder, an unforgivable sin in tilen communities. In response, Lhamah fled into exile. Refusing to leave her side, her

offspring  
accompanied  
her, despite the  
death of their father at  
their mother's hands.

The family fled east and took boats to cross the ocean. Upon landing in western Southam, a year had passed. Only two of her children had survived the journey with her. Their boat shattered on the rocks. They washed up on shore, near death.

Meanwhile, Davan Wynstruck led a small group of 250 humans and damaskans on the wrong side of the mountains. They were battle hardened, suffering constant tenenbri raids. After years of pursuit, they had finally founded a settlement near the western shores.

Davan's word was never questioned by his followers and despite the worried and nervous faces eyeing his guests he would find, the community never doubted his decision to accept the tilen.



*"I see your compassion came with many motives," Lhamah smiled as she spoke. Six other respected figures sat abreast of Davan across the makeshift table, a board was laid across a stump. The tilen and her offspring sat close to one side, near Davan's left.*

*Davan responded. "I never deceived you of my intentions. We need allies."*

*"And we are they," she answered plainly. "We will cover your community in the blanket of the magic we possess. We will train your soldiers, educate your teachers. All we ask is acceptance."*

*"Already bestowed. You will be welcomed in our community as respected and honored citizens. Equals at the least. No restrictions will be enforced."*

*Lham smiled. She straightened her back, rising a few inches above her sons. Her impressive stature made her the tallest one sitting.*

*"Thank you," she said. "As a symbol of this acceptance, I also suggest you and I marry. It will set an example." Davan's eyes shot open at her honesty. "You will endure more than I so please consider carefully."*

*Davan's eyes failed to blink. They shifted left and right to catch the other reactions, though refusing actually to lock eyes on any of them. His head did not move.*

*"Well," he started, "I appreciate the honesty, but I imagine that is a topic tabled to after committee."*

A History of Lhamare  
By Marxus Cyrose

Eventually, the community lifted their roots to shuffle through the mountains until finding a relative rich expanse of fertile soil. It had only been a few weeks since the tilen had been taken in. Davan made a point to understand every facet of their unique culture, foreign in this part of the world. Davan waited until he understood his guests and could gauge their response when he offered them a more involved role in the development of the community they were trying to establish. Davan despised the constant running and hoped the tilen could offer the humans the means to hold their ground against the tenenbri. He understood there was very little to keep

them in the camp. The resulting alliance proved more fruitful than Davan could have imagined.

It was in their marriage that Lhamah found some inner peace. Together, they banded the remaining human camps in the region into a respectable community. The tenenbri raids shrunk with each failed attempt. The community was sure to flourish into a city in given time. Tilen breeding cycles kept the demographic relatively small. Lhamah's two elder sons married within the populace and her marriage to Davan produced several offspring. Since human / tilen coupling always produce tilen, after two centuries, almost all the humans and damaskans have been bred out, save for those bondmates whose magically extended years have yet to pass.

## NOABLE

Noable Shedün was a shemjaza from across the world who had the unfortunate fate of being trapped in the wrong gate during the Exodus. However such a thing happened, exposure to Attricana severed the shemjaza's connection to Ixindar. Cut off from the whisper of Mengus, upon landfall he kept out of sight, wandering, trying to regain a sense of purpose.

Noable's wanderings took him to and through the northern mountains. He even attempted a normal life

*I know of this town, and I tell you, it sickens me. Our spirit, the souls blessed by the one true God, is mere nourishment for them.*

*They once drank our blood but have evolved less evasive means. Now they simply draw our essence with their sex, breeding out who do not submit to their appetites. Why use blades when they have beauty?*

*This is our fate if we do not resist. You let one enter your community and the germ will spread. Like a virus, they are patient, slowly eating from within. If we allow them unchecked in this world, humanity will be nothing more than a footnote in their conquest, a means to procreate an army of the profane. We are witnessing an apocalypse of our very seed and womb.*

*This small community is a symptom of the future, of nothing short than a holocaust of all mankind.*

King Darius Konig  
455 AE





when he bonded with a tenenbri girl, Lirannaskoll. She had been abandoned by her family in Vakai for being crippled in an ogre attack, resulting in her expulsion from the caves. Noable found her half-dead from cold and nursed her back to health. Their bond was not fruitful with children. Despite clashes of culture and personality—she was passionate and expressive, he was quiet and cold—they lived in peace for nearly thirty years until her family, publicly disgraced for their actions in sending her away, discovered her and the company she kept. Her mother set fire to their home and only Noable escaped. He traveled south until the mob had vanished. He never openly expressed remorse for the loss, for he was still shemjaza; but internally, he was shattered.

Noable wandered for decades, walking until he stopped finding other people, then continued until he found some again. As a warrior, Noable had few equals and those he encountered were battered, looking for any salvation. The humans he encountered had never heard of a shemjaza before and knew nothing of the stigma; they only wished protection. He wanted no such responsibility, only desiring to be left alone, but would give what help he could and moved on. As time wore on his soul, he realized that the chaos around him had to be dealt with. He quested to destroy as many demispheres as he could find in hopes of shattering the faith of a fracturing kingdom, already teetering on the edge of extinction.

Some people praise him for this. Others want his head. His location and strengths have been rumored and exaggerated to such an extent as to dissuade anyone willing to take him on without an army. The kingdom is too busy tearing itself apart to wage war on a single person.

Noable can remain hidden for weeks or months, then suddenly appear inside a monolith. With inhuman speed, wielding a black blade with an edge reflecting blood, the savior can cleave a dozen stones and vanish before arrows can be drawn. His exploits have been embellished by the locals who love him, placing posters on walls next to wanted signs demanding his execution.

*I keep my eyes closed, for the darkness flows when I see with them open.*

*I came into this world in a moment of pain. I exist with peace in my heart, but who can see the heart behind the armor. The armor protects and condemns me.*

*My armor is my skin and I have no wish to flay it as proof of piety.*

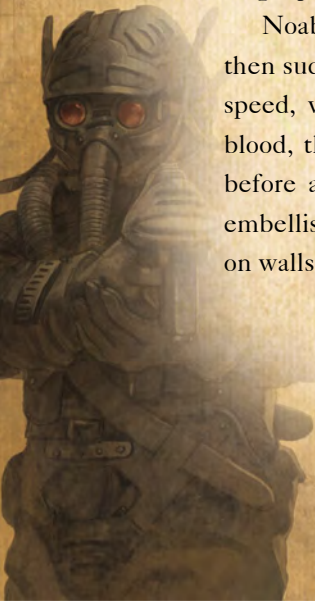
*With eyes closed, I see more than most. With the shackles of my dark side cast away, I see a fate where my kind may prosper without gods. Gods serve no purpose other than to command death. I reject all gods, as they will never direct my actions or thoughts. There is room in this world for my kind. For everyone to find peace, we must cast off our gods, for they will destroy our world.*

Noable Shedūn  
A speech

## NORASAK MARSH

A geographical upheaval occurred on the eastern edge of the Kamaq that flattened a large section of land and sunk the plains below sea level. The expanse that formed as a result became an inhibitor of disruption given the salt marsh that formed. Although salt-tolerant plants do grow, the mud permeating the landscape is heavily salinated with the few ponds found boasting even higher levels, being mostly composed by calcium- and magnesium chloride with massive deposits of sodium carbonate, giving rise to alkalinity and carbonation. This has made the marsh virtually unlivable. The gas bubbling from the water is odorless and most likely carbon dioxide. The land is permeated by the corpses of errant animals, mostly insects and birds, suffocated from the atmosphere.

The Norasak Marsh is considered by some to be as deadly as the Gloam, though through completely terrestrial means. Although the formation of Norasak occurred via magic, the resulting life-void allowed natural laws to resume, though to purely destructive extents. The marsh does boast the lowest rate of disruption in all Southam, causing a few desperate techan communities to seek shelter within it. The intractable sludge and unpredictable water depth made traditional transportation impractical, resulting in “swampers”—vehicles rolling on massive inflatable wheels able to cross any aspect of the marsh, all the while sealed in from the toxic external environment.











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Communities within the marsh are small and tightly connected out of survival. Although safe from anathema and rival nations, Norasak still suffers from the very toxicity of the atmosphere itself. The people, referring to themselves as the Oculito (also known as the “Hidden”) have adapted perfectly to their environment with little to no desire to leave. Their technology, stable given the lack of disruption, processes the air, removes the salinity of the water and allows them to gather their primary diet—worms, mussels, shrimp, pupfish, and numerous invertebrates.

On a rare occasion, a swamper from the Oculito will venture from the marsh and seek out a potential trade. There are those among Oculito that have even adapted to surviving without the considerable breathing gear all are required to wear while inside the marsh. The others often take pride in their gear, wearing their intimidating

environment suits no matter the setting. The technology of the Oculito is primitive by most techan standards, suffering from increased oxidation from the land. Communities and vehicles survive off a combination of solar power and internal combustion from the few oil deposits discovered. There has never been a consensus of the population within Norasak, but citizens have guessed between 5,000 and 20,000 humans, spread over the estimated 50 thousand square kilometers of the marsh. There are no fae residents within the marsh, though rumors point to a few gimfen hiding amongst them.



## NOVO

A lack of records prevents the population of Novo from confirming much of their history from before the Second Hammer, beyond the name of the city upon which they were built. It is entirely possible the lack of information was intentional as a way of erasing the sins of their past.

Certainly, Novo's success is chiefly due to the perseverance of the city's builders and their adaptation to their surrounding hostile environment. However, they never would have reached a state of self-sufficiency if it hadn't been for their predatory practices upon other techan nations in Southam.

Based on population alone, Novo is not particularly massive, though it still holds the title as the largest and most densely populated city in all of Southam, despite it not being located on land. The bastion sits offshore, built upon the ruins of a sunken antediluvian city. From there, they observe the machinations of the mainland, a region with so much latent disruption it would be nearly impossible for their technology to operate for long before failure. Over the centuries, their insulation technology has gotten better, but given their advancement, still suffers break-down in the long run. As a result, Novo has concentrated mostly on developing technology that can operate and survive on and under the water, developing submersibles and sea vessels able to withstand the tides of the modern age. Retaking the mainland is nearly impossible by this point, and with the narros nation of Axom sitting on the shore, a conflict may eventually be spurred by two otherwise peaceful nations. Given the violent nature of the ocean, pushing further from shore may not be advisable, but planners have been looking at colonizing further south, in the frozen, barren, and magically devoid land at the pole.

## LOCATION

Novo rests upon the ruins of an old human city that the few surviving records name Rio de Janeiro, now mostly sunken from the swelling ocean. The hills around the original city became a natural levee system which the residents later enhanced, though keeping the city flooded within. The bastion's claimed territory includes the entirety of the old city, water and all, all the way to the new shore at Petropolis. Everything from Santa Cruz to Itaborai is submerged.

## COMMON KNOWLEDGE

The majority of Novo is comprised of floating platforms and buildings jutting up from the water, rooted in the ruins of the city under the sea. Apart from a handful of bridges, transportation comes mostly via aircraft, boats, and submersibles, the latter Novo's specialty. Levees and floodgates stave off the severe tides, though natural dikes provide most of the protection. Ironically, the only aspects of the original city still visible sit under water. Other landmarks have crumbled to dust with only their foundations remaining. Today, the city looks forward, rarely bringing up past events, but isolation thanks to politics and geography have resulted in a population prone to xenophobia, as is not uncommon among the bastion-born.

With the narros controlling the land around the city, this opinion has had little to temper it. Although there are techan atolls in Southam, they are all too far away to sustain a viable trading relationship. Given the level of technology within Novo, most of their machinery is unseen by the rest of the continent—about the only presence they make is when one of their submersibles rises from the water.

These vessels range from small personal craft to the enormous Kylon vessels, able to displace more than 55,000 tons and remain underwater for as long as a year. These vessels are designed to survive the oceans, like wavecrashers do, by keeping under the surface, but unlike the echan vessels, Kylons have not appeared at any other bastion in Canam, despite being able to.

Two vessels have attempted to cross the ocean but never returned. There is a plan for an expedition north along the coast to reach York, the existence of which the Novans are dimly aware, but this has yet to occur. Most of the time, the vessels hug the coast, over old sunken techan cities (as so many pre-hammer techan cities sat on the coast in Southam) in search of salvageable knowledge and technology. A few have pushed into the the Catalyst of Ararandish and reached the atoll of Solimos, but repeated trips proved dangerous. One Kylon, the Cotopaxi, drifted slowly back Novo, but when rescue teams intercepted the vessel, they discovered it had been bitten in half, justifying the lack of cross-oceanic journeys afterward.

Novo is mostly powered by tidal generators today, but for the previous centuries, it relied on nuclear reactors, some still running today. A lack of fuel has crippled progress on this front. Being the only bastion on





Southam has given Novo a sense of superiority, augmented by a human-centric religion that around half the population subscribes to.

## ALLIES

Ignoring the sins of the past that Novo is desperate to conceal, the bastion benefits from no formal alliance with either echan or techan neighbors. Occasionally, a transport will connect with the atoll of Solimos. An obligatory relationship with the narros of Axom was an eventuality, though shared goods are limited.

## ENEMIES

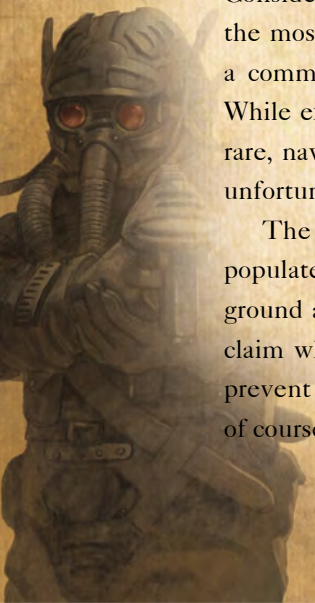
Despite attempts of Novo to erase its past, enemies remember, mainly the nation of Gagua and those within Nuqa Koppa. Gagua's human population came from the fallen bastion of Patagonia, long since plundered by Novo. With the advanced technology of Novo coupled with both distance and the narros kingdom of Axom between them, conflict is unlikely.

Novo officially placed a moratorium on raiding pop-

Considering Novo is the only bastion of Southam and the most advanced region of advanced technology, it is a common location for techans surviving in Southam. While expeditions from the city taking a land route are rare, naval voyages along the coast do frequently occur, unfortunately resulting in the occasional marooning.

The Cruz is the name given to the bastion's navy, populated by a force a hundred times larger than its ground army. Coastal walls maintain the bastion's land claim while levee's secure the water, but these do not prevent techans from entering or leaving the city. Fae, of course, are strictly prohibited—even gimfen.

## ADVENTURES





*The Stapp scale is a complete gauge of magical disruption using as its null point of zero disruption, the level at which there is no alteration to known laws of the physical universe above the quantum scale.*

*It was introduced in March of 355 AE by Dr. Elanie Quarice of Porto. The stapp (represented by the symbol S) is also the base unit of measurement, expressed as the accelerated decay of Thorium 232.*

*While nearly all alterations to nature appear random in a disruption field, the rate in which Radium 226 and Thorium 232 decay appears constant. As such, a stapp is defined as a 0.05% increase in the rate of decay of the latter of the two elements.*

*Although the Stapp Scale works as theory, the inherent problem is that any device built that can measure in Stapp disrupts in any field of significant power where measurement is required. Consequently, the most the scale has ever been measured has been 3.567 degrees stapp.*

*However, research in this field eventually led to the development of EDF detection equipment where the “fail” state of one aspect (usually electronics) is measured by another aspect less susceptible to EDF (usually mechanical or chemical). This has resulted in degrees above 4 stapp being estimated rather than accurately measured.*

*The most common detection device employed is the disruption patch, based on similar technology as a thermoluminescent dosimeter (or TLD). More accurate measuring devices employ chemical reactions which are affected by microscopic radioactive isotopes built into the device.*

*Despite the above-mentioned inaccuracy with the stapp scale, the lowest recorded stapp measurement occurred in Angel—at 0.5 stapp, while the highest recorded occurred in Burganasis at 35.5 stapp. Based purely on relayed information, it has been theorized Delecoure in Southam is higher even than this. The initial outburst of disruption 500 years ago is believed to have been several times larger still and took several centuries to fall to the levels we are experiencing today.*

*The Stapp Scale*

*From Yorkpedia, the largest digital encyclopedia  
Current Entry.*

ulated targets, preferring to scavenge; however, many of the sea vessels leaving port, especially the enormous Kylons, are designed and are known to operate independently. There are even rumors of Kylon captains

operating their vessels as their own dictatorship, believing the conventions of the bastion do not apply to them. More than one has not returned, leading to the belief the vessels were destroyed or its crews had gone native.

It is also entirely possible the vessel made landfall in order for the commander and crew to form their own techan community away from home. If true, these communities would obviously refuse contact with Novo.

## HISTORY

The bastion began as a caravan of techan refugees, not unlike Abidan's Caravan of the King—only in this case, instead of a string of slow-moving wagons, the techans had access to a pre-Hammer military-grade submersible with a crew capacity of more than 150 people. Electromagnetic interference had scrambled its computer system, but its nuclear reactor and weapons payload were intact when it was discovered wedged in the ruins of a techan city half-sunken in the ocean. Scattered documents are inconsistent, with the initial population either being from the flooded city, the submarine, or a mixture of the two. The vessel was eventually repaired and reactivated and began searching for a new home. The journey began on the west coast and followed under the waves (though close to shore), searching for supplies and other techans like themselves. This search turned to scavenging, and eventually to raiding, with the vessel dubbed “Novo” stealing supplies and technology wherever it could find it, while also appropriating skilled crew to the help in the operation of the vessel. By the time Novo rounded the southern coast, its internal structure had been modified to increase its crew and storage capacity, its missile systems disassembled save for the still functioning nuclear weapon payload.

The population had reached 300 by the time the submarine reached the port city of Patagonia, the largest techan community in Southam at that time. Its size was never recorded, though estimates place it larger than an atoll but smaller than any Canam bastion. Like other techan communities, Patagonia had been built upon the ruins of an old human city. There was poten-





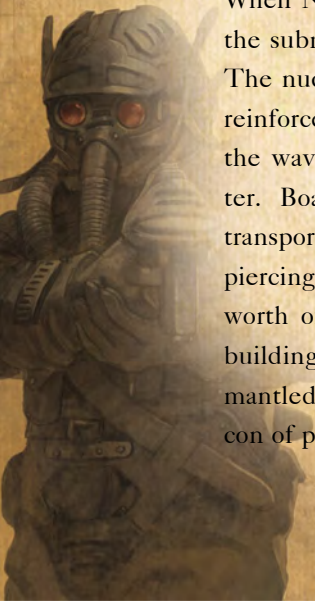
tial for it to become a full-sized bastion, but it could not defend itself from a techan raiding party from an armed nuclear submarine.

Patagonia was not so much destroyed but rather stripped of all useful knowledge and technology. The most skilled individuals were kidnapped to contribute their knowledge to the whole. Anyone else was forced to survive in the ruins, eventually leaving to emigrate to nearby echan communities. The Nova continued northward until finding a sunken city, not unlike the one they left, albeit considerably larger. A small band of humans tried to subsist on the floors above the water. When Nova arrived, they were welcomed, resulting in the submarine permanently mooring itself to the ruins. The nuclear cores were removed. The buildings were reinforced, levees and floodgates were built to control the waves, though the city remained mostly underwater. Boats and aircraft became the primary methods of transport, connecting artificial islands and skyscrapers piercing both water and clouds. With many centuries worth of nuclear fuel, Novo prospered, eventually rebuilding newer submersibles to rival the original dismantled centuries prior. Today, Nova shines as a beacon of progress, an island of insurmountable technology

while ignoring the sins it committed to get it there.

## LAYOUT

The old city of Rio de Janeiro is almost entirely submerged. The original city was founded on an inlet with low plains and hills surrounding it. That cove has all but vanished, replaced with scattered islands and occasional jutting peaks. This resulted in greater effort to create a levee system to connect the islands with the mainland. Novo was unable to reduce the water level inside the bay, so the focus diverted to simply holding back the turbulent waves of the ocean. The initial domiciles were built from the still standing structures of the old city, later reinforced. Further buildings and floating islands along with the settlement of the surrounding lands. Despite having a claim to the shore and the islands, most of the population live on the water, with some spending the whole of their lives on the transport boats moving about the territory. The current region of Novo covers Nova Iquacu, Duque de Caxias, Itaborai, Tangua, Mage, and the shoreline at Petropolis.





## POPULATION

8 million

## TECH LEVEL

Novo is tech level 3 but has recently made exceptions into TL4.

## GOVERNMENT

Novo is a federal presidential constitutional republic based on representative democracy. The Executive Cabinet (EC) is headed by an elected president and advised by senators. Judicial power is exercised by the Federala Court, which can by the majority force a public election of all members of the cabinet if required. It was not always this situation; the republic is only 260 years old, placed into effect by the last general of the military junta, who later had the standing military of Nova named after him, Cruz.

Before that, Novo was controlled by a military admiral placed in charge by the Novo Restoration Committee, which was itself staffed by military personnel, tracing their lineage to the original Novo submarine that sailed around Southam centuries prior. Despite having the designation as military, the NRC was often staffed by the descendants of the original members rather than an enlisted force.

## MILITARY

The Novo Restoration Committee, the original governors of Novo, still exist today, though only control the military arm of Novo. Members are prohibited from taking any roles in the Executive Cabinet. They control both the ground military on the outer rim of the city as well as the sizable navy, the Cruz. Old habits can die hard, and several captains of the larger Kylon vessels have sworn independence and vanished along with their crews. A few were hunted down and destroyed with a few still unaccounted for. Other vessels that vanished are also feared in control by despotic commanding staff. Some have grounded their vessels to form a town—others patrol the shores, raiding while often still brandishing the flag of Novo, salting the bastion's reputation. Back home, as more members of the Executive Cabinet swear allegiance to the Paleo-Cath movement, there is growing concern the NRC will stage a coup to resume control and prevent religious zealotry from cartelizing the bastion.

## RELIGION

Paleo-Catholicism, the sole religion of Novo, is claimed to be an unaltered version of Christianity based directly on unedited books derived from techan ruins. Of course, these texts explain a variation of Catholicism that was already a syncretistic system resulting from the blending of Christianity with the traditions of aborigines. Regardless, the growing zealotry of the Paleo-Caths in the face of both a secular government and education system, one credited for making the city what it is, threatens to form a schism in the city, potentially leading to internal violence. This has risen of late, forcing occasional curfews and rumblings by the NRC to compel the Executive Cabinet to act. However, given half the Cabinet senators are members of the church, the government is growing increasingly unresponsive.

## NAMES

The bastion's original population blended the submarine crew (largely Spanish-speaking, from western Southam and southwestern Canam) with Portuguese-speaking survivors, forming a creole called Romanic. Only a small portion of the population can speak any form of English (though many with a technical background can read the archaic form of the language), and a few have picked up a handful of fae languages as well. As a result, Novan names follow the same Romanic pattern.

**Examples:** Ricardo Graca Caldiera, Margarida Velloso, Filipa Lapa Quadros, Rodrigo Fidalgo.

## NUQA KOPPA

The lost kingdom, as it is known by many that know of it, emerged shortly after initial narros defeats to the crusading tenenbri over 400 years ago. Although some of the ruins in the area match narros construction, most were human, relics of the previous age. Scattered human nomads, mostly exiled from techan atolls destroyed by the bastion of Novo, eventually stumbled across them and attempted to develop their own civilization, but like the narros, were stretched too thin to defend against surrounding predators. As such progress was slow, and the lack of higher education among the refugees stunted technological development. Secluded from most other civilizations, the humans developed independently, and many lived their lives without





Here



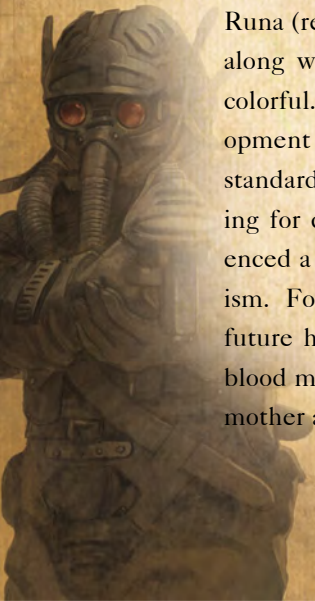
knowing of the world outside their land. Barren plains and snow-covered mountains wall off this region from the rest of the world. The realm is not completely isolated, but the terrain surrounding it is no encouragement to travel.

The people here created their own tongue, Koppa Runa (related to Romance but with a patois all its own), along with hundreds of regional customs, bizarre and colorful. Disruption has kept any technological development embryonic, well below even the medieval standards of the northern continent. Rather than striving for cultural development, Nuqa Koppa has experienced a regression to a pre-bronze age level of primitivism. For example, a couple cannot be married until the future husband has slain his fiancé's father (or nearest blood male relative) in single combat. Since the bride's mother arranges the competition, it can turn sour for the

father's family. This and other strange traditions appear in place to intentionally cause conflict within the populace. In 450 years of history, Nuqa Koppa has never known peace.

In the birth pains of the empire, three covenants emerged to claim power: Yannawasi, Cuscanni, and Chimina. Though they shared a similar religion that worshipped the sun and a serpent god coiled around the Earth, a very distinct deviation occurred with the acquisition of the Demistones.

Demistones are perfect spheres with three concentric rings around the equator that weigh between 1 and 15 tons each. They vary in size from just under a man's height to that which dwarfs a house. They are made from sandstone or granite and are not enchanted in any way. They appear somewhat plain in their presentation save for the flawlessness of their shape. Every covenant





in the empire craves these spheres, considering their possession a symbol of their stature.

Any family owning more than ten stones can claim to be a covenant. The one with the most spheres may claim the entire land as theirs, and all others must abide their rules, at least until the next marriage ceremony. The aforementioned tradition of marriage combat forces the winner to hand over several their spheres in compensation for the death. Both sides lose and gain regardless of the results. Some have refused to pay, resulting in war.

Cuscanni took the honor of the throne initially but a generation later, it was being seated by Macca Gollaglobas. Macca legally acquired Cuscanni when he killed the prince regent Santa Cuscanni after proposing to Macca's daughter. Cuscanni was absorbed into Gollaglobas and gained an impressive thirty-five stones, including the largest, "The Silver Eye of God," which was perched atop of the Cuscanna monolith (their version of a castle). When Macca's wife signed a marriage contract with the Incana family, the king was taken aback, knowing the stout figure of the Incana heir. Macca's death put his wife, Pataga, on the throne. When Incana refused to compensate for the loss, Patanga declined the marriage. Being fools in love, the Incana and Gollaglobas heirs secretly eloped. With each swearing treason on the other, Gollaglobas and Incana went to war, splitting Cuscanni apart. Older families loyal to Cuscanni brought up bastard heirs to claim the Cuscanni Monolith while Gollaglobas and Incana battled. This increased the warring Covenants from three to five. When Yannawasi lost half their Demistones, they accused Chimina and went to war. Then the covenant of Cutiyuti appeared with the pilfered spheres.

It was never defined in their history why these stones were so cherished. The people believed them to be gifts from God. They are never created, only found. Experts could always distinguish a genuine stone from a forgery. As more were discovered, their acquisition became an obsession. To own them brought respect from other families. Alliances with or without marriages would be forged. A cabal of spies known only as the Haillikuna snaked their way into the mines, where most of these stones were recovered. Lifting these stones away before armies could converge allowed Haillikuna to claim to be a covenant without a single drop of blood being spilled. This didn't last long and when the elder

Chacalla Haillikuna was assassinated, Haillikuna spies struck at their closest suspect, Chimina.

A century later, the number of covenants had ballooned to more than twelve. The rightful rulers through this torrential time was claimed by Yannawasi, but later shifted to a new covenant, Cochosappa. Since another unique aspect of their faith demanded honor for a married woman was only had if she birthed at least three boys and three girls, the population increase more than met the demand to replace those that fell in war. The constant casualties of men resulted in a huge overpopulation of honor-lacking women, yet the traditions remained solid.

The covenants were getting smaller and more numerous. Even past giants like Cuscanni and Chimina claimed more ruins than buildings. Only the resident covenant monoliths stood unspoiled. The tall, un-walled fortresses were rarely attacked to prevent damage to the stones displayed in pride.

The Demispheres were intentionally and sometimes blatantly paraded on the towers and around the perimeter of these keeps. They were more effective as defenses than any bulwark built. All involved saw the destruction of a single stone as the worst offense. A brutal death followed one who even cracked one by mistake. Thankfully, they are not easy to destroy.

Another century passed, and the number of covenants and keeps ballooned to twenty-two. Cochosappa lost the throne to Tintansuyu, though others claimed a fraud since they counted their iconic broken demistone, "Lover's Split" as two. Gollaglobas' current ruler, Ninawana, lost their last male combatant when their cherished "Silver Eye" toppled from the monolith's tallest tower, crushing him into the soil. Without men to duel, other covenants could move in to claim the stones. Another war broke out over the carrion left behind. Remaining unallied families with no demisphere currency allied with Gollaglobas in efforts to take the sphere with inheritance. By this time, Tintansuyu had no respect and everyone in the empire felt the royal title was hollow. The kingdom seemed truly lost.

Today, only the largest covenants remain. Between their realms sit the charred carcasses of hundreds of buildings and ransacked monoliths. Current Covenants of Nuqa Koppa include Chimina, Cochosappa, Cutiyuti, Gollaglobas, Haillikuna, and Tintansuyu. Currently, Tintansuyu still holds claim as the ruling family with Yupan at its seat. They have managed to gain some





control of the land, but all they've really accomplished was lessen the attacks on their own land. The remaining covenants still war as often as they always did. By present day, nearly 87% of the surviving population are women, who now fight as often and as fiercely as the men.

Nuqa Koppa is not a place that offers much to adventurers; its settlements supply little in the way of hospitality and the covenants have no treasures of note worth offering to a mercenary, though any side which managed to scrape together enough to pay outside sellswords would gain an instant advantage. What it does have, however, are plentiful ruins of the prior age, often damaged or destroyed by the constant fighting but not left completely without value; an enterprising scavenging party could come away with a wealth of recyclable materials to sell to a bastion, assuming they made it out of the region alive.

### OUROBOROS

In Southam, the gimfen number less than a thousand, with the majority residing in the Ouroboros—which is less a town and more a mobile strong-point. The colossal walking castle strides over forests and mountains, seeking resources and evading predators. It can park for years at a time until needing to uproot.

When asked, no native gimfen claims to know why such a monstrosity was built, only that they were the ones that built it. The technology was clearly gleaned from humans, but no formal trade was ever established with either bastion or atoll. More likely the gimfen discovered lost human technology. The decision to employ a complicated walking mechanism over treads came from the need for the entire construct to walk over the chaparran forests. Ouroboros has been spotted across all of Southam except for Delecoure and Skogra. The gimfen have traded with humans, narros, and occasionally chaparrans. However, as the construct was built to accommodate gimfen, no ration was given for larger creatures. As such, non-gimfen are not allowed to reside within the machine.

Over 200 feet tall and 800 feet long, Ouroboros boasts several strange abilities, some even resident gimfen are surprised to discover—leading to the belief that Ouroboros is alive and modifies itself to adapt to threats

*A portion of it can detach and fly, we know that ("Kopter"), and then there are the inflatable baffles, so the entire thing can float if required (though it probably wouldn't survive the ocean tides).*

*The legs feature at least a dozen concealed features, including treads in the feet, pitons for climbing, jackhammers, claws, and skis...for some reason.*

*There are at least a thousand spotlights and double that many secret compartments scattered about, so many, I doubt the resident population knows them all. Witnesses have seen Ouroboros fire flares, launch grappling hooks, as well as deploy and swing a gigantic wrecking ball. To think there are no defensive measures is foolish.*

*My guess is flamethrowers. It's a giant walking robot—why wouldn't the gimfen allow it to breathe fire?*

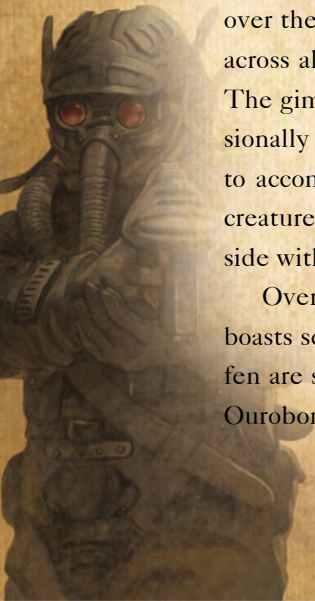
The Strange Bits  
Nuala Glas

and impediments. Another theory claims hidden gimfen within the superstructure work silently within the shadows. Several modifications have been attributed to specific gimfen, meaning most likely the mystery is due to lack of records and not to any lofty theory about robot sentience.

The machine does appear to operate on its own, requiring very little maintenance from the population. In fact, beyond external attack, Ouroboros can function with six gimfen working the system, leaving the remaining population to repair what damage does occur as well as gathering food and establishing trade. The head of the machine only has room for a single control seat, leading to more than 200 levers, sliders, wheels, switches, gauges, buttons, and instruments. Who controls Ouroboros controls the people, the lord of a mobile nation. The current "boss" is Botanbotas Wolfenfrogenhawkencatodorff, who has controlled the Ouroboros for over 100 years. Although many gimfen claim the machine sports no offensive weapons, it's assumed they are present, just hidden like many of the other features of the machine.

### SKOGRA

Ogres. In narroni, the term *ogerr* equates to 'failed work'. Hitherto uncommon in Canam, they may not remain so for long. All narros anathema have proved to be immune to the effects of the Gloam, and their ex-







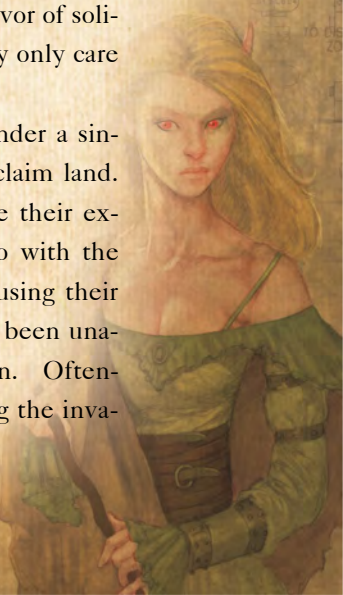
pansion rate is such that a northward migration is inevitable. Until then, ogres remain a massing threat to the whole continent, heightened by the lack of attention by opposing forces. Southam as a whole appears to ignore the mounting danger posed by ogres, preferring to concentrate on archaic ethnic hatred, religious disagreements, or venal empire building. If chaparrans, narros, and tenenbri united against the growing threat, the ogres wouldn't survive. As it stands, bands of ogres have assailed nearly every settlement of note, and have more or less been driven off.

However, if the anathema were to unite and focus on a singular enemy, the ogres would sweep through their opponents, eating and destroying everything in their path. An accurate population count is impossible as, like the pagus in Apocrypha, the ogres in Skogra pos-

sess no central government, and like the puggs of Xixion, they possess little to no actual society either.

While the pagus have been rallied around dragons and shemjaza, ogres lack any supreme authority. Additionally, they also lack the understanding and intellectual maturity of even the pagus, with the most refined ogres avoiding the civilization altogether in favor of solitude and asceticism. As for the majority, they only care about killing, mating, and eating.

Occasionally, several bands congregate under a single warchief that pushes south in order the claim land. In some cases, they have managed to secure their expansion, generally against the narros, less so with the tenenbri or chaparrans. With the narros focusing their attention to the defense of Antok, they have been unable or unwilling to deal with this expansion. Oftentimes, the chief of these hosts is killed during the inva-





*In words, I shall weaken him.*

*In stature, I shall overshadow him.*

*In conviction, I shall devour him.*

Cynusmaksis  
By My Own Tongue

sion, forcing the armies to scatter—ogres lose focus without a banner to lead them, the chaotic nature of their souls driving them to disarray. Ogres sit on the edge of civility, like the skeggs from the damaskan line of anathema, with all lower devolutions incapable of congregating outside of the desire to mate. With Skogra sitting so close to Delecoure, more than a few ogre offspring have devolved into oggraks while the occasional oggrak has been found trained to function as a brute as part of an ogre invasion.

Instead of learning, they stole. Instead of talking, they warred. Instead of mating, they raped. Seldom do ogres ever dedicate their lives to anything other than war. They are inherently selfish, thus a warlord appearing to corral the masses is exceeding rare. Unfortunately, such an individual has recently appeared.

Though Zarikaskogra's first invasion was defeated by Sharajaclypse in 420 AE, he survived the onslaught, returning to his land, sending messages to his many, many enemies of his claim to the north. This land would soon be dubbed Skogra, carved from the larger Delecoure. The warlord swore to wipe out everything non-ogre from Southam, beginning with the chaparrans and tenenbri.

Now old and powerful, Zarikaskogra commands through fear and respect. Ogres do not reproduce at the same rate as pagus or the damaskan anathema, but rather with the almost cripplingly slow fertility rate of their narros forebears. Skogra declared marriages illegal and insisted every female be taken by at least three different males while in season. Skogra, himself beds a different ogre female every night and rarely takes one twice. It is rumored (though statistically unlikely) he has personally fathered more than 1500 children. He hopes to create another army to rival the last.

Before his final breath escapes his lungs, Skogra promises to fulfill his oath and collapse the entire mountain range upon the heads of the tenenbri. There are few permanent settlements in Skogra; most of the population is found in seminomadic warhosts that claim

a patch and exploit it until forced to move. Roots are not planted, and communities seldom develop.

### ANATHUS PRIA

Only by her strength of magic has Nirakrakis survived the male-dominated empire of Skogra. Despite numerous forced matings, she never bore children. Instead, she channeled her trauma towards her faith in dark gods. Unlike the thousands of others screaming for salvation from the hands of such barbarity, Nira's prayers were answered, though she was never entirely sure by what or whom. She feels blessed by the plague currently infecting her. Any male now wishing to procreate with her, forceful or not, is struck by an instantly destructive disease.

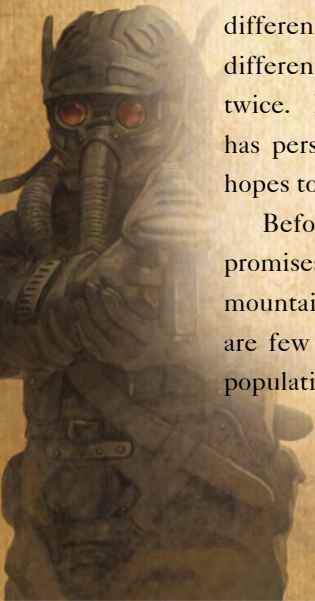
Their manhood withers to black and drops off but their drive to procreate increases tenfold. Without a way to release, the afflicted male goes insane, eventually being killed by his fellows if he does not commit suicide, which most do. Nira never desires physical contact. Her unholy bond also offered her channeled powers like that of a gneolistic.

With said power, she earned a place in Skogra's inner circle and founded Anathus Pria a short time later. Nira has not challenged Skogra's stance on marriage or mating and the females of Anathus fall victim to the opposite sex as much as any other ogre village. However, Nira has been known to take the worst offenders as captives. Within her modest wood and hardened mud keep, she forces herself upon the restrained male, inflicting him with a fate worse than death.

### ARBALUA KIX

Cynusmaksis chose to spare the life of the human elder Eduardo Rossel. In exchange, the young ogre ordered the human to teach him everything he knew about everything. Cynus, already a successful warlord, envied Zarikaskogra's power but knew he could never best him in combat. He knew knowledge would be his weapon. Rossel was given protection within the lord's house, offered the best food and even a few ogre women (though the latter, Eduardo declined).

Cynus took to learning quickly and soaked it in like a child, fast and without rest. Rossel expanded the ogre's vocabulary in the human tongue, previously known only brokenly, and trained him in the written word. With gathered books as assistance, the human





taught Cynus everything he knew. With engineering and architecture, the city rebuilt its houses and keeps. With smithing, the horses were shoed, the swords were sharpened, and the men were mailed. With agriculture, the masses were fed. Arbalua expanded quickly, and thousands more from around flocked to the town. Despite offering a promise to civilize, Cynus only took this knowledge as leverage to replace the warlord Skogra.

After thirty years, when Rossel finally admitted to having passed on every ounce of knowledge from book and brain, Cynus immediately ate the human. His very imprint was erased from all records, and Cynus claimed his superior intellect came from a god as righteous proof of his crusade to displace the elder and thick-witted Skogra.

After Rossel's death, more than a century ago, many expected Cynus to make his move, but he has seemingly done nothing. Even many of his followers believe that even though Cynus is brilliant and deceitful, he may also be a coward.

## KRYPHAS SAX

Laskerfarnum despises the nickname "cripple-lord" spoken under breath and out of sight. The last fool uttering it as a whisper within Lasker's attuned hearing found himself the unlucky victim of a popular punishment known only as the "Forever-flayed." Krypas keeps a vivicator in servitude and his specialty is in the healing and torturing of victims under his care. Thigramkarus possesses the ability to accelerate a victim's healing rate but never to the point of instantly curing injuries. He prefers just to keep the rate fast enough to maintain the subject's survivability in the face of whatever torture is inflicted. Given that knowledge, one need not explain the details of the "Forever-flayed."

Lasker came resulting from an imprudent bonding between an ogre male and a narros female. Though mostly ogre, Lasker was born with stubby legs and arms. Physically strong, he lacked agility and needed to throw his weight from leg to leg if required to run any decent speed. The union of his parents did not last despite attempts by the mother. The father took the son away and vanished northwest, though he would not survive long, dying by the hands of passing narros. Lasker grabbed his father's axe and took vengeance quick-

*They were called ogres.*

*For most fae, the word elf is an insult. Narros do not call themselves dwarves, though some permit others to call them so.*

*Dragon? Well, their word is also a spell. Most fae words for dragon sound like dragon—dracone, drekon, drakontose, drogan—so it doesn't seem strange to use the human word. It's fascinating how certain titles were embraced. Fae generally find fantasy labels pejorative, while dragons never seemed to mind.*

*The anathema...well, they didn't really have a vote on it, but for some reason, the common tongue embraced the fae labels instead of the human fantasy stamps, though exceptions do occur. Occasionally, a human will be caught calling a bogg a goblin or a pagus an orc. But ogre is a word everyone uses. The narros word for their 'broken' children, bespeaking flawed creation, sounds much like the human word for a mindless giant. When humanity heard the term, they assumed their spelling and it entered the common vernacular. For the few ogres able to speak narroni, it became their title as well.*

**Trovell Enhasa**  
**The Know of Now**

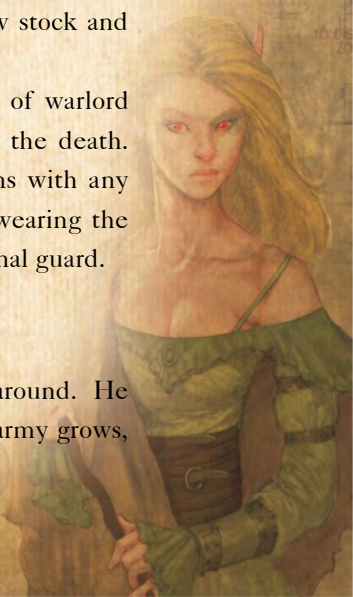
ly, defeating the narros barbarians, then turning on the women and children soon after.

He killed every living creature in the caravan save for the horses. He tied the caravan cars together and led the empty carriages west, where he encountered Skogra. Despite the handicap, Zarik offered Lasker a single chance to prove himself. He ordered Lasker to fill his caravan with ogres, return to his mother's village, and kill everyone they saw. Lasker did so without apprehension and even returned the head of his mother as proof of his new loyalty. In truth, Zarik had intended to kill the cripple anyway, repulsed by the disability. Instead, he found himself moved by the offer and ordered Lasker to refill his caravan's losses with new stock and seize a patch of land for himself.

Lasker remains the most loyal follower of warlord Skogra and swears to defend his master to the death. His village sits nearby Skarris Rex and joins with any force leaving the capital, with Lasker still wearing the pink cloth of Skogra elite and honored personal guard.

## PICARAN MACH

Skiranrennel's power attracts ogres from all around. He promises wealth and delivers often. As his army grows,





## SHOGAK

*I take war to their home. Burn every cloth. Crack and shatter and spit on every stone cut by their hands.*

*Kill the males. Use the women. Dagger pin bodies to the wall. Let children see their mothers and fathers so and release them with the trauma firm in hearts to tell others.*

Zarikaskogra

A known speech (translated).

he attacks further and further targets. He started with rival villages and moved onto the nearby narros. The tenenbri will be next. Rennel has been warned by Skogra to hold his advance for the time when all Skogra moves south. However, Rennel's impatience often overcomes him and he strikes another foe. Recently, he compromised only to strike softer, smaller targets. It is only a matter of time before his appetite grows hungry again. His army now stands at 4,000.

Each devolution of the fac is more bestial and violent than the last, and any devolved enough to be called 'anathema' have generally passed the point where civilization is even an option. While most ogres fall firmly on the far side of that line, a few cling to the near side, forming a permanent community in the north. The ogres of Shogak can often be approached with open arms, though under the circumstances there are few who do. Although not entirely decent, these village ogres seldom attack without provocation, unless you catch them in a bad mood.

Ragongrik, their leader, survived a raid from Zari-kaskogra before his rise to power, but the resulting attack routed Ragon and his people, forcing them east until reaching the coast and taking root. With plentiful fishing, the community prospered.

Couples can bond, and crimes are punished either by banishment or by execution by drowning. Although Ragon doesn't desire the total extinction of the land's population of ogres, he also privately hopes Zarik's last crusade will result in the total elimination of his cause and him along with it. Then Rogan can take his people east and claim the territory as his own, shepherding a new civilized path for his race.

## SKARRISREX

Zarikaskogra didn't establish Skarrisrex until after his defeat by Sharajaclypse more than 80 years ago. Initially, Zarik gathered ogre camp upon ogre camp and then brazenly marched south without a base or city to fall back upon. They nearly fell into civil war upon their return.

Zarik created Skarris Rex much later to central-ize his authority. He returned from his failed crusade and found a group of ogres that had not followed him. The chief of the town, Ragongrik, had refused, citing Skogra's inept planning and foolhardily application. Ragon had also been soured to the idea of war. Skogra's returning force still outnumbered the blossoming colony and





forced the residents away. Ragon fled east while Zarik whipped his population to erect huge statues in his likeness standing in various poses, slaying various beasts, and taking various females. Each one commissioned was ordered taller and grander than the last. The final, still under construction, is promised to be taller than the tallest tree in Southam, casting a shadow over the entire town and over hills and valleys to the horizon. Building materials come from near worthless mines scattered over the land. Skogra, nearing senility, wishes it finished before his final push to Vanaka. In his final war, he swears to sacrifice every soul under his command to his obsession. He will not surrender until he has personally taken Sharajaclypse in the most violent manner possible.

## TECHAN ATOLLS

There are several techan atolls in Southam, most scattered far apart from one another and built upon the ruins of an ancient pre-Hammer techan city. More atolls could have emerged, but for two factors.

The first was the propensity of ancient humans to build their cities on the coast, resulting in the majority of techan cities sitting under water. The second is the bastion of Novo, which in its early years raided other techan atolls for supplies and personnel, forcing many of these fledgling communities to disperse or emigrate to nearby echan nations.

The ones that remain were either never in the warpath of Novo or benefitted from a geographic advantage to stave off echan predators. There are certainly more in Southam than the ones listed below (for example, those formed from Novo expatriates on a stolen submersible) but those that follow are large enough to be mentioned.

### ALTIPLANO (TL2)

High in the Zoic mountains rests Altiplano, known more for its location than any technology it may possess. Although not particularly advanced, the atoll has been able to survive so far north due to its altitude, an impressive 5,000 meters above sea level. This plateau is more than large enough to house the atoll, blessed by a natural ice wall and solar technology keeping the population warm.

The atoll sits atop a mine and trades with nearby echan farmers for sustainability. As a further payment

to these farmers, Altiplano patrols a larger expanse from their territory, intercepting possible attacks when noticed, mostly manning various scales of snowmobiles from one-man vehicles to those able to compete with the ETVs found elsewhere. Occasionally, they sell these to potential customers. With ogres from Skogra climbing further up the mountains, Altiplano's safety may finally be at risk.

### BIO-BIO (TL1)

A smaller version of Novo, Bio-Bio sits upon the ruins of a coastal city, now sunken thanks to sea level rise. However, it has not had the luxury to defend against the waves crashing from the west. Fringing a much larger ocean, the tides slamming into the west coast are catastrophic, forcing Bio-Bio into an inlet around natural levees with only a small opening for access. Hundreds of islands both in and outside the inlet have also staved the damage from waves. This allowed Bio-Bio to colonize many of these islands, connecting each other with various water craft. The atoll formed after Novo and took much longer to develop. Isolation has been Bio-Bio's ally given their position on the west side of the Zoic.

### PANTANAL (TL2)

In the middle of a colossal tropical wetland sits the city on stilts, Pantanal. The eastern region is flooded most times of the year, leaving the western upper region only suffering less frequently. Pantanal doubles as the name of this region as no one else has claimed it officially other than the narros of Axom, who have drawn their borders to include it despite having no presence there whatsoever.

As such, Pantanal is both the name of the atoll and the surrounding wetlands, nearly 60,000 square miles open for the taking. If nobody contests them, Pantanal may become the next bastion in Southam.

Currently, it comprises of a hundred buildings resting on concrete supports several feet above the highest flood point, boardwalks and bridges connect the upper levels while mass transport and supplies move via airboat and hovercraft, the latter Pantanal's signature. Most airboats are 2-4-man vessels with a handful at fifty feet. The hovercraft are built even larger, with the Zigurat-class airboat displacing a shocking 600 tons and measuring 200 feet in length. With only three in ser-





vice, the loss of one would cripple the atoll, resulting in the vessels being heavily armed against outside attack. The Ziggurats move supplies to and from farms. Unlike Novo, Pantanal is popular within the region and has even successfully traded with a handful of echan communities.

### PUERTA (TLO)

Also dubbed “Gateway” by outsiders, Puerta sits in a hazardous portion of Southam snuggled between Delecoure and the Gloam. The latter covers the narrow patch of land and the surrounding water, resulting in both water and land crossings north of Puerta covered by the smog, a darkness visible from the towers in the atoll. The flooding has resulted in the actual patch of land connecting Southam to the north at only twenty kilometers across at its narrowest point. It’s here where Puerta positions itself, leaving only a small patch outside their gates to allow echans by.

It wasn’t the intent of the atoll to lock the South off or protect anyone from the reach of the Gloam (assuming they had any impact in preventing its spread). More likely, Puerta became a rendezvous point for techan immigrants fleeing the rising tides east and west, the Gloam to the north, and Delecoure from the south. Trapped on all sides, those of Puerta settled on the safest patch they could find and dedicated themselves to fishing and developing their technology in a region with virtually no disruption. Insulated for centuries, Puerta would entertain visitors only a few times a decade, mostly from those daring a push through The Gloam. Some reach the atoll, look at the darkness beyond, and elect to join the village and plant roots. Outside of fishing, the atoll survives mostly through scavenging the surrounding islands, of which there are thousands.

### SOLIMOS (TL1)

The Catalyst of Ararandish was once an extensive river that penetrated the land and created one of the most biodiverse regions on the planet. As the sea levels rose, this region turned the river into a swelling mass of water that nearly split the continent in half. A river where were during the wet season, the widest portion would

*They burned their records. All of them. The Solimos Nexus are not just soldiers. They’re caretakers.*

*Back when the city was built, and a name was hung, those in control took effort to mitigate what memories would carry forward. Engineering, the sciences, those were kept, but history, the accounts of what happened back then, was lost.*

*Not lost, the Solimos Nexus wiped them out—for the good of the people and for the future, they said. We needed to forget. There are rumors that within the Nexus head office, there resides on book kept from back then—one that no one reads. I doubt that. After 500 years, someone would have read it, allowed it to be copied, narrated to another. They didn’t even keep it in arrogant sense of superiority.*

*The Nexus couldn’t trust their successive generations from revealing the past. They salted the soil, scorched the fields—they killed those that refused to forget until Solimos became a blank slate. We could dive in to find out who did what to whom, but what would it prove? There are no answers there, just a group of elder soldiers equally unaware why such secrets were wiped out. They only know it was done, and no one alive today could change it. Even today, recording history, it’s an insult, burned into their culture. They record measurements, experiments, and blueprints. No one ever writes a date down. What a self-imposed curse these people must suffer from.*

From A Letter Smuggled from Solimos,  
unknown author

be less than 120 miles is now a body of water 660 miles across north to south. Settled within a collection of islands on a northern shore is the atoll of Solimos, built like many techan communities upon the ruins of a city from Earth’s past—in this case, Manaus. Most of the original city sits submerged, with houses originally built on hillsides emerging from the waves. Unlike most other locations, it is believed those in Solimos are direct descendants of the original population of Manaus, struggling each day to survive in a chaotic, magically saturated landscape. Not a day goes by that some abomination from the north charges towards the city.

Like Pantanal, Solimos is much larger than most other atolls, with a population of nearly 50,000 people. However, the average life expectancy is less than 50 years thanks to the constant struggle to survive from an unending stream of creatures either from the north via



land or from the south via the sea. The population increases very slowly, as does its technological advancement, spurred only slightly by the odd trading mission from Novo.

Solimos may suffer from more loss of life than all the other atolls combined, but it is as a result populated by the most hardened techans on this half of the world. The Solimos Nexus—the name of the elite military—are especially trained to survive in echa, aware of many of the weaknesses to exploit in many of the monsters plaguing Southam. Unlike most techans, those in Solimos do not fear the outside world. They embrace nature but believe it must be stepped on if grown where it is not desired. Conflict with ogres has soured relations between Solimos and any other fae, and their location on the north side of the Catalyst decreases any chance of more friendly contact. Still, Solimos remains one of the few vestiges of civility left in that region, one of the few stopping points for land journeys attempting to push through Delecoure in the north.

## VANAKA

In the deep mountains of Zoic, where few dares to tread, the tenenbri slowly multiply. They dig deeper and further into the ground every day, snaking across the entire mountain range, end to end, all seven thousand kilometers of it. As many as a million tenenbri flourish under Zoic, sprouting underground communities monthly. Since they faced no opposition for 300 years, their expansion continued unhindered.

Even today, those who enter one of the tens of thousands of cave entrances along the mountains had best draw a map or hope to encounter friendly denizens, rare that they are; otherwise, they are unlikely to escape. Most trespassers fall to raiders, but others get lost in the labyrinth, a network even many tenenbri don't fully understand. One claim implied more than a million miles of natural and carved tunnels under Zoic, with every entrance leading to a network of caverns, some tiny, others enormous, though all connected. There are no dead ends in Vanaka. Many snake around, splitting a hundred times, rarely leading back to the surface.

The tenenbri utilize this maze to ensure hostile intruders deal with them on their own terms. For adventurers entering the caves, they face more dangers than

*Tomes romanticize tenenbri, but most representations are stereotypes employed to fill a role. Like any pigeon-hole, very little fits in.*

*You know of the spread of racial hierarchy through their ranks—a belief many them would drop in an instant if allowed to. But on the surface, they present themselves as homogenous race, where any single tenenbri is merely a double of another. Spend one day in any of their villages, not the cities where even the stones have ears; I mean the villages at the fringe where they present that veneer to the patrols that come by to collect taxes.*

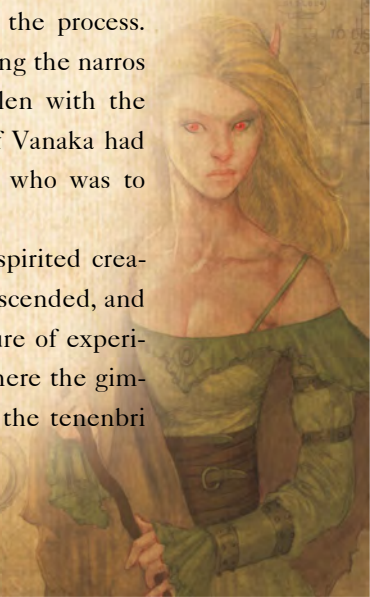
*Tenenbri can pick up buried emotions, so I don't know how they obscure their intent. Without the cult to monitor, one can witness all that they could be. The architects can place their ears against mountains and know the sizes and locations of any caves. The healers can find any injury, even those hidden under the skin. Lovers always know the right thing to say. It's remarkable what one can learn by listening.*

António Almeida de Baptista  
Journal Entry (undated)

just the fae, as beasts shunning the light took solace in the caves long before the tenenbri arrived. The temptation of great treasures in Vanaka coaxes many seekers willing to risk their lives. Few ever succeed. Maps of even the smallest portion of the network fetch a steep price and are a rarity.

Despite the tenenbri's push for invasion into Axom upon their first arrival to Southam, a large portion of their builders journeyed to the now immense mountains the humans once called the Andes to rebuild their empire. They initially ignored the few chaparrans and humans in the area and began digging, quickly discovering natural tunnels leading into immense cavities from which to build cities. From there, the tenenbri architects employed their natural acoustical gifts to locate other caverns to uncover and repeat the process. By the time the army had returned, declaring the narros nearly defeated and every Axom city fallen with the notable exception of Antok, the empire of Vanaka had been established, though the decision of who was to rule would take longer.

The first tenenbri were as much free-spirited creatures as the damaskans from which they descended, and with the same rough and enthusiastic nature of experimentation as their gimfen cousins—but where the gimfen experimented with tools and devices, the tenenbri







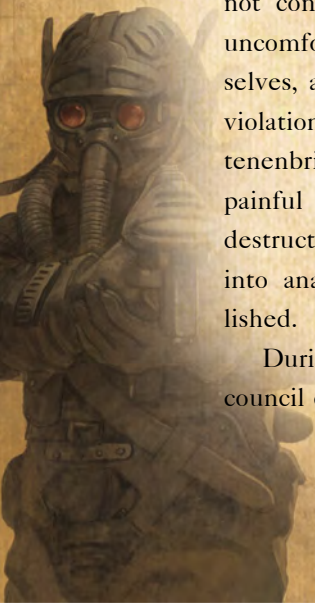
**282** experimented with bodies, both their own and those of other fae species.

To their non-visual senses, beauty lies in deviation, not conformity. Unfortunately, the tenenbri are also uncomfortably close to the line of anathema themselves, and their aesthetic sense has a chilling seed of violation in it. Where deformity did not exist, some tenenbri ‘artists’ were inspired to create it, often with painful and even lethal results. It was to curb these destructive tendencies and to stave off further descent into anathema that the tenenbri religion was established.

During the Terros Age, the tenenbri were ruled by council of elders known as the Domme. Most of these

elders were spellcasters, a rare breed among tenenbri (since learning magic depends upon the written word, and tenenbra’s braille-like script had yet to be invented). Tenenbri mages can, of course, read Pleroma, but to those without such training, spells are invisible and indistinguishable from miracles. It was therefore easy for the literate ithrannasa of the Domme to convince the tenenbri laity that they possessed a gift from the gods, proof of Oaken’s favor and their divine right to rule. Over the course of millennia, council members began embracing the pretense of theocracy until membership mandated piety to the state religion.

Simultaneously, fervent disciples of the Domme formed a paramilitary organization known as the





“Pel’cato” and took it on themselves to seek out enemies of the tenenbri race, neutralizing such opposition, and providing intelligence to their masters of those unsympathetic to the progressively nationalistic beliefs of Vanaka’s ruling class.

The Domme propagated the idea that the tenenbri, despite their position in the fae “devolutionary” ladder, were of superior stock, and that all other species were physically and/or intellectually inferior. The creed stated that tenenbri blindness was a gift to stave off further degradation of their race. Consequently, despite their natural propensity for desiring emotional/physical diversities and alternative traits in potential mates, the tenenbri were convinced to adopt an ethnic eugenics program in hopes of creating a new fae master race. The Pel’cato broadened this conviction to include the discrimination and later extermination of non-tenenbri within mixed communities, which the Domme originally tolerated.

Concurrently, a new denomination of Oaken believers emerged within smaller tenenbri communities known as the Enos Movement. In truth, this faction was preserving the older beliefs before its corruption by the theocracy, leading to their marginalization within Vanaka. The sect fled from their mountains to find solace with the narros who shared most of their beliefs. The narros of Axom, however, were nearly as xenophobic as the tenenbri, and refused to open the gates of Antok.

The Enosian leader Nihilochrysis was content to take refuge outside, preserving faith for an eventual change of heart while word reached back to the Domme of the situation. Despite theological and juridical disagreements, the Domme saw in the Enos movement an opportunity to expand their influence. The Domme prepared new sermons for their priests to deliver to the masses: the treacherous narros had spurned the peaceful pilgrims of the Enos sect (the fact that up until now the sect had been ostracized by the orthodoxy being conveniently overlooked), and it was the duty of all right-thinking tenenbri to repay the insult.

Invoking the worst kind of nationalistic rhetoric, the Domme successfully rallied their kingdom to action, resulting in one of the greatest conflicts during Terros, and climaxing with the seizing of Antok. The Domme later retroactively claimed the Well of Salvation within Antok as an aspect of their reformed Oaken faith, along with the city and several other relics within it. As for

Nihilochrysis and her people, their purpose served, the Domme erased their opposing views from history and the disciples themselves quietly disappeared. Even Nihilochrysis, a popular figure at the time, vanished without a trace, though seditious rumors reported that she escaped from the indoctrinators and left Vanaka behind.

However, the taking of Antok in Terros revealed a flaw in Domme policy. While all the councilors remained faithful to the *ideals* of their religion, they knew their authority was ultimately based on deception.

Broadly speaking, the tenenbri were aware that spellcasters of other species *existed*, but knowing by hearsay vs. actually coming face to face with one on the battlefield are entirely different things. For the truly faithful, of course, such trifles as ‘evidence’ were immaterial, but for any authoritarian regime the mere existence of a dissenting voice can be cancerous. The Domme realized they had to quickly establish a new, consistent orthodoxy in order to maintain power. The trouble was, even the most devout ministers of the council did not share the same opinion of what to do about it. Furthermore, as tends to happen, ministers became devious, manipulative, and corrupt, and heedless of their own church’s inconvenient edicts. Even the Pel’cato began reconsidering their devotion given recent unclear mandates. Then Sharajaclypse appeared.

Unlike Nihilochrysis, both peaceful and spiritual, Sharajaclypse was both antagonistic and skeptical. Vanaka had expanded to such a degree, many of the fringing towns fell outside the reach of Pel’cato militants, and these communities became prone to dissenting opinions. Sharaj, a natural leader prioritizing the safety of her people in the face of emerging anathema the nation refused to acknowledge, deemphasized obligations to religious doctrine as well as laws regarding resource acquisition, family rearing, and tax collection.

By the time the Domme noticed the dissension, Sharaj had already won the devotion of a half-dozen outlying communities, though their total population was still a drop in the ocean compared even to the Vanaka capital of Vakai. Despite discord still within the council, the Domme ordered the Pel’cato to suppress Sharajaclypse and restore order to the fringe. Before any subjugation could occur, a soft-spoken tenenbri within Sharajaclypse’s community transformed into an immense noble dragon that nearly occupied the entire cavern.





Ordanis of Primacy had been watching the tenenbri race with concern and hoped a moral ruler would eventually arise. He allowed the Pel'cato to withdraw to Vakai with a warning that Sharajaclypse had earned a dragon's birthright—the first and still only tenenbri to be declared royalty.

Ordanis disappeared, likely assuming the proclamation had been enough, not realizing the firestorm that he had sparked. Dragons, with their mastery over magic beyond that of any fae, were the weak link in Vanaka's theology. The endorsement of a rebel by a creature that could be seen as one step below the gods themselves threatened the Domme's control over all tenenbri, and internally, the council was disintegrating. Despite potential redemption in view, the rise of Sharajaclypse also gave rise to her reflection in Evallanecrebet.

Eva's voice carried little weight within the council, but she was the first to seize control given the disarray and distraction caused by Sharaj. Eva won the fidelity of the Pel'cato and utilized them to enact a clandestine takeover. So discreet was this event no one is sure exactly when it occurred. It also had no name, with the few aware of it referring to it as "The Outcome". The Pel'cato turned on the Domme, staging extrajudicial executions and consolidating Evallanecrebet's authority. In their stead, Eva repopulated a new Domme devoted to her. The council turned into a chancery that advised Eva rather than pass decrees, with one notable exception of their first proclamation—that Evallanecrebet was queen.

This created a deadlock between the two rulers that lasted for centuries, until the First Hammer put it on hold for 65 million years. After Vanaka was reclaimed, Evallanecrebet attempted to locate Sharajaclypse with intent to assassinate her, but her rival was nowhere to be found and Eva eventually concluded that she had not survived the Exodus.

In truth, Sharaj had been in hiding, and news of her reappearance came appended with the knowledge she had already gathered her followers at the northern edge of Vanaka. Not long after, Evallanecrebet finally succumbed to age and was succeeded by her daughter, Karellanecrebet, who inherited her mother's obsession with Sharaj's threat to power. Sharajaclypse herself shows no signs of age through her dragon blessing, but Karell's assassins have made more than two dozen attempts on her life. To prevent internal dissent, news of

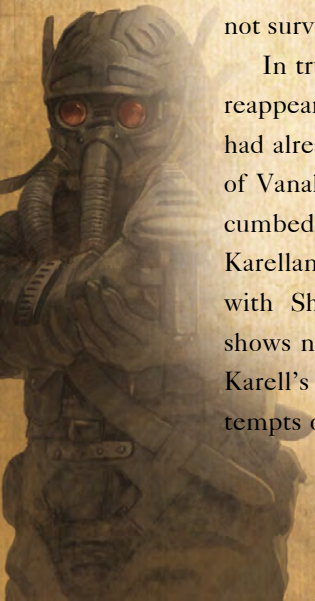
Sharajaclypse's survival was not initially made public, upon the recommendation of the Domme.

The regime of Vanaka continues today as it did since Terros, under the rule of a despotic authority employing an autocratic ideology that forces the population to act against their nature. In the face of rising external threats, these mandates haven't changed, increasing the rate at which tenenbri are losing their minds.

The further from the capital a tenenbri is encountered, the less receptive that fae is to the policies of the kingdom. However, this does equate them as being kind. Tenenbri psychology is a morass of conflicts between instinct and training. Their nature leads them to accept strangers at face value; their upbringing teaches them to hate and fear anything unlike themselves. They are simultaneously skittish and impulsive, paranoid and curious. Each town on the fringe operates on its own principles, which may welcome or attack outsiders. There are still those towing the monarchy's line, but as the number of kythix appearing across the fringe increases, and the war for Antok shows no signs of being over soon, the belief of tenenbri being perfect stock has begun to wane.

Villages have started endorsing views more reflective of their ingrained nature rather than that of the Domme. In the north, under constant conflict, many tenenbri assume opposition first. Those differing from this stance are sworn under the banner of Sharajaclypse, gathering together as much for protection than from conviction of belief. The ruling queen in the south continues to focus the war with the narros and the retaking of Antok, while ignoring the growing threat ogres pose to the entire land. Unlike the pagus, there is no geographical impasse preventing the tenenbri expansion through the land save for the tunnel network of Vanaka itself.

When the ogres first started sweeping in from the north, the tenenbri did not raise a finger to help those on the surface. When the invasion reached the mountains, the tenenbri initiated guerilla attacks for weeks until the horde brazenly crossed the first set of mountains. Within their homeland, the tenenbri kept the corridors and caverns dark, striking fast and deadly. They sliced through the ogre advancement. The credit of this victory belongs to Sharajaclypse, who let the ogres advance further and further into the tunnel network until she was ready to spring a trap on them, all but wiping them out in one fell swoop. Her victory, no







less than the news that she was still alive, sent ripples of unease through the orthodoxy.

Before the religious faction took over, the tenenbri developed a grand culture based on the physical expression of emotions. Where other species would create grand structures, paintings, murals, or tapestries, they express themselves with their voices and their actions. Although suppressed in the larger cities and towns closer to the capital, out on the fringe, every few days, celebrations of beating feet, fists, and hearts break out. By the new day, though no light ever heralds the coming, the tenenbri work their jobs, thinking of only the next cycle's festivities.

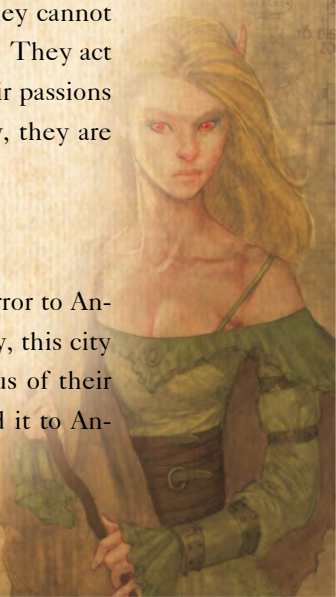
Like the narros, the majority of tenenbri are miners but don't dedicate the whole of their lives to just one profession. Every tenenbri is required to shift their expertise every few years to expand their skills. At least

one point in their lives, a tenenbri serves the military, works the mine, and helps build their civilization.

Despite both the opposing rulers of their nation being women, there is no gender discrimination in Vanaka; women and men can attain the same ranks in any echelon of society. The tenenbri are a sharp contrast to outsiders' expectations of the fae. They cannot hide their emotions, and so do not attempt to. They act on instinct and less on logic. They follow their passions before thinking of consequences. In this way, they are more like human beings.

## GREYLICH

Deep in the mountains resides the closest mirror to Antok, the tenenbri holy city Greylich. Ironically, this city was the original tenenbri divine site, the focus of their belief system until books retroactively shifted it to An-





tok. Dozens of tenenbri holy relics still reside in Greylich, treasured by the masses; they are just seldom spoken of when the queen preaches. For many though, it is the true paragon, content in the lack of public attention, averting the gaze of enemies wishing to destroy the heritage of the tenenbri. Said legacy involves rewritten tomes and rebuilt idols—Greylich being an ideal rather than a collection of rocks strategically organized.

The 50,000 tenenbri of Greylich fall under the rule of the ithrannas priest Lilandyranner. Anyone trying to reach Greylich must traverse more than ten miles of underground caverns and dungeons to the nearest entrance. There is no easy shortcut. The tenenbri here do not permit outsiders. All slaves under their control work outside the city limits.

The original Greylich was commissioned as a simple mine digging for various semi-precious ores that became hallowed ground with the discovery of the “Koedas”.

Not much is known about the artifact other than the description that it is “the finger of Oaken”. Some stories claim it is an obelisk with inscriptions in several languages, though no two accounts agree as to what these languages are, and some claim the inscriptions include words in tongues that had yet to be spoken when the Koedas was first unearthed. Tenenbri entering the holy chamber can see the obelisk despite their blindness and can read the glowing letters. The few that have dedicated their lives to the study of the obelisk reported regaining their natural eyesight, though the process took more than 100 years before finally occurring—those so blessed first noticing the faint glow of bioluminescent organisms hanging from the roof of the chamber the town resides in. Those gifted this way retained their blindsense but develop an overpowering urge to walk into the light. To date, less than two-dozen tenenbri have undergone this transformation, and the mutation does not pass to their children.

*“Before we begin, you understand, as mistress and mayor of this city, I am the adjudicator in this matter,” Sharaj announced as she entered the chamber. The bellies of a few oversized bugs latched to the walls, glowed with a cold green light. No tapestries or paintings, only the Clypse crest hung from one side. The monotone image featured depressed and embossed shapes, clear to a tenenbri’s blindsense, but hard to make out to the human clapped in irons. Two tenenbri guards with twin curved blades sheathed on their back held the man up and steady. Sharaj orbited a black stone table, expertly carved with swirls and shapes up its legs, with rounded edges and set with flakes of glowing stone, radiating the table in a soft glimmer to match the ceiling. The man could hardly make out the mistress in the mediocre light as she reached her regal wooden and leather chair, though refraining from sitting.*

*Faellenassun’s weapon had been removed, leaving his empty magnetic scabbard hanging from his back. His book of policies and procedures was open a crack with his index finger inset. He kept the book to the chest as he stepped forward, also refusing to sit upon the welcomed wood and cushioned chair.*

*Wood.*

*Haishal had harvested the massive roots from snaking trees above, one of the few tenenbri cities able to do so. The material was worth more than silver in the network. Faellen sported a long leather coat over silver gilded chain armor. His bracers featured a raised crest of different stature and house than Sharaj. “Of course, mistress. Judge and jury. This is him,” Faellen said in the native tongue, referring to the prisoner.*

*“This child?” Sharaj countered likewise.*

*“This child put a dagger between the eyes of Holiafanrullen, and let me remind my mistress that looks can be deceiving for these creatures. The time between boy and man is less than a season to us. This man knows of his crime.”*

*“So, was this before or after Rullen killed this one’s family?” she asked. A moment paused while Faellen attempted to ascertain if the question was rhetorical. If not, he must take caution in choosing his response.*

*“Trying to understand the situation, Faellen. Holiafanrullen is no citizen or follower of mine, else he would have faced and explained his actions in this gratuitous raid.”*

*Faellen attempted restraint as he spoke up. “Mistress, Rullen is noble-birthed from Ikaren—”*



*"You believe I required reminding?" she snapped. "I repeat my question. You believe my words would change if I knew or knew not of his heritage?"*

*Although etiquette dictated he lower his head in shame, the tenenbri did not do so. "My apologies," he still added.*

*"Rullen is only noble because of a claim backed from Vakai. I see no dragons upon his crest. Do you see one above mine?" she said, leaning forward, not referencing the banner hanging behind her. Despite knowing exactly what he would see, Faellen clicked his tongue as she expected of him, and listened to the echo.*

*"A pearl, milady," he answered.*

*"And what would that mean?" she goaded.*

*"Decreed by the dragons."*

*"And I say his raid was criminal."*

*Faellen took a step forward. With stealth and unknown to him, one of the guards on the man stepped forth with a counterstep to the envoy, still maintaining his distance. Faellen spoke barely under the tolerance, bordering on offense. "Surely this child-man cannot live. Noble or not, murder is murder."*

*Sharaj leaned and took her seat. "Very well, we'll give the man a blade and enter a ring with the Rullen heir. Let them fight squarely for honor. It's more than what Holiafan offered his victims. I believe such a judgment is proper given similar decrees from Vakai."*

*Both Faellen and Sharaj's personal guard took a step forward. Faellen strained to keep his voice in check. "Reless has only thirty seasons. She is a child, untrained and unprepared for such barbarity—"*

*"Until she reaches adulthood herself, which I do believe won't be too long given the age of the world and the trees reaching their roots into my city."*

*"The boy, nearly a man, will have died of his age before Reless could face him with comparable skill—"*

*"And still there is no guarantee she will keep her bloodlust until that day. In the time until then, we will keep the boy as our ward. Have to make sure he remains in good health for the upcoming duel, correct?" Sharaj's smirk grew from a slight crack but threatened to expose her sentiments on the issue.*

*"He will live?"*

*"Oh, heavens no, he will die . . . in time."*

*Faellen made another step, finally reaching the opposite of the desk. Sharaj was undaunted and unworried, not unlike her guard, now closer to Faellen than the man behind. Faellen turned and quickly snatched a glance to the guard, then to the man. The unnamed was frightened but did his best to conceal it. His*

## HAISHAL

Sharajaclypse leads a fanatically loyal group of 15,000 tenenbri near a northern network entrance. Sharaj, statuesque and beautiful, is charismatic, wise beyond her already lengthy lifespan, able to solve almost any problem presented to her with words more than actions. She is known for her compassion, diplomacy, and quick wit. This has made her dangerous to those in the aristocracy—that is the authority posting as nobility, as Sharaj is only tenenbri bestowed royal by the decree of dragons.

Despite her talent with words, Sharaj was not given the opportunity to use them when the ogre invasion rolled through the forests towards the tunnel entrances. Sharaj dismissed any accusations of cowardice and thrust into action, ordering her small but elite army to monitor the approaching crusade, taking out officers when the opportunity arose. Meanwhile, her remaining militia, along with reinforcements from other loyal towns, fortified within the tunnels, implanting murder holes and traps for several miles. Against advice from other commanders, she refused to face the ogres in front of the entrance. Tenenbri despised the idea of allowing the anathema to soil their kingdom, but Sharaj insisted.

The ogres assumed mediocre defenses when approaching the undefended network entrance. It was not until a full quarter of the army was within the network that Sharaj sprung her trap. Arrow fire, molten oil, and spike traps killed 3,000 in ten minutes. The chaos that ensued resulted in twice that number dead as morale broke, causing a stampede in the darkness. Magic doused every light. Cave-ins and secret passages diverted the army deeper into the network where they were eliminated. The few that did emerge were so badly beaten, so disheartened, that the ogre leader refused to believe their account of the ambush and ordered yet another wave. Only after that force fell to the same fate, did Sharaj take the opportunity to emerge from the mountain. By





*clothes were clean and undamaged though patches indicated recent work. His face had been shaven with barely a shadow present. His eyes were as wide as possible to allow the minuscule light in. Even still, the shadows and shapes across the room made him skittish. Faellen turned slowly back to Sharaj and whispered. "You see the fire in his eyes. He will turn on you as quickly. Will you be as uncouth when he kills one of your own?"*

*She leaned forward and spoke at normal tone. "He is no animal. Once I speak words he understands, you may be surprised at his civility. Is this all?"*

*Faellen thought about a counter but restrained himself. He pushed himself from the table and stepped back a pace. "Nothing further. Thank you for your judgment."*

*The instant before he broke contact to leave, Sharaj spoke again. "By the way, I will be sending invoices to Ikaren, costs for food and bed for the ward. If we are to keep their captive alive for the duel, they will compensate us for that."*

*Mouth agape, Faellen had nothing. He knew the futility and the insult she laid. He could say nothing. He needed to recount the conversation with his lord for them to weigh the price of war over the issue. He could do nothing. He was a messenger and could not even draw his hidden dagger in reprisal before the guard would jump in reflex and sever his head. All he could do was stand in shock.*

*Sharaj added an insult to drive the point further. "Unless they wish to renounce their claim for vengeance?"*

A Pilgrim's Tale  
The Voyage of Seddon Archer  
By Seddon Archer

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then, night had fallen and the tenenbri, led by Sharaj herself, struck the broken army. Her victory came with the double blessing of few tenenbri losses. When the humans and narros in the woods and fields of the east rose up to assist, Sharaj took note.

Sharaj believes the tenenbri are a dignified race, worthy of respect and honor if they break free from the malignant conditioning still spreading through their empire. Over 800 years old, Sharaj has still to take a mate. Her brother, Maenis, bonded to a local servant girl and offered several children worthy of succession. The entire Clypse name is popular with the locals,

some swearing their blood for the entire family's history. Outside, her leniency with the narros and human communities on the surface have been taken as sour by Vakai, and most traditionalists consider her outlandish opinions as a severe threat to the Queen's influence over the rest of the network. If power of the network were to transfer from Vakai to Haishal, the entire policy of the tenenbri in Vanaka would shift.

## IZAPIX

This small city rests on an island inside a very large subterranean lake. There are no bridges to Izapix, only stairs that drop from the ceiling above, carved into a huge natural hourglass-shaped stone pillar. Bridges once connected to the distant shores, but the population tore them down in a sudden rebellion. The pedagogue who runs Izapix, the former ithrannas Nillascenkarx, only wished his people to be left alone. They seldom dig anymore, preferring isolation with their island and the rich fishing waters from the lake and river that flows through. Unlike other tenenbri communities, usually gifted with lukewarm illumination, Izapix is bathed in complete darkness.

Outsiders are not welcomed, not even other tenenbri. Warnings are fired to those attempting a boat crossing, and few have ever located the tunnel that leads to the staircase. However, the tenenbri of Izapix have never taken a life against those attempting to reach their town, an edict of their faith. If someone dares reach the shore, they are accepted, fed, even sheltered. Leaving offers a similar set of challenges.

The religious sect in Izapix prefers sequestration without interruption in their attempts to reach a total understanding of the universe through sensory deprivation. Residents of Izapix believe the tenenbri blindsense allows them to see more than simple echolocation or vibrations within the ground. It allows tenenbri to peer into souls, through the very fabric of time and space, and finally to look into the eyes of God. The Order of Zaleel hopes to discover the origin and meaning of all life, to solve the greatest questions.

To them, no longer can evolution answer everything; no longer can magic answer everything. The Order believes that there is more to know that connects



*The four most notable accounts follow:*

*Sciogeanasis and Perciarachias both claim to have noticed figures watching them from the edge of room. The tenenbri claimed sight, seeing colors. Would they even know what colors were? Ghostly figures drifted from the walls and surrounded them. Unlike all other hallucinations, where one creates figures from memory, both Scio and Percia attest the figures were no one they knew. They did not sense as tenenbri but had the ears of a fae. In each encounter, one of the figures approached the tenenbri and placed something in his or her hand. With Scio, it was a palm-sized crystal sphere with a single rose petal perfectly incased. With Percia, it was hardwood hilt for a longsword with no blade set. Both subjects emerged from the chamber with said items still in hand.*

*Urihollianis spoke of a similar account but from him, only a solitary female appeared. She was as tall as a laudenian, but with a more athletic physique and long curls of waving hair, as animated as her smile. Uri remembered wishing his heart to know her name. She leaned over and whispered, "Kirana." Uri emerged spent and obsessed with the female. He left the order soon after.*

*Then there was Elamcryphanus. We opened the chamber... and he had disappeared.*

Brother Kenazsina  
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the world of magic to science. They go about pursuing this path by removing external stimulus. Followers enter a large shallow pool and float upon the surface. Each room is massive, and after the doors close, all external acoustics are removed. The subject remains, sometimes for hours. Despite screams and pleas, the doors are never opened until the leading monk consents. During the procedure, the subject is prone to hallucination and lucid dreams of impressive realism, occasionally striking fear in the viewer. Concerns arise for those who do not scream, that remain silent for the entire duration. Some refuse to speak of their experience afterward while others insist on recording their visions for prosperity. The settlement's founder himself renounced his study of magic so that the glowing runes of Pleroma would not distract him from the search for enlightenment.

## KALAK

The people of Kalak are slightly shorter than other tenenbri and look unkempt. They carry dirty faces from digging. The narros claim ancestors from the original Kalak were responsible for bringing the wrath of Oaken that created the tenenbri in the first place. They continue to dig deeper than any narros mine. Kalak and the people are responsible for 80% of all mineral riches in Vanaka, mainly gold and silver. The pedagogue of Kalak, Runnaklimix, is the oldest living tenenbri at 1,000 years of age. Few see him although all tenenbri know he still lives. Oddly enough, he garners little respect outside of Kalak and the people who deify him.

Runn also prides himself with one of the longest marriage of any living fae, having been paired to Elsanabora several centuries ago by feuding parents in a vain attempt to settle grievances. Well before the exodus, Elsa's brother, Ronnabora took an insult from Runn and attempted to exact vengeance by taking Runn's own younger brother in an alleyway ambush. Elsa, aware of the trap, warned Runn, who arrived and challenged Ronna to a duel. Ronna was killed and the feud exploded into a full war despite the marriage.

Elsa's father attempted to nullify the bond and take back his daughter. Runn, with Elsa's help, snuck inside the Abora house. Elsa knew very well what was required and stood back as Runn slew her family as they slept. Runn and Elsa took the house as their own. As proof of his love for his wife and wishing not to show favor, Runn turned on his own family and killed them all as well, the entire household of twelve relatives. The couple claimed the combined inheritance and took control of the city. To an outsider such a tale sounds horrific, but to a tenenbri it speaks of true dedication. Whether it actually be true or no, the pair has ruled with distinction and honor ever since. They remained together both before the exodus and after the influx. In the 900 years of marriage, they hardly ever leave one another and have sired more than 75 offspring, most of which run the operation and administration of Kalak.

Recent controversies over accusations of inbreeding between their descendants resulted in Vakai demanding an inquisition be set up. Runnaklimix refused. If evidence were to surface, Vakai forces would surely





move in to remove the family from power, for tenenbri law forbids such a pairing.

dim, but usable green-blue light. Candles and torches are also available, for those who need them.

## 290 PALENQA

The abodes and dwellings of Palenqa protrude from the walls, carved into the narrow cavern stretching for over a mile long and hundreds of feet high. The citizens entertain many visitors from the nearby eastern cave entrance. Of all the communities, Palenqa is one of the most sociable. Pedagogue Petterishoram is a friendly sort that enjoys successful trade with adventurers entering the network. Most tenenbri wandering outside Vanaka originate from Palenqa, which is the brightest lit of any tenenbri city by the bioluminescent algae growing over the ceilings and walls, basking the town in a

Palenqa, like Kalak, recently fell under scrutiny. Here, the rumors spread about crossbreeding between tenenbri and outsiders, a crime in the lawbooks of Vakai. Critics of the city also charge that Palenqa harbors those breaking social laws, and paint it as a hotbed of vice and depravity. Defenders counter that such foolish accusations serve no purpose other than to support the fear agenda Vakai currently involves itself in.

It is in Palenqa's best interest to repress Vakai's unpopular social engineering laws in the face of progress and revenue, though more the latter. Being the closest community to a well-known cavern entrance, the citizens of Palenqa had a choice—raid intruders attempting to enter the caves or open a dialogue with them.



Knowing repeated attacks would discourage intrusions, and thus reduce potential gains, the city decided to accept and embrace the potential revenue in entertaining visitors rather than killing them. This expanded to include trade and the selling of maps and even eventually hiring of guides to ensure safe passage through the network. Although visitors are prohibited to stay, there have been more than a few who have lingered for decades.

When government tax collectors or militants arrive, the city changes its tune and shifts back to loyal population conforming to the doctrine bidden by the queen. Occasionally, bribes are issued, and on more than one occasion, militant patrols reporting back on offenses witnessed within the city have mysteriously vanished on their return.

Meanwhile, Petter, devoutly in love with Shara-jaclypse, has forged an unofficial alliance many decades ago, though Sharaj continually denies his romantic advances. He hopes in a few centuries to win her over.

## VAKAI

The capital city begins as small cave, though continuing to expand as one enters until appearing larger than the mountains above can hold. The massive cavern of Vakai humbles all. A river divides the cavity in two. Several bridges cross the expanse to the main city where hundreds of cathedral-shaped black buildings rise, stretching to the distant ceiling. Natural life forms and magical elements in the ceiling create a radiance draping the entire city in a dim twilight. Not that anyone there requires it: the sprawling city welcomes only tenenbri, and the city's equally sprawling bureaucracy micromanages every facet of their society, from the military and their government to their mining concerns and map making. Queen Karellanecrebet frowns on outsiders. She believes in only her people and the development of her empire. She is obsessed with the war with the narros and expects further conflicts with both the ogres and the awnee. She intends the tenenbri to eventually move beyond the mountains and into the north once they have taken every inch of Southam and designated it all as Vanaka. Despite this, Karell does not see herself as a warmonger; centuries of bad blood merely make war inevitable.

Neither Karell nor any of her lords have any proximity of blood. Karell continually expands the number of her loyal followers by passing down titles hand over fist.

None of these titles carry the weight of nobility as fae understand it; only Sharajaclypse, bearer of the dragon's kiss, has the natural right to ennoble anyone within Vanaka, and therefore the lords of Vakai are not always given what they perceive as their due outside of the great cavern. The dragon crest always keeps the rogue tenenbri Sharaj popular with the people of Vanaka, even in Vakai. As expected, Karell feels threatened.

Recently, the city turned metaphorically darker. Citizens have been disappearing from streets. Those questioning the government or their policy either vanish or meet with unfortunate accidents. Religious militants, the Pel'cato, walk the streets more concerned with combating the vices than enforcing actual crime. Although initially being tasked with enforcing the racial policy of Vanaka, the Pel'cato later amalgamated several secret law enforcement agencies under their banner and expanded their mission to include the investigation and peremptory punishment of anyone suspected of treason, vice, non-tenenbri sympathy, or openly expressing thoughts that question the rule of the queen or the Domme. The Pel'cato functions with complete discretion, able to operate without judicial review. Members themselves are above the law. As a result, the Pel'cato no longer just hunts racially impure tenenbri or sympathizers but also anyone unpopular with the kingdom.

Over 100,000 tenenbri call Vakai home.

## THE ZOIC MOUNTAINS

Like the chaparrans in the Kamaq, the tenenbri claim their empire stretches to every corner of the mountain range connecting north to south in Southam, a region called Zoic. However, their declarations are highly dubious given the territory involved. Not only are there caverns under the mountains lacking any fae population—replaced by spawn and exiles from other civilizations—but on the surface, where altitude prevents the spread of the forest, several non-tenenbri communities have prospered. The majority of these are humans trapped on the wrong side of the Zoic from the rest of Southam while others simply prefer to live isolated.

The Zoic is divided into four climate zones, differentiated by elevation. As humans mostly live on this land, the designations of these regions predate the Second Hammer. From the lowest altitude to the highest,





they are the Tierra Caliente, the Tierra Templada, the Tierra Fria, and the Tierra Helada.

These communities have adapted to survive in every one of these regions, aware of which crops survive at which elevations. Given the lack of flat land, farmers employ terracing—where steps are carved into the mountainside where crops can grow. Communities are often built from stone to protect against the elements, forcing permanent roots. Another recent development is the manner in which the indigenous population has adapted to the elevation, possessing larger than average lung capacity due to the thin air. A natural evolutionary adaptation before the Hammer, it has subsequently been enhanced by magic, such that at lower elevations these humans are able to hold their breath for a prodigious length of time (though it also makes them act slightly drunk at normal oxygen levels).

After five centuries, a micronized and isolated realm has established with dozens of villages trading across the mountains, communicating via smoke or bird, sharing defensive responsibilities, and trading goods between elevations. Food is dragged uphill and mined resources are carried down. Sleds and beasts of burden are common given the lack of any roads. Transportation between villages can take days, especially when a mountain or deep valley blocks passage. Despite coming close, those living in the mountains have never elected a ruler or king, and no one individual has ever amassed an army capable of conquering the others. Any crusade would result in attrition as the army would run out of food or morale as they travelled. Notable larger towns in Zoic include Ataca, Uruc, Quevo, Wau-Wau, and Kawawixi.

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*Mischa was tossing loose stones irresponsibly from the edge, waiting for his stomach from the evening meal before sleeping. He didn't care if anyone else was sleeping.*

*"Still thinking you'll save my soul, huh?" Mischa asked Mahan.*

*Mahan smirked, then opened his eyes. He hadn't been sleeping.*

*"So far, you don't appear the type needing rescue," replied Mahan. "I only wonder what will possess you after vengeance is satisfied....assuming you see this journey to its conclusion and destroy the demon you've sworn to."*

*"Be a lord, maybe," Mischa replied. "Conquer some bride, hammer out a few heirs. Rebuild Kantis from its ashes. Restore and continue as before...until Ixindar releases another intractable foe."*

*"Sleeping forever with one eye open alongside a baby maker waiting for a better creature to kill. Sounds tranquil."*

*"Maybe Gebermach would be my final trophy. Maybe a king will take notice and touch a sword on my shoulder, offer me a keep in his land. I'd be a farmer and tend the pigs, find some maiden from a rival house take her as wife to forge an alliance."*

*"Who wouldn't want a piece of Mischa?" Mahan joked. Mischa responded with an equal loud guffaw.*

*"Some robust woman modest enough to work with the peasants, strong-willed to talk back to her lord. I'd give her the first night of passion and have her willing and wanting to return the favor a thousand times over. Raise a son; pass down the pride of my family."*

*"Surprised you don't want to be a king yourself."*

*"I could never be a king. A king isn't allowed to joust, to fight, isn't allowed to lead armies."*

*"Some do. Mine did."*

*"I heard of that. Those stories true?"*

*"The Caravan of the King. Aiden's read the book. It's all true." Mahan closed his eyes and thought of the possibility. "King Mischa...I shudder to think of the statues you would erect."*

*Mischa's answer was neither jovial nor sarcastic.*

*"Honestly, cleric," he said, "I doubt I'll survive this affair. In fact, I'm fairly certain I won't."*

*Mahan didn't respond. Mischa knew nothing could dissuade him from that opinion. Gebermach destroyed an entire kantis village, slayed a dragon god. His vengeance was short-sighted, and he knew that.*

*"I appreciate your companionship," Uriel finally interjected from his corner, "but you two seriously need to shut up and sleep or I'll toss you off this mountain."*

*The three of them finally settled to sleep, though after Mischa had to mutter, "Someone's grumpy."*

\* \* \*

*The third cave was even higher and more precarious than the previous one. It was too much for their length of rope. Uriel threw himself to the rock and climbed with a cat's grace. When he tossed the rope down, it came forty feet short.*

*"Any more?" Mischa asked.*

*Mahan reached into this pack. "You would think,*



knowing the climb, we would plan ahead.” He pulled out his bars. Mahan placed one like a ladder rung in the air, and it hung. Mahan pulled himself up and reached the other one higher. It locked in the air, and he scaled the distance, anchoring the bars higher with each step. Mahan climbed until grasping the rope, grabbing hold and looking down to Mischa.

“At what point did you think I would be able to do that?” Mischa shouted up.

Mahan looked at Uriel. “Drop the rope!” he shouted up. Uriel looked confused. “Have faith.” Uriel did so.

Mahan tied one end to a bar and let the other end fall to Mischa. The ranger was not impressed.

“You’re shitting me, right?” Mischa shouted.

“Climb.”

Mischa trusted magic more than technology but not to the extent that a five-pound bar floating in the air would support him. He gave a few tugs to test confidence and started to climb.

Upon reaching Mahan, Mischa reached up to the other bar and stood on the lower one. The two of them brushed bellies as they hung in the air. They both looked up at the cliff far above and then the rope that hung underneath. The rock wall was fifty feet away.

“You know when we have a plan, best we think it through to its conclusion,” Mischa said.

“Pessimist,” Mahan retorted. He grabbed Mischa’s mail firmly and reached down to untie the rope. He stood back up. “Hold onto me, please.” Mischa looked unsure. “Substantiate the legend of Kantis grip.” Mischa grabbed Mahan’s robes. Mahan released his hold and pulled out the black bow from this back. He tied the arrow to the rope and aimed up.

“Told you I couldn’t fire an arrow with a rope and anchor at hundred feet. Never said I couldn’t fire a rope at fifty.” He released. The arrow reached Uriel’s grasp, and he braced against a rock. Mahan smiled to Mischa. “Where would you be without me, Mischa?”

“Safe on the ground,” he growled and started to climb.

Upon reaching the cave, Mischa slumped on his back. Mahan looked over the edge and clapped his hands. Both bars leaped up quickly for him to catch.

The last cave left all three of them exhausted. Even Uriel paused for a quick breath. Mischa, still gasping, pushed out in a huff, “Did anyone think to ask how an oracle could get up here. Starting to think someone is laughing at us.”

Mahan coughed and spoke with a hoarse, “Perhaps

said oracle beckoned this mountain’s creation. Clearly, it is not a natural occurrence. And Uriel got up here easy enough.”

Uriel didn’t answer. They dropped whatever packs they brought along with the climbing gear. Mahan left his scimitar back with the rest of their supplies below. Mischa and Uriel had brought their weapons.

“Leave your arms here,” said Mahan. “If not faith, show some respect. If we climbed all this only for a fight, then we’ll have failed.” Mischa squirmed his mouth and threw the cleaver on his pack. “Wonder why you even brought it.” Mischa didn’t answer. They both looked at Uriel, unmoving.

“I drop my weapons for no one,” Uriel said plainly. “Any oracle worth his wisdom will know that.” Neither of them pushed the point and took a few steps into the sparse woods.

Movement caught Mischa’s eye first, and he instinctually reached for his absent sword. Mahan glanced and saw the white shape passing behind a tree. Uriel kept calm. His sword was secured and still locked with a clasp. He had no intention of pulling despite his argument.

A halo of soft light barely visible against the canvas of a cloudless afternoon peeked from behind the trunk of a conifer. Her face was smooth and perfect, angelic in ways no other words could describe. Her eyes glowed a light blue, striking against her white gown of silk without a blemish of dirt or rain. She was as tall as any man, but her form was blurry against the radiance of her aura.

“You have got to be...” Mischa muttered and trailed off.

“Beautiful in ways to put all others to shame,” Mahan whispered a quote from some old text. “The covet of gods and the desire of all mortals who gaze upon them.”

She remained partially hidden.

When Mischa attempted to step closer, she pushed behind the bark and re-emerged two trees back. None of them had ever seen such a rare fae, a *nariisa* of the wood.

“Call them dryads or nymphs,” Mahan whispered, “They prefer Sibharil. No form shaped by divine hands could measure to their beauty, forcing even the vainest to look away in humility.”

“I take everything back I ever said about the climb,” said Mischa.

“If she’s the oracle, how are we expected to talk to her?” Mahan responded. “I’m weak being this close.”





## CHAPTER NINE: SOUTHAM

*The growl was loud and deep. "What are your intentions towards my wife?"*

*Mischa snatched open air again looking for his weapon. Uriel still didn't flinch. The bass of the voice shook needles to the ground. The group scanned the forest and found a bulge rising from a mound across the summit. It turned around, the four large paws thumped lazily on the soil. It sulked forward.*

*"Kodiak," Mischa observed naturally.*

*"No...just a bear," Mahan corrected. This one was monstrous. Three times the size of any bear they had ever seen. It was not of the new Kodiaks, the bipedal bears known in the north. This had four paws and a huge trunk.*

*It was just a bear...that talked.*

*"Sure he didn't eat the oracle?" Mischa asked. He glanced over at the nariisa, eavesdropping from her tree, her delicate digits curled around a branch as she looked closer.*

*"Raunnis the Wise?!" Mahan asked loudly. The beast stepped closer, rearing on its rear legs, draping the three of them in shadow.*

*"This is one of those humbling moments, isn't it?" Mischa whispered. The bear slumped back and flopped on its rear, dangling its front paws. Mischa leaned behind Mahan. "Do we offer a gift? Fish?" Mahan gave Mischa a mystified look. "Just thinking."*

*"You bring any?" growled Raunnis.*

*"No, sorry," Mahan replied.*

*"Depressing. Been a long time since I had fish."*

*"We seek wisdom, great seer!" Mahan declared stridently.*

*"I seek fish. Sudden craving."*

*Mahan turned to Mischa. Mischa read his eyes. "I don't want to climb back down," Mischa said.*

*Mahan looked at Uriel.*

*"I don't swim," Uriel answered.*

*Mahan turned back to Raunnis.*

*"Is there nothing else we can offer?" he asked.*

*The beast diverted its head to see a flying bird, then got distracted by a pine cone that dropped by his foot.*

*"His father's weapon would be an appropriate investment," it said while sidetracked. All eyes went to Mischa.*

*"No," Mischa answered.*

*"Mischa," pleaded Mahan.*

*"No. What if he wanted your Koran?"*

*"I'd give it without trade."*

*"I will take it as well," Raunnis interrupted, "and the mask of the silent one." Uriel pulled the mask from his*

*side and tossed it onto the grass without hesitation. Mahan removed his book from his pocket and approached slowly. He placed it gently by the mask.*

*"I wrote in it," said Mahan. He stepped back and resumed his stare at Mischa. "Mischa..."*

*"It's not up for debate," he snapped back.*

*"Sacrifice."*

*"I've paid enough." Mischa unlatched one of his coverings. "He can have the firewolf pelt." The bear cocked a head. Mischa shouted to him, "It has sentimental value!" The pelt landed lazily over the two other items.*

*"What is it you wish?" the beast said, somewhat depressed.*

*Mahan took control.*

*"The artifacts forged from the broken shards of the dragon god, Amethyst," he said. "We possess the amulet. We seek the others."*

*"Why."*

*"Save the world!" Mahan shouted quickly to prevent Mischa from saying the same.*

*Raunnis found more interest in a small ferret that ran up a tree. Then he looked at his claws, noting one had taken a crack.*

*"I know of what you speak," it mumbled. "As whispers. They get louder in time."*

*Mischa started to get unsettled, averting his eyes, occasionally glancing at the faerie hiding in the distance. Mahan continued, "Do you know where we could find the others?"*

*Raunnis opened his massive jaw for a great yawn and lingered with his gaping mouth until satisfied. His tongue fell out a few inches. He arched his head back and noticed how warm the sun was.*

*He wanted to sleep. He let his mouth snap closed, and then he scratched his crotch.*

*"No," he finally answered.*

*"What?" Mischa snapped quickly.*

*"Not even a guess?" Mahan added.*

*"I want my pelt back."*

*"You should ask Ramkava," snarled Raunnis.*

*Mischa tossed an arm in the air and turned his back.*

*"Waste of time!" he snapped.*

*"The heads don't talk to everyone," Mahan said calmly to the oracle. "Only nobles and kings have been heard."*

*"And those with a symbol of great power," Raunnis replied. He then began to lick himself. Mischa gripped both hands on his forehead and held his brain tight.*

*"Like?" Mahan asked.*



*"The Staff of Kerif," Raunnis answered.*

*"Keris Rifts?"*

*"The keep of the mage is nearby." Raunnis continued licking. "Catacombs be the better word. Find the staff and go to Ramkava."*

*Mischa pushed past Mahan and barked, "Easier said than done, bear. If anyone could walk in and take it, we'd find it on the arm of a despot or on display in Limshau!" He turned back to Mahan. "Let's go."*

*"Wait, Mischa," Mahan responded.*

*"Waste of time and we're losing light!" Mischa ignored him and started walking back to the edge. Raunnis was still concerned with his grooming. Mahan took noticed, then turned to catch up to the ranger. Uriel kept his eyes on the bear.*

*"Perhaps we should take Janoah first," Mahan said to the back of Mischa's march. "See what my king has to say."*

*"A citizen of God's kingdom?" asked Raunnis loudly. Mahan turned back.*

*"Proudly," he responded.*

*Raunnis stopped his cleaning.*

*"Then you should travel north to Quinox," it said. Mahan glanced to Uriel, who offered only a shrug.*

*"What's at Quinox?" Mahan asked.*

*"Nothing," Raunnis replied.*

*Mischa twisted around and shouted, "The dragon made more sense than this! Next time, I'll just read tea leaves in a cup, strike a gong, or listen to the noises my stomach makes."*

*"Genai was wise," it replied.*

*"And that's all it got from that statement!"*

*Uriel bent a knee and said, "As are you, great one."*

*"Stand up," Raunnis moaned. "I only have good ears, which is why I send you to Quinox."*

*"What's so important at Quinox?" Mahan asked.*

*"Nothing. I am no seer of cataclysm or calamities. I only listen. I heard of a vault of forbidden items locked tight in a city in rock, but it is far in the Nankani Mountains. Perhaps they found what you seek. But first, you must travel where the green turns white, where they take the cold as their mistress and my kind worship a god made of ice."*

*Uriel stood up. The beast moaned again and glanced elsewhere. "I will speak no more of this. It equals the offer of a pelt."*

*"Then that's where it stands," said Mischa, turning back to the precipice. Mahan and Uriel nodded. The creature didn't bother acknowledging them. Uriel snapped around and followed the ranger.*

*Mahan leaned over to glance at the faerie. She was still poking her head around the tree, still curious. She smirked a little smile. Only Mahan saw it. He almost formed a smile in return and forced himself to break it. He turned quickly and shuffled to catch the other two.*

*They didn't say anything at first. They approached the edge and took in the view. Mischa and Mahan pondered how to descend. Uriel let his cloak reach out wide.*

*"Hold onto me," the kenbu muttered.*

*Mischa looked him over. "You've got to be kidding." He wasn't, and they made it to the ground in less than a minute, Mahan and Mischa screaming during most of the fall.*







## CHAPTER TEN

# MONSTERS

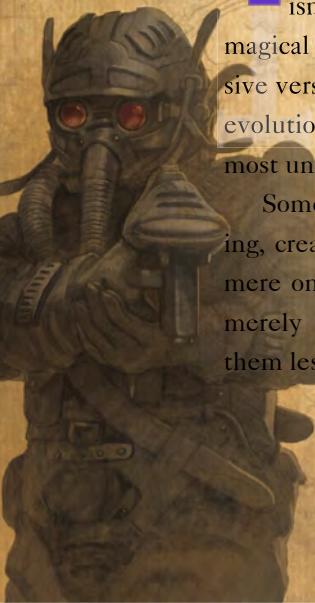
302 **T**here will never be an exhaustive list of all the creatures affected by magic affecting the land—it would number in the millions. In truth, few organisms are immune to the influence of fantasy. A magical surge could mutate a natural animal into a massive version of itself, regress it millions of years along its evolutionary ladder, or transform it into something almost unrecognizable, be it creature or abomination.

Some of these spawn creatures might end up breeding, creating a whole new species, and others might be mere one-offs, succumbing to an adventurer's blade or merely to the survival of the fittest as magic renders them less suitable for their own environment.

Meanwhile, the fae move along a different path. They emerged upon the world (at least according to their inconsistent history) fully formed as the original elder fae, but since then have been branching off into progressively more chaotic and less intelligent subspecies, culminating in the anathema, accurately labeled as monsters, controlled entirely by chaos.

At least, that is what most believe.

In truth, many of the fae 'devolutions' are more sidesteps than anything else, particularly among the chaparran line which has produced uncounted strains of pastoral fae without delving into anathema, and furthermore, not every creature dubbed 'anathema' is entirely bestial or evil, though most are.





The corruption of Ixindar is a special case. In most situations, a corrupted creature is indistinguishable from its original form. Most Ixindar creatures are actually undead, sustained in the exact same state as they were reanimated in perpetuity, whether it be as a pristine cadaver or a half-rotten corpse. Other corruptions are twisted toward a specific purpose, and display a peculiar uniformity; for instance, there is much less diversity of feature among pagus than among any other fae species, and all shemjaza are essentially identical to an unfamiliar eye.

## TECHAN MONSTERS AND DISRUPTION

The regular disruption rolls that normally happen at the end of a round affect only player characters. A GM should make a second roll to determine if techan opponents are affected. Since tracking disruption individually for each techan opponent can slow things down, if a disruption event occurs, it affects every monster/NPC in the squad. Players can also use disruption offensively against techan monsters the same way that targeted disruption events can be used against them; in this case, it should be tracked case-by-case.

Most techan monsters are considered TL1 for purposes of disruption rolls, unless indicated otherwise. Most if not all techan monsters in this chapter have some effect to counter possible disruption. Some specific creatures like MAX (in the core book) and Kairos (in this chapter) are immune to disruption.

## CHIGGOTH

The chiggoth is the single largest fae on the planet by a significant margin, so large that they have been known to take down dragons. Thankfully, these monstrosities are rare. They are extremely hard to control, and few armies have been able to gather one to be used in war. They have never been domesticated to any degree, and when in used in combat, are only released when the damage to the enemy is predicted to be greater than the losses suffered by the allies that freed it. In these situations, the only solution is the creature's death or the time-consuming ordeal of recapturing it. In most cases, it is an act of desperation by a failing side to let lose the beast knowing their deaths are sure to follow. The

most common stomping grounds (a term not used flip-pantly) of chiggoths are the wild lands of Xixion, where they inadvertently help to keep the pugg population under control. There are also rumors of one wandering the north between Kannos and Chronzia, and of another locked in a pen in Baruch Malkut. They are known to exist in Delecoure in Southam as well.

Like other narros anathema, the chiggoth is a monster that is partially fused with the surrounding terrain. While the oggraks feature jutting stones from their limbs, chiggoths showcase an entire landscape. Hills and grass along with trees grow their back with roots snaking into the creature's skin. As these monsters are known to slumber for centuries, it was initially believed sediment deposits naturally bury the creature, allowing life to grow overtop, but this terrain is fused to the beast's skin in some way, and although dirt and various particulate matter is seen dropping off as a chiggoth walks, the majority remains in place. When in hibernation, a chiggoth is invisible to the casual observer, leading to the obvious conclusion that there are many more scattered about the world waiting to be stirred. Another unfortunate supposition following that certainty is that there may be larger creatures than even the chiggoths slumbering within the Earth.

## CHIGGOTH LORE

A character knows the following information with a successful Knowledge (Nature) (Int) check.

**DC 15:** An unstoppable, indestructible juggernaut is one way to describe the chiggoth. A deviation from the oggrak, and ultimately, the narros, the chiggoth is the largest of any fae creature and even grows larger than most dragons.

**DC20:** There are at least two chiggoths in Xixion (plus the skeleton of another near the foothills of the Nankani mountains), another covered in ice and snow in the far north, and at least one more in Burganasis. In Southam, many reports claim there to be two, when in fact, there are four, all in Delacoure. As for larger anathema in the same family, there is one book in Limshau that claimed it to be true, calling it Praimox. There is no other information regarding this creature.





## CHIGGOTH

CR 20

**XP 307,200**

CE Gargantuan Monstrous humanoid (fae)

**Init** +0; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision; Perception +8

### DEFENSE

**AC** 36, touch 10, flat-footed 26 (+0 Dex, +26 natural)

**hp** 465 (31d10+310)

**Fort** +25, **Ref** +16, **Will** +18

**DR** 10/adamantine; **Immune** fire, poison, frightened, paralyzed, stunned

### OFFENSE

**Speed** 40 ft.

**Melee** 1 bite +31 (4d8+12) with swallow, 2 claws (2d8+12), and Obliterating Smash

**Space** 20 ft.; **Reach** 20 ft.;

**Special Attacks** Obliterating smash +32 (4d6+12+stunned), frightful presence, backblast, swallow whole (3d6+12 plus 2d6 acid, AC 27, hp 40)

### STATISTICS

**Str** 34, **Dex** 10, **Con** 30, **Int** 3, **Wis** 10, **Cha** 6

**Base Atk** +20; **CMB** +33; **CMD** 54

**Skills** Stealth +20, Racial Modifiers +8 Perception

**Languages** guttoran

**SQ** Chaotic Resistance, Mountain Made Flesh, Siege Monster, The Earth Shook, To the Earth

### ECOLOGY

**Environment** any

**Organization** solitary

**Treasure** none

### SPECIAL ABILITIES

**Obliterating Smash (Su)** +32 (4d6+12 damage and the target is stunned until for 1 round).

**Backblast (Su)** Every 1d4 rounds, the chiggoth can create an immense pressure from smashing its limbs upon the ground, affecting all targets within 60 feet around it (10d10 thunder damage and the target is knocked prone, successful Reflex save DC26 for half. Regardless of the save, each target is pushed back 30 feet and knocked prone.

**Chaotic Resistance (Su)** The chiggoth is immune to any magic that would alter its shape or size.

**Mountain Made Flesh (Su)** Enemies may not move or knock prone the chiggoth.

**Siege Monster (Su)** The chiggoth deals double damage to objects and structures.

**The Earth Shook (Su)** Whenever the chiggoth moves, all creatures within ten feet are knocked prone.

**To the Earth (Su)** When the chiggoth sleeps, it merges with its environment; its bonus to Stealth doubles in this state, but it cannot move







# DRAGONS

The typhox dragons are the most intrusive within the world: Death dragons, cancer dragons, and fallen dragons often make a point to make their presence known. They spread infection, corruption, and tyranny with trifling resistance given their power.

Their mirror, the archon dragons, are lesser known despite being found in equal numbers across the globe. They are largely indifferent to the world, preferring solitude and governing over their meagre realms rather than intruding in the affairs of others. Most of the ruling class, the noble dragons, consider it a point of policy not to interfere with the internal development of other civilizations.

Not all archon dragons adhere to this policy, of course, but most really could not care less about beings so much smaller than themselves. Holy dragons, the keepers of draconic lore, religion, and philosophy, go even further and claim that since the minds and matters of dragonkind are on a totally different plane from other creatures, any involvement with them would be like a mountain trying to talk to the sea. This indifference to anything non-dragon resulted in many holy dragons congregating in a singular nation of affluence and supremacy on the other side of the world, one that has refused to get involved in the greater conflict.

Not all dragons seek isolation: the guardians, the protectors of the species, disagree wholly with the commandments dictated by the holy dragons and enforced by the nobles. Guardians are warriors, conditioned from birth to stand up against tyranny and protect those in need. If it were up to them, the archons would be leading the fight against the forces of corruption. Considering themselves soldiers first, the guardians are grudgingly loyal to the chain of command and always defer to the rule of noble dragons.

That said, dragons are not social creatures by nature and their social hierarchy is enforced by deference to other dragons' strength rather than true rule of law; a dragon of a lower class will defer to another of higher class in that dragon's presence, but at all other times will act according to her own judgments—using the logic familiar also to human toddlers that a lack of a specific

*Amethyst knew.*

*Certainly, he would know, why would there be a question. He was the greatest of the great. Mengus would not go quietly, and an eventual betrayal was less a realization and more expectation. The seeds had been sowed, however. A few bishops were asked by Amethyst to hide in Ixindar. When it was uncovered in the new age, many had fallen to corruption, leaving only one, Kronos of Stone (now of Flaw), powerful enough to maintain control. Kronos rallied the others to open Attricana. The force killed many of them, leaving Kronos the only survivor, living still secluded somewhere in the world. How did Amethyst convince them to corrupt their souls? How did Amethyst know Ixindar would open before Attricana. How does he know anything? Sometimes I wonder if he is even a dragon.*

Gospel of Lazarus

prohibition to act on a case-by-case basis is tantamount to permission to do so. Even noble dragons are not immune to the temptations of interference, as evidenced by the few dragon-blessed royal lines in the world, but their rarity points to how seldom archon dragons intervene. As long as this attitude continues, the archons may remain out of a conflict that very much needs them.

*I was there during Witenagemot in the old time—the formation of powerful dragons that once met in the Axis Terra, the defacto rulers of the planet.*

*After the fall of Goch of Serenity, the Witenagemot declared the fallen outcast. Later, the bishops helped with the creation of the Escutcheon. Then Amethyst went missing, presumably saddened by the betrayal of Goch. The Witenagemot disbanded and returned to their lands, leaving the Curia Regis to rule in their stead. Truthfully, I'm amazed the bishops even lifted their head to notice the world was about to end.*

*It was the return of Amethyst that finally stirred them; what faith these patriarchs must have to be lethargic without the physical presence of their god among them. If my kind weren't conditioned to serve, I'd lock them in their cathedrals and leave them to their meditations while better dragons saved the world.*

Kelto of the Guard  
Gospel of the Guardian



## HOLY DRAGON

### CE dragon

#### BASE STATISTICS

**CR** 7; **Size** Small; **Hit Dice** 8d12

**Speed** 70 ft.

**Natural Armor** +7; **Breath Weapon** cone, 2d10 fire

**Str** 16, **Dex** 14, **Con** 12, **Int** 15, **Wis** 15, **Cha** 15

#### ECOLOGY

**Environment** any

**Organization** solitary

**Treasure** double

#### SPECIAL ABILITIES

**Change Shape (Su)** A juvenile or older holy dragon can assume any animal or humanoid form three times per day as if using polymorph.

**Fast Flight (Ex)** A young or older holy dragon is treated as one size category larger when determining his fly speed.

**Element Aura (Su)** An old or older holy dragon is surrounded by an aura of fire (by default, see *elemental shift*). All creatures within 5 feet of the dragon take 1d6 points of fire damage at the beginning of the dragon's turn. An ancient holy dragon's aura extends to 10 feet. A great wyrm's damage increases to 2d6. The dragon can activate or suppress this aura as a free action.

**Elemental Shift (Su)** A very young or older holy dragon can change the damage type of its breath weapon, element aura, and damage immunity to any other type from the following list—acid, cold, force, lightning, or radiant as a move action.

**Prescience (Su)** A holy dragon can glimpse the future. Once outside of its turn, it can gain a +4 bonus to AC or to any saving throw against one attack.

**Mastercaster (Sp)** A young adult or older holy dragon can swap any prepared spell it has with any other non-necromancy spell it can cast as a Swift action.

**Invisibility (Sp)** An adult or older holy dragon can cast *invisibility* as a spell-like ability. Its caster level is equal to its Hit Dice +1.

**Dream Messaging (Su):** An ancient or older holy dragon can communicate with any creature telepathically with 10 miles of it. This form communication can only occur within the target's dreams. The creature remembers its conversation with the dragon upon waking.

## ANCIENT HOLY DRAGON

CR 20

**XP** 307,200

CG Gargantuan dragon

**Init** –1; **Senses** dragon senses; Perception +40

**Aura** Element Aura, frightful presence (300 ft., DC30)

#### DEFENSE

**AC** 39, touch 5, flat-footed 39 (–1 Dex, +34 natural, –4 size)

**hp** 351 (26d12+182)

**Fort** +23, **Ref** +14, **Will** +24

**DR** 15/magic; **Immune** fire, paralysis, sleep; **SR** 31

#### OFFENSE

**Speed** 70 ft., fly 300 ft. (clumsy)

**Melee** bite +36 (4d6+21/19–20), 2 claws +36 (2d8+14/19–20), 2 wings +34 (2d6+7/19–20), tail +34 (2d8+21/19–20)

**Space** 20 ft.; **Reach** 15 ft. (20 ft. with bite)

**Special Attacks** breath weapon (120-ft. cone, DC 31, 20d10 fire), crush, tail sweep

**Spell-Like Abilities** (CL 27th) At will—*invisibility*

**Spells Known** (CL 17th)

9th (3/day)—*time stop*

8th (4/day)—(DC25) *polar ray*, *discern location*

7th (5/day)—(DC24) *greater teleport*, *resurrection*

6th (7/day)—(DC23) *antimagic field*, *greater dispel magic*, *heal*

5th (7/day)—(DC22) *dispel evil*, *plane shift*, *teleport*, *true seeing*

4th (7/day)—(DC21) *divination*, *restoration*, *spell immunity*, *stoneskin*

3rd (7/day)—(DC20) *dispel magic*, *haste*, *invisibility purge*, *prayer*

2nd (8/day)—(DC19) *aid*, *cure moderate wounds*, *lesser restoration*, *resist energy*, *silence*

1st (8/day)—(DC18) *alarm*, *divine favor*, *mage armor*, *shield*, *shield of faith*

0 (at will)—(DC17) *detect magic*, *light*, *mending*, *stabilize*, 6 more

#### STATISTICS

**Str** 39, **Dex** 8, **Con** 24, **Int** 25, **Wis** 25, **Cha** 25

**Base Atk** +26; **CMB** +44; **CMD** 53 (57 vs. trip)

**Feats** Alertness, Critical Focus, Extend Spell, Improved Critical (bite, claw, wing, tail), Iron Will, Multiattack, Power Attack, Quicken Spell, Stunning Critical, Vital Strike

**Skills** Diplomacy +36, Fly +13, Heal +36, Knowledge (arcana, history, local, nobility, planes, religion) +36, Perception +40, Sense Motive +40, Spellcraft +36, Swim +51

**Languages** All

**SQ** change shape, fast flight, mastercaster, elemental shift, dream messaging

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## HOLY DRAGON AGE CATEGORY

### SPECIAL ABILITIES

### CASTER LEVEL

|              |  |      |
|--------------|--|------|
| Wyrmling     | Prescience                                 | —    |
| Very young   | Elemental Shift                            | 1st  |
| Young        | Fast Flight                                | 3rd  |
| Juvenile     | Change Shape                               | 5th  |
| Young adult  | Mastercaster, DR 5/magic, spell resistance | 7th  |
| Adult        | <i>Invisibility</i>                        | 9th  |
| Mature adult | Frightful presence, DR 10/magic            | 11th |
| Old          | Element Aura                               | 13th |
| Very old     | DR 15/magic                                | 15th |
| Ancient      | Dream Messaging                            | 17th |
| Wyrmling     | DR 20/magic                                | 19th |
| Great wyrm   |  | 21st |





## HOLY DRAGONS

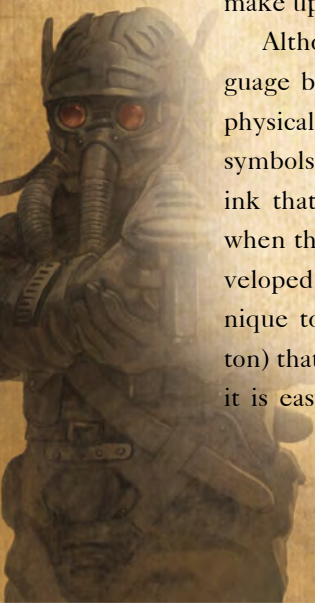
Holy dragons (also known as “bishops”) are more powerful on average than any of the typhox. They are also the smallest in number than of all dragons. They reflect the slightest light from their glimmering scales and sport long manes of white hair. Their wings sport feathers that blend perfectly with their ivory scales. The only colorful aspects are their golden talons and blue human-like eyes. The oldest order of dragon, the holy dragons are weaker in physical strength, but more than make up for it with their adeptness with magic.

Although holy dragons were given the Pleroma language by Amethyst, they were the first to employ the physical written word to contain spells, etching the symbols on their own scales with permanent magical ink that glows in a sparkling cascade across her body when the dragon casts a spell. After the laudenians developed totems, later holy dragons adapted the technique to employ a large pearl (weighing as much as a ton) that floats around holy dragon as it moves. As such, it is easy to tell a younger holy dragon from an elder,

based on where they keep their spells (not that dragons actually need totems, since the words of magic are their day-to-day language, but it allows them to trigger spells with a single word rather than having to intone entire compositions every time).

Holy dragons were intended to represent all that is good and pure, and in recent years have frequently displaced the traditional image of angels in the echan versions of human religions. They are also the last to volunteer for war, believing peace must stand paramount. This position has unfortunately contributed to their apathy toward non-dragons, a position tracing back to long before the Exodus.

On their own, holy dragons are very talkative, taking joy in verbal jousts with an ally over some minor subject. They often bring up topics and disagree with the common acceptance just to spark a conversation. This tendency has made them unpopular in the Dracontia court, which is why it falls under the noble dragons to maintain control. This desire for interlocution is another cause of their inaction, preferring to waste years discussing a trivial topic until a matter is exhausted, not





## ADULT HOLY DRAGON

CR 15

XP 51,200

CG Huge dragon

**Init** –0; **Senses** dragon senses; Perception +30**Aura** Element Aura, frightful presence (180 ft., DC24)

## DEFENSE

**AC** 30, touch 8, flat-footed 30 (+22 natural, –2 size)**hp** 219 (18d12+72)**Fort** +17, **Ref** +11, **Will** +18**DR** 5/magic; **Immune** fire, paralysis, sleep; **SR** 26

## OFFENSE

**Speed** 70 ft., fly 300 ft. (clumsy)**Melee** bite +26 (2d8+15/19–20), 2 claws +26 (2d6+10/19–20), 2 wings +24 (1d8+5), tail +24 (2d6+15)**Space** 15 ft.; **Reach** 10 ft. (15 ft. with bite)**Special Attacks** breath weapon (50-ft. cone, DC 25, 12d10 fire), crush**Spell-Like Abilities** (CL 16th) At will—*invisibility***Spells Known** (CL 9th)5th (3/day)—(DC 20) *dominate person*4th (4/day)—(DC 19) *shout, wall of fire*3rd (5/day)—(DC 18) *dispel magic, prayer, blink*2nd (7/day)—(DC 17) *aid, cure moderate wounds* (DC 18), *resist energy*1st (7/day)—(DC 16) *alarm, divine favor, mage armor, shield, shield of faith*0 (at will)—(DC 15) *detect magic, light, mending, stabilize, 3 more*

## STATISTICS

**Str** 31, **Dex** 10, **Con** 18, **Int** 21, **Wis** 21, **Cha** 21**Base Atk** +18; **CMB** +30; **CMD** 40 (44 vs. trip)**Feats** Alertness, Critical Focus, Extend Spell, Improved Critical (bite, claw), Iron Will, Multiattack, Power Attack, Vital Strike**Skills** Diplomacy +26, Fly +13, Heal +26, Knowledge (arcana, local, nobility, religion) +26, Perception +30, Sense Motive +30, Spellcraft +26, Swim +39**Languages** All**SQ** change shape, fast flight, mastercaster, elemental shift

realizing more urgent matters are at hand; to a holy dragon's perspective, most things of the world are so transient, it is better to ignore them for they will have changed by the time any meaningful action is taken.

## YOUNG HOLY DRAGON

CR 11

XP 51,200

CG Large dragon

**Init** +1; **Senses** dragon senses; Perception +22

## DEFENSE

**AC** 23, touch 10, flat-footed 22 (+1 Dex, +13 natural, –1 size)**hp** 126 (12d12+48)**Fort** +12, **Ref** +9, **Will** +13**DR** 5/magic; **Immune** fire, paralysis, sleep

## OFFENSE

**Speed** 70 ft., fly 300 ft. (clumsy)**Melee** bite +18 (2d6+10), 2 claws +18 (1d8+7/19–20), 2 wings +16 (1d6+3), tail +16 (1d8+10)**Space** 10 ft.; **Reach** 5 ft. (10 ft. with bite)**Special Attacks** breath weapon (80-ft. cone, DC 20, 6d10 fire)**Spells Known** (CL 3rd)2nd (3/day)—*magic missile*1st (4/day)—*mage armor, shield*0 (at will)—*detect magic, light, mending, stabilize*

## STATISTICS

**Str** 25, **Dex** 12, **Con** 16, **Int** 17, **Wis** 17, **Cha** 17**Base Atk** +12; **CMB** +20; **CMD** 31 (35 vs. trip)**Feats** Alertness, Improved Critical (claw), Iron Will, Multiattack, Power Attack, Vital Strike**Skills** Diplomacy +18, Fly +10, Heal +18, Knowledge (local, religion) +18, Perception +22, Sense Motive +22, Spellcraft +18, Swim +30**Languages** All**SQ** change shape, fast flight



## NOBLE DRAGON

**LG dragon**

### BASE STATISTICS

**CR** 6; **Size** Small; **Hit Dice** 7d12

**Speed** 40 ft.

**Natural Armor** +6; **Breath Weapon** cone, 2d8 cold

**Str** 13, **Dex** 14, **Con** 13, **Int** 14, **Wis** 15, **Cha** 14

### ECOLOGY

**Environment** any

**Organization** solitary

**Treasure** triple

### SPECIAL ABILITIES

**Change Shape (Su)** A juvenile or older noble dragon can assume any animal or humanoid form three times per day as if using polymorph.

**Mind Control Breath (Su)** Instead of fire breath, a noble dragon can breathe a cone of mind control gas. Creatures within the cone must succeed on a Fortitude save or be charmed (per the spell) for 1d6 rounds plus 1 round per age category of the dragon.

**Spell-Like Abilities (Sp)** A very-young or older noble dragon can cast *charm person* at will. A young or older holy dragon can cast *fog cloud* at will.

**Aura of Regeneration (Su)** An old or older noble dragon is surrounded by an aura of regeneration. All good creatures within 5 feet of the dragon recover 1d6 points of damage at the beginning of the dragon's turn. An ancient dragon's aura extends to 10 feet. A great wyrm's aura increases to 2d6. A noble dragon can suppress or activate this aura at will as a free action.

**Inspirational Presence (Su)** A young or older noble dragon inspires those that see it. All good-aligned creatures that can see a noble dragon gains a +2 bonus with Charisma-based skill checks.

**A Strange Side Effect (Su)** The chance of a successful pregnancy between bonded couples within 10 miles of a juvenile or older noble dragon increases by 50%.

**Healing Radiance (Su)** All good-aligned creatures within 6 miles of an ancient or older noble dragon regain an additional 1d8 hit points whenever any healing spell is cast upon them.

## ANCIENT NOBLE DRAGON CR 19

**XP** 204,800

LG Gargantuan dragon (fire)

**Init** +3; **Senses** dragon senses; Perception +35

**Aura** of Regeneration, frightful presence (300 ft., DC 29)

### DEFENSE

**AC** 38, touch 5, flat-footed 38; (–1 Dex, +33 natural, –4 size)  
**hp** 337 (25d12+175)

**Fort** +21, **Ref** +15, **Will** +23

**DR** 15/magic; Immune fire, psychic, paralysis, sleep; **SR** 30

### OFFENSE

**Speed** 40 ft., fly 250 ft. (clumsy)

**Melee** bite +34 (4d6+18/19–20), 2 claws +33 (2d8+12), 2 wings +31 (2d6+6), tail slap +31 (2d8+18)

**Space** 20 ft.; **Reach** 15 ft. (20 ft. with bite)

**Special Attacks** breath weapon (60-ft. cone, DC 29, 20d8 fire), charm, crush, mind control breath, tail sweep

**Spell-Like Abilities (CL 25th)** At will—charm person, fog cloud

**Spells Known (CL 15th)**

7th (5/day)—(DC 24) *mass hold person*, *repulsion*

6th (7/day)—(DC 23) *mass suggestion*, *greater dispel magic*, *heal*

5th (7/day)—(DC 22) *break enchantment*, *dominate monster*, *plane shift*, *wall of force*

4th (7/day)—(DC 21) *charm monster*, *confusion*, *freedom of movement*, *solid fog*

3rd (7/day)—(DC 20) *cure serious wounds*, *dispel magic*, *heroism*, *wind wall*

2nd (8/day)—(DC 19) *augury*, *calm emotions*, *cure moderate wounds*, *daze monster*, *web*

1st (8/day)—(DC 18) *charm*, *hypnotism*, *protection from evil*, *shield*, *true strike*

0 (at will)—(DC 17) *daze*, *detect magic*, *flare*, *light*, *message*, *prestidigitation*, *read magic*, *stabilize*, *resistance*

### STATISTICS

**Str** 35, **Dex** 8, **Con** 25, **Int** 24, **Wis** 25, **Cha** 26

**Base Atk** +25; **CMB** +41; **CMD** 50 (54 vs. trip)

**Feats** Critical Focus, Flyby Attack, Hover, Improved Critical (bite), Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Lighting Reflexes, Multiattack, Power Attack, Quicken Spell, Skill Focus (Fly), Vital Strike, Weapon Focus (bite)

**Skills** Acrobatics +24, Diplomacy +36, Fly +21, Heal +35, Intimidate +35, Knowledge (arcana, history, local, nobility, planes) +35, Perception +35, Sense Motive +35, Spellcraft +35

**Languages** All

**SQ** change shape, inspirational presence, a strange side effect, aura of regeneration, healing radiance





## NOBLE DRAGONS

Where holy dragons fly proud and free, noble dragons stay grounded and carry all the responsibilities. They seldom fly, and their wings have shrunk slightly as a result. Their fingers look thinner and more articulate than any other dragons, and their eyes are oversized and expressive. Their scales fit so perfectly together, a noble dragon's skin looks uniform with a matte silver tone.

Their position within the dragon hierarchy places noble dragons as rulers and administrators, as well as the facilitators of canonical law per the archon religion written out by order of holy dragons. However, the

bishops have remained outside of the ruling class, forcing the nobles to interpret the holy laws as they wish – which has caused them to interpret the holy dragons' view that dragons and fae (and now, humanity) are on such different orders of being as to be practically incompatible as an exhortation to avoid involvement with them. Most noble dragons consider that they have enough problems keeping their own kind in line. That said, the concept of *noblesse oblige* is written into the very soul of noble dragons, and they will fiercely defend their lands and any creatures that freely reside therein (even those who have no idea that they live within the territory claimed by a dragon). That ferocity has often

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| NOBLE DRAGON AGE CATEGORY | SPECIAL ABILITIES                                    | CASTER LEVEL |
|---------------------------|--|--------------|
| Wyrmling                  | Change shape, immune to psychic, mind control breath | —            |
| Very young                | Charm  | —            |
| Young                     | Inspirational Presence                               | 1st          |
| Juvenile                  | A Strange Side Effect                                | 3rd          |
| Young adult               | DR 5/magic, spell resistance                         | 5th          |
| Adult                     | Frightful presence                                   | 7th          |
| Mature adult              | DR 10/magic  | 9th          |
| Old                       | Aura of Regeneration                                 | 11th         |
| Very old                  | DR 15/magic  | 13th         |
| Ancient                   | Healing radiance                                     | 15th         |
| Wyrmling                  | DR 20/magic  | 17th         |
| Great wyrmling            |  | 19th         |





## ADULT NOBLE DRAGON

CR 14

XP 38,400

LG Huge dragon (fire)

Init +4; Senses dragon sense, Perception +25

Aura frightful presence (180 ft., DC 23)

## DEFENSE

AC 29, touch 8, flat-footed 29 (+21 natural, -2 size)

hp 195 (17d12+85)

Fort +15, Ref +12, Will +17

DR 5/magic; Immune fire, psychic, paralysis, sleep; SR 25

## OFFENSE

Speed 40 ft., fly 200 ft. (clumsy)

Melee bite +24 (2d8+12), 2 claws +23 (2d6+8), 2 wings +21 (1d8+4), tail slap +21 (2d6+12)

Space 15 ft.; Reach 10 ft. (15 ft. with bite)

Special Attacks breath weapon (50-ft. cone, DC 23, 12d8 fire), crush, mind control breath

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 17th) At will—charm person, fog cloud

Spells Known (CL 7th)

3rd (5/day)—*dispel magic*, *heroism*2nd (7/day)—(DC 17) *cure moderate wounds*, *daze monster*1st (7/day)—(DC 16) *alarm*, *charm divine favor*, *shield*, *true strike*0 (at will)—*detect magic*, *daze*, *light*, *message*, *prestidigitation*, *read magic*, *stabilize*

## STATISTICS

Str 27, Dex 10, Con 21, Int 20, Wis 21, Cha 22

Base Atk +17; CMB +27; CMD 37 (41 vs. trip)

Feats Flyby Attack, Hover, Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Lightning Reflexes, Multiattack, Power Attack, Vital Strike, Weapon Focus (bite)

Skills Acrobatics +17, Diplomacy +25, Fly +16, Heal +25, Intimidate +25, Knowledge (arcana, local, nobility) +25, Perception +25, Sense Motive +25, Spellcraft +25

Languages All

SQ change shape, inspirational presence, a strange side effect

resulted in nobles being prone to emotional outbursts and actions against their expected nature. Nobles hold grudges and will seek revenge upon those that break their laws or wrong them.

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In the time of Terros, noble dragons ran the world, but in the modern age, with few exceptions, they mostly remain in enclosed kingdoms, preferring to control small realms where they have unopposed authority. Although known for generosity and impartiality, they have also been called patronizing and condescending. Those often associating with humanoids sometimes adopt their more gregarious tendencies, even their senses of humor. Noble dragons are one of the few types of dragons that have established long-standing friendships with humanoids with even rumors of the rare noble assuming human form to establish more intimate relationships.

## YOUNG NOBLE DRAGON

CR 10

XP 9,600

LG Large dragon (fire)

Init +5; Senses dragon senses; Perception +17

## DEFENSE

AC 22, touch 10, flat-footed 21; (+1 Dex, +12 natural, -1 size) hp 104 (11d12+33)

Fort +10, Ref +8, Will +12

Immune fire, psychic, paralysis, sleep

## OFFENSE

Speed 40 ft., fly 200 ft. (clumsy)

Melee bite +16 (2d6+7), 2 claws +15 (1d8+5), 2 wings +13 (1d6+2), tail +13 (1d8+7)

Space 10 ft.; Reach 5 ft. (10 ft. with bite)

Special Attacks breath weapon (40-ft. cone, DC 18, 6d8 fire), mind control breath.

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 11th) At will—charm person

Spells Known (CL 1st)

1st (4/day)—(DC 14) *charm*, *true strike*0 (at will)—*detect magic*, *light*, *message*, *read magic*

## STATISTICS

Str 21, Dex 12, Con 17, Int 16, Wis 17, Cha 18

Base Atk +11; CMB +17; CMD 28 (32 vs. trip)

Feats Hover, Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Multiattack, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (bite)

Skills Acrobatics +12, Diplomacy +17, Fly +13, Heal +17, Intimidate +17, Know. (local) +17, Perception +17, Sense Motive +17, Spellcraft +17

Languages All

SQ change shape, inspirational presence







## GUARDIAN DRAGONS

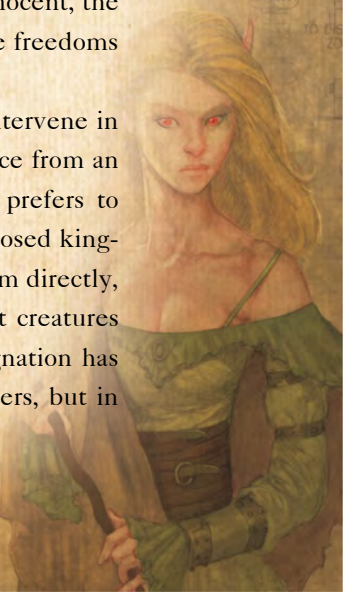
The defenders of lands, the knights of the highest order, guardian dragons need not swear an oath to protect the innocent, to keep their word, to give mercy when asked, or to put the needs of others before their personal gain. Guardian dragons are born conditioned with these traits.

They live without fear no matter the situation. They never lie, even to a fault. But most importantly, they possess a nearly unstoppable drive to safeguard the helpless when encountered and to defend their lands from attack. Although often the generals that lead armies, guardians are also content being grunt soldiers, taking orders from noble dragons or even those granted authority by noble dragons, including fae and humans anointed with the dragon's kiss. They are known for their fierce loyalty and fairness as well as their humble disposition.

Guardian dragons neither seek nor claim trophies and are never known to be swept up in rage or bloodlust. They are renowned strategists behind the curtain, though when fighting starts, are always on the front

line. Loyalty is earned from the armies surrounding a guardian dragon, and there is seldom one that reaches adulthood without scars. Though able to regenerate lost limbs, guardians take pride in their blemishes and will never hide a wound that does not impair their ability to fight. Outside of war, guardians take the protection of a kingdom as paramount; they never miss a patrol. They are ever vigilant, which can occasionally make them paranoid. They are not the greatest party guests, though when a battle is won, they are not above indulging in a little revelry. Despite holding a position as dragon knights, guardians never start conflicts, but as long as the enemies of the light attack the innocent, the guardian dragons will defend to the death the freedoms of those unsullied.

Alas, the desire for guardian dragons to intervene in conflicts on the side of good has met resistance from an increasingly lethargic dragon hierarchy that prefers to remain locked within massive citadels in enclosed kingdoms. With no army foolish to the attack them directly, the guardians watch from towers as innocent creatures are preyed upon by the powerful. This stagnation has come from both the nobles and the holy orders, but in





## GUARDIAN DRAGON

**LG dragon**

### BASE STATISTICS

**CR** 5; **Size** Small; **Hit Dice** 6d12

**Speed** 50 ft., **swim** 60 ft.

**Natural Armor** +7

**Str** 13, **Dex** 14, **Con** 13, **Int** 14, **Wis** 15, **Cha** 14

### ECOLOGY

**Environment** any

**Organization** solitary

**Treasure** double

### SPECIAL ABILITIES

**Change Shape (Su)** A juvenile or older noble dragon can assume any animal or humanoid form three times per day as if using polymorph.

**Equipment** A guardian dragon can either wield a one-handed melee weapon and shield or a two-handed weapon. If wielding a shield, the guardian dragon's AC increases by 1. Noble dragon melee weapons are enormous and can only be wielded by creatures matching the dragon's size. The dragon can summon any weapon configuration, switching its melee weapon, including the removal or addition of a shield, as an action. This equipment magically appears on the dragon's body, the old weapons disappearing.

**Parry (Ex)** A young or older guardian dragon can parry an attack. As many times per day as the noble dragons age category, a guardian dragon increases its AC against a melee or non-spell ranged attack by 6. Regardless if the attack still hits, the guardian dragon gains a single melee attack as a reaction to the attack.

**Bellow (Ex)** An adult or older guardian dragon lacks a breath weapon, but it does have the loudest roar among all dragons, which requires a move action to activate. When announced, all creatures smaller than the guardian dragon and within 50 feet of it are deafened and shaken for 1 turn. As an action, the guardian dragon can project its booming voice to any creatures it wishes within 6 miles of its current position.

**Trained (Ex)** When a very young or older guardian dragon rolls a 1 or 2 on a damage die for an attack it makes with a melee weapon that it is wielding with two hands, it can reroll the die and use the new roll, even if the new roll is a 1 or a 2.

**Swift Attack (Ex)** An ancient or older guardian dragon can make a single melee attack as a swift action.

## ANCIENT GUARDIAN DRAGON CR 19

**XP** 153,600

**LG** Gargantuan dragon

**Init** +4; **Senses** dragon senses; Perception +38

**Aura** frightful presence (300 ft., DC 29)

### DEFENSE

**AC** 39, touch 5, flat-footed 37; (+0 Dex, +33 natural, -4 size)

**hp** 324 (24d12+168)

**Fort** +22, **Ref** +15, **Will** +22

**DR** 15/magic; Immune fire, paralysis, sleep; **SR** 29

### OFFENSE

**Speed** 50 ft., fly 200 ft. (clumsy), swim 60 ft.

**Melee** bite +33 (4d6+19/19-20), 4 sword attacks +33 (2d8+13/19-20), 2 wings +30 (2d6+7), tail slap +30 (2d8+19)

**Space** 20 ft.; **Reach** 15 ft. (20 ft. w/bite; 25 ft. w/sword)

**Special Attacks** bellow, crush, tail sweep, swift attack

### STATISTICS

**Str** 36, **Dex** 10, **Con** 25, **Int** 24, **Wis** 25, **Cha** 24

**Base Atk** +24; **CMB** +40; **CMD** 49 (53 vs. trip)

**Feats** Alertness, Cleave, Flyby Attack, Great Cleave, Hover, Improved Critical (bite, claw), Improved Initiative, Improved Vital Strike, Multiattack, Power Attack, Vital Strike

**Skills** Diplomacy +34, Fly +10, Handle Animals +31, Heal +34, Intimidate +34, Knowledge (arcana, geography, history) +34, Perception +38, Sense Motive +38, Spellcraft +34, Stealth +14, Swim +47

**Languages** All

**SQ** change shape, parry, trained

situations where neither are present, a guardian can act more in line with its instincts, open to swear its heart to an honorable cause.

Guardian dragons may be the most outlandish looking of archon dragons. Though as large as any other dragon, their longer limbs and smaller torsos allow them to not only walk upright but to wield weapons and don armor, making their presence especially intimidating on the battlefield.

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### NOBLE DRAGON AGE CATEGORY

### SPECIAL ABILITIES

### CASTER LEVEL

|              |  |   |
|--------------|--|---|
| Wyrmling     | Change shape, equipment                    | — |
| Very young   | Trained                                    | — |
| Young        | Parry (3/day)                              | — |
| Juvenile     | Parry (4/day)                              | — |
| Young adult  | Parry (5/day), DR 5/magic spell resistance | — |
| Adult        | Bellow, frightful presence, parry (6/day)  | — |
| Mature adult | DR 10/magic, parry (7/day)                 | — |
| Old          | Parry (8/day)                              | — |
| Very old     | DR 15/magic, parry (9/day)                 | — |
| Ancient      | Parry (10/day), swift attack               | — |
| Wyrm         | DR 20/magic, parry (11/day)                | — |
| Great wyrm   | Parry (12/day)                             | — |



## ADULT GUARDIAN DRAGON CR 13

**XP** 25,600

LG Huge dragon

**Init** +1; **Senses** dragon senses; Perception +28

**Aura** frightful presence (180 ft., DC 23)

### DEFENSE

**AC** 30, touch 10, flat-footed 28 (+22 natural, -2 size)

**hp** 184 (16d12+80)

**Fort** +17, **Ref** +13, **Will** +16

**DR** 5/magic; **Immune** fire, paralysis, sleep; **SR** 24

### OFFENSE

**Speed** 50 ft., fly 150 ft. (poor), swim 60 ft.

**Melee** bite +23 (2d8+14), 4 sword attacks +23 (2d6+10), 2 wings +22 (1d8+6), tail slap +20 (2d6+12)

**Space** 15 ft.; **Reach** 10 ft. (15 ft. with bite; 20 ft. w/sword)

**Special Attacks** bellow, crush, tail sweep

### STATISTICS

**Str** 27, **Dex** 10, **Con** 21, **Int** 20, **Wis** 21, **Cha** 20

**Base Atk** +16; **CMB** +26; **CMD** 36 (40 vs. trip)

**Feats** Alertness, Cleave, Flyby Attack, Hover, Improved Vital Strike, Multiattack, Power Attack, Vital Strike

**Skills** Diplomacy +24, Fly +11, Handle Animals +21, Intimidate +24, Knowledge (arcana, geography) +24, Perception +28, Sense Motive +28, Spellcraft +24, Stealth +11, Swim +35

**Languages** All

**SQ** change shape, parry, trained

## YOUNG GUARDIAN DRAGON CR 9

**XP** 6,400

LG Large dragon

**Init** +1; **Senses** dragon senses; Perception +20

### DEFENSE

**AC** 23, touch 11, flat-footed 22 (+2 Dex, +12 natural, -1 size)

**hp** 95 (10d12+30)

**Fort** +12, **Ref** +10, **Will** +11

**Immune** fire, paralysis, sleep

### OFFENSE

**Speed** 50 ft., fly 150 ft. (poor), swim 60 ft.

**Melee** bite +15 (2d6+8), 4 sword attacks +15 (1d8+6), 2 wings +13 (1d6+3), tail +13 (1d8+8)

**Special Attacks** bellow, crush, tail sweep

### STATISTICS

**Str** 22, **Dex** 14, **Con** 17, **Int** 16, **Wis** 17, **Cha** 16

**Base Atk** +10; **CMB** +16; **CMD** 27 (31 vs. trip)

**Feats** Alertness, Flyby Attack, Multiattack, Power Attack, Vital Strike

**Skills** Diplomacy +16, Fly +8, Intimidate +16, Knowl. (arcana) +16, Perception +20, Sense Motive +20, Spellcraft +16, Stealth +10, Swim +26

**Languages** All

**SQ** change shape, parry







## THE SEVEN APOSTLES OF AMETHYST & THE FINAL MARTYR

Seven holy dragons rose to immense power during the time of Terros under the teachings of the greatest living dragon, Amethyst. They were Edis of Green, Grail of Flux, Keter of Veil, Kronos of Stone, Sefer of Flare, Tanya of Squall, and Yerex of Lea. Amethyst asked for volunteers among his greatest, and all seven stepped forth. They were requested to hide within Ixindar in case something were to happen. Amethyst recognized the possibility he might not survive the calamity to come. He was fully aware that Mengus and the forces of Kakodomania would lash out before the fall of the first Hammer.

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*It wasn't enough. Amethyst was more than a dragon. Refute godhead of you will, but there was more required to break through our cosmos. It cannot be done by magic alone. We needed help. There were sins aplenty back then.*

Kronos of Flaw

The apostles of Amethyst hid within Ixindar, fleeing into the dark instead of the light. No one knew the door would remain closed for 65 million years. Time degraded the apostles' sanity. No matter how hard they fought the darkness, their corruption was inevitable.

When Ixindar finally breached its tomb and escaped, the apostles were forever changed. Edis, Sefer, and Keter had fallen. The only one still maintaining his loyalty was Kronos. With drive and determination, he brought the others from the brink. Their power sapped, very little energy remained in them to open Attricana. The ordeal to finally release the white gate would be at the sacrifice of their very souls.

After suffering and sacrifice, Attricana burst open, but only Kronos had survived. Forswearing his old title-name, he became Kronos of Flaw and fell into obscurity. Unable to face his brothers (who would have welcomed him regardless of his physical deformities or degrading mental state) and still not wholly released from his corruption, Kronos vanished. He wandered the lands alone, finally settling in a dungeon in northern Canam.

He carries secrets no one else knows—secrets about the time between. He mourns the death of



## YOK-ANI DRAGON

CR20

**XP 307,200**

CG Gargantuan dragon

**Init** +5; **Senses** dragon senses; Perception +44

**Aura** Calm; frightful presence (300 ft., DC30)

### DEFENSE

**AC** 30, touch 12, flat-footed +28 (+6 Dex, +28 natural, -4 size)  
**hp** 273 (26d12+104)

**Fort** +20, **Ref** +20, **Will** +24

**DR** 20/magic; **Immune** fire, paralysis, sleep; **SR** 31

### OFFENSE

**Speed** 70 ft., fly 300 ft. (Perfect)

**Melee** bite +36 (4d6+21/19–20), 2 claws +36 (2d8+14/19–20), tail +34 (2d8+21/19–20)

**Space** 20 ft.; **Reach** 15 ft. (25 ft. with bite)

**Special Attacks** breath weapon (120-ft. cone, DC 31, 20d10 fire), crush, tail sweep

**Spell-Like Abilities** (CL 27th +35) At will—detect magic, find the path, pyrotechnics (DC 20), suggestion (DC 21), wall of fire

**Spells Known** (CL 20th)

9th (5/day)—(DC29) *meteor swarm*, *time stop*, *wish*

8th (5/day)—(DC28) *dimensional lock*, *polar ray*, *maze*

7th (5/day)—(DC27) *forcecage*, *greater teleport*, *spell turning*

6th (6/day)—(DC26) *chain lightning*, *greater dispel magic*, *true seeing*

5th (6/day)—(DC25) *cone of cold*, *dominate person*, *feeblemind*, *wall of force*

4th (6/day)—(DC 24) *charm monster*, *confusion*, *greater invisibility*, *solid fog*

3rd (6/day)—(DC 23) *displacement*, *haste*, *slow*, *arcane sight*

2nd (7/day)—(DC 22) *detect thoughts*, *false life*, *mirror image*, *see invisibility*, *web*

1st (7/day)—(DC 21) *mage armor*, *magic missile*, *ray of enfeeblement*, *shield*, *true strike*

0 (at-will)—(DC 20) *arcane mark*, *detect magic*, *mage hand*, *mending*, *message*, *prestidigitation*, *ray of frost*, *read magic*, *touch of fatigue*

### STATISTICS

**Str** 39, **Dex** 22, **Con** 18, **Int** 25, **Wis** 30, **Cha** 25

**Base Atk** +26; **CMB** +44; **CMD** 53 (57 vs. trip)

**Feats** Alertness, Critical Focus, Extend Spell, Improved Critical (bite, claw, wing, tail), Iron Will, Multiattack, Power Attack, Quicken Spell, Stunning Critical, Vital Strike

**Skills** Diplomacy +36, Fly +13, Heal +40, Knowledge (arcana, history, local, nobility, planes, religion) +36, Perception +44, Sense Motive +44, Spellcraft +36, Swim +51

**Languages** All

**SQ** change shape, aura of calm, dance

### ECOLOGY

**Environment** any

**Organization** solitary

**Treasure** none

his brothers. Some believe the souls of Grail, Tanya, and Yerex exist still and wait to return to form when Amethyst does. Kronos believes he will never see them. Assumed forever damned, he awaits the time to be taken out of his misery. Kronos of Flaw will attack

### SPECIAL ABILITIES

**Change Shape (Su)** A yok-ani dragon can assume any animal or humanoid form three times per day as if using polymorph.

**Aura of Calm (Su)** Each creature of the dragon's choice that is within 60 feet of the dragon and aware of it must succeed on a DC 24 Will saving throw saving throw or become charmed for 1 minute (per spell).

**Dance (Su)** Yok-Ani dragon does not provoke attacks of opportunity when moving.

**Twirl (Ex)** The yok-ani can move 50 feet as a swift action

those who understand his plight, forcing them to take pity and destroy the final martyr of Amethyst.

## YOK-ANI

There is some discussion among dragons about who emerged first, the holy dragons or the yok-ani. Although the holy dragons have assumed the claim, which has been endorsed and accepted by the majority, they don't resemble Amethyst in any way, unlike the yok-ani. The yok-ani care little about the past and have not contested the assertion, despite the holy dragons most likely being in the wrong.

As the other dragons grew to power and passed the yok-ani in number, the line of yok-ani refused to change. By the time of the first hammer and the closing of the gates, only nine yok-ani lived. None have ever died from natural causes or fell to the hands of an enemy. Only nine have been born, and only nine exist today. In the half-millennium since Attricana, no attempt has been made to increase their numbers. Although few, the yok-ani are some the most powerful dragons in the world, rivaled only by the dragon kings, of which Shaka of Dawn, a yok-ani, counts herself one. Even the dragon kings themselves resemble the yok-ani, except for Goch, of Serenity turned to Wrath, corrupted by evil and turned into a fallen dragon.

Yok-ani take pride in their neutrality. They see themselves as the world's diplomats. They believe if the dark gate and its denizens stayed in their land, they could be allowed to exist. However, Ixindar's obsessive drive to destroy all prevents such a compromise. In wars, yok-ani refuse to take sides, and when finally forced to intervene often take measures against all the belligerents, not merely the aggressors.

Eight of the nine yok-ani live in and around Kuraukou and Eastern Slav. One, Genai-Dilong, is the patron of his namesake community in the bastion of Angel, having guided the Asiatic refugee fleets across the ocean to Canam for reasons that he never explained.



## KRONOS OF FLAW

CR20

XP 307,200

CN Gargantuan dragon

Init -1; Senses dragon senses; Perception +40

Aura Element Aura, frightful presence (300 ft., DC30)

## DEFENSE

AC 39, touch 5, flat-footed 39 (-1 Dex, +34 natural, -4 size)

hp 165 (26d12+52)

Fort +16, Ref +16, Will +24

DR 15/magic; Immune fire, paralysis, sleep; SR 31

## OFFENSE

Speed 70 ft.

Melee bite +36 (4d6+21/19-20), 2 claws +36 (2d8+14/19-20),  
2 wings +34 (2d6+7/19-20), tail +34 (2d8+21/19-20)

Space 20 ft.; Reach 15 ft. (20 ft. with bite)

Special Attacks crush, tail sweep

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 27th) At will—detect magic, find the  
path, pyrotechnics (DC 20), suggestion (DC 21), wall of fire

Spells Known (CL 20th)

9th (5/day)—(DC 26) meteor swarm, time stop, wish

8th (5/day)—(DC 25) dimensional lock, polar ray, maze

7th (5/day)—(DC 24) forcecage, greater teleport, spell turning

6th (6/day)—(DC 23) chain lightning, greater dispel magic, true  
seeing5th (6/day)—(DC 22) cone of cold, dominate person,  
feeblemind, wall of force4th (6/day)—(DC 21) charm monster, confusion, greater  
invisibility, solid fog

3rd (6/day)—(DC 20) displacement, haste, slow, arcane sight

2nd (7/day)—(DC 19) detect thoughts, false life, mirror image,  
see invisibility, web1st (7/day)—(DC 19) mage armor, magic missile, ray of  
enfeeblement, shield, true strike0 (at-will)—(DC 18) arcane mark, detect magic, mage hand,  
mending, message, prestidigitation, ray of frost, read magic,  
touch of fatigue

## STATISTICS

Str 39, Dex 8, Con 14, Int 25, Wis 25, Cha 25

Base Atk +26; CMB +44; CMD 53 (57 vs. trip)

Feats Alertness, Critical Focus, Extend Spell, Improved Critical  
(bite, claw, wing, tail), Iron Will, Multiattack, Power Attack,  
Quickened Spell, Stunning Critical, Vital StrikeSkills Diplomacy +36, Fly +13, Heal +36, Knowledge (arcana,  
history, local, nobility, planes, religion) +36, Perception +40,  
Sense Motive +40, Spellcraft +36, Swim +51

Languages All

SQ mastercaster, elemental shift, dream messaging

## ECOLOGY

Environment any

Organization solitary

Treasure double

The typhox dragons regard them as manipulative puppeteers. Archons consider them honorable, fair, though a little untrustworthy. They have their agenda and even though good creatures, their motives often differ from archons. The yok-ani neither answer to Lazarus nor do they regard or follow the archon hierarchy. The yok-ani look to Shaka, the elder dragon, living in the

## SPECIAL ABILITIES

**Elemental Shift (Su)** Kronos can change the damage type of its breath weapon, element aura, and damage immunity to any other type from the following list—acid, cold, force, lightning, or radiant as a move action.

**Prescience (Su)** Kronos can glimpse the future. Once outside of its turn, it can gain a +4 bonus to AC or to any saving throw against one attack.

**Mastercaster (Sp)** Kronos can swap any prepared spell it has with any other non-necromancy spell it can cast as a Swift action.

**Dream Messaging (Su):** Kronos can communicate with any creature telepathically with 10 miles of it. This form communication can only occur within the target's dreams. The creature remembers its conversation with the dragon upon waking.

**Vulnerabilities (Ex)** Kronos suffers from open wounds that never heal and pains that wrack his every move. He can no longer use his breath weapon. He can no longer fly or swim. His physical abilities are reduced substantially for a dragon. He can no longer breathe water. He has not tried to alternate his form since he emerged from Ixindar. Even though he does not class as a fiend, he does count as one when dealing with attack bonuses from favored enemies.

great temple in the clouds, for guidance. Except she and Genai, no one is entirely sure where all the other yok-ani are located.

Yok-ani resemble Asian dragons of legend, with long, thin bodies and extravagantly adorned heads. They are proud creatures with polished, glistening scales that never dull with age. They do not take titles for themselves, though they will acknowledge them if given by others as a courtesy (Shaka's title 'of Dawn' was given to her by Lazarus himself, and she in turn bestowed him the title 'of Grace,' possibly as a joke, for she laughed as she spoke it). They seldom take mates, and when they do, they never have children. They know their time is limited, but so is the universe. If they should die, then their time was simply up. They are so powerful that yok-ani believe their souls will simply rise to Attricana to watch over the world upon their death. Yok-ani are rare in story terms, and most wandering adventurers consider seeing one as a good omen for times to come. Seeing two in a lifetime has often been interpreted as having a blessed life. Seeing three has never occurred.

## GENAI-DILONG

Living deep in the Genai temple in Angel, this powerful dragon left his homeland long ago. Tracking the refugees from Kuraukou, he kept them safe across the water until they arrived in Angel. He remained hidden in the population and moved to and from human form when needed. He is the most personable of all the yok-



## JAHADA OF GLASS

CR 20

**XP 307,200**

CG Gargantuan dragon

**Init** -1; **Senses** dragon senses; Perception +40

**Aura** Element Aura, frightful presence (300 ft., DC30)

### DEFENSE

**AC** 39, touch 5, flat-footed 39 (-1 Dex, +34 natural, -4 size)

**hp** 420 (30d12+240)

**Fort** +23, **Ref** +14, **Will** +24

**DR** 15/magic; **Immune** fire, paralysis, sleep; **SR** 31

### OFFENSE

**Speed** 70 ft., fly 300 ft. (clumsy)

**Melee** bite +38 (4d6+21/19–20), 2 claws +38 (2d8+14/19–20),

2 wings +36 (2d6+7/19–20), tail +36 (2d8+21/19–20)

**Space** 20 ft.; **Reach** 15 ft. (20 ft. with bite)

**Special Attacks** breath weapon (120-ft. cone, DC 33, 22d10 fire), crush, tail sweep, alternate breath weapon

### STATISTICS

**Str** 39, **Dex** 8, **Con** 26, **Int** 25, **Wis** 25, **Cha** 25

**Base Atk** +28; **CMB** +46; **CMD** 55 (58 vs. trip)

**Feats** Alertness, Critical Focus, Extend Spell, Improved Critical (bite, claw, wing, tail), Iron Will, Multiattack, Power Attack, Quicken Spell, Stunning Critical, Vital Strike

**Skills** Diplomacy +38, Fly +15, Heal +38, Knowledge (arcana, history, local, nobility, planes, religion) +38, Perception +42, Sense Motive +42, Spellcraft +38, Swim +53

**Languages** All

**SQ** change shape, elemental shift, dream messaging, invisibility

### ECOLOGY

**Environment** any

**Organization** solitary

**Treasure** double

ani. In the Amethyst quest, he assists the heroes by directing them to find the *Chronicle of Aurannis*. Later, Genai and the city named after him can operate as a staging point for many quests to find the artifacts.

Genai only assumes one other form, that of David Obatala Chen, owner of a small (at least on the outside) bookshop in a run-down part of town. David will not transform in view of anyone, preferring the anonymity of his human disguise. Few are aware of the double identity, and most of these are other dragons (and of the fae, only Ravenar Limshau knows for sure). He can neither be forced to transform nor can any detection spell reveal his identity. Not even truesight will see David for what he is. When he must appear in his true guise, he does so inside the temple built in his honor by the residents of Genai.

### SPECIAL ABILITIES

**Alternate Breath Weapons (Su)** Jahada uses one of the following breath weapons. Each time, Jahada must use a different breath weapon, and only after using all five can Jahada reset her uses and start the process again.

**Weakening Breath (Su)** Instead of a cone of fire, a gold dragon can breathe a cone of weakening gas. Creatures within the cone must succeed on a Fortitude save (DC31) or take 11 points of Strength damage per age category (Will save half).

**Sleep Breath (Su)** Instead of a cone of fire, Jahada can breathe a cone of sleep gas. Creatures within the cone must succeed on a Will save (DC31) or fall asleep for 1d6 + 11 rounds.

**Repulsion Breath (Su)** Instead of a cone of fire, Jahada can breathe a cone of repulsion gas. Targets must make a Will save (DC31) or be compelled to do nothing but move away from the dragon for 1d6 + 11 rounds. This is a mind-affecting compulsion effect.

**Change Shape (Su)** A juvenile or older noble dragon can assume any animal or humanoid form three times per day as if using polymorph.

**Elemental Shift (Su)** Jahada can change the damage type of its breath weapon, element aura, and damage immunity to any other type from the following list—acid, cold, force, lightning, or radiant as a move action.

**Prescience (Su)** Jahada can glimpse the future. Once outside of its turn, it can gain a +4 bonus to AC or to any saving throw against one attack.

**Dream Messaging (Su):** Jahada can communicate with any creature telepathically with 10 miles of it. This form of communication can only occur within the target's dreams. The creature remembers its conversation with the dragon upon waking.

**Invisibility (Sp)** Jahada becomes invisible until the beginning of her next turn. Anything she is carrying is invisible as well. The effect ends if Jahada attacks or casts a spell.

**Recharge (Sp)** Jahada can make a DC35 Will save as a move action; if she succeeds, she gains one use of her breath weapon.

## DRAGON KINGS

The term dragon king was a somewhat incorrect slang appointed to the four most powerful dragons. This title was labeled by the emerging fae and never by the dragons already inhabiting the planet. To them, they were all equal, save for one. The fae marked Shaka of Dawn, Lazarus of Grace, Goch of Serenity (Goch at that time had yet to turn to darkness), and Jahada of Glass as the greatest and wisest. Some label Amethyst as a dragon king, but this title is the one used by dragons, referring to Amethyst as the only true king.

Like the yok-ani, the dragon kings resemble Asian dragons, sinuous snake-like creatures with gloriously decorative feathery manes, short legs and articulate hand-like talons on each foot, who need no wings to fly. Even Goch retains some semblance of her ancient glory, though she can no longer float through the air as easily as a fish swims, and has grafted onto herself a pair of blade-like wings of living obsidian. Other dragons pro-

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*I finally figured it out.*

*Amethyst meant to die.*

*If Ixindar could not close, it could envelop the planet before it could heal from the catastrophe to come. There was no possibility Amethyst could defend himself against Mengus and his hordes. By numbers, they had him. Amethyst knew of his fate. He may or may not be god, but godlike he is. Mengus pales in comparison to the brilliance of our greatest. Amethyst tricked the dark one to reveal her tricks and tactics to the dragon's advantage.*

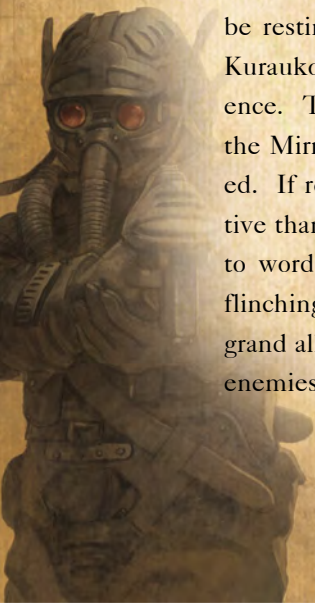
*Amethyst plotted his demise and the required sacrifice to keep the world safe. He laid down an intricate plan to sow the seeds of his resurrection and the salvation of Attricana. He taunted Mengus with a target and used evil's appetite for vengeance to let lose all the muscle she had in reserve. With almost every soldier of darkness around Amethyst, and the last moments of his life ticking away, the king released his spirit in a cascade of divine power, destroying everything around and burying Ixindar, orphaning the world to science. Mengus fell into the trap, leaving only a few of her officers and pagus guards, pulled within the gate the moment before the mountain fell. Amethyst fooled his mirror while laying down the framework to not only ensure the survivability of the planet but also of his return.*

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claim them as having been made in Amethyst's image, but this claim they renounce.

All four of the dragon kings have survived into the new age. Lazarus remains in his mountain keep across the ocean. Goch, now of Wrath, proclaims all of Ažhi Dahaka as her realm and feuds with the other fallen dragons of that land who do not accept her rule. Shaka is believed to be resting in a large temple atop a mountain in Kuraukou, and declines all requests for an audience. That leaves Jahada of Glass, entrapped in the Mirror of Jairus, which has never been located. If released, she would likely be more proactive than the other dragons. She preferred action to words, and her loyalty to Amethyst was unflinching. If found and released, she would be a grand ally on the side of light, a fact sure to worry enemies of Attricana.





*Before there was man, before the great equalizer, we had Phaethis, once a battleground during the Brilliance—a time where the forces of Ixindar were losing ground to the organized forces led by the Witenagemot—the dragon council that ruled for millennia before disbanding.*

*A schism of corruption refused to leave their land, preferring to be kept out of the fight. Military interventions failed, with the only ones able to mount an offensive, the chaparrans of Epherka, refusing to get involved.*

*Phaethis was old, with probably the most preserved remains of the old fae before being appropriated and personalized by their anathema.*

*The capital was Ziggurat—a city-sized fortress sitting atop an inverted mountain, the peak floating a few feet above the ground with massive chains preventing its drift.*

*They knew how to make them back then.*

*I remember that life, of my desires, of every single sin committed, an unnatural level of recall. Before being swayed by that oddly convincing ar-*

*gument, I was damaskan.*

*Three states for one soul—the tilen, the eidolon, and the damaskan. What's stranger is that two of those felt normal to me.*

*The original fae...I don't know that person.*

*We don't share likes or aversions. She liked the instrument we now call the violin, I prefer the piano. She hated stone fruit while I love them. All her aspirations I avoid while furthering the pursuits from when I drank the blood of the living.*

*I carry the guilt from that time, and the reflection I see in the mirror reminds me of those crimes I refuse to absolve myself of. I don't see the fae I was.*

*Was I ever her?*

*Perhaps the curse is an invasive organism—our soul a devouring entity—consuming an innocent spirit and converting the biomass to serve its own.*

*What am I other than an intelligent disease parading around inside a flesh suit?*

*What are we but thinking cancer?*

Saleena Kaaris



## GHULATH

In Terros, the ghulath was the iconic symbol of the underworld. Though Mengus had rejected the path of undeath after a brief attempt to explore its limits, she had unwittingly sowed the seeds of a variant religion. Though many of the shemjaza have abandoned their work in necromancy, many of the spells they developed remained in their repertoire and linger today. These were embraced by a subset of fae obsessed with entropy. Their motivations have not been lost to history as many of those initial disciples are still alive today, though it is a loose interpretation of the word “alive.” These ghulath, the only creatures that remember the Terros Age, are known to live in a corrupted region across the world called the Necrosea—a region even the corrupted forces of Ixindar avoid. It is believed they survived the passage of time the same way as other denizens of Ixindar, though not swearing fealty to the whisper of Mengus.

The return of Attricana and its sweeping of enchantment never affected the pagus or the shemjaza, but it did affect the ghulath. A huge number of them rose from the darkness into the light, regaining possession of their faculties, no longer controlled by their sinister lust.





## EIDOLON

CR9

**XP 6,400**

LE Medium undead (augmented humanoid)

**Init** +9; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +13

### DEFENSE

**AC** 24, touch 15, flat-footed 19 (+5 Dex, +9 natural)

**hp** 133 (14d8+70)

**Fort** +14, **Ref** +3, **Will** +6

**Defensive Abilities** channel resistance +4; **DR** 10/magic and silver; **Immune** undead traits; **Resist** cold 10, electricity 10

**Weaknesses** vampire weaknesses, fae iron

### OFFENSE

**Speed** 40 ft.

**Melee** claws +13/+13/+13 (1d8+5 plus energy drain)

**Special Attacks** blood drain, create underlings, dominate (DC 22), energy drain (2 levels, DC 22), pounce

### STATISTICS

**Str** 16, **Dex** 20, **Con** —, **Int** 18, **Wis** 16, **Cha** 26

**Base Atk** +8; **CMB** +13; **CMD** 26

**Feats** Alertness, Blind-Fight, Combat Expertise, Combat Reflexes, Dodge, Eschew Materials, Improved Grapple, Improved Initiative, Improved Unarmed Strike, Lightning Reflexes, Toughness, Weapon Finesse

**Skills** Bluff +27, Knowledge (arcana) +13, Knowledge (religion) +13, Perception +13, Sense Motive +13, Stealth +12, Use Magic Device +19; **Racial Modifiers** +8 Bluff, +8 Perception, +8 Sense Motive, +8 Stealth

**Languages** Common, two other fae languages

**SQ** spider climb

### ECOLOGY

**Environment** any

**Organization** solitary or family (vampire plus 2–8 familiars)

**Treasure** Standard

### SPECIAL ABILITIES

**Blood Drain (Su)** An eidolon can suck blood from a grappled opponent; if the eidolon establishes or maintains a pin, it drains blood, dealing 1d4 points of Constitution damage. The eidolon heals 5 hit points or gains 5 temporary hit points for 1 hour (up to a maximum number of temporary hit points equal to its full normal hit points) each round it drains blood.

**Create Underlings (Su)** An eidolon can create a servant out of those it slays with blood drain or energy drain, provided that the slain creature is of the same creature type as the vampire's base creature type. The victim rises from death as either a vampire familiar or a phyrus in 1d4 days. This ghulath is under the command of the ghulath that created it, and remains enslaved until its master's destruction. An eidolon may have enslaved spawn totaling no more than twice its own Hit Dice; any spawn it creates that would exceed this limit become free-willed undead. An eidolon may free an enslaved underling in order to enslave a new one, but once freed, a ghulath cannot be enslaved again.

**Dominate (Su)** An eidolon can crush a humanoid opponent's will as a standard action. Anyone the eidolon targets must succeed on a Will save (DC22) or fall instantly under the eidolon's influence, as though by a *dominate person spell* (caster level 12th). The ability has a range of 30 feet. At the GM's discretion, some eidolons might be able to affect different creature types with this power.

**Energy Drain (Su)** A creature hit by an eidolon's claw gains two negative levels. This ability only triggers once per round, regardless of the number of attacks a vampire makes.

**Pounce (Ex)** The eidolon can as a standard action make a pounce attack. It jumps 40 feet and makes a single claw attack. If the eidolon hits, the target is knocked prone and pinned.

**Spider Climb (Ex)** An eidolon can climb sheer surfaces as though under the effects of a *spider climb* spell.

## VAMPIRE FAMILIAR

CR4

**XP 1,200**

LE Medium undead (augmented humanoid)

**Init** +8; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +13

### DEFENSE

**AC** 18, touch 14, flat-footed 14 (+2 armor, +4 Dex, +2 natural)

**hp** 39 (6d8+12)

**Fort** +4, **Ref** +9, **Will** +2

**Defensive Abilities** channel resistance +2; **DR** 5/magic and silver; **Immune** undead traits; **Resist** cold 5, electricity 5

**Weaknesses** vampire weaknesses, fae iron

### OFFENSE

**Speed** 40 ft.

**Melee** 2 claw +6/+6 (1d6+2/19–20)

**Special Attacks** blood drain, dominate (DC 22), create phyrus

### STATISTICS

**Str** 16, **Dex** 18, **Con** —, **Int** 16, **Wis** 16, **Cha** 20

**Base Atk** +4; **CMB** +6; **CMD** 20

**Feats** Double Slice, Two-Weapon Fighting, Weapon Finesse

**Skills** Climb +10, Perception +8, Sleight of Hand +5, Stealth +8; **Racial Modifiers** +4 Climb, +4 Perception, +4 Stealth

**Languages** Common, two other fae languages

**SQ** spider climb

### ECOLOGY

**Environment** any

**Organization** solitary or family (2–8 familiars)

**Treasure** Standard

### SPECIAL ABILITIES

**Blood Drain (Su)** A familiar can suck blood from a grappled opponent; if the familiar establishes or maintains a pin, it drains blood, dealing 1d4 points of Constitution damage. The familiar heals 5 hit points or gains 5 temporary hit points for 1 hour (up to a maximum number of temporary hit points equal to its full normal hit points) each round it drains blood.

**Create Phyrus (Su)** A familiar can create a phyrus out of those it slays with blood drain or energy drain, provided that the slain creature is of the same creature type as the vampire's base creature type. The victim rises from death as a phyrus in 1d4 days. This phyrus cannot be enslaved and is wild.

**Dominate (Su)** A familiar can crush a humanoid opponent's will as a standard action. Anyone the familiar targets must succeed on a Will save (DC22) or fall instantly under the familiar's influence, as though by a *dominate person spell* (caster level 12th). The ability has a range of 30 feet. At the GM's discretion, some familiars might be able to affect different creature types with this power.

**Spider Climb (Ex)** A familiar can climb sheer surfaces as though under the effects of a *spider climb* spell.



They became the elder tilen, though how these specific creatures were turned while sparing the other millions has never been publicly explained.

Throughout human mythology, the morphology of the ghulath changed from folklore to pop culture and their capabilities altered alongside. The only real commonality among them is their need to feed on the blood or life essence of the living to sustain themselves. Folklore from across the nations of man described them as having pale faces, purple faces, or no faces at all—only a skinless skull. They may have had talons or long fingers. Their hair was the color of night or of blood. They had eyes of red or yellow. They were tall and thin or short and furry. Not even

*No doubt, they were evil. But when assuming the disposition of the vampire lords, you often ascribe barbarity, sudden acts of extreme violence.*

*You presuppose tyranny through fear, loyalty through intimidation, and that was never the case.*

*Once our enemies stopped invading our land, we remained in relative isolation for centuries. We were merciless to invaders, especially those uncivil.*

*Sacander was known for his uncompromising opinion towards those ill-mannered. But occasionally, travelers would arrive by accident or intention. Those willing to join were welcomed without deceit.*

*Those that landed through misfortune were often devoured by the phyrus before we could reach them, but when exceptions occurred, their fear instigated violence when none was presented.*

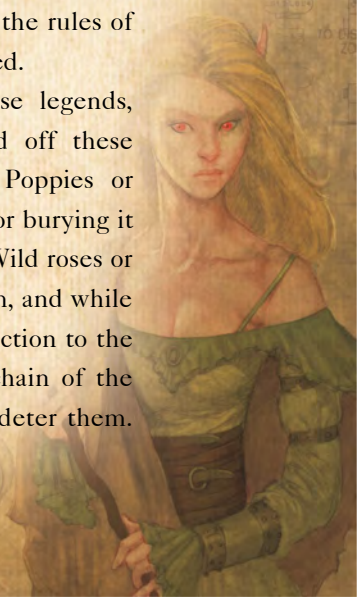
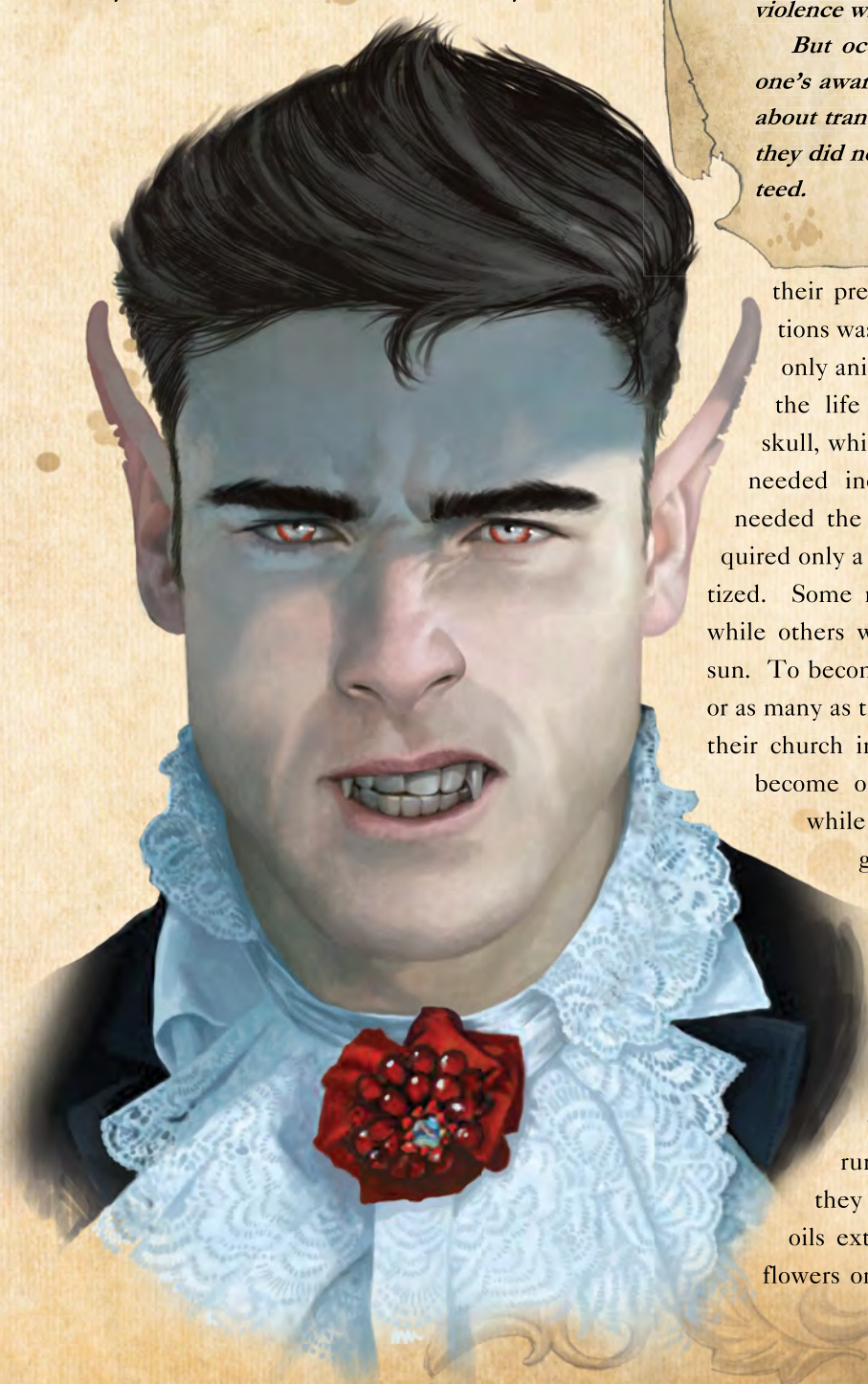
*But occasionally, that dread begot acceptance, as one's awareness of the certainty of their death brought about tranquility. Those individuals would survive. If they did not insult their hosts, their safety was guaranteed.*

Mira Diemasko

their preferred victims or process of exsanguinations was common. Some preferred virgins, some only animals, while most didn't care. Some drew the life from the neck while others from the skull, while still others took from the chest. Some needed incisors to draw their sustenance, some needed the palm of their hand, and still a few required only a kiss. Some seduced while others hypnotized. Some required stealth and the cover of night while others walked openly in public, fearless of the sun. To become one required either being bitten once or as many as three times. One may need only to reject their church in an exceptionally blasphemous way to become one. Some came from a witch's curse while some rose from the dead with not a single sin upon their soul. Though they class as undead and follow the rules of such, they may not have died.

Alas, like most of these legends, most superstitions to ward off these creatures are also false. Poppies or coins placed upon a corpse or burying it upside down has no effect. Wild roses or running water do not repel them, and while they do exhibit a mild allergic reaction to the oils extracted from garlic, a daisy chain of the flowers or a bundle of bulbs will not deter them.

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## PHYRUS

CR4

XP 1,200

CE Medium undead (augmented humanoid)

Init +3; Senses darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +11

### DEFENSE

**AC** 18, touch 13, flat-footed 13 (+3 Dex, +5 natural)

**hp** 38 (4d10+16)

**Fort** +5, **Ref** +7, **Will** +5

**Immune** undead traits; **Resist** cold 5, electricity 5

**Weaknesses** vampire weaknesses, fae iron

### OFFENSE

**Speed** 40 ft.

**Melee** 2 claw +8/+8 (1d6+2)

**Special Attacks** blood drain, create phyrus, pounce

### STATISTICS

**Str** 19, **Dex** 16, **Con** —, **Int** 12, **Wis** 13, **Cha** 15

**Base Atk** +4; **CMB** +8; **CMD** 21

**Feats** Two-Weapon Fighting, Weapon Finesse

**Skills** Climb +10, Perception +8, Stealth +8

**Languages** Common, two other fae languages

**SQ** spider climb

### ECOLOGY

**Environment** any

**Organization** solitary or family (2–8 phyrus)

**Treasure** None

### SPECIAL ABILITIES

**Blood Drain (Su)** A phyrus can suck blood from a grappled opponent; if the phyrus establishes or maintains a pin, it drains blood, dealing 1d4 points of Constitution damage. The familiar heals 5 hit points or gains 5 temporary hit points for 1 hour (up to a maximum number of temporary hit points equal to its full normal hit points) each round it drains blood.

**Create Phyrus (Su)** A phyrus can create a phyrus out of those it slays with blood drain or energy drain, provided that the slain creature is of the same creature type as the vampire's base creature type. The victim rises from death as a phyrus in 1d4 days. This phyrus cannot be enslaved and is wild.

**Pounce (Ex)** The phyrus can as a standard action make a pounce attack. It jumps 40 feet and makes a single claw attack. If the phyrus hits, the target is knocked prone and pinned.

**Spider Climb (Ex)** A phyrus can climb sheer surfaces as though under the effects of a *spider climb* spell.

They do not require permission to enter anyone's home, and while a wooden stake through the heart and cutting off the head will definitely kill them, the same applies to pretty much anything else.

They are still thankfully repelled by an enchanted holy seal (though the religion does not matter) as well as consecrated earth and water—anything blessed with radiant energy from Attricana. Apotropaics are commonly used to ward off the creatures, though without radiant energy to back it up they are merely regarded

## BLOOD TEST RESULTS

Lieutenant Martin Ogura, CSAF (Deceased)

| Test                         | Results                           |
|------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 17 Hydroxyprogesterone       | 3.0 mg/L                          |
| 25-hydroxyvitamin D          | 40 ng/mL                          |
| Acetoacetate                 | 3 mg/dL                           |
| Acidity (pH)                 | 7.45                              |
| Alcohol                      | 0 mg/dL                           |
| Ascorbic Acid                | 1.5 mg/dL                         |
| Bicarbonate                  | 23 mEq/L (carbon dioxide content) |
| Bilirubin                    | 0.4 mg/dL                         |
| Blood Volume                 | 4.1 % of total body weight        |
| Calcium                      | 8.5 mg/dL                         |
| Carbon Dioxide Pressure      | 35 mm Hg                          |
| Carbon Monoxide              | 5% of total hemoglobin            |
| CD4 Cell Count               | 500 cells/μL                      |
| Copper                       | 70 μg/dL                          |
| Creatine Kinase              | 38 units/L                        |
| Creatine Kinase Isoenzymes   | 1% MB                             |
| ESR or Sed-Rate              | 1 mm/hr                           |
| Hemoglobin                   | 5 gm/dL                           |
| Iron                         | 190 μg/dL                         |
| Lactic Dehydrogenase         | 50 units/L                        |
| Cholesterol                  | 35 mg/dL                          |
| Triglycerides                | 225 mg/dL                         |
| Oxygen Pressure              | 15 mm Hg                          |
| Red Blood Cell Count         | 1.2 million/μL/cu mm              |
| Thyroid-Stimulating Hormone  | 1 μ units/mL                      |
| White Blood Cell Count (WBC) | 500 cells/μL/cu mm                |

*Results: Victim's blood cell contaminated. Reject and retest. Recommend coroner retake the blood sample as I identified two different blood types in the victim. Subject also appears to be suffering from lyssavirus (rabies) and erythropoietic porphyries.*

*If the bullet wound didn't kill him, his low blood count and various infections would surely do it. However, I don't know which blood type the victim has. There is still cellular activity in this blood sample. Who is running that lab?! This subject is not dead.*

warily, and anyone blessed with radiant-based magic usually does the job as history claims. The few experiments techans have managed to perform on ghulath suggest that they are vulnerable to all varieties of high-wavelength radiation, though in the case of exposure to so-called 'nuclear' weapons, the necrotic effect produced offsets their vulnerability.



This disparity can be sourced to the three variations of ghulath. Atop the ladder of power is the necurat, known as a vampire lord to others, the original stock that embraced corruption. These are the most powerful ghulath, the ones that tempted the others, later to be called eidolons. The first generation ghulath all willingly swore their souls to their parental necurat, thus their bodies didn't degrade like the monsters they would infect later. The vampires turned against their will became phyrus, true monsters barely controlled by the eidolons though still docile in the face of a lord. It was these beasts more than any other that propagated the curse across the land.

Some eidolons or necurat who were not turned into tilen grew envious and hoped that by devouring enough, they would earn such a gift. They even attempted a normal life, taking mates and mimicking a mortal existence. Alas, the wave of Attricana's opening was an exclusive event that has not been replicated or repeated since. The poor souls fooled to love these beasts often fell victim to them, either in a sudden violent act of relapse or after a long slow process to an ultimate fate. Those that didn't fall as prey survived via the fidelity that the ghulath retained from when he or she was mortal.

Loyalty to a companion rarely translates to anyone else in this situation.

In the occasions where eidolons or necurat feign a normal life, they have been known to bond and even sire children, creating the uncommon nespherat, a ghulath half-fae. When that occurs, there is a 50/50 chance the progeny will become a normal human or a tilen. When reaching puberty, this specific type of tilen has another 50/50 chance to turn into an eidolon.

## GHULATH LORE

A character knows the following with a successful Knowledge (Arcana) (Int) check.

**DC 10:** Vampires are only called so by the humans. They refer to themselves as ghulath, a term still used by the fae today. Ghulath are the undisputed nobles of necromancy. They sustain themselves on life energy drawn primarily from blood. There are rumors that certain powerful ghulath may have remained in the world





## NECURAT

CR17

XP 102,400

LE Medium undead (augmented humanoid)

Init +4; Senses darkvision 60 ft., true seeing; Perception +31

## DEFENSE

AC 33, touch 18, flat-footed 25 (+8 Dex, +15 natural)

hp 264 (16d10+176)

Fort +25, Ref +18, Will +13

Defensive Abilities channel resistance +4; DR 10/magic and silver; Immune undead traits; Resist cold 10, electricity 10

Weaknesses vampire weaknesses, fae iron

## OFFENSE

Speed 40 ft.

Melee +1 longsword +24/+19/+14/+9 (2d6+8/17–20), or 6 slams +24 (1d8+7),

Special Attacks blood drain, create underlings, dominate (DC 25), energy drain (2 levels, DC 25), pounce

Spells Known (CL 15th)

7th (4/day)—(DC 27) *control undead*, *finger of death*6th (6/day)—(DC 26) *create undead*, *circle of death*, *undeath to death*5th (7/day)—(DC 25) *blight*, *waves of fatigue*, *cone of cold*, *sending*4th (7/day)—(DC 24) *animate dead*, *bestow curse*, *contagion*, *fear*3rd (7/day)—(DC 23) *gentle repose*, *halt undead*, *ray of exhaustion*, *vampiric touch*2nd (7/day)—(DC 22) *command undead*, *false life*, *ghoul touch*, *scare*1st (8/day)—(DC 21) *cause fear*, *chill touch*, *ray of enfeeblement*, *magic missile*0 (at will)—(DC 20) *bleed*, *disrupt undead*, *touch of fatigue*, *light*, *ray of frost*

## STATISTICS

Str 22, Dex 28, Con —, Int 30, Wis 20, Cha 26

Base Atk +16; CMB +24 (+28 grapple); CMD 42 (can't be tripped)

Feats Bleeding Critical, Combat Expertise, Combat Reflexes, Critical Focus, Improved Critical (longsword), Improved Disarm, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (longsword)

Skills Acrobatics +23, Bluff +26, Diplomacy +26, Fly +18, Intimidate +26, Knowledge (arcana) +20, Perception +31, Sense Motive +23, Stealth +19, Use Magic Device +26;

Languages Common plus all fae languages

SQ spider climb, turn immunity

## ECOLOGY

Environment any

Organization solitary or family (vampire plus 2–8 familiars)

Treasure triple

through the cons, preserved in torpor by ambient power from Ixindar's buried shell, influencing human legends. Ghulath are, aside from death dragons, the most adept necromancers on earth. They are capable of raising whole armies to command with simple hand gestures, and often visit mass burial grounds and old battlefields in order to find the dead necessary.

**DC 15:** Ghulath are immortal, undying creatures that have been turned into a ghulath by another ghu-

## SPECIAL ABILITIES

**Blood Drain (Su)** A necurat can suck blood from a grappled opponent; if the necurat establishes or maintains a pin, it drains blood, dealing 1d4 points of Constitution damage. The necurat heals 5 hit points or gains 5 temporary hit points for 1 hour (up to a maximum number of temporary hit points equal to its full normal hit points) each round it drains blood.

**Create Underlings (Su)** A necurat can create a servant out of those it slays with blood drain or energy drain, provided that the slain creature is of the same creature type as the vampire's base creature type. The victim rises from death as either a vampire familiar or an eidolon in 1d4 days. This ghulath is under the command of the necurat that created it, and remains enslaved until its master's destruction. A necurat may have enslaved spawn totaling no more than twice its own Hit Dice; any spawn it creates that would exceed this limit become free-willed undead. A necurat may free an enslaved underling in order to enslave a new one, but once freed, a ghulath cannot be enslaved again.

**Dominate (Su)** A necurat can crush a humanoid opponent's will as a standard action. Anyone the eidolon targets must succeed on a Will save (DC30) or fall instantly under the necurat's influence, as though by a *dominate person spell* (caster level 20th). The ability has a range of 30 feet. At the GM's discretion, a necurat might be able to affect different creature types with this power.

**Energy Drain (Su)** A creature hit by a necurat's claw gains two negative levels. This ability only triggers once per round, regardless of the number of attacks a vampire makes.

**Pounce (Ex)** The necurat can as a standard action make a pounce attack. It jumps 40 feet and makes three claw attacks. If the necurat hits, the target is knocked prone and pinned.

**Spider Climb (Ex)** A necurat can climb sheer surfaces as though under the effects of a *spider climb* spell.

**Turn Immunity (Ex)** The necurat is immune against any effect that turns undead.

lath, generally necurats, though no one knows who created *them*. The only traditional weakness of vampires that ghulath possess is a sensitivity to sunlight (or rather, to high-wavelength radiant energy, including ultraviolet rays, gamma rays, microwaves, and focused radiant energy from *Attricana*: light in the visible spectrum and below has no adverse effect, including filtered sunlight). Garlic oil gives them a rash, but otherwise has no effect; neither do running water or religious symbols that do not have the power of *Attricana* behind them.

**DC 20:** While ghulath normally draw life energy from the blood of a bitten victim, in truth eidolons and necurath can extract it from any sort of skin contact (often a seducer's kiss, or a strangling grasp). A ghulath's age and power is relative to how normal they look, with the monstrous abominations being younger to the statuesque and nearly beautiful elders. Ghulath start their existence as pale-faced with glossed eyes and decrepit bodies. As they gain years in that state, they regain some color to their skin and the life within their





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eyes. They resemble their old selves more and more, though their evil dispositions do not change. This may be more the amount of essence and blood they feed upon and less on the actual age of the beast. Could this be how the tilen came about? If so, then all the tilen elders graced with life would have entered the path of redemption with the burden of the greatest stains of all ghulath upon their souls.





# KAIROS

Kairos is not a Saint. He is also not from any bastion. His motivations are mysterious, his loyalties undefined.

He has killed both echan and techan to advance his agenda.

Although appearing of alien origin, Kairos acts very human, despite not appearing so. When his holographic camouflage is down, Kairos appears as a flamboyant robotic humanoid with elaborate markings, tri-segmented legs, and an inhuman head sporting sensors rather than a face. Despite that, Kairos is

not an artificial intelligence, but rather is a fully prosthetic human cyborg, with only his brain and spinal cord intact. He is immune to disruption, so it's unclear how long he has been on Earth. Like most techans, Kairos

plots to destroy the world of magic and return it to the control of mankind; however, unlike those living in bastions or even most Saints, he doesn't care about the lives of other techans. If closing Attricana and Ixindar resulted in the deaths of every human on Earth, he would do so.

It is unknown of Kairos is exclusive or a member of a species. He is aware of the Saints, though they do not appear to be aware of him (though it is unknown if this ignorance extends to the deacons). Although he must originate from somewhere, nothing about his composition or appearance connects to any bastion on the planet. The technology present in his framework is also more advanced than anything ever seen by anyone else. No bastions are aware of his existence, and Kairos has been successful in avoiding revealing his presence. When revealing himself, Kairos does so with confidence that no witnesses will relate seeing him. That being said, Kairos is smart enough to evade capture and knows when to flee in the face of overwhelming odds.





**XP 51,200**

LN Medium construct

**Init** +3; **Senses** blindsight 120 ft., true seeing; **Perception** +26**DEFENSE****AC** 32, touch 22, flat-footed 20 (+12 Dex, +10 natural)**hp** 214 (16d10+126);**Fort** +16, **Ref** +16, **Will** +13**Defensive Abilities** DR 15/adamantine, immutable form, force projection, energy shell; **SR** 26**OFFENSE****Speed** 30 ft.**Melee** 6 embedded blades +27 (2d6+12)**Ranged** 2 forearm blasters +27 (4d6+12, plus prone)**Special Attacks** pounce**STATISTICS****Str** 18, **Dex** 35, **Con** 23, **Int** 18, **Wis** 17, **Cha** 24**Base Atk** +16; **CMB** +29; **CMD** 43**Feats** Awesome Blow, Blind Fight, Combat Expertise, Dodge, Improved Bull Rush, Improved Vital Strike, Power Attack, Weapon Finesse**Skills** Diplomacy +26, Intimidate +26, Knowledge (history) +20, Perception +26, Sense Motive +22, Survival +22; **Racial Modifiers** +4 Perception**Languages** English**SQ** extra joints, immutable form, leap, magic weapons**ECOLOGY****Environment** any**Organization** solitary**Treasure** None**SPECIAL ABILITIES****Energy Shell (Ex)** Kairos is draped in a force shroud that allows him to alter his appearance and defend against physical attack. While the shroud is up, Kairos has Hardness 10. If a single attack inflicts at least 30 points of damage on Kairos, or if Kairos is struck with an angelite (adamantine) weapon, the shell deactivates for one minute.**Extra Joints (Ex)** Kairos can stand up from prone without taking an action**Force Projection (Ex)** Kairos alters transforms his appearance to resemble any humanoid of the same shape as he. He can alter facial features, the sound of his voice, hair length, coloration, and distinguishing characteristics if any. He can make himself appear as a member of another race, though none of his statistics change. He can't appear as a creature of a different size than him, and his basic shape stays the same. By default, he moves about looking like a normal human. This projection can remain in effect until Kairos changes it, makes an attack, or jumps.**Immutable Form (Ex)** Kairos is immune to any spell or effect that would alter his form.**Leap (Ex)** As a swift action, Kairos can move 20 feet without provoking attacks of opportunity.**Magic Weapons (Ex)** Kairos's embedded weapons are counted as magical and angelite (adamantine).**Pounce (Ex)** As a standard action, Kairos leaps 40 feet, and makes two embedded blade attacks against a target. If at least one hits, the target is knocked prone and pinned, and Kairos will follow up with four additional embedded blade attacks.

Kairos manages to evade detection through a convincing holographic system that can perfectly envelop his body. When in this state, many of his natural weapons and abilities remain hidden, and no element of his physical body sticks out from the illusion. Oddly, he prefers one form above all others—perhaps what his genetic profile would make his original human body to be, though he can alter this if need be. The holographic projection doubles a force field, further protecting the body within. However, when required, Kairos can drop the illusion in an instant and reveal the machine of death he really is.







## KYTHIX

The kythix are one of the terrifying anathema plaguing the world, though their dispersion is more concentrated near the tenenbri homeland, ironically making it the problem of the very kingdom responsible for their creation in the first place.

They aren't much prettier than the dojenn, though apart from their overwide mouths full of spiny teeth and enormous milky-white eyes, they do not have a fishlike appearance. Their skin is naturally the same chalky white as the tenenbri, but is faintly chameleonic, making it easy for the kythix to blend in against dark cave walls. Their gait is hunched, and their arms extend to an unnatural length, made still longer by their needle-like talons. They seem to have inherited and improved upon their distant damaskan ancestors' ability to climb and cling to any surface, allowing them to stalk and drop on unsuspecting victims from a tunnel ceiling.

Even those tenenbri willing to talk about their history are not fully aware of the origin of these prowling predators. Popular theories point to villages deeper into the Earth that were cursed by Oaken, or abominations

birthed from pairings between tenenbri and outsiders. Both of these, of course, are incorrect; in reality, the kythix are born from the same process as any other fae devolution. This process has recently accelerated thanks to the shift in tenenbri cultural traditions. Instead of embracing their instinctive and natural behavior, the majority of tenenbri, living within their largest empire of Vanaka, have embraced a social structure that is regimented, detached, and devoid imagination or individuality. It is almost a conviction sympathetic to the corruption of Ixindar, though no such infection has ever been detected. It was believed, though this was not the impetus for the change in social structure, that his shift would impede the degradation that all fae suf-



## KYTHIX

CR10

**XP 9,600**

CE Medium aberration

**Init** +1; **Senses** blindsight 60 ft.; tremorsense, Perception +27

### DEFENSE

**AC** 24, touch 10, flat-footed 23 (+1 Dex, +14 natural)

**hp** 127 (15d8+60)

**Fort** +9, **Ref** +6, **Will** +12

**Immune** disease, poison

**Special Defenses** false death

### OFFENSE

**Speed** 40 ft., climb 40 ft.

**Melee** bite +17 (1d8+7), 4 claws +17 (1d6+7)

**Special Attacks** Piezo Scream (DC25)

### STATISTICS

**Str** 25, **Dex** 12, **Con** 18, **Int** 11, **Wis** 16, **Cha** 11

**Base Atk** +11; **CMB** +19; **CMD** 30

**Feats** Awesome Blow, Blind-Fight, Combat Reflexes, Greater Bull Rush, Improved Bull Rush, Lunge, Power Attack, Skill Focus (Perception)

**Skills** Climb +15, Escape Artist +13, Perception +27, Stealth +15, Survival +21;

**Languages** None

**SQ** Natural Concealment, shift, spider climb

### ECOLOGY

**Environment** any

**Organization** solitary or family (2-4 kythix)

**Treasure** Standard

### SPECIAL ABILITIES

**Spider Climb (Su)** The kythix can climb difficult surfaces, including upside down on ceilings, without needing to make an ability check (per the spell).

**Natural Concealment (Su)** If within darkness, if the kythix doesn't move on its turn, its Stealth check bonus increases to +25.

**False Death (Su)** When the kythix is reduced to zero hit points, it appears dead for 1 minute, then rises to 30 hit points. Only after being killed a second time does the kythix remain in that state. Inflicting an additional 30 damage to the creature after being reduced the first time negates this effect.

**Shift (Su)** If already in darkness or benefitting from stealth, the kythix becomes invisible. The effect ends if the kythix attacks.

**Piezo Scream (Su)** The kythix can emit a high-pitched scream as a standard action to disorientate or damage its foes. All creatures within 20 feet of the kythix must make a Fort saving throw (DC 25) or suffer 4d6+12 thunder damage and be deafened for 1 minute and stunned for 1 round.

fer from, thus preventing anathema like the kythix from developing. Ironically, it has had the opposite effect, since devolution is fae nature when exposed to a different environment. The anathema still appear outside Vanaka, of course, anywhere that tenenbri live isolated and almost exclusively underground.

The kythix began attacking their own kind initially before migrating to the surface to raid nearby towns

under cover of darkness. They wait for heavy clouds or a covered moon before slithering in without a whisper, attacking and devouring prey on site, before returning. Another preferred tactic is to steal live prey--a child or another citizen the kythix have observed would be missed--and pull the innocent into their cave lair, making sure the yells for help will carry to the ears of loved ones. The kythix then wait patiently for the naïve victims to enter the caves to be picked off.

## KYTHIX LORE

A character knows the following with a successful Knowledge (Nature) (Int) check.

**DC 10:** The kythix are a deviation from the tenenbri line. Subterranean creatures, the kythix prey upon tenenbri and any other individuals foolish enough to wander into their domains. If such targets are not readily available, they begin reaching out. They are notoriously difficult to slay and even when put down, one can never trust that they are truly dead.

**DC 15:** Kythix have only one aspect that might be called 'culture', their trophy room. They never devour or kill their targets in this cavern, but pile the cleaned bones in piles within it. They often only choose specific bones (skulls an obvious example) for their trophies. They pile them high and use these achievements to entice a mate. Both males and females do this equally. When this happens, trophy rooms merge. One discovered room deep in a dense maze of caves close to the Torquil town of Goodchild held nearly 125 skulls and 75 pelvic bones, mostly human and chaparran. The kythix were never located, and the caves were collapsed soon after.





# NARIISA

Many human legends speak of nature spirits of surpassing beauty that protect the wild places of the world and enchant lonely travelers, many of whom then waste away their days pining for another such ephemeral encounter. The nymphs and dryads of these myths are echalogical echoes of the nariisa. Few mortals have ever seen one, and they resemble the legends so accurately and so spellbindingly, most

## SYLFAEN BREEZEBORN

CR9

**XP 9,600**

CN Medium fey (air, fae)

**Init** +9; **Senses** darkvision 120 ft.; Perception +21

### DEFENSE

**AC** 25, touch 25, flat-footed 16 (+9 Dex, +6 ethereal movement)

**hp** 126 (12d6+84)

**Fort** +11, **Ref** +17, **Will** +14

**Defensive Abilities** DR 10/fae iron; **Immune** cold, poison; **SR** 21

### OFFENSE

**Speed** 30 ft., fly 60 ft. (perfect)

**Melee** 2 kukri +10 (1d8+7) plus innocuous breath

**Special Attacks** innocuous breath

### STATISTICS

**Str** 11, **Dex** 29, **Con** 24, **Int** 18, **Wis** 22, **Cha** 21

**Base Atk** +6; **CMB** +15; **CMD** 38

**Feats** Agile Maneuvers, Combat Expertise, Defensive Combat Training, Point-Blank Shot, Mobility, Weapon Finesse

**Skills** Bluff +20, Escape Artist +24, Knowledge (nature) +20, Perception +21, Perform (sing) +20, Sense Motive +21, Stealth +24, Swim +23

**Languages** Chaparran, Old fae

**SQ** ethereal movement, weightlessness, child of mist

### ECOLOGY

**Environment** any

**Organization** solitary

**Treasure** Standard

### SPECIAL ABILITIES

**Ethereal Movement (Su)** The sylfaen can move through other creatures and objects as if they were difficult terrain. It takes 5 (1d10) force damage if it ends its turn inside an object. The Sylfaen never provokes attacks of opportunity. She also gains a bonus to AC based on her Wisdom modifier.

**Weightless (Su)** The sylfaen cannot fall, and in its rest state, can float in the air. It can hover without using movement or actions.

**Innocuous Breath (Su)** Any Large target or smaller the Sylfaen hits can (if she wishes) be pushed 15 feet and knocked prone.

**Child of Mist (Su)** As an action, the sylfaen becomes ethereal or vice-versa.

*One famous account came from of all places, Angel, which told of a sniper atop the outer wall. This sniper could target puggs from a kilometer away, placing bullets between their eyes before the crack of the concussion reached their ears. One day, a nymph found itself carried along the waters of a nearby river and was accosted by a gang of boggs. Though virtually out of sight from the wall, this sniper found his targets and was able to, with surgical precession, kill any that closed to strike the girl. From this range, the soldier could see the victim was fae, though not realizing she was far more exceptional. After the attackers retreated, the nymph vanished from his sights.*

*A full month passed before the soldier saw her again, staring directly at him through his reticule from nearly the vanishing point. He could hear her whisper and found himself sharing a conversation, which made the other snipers of the wall somewhat uneasy. The next day, the soldier had vanished. He had left his sergeant stripes, his apartment, his assigned vehicle, even his weapon. His bank account was full, and he never informed friends of his intentions. One sniper had reported seeing him walking away with a ghost-like figure into the forest. A transport was sent to locate him. He was never found.*

*In an addendum, his body was identified from his tattered and heavily patched uniform. He had never traveled more than 10 kilometers from the wall and had never been seen by anyone in that time.*

*He had only recently died.*

*It had been 200 years.*

Legends of a New World

By Bacchus Relm

of those who *have* swear afterwards that they must have been dreaming.

As chaparrans took to the forests, they began branching into descent species almost immediately, though never being rendered extinct themselves like their ancestor fae. Nariisa exaggerate the chaparran nature of being nomadic, reclusive, and introverted. Despite popular beliefs, nariisa are not exclusively female, but nearly 95% of them are, and their low conception rate (almost the lowest of any fae) contributes to their rarity. Their appearance and demeanor matches many references in human literature including dryads,



selkies, kitsune, neireids, narfs, nymphs, and yuki-onna. In many ways, they are all connected. Before fairies were attached with the cliché of being diminutive creatures with butterfly wings, there were tall and beautiful, with neither wings nor inhibitions.

All nariisa are beautiful in ways to put all others to shame. No form shaped by divine hands can measure to their beauty, forcing even the vainest to look away in humility, which is unfortunate, for like many fae, nariisa are not conceited. Most who look upon a nariisa cannot help but either covet them or envy them. They appear in every skin tone, every eye and hair color, but never exhibit any blemish, not even scarring when violence is inflicted upon them. Their reputation for physical perfection is actually a self-defense mechanism, caused by a limited shapeshifting and low-level empathic ability which allows them to instinctively know what someone who views them regards as beautiful and adjust their bodies to match, in the hopes that the interloper would never harm such a perfect being. Such a trait would never have evolved naturally, and often backfires when encountering evil humans whose covetousness gets the better of them. Thankfully, nariisa are also swift and have many ways of evading pursuit.

They are solitary, seldom found even with other nariisa. Their introverted nature translates to an impossible estimate of their population, with some optimistic guesses placing them at less than 500 worldwide. Most rarely speak, even when curiosity forces one to reveal itself to others. They only speak when confronted by a stranger of a peaceful or benign disposition, especially if from a race they had no prior experience with. They are also known to appear to injured creatures that suffered while defending nature or those less fortunate. Although it occurs infrequently, they have been known to be caught off guard.

While it is not true that nariisa are bound to specific trees, rocks, or rivers, and are unable to venture far from them, they do stick to familiar territory and have particular affinities for types of natural phenomena; neirryds for rivers, sylfaen for windswept places, and so on. Rumor has it that some can even merge with the landscape or transform themselves into animals, though the latter is more likely to be a misunderstood coincidence, or perhaps a unique individual with stronger than usual shapeshifting talents.



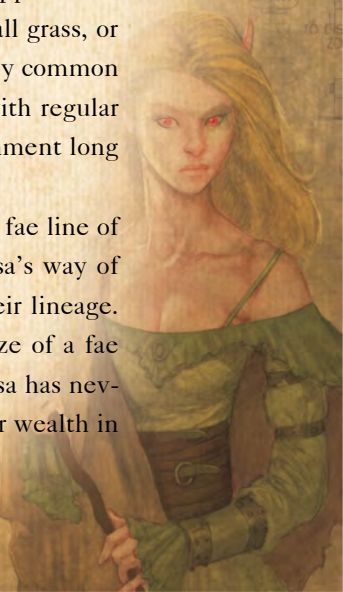
## NARIISA LORE

A character knows the following with a successful Knowledge (Nature) (Int) check.

**DC 10:** Nariisa are not just bound to forests, like one would assume, but are found tied to many different environments. Nariisa are the personification of an element of nature. They have been known to appear near or within bodies of clean water, in fields of tall grass, or atop of green-filled mountain peaks. The only common trait is they always appear in lands blessed with regular sunlight. Most have adapted to their environment long ago, and will fight furiously to protect it.

**DC 15:** The nariisa are offshoots from the fae line of chaparrans. The chaparrans revere the nariisa's way of life, viewing it as a natural progression of their lineage. Nariisa are considered the most valuable prize of a fae slaver. Despite claims to the contrary, a nariisa has never been sold or caught. Slavers have lost their wealth in

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## NEIRRYD RIVERBLESSED

CR9

**XP 9,600**

CN Medium fey (air, fae)

**Init** +9; **Senses** darkvision 120 ft.; Perception +21

### DEFENSE

**AC** 25, touch 25, flat-footed 16 (+9 Dex, +6 river's daughter)  
**hp** 126 (12d6+84)

**Fort** +11, **Ref** +17, **Will** +14

**Defensive Abilities** DR 10/fae iron; **Immune** cold, poison;  
**SR** 21

### OFFENSE

**Speed** 30 ft., swim 60 ft.

**Melee** invisible claws +16 (2d8+7) plus grab

**Special Attacks** liquid kiss, drown

### STATISTICS

**Str** 11, **Dex** 30, **Con** 24, **Int** 16, **Wis** 22, **Cha** 24

**Base Atk** +6; **CMB** +15; **CMD** 38

**Feats** Agile Maneuvers, Combat Expertise, Defensive Combat Training, Point-Blank Shot, Mobility, Weapon Finesse

**Skills** Bluff +20, Escape Artist +25, Knowledge (nature) +17, Perception +21, Perform (sing) +24, Sense Motive +21, Stealth +24, Swim +23

**Languages** Chaparran, Old fae

**SQ** rivers daughter

### ECOLOGY

**Environment** any

**Organization** solitary

**Treasure** Standard

### SPECIAL ABILITIES

**River's Daughter (Su)** When fully immersed in water, the neirryd is invisible. While within 5 feet of water or immersed, the neirryd gains a bonus to AC equal to her Wisdom modifier.

**Liquid Kiss (Su)** A grappled target suffers 4 points of Strength damage unless the target succeeds on a DC 23 Fortitude save. The save DC is Constitution-based.

**Drown (Su)** A neirryd can flood the lungs of a willing, helpless, or grappled creature by touching it. If the target cannot breathe water, it cannot hold its breath and immediately begins to drown. On its turn, the target can attempt a DC 23 Fortitude save to cough up this water; otherwise it falls unconscious at 0 hp. On the next round, the target must save again or drop to –1 hit points and be dying; on the third round it must save again or die (see page 445 of the Pathfinder RPG Core Rulebook). The save DC is Constitution-based.

the obsessive drive to catch one. Bounties for their retrieval by the rich landowners of Baruch Malkut have topped 30,000-40,000 gold. These selfish misers are mocked by tales of nariisa taking mates by their own choosing. They are exclusively true-breeding; any child of a bonding takes after the non-nariisa parent. The only way to increase the population of nariisa is to reproduce slowly themselves or wait for a chaparran village to descend.



**DC 20:** The oldest forests have a sibharil thornwarden at their heart, ensuring that no unnatural harm comes to the old growth. They consider themselves avatars of the forest. They only appear in forests also populated by chaparrans, though seen away from their villages. They are extremely shy, even with the chaparrans. Variations on the name (meliai, hamadryad, daphnaic) are direct human terms and do not show up in their lexicon. Their personality seems so distant that they are prone to vanishing during a conversation if one is lucky enough to catch one being talkative. They are also nearly mutes and seldom talk for any reason.

**DC25:** Unfortunately, the drawback with winning the love of a nariisa is the surrender of whatever life the winner held onto before. A nariisa wishes no such sacrifice—the other mate desires this by choice. The mate gives up his or her career, obligations, even family for this new love, vanishing into the open world with noth-



## SIBHARIL THORNWARDEN

CR9

**XP 9,600**

CN Medium fey (air, fae)

**Init** +9; **Senses** darkvision 120 ft.; Perception +21

**Aura** Thorned Empress (25 ft.)

### DEFENSE

**AC** 25, touch 25, flat-footed 16 (+9 Dex, +6 natural armor)

**hp** 126 (12d6+84)

**Fort** +11, **Ref** +17, **Will** +14

**Defensive Abilities** DR 10/fae iron; **Immune** cold, poison; **SR** 21

### OFFENSE

**Speed** 30 ft., burrow 30 ft.

**Melee or Ranged** 3 bladethorns +16 (1d6+7) and the target is staggered.

**Special Attacks** enthrall

### STATISTICS

**Str** 11, **Dex** 30, **Con** 24, **Int** 16, **Wis** 22, **Cha** 26

**Base Atk** +6; **CMB** +15; **CMD** 38

**Feats** Agile Maneuvers, Combat Expertise, Defensive Combat Training, Point-Blank Shot, Mobility, Weapon Finesse

**Skills** Bluff +20, Escape Artist +25, Knowledge (nature) +17, Perception +21, Perform (sing) +24, Sense Motive +21, Stealth +24, Swim +23

**Languages** Chaparran, Old fae

**SQ** nature talk, tree meld, woodcraft

### ECOLOGY

**Environment** any

**Organization** solitary

**Treasure** Standard

### SPECIAL ABILITIES

**Enthrall (Su)** The sibharil targets one humanoid or beast that it can see within 30 feet of it. If the target can see the sylfaen, it must succeed on a DC 23 Will saving throw or be magically charmed. The charmed creature regards the sibharil as a trusted friend to be heeded and protected. Although the target isn't under the sibharil's control, it takes the sibharil's requests or actions in the most favorable way it can. Each time the sibharil or its allies do anything harmful to the target, it can repeat the saving throw, ending the effect on itself on a success. Otherwise, the effect lasts 24 hours or until the sibharil dies or ends the effect as a bonus action. If a target's saving throw is successful, the target is immune to the sibharil's charm for the next 24 hours. The sibharil can have no more than one humanoid and up to three beasts charmed at a time.

**Tree Meld (Su)** A sibharil can meld with any tree, similar to how the spell *meld into stone* functions. She can remain melded with a tree as long as she wishes.

**Woodcraft (Ex)** A sibharil has a +6 racial bonus to Craft checks involving wood, and is always treated as if she had masterwork artisan's woodworking tools when making such checks.

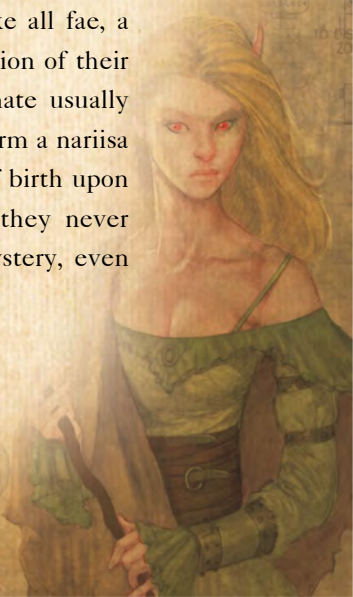
**Thorned Empress (Su)** Enemies of the sibharil treat all open ground within 25 feet of the sylfaen as difficult terrain.

**Nature Talk (Su)** The sibharil can communicate with beasts and plants as if they shared a language.



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ing but the clothes on his or her back. They wander the world, living off the land and taking no responsibilities other than those taken upon partners. Like all fae, a nariisa remains with their love for the duration of their lives (they live about 1000 years). The mate usually only dies of old age since no animals will harm a nariisa or her mate. Nariisa returns to their land of birth upon their mate's death, but unlike other fae, they never bond a second time. They vanish into mystery, even abandoning children and their descendants







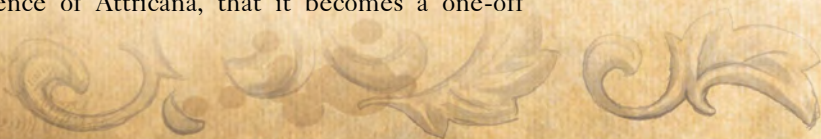
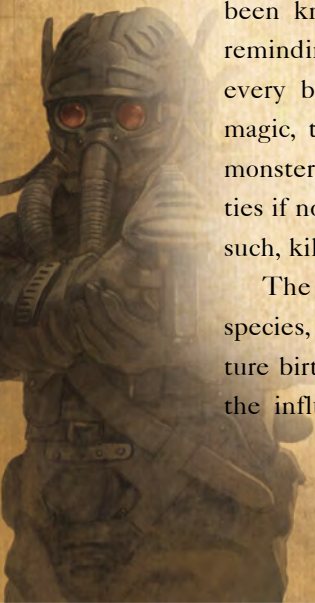
## NIHILIMORPH

The chaos of Attricana is responsible for the creation and subsequent degradation of the fae along with the spawning of dragons and all manners of fantastical beasts. It injected intelligence into bears, possums, and perhaps other creatures, and allowed the mastering of the cosmos through the use of spellcraft.

**336** However, Attricana is about anarchy, disorder, and even though its unpredictability has produced many wonders considered impossible in a normal world, it has been known to spontaneously produce abominations, reminding the world that chaos abhors symmetry. For every beautiful or intelligent creature spawned from magic, there may be an equal number of nightmarish monsters that should have died from their own deformities if not for chaos of Attricana keeping them alive. As such, killing such terrors may be a sympathy.

The nihilimorph is not a label attached to a single species, but rather the blanket term given to any creature birthed from chaos that is so twisted or warped by the influence of Attricana, that it becomes a one-off

abomination driven insane by its very biology, all it can think of is to devour everything it sees. All nihilimorphs are technically sterile and only a few have been known to reproduce through fission. To see one tests the viewers sanity. This is not one monster but four or five, a chimaera merged into a single mass. Mouths within mouths. Limbs where there should not be, and amorphous masses of flesh able to shape itself as needed.





## CHERUBIM NIHILIMORPH

CR5

**XP 1,600**

CE Medium aberration

**Init** +3; **Senses** all-around vision, darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +12

**Aura** frightful presence (60 ft., DC 18)

### DEFENSE

**AC** 19, touch 13, flat-footed 16 (+3 Dex, +6 natural)

**hp** 46 (4d8+28)

**Fort** +8, **Ref** +4, **Will** +5

**Defensive Abilities** amorphous; **DR** 5/bludgeoning; **Immune** critical hits, precision damage

### OFFENSE

**Speed** 30 ft., **swim** 30 ft.

**Melee** 2 bites +9 (2d6+6) plus 1 pseudopod +9 (reach 10 ft., 1d8+6 plus grab)

**Special Attacks** swallow whole (2d10+9 bludgeoning damage, AC 16, 15 hp)

### STATISTICS

**Str** 10, **Dex** 22, **Con** 24, **Int** 4, **Wis** 13, **Cha** 12

**Base Atk** +3; **CMB** +3 (+7 grapple); **CMD** 16 (can't be tripped)

**Feats** Weapon Finesse, Weapon Focus (bite)

**Skills** Perception +12, Swim +8; Racial Modifiers +4 Perception

**Language** None

**SQ** entropic discord, all-around vision

### ECOLOGY

**Environment** any

**Organization** solitary

**Treasure** Standard

### SPECIAL ABILITIES

**All-Around Vision (Ex)** A cherubim nihilimorph sees in all directions at once. It cannot be flanked.

**Amorphous (Ex)** A cherubim nihilimorph's body is malleable and shapeless. It is immune to precision damage (like sneak attacks) and critical hits, and can move through an area as small as one-quarter its space without squeezing or one-eighth its space when squeezing.

**Entropic Discord (Su)** All disruption rolls are made at -2 penalty within 60 feet of the cherubim.

**Swallow Whole (Ex):** Unlike other creatures, cherubim nihilimorph can swallow targets it's size or smaller.

## SCYLLA NIHILIMORPH

CR12

**XP 19,200**

CE Large aberration

**Init** +9; **Senses** all-around vision, darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +12

**Aura** frightful presence (100 ft., DC 25)

### DEFENSE

**AC** 27, touch 10, flat-footed 26 (+1 Dex, +17 natural, -1 size)

**hp** 162 (12d8+108)

**Fort** +13, **Ref** +5, **Will** +13

**Defensive Abilities** amorphous; **DR** 10/bludgeoning; **Immune** critical hits, precision damage

### OFFENSE

**Speed** 35 ft., **swim** 35 ft.

**Melee** 3 bites +14 (3d6+6/19-20) plus 3 pseudopod +9 (reach 40 ft, 2d8+6 plus grab)

**Space** 20 ft.; **Reach** 20 ft. (40 ft. with pseudopod)

**Special Attacks** swallow whole (6d6 bludgeoning damage plus 6d6 acid damage, AC 21, hp 18)

### STATISTICS

**Str** 34, **Dex** 13, **Con** 29, **Int** 4, **Wis** 16, **Cha** 12

**Base Atk** +9; **CMB** +22 (+25 grapple); **CMD** 33 (can't be tripped)

**Feats** Improved Critical (bite), Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Weapon Finesse, Weapon Focus (bite),

**Skills** Perception +12, Swim +8; Racial Modifiers +4 Perception

**Language** None

**SQ** entropic discord, all-around vision

### ECOLOGY

**Environment** any

**Organization** solitary

**Treasure** Standard

### SPECIAL ABILITIES

**All-Around Vision (Ex)** A scylla nihilimorph sees in all directions at once. It cannot be flanked.

**Amorphous (Ex)** A scylla nihilimorph's body is malleable and shapeless. It is immune to precision damage (like sneak attacks) and critical hits, and can move through an area as small as one-quarter its space without squeezing or one-eighth its space when squeezing.

**Blood of the Creator (Ex)** If a single attack does 40 or more damage to the scylla, place a cherubim adjacent to it as a reaction. This cherubim has 10 hit points, but its attacks are identical.

**Entropic Discord (Su)** All disruption rolls are made at -2 penalty within 60 feet of the scylla.

**Swallow Whole (Ex):** Unlike other creatures, the scylla nihilimorph can swallow targets it's size or smaller.





## TYPHON NIHILIMORPH

CR 15

### XP 51,200

CE Gargantuan aberration

**Init** +2; **Senses** all-around vision, darkvision 120 ft.; Perception +25

**Aura** frightful presence (300 ft., DC 23)

### DEFENSE

**AC** 30, touch 4, flat-footed 30 (–2 Dex, +26 natural, –4 size)

**hp** 230 (20d8+140)

**Fort** +15, **Ref** +4, **Will** +16

**Defensive Abilities** amorphous; **DR** 15/bludgeoning; **Immune** critical hits, precision damage

### OFFENSE

**Speed** 35 ft., Swim 40 ft.

**Melee** 4 bites +21 (3d6+10/19–20 plus assimilate) plus 3 pseudopod +21 (reach 60 ft., 3d8+6 plus grab and assimilate)

**Space** 20 ft.; **Reach** 20 ft. (60 ft. with pseudopod)

**Special Attacks** assimilate, swallow whole ((2d6+10 bludgeoning plus 2d6 acid, AC 23, hp 23)

### STATISTICS

**Str** 30, **Dex** 7, **Con** 24, **Int** 6, **Wis** 15, **Cha** 21

**Base Atk** +15; **CMB** +29 (+33 grapple); **CMD** 37 (can't be tripped)

**Feats** Cleave, Great Cleave, Great Fortitude, Improved Bull Rush, Improved Critical (bite), Improved Initiative, Improved Overrun, Iron Will, Power Attack,

**Skills** Bluff +25, Climb +33, Diplomacy +25, Intimidate +28, Perception +25, Swim +25

**Language** None

**SQ** entropic discord, all-around vision

### ECOLOGY

**Environment** any

**Organization** solitary

**Treasure** Standard

### SPECIAL ABILITIES

**All-Around Vision (Ex)** A scylla nihilimorph sees in all directions at once. It cannot be flanked.

**Amorphous (Ex)** A Scylla nihilimorph's body is malleable and shapeless. It is immune to precision damage (like sneak attacks) and critical hits, and can move through an area as small as one-quarter its space without squeezing or one-eighth its space when squeezing.

**Assimilate (Ex)** Any time the typhon touches a creature in any way or if a creature touches a live typhon, the creatures takes 2d8 acid damage, and the typhon regains the same amount.

**Blood of the Creator (Ex)** If a single attack does 40 or more damage to the typhon, place a scylla adjacent to it as a reaction. This cherubim has 10 hit points, but its attacks are identical.

**Entropic Discord (Su)** All disruption rolls are made at –2 penalty within 60 feet of the scylla.

**Swallow Whole (Ex):** Unlike other creatures, the typhon nihilimorph can swallow targets it's size or smaller.





# Obsidian Mages

The Obsidian Mages of Victrix are some of the most powerful spellcasters in northwest Canam, apart from the laudenians, and also some of the most secretive and paranoid. The source of their knowledge and power is the huge chunk of black stone at the heart of their central tower, which (it is believed) keeps the rest of the island aloft. Those who have studied the stone (and none are still alive who do not belong to the order itself) are aware that it is a product of Ixindar, not Attricana – perhaps even a shard of the black gate’s cracked shell itself.

## Obsidian Acolyte

CR 1/4

### XP 100

Damaskan Wizard I  
LN Medium humanoid  
**Init** +1; **Senses** Perception +4

### DEFENSE

**AC** 13, touch 11, flat-footed 12 (+2 armor, +1 Dex) or 17 with *mage armor*  
**hp** 4 (1d8)  
**Fort** +2, **Ref** +1, **Will** –1

### OFFENSE

**Speed** 30 ft.  
**Melee** Staff +1 (1d6–1)  
**Spells Known (CL 1st)**  
1st (3/day)—(DC 14) magic missile (1d4+1), mage armor, charm person  
0 (at will)—(DC 13) ray of frost (1d3), daze, resistance, touch of fatigue.

### STATISTICS

**Str** 9, **Dex** 13, **Con** 10, **Int** 17, **Wis** 9, **Cha** 8  
**Base Atk** +1; **CMB** –1; **CMD** 10  
**Feats** Skill Focus (Perception)  
**Skills** Perception +4, Stealth +6; +2 Perception, +2 Knowledge (arcana) +6  
**Languages** Common, Pleroma, all fae languages  
**SQ** Gravity Focus

### ECOLOGY

**Environment** any  
**Organization** gang (2–4), usually with magistar  
**Treasure** NPC gear (leather armor, staff, spellbook totem)

### SPECIAL ABILITIES

**Gravity Focus (Ex)** As a free action, the acolyte can employ gravity focus. This does not provoke opportunity attacks.

- Speed by +10 feet.
- Gain a +5 bonus to Acrobatics and Climb checks.
- Gain a +2 bonus to AC and a +5 bonus to all Ref saves.
- Enemies gain no attack bonuses against the acolyte from flanking, if on higher ground, or if you are flat-footed, kneeling, sitting, or prone.

## Obsidian Magistar

CR 16

### XP 100

Damaskan Wizard I  
LN Medium humanoid  
**Init** +1; **Senses** Perception +4

### DEFENSE

**AC** 21, touch 12, flat-footed 17 (+7 armor, +2 Dex) or 26 with *mage armor*  
**hp** 112 (15d8+45)  
**Fort** +13, **Ref** +15, **Will** +18

### OFFENSE

**Speed** 30 ft.  
**Melee** Staff +1 (1d6)  
Spell Like Abilities *grave touch* (8/day)  
**Spells Known (CL 15th)**  
7th (4/day)—(DC 22) *finger of death*, *waves of exhaustion*  
6th (6/day)—(DC 21) *circle of death*, *create undead*, *undeath to death*  
5th (7/day)—(DC 20) *blight*, *symbol of pain*, *waves of fatigue*, *cone of cold* (15d6)  
4th (7/day)—(DC 19) *fear*, *fire shield*, *greater invisibility*, *stoneskin*  
3rd (7/day)—(DC 18) *dispel magic*, *displacement*, *haste*, *ray of exhaustion*  
2nd (7/day)—(DC 17) *alter self*, *detect thoughts*, *misdirection*, *resist energy*, *see invisibility*  
1st (8/day)—(DC 16) *cause fear*, *grease*, *magic missile*, *shield*, *true strike*  
0 (at will)—(DC 15) *arcane mark*, *bleed*, *light*, *mage hand*, *mending*, *message*, *open/close*, *prestidigitation*, *read magic*

### STATISTICS

**Str** 10, **Dex** 14, **Con** 16, **Int** 20, **Wis** 16, **Cha** 16  
**Base Atk** +15; **CMB** +23; **CMD** 30  
**Feats** Skill Focus (Perception), Command Undead, Turn Undead, Extra Channel, Improved Channel, Defensive Combat Training, Extend Spell, Improved Lightning Reflexes, Iron Will, Maximize Spell, Quicken Spell, Scribe Scroll  
**Skills** Craft (alchemy) +20, Intimidate +17, Knowledge (arcana) +20, Knowledge (planes) +20, Linguistics +18, Perception +24, Sense Motive +24, Spellcraft +20  
**Languages** Common, Saeqaar, all fae languages

### ECOLOGY

**Environment** any  
**Organization** solitary with neverborn or gang with 2–4 acolytes  
**Treasure** NPC gear (magic leather armor and rings, staff, spellbook totem)

### SPECIAL ABILITIES

**Power over Undead (Su)** The magistar can channel energy 8/day per the wizard (DC 20).  
**Grave Touch (Sp)** As a standard action, the magistar can make a melee touch attack that causes a living creature to become shaken for 7 rounds. If he touches a shaken creature with this ability, it becomes frightened for 1 round. The magistar can use this ability 8 times per day.  
**Life Sight (Su)** The magistar gains blindsight to a range of 20 feet for up to 15 rounds  
**Command Neverborn (Su)** The magistar commands its neverborn servant to attack.





**BASE NEVERBORN****CR 12****XP 3,200**

Medium construct

**Init** -1; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision; Perception +0**DEFENSE****AC** 23, touch 14, flat-footed 19 (+4 Dex, +9 natural)**hp** 140 (12d10+78)**Fort** +13 **Ref** +15 **Will** +18**DR** 5/adamantine; **Immune** construct traits, magic**OFFENSE****Speed** 30 ft.**Melee** 2 slams +16 (2d8+5)**Space** 5 ft.; **Reach** 5 ft.**STATISTICS****Str** 20, **Dex** 18, **Con** 18, **Int** 20 **Wis** 16, **Cha** 16**Base Atk** +11; **CMB** +18; **CMD** 27**Feats** Skill Focus (Perception), Command Undead, Turn Undead, Extra Channel, Improved Channel, Defensive Combat Training, Extend Spell, Improved Lightning Reflexes, Iron Will, Maximize Spell, Quicken Spell, Scribe Scroll**Skills** Craft (alchemy) +20, Intimidate +17, Knowledge (arcana) +20, Knowledge (planes) +20, Linguistics +18, Perception +24, Sense Motive +24, Spellcraft +20**Languages** none**ECOLOGY****Environment** any**Organization** solitary**Treasure** none**SPECIAL ABILITIES****Activity** Neverborns do not eat, sleep, or breathe. While the nihilimancer is asleep, the neverborn can act on its own but never deviates out of its control range unless instructed.**Death** If reduced to 0 hit points, the neverborn falls to pieces upon the ground.**From Ixindar** Being from Ixindar, a neverborn does not disrupt technology if held. Its form prevents it from wearing any magic items.**Gear** Neverborns are sentient creatures usually built to be humanoid. Both its hands are free to wield a shield and/or a weapon. Every other magic slot is occupied beyond this. Therefore, it cannot be assigned any magic items save for a magic weapon and/or a magic shield. These items must be bound to Ixindar. Items bound to Attricana are suppressed, and act as mundane items.**Necrotic Resistances** The neverborn is immune to any spell or effect that would alter its form or disintegrate it. It is immune to all necromancy spells.

some other unavoidable accident on the way back to Seliquam. It is not entirely certain what the mages are actually looking for, as there is no consistency in what finds they consider significant.

While not every Obsidian Mage is a nihilimancer, all of the order's inner circle and many of its more promising adepts have been corrupted by Mengus. This fact must be kept secret at all costs, for while Lady Melaresis turns a blind eye to many of the less savory experiments performed in her keep, were she to ever discover that the rumors about her inner retinue are true, she would purge them all without hesitation, destroy the stone and allow the island to fall back to Earth (with drastic consequences for the entire region), and set off elsewhere to rebuild her domain.

The Obsidian Mages are a driving force behind expeditions into Xixion in search of anything 'unusual' the migrant narros may have discovered. Whenever a promising lead comes up, a team from the tower is quickly dispatched to take over the investigation, regardless of whether the original discoverers wish to be sent home. Occasionally, a particularly stubborn archaeologist may tragically fall victim to a kaddog attack or





## OGGRAK

While the chaparran descendants were vanishing into their forests, narros descendants grew and became threats of immediate concern. The first were the ogres, larger and meaner than their ancestors. Oggraks followed later, their appearance marking the pattern narros branches would follow, merging with their environment like the chaparrans but in much more severe ways.

The oggraks were first assumed to be ogres driven insane by the grafting of stone and wood onto their skin. The pain of such a foreign intruder must have been unbearable. Eventually, it was discovered these were not ogres but a new descent species. It was no surprise that no ogre mother has ever survived the birth of an oggrak.

Oggraks, like nariisa, are bound to an element but in the oggrak's case, they exhibit characteristics of the element, possessing stone or jagged patches of dirt for skin. Even the ogres have difficulty controlling the oggrak's madness, continually gripped in pain and unable to tear to the rocks from their limbs, as the wounds would never heal and their death would follow. They

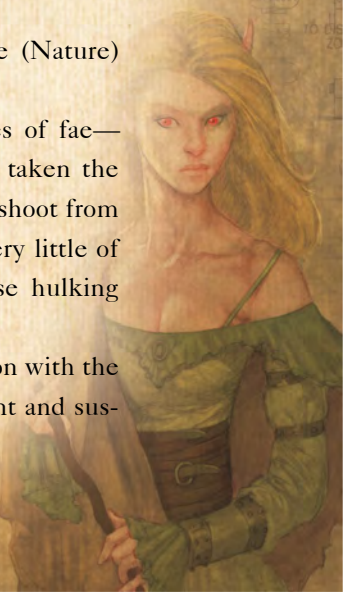
have enough sense to not injure themselves, aware of the benefits these attachments offer. Being of enchanted rocks, they offer increased strength and rapid healing. They can even blend in with their environment, but the enhanced muscle is what they most utilize. It is unfortunate the stones also drive them into psychosis as such abilities could enable them a significant advantage over their ogre ancestors. Alas, they are often found forced in service. When left to roam free, they wander the world, smashing and devouring anything they can grip and rend.

### OGGRAK LORE

A character making a successful Knowledge (Nature) (Int) check knows the following.

**DC 10:** The oggrak are a brutal species of fae—enormous, thick-fleshed creatures that have taken the earth into themselves. The oggrak are an offshoot from the narros line of the fae species tree, but very little of the hard working, stolid race is left in these hulking beasts.

**DC 15:** Oggraks enjoy a unique connection with the stone, dirt and earth. They draw nourishment and sus-





tenance from it, even capable of rapid healing if they are in contact with the kind of earth that they share a bond with. To compound this, oggraks are able to convert the flesh of creatures into similar healing. Shoveling whatever is close into their gaping maws, an oggrak can rapidly heal the most debilitating of wounds.

## OGGRAK REAVER

CR6

**XP 2,400**

CE Large humanoid (fae)

**Init** +3; **Senses** low-light vision; Perception +12

**Aura** Jagged Flesh (1d10)

### DEFENSE

**AC** 18, touch 8, flat-footed 18; (+2 armor, -1 Dex, +8 natural, -1 size)

**hp** 65 (10d8+20); regeneration 10 (conditional)

**Fort** +9, **Ref** +2, **Will** +5

**Resist** 10 thunder

### OFFENSE

**Speed** 30 ft., climb 20 ft.

**Melee** slams +12/+7/+7 (2d6+6)

**Ranged** rock +13 (3d8+12) plus knocked prone

**Space** 10 ft.; **Reach** 10 ft.

### STATISTICS

**Str** 23, **Dex** 8, **Con** 15, **Int** 6, **Wis** 10, **Cha** 11

**Base Atk** +7; **CMB** +14; **CMD** 23

**Feats** Cleave, Improved Initiative, Improved Overrun, Iron Will, Power Attack

**Skills** Handle Animal +8, Perception +12; Racial Modifiers +4 on Perception

**Languages** guttoran

**SQ** Stone shift

### ECOLOGY

**Environment** any

**Organization** solitary, pair, gang (3-6), troupe (3-8 plus 1 ravager)

**Treasure** standard

### SPECIAL ABILITIES

**Jagged Flesh** Any creature that starts its turn within 5 feet of the reaver, takes (1d10) slashing damage.

**Regeneration** If the reaver is in contact with solid stone, it regains 10 hit points at the start of its turn if it has at least 1 hit point.

**Stone Shift** The oggrak reaver sinks into a stone wall or floor, rendering it invisible and immune to attack. It can move up to 10 feet in this state. It uses movement to emerge; if it appears within 10 feet of any Medium-sized or smaller creature, that target is knocked prone.

## OGGRAK RAVAGER

CR13

**XP 25,600**

CE Huge humanoid (fae)

**Init** +2; **Senses** low-light vision; Perception +27

**Aura** Jagged Flesh (2d8)

### DEFENSE

**AC** 28, touch 10, flat-footed 26 (+2 Dex, +18 natural, -2 size)

**hp** 199 (19d8+114) regeneration 10 (conditional)

**Fort** +17, **Ref** +8, **Will** +13

**Resist** 15 thunder, hardness 5

### OFFENSE

**Speed** 50 ft., climb 40 ft.

**Melee** Slam +26/+21/+16 (4d6+21/19-20)

**Ranged** bigger rock +26 (8d6+21) plus knocked prone

**Space** 15 ft.; **Reach** 15 ft.

**Special Attacks** earthen eruption (DC 19, 8d8+21), minor afterthought

### STATISTICS

**Str** 39, **Dex** 14, **Con** 23, **Int** 4, **Wis** 18, **Cha** 10

**Base Atk** +14; **CMB** +30; **CMD** 42

**Feats** Awesome Blow, Cleave, Combat Reflexes, Improved

Bull Rush, Improved Critical (slam), Improved Sunder, Improved Vital Strike, Iron Will, Power Attack, Vital Strike

**Skills** Acrobatics +16, Climb +17, +13, Intimidate +15, Perception +27, Sense Motive +20, Swim +22

**Languages** guttoran

### ECOLOGY

**Environment** any

**Organization** solitary, troupe (3-8 plus 1 ravager)

**Treasure** standard

### SPECIAL ABILITIES

**Jagged Flesh.** Any creature that starts its turn within 5 feet of the ravager, takes 11 (2d8) slashing damage.

**Regeneration** If the ravager is in contact with dirt or soil, it regains 10 hit points at the start of its turn if it has at least 1 hit point.

**Earthen Eruption** As a full-round attack, the ravager slams into the ground, shaking the earth around it. Each creature within 20 feet of the ravager must make a DC 19 Reflex saving throw, taking 8d8+21 bludgeoning damage. All targets are knocked prone.

**Minor Afterthought** The ravager can make a single slam attack as a move action.











# SHEMJAZA

The shemjaza presents a mechanical façade, little more than veneer over a powder keg of pent-up rage and cruelty. A corrupted conditioning keeps a shemjaza in control of its emotions most of the time, forcing it to follow the programming laid down in its birth. This places a shemjaza in one of five classifications, rooxs, tengyn, shedün, rueheen, and shaya. Given their position as the administrators of all of Kakodomania, the administrators of tengyn are rarely seen in battle, and possess little to no battle abilities. However, they are the strategists, and their elimination would be the most destructive to the whole. While all appear more or less identical (even caste differences are hard to identify), shemjaza can be

## ROOXs WRATHSHROUD

CR 7

**XP 3,200**

LE Medium outsider (Ixindar)

**Init** +3; **Senses** blindsight 60 ft.; Perception +13

**Aura** Prince of the Shrouded Pearl (50 ft.)

### DEFENSE

**AC** 21, touch 13, flat-footed 18 (+3 Dex, +8 armor)

**hp** 73 (7d10+35)

**Fort** +7, **Ref** +10, **Will** +10

### OFFENSE

**Speed** 40 ft.,

**Melee or ranged** 2 dancing orbs +12 (2d6+8/19–20 plus shaken)

**Spells Known (CL 7th)**

3rd (2/day)—(DC 17) charm monster

2nd (4/day)—(DC 16) hold person, invisibility, burning hands, darkness

1st (5/day)—(DC 15) charm person, cure light wounds, magic missile, sleep

0 (at will)—(DC 14) dancing lights, daze, detect magic, mage hand, read magic

**Special Attacks** On Its Own

### STATISTICS

**Str** 17, **Dex** 20, **Con** 21, **Int** 19, **Wis** 16, **Cha** 19

**Base Atk** +7; **CMB** +13; **CMD** 26

**Feats** Combat Casting, Iron Will, Lightning Reflexes, Weapon Finesse

**Skills** Bluff +14, Diplomacy +14, Knowledge (arcana) +9, Perception +13, Sense Motive +13, Survival +14

**Languages** saeqaar

### ECOLOGY

**Environment** any

**Organization** solitary, group (2–4 mixed shemjaza)

**Treasure** standard

### SPECIAL ABILITIES

**Prince of the Shrouded Pearl** All enemies within 50 feet of the rooxs suffers a -2 penalty to saving throws.

**On Its Own** As a swift action, the rooxs makes a dancing orb attack.

loosely customized for a specific purpose, which grants them a singularity of vision as well as limited durability against hazards associated with that purpose.

## SHEDUN BLADESEER

CR 6

**XP 2,400**

LE Medium outsider (Ixindar)

**Init** +5; **Senses** blindsight 60 ft.; Perception +19

Immune

**Aura** Prince of Pearled Blades (25 ft.)

### DEFENSE

**AC** 22, touch 14, flat-footed 18 (+4 Dex, +8 armor)

**hp** 73 (7d10+35)

**Fort** +6, **Ref** +10, **Will** +5

**Immune** critical hits, precision damage

### OFFENSE

**Speed** 40 ft.

**Melee** 2 sickle attacks +12 (1d6+5/x3 + 2d6 necrotic)

**Special Attacks** Exsanguinate, Off-Hand Sickle

### STATISTICS

**Str** 13, **Dex** 21, **Con** 20, **Int** 14, **Wis** 13, **Cha** 19

**Base Atk** +7; **CMB** +12; **CMD** 23

**Feats** Combat Reflexes, Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Skill Focus (Stealth), Weapon Finesse

**Skills** Acrobatics +11, Climb +12, Disable Device +11, Escape Artist +11, Perception +19, Sense Motive +11, Sleight of Hand +11, Stealth +22;

**Languages** saeqaar

**SQ** Emotionless

### ECOLOGY

**Environment** any

**Organization** solitary, group (2–4 mixed shemjaza)

**Treasure** standard

### SPECIAL ABILITIES

**Emotionless** The shedun cannot be charmed or frightened; it cannot be compelled to act in a manner contrary to its nature or personality (or lack thereof).

**Martial Paragon** The shedun is immune to critical hits and precision damage.

**Prince of Pearled Blades** All enemies within 25 feet of the shedun cannot be invisible, ethereal, and gain no benefits from stealth.

**Exsanguinate** As a move action, a shedun can make a sickle attack. If it hits, the attack is a critical hit.

**Off-Hand Sickle** As a swift action, the shedun makes a sickle attack



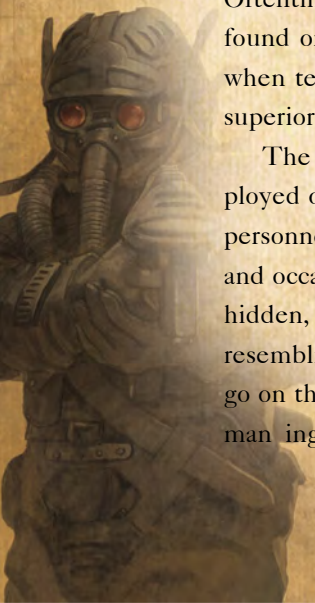
# SAINTS

Saints are humans from a forgotten Mars colony believed to have died over 500 years ago when the Second Hammer cut them off from the homeworld. Somehow, the dead colony was mysteriously revived, and its residents have finally returned to Earth with the intent of clearing out magic and retaking the planet in the name of mankind. Despite currently possessing the most advanced technology the planet has seen, Saint technology has not cracked the code for resisting the effects of disruption—in fact, their progress has made Saint tech more susceptible, forcing the majority of them to remain in orbit where magic's influence does not extend. Vessels able to master gravity drop quickly into the atmosphere to drop off crews. They then depart, leaving teams isolated until the scheduled pick-up. Those on planet are often forced to employ more primitive technology to work incognito among a population completely oblivious to those watching from above. This is not to say Saints always traverse the Earth in crude tech stolen from bastions. Oftentimes, they recreate the technology found on Earth, though more efficiently, and when technology does not employ power, the superiority of Saint tech truly reveals itself.

The buzz-boy team is the standard crew deployed on Earth, comprised of usually a half-dozen personnel, and complemented by various weapons and occasional robotic support. They prefer to remain hidden, even to the extent of wearing imitation gear resembling that of nearby bastions. When required to go on the offensive, the full might of uninterrupted human ingenuity can often come to bear. However, if

safety of a team is compromised or if casualties are suffered, saint clandestineness takes precedent. Rescue may not arrive, and if killed, both Saints as well as their technology are rigged to destroy themselves, erasing evidence they were ever there.

Although Saints have watched from the shadows from probably decades (or perhaps longer), they have become more brazen of late, perhaps due to recent revelations involving the Amethyst artifacts, or perhaps something more. Some may have even made diplomatic overtures to select bastion leaders who can be trusted to keep their secrets.





## BUZZ-BOY ACOLYTE

CR 4

**XP 1,200**

Any Medium humanoid (techan)

**Init** +4; **Senses** Perception +8**DEFENSE****AC** 18, touch 14, flat-footed 14 (+4 armor, +4 Dex)**hp** 39 (6d8+12)**Fort** +4, **Ref** +9, **Will** +2**Immune** poison**Resist** 5 fire, acid, and cold**OFFENSE****Speed** 30 ft.**Melee** rifle butt +8 (1d6+2)**Ranged** archaic rifle +8/+8/+2 (1d8+4) or teleforce rifle +8/+8/+2 (1d10+4)**STATISTICS****Str** 14, **Dex** 18, **Con** 14, **Int** 14, **Wis** 14, **Cha** 14**Base Atk** +4; **CMB** +6; **CMD** 20**Feats** Acrobatic, Combat Reflex, Weapon Finesse**Skills** Acrobatics +8, Climb +10, Perception +8, Sleight of Hand +5, Stealth +8;**Languages** English**SQ** Disruption, Insurance Policy**ECOLOGY****Environment** any**Organization** solitary, group (3-6 mixed saints)**Treasure** None**SPECIAL ABILITIES****Disruption (Ex)** The only item that can be disrupted on an acolyte is its teleforce rifle. If disrupted, the acolyte will switch to its archaic rifle as a free action.**Insurance Policy (Ex)** If reduced to 0 hit points, the acolyte's armor and gear disintegrate, leaving no evidence.

## BUZZ-BOY CELEBRANT

CR 7

**XP 1,200**

Any Medium humanoid (techan)

**Init** +6; **Senses** Perception +8**DEFENSE****AC** 22, touch 16, flat-footed 16 (+6 armor, +6 Dex)**hp** 85 (10d8+40)**Fort** +5, **Ref** +7, **Will** +3**Immune** poison**Resist** 5 fire, acid, and cold**OFFENSE****Speed** 30 ft, fly 40 (perfect)**Melee** rifle butt +13 (1d6+6)**Ranged** plasma pistol +13/+13/+8 (1d8+6) and take a 5-foot step at any point during this.**Special Attacks** Coordinate, Zeal**STATISTICS****Str** 14, **Dex** 22, **Con** 18, **Int** 16, **Wis** 16, **Cha** 16**Base Atk** +7; **CMB** +9; **CMD** 25**Feats** Acrobatic, Athletic, Agile Maneuvers, Combat Expertise, Combat Reflex, Weapon Finesse**Skills** Acrobatics +8, Climb +10, Perception +8, Sleight of Hand +5, Stealth +8;**Languages** English**SQ** Conditional Leadership, Disruption, Insurance Policy**ECOLOGY****Environment** any**Organization** Group (3-6 mixed saints)**Treasure** None**SPECIAL ABILITIES****Insurance Policy (Ex)** If reduced to 0 hit points, the celebrant's armor and gear disintegrate, leaving no evidence.**Disruption (Ex)** The only item that can be disrupted on a celebrant is its plasma pistol. If disrupted but not destroyed, the plasma pistol is only offline for 1 turn.**Conditioned Leadership (Ex)** All acolytes that can see the celebrant can move up to half their speed as a swift action.**Coordinate (Ex)** As a swift action, the celebrant compels one acolyte that can see the celebrant or communicate with him to make a attack.**Zeal (Ex)** As a swift action, the celebrant compels one acolyte that can see the celebrant or communicate with him to move up to 20 feet.



## DAATH QUADRUPED

CR 8

**XP 3,200**

N Medium construct

**Init** +5; **Senses** darkvision 120 ft., low-light vision; Perception +8

### DEFENSE

**AC** 20, touch 15, flat-footed 15; (+5 Dex, +5 natural)

**hp** 79 (9d10+30)

**Fort** +6, **Ref** +10, **Will** +6

**DR** 5/adamantine; **Immune** construct traits

### OFFENSE

**Speed** 40 ft.

**Melee** 2 slams +13 (1d8+5)

**Ranged** 2 submachine guns +14/+14/+8/+8 (1d8+5 plus pinning fire)

**Special Attacks** grenade launchers

### STATISTICS

**Str** 9, **Dex** 20, **Con** —, **Int** —, **Wis** 11, **Cha** 1

**Base Atk** +9; **CMB** +15; **CMD** 24

**Languages** none

**SQ** Disruption, Insurance Policy, Pinning fire

### ECOLOGY

**Environment** any

**Organization** Solitary or group (3-6 mixed saints)

**Treasure** None

### SPECIAL ABILITIES

**Disruption (Ex)** The daath is TL4; if disrupted, it is stunned for 1 turn.

**Grenade Launcher (Ex)** As a Standard action, the quadruped can launch a grenade to any location within 80 feet. Any creature caught in the 10-foot radius from an impact point up 80 feet from the daath must make a DC 19 Reflex saving throw, taking 8d6 piercing damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one. The daath can only have six grenades loaded. It cannot use the grenade launcher against targets 30 feet or closer.

**Insurance Policy (Ex)** If reduced to 0 hit points, the daath's power cell overloads and the unit explodes. Each creature within 10 feet must make a DC 18 Reflex saving throw or take 12d6 bludgeoning damage (or half with a successful save).

**Pinning Fire (Ex)** Any target the daath hits with its submachine guns cannot move any closer to the daath on its turn.

## DAATH QUADRUPED

The daaths escort ground troops and seldom enter without human flankers or Vortexes hovering above. They sport grenade launchers and twin machine guns. They resemble human-shaped and sized mechanical torsos with four spindly legs connected to the sides and two weapon pods mounted at the shoulders.

## VORTEX FLIGHT BOT

CR 3

**XP 800**

N Medium construct

**Init** +6; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; low-light vision; Perception +4

### DEFENSE

**AC** 17, touch 14, flat-footed 13 (+4 Dex, +3 natural)

**hp** 34 (4d8+16)

**Fort** +8, **Ref** +6, **Will** +2

**DR** 5/adamantine; **Immune** construct traits

### OFFENSE

**Speed** fly 50 ft. (good)

**Melee** 2 claws +5 (1d6+4)

**Ranged** detuned assault cannon +8 (1d8+4)

### STATISTICS

**Str** 13, **Dex** 18, **Con** —, **Int** —, **Wis** 11, **Cha** 1

**Base Atk** +3; **CMB** +3; **CMD** 15

**Languages** none

**SQ** Disruption, Insurance Policy, Surveillance, Shift

### ECOLOGY

**Environment** any

**Organization** Solitary or group (3-6 mixed saints)

**Treasure** None

### SPECIAL ABILITIES

**Disruption (Ex)** The vortex is TL3; if disrupted, it is stunned for 1 turn—it is knocked prone. If its power cell detonates, it is reduced to 0 hit points.

**Insurance Policy (Ex)** If reduced to 0 hit points, the vortex's power cell overloads and the unit explodes. Each creature within 10 feet must make a DC 12 Dexterity saving throw, taking 21 (6d6) piercing damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.


**Surveillance (Ex)** The vortex transmits all visual and auditory input to any saint acolyte or celebrant within 1 kilometer with the helmet-mounted controller. The controller can make a Perception check instead of the robot.

**Shift (Ex)** Once per turn, the vortex takes a 5-foot step as a free action.

## VORTEX FLIGHT BOT

VFBs are deployed before a dropship or cruiser lands in order to secure an area. They can operate via a control center on the ship and be ordered to follow instructions from a portable controller. They are simple gun platforms, kept permanently aloft with a pair of fanjets. They can operate in virtually any pressure, even the low atmosphere of Mars. Because of the vulnerability of the Vortex, its weapon is intentionally detuned.





can also be assigned to entire squad. Because of their vulnerability to disruption, certain safeguards were added to offer some form of backup, though if this fails, the machine will detonate like any other piece of saint tech granted it is not nearly what it is programmed to protect.

Usually, two jovians will protect a deacon while one will be assigned to protect any officer higher ranked than a captain. Jovians are humanoid but feature no human features.

They lack eyes, mouths, or the illusion of organic features. They can still communicate, and their AI is advanced enough to carry on a conversation—they are just not that clever. Artificial intelligence is advanced in Saint culture, but none of them have ever gained

## JOVIAN SAFEGUARD

The jovian is a standard but seldom seen security droid employed by the saints to guard their most important individuals, mostly deacons. Since the deacons rarely set foot on Earth, likewise the jovians are virtually unseen, though they have been known to accompany high-ranking military officers as well. The issue is that, like all Saint technology, the jovians are equally susceptible to disruption, and it is believed this model predated the more powerful and insulated MAX, with the latter being little more than a reprogrammed jovian with two tons of insulation and firepower added. The original, however, operates with a primary base function to protect those it is assigned to. Although one specific target is selected, they







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## JOVIAN SAFEGUARD

CR 12

XP 19,200

N Medium construct

**Init** +6; **Senses** darkvision 120 ft., low-light vision; Perception +0

### DEFENSE

**AC** 26, touch 16, flat-footed 20 (+6 Dex, +10 natural) or 30 with parry

**hp** 152 (16d10+64)

**Fort** +12, **Ref** +12, **Will** +10

**DR** 10/adamantine; **Immune** construct traits

### OFFENSE

**Speed** 40 ft.

**Melee** 2 slams +19 (2d8+6, and the target is pushed 5 ft.)

**Ranged** palm blaster +19 touch (8d6 force, and the target is pushed 5 ft.)

**Special Attacks** Pressure blaster, override

### STATISTICS

**Str** 27, **Dex** 12, **Con** —, **Int** —, **Wis** 11, **Cha** 1

**Base Atk** +16; **CMB** +25; **CMD** 36

**SQ** Disruption, Insurance Policy, Parry, Protect

### ECOLOGY

**Environment** any

**Organization** Solitary or group (3-6 mixed saints)

**Treasure** None

### SPECIAL ABILITIES

**Disruption (Ex)** The jovian is TL5; if disrupted, it is stunned for 1 turn—it cannot be destroyed via disruption.

**Insurance Policy (Ex)** If reduced to 0 hit points, the jovian's power cell overloads and the unit melts, destroying it completely. It does not explode for fear it will damage nearby allies. It can override this willingly (see Override).

**Pressure Blaster (Ex)** Once during the jovian's turn, if it hits with a slam attack, it may immediately follow up with one palm blaster against the same target as part of the same action.

**Parry (Ex)** As a swift action, the jovian gains a +4 to its AC against its next melee attack.

**Override (Ex)** When the jovian reaches zero hit points, instead of melting per insurance policy, it can detonate its power pack. Creatures within 20 feet of the jovian must succeed on a DC 25 Reflex save or take (13d8) fire damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

**Protect (Ex)** The jovian targets one ally within 5 feet as a free action. Both the jovian and the target share the jovian's AC and Reflex save (unless the ally's is higher). Any damage from successful attacks on either target is taken by the jovian. The only way for the target to take direct damage is for either the target or the jovian to move more than 5 feet away. The jovian's defense includes area attacks.

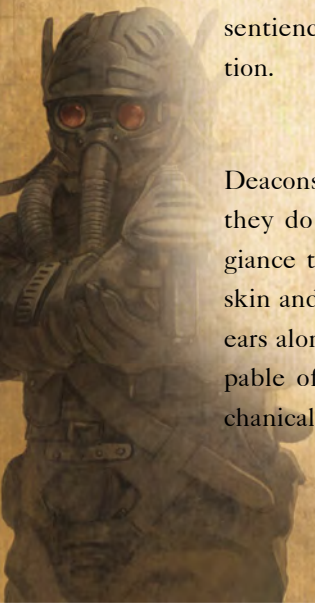
sentence or displayed even the hint of genuine emotion.

## DEACONS

Deacons are human. There is no doubt. However, they do not resemble the other Saints that swear allegiance to them. Deacons are tall, with thick, leathery skin and frail bodies. They have bad eyes but superior ears along with unmatched intelligence. They are incapable of safely handling Earth gravity, so require mechanical assists that support their weight when on the

surface, seldom as that occurs. When caught in a conflict, deacons are not effective in combat, but are able to rally and embolden Saints around them. They are also oftentimes flanked by jovians.

The oddity of the deacons is their strange imbalance of abilities. They are extremely intelligent, but lack any physical prowess. They are immune to most medi-





## GESTALT DEACON

CR 17

**XP** 102,400

**LE** Medium human (techan)

**Init** +5; **Senses** Perception +26

**Aura** Suicide Wall, Wireless Command

### DEFENSE

**AC** 18, touch 14, flat-footed 14 (+4 armor, +4 Dex)

**hp** 161 (19d8+76) plus Regeneration 5

**Fort** +24, **Ref** +15, **Will** +23

**Immune** frightened, poison; **Resist** cold and fire 10

**Weakness** physical attacks

### OFFENSE

**Speed** 20 ft.

**Melee** slam +21 (1d6+2)

**Special Attack** Inducement, Overdrive, Puppeteer, CNS Stimulant

### STATISTICS

**Str** 14, **Dex** 14, **Con** 18, **Int** 30, **Wis** 30, **Cha** 30

**Base Atk** +19; **CMB** +24; **CMD** 43

**Feats** Combat Expertise, Endurance, Diehard, Great Fortitude, Improved Great Fortitude, Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Improved Iron Will

**Skills** Diplomacy +22, Knowledge (all categories) +24, Linguistics +23, Perception +26, Sense Motive +26

**Languages** All human languages

**SQ** Magic Resistance, Regeneration, Rally, Void

### ECOLOGY

**Environment** any

**Organization** Group (10 buzzboy acolytes, 2 celebrants + 2 jovians)

**Treasure** None

### SPECIAL ABILITIES

**Magic Resistance (Ex)** The deacon has a +2 bonus with all saving throws against spells and spell-like effects.

**Suicide Wall (Ex)** If there is any Saint within 10 feet of a deacon, the deacon cannot be targeted by a ranged attack.

**Wireless Command (Ex)** The deacon possesses an implanted wireless device called a motivator, which can compel Saints to act against their wishes. All Saints, regardless of alignment or position on the battlefield that see the deacon must succeed on a DC 15 Will saving throw or be charmed (per spell) for as long as the Saint sees the deacon. The Saint can attempt another save at the beginning of each minute.

**Rally (Ex)** Once/round outside of the deacon's turn, if an allied Saint is killed the deacon can see, the deacon gains 1d4 additional standard actions it can perform on its next turn.

**Void (Ex)** The deacon's abilities do not affect other deacons.

**Inducement (Ex)** As a standard action, the deacon selects two saints. Each takes a standard action.

**Overdrive (Ex)** As a swift action, the deacon selects one. The targeted saint gains a +3 bonus with all attack rolls until the end of its turn.

**Puppeteer (Ex)** As a move action, the deacon selects up to six other saints to take a 5-foot step.

**CNS Stimulant (Ex)** Once per round, as a free action, the deacon selects another saint to gain a full turn.



cal conditions but are vulnerable to any physical damage. On their own, they are an easy kill, but if among Saints, they are near invincible.





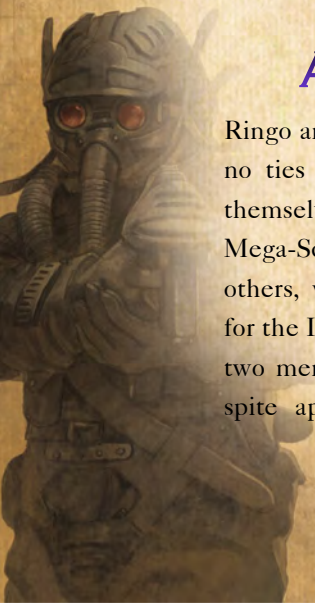
## TECHANS

352 While most techans prefer to stay inside their bastions, there are numerous techan mercenaries and free agents who venture into echa for reasons of their own.

### RINGO CHAVEZ & ANGUS RAMIREZ

Ringo and Angus are pair of infamous mercenaries with no ties to any specific company. They have leased themselves out to the Red Band Dragoons, Vector Mega-Sciences, and Aegis Techanational and a dozen others, with one notable exception—they never work for the Iron Sons. There is very little backstory of these two men, but they rarely leave each other's sides, despite apparently showcasing contrasting dispositions.

Ringo is intelligent and calculating while Angus is brash and impulsive. When encountered, they could be an ally or an opponent. Regardless, they are both becoming the examples of leading techans taking the echan landscape without compromising their technological identity. Both sport technology from numerous bastions, through the end result is vastly different.





## ANGUS RAMIREZ CR 9

**XP 6,400**  
CN Medium humanoid (techan)  
**Init** +7; **Senses** Perception +18

### DEFENSE

**AC** 29, touch 14, flat-footed 25 (+3 Dex, +15 armor, +1 Dodge)  
**hp** 95 (10d8+50)  
**Fort** +10, **Ref** +8, **Will** +10  
**Defensive Abilities** DR 10/adamantine; resist 10 lightning, poison, Immovable Object; **Immune** frightened

### OFFENSE

**Speed** 40 ft.  
**Melee** hydraulic slam +16 (2d6+6/3 plus knocked prone)  
**Ranged** Thumper rifle +16 (2d8+6/19-20 plus pushed 5 feet)  
**Special Attacks** Multiattack, Full-Throttle Slam

### STATISTICS

**Str** 22, **Dex** 16, **Con** 20, **Int** 15, **Wis** 16, **Cha** 10  
**Base Atk** +10; **CMB** +16; **CMD** 29  
**Feats** Athletic, Power Attack, Combat Reflexes, Dodge, Great Fortitude, Improved Initiative  
**Skills** Athletics +18, Climb +18, Diplomacy +14, Perception +18,  
**Languages** English

### ECOLOGY

**Environment** any  
**Organization** Solitary or with Ringo Chavez  
**Treasure** None

### SPECIAL ABILITIES

- **Full Throttle Slam** As a full-round attack, Angus attacks the ground. He makes a hydraulic slam attack against all targets within 5 feet. Any hit is a critical hit.
- Immovable Object** Angus may not be moved against his will.
- Multiattack** As a full round attack, Angus makes any combination of five attacks between thumper rifle and hydraulic slam

## RINGO CHAVEZ CR 9

**XP 6,400**  
CN Medium humanoid (techan)  
**Init** +6; **Senses** Perception +18

### DEFENSE

**AC** 30, touch 20, flat-footed 24 (+6 Dex, +4 Class, +10 armor)  
**hp** 95 (10d8+50)  
**Fort** +10, **Ref** +8, **Will** +10

### OFFENSE

**Speed** 40 ft.  
**Melee** Pistol whip +16 (2d6+6/3 plus pushed 5 ft.)  
**Ranged** machine pistol/rail pistol +16/+16/+10/+10 (1d8+6/19-20)  
**Special Attacks** Gunstorm, Gun Symphony, Snapshot

### STATISTICS

**Str** 16, **Dex** 22, **Con** 20, **Int** 16, **Wis** 18, **Cha** 12  
**Base Atk** +10; **CMB** +16; **CMD** 29  
**Feats** Agile Maneuvers, Combat Expertise, Combat Reflexes, Two Weapon Fighting, Weapon Finesse  
**Skills** Acrobatics +18, Climb +15, Diplomacy +16, Perception +18, Swim +10  
**Languages** English

### ECOLOGY

**Environment** any  
**Organization** Solitary or with Angus Ramirez  
**Treasure** None

### SPECIAL ABILITIES

- Snapshot** Ringo can reduce his remaining speed by 10 feet and make an additional pistol attack. This is cumulative (up to 3 additional attacks).
- Spiteful** All ammunition in Ringo's machine pistols are fae-iron.
- Gunstorm** As a full-attack action, Ringo make one pistol attack against every enemy within 50 feet.
- Gun Symphony** As a full-attack action, Ringo makes one pistol attack. If he hits, he may attack again. This continues until Ringo misses, to a maximum of 8 hits.
- Off-Hand Pistol** As a swift action, Ringo makes a pistol attack.





## RED BAND

The red band are a low-tech mercenary company that often travels between Angel and York. They initially found popularity guarding bastion convoys, and later expanded to form their own communities with the establishment of several atolls like Antillia, Thule, and Polybius.

From there, they developed rudimentary robotics that have grown in capabili-

ties for the past century. Unlike the Iron Sons, the red band are less concerned with establishing their own empire and more about creating a successful trading economy between echan and techans. They consider themselves altruistic, coming to aid to others in need, pro-bono, hoping for compensation afterwards. They have been known to sell their machines at cost to aid communities.

Oddly, the Red Band seldom works for bastions, preferring to sell to smaller techan communities, probably per the directives of its founder, Rut-





## RED BAND DRAGOON

CR 2

## XP 600

LN Medium humanoid (techan)

Init +2; Senses Perception +8

## DEFENSE

AC 18, touch 13, flat-footed 15 (+5 armor, +3 Dex)

hp 18 (2d8+6)

Fort +3, Ref +5, Will +5

## OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee gauntlet +4 (1d6+3)

Ranged Thumper Rifle +4 (1d8+3/19–20)

Special Attacks Alpha Strike

## STATISTICS

Str 14, Dex 16, Con 16, Int 10, Wis 16, Cha 6

Base Atk +1; CMB +4; CMD 15

Feats Iron Will, Weapon Finesse

Skills Acrobatics +7, Bluff +3, Climb +6, Intimidate +3, Knowledge (local) +5, Perception +8, Sense Motive +8, Stealth +7, Swim +6

Languages English, Engle-Lingo

## ECOLOGY

Environment any

Organization Solitary or mixed techan group (2-10)

Treasure Standard

## SPECIAL ABILITIES

**Alpha Strike** As a standard action, the red band dragoon makes two gauntlet or two thumper rifle attacks. After using this ability, the dragoon cannot use it again for 1d4 rounds.

**Linked Targeting.** When another Red Band dragoon or corpsman hits a target with a ranged attack, this Red Band dragoon may make one thumper rifle against the same target.

## RED BAND CORPSMAN

CR 3

## XP 800

LN Medium humanoid (techan)

Init +3; Senses Perception +5

## DEFENSE

AC 20, touch 14, flat-footed 16 (+6 armor, +4 Dex)

hp 20 (3d8+6)

Fort +4, Ref +6, Will +6

## OFFENSE

Speed 20 ft.

Melee Slam +5 (1d6+3)

Ranged Rail rifle +5 (1d10+3/19–20)

Special Attacks Seeker rocket

## STATISTICS

Str 14, Dex 17, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 17, Cha 12

Base Atk +2; CMB +4; CMD 15

Feats Deadly Aim, Weapon Finesse

Skills Knowledge (local) +6, Sense Motive +9, Perception +8

Languages English, Engle-Lingo

## ECOLOGY

Environment any

Organization Solitary or mixed techan group (2-10)

Treasure Standard

## SPECIAL ABILITIES

**Seeker Rocket (One use)** The corpsman targets a 20-foot radius spot up to 200 feet away. Each creature in that area must make a DC 17 Reflex saving throw or suffer (6d6) piercing damage.

**Linked Targeting** When another Red Band dragoon or corpsman hits a target with a ranged attack, this Red Band corpsman may make one rail rifle against the same target.

tigard Howard III, a half-gimfen that inherited her father's technical skills and the inventor of many of the machines being distributed by the Red Band.

The teks employ a combination of rechargeable batteries and solar power in a heavily insulated body and primitive external mechanics, offering the impression red band machines are already damaged, or at least resemble junk.





## BOX TEK

CR 3

**XP 800**

N Medium construct

**Init** +3; **Senses** blindsight 60 ft.; Perception +0

### DEFENSE

**AC** 15, touch 13, flat-footed 12 (+3 Dex, +2 natural)

**hp** 34 (3d8+20)

**Fort** +1, **Ref** +4, **Will** +1

**Immune** construct traits

### OFFENSE

**Speed** 40 ft.

**Melee** blade leg +7 (1d8+4)

**Ranged** sticker pistol +7 (1d6+4)

**Special Attacks** Knives for Legs

### STATISTICS

**Str** 16, **Dex** 17, **Con** —, **Int** —, **Wis** 11, **Cha** 1

**Base Atk** +3; **CMB** +6; **CMD** 19

**Languages** none

### ECOLOGY

**Environment** any

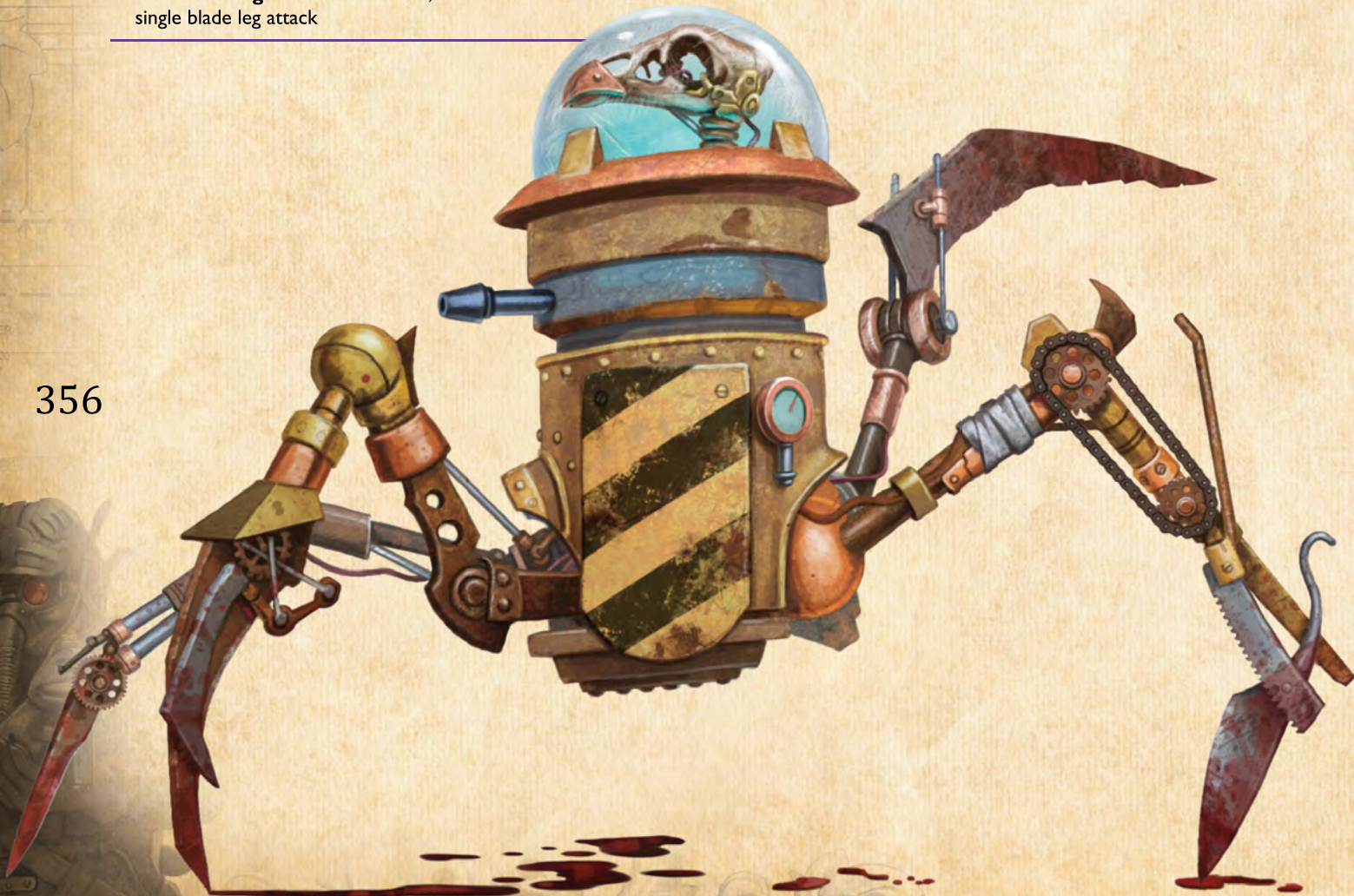
**Organization** Solitary or mixed techan group (2-10)

**Treasure** none

### SPECIAL ABILITIES

**Knives for Legs** As a move action, the BOX TEK can make a single blade leg attack

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## S.H.O.K. TEK

CR 8

**XP 4,800**

N Medium construct

**Init** -1; Senses blindsight 20 ft., darkvision 60 ft., Perception +0

### DEFENSE

**AC** 23, touch 13, flat-footed 20 (+3 Dex, +10 natural)

**hp** 84 (12d8+30)

**Fort** +4, **Ref** +3, **Will** +4

**Immune** construct traits

### OFFENSE

**Speed** 30 ft.

**Melee** piston +16 (2d8+5)

**Ranged** Minigun +16/+16/+11/+6 (1d6+3)

### STATISTICS

**Str** 20, **Dex** 16, **Con** —, **Int** —, **Wis** 11, **Cha** 1

**Base Atk** +12; **CMB** +18; **CMD** 27

**SQ** Omnivision

### ECOLOGY

**Environment** any

**Organization** Solitary or mixed techan group (2-10)

**Treasure** Standard

### SPECIAL ABILITIES

**Omni-Vision (Ex)** The SHOK TEK is immune to precision damage (like sneak attacks) and critical hits.





# TILEN

In truth, there is little to distinguish the elder tilen from the ghulath they once were. Physically, they are almost identical to an elder necurat, save that they lack the ghulath's vulnerability to radiant energy and can therefore walk in the sunlight (though they are still discomforted by it, more out of habit than anything else). They retain many of the ghulath's powers, and each possesses some unique ability of their own.

Most of the elder tilen were once damaskan before they became ghulath, though there is no way of telling that from a glance – part of the process of seizing Ixindar's power caused physical changes that leveled out many of the distinctions between fae groups. Former narros are a little bit shorter, a little bit heavier; former laudenians a little taller and lankier. Former damaskans and chaparrans are indistinguishable. There are no former gimfen or tenenbri among the elder tilen.

## TILEN ELDER

CR9

**XP 6,400**

**CG** Medium fey (fae)

**Init** +9; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +13

### DEFENSE

**AC** 24, touch 15, flat-footed 19 (+5 Dex, +9 natural)  
**hp** 133 (1d8+70)

**Fort** +14, **Ref** +3, **Will** +6

**Defensive Abilities** **DR** 10/magic and silver; **Resist** cold 10, electricity 10

**Weaknesses** fae iron, elder tilen hypersensitivity

### OFFENSE

**Speed** 40 ft.

**Melee** 3 claws +8/+8/+8 (1d6+4 plus grab)

**Special Attacks** blood drain, dominate (DC 22), pounce

### STATISTICS

**Str** 16, **Dex** 20, **Con** 20 **Int** 18, **Wis** 16, **Cha** 26

**Base Atk** +8; **CMB** +13; **CMD** 26

**Feats** Alertness, Blind-Fight, Combat Expertise, Combat Reflexes, Dodge, Eschew Materials, Improved Grapple, Improved Initiative, Improved Unarmed Strike, Lightning Reflexes, Toughness, Weapon Finesse

**Skills** Bluff +27, Knowledge (arcana) +13, Knowledge (religion) +13, Perception +13, Sense Motive +13, Stealth +12, Use Magic Device +19; Racial Modifiers +8 Bluff, +8 Perception, +8 Sense Motive, +8 Stealth

**Languages** Common, two other fae languages

**SQ** balanced soul, elder exceptionality, flow of life, immortal enemies, spider climb

### ECOLOGY

**Environment** any

**Organization** solitary

**Treasure** Standard

## SPECIAL ABILITIES

**Balanced Soul** The tilen elder does not age, and is immune to disease.

**Blood Drain (Su)** A tilen elder can suck blood from a grappled opponent; if the elder establishes or maintains a pin, it drains blood, dealing 1d4 points of Constitution damage. The elder heals 1d8+9 hit points or gains 1d8+9 temporary hit points for 1 hour (up to a maximum number of temporary hit points equal to its full normal hit points) each round it drains blood. A creature slain in this way does not rise as undead. (Although this attack is listed, within tilen culture, elders generally refuse to employ this attack, only doing so against evil creatures as a last resort.) If the target is not dominated or coerced in any way and is still willing, the recovered hit points increase to 2d8+18.

**Dominate (Su)** A tiler elder can crush a humanoid opponent's will as a standard action. Anyone the tiler elder targets must succeed on a Will save (DC22) or fall instantly under the elder's influence, as though by a *dominate person* spell (caster level 12th). The ability has a range of 30 feet.

**Elder Exceptionality** Each specific elder tilen possesses a unique additional ability (examples below)

**Elder Tilen Hypersensitivity.** Exposing a tilen elder to direct sunlight staggers it on the first round of exposure, then sickens it until it escapes.

**Flow of Life (Su)** A tiler elder can sacrifice of its own essence to heal others. It can go about this in several ways.

*Transfusion* The tiler elder reverses blood drain—the elder suffers 1d4 points of Constitution damage and the target is healed of 1d8+9 points of damage.

*Healer* The tiler elder embraces a willing creature—after one minute, the target recovers from blindness, deafness, any disease, or any curse. The tilen elder is then sickened and staggered for one hour.

*Revivify* The tilen elder embraces a creature that has died within the last minute. That creature returns to life with 1 hit point. This effect can't return to life a creature that has died of old age, nor can it restore any missing body parts. The tilen elder's hit points are reduced by half, suffers 2d4 constitution damage, and is exhausted.

**Immortal Enemies (Ex)** The tilen elder treats all undead enemies as flat-footed (denied their Dex bonus to AC).

**Pounce (Ex)** The tiler elder can as a standard action make a pounce attack. It jumps 40 feet and makes a single claw attack. If the tiler elder hits, the target is knocked prone and pinned.

**Spider Climb (Ex)** A tilen elder can climb sheer surfaces as though under the effects of a spider climb spell.

## ELDER EXCEPTIONALITY

Each tilen elder possesses one unique ability the others do not share. Here is a list of some examples.

*Lhamah Cyrose—Sepulchre* As an action, Lhamah can release a wave of energy which inflicts 7d6 holy damage upon each undead in a 30-foot radius centered on Lhamah. Creatures that take damage from channeled energy receive a DC25 Will save to halve the damage. Lhamah use Sepulchre 10 times per day. This attack does not provoke an attack of opportunity.



**Mira Diemasko—Transference** Mira chooses one creature that she can see within 60 feet of her. That creature must make a DC25 Will saving throw; on a failure, Mira can read its surface thoughts (those foremost in its mind, reflecting its current emotions and what it is actively thinking about). This effect lasts for 1 minute. During that time, Mira can use her Standard action to end this effect and cast *dominate person* on the target. The target automatically fails its saving throw against this effect. Mira can only use this ability once/day.

**Naga Sorenti—**

**Channel Vengeance**

Once every five minutes, Naga can infuse his body with divine energy as a standard action. The next time he hits with his claw attack, he inflicts an additional 50 points of radiant damage.

**Salcena Kaaris—**

**Indignation (Hourly).**

Salcena has some strong feelings when it comes to evil—it has a tendency of getting her heated. Salcena can enter indignation for a up to 20 rounds a day as a free action. The total number of rounds per day is renewed after resting for 8 hours, although these hours do not need to be consecutive. While in a state of indignation, Salcena gains a +4 morale bonus to her Strength, Dexterity, and Constitution, as well as a +2 morale bonus on Will saves. The increase to Constitution grants Salcena 2 hit points per Hit Dice, but these disappear when indignation ends

and are not lost first like temporary hit points. Salcena claw attacks increase to 1d8 and her critical range increases to 18-20. Her speed increases to 50 feet, and she inflicts 2d6 bleed damage with blood drain (in addition to other effects. Salcena cannot use any Charisma-, Dexterity-, or Intelligence-based skills (except Acrobatics, Fly, Intimidate, and Ride) or any ability that requires patience or concentration. Salcena can end indignation as a free action and is fatigued afterward for a number of rounds equal to 2 times the number of rounds spent in that state. Salcena cannot enter indignation while fatigued or exhausted but can otherwise enter that state multiple times during a single encounter or combat. If Salcena falls unconscious, indignation immediately ends, placing her in peril of death.

**Zacheria Korvek—**

**Mender.** Four times/day, if Zacheria touches a living creature using a Standard action; that target is healed for 3d8+14 hit points. He can also cast *raise dead* (per spell) once per week, though afterward, Zacheria is reduced to 0 hit points and is disabled.



# TRAIN GUARD

The elite troopers of Seliquam, the Train Guard was created a little over 100 years ago, when the idea of a locomotive line between Selkirk and Thos Thalagos was first proposed. As the line would have to pass through one of the most magical zones in Canam, full of weird spawn creatures as well as bandits, the train would have to be protected by the finest warriors the northwestern alliance had to offer.

During the decades it took to actually build the line, the masters of each warrior tradition in Selkirk, Seliquam and Fargon came together to develop a synthetic martial art, suitable for fighters to employ on precarious

## TRAIN GUARD RIFLEER CR 10

**XP 9,600**

NG Medium humanoid (techan)

**Init** +7; **Senses** Perception +20

### DEFENSE

**AC** 24, touch 13, flat-footed 21 (+3 Dex, +11 armor)

**hp** 102 (12d8+48)

**Fort** +12, **Ref** +11, **Will** +9

### OFFENSE

**Speed** 30 ft.,

**Melee** Rifle butt +16 (1d6+4), bayonet +16 (1d8+4)

**Ranged** rifle +16/+11/+6 (2d6+4)

**Special Attacks** Careful Aim, Doppelshooto, Snap-shot, Sweep Them Off

### STATISTICS

**Str** 16, **Dex** 19, **Con** 18, **Int** 12, **Wis** 17, **Cha** 19

**Base Atk** +12; **CMB** +16; **CMD** 29

**Feats** Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Power Attack, Toughness, Vital Strike, Weapon Finesse

**Skills** Intimidate +15, Perception +20, Sense Motive +16, Stealth +18, Survival +18;

**Languages** English, Narroni, Argose

### ECOLOGY

**Environment** any

**Organization** Group (3-6 mixed train guard)

**Treasure** None

### SPECIAL ABILITIES

**Careful Aim** As a move action, the rifleer gains a +4 bonus on its next rifle attack roll.

**Doppelshooto** When the rifleer makes a melee attack against an adjacent creature, she may make an additional rifle attack against the same creature or another within 30 feet. When the officer makes a rifle attack against a creature within 30 feet, she may make an additional melee attack against an adjacent creature.

**Sweep Them Off** As a move action, the rifleer can make one rifle butt attack; if it hits, the target is knocked prone.

**Snap Shot** As a move action, the rifleer makes a single rifle attack against a creature that moves into her line of sight or that is in cover.

## TRAIN GUARD JIZMURAI

CR 8

**XP 4,800**

LN Medium fey (fae-narros)

**Init** +8; **Senses** Darkvision 60 ft., Perception +14

### DEFENSE

**AC** 21, touch 13, flat-footed 18 (+3 Dex, +8 armor)

**hp** 85 (10d8+40)

**Fort** +14, **Ref** +6, **Will** +8

### OFFENSE

**Speed** 30 ft.

**Melee** oarblade +14/+14/+9 (2d6+4)

**Special Attacks** Doppelshido

### STATISTICS

**Str** 14, **Dex** 17, **Con** 20, **Int** 12, **Wis** 13, **Cha** 7

**Base Atk** +10; **CMB** +13; **CMD** 26

**Feats** Critical Focus, Great Fortitude, Improved Initiative, Weapon Focus (oarblade), Weapon Finesse

**Skills** Acrobatics +16 Perception +14 Stealth +16

**Languages** English, Narroni, Argose

**SQ** Stone bones

### ECOLOGY

**Environment** any

**Organization** Group (3-6 mixed train guard)

**Treasure** None

### SPECIAL ABILITIES

**Stone Bones** The jizmurai cannot be moved against his will.

**Doppelshido** When a creature the jizmurai has not attacked since the start of his last turn approaches within 10 feet, the jizmurai may make an oarblade attack as a reaction.

ground and with a variety of weapons, including the highest-tech disruption-resistant firearms Selkirk could provide.

In addition to serving as train security, the Guard also conducts raids into Xixion in search of relics left over from the Fargon exodus or to stamp out troublesome monster nests. Given the environment they normally work in, they are often inclined to shoot first and ask questions later.

The train guard accepts members of any species, though humans and narros are the most common. Even fae members train with firearms, though they can only safely wield single-action weapons that must be reloaded after every shot (thankfully, Selkirk engineers have come up with an easy breech-loading variant of the bolt rifle for this purpose).

Damaskans are particularly prized for their ability to clamber effortlessly over the sides and roof of a moving train. Many train guard cadres also include kodiaks, whose tactics tend to be a bit less fancy.



## TRAIN GUARD OFFICER

CR 12

XP 9,600

NG Medium fey (fae-damaskan)

Init +7; Senses Perception +20

### DEFENSE

AC 27, touch 16, flat-footed 21 (+6 Dex, +11 armor)

hp 102 (12d8+48)

Fort +12, Ref +15, Will +9

### OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.,

Melee cutlass +18/+18/+13 (1d8+6)

Ranged Pistol +18 (1d6+6)

Special Attacks Doppelshooto

### STATISTICS

Str 16, Dex 22, Con 18, Int 17, Wis 17, Cha 19

Base Atk +12; CMB +16; CMD 29

Feats Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Power Attack, Toughness, Vital Strike, Weapon Finesse

Skills Acrobatics +22, Diplomacy +19, Intimidate +19, Knowledge (local) +18, Perception +20, Sense Motive +16, Survival +18;

Languages English, Damaskan, Argose

SQ

### ECOLOGY

Environment any

Organization Group (3-6 mixed train guard)

Treasure None

### SPECIAL ABILITIES

**Gravity Focus** The officer has a +3 bonus with all Dexterity-based skill checks.

**Doppelshooto** When the officer makes a cutlass attack against an adjacent creature, she may make an additional pistol attack against the same creature or another within 10 feet. When the officer makes a pistol attack against a creature within 10 feet, she may make an additional cutlass attack against an adjacent creature.

**Snap Shot** The officer makes a single pistol attack against a creature that moves into her line of sight as a reaction.

*The reflection from the snow limited the vision of the pagus. They could barely make out the shapes up the path. When their eyes focused, they noticed three figures, three human men, brazen enough to block their path.*

*They were still nearly two hundred feet away. Two loud thuds rang out.*

*The pagus looked at each other with mild alarm. One-Ear with the spear, glanced peculiarly at the arrow sticking from his chest. He glanced over to a bowman, Crooked-Nose, with a similar injury through his shoulder. Elder, with the warsword, reached over and snapped both projectiles from the wounds.*

*"Fallaguuta!" he shouted a curse in their tongue.*

*Scar drew his twin longswords and tapped them together as he started his charge. The two bowmen pulled the long shafts of wood from their quivers and aimed.*

*"Dammit, Mischa, aim for the bowmen," Mahan snapped as he yanked another soil stained arrow from the snow and pulled. He fired before Mischa could ready another shot.*

*The arrow struck the chest of Crooked-Nose bowman, inches from the other wound. The pagus flicked the sprinter away in annoyance as he hooked his shot and released. It flew safely wide. Mischa released and it sunk into Missing-Fingers, the one wielding two axes as he began charging. The pagus archers approached slower, firing on the walk while the others steadily increased their run. The distance closed rapidly.*

*Uriel was impatient; his demon mask concealed his mood, but his vibrating foot spoke volumes.*

*Mischa shouted, "Hold it until my blade is drawn, Kenbu."*

*Uriel's weapon was still sheathed. Another of Mahan's arrows struck the neck of Crooked-Nose, and the dying pagus fired his round into the back of No-Teeth, the one that wielded the maul.*

*The impact didn't register. Bear-Pelt, the pagus wielding a massive double-edged axe, charged ahead, forgetting Elder behind him; he was falling behind.*

*Mischa's third shot missed the injured One-Ear. He shook his head as he reached for another round.*

*"We're running out of time," Mischa muttered.*

*"I'm only going to get another shot." Mahan fired as Mischa pulled. His arrow was true and struck the other archer, Bandaged-Wrapped-Arms, in the shoulder which connected to the arm that held the bow. The countershot from the pagus missed wild a second later. His following shot would not have such a distraction. He was closer now, and his eyes could see his target, his counter, the human archer with the worn bracers. Mischa released and impacted his round into One-Ear's leg, causing a stumble, which broke his spear. The beast righted himself and continued with his broken weapon.*

*Mischa dropped the bow despite still having arrows around. He pulled the cleaver and locked his grip.*

*Uriel took the cue and lifted his scabbard from his waist, drawing the rope away from his belt. Mahan reached for another arrow.*

*"No time!" Mischa screamed. "Leave it."*

*"One archer left," Mahan whispered.*

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*"Leave it!" he snapped as he charged.*

*Uriel jumped past the ranger, racing towards Bear-Pelt. Mahan carefully held the shot. There would be no time to pull another. He focused on the final archer and saw him release.*

*The large arrow thundered across the path, brushing Mahan's hair back as it missed. Mahan didn't blink. He sent his response, following the same path back to this counter. The human arrow crossed over the pagus's bandaged arm, snapped through this bow, and drove into his eye. The steel point stuck from the skull as the massive fae fell back.*

*Mischa tried to find the dark armor, but in the shifting forms of massive pagus, it had vanished. Uriel bowed low, head down, and back straight. Bear-Pelt brought his weapon high for a massive chop. The kenbu catapulted under the arms of the pagus.*

*His katana's edge came free from the scabbard and disemboweled the giant. The pagus fell hard, his weapon tumbled free from his grasp and flipped over the snow, finally embedding into the ground, handle in the air.*

*Mischa released one hand on his sword and side-stepped to catch the massive axe. With only one stable hand, Mischa pulled it from its spot. He spun himself around to gain energy and hurled the weapon against the enemy line. The weapon weighed nearly fifty pounds and caved through One-Ear's skull, spraying blood into the remaining eye of the remaining spear-man.*

*Missing-Fingers, with the two axes, hurled one in hand to the approaching Uriel. Uriel slapped the weapon out of the air with a slice of his sword. The pagus tossed another as he pulled another axe from his collection strapped to his back.*

*Uriel cuffed that one away as quickly.*

*Scar with the twin swords orbited to move around Uriel.*

*Mischa ran up to strike the maul.*

*Mahan dropped his bow and removed his sticks.*

*Mischa attempted a clean strike to the arm but misjudged the momentum of the massive mallet. It swung down with such speed, Mischa sidestepped, allowing the hammer to send up a gust of snow in the air. Mischa launched through the cloud of white but caught a parry instead, as the hammer's long staff rose up to deflect. Mischa, not one to spar, spun his blade around the handle of the hammer and gripped the blade edge. The crossguard caught his enemy's weapon and pulled the pagus off balance.*

*Mischa pushed his pommel into his enemy's throat. The pagus started to fall, allowing Mischa to glance up at Elder with his warsword as he moved within reach.*

*Mischa didn't acknowledge the maul other than with a passing slice from the few inches of the cleaver's edge above his grip.*

*Mahan intercepted Scar's attempt to flank Uriel. He deflected one sword strike and firmed his bar's placement as a rooted pole in the air. The pagus struck the weapon, expecting to knock it down. Mahan drew his scimitar with his free hand and orbited around the post. The pagus tried to counter with a thrust, but Mahan dodged under the strike, coming up the other side to slam the creature's elbow against the fixed post hard enough to dislocate the joint. The arm flopped down, but the blade didn't drop. It dangled like a rag as the pagus brought his other weapon around.*

*Uriel failed to deflect another thrown axe. The hefty edge came for the kenbu's face. Uriel rolled his head to the side as the weapon tore off his mask. A trickle of blood dripped from his nose. Uriel's eyes fell off their target as the pagus snatched another axe.*

*Uriel rolled over the ground and found his footing in a hardy plant. He tugged his cloak with his arm and twirled the fabric into a quick braid. Snapping it forward, the leather tail wrapped around the pagus's neck and pulled him off balance. Uriel jumped up and drove his katana up under his enemy's throat, punching out the top of the head.*

*Before the spear of One-Eye could drive into Uriel's side, the kenbu pulled the body of MissingFingers over to take the thrust. He then slammed his body against the dead pagus, pushing him deeper into the enemy spear until it pushed from his chest.*

*Uriel pressed further until the body slid to the wielder of the weapon. The kenbu shoved again, forcing both pagus back until Uriel saw a broken spear tip on the snow.*

*He flung his cloak and snapped the leather braid around the spear-tip. A quick flick pulled the weapon to his hand.*

*Uriel rolled around to drive it through the OneEye's neck. Pinned together, the bodies didn't fall. The kenbu yanked the katana from its mooring.*

*Mahan stepped back and allowed a sword strike to deflect off a floating post. Mahan's boot came down on his enemy's foot while his blade cut across the tendons of a leg. Mahan unlocked a bar and swung around the other to slam it on the back of the pagus's head. The fae's foot slumped to its side, and the pagus stumbled*



on its broken ankle. His remaining sword was still sound, and he smiled, launching from his good foot.

The charge ran past the remaining post as Mahan stepped back to gain distance. The hobbled charge was slower than before but still fast enough to carry strength.

Mahan snapped his fingers and called his remaining stick to his hand. It knocked the head of the pagus as it returned. Mahan caught it and held both bars with one hand with his blade in the other and took the opportunity to step forward. The scimitar cleaved down his neck and wedged in his collarbone.

The pagus's smile was crooked from damaged nerves, and it lifted his one good arm with his one good sword.

Mahan released his grip on the sword and hardened it around both bars. The bars dislodged the head and peeled the neck from the body at the blade's slice.

Mahan spun around to catch another target, but the blackened sword of the demon armor stuck deep in Mahan's side.

Mahan winced and coughed as he stared at the shriveled human skull's smile.

Mahan pulled back from the injury and slapped the sword from the wound with this weapon.

The armor plates slid and floated, protecting under the arms when they rose, shielding the shoulders when they dropped.

It glared its teeth.

Its eyes were without lids and stared with hunger back to the human. It rolled its longsword over its wrist, flamboyantly, flicking Mahan's blood to the snow. Its other hand displayed its open palm and the five digits on its fingers.

"What in God's name are you?" Mahan whispered.

"I am nothing," it responded with its deep growl.

It smiled and jumped forward. It moved as no man or fae could. Jumping left and right, hopping as if weighing a feather, and as fast as a skittish cat.

Mahan brought his blade around, catching the first strike. The armor pushed in and spun around to slam an Angelite elbow into Mahan's head, throwing him back to a tree.

Mahan ducked as the blade cut through the bark without strain.

A backhand with the armor's gauntlet sent Mahan across the snow, sliding without falling off his feet.

The pagus Elder was a foot taller than the others and two feet on Mischa. His warsword was also a few inches longer than Mischa's, a fact proven with the first

strike as it reached over the ranger's thrust and spiked through his leather. It sunk an inch into flesh before Mischa recoiled.

Another full swing by his opponent was caught in a parry. The beast pushed forward, scraping his blade down to Mischa's crossguard then attempting to drive the sword into the ranger's shoulder.

Mischa slid aside and allowed the warsword to continue to the snow, opening a slash to his enemy's arms. Elder quickly released his weapon and caught Mischa's blade between his palms. Elder pulled Mischa across the field but couldn't disarm the weapon.

The pagus twisted the blade, and the ranger flipped in the air rather than release his sword. Mischa yanked the weapon from the grapple.

The pagus ignored the profuse bleeding from his hands as he reached down and retrieved his sword.

Mischa charged.

The pagus furrowed its hairless brow and grimaced back. It swung its blade across to parry. The cleaver was a proud Kantis weapon, and it chopped the extra inches off his enemy's weapon, deflecting the point into the beast's forehead. It appeared unconcerned.

Mischa came up for a high strike but heard a shout from behind.

"Mischa!"

It was Mahan.







## CHAPTER ELEVEN

# ADVENTURING

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### INTEGRATING CHARACTERS

The first and most integral step in creating an *Amethyst* campaign is developing the characters, both player and non-player. In the end, all great stories need great characters. A GM can present a brilliant setting, but it's for naught if the player characters are annoying or poorly conceived.

Creating a character is a collaboration. *Amethyst* presents two oppositional starting points: fantasy and technology. The two are mutually exclusive and the conflict between them drives much of the drama within the setting. A GM planning a bastion-based political





thriller will probably not appreciate a chaparran wilder being dropped into the middle of her plans (though a willing group could certainly make a terrific story out of this premise), nor will a group who wants to play a paramilitary group enjoy it if the GM drops them in the middle of nowhere, away from any chance to repair and resupply.

More than other settings, player characters need a reason to come together. An *Amethyst* character is firmly rooted in her place of origin; travel is rare, expensive, and dangerous not only to life and limb, but often to the character's entire worldview as well. People in this world do not just meet up in a tavern and decide to go on an adventure together for the fun of it. When creating a character, consider where that character comes from, and what could persuade or drive her to leave. Look to the historical events described in this and other *Amethyst* books for inspiration, or come up with an event of your own – but be sure to share that idea with the table first, in case someone else wants to integrate with it as well. A party that has at least a few things in common is better than a group of total strangers.

## OPTION: “I KNOW A GUY”

To encourage integration with the setting, once per adventure, whenever the party is in a player character's old stomping grounds, the player can declare that they know someone who has the ability to assist them with their current problem. The player gives this NPC a name and provides a brief description, including their relationship to the character and how they can help (the GM obviously has veto power if the NPC sounds like they could be a little *too* helpful). The GM then takes on the responsibility of portraying this character... who may not be *entirely* as the PC remembers them. NPCs should have their own motives as well. While the GM shouldn't go out of her way to mutate the character into the complete opposite of what the player intended for no reason, 'good guys' and 'bad guys' are usually not as clear-cut as the fairy tales make them seem.

## THE LIFEPATH

The background system that accompanies 5<sup>th</sup> Edition is a starting point for developing a character's history, but it is still fairly basic. The Lifepath system, which formerly appeared in Dias Ex Machina's *Ultramodern5*, is meant as an optional path for players looking for some assistance in developing a backstory. There are two paths within these tables, for echa or for techa. A background should be selected first, which will assist in the selecting appropriate events in one's life. If an event doesn't match well with a character's backstory, the GM or player can request an alteration.

## ORIGIN

These tables detail the birth, parentage, general family, and the events which punctuate a character's life. The good and bad. The loves and the tragedies. The following pages comprise a loose flowchart in which to build a life, creating the significant events that will hopefully pop up during a campaign.

Start with parenting (A1), and then move onto siblings (B1), then onto life events (C1). Several tables are referred to several times.





## CHAPTER ELEVEN: ADVENTURES

### A1—PARENTING

What happened to one or both of your parents?

Choose or roll 1d20

- |              |   |
|--------------|---|
| <b>1-11</b>  | Both parents are alive. (Go to A2-Status)   |
| <b>12-14</b> | Orphan — Your parents are dead. (Go to A3-Casualty, then go to A5-Surrogate)  |
| <b>15-17</b> | Abandoned — Your parents are gone, but unlikely dead. (Go to A4, then go to A5-Surrogate)   |
| <b>18-20</b> | One parent is absent.<br>(1-10: Mother; 11-20: Father)<br>(1-10: Got to A3-Casualty; 11-20: Go to A4-Separation) (Also go to A2-Status) |

### A2—STATUS

Both parents are alive, but what standing are they and the family in?

Choose or roll or roll 1d20

- |            |   |
|------------|---|
| <b>1-8</b> | Your family has had its highs and lows, but you've got nothing to complain about.                           |
| <b>9</b>   | Your family lived as paupers for some reason.   |
| <b>10</b>  | A parent or parents were abusive; you hated them.   |
| <b>11</b>  | Your family got swept up in a cult.   |
| <b>12</b>  | Parents doted on either you or a sibling hand and foot at the expense of others. There might be resentment. |
| <b>13</b>  | Unpredictable work moved your family from location to location, never establishing roots. Nomads?           |
| <b>14</b>  | You lived a bucolic life.   |
| <b>15</b>  | Your family is a cog in a well-oiled corporate/government/tribal machine.                                   |
| <b>16</b>  | Your family sold you into servitude.  |
| <b>17</b>  | Trauma tore the family apart, and you've never fully recovered.   |
| <b>18</b>  | The family would be better off without you. You are damaged.  |
| <b>19</b>  | Your parents are criminals, and that's the source of some stress.   |
| <b>20</b>  | Your family is embroiled in a rebellion. It's respectable, but also dangerous.                              |

## 360 A3—CASUALTY

Someone close to you died. What happened?

Choose or roll or roll 1d20

- |              |  |
|--------------|--|
| <b>1-2</b>   | Murdered in a targeted attack (it was not random violence).  |
| <b>3-4</b>   | Murdered by criminals.                                       |
| <b>5-6</b>   | Murdered by "monsters" (vague words).                        |
| <b>7-8</b>   | Assassinated by the state.                                   |
| <b>9-10</b>  | Killed in a terrorist strike.                                |
| <b>11-12</b> | Died by natural causes.<br>(cancer, diabetes, etc.).         |
| <b>13-14</b> | Died in a viral outbreak.                                    |
| <b>15-16</b> | Suicide—you could deny it, but it's the truth.               |
| <b>17-18</b> | Killed in an accident (fire, vehicle crash, drowning, etc.). |
| <b>19-20</b> | Civilians casualty of armed conflict.                        |

### A4—SEPARATION

Someone close to you is no longer around. Why?

Choose or roll or roll 1d20

- |              |   |
|--------------|---|
| <b>1-3</b>   | Amnesia—the memories of you are gone.                                     |
| <b>4-6</b>   | In hiding, probably to protect you.                                       |
| <b>7-9</b>   | Confinement (jail, concentration camp).                                   |
| <b>10-12</b> | Vanished, just like that.   |
| <b>13-15</b> | Kidnapped, you're sure of it.   |
| <b>16-18</b> | Separation, for your safety or someone else's.                            |
| <b>19-20</b> | There were psychological problems in place.<br>Maybe they were committed. |

### A5—SURROGATE

Someone raised you other than your parents.

Choose or roll or roll 1d20

- |              |   |
|--------------|---|
| <b>1-4</b>   | You were raised by relatives.<br>(go to A1-Parenting again) |
| <b>5-6</b>   | You bounced through temporary homes.                        |
| <b>7-8</b>   | You were reared without a home to call your own.            |
| <b>9-10</b>  | You joined a cult or monastery.                             |
| <b>11-12</b> | You were raised in an orphanage.                            |
| <b>13-14</b> | You were adopted.<br>(go to A1-Parenting again)             |
| <b>15-16</b> | An inheritance paid for private education.                  |
| <b>17-18</b> | You joined a military organization.                         |
| <b>19-20</b> | Your family is atypical (another race than your own).       |

### B1—SIBLINGS

Did you have brothers and/or sisters? If so, how many?

Choose or roll or roll 1d20

- |              |                        |
|--------------|------------------------|
| <b>1-6</b>   | You are an only child. |
| <b>7-11</b>  | You have 1 sibling.    |
| <b>12-15</b> | You have 2 siblings.   |
| <b>16-17</b> | You have 3 siblings.   |
| <b>18-19</b> | You have 4 siblings.   |
| <b>20</b>    | You have 5 siblings.   |

After determining the number of siblings, go to B2.

### B2—SIBLING INDIVIDUALITY

Is your sibling older or younger, and by how much?

Choose or roll 1d20 for each sibling

- |              |                          |
|--------------|--------------------------|
| <b>1-2</b>   | Baby Sister              |
| <b>3-5</b>   | Slightly younger sister  |
| <b>6</b>     | Twin sister              |
| <b>7-9</b>   | Slightly older sister    |
| <b>10</b>    | Matriarch sister         |
| <b>11-12</b> | Baby brother             |
| <b>13-15</b> | Slightly younger brother |
| <b>16</b>    | Twin brother             |
| <b>17-19</b> | Slightly older brother   |
| <b>20</b>    | Patriarch brother        |



## B3—SIBLING VIEWPOINT

What does your sibling think of you?

Choose or roll 1d20 for each sibling

|       |   |
|-------|---|
| 1-6   | The sibling is a sibling, love and rivalry will always be there.          |
| 7-9   | Your sibling is also your best friend.                                    |
| 10-12 | The sibling loves you, but you don't see eye to eye.                      |
| 13-14 | The sibling worships the very ground you walk on. You respect that.       |
| 15-16 | The sibling has issues with you, which may or may not be justified.       |
| 17-18 | You and the sibling don't talk. They may hate you; you may hate them.     |
| 19    | Feelings are moot—your sibling is dead (go to A3-Causality).              |
| 20    | Feelings are moot—your sibling is no longer around (go to A4-Separation). |

## LIFE EVENTS

This is the one section you cannot choose, where you must gamble the events of your life. After selecting your current age, roll 1d6+4. The final result is the number of life-changing events which occurred in your past, in the order in which they are determined. You can spread the events around as much as you'd like, and they can even be swapped around if it best suits the backstory the GM is approving.

For humans, you can assume each event marks one year of your life. If older or a fae, each event could occur every few years or even every few decades. If younger, the events could happen over a matter of a few months (once a year is a default). Roll on the Life Episodes table (C1) for each event.

**Optional Rule:** Each time Tragedy is rolled, it cannot be rolled again before a windfall is selected, and vice-versa.

## C1—LIFE EPISODES

Roll 1d20

|       |                                     |
|-------|-------------------------------------|
| 1-4   | Tragedy<br>(go to C2-Tragedy)       |
| 5-8   | Friendship<br>(go to D1-Friendship) |
| 9-12  | Enemy<br>(go to E1-Enemy)           |
| 13-15 | Romance<br>(go to F1-Romance)       |
| 16-20 | Windfall<br>(go to C3-Windfall)     |

## C2—TRAGEDY

Effects that impose gameplay penalties can be later addressed in game. Physical handicaps can be repaired later with TL4+ medical technology or spells. *Regeneration* can repair lingering physical injuries while *disguise self* can cover up visible impairments. Visible injuries need not carry forward if you are polymorphed, but if transformed back, your injuries return. Spells like *heal* and *mass heal* can address issues with sight or hearing as well as cure you of any lingering illness, though it still cannot regenerate missing body parts like eyes. *Lesser Restoration* can address in-game disease, but not lingering illnesses listed below. If you emerged from a past capable of TL4+ technology or high magic, create a reason why your disabilities have not been repaired.

Roll 1d20

- 1-2 Injury:** You suffer a crippling wound. This could be from (1-10) an accident, or (11-20) in a battle. Roll 1d20 to determine the extent of the injury.
- 1-10:** Most of the damage is internal or psychological; most people don't notice.
- 11-12:** You have scars or burns across your body, but most can be covered by clothes. *If a critical hit is scored on you, you are stunned until the end of your next turn.*
- 13-14:** You suffered facial scars or burns. *You have disadvantage with Diplomacy (Cha) checks.*
- 15-16:** You developed hearing problems. *You have disadvantage with any ability check that requires hearing. If you also have the Bad Hearing shortcoming, you are completely deaf instead.*
- 17:** You developed a limp. *It's noticeable and may require a cane. Your speed is reduced by 5 feet.*
- 18:** You lost a hand. Unless cybernetics have advanced far enough, your functionality is severely reduced. *You lose the function of one hand.*
- 19:** An internal injury never fully healed. *It's not visible, but it affects you. Your hit points are reduced by 2 at 1<sup>st</sup> level, and you gain 1 fewer hit point at every additional level.*
- 20:** You lost an eye, replaced with a false eye or patch. *Advances in cybernetics or magic may mitigate this penalty—otherwise, you cannot score a critical hit.*

- 3-4 Addiction:** You developed a substance addiction. You can try to kick the habit in game (you may kick it later in life habits), but it shouldn't be easy. *If separated from your fix for more than a day, you are poisoned until your addiction is satisfied.* Roll 1d20 to determine the dependence.

- 1-6:** Caffeine  
**7-11:** Alcohol  
**12-14:** Cannabis  
**15-16:** Tobacco  
**17-18:** Prescription drugs  
**19:** Amphetamines  
**20:** Opioids



**5-6 Psychological Trauma:** You suffered an ordeal which left permanent emotional scars or even a behavioral addiction. Roll 1d20 to determine the trauma.

**1-10:** You wake up every morning suddenly. You are slightly moody. You sweat on occasion in stressful situations. These are minor manifestations that don't affect you greatly, but friends notice.

**11-12:** You developed a substance addiction. You can try to kick the habit in game (you may kick it later in life habits), but it shouldn't be easy. *If separated from your fix for more than a day, you are sickened until your addiction is satisfied.* Roll 1d20 to determine the dependence.

**1-6:** Caffeine

**7-11:** Alcohol

**12-14:** Cannabis

**15-16:** Tobacco

**17-18:** Prescription drugs

**19:** Amphetamines

**20:** Opioids

**13-14:** You developed a stutter and have issues with public speaking. *You have disadvantage with both Diplomacy (Cha) and Intimidation (Cha) checks.*

**15-16:** You suffer from nightmares. Even if no one notices, it affects you. *After you wake from unconscious, you are shaken for five minutes.*

**17-18:** You suffer from migraines. *You suffer a -2 penalty with all Intelligence-based skill checks.*

**19-20:** You love gambling, but this is not necessarily limited to games; you may place yourself at risk in order to achieve the same stimulus.

**7-8 Lover, friend, or relative killed:** Which one dies can be up to you or the GM, but it should be a lover or friend established through life events or a relative from your immediate family.  
(Go to A3-Casualty)

**9-10 Pursued by Villains:** You have crossed some very dangerous people/creatures and are now being hunted. This may continue to the present or be resolved in the same event or a later event. Roll 1d20 to determine who tracks you.

**1-6:** You crossed a small gang/tribe, forcing you to avoid specific areas.

**7-11:** A small crime organization or large tribe put a mark on you.

**12-15:** You crossed a prominent crime family or an entire independent village.

**16-18:** You ticked off a major crime syndicate with connections across the land.

**19-20:** Turns out, you cut the finger of a massive body with influence over a vast expanse, like a cult or a mercenary company.

**11-12 Illness:** You either contract a major illness or a hereditary disease rears its ugly head. You spend a time suffering from it. Pick a specific condition. Roll 1d20 to determine the affliction.

**1-10:** Level 0—You contract an infectious disease, and for a while, the prognosis looked grim. Thankfully, you pulled through with only minor aftereffects.

**11-14:** Level 1—You cannot fully recover from your condition and must manage it with medication or meditation. If properly treated, no one notices your situation. *If you are denied your treatment or an hour of meditation,*

**15-17:** Level 2—Despite regular treatment, everyone that knows you is aware you'll never be 100%. *You suffer from the Level 1 impairment, and you also have disadvantage with Constitution ability checks.*

**18-19:** Level 3—Your condition is apparent to most everyone. Friends worry; strangers often keep their distance. *You suffer from the Level 1 and Level 2 impairments, and at the start of every morning, you suffer hit point loss equal to 10% of your total hit points. This can be healed through any available means.*

**20:** Level 4—It's honestly a miracle you're still alive. There's no doubt that your lifespan has been reduced from an affliction that you suffer from daily. *You suffer from the Level 1, Level 2, and Level 3 impairments, and your hit points are reduced by 2 at 1<sup>st</sup> level, and you gain 1 fewer hit point at every additional level.*

**13-14 Pursued by the Law:** From tax evasion to premeditated murder, an arrest was issued with your face and name. You and/or the GM can decide if the accusation was legitimate or not. Perhaps you were framed. That aspect is up to choice (and should be assumed for the major crimes). The severity of the crime and the lengths people will go to your capture is not. Roll 1d20 to determine who pursues you.

**1-6:** You honestly don't know the big deal, but apparently someone does. Outside of enforcers that know you, most others won't even bother chasing you.

**7-11:** It's a relatively minor offense (petty theft, drug use) in a small town, though still warranting punishment.

**12-15:** It's a significant crime (burglary, drug dealing), though you are relatively safe if you avoid the big cities/forests.

**16-18:** The state or local militia have posted rewards for information leading to your capture. This sort of crime (individual murder, organized crime, serial robbery, sex crimes) is considered severe.

**19-20:** A national/kingdom-wide movement has pushed for your capture. Information regarding you has spread to every corner of the land.



**15-16 Debt:** What you owe can be financial or personal. It could be to a government or to one person. Roll 1d20 to determine to what extent you owe.

**1-6:** Someone, somewhere, did you a favor, something you needed at the time. This is not entirely financial, but they can call on you anytime for help.

**7-11:** You were saddled with incredible amounts of debt, which thankfully you have resolved in your later life. However, the stigma of that liability lingers, preventing you from taking chances financially or even getting approval for credit.

**12-16:** Your debt derives from some terrible decisions, decisions that you are still paying for. Your debt is 1d6x100 gp or uc. When paid by a later event or in-game, your debt is fulfilled.

**17-18:** There is no legal recourse; this is bad. You owe some influential people a lot of money. You better appease them or make installments; otherwise, you might find a price on your head. Your debt is 1d6x1000 gp or uc. When paid by a later event or in-game, your debt is fulfilled.

**19-20:** In cash or blood, you must repay this obligation. Instead of a perilous mission, your debt is massive. Your debt is 1d6x10,000 gp or uc. When paid by a later event or in-game, your obligation is fulfilled.

**17-18 Imprisonment:** You've been either kidnapped or sent to prison. Whether or not it's warranted or how you get out at the end is up to you or the GM. Roll 1d20 to determine the number of months served.

**19-20 Failure:** Your career has faltered. Something you have been working on for a very long time has failed miserably. You may need to reconsider your goals, perhaps even your direction in life. Roll 1d20 to determine how bad you screwed up.

**1-7:** The failure cost you financially. You lose half your starting money.

**8-12:** You lose your status among your people. If you had a rank, you are demoted. If it was a corporate job, you were banished to a lower floor.

**13-17:** You were fired outright or placed on leave. If in the military, you are busted down to private.

**18-20:** You lose everything, your position, your rank, and any hope of following that career again. What did you do? It might have been unethical. Was it warranted, or were you framed?

## C3—WINDFALL

Roll 1d20

**1-2 Earned Favor:** Someone appreciates your actions. You might have saved a life or offered critical advice at the right time. A debt is owed that you can call on. How you can call on this favor and how often you can be determined below. A favor can supply equipment, transportation, access, money, or even military support. Roll 1d20 for frequency and influence.

### Frequency

**1-7:** The debtor is limited to what she can accomplish by herself.

**8-13:** You can call on them for a single favor a level, or one big favor that will resolve the obligation.

**14-18:** You can call on them, big or small, but you are limited to six favors total.

**19-20:** You can call on them, big or small, but are limited to two favors per level.

### Influence

**1-6:** The debt is owed by a single person who can or will only supply oneself.

**7-11:** The debtor can bring in a small group, like a gang, retinue, or a few employees.

**12-15:** The debtor will bring in dozens of people if necessary, calling on the right people for the right job.

**16-18:** The debtor has power and influence across hundreds and can draw on favors as well.

**19-20:** The debtor will move heaven and earth to appease you and may be able to do so. You want an army?

### Identity

**1-5:** A relative nobody but who obviously has connections you don't know about.

**6-9:** The militia commander or a member of the ruling government.

**10-12:** A lord, small-town mayor, or the president of a small company.

**13-15:** The patriarch or matriarch of a significant crime family.

**16-17:** The president of a corporation, a duke or a baron.

**18-19:** Royalty or a member of political hierarchy.

**20:** This person runs a country.

**3-4 Informant:** Differentiated from favor, this is a connection that supplies information or their skill when called upon. This is probably someone you helped or a friend in a position of access. An informant has one dominant skill, rolled with a +12 bonus. You can call on an informant once a week. The informant will never put oneself at risk and won't have access to anything outside of what's around.

Roll 1d20 for identity and skill.

**1-2:** Professor/Scholar. Knowledge (History) (Int)

**3-4:** Druid/Scientist. Knowledge (Nature/Sciences) (Int)

**5-6:** Doctor. Heal (Wis)

**7-8:** Hacker. Computer Use (Int)

**9-10:** Engineer. Engineer (Int)

**11-12:** Cleric. Knowledge (Religion) (Int)

**13-14:** Entertainer. Perform (Cha)

**15-16:** Charlatan. Bluff (Cha)

**17-18:** Private Investigator. Perception (Wis)

**19-20:** Survivalist. Wisdom Survival (Wis)



**5-6 Wealth:** What a stroke of luck, you've come into some money. Don't spend it all at once. Roll 1d20 for amount.

**1-7:** 3d6 x 10 gp or uc.

**8-13:** 6d6 x 10 gp or uc.

**14-18:** 1d4 x 1000 gp or uc.

**19-20:** You gain the following bonuses in gp or uc when achieving the listed level: 1<sup>st</sup> level – 500; 5<sup>th</sup> level – 2,500; 10<sup>th</sup> level – 10,000; 15<sup>th</sup> level – 55,000.

**7-8 Combat Training:** You gain admittance in a self-defense class or find a martial-arts / weapons teacher. You spend an extended time specializing in a craft apart from your usual training. Each time you gain this windfall, you learn an additional tier.

**Tier 1:** You gain 1d4 weapon proficiencies.

**Tier 2:** You gain a +1 bonus to initiative.

**Tier 3:** You gain 1 feat.

**9-10 Education Grant:** People believe you're smart and throw money your way to develop your skills further. Each time you gain an education grant, you gain proficiency in one skill or tool of your choice as well as one additional language.

**11-12 Recognition:** You have been bestowed a well-deserved award, perhaps a gilded trophy. Maybe a medal. This doesn't assume a contest. If in the military, you receive medals; you don't win them. If in academia, you receive acknowledgment for a peer-reviewed paper which has advanced your field. *You have advantage on Charisma (Persuasion) checks with other people in the same field that knows of your achievements.*

**13-14 Positive Side Effect:** Well, that was unexpected. You have been subjected to a medical experiment, a yet untested treatment to a condition you suffer from, or something latent hidden for many years has finally manifested itself. *You gain a +1 bonus to one Ability Score. You can only achieve this windfall once.*

**15-16 Reputation / Rank:** If in the military, you achieve a promotion. If on contract, you can raise your prices based on reputation alone. You are given more authority, influence over underlings or employees. This may have reaching aftereffects in the game. *You have advantage on Charisma (Intimidation) checks with other people under your command or influence.*

**17-18 Recovery:** You recover from one effect from the Tragedy table you are suffering from (chosen by you or the GM).

**19-20 Personal Treasure:** You discovered, was bequeathed or were given something of value, something you treasure more than most other things, something you neither should sell or even want to (not that you would get anything, as selling it would only net you 1/10 its original value. Select one item worth \$5,000 or less as your item.

Friends can be there for you in a pinch, help you out, but they should not be taken advantage of. They can be at home waiting for a phone call, or side-by-side with you in the neck of battle (as an NPC).

## Roll 1d20

**1-2** You reconnect with a relative (cousin, uncle, a lost sibling, etc.)

**3-4** A previous romantic interest. Either you're separated prior and reconnected later, or the relationship didn't work, and you remained as friends.

**5-6** An old childhood friend, either that you've never lost contact with or one you bumped into and realized no time had really passed.

**7-8** A co-adventurer, which could mean a tedious day job or a comrade you shared basic training with.

**9-10** You owed this person a favor, or they owed you. Turns out you two both like the same things. The debt has long since been paid.

**11-12** This person had known your family or mutual friends for years, and you always considered him/her like a big brother / big sister. Alternatively, you've known this person through his/her family or mutual friends for years, and you always considered him/her as a kid brother/kid sister.

**13-14** It started as a teacher or mentor relationship, but after the classes were concluded, you two stayed in touch.

**15-16** An old enemy, if you have one, and it makes sense. You two came to an understanding.

**17-18** You two met through shared interests or mutual friends. Consider it boring, but it's also familiar.

**19-20** He or she was more like a foster-parent, or rather the closest one you had to one, or the one you wished you had.

## D1-FRIENDSHIP

You found a friend. Good for you. Roll 1d20 to determine how you met. Gender and race are up to you. Friends are different than earned favors or informants.



## E1—ENEMY

Yikes. You really got someone's hackles up. Decide on who the person is, what caused it, and what the other will do when encountered. Gender and age are up to you. If a combination doesn't work, the GM is more than welcome to order a re-roll.

### Roll 1d20

- 1-2** Alas, not all friendships end well. A friend you picked up becomes an enemy.
- 3-4** A relationship you are currently in ends poorly. Or else someone you used to date comes back with an aim to destroy your life.
- 5-6** Regardless of blood, some lines still cannot be crossed. A relative is no longer a friend.
- 7-8** Either someone that bullied you or someone you bullied in your youth returns.
- 9-10** A comrade in a higher position wants to keep you down. If he/she is above you, you'll never advance.
- 11-12** Someone under your authority wants to bring you down to his/her level.
- 13-14** Someone you work with (a co-worker on equal footing) has it in for you.
- 15-16** A criminal is out for you.
- 17-18** Someone with a lot of influence really doesn't like you.
- 19-20** Make sure you don't step out of line or get noticed because even the slightest slip could bring down the wrath from this mastermind.

## E2—THE CAUSE

Why is there such a divide between you two?

### Roll 1D20

- 1-2** Either you or the enemy caused the other to lose face (not literal) or position.
- 3-4** You caused your enemy a physical disability.
  - 1-4:** Facial scars or burns
  - 5-8:** Developed hearing problems
  - 9-12:** Developed a limp
  - 13-16:** Lost a hand
  - 17-20:** Lost an eye
- 5-6** You or your enemy caused the enemy to lose a loved one.
- 7-8** You or your enemy exposed a dark secret of the other that upset the other's life (but did not involve criminal proceedings).
- 9-10** You or your enemy was humiliated. Sometimes, that's enough.
- 11-12** There was a betrayal or abandonment.
- 13-14** You or your enemy was responsible for imprisonment.
  - 1-10:** You were imprisoned;
  - 11-20:** Your enemy was detained.Roll 1d20 to determine the number of months served.
- 15-16** You or your enemy just hates the other's stupid, stupid face.
- 17-18** You or your enemy cost the other an esteemed position.
- 19-20** You or your enemy foiled the other's cunning plan.

## E3—WHO TICKED OFF WHO

Maybe you hate him/her; perhaps it's the other way around; perhaps it's mutual.

### Roll 1d20

- 1-6** Your enemy is ticked off with you. You don't entirely get it, and probably think it's really over-inflated. Someone needs a hug.
- 7-12** Your enemy is your enemy. It doesn't matter that he or she doesn't hold a grudge; you do.
- 13-20** It's totally mutual.

## E4—WHO DOES WHAT

How angry are either of you? One of you can take this personally. Choose logically who is the more cross (or if both sides are equally irate), then roll below.

### Roll 1d20

- 1-4** The crossed individual (or both) will try to kill the other when given a chance, no remorse. Is that going too far?
- 5-8** The crossed individual (or both) wants to beat the living snot out of the other. Maybe it's something you both need to get out of your system.
- 9-12** The crossed individual (or both) wants to destroy the other's life, to suffer for years and years.
- 13-16** The crossed individual (or both) have been prepping some choice zingers to fling at the other at the first opportunity.
- 17-20** It's just best you just avoid each other.

## E5—WHAT CAN BE THROWN

The influence of your enemy—what he or she can throw at you, assuming there's motivation for doing so.

### Roll 1d20

- 1-6** Despite any authority, your enemy will only handle matters personally.
- 7-11** Your enemy can bring in a small group, like a gang, retinue, or a few employees. A line is drawn about bringing in more.
- 12-15** Your enemy will bring in dozens of people if necessary, calling on the right people for the right job.
- 16-18** Your enemy has power and influence across hundreds and can call on favors as well.
- 19-20** Your enemy will move heaven and earth to appease you and may be able to do so. You want an army?





## F1—ROMANCE

Aww...Sweet. You found someone important in your life. It might have been a quick fling or a much longer affair. Roll for the type of relationship unless it's a continuation of a prior relationship, its current status, and it's potential for joy or misery.

### NEW RELATIONSHIP

Roll 1d20

- 1-6** You met someone, dated for a spell, but ultimately it didn't work out after only a few weeks or months. The break up might not have been mutual, but these things happen all the time.
- 7-11** You met, are still together, but you can't see it lasting.  
(go to F4—Feelings)
- 12-15** You met and are still together. This may be the one.
- 16-18** You met someone, but from the beginning, there were complications.  
(go to F2—Issues)
- 19-20** Tragic Love Why? WHY?  
(go to F3—Misfortune)

### PREVIOUS RELATIONSHIP

You are currently in a relationship. Roll to see if you two are still together, and how things are coming along.

Roll 1d20

- 1-4** It's going very well. If it wasn't before, it is now. If it was before, congratulations.
- 5-8** The relationship is as before. Nothing has changed.
- 9-12** This is the one. You two can get married. If either is a fae, you can bond. You can elect to re-roll "complications" (if bonded, you must ignore complications).
- 13-15** You have a child. If either of you is a fae, you must be bonded first (gained the previous entry from an earlier event). If fae bonded, you can only gain this once.  
Roll 1-10: boy; 11-20: girl.
- 16-18** The relationship has hit a few snags.  
(Move to F2—Issues)
- 19-20** Something bad happened.  
(Move to F3—Misfortune)

## F2—ISSUES

Your relationship encountered several snags. After rolling in F2-Issues, roll again in F4-Feelings.

Roll 1d20

- 1-2** Your family and/or friends hate your romantic interest.
- 3-4** Your romantic interest's family and/or friends hate you.
- 5-6** Complication—There is a romantic rival involved trying to divide you to. Who the rival is interested in can be chosen or randomized.
- 7-8:** Complication—You fight constantly.
- 9-10** Complication—You are professional rivals.
- 11-12** Complication—There is a lot of jealousy between you to.
- 13-14** Complication—One of you two had an affair and the other found out.
- 15-16** The both of you come from different walks of life, and it puts pressure on the relationship.
- 17-18** The two of you differ in ethnicity or race.
- 19-20** There are money problems; aren't there always money problems?

## F3—MISFORTUNE

Something terrible happened in the relationship, including a simple break-up, which can feel like the end of the world sometimes.

Roll 1d20

- 1-4** Sometimes bad things happen, but the relationship survives it.
- 5-8** Complication—You break up. It just was never going to work out—the separation is mutual.
- 9-12** Complication—You dumped your romantic interest.
- 14-16** Complication—Your romantic interest dumped you.
- 17-18** Complication—You two are separated.  
(go to A4-Separation)
- 19-20** Your romantic interest has died.  
(go to A3-Casualty)



## F4—FEELINGS

Your relationship has complications, but how do you two feel about each other?

Roll 1d20

|       |   |
|-------|---|
| 1-4   | Despite everything (and there are a lot), you still love each other.  |
| 5-6   | Your romantic interest appears to have issues but won't leave you. Why?                                     |
| 7-8   | You have issues, but you won't leave your romantic interest. Why?   |
| 9-10  | You both have issues—the relationship should have ended, but it doesn't. Something is holding you together. |
| 11-12 | Your romantic interest still loves you; you're not so sure.   |
| 13-14 | You still love your romantic interest. You are worried it is no longer reciprocated.                        |
| 15-16 | You're drifting apart from mutual apathy.   |
| 17-18 | You'll always be friends, but you fear the spark has faded.   |
| 19-20 | Screw it. It's over.  |

## THE ARC

*Amethyst* is all about the player characters changing the world for better or worse, and this is hard to do in a one-shot. Although single-episode stories are certainly possible in the setting, *Amethyst* adventures work best as part of a story arc. We provide one story arc as a default—the quest for the Amethyst relics—but it is by no means the only approach. An arc should change the setting in either subtle or significant ways by the end of it.

That final point is important—have an end in mind. A GM should be prepared to close the arc, to reach a culmination the players can be happy with. It may not be the end of the story for the players or the end of their experiences in the setting, but be a turning point for all players involved, where they have had an impact in the entire setting. This need not be resolved at 20th level but may end at 5th or 10th or 15th. Obviously, a story ending at 10th level could have a sequel with the same characters, while a game where the characters end at 20th level would end that story with those characters and a sequel would involve all new characters.

The arc should hopefully take the players across as much landscape as possible: if not completely from one end of a continent to the other, then at least across an entire nation. Even a game that mostly takes place inside a bastion should include some ventures beyond. The GM should include story tangents which force the group away from their home territory into the unknown.

Meanwhile, the arc should touch on several characters in a personal way, hence why it is so important to include the GM and the rest of the group in character creation.

The GM should also be prepared to change the arc in response to the players, and not force them to see through a plot that they have no interest or agency in. An ill-conceived arc handled inadequately forces players down paths that seem illogical from their perspectives. Straying off the planned path results in total disaster. In the end, the players must be able to affect the outcome and not be static characters in a novel they are reading more than playing. The players should prefer the arc and be personally motivated by it. If a GM cannot depend on the heroes' own virtue, then she is responsible for creating some other motivation for the PCs to follow the arc.

## THE AMETHYST ARC (ECHA OR TECHA)

This sample arc, initiated in the adventure at the end of the core book, involves discovering the truth of Amethyst's fate, what happened at the moment of his death, and how he could be brought back. The heroes will travel to every corner of the planet searching for clues and defeating evil in pursuit of their prize. Meanwhile, the forces of darkness prepare to mobilize for they will stop at nothing to prevent the return of the dragon god.

Players will be encountering every evil the world can throw at them. Nothing short of the world may rest on their shoulders. For an echan group, they are personally motivated, so injecting additional incentive is hardly necessary. Player characters are fighting for their very survival, as well as those all around them. A techan group, meanwhile, begins epistemologically opposed to the very concept of fantasy, but may eventually change their views as they become exposed to the world outside their bastion walls.

## HOW IT BEGINS

After a standard introductory adventure where the group becomes familiarized with each other and the setting, they come into possession of a mysterious amulet of purple gemstone, either at the end of an adventure or as a random act of fate. If the party has completed the initial adventure from the core *Amethyst* book,





they will have also encountered the Chronicle of Aurannis, which speaks of the other Amethyst relics and their world-changing potential, to possibly either open Attricana further or close it forever. Otherwise, they will need to come across the quest some other way.

**Echans:** How an echan party encounters the quest will depend largely on where they come from. A group loyal to Limshau may be given a task by an elder librarian or custodian (possibly even by Ravenar himself) to locate the rest of the relics. Someone from Abidan might experience a religious vision in a dream. A party from Kannos might be offered a bounty for more such artifacts. A team from Seliquam might take a job guarding a train car or caravan conveying Selkirk's relic to Fargon, without knowing what it is...until someone attacks the shipment and tries to take it from them.

**Techans:** In contrast, a techan military or paramilitary party has it easier: they are given a mission by their commanding officer. The amulet came from a crashed Porto beluga, along with notes that spoke of additional such relics. As objects of potential threat to the security of the bastion, it is imperative that they be recovered without delay. A party from a techan atoll, alternatively, might seek to claim the relics as a means of gaining the attention and assistance of a bastion for their struggling community. A group with no military or paramilitary connection might instead be attempting to uncover secret actions within their own government.

### WHERE IT TAKES THEM

Three Amethyst relics (bracers, the buckle, and the cloak) can be found in Canam, in addition to the amulet. But making the connection between these artifacts is not so easy. Before the group gallivants where angels fear to tread, they need a direction.

Assuming that they do not already start in Limshau, the kingdom of knowledge is the obvious first step. If they have not already encountered the Chronicle of Aurannis, that text can be found there and will provide the clues they need to locate the remaining artifacts in Canam. A party from Abidan or further east might seek help from the elder bear Raunnis, while those from Kannos or a western free house might seek the attention of Ramkava. All these routes lead only to further questions: of the three, only Ramkava knows the *current* form of the artifacts and who possesses them, and it will not speak to ordinary folk without the Staff of Ke-Rif (and if they have the Staff, chances are they already

possess the cloak relic as well), and even with it, their answers will be cryptic and largely unhelpful.

**The Buckle:** Where the party can find the buckle will vary depending on whether they are echan or techan.

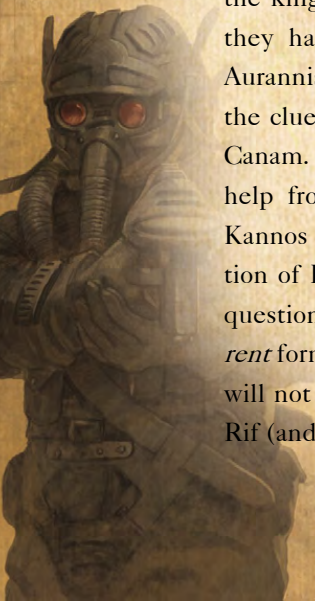
For echans, their initial information describes it as the Mending Sap, and will send them at first to Laurama before discovering that it was taken into Baruch Malkut and transformed into a fashion accessory that has passed through several hands since. From there, the party will have to brave the Blessed Kingdom and its fanatical sentinels in order to recover the buckle – and then deal with the fallout of their actions as Darius Konig's forces pursue them back.

Since a techan party would have significantly more trouble in the magical kingdom, they should instead discover that it was stolen from Baruch Malkut by agents of the bastion of Mann, which they will then have to infiltrate.

**The Bracers:** The party's initial information will lead them to the bastion of Selkirk, though whether the artifact is still there when they arrive will depend on whether the players wish to engage in bastion politics. Echan characters, of course, are not permitted to enter the bastion, but can conduct negotiations with Selkirk officials in the gimfen town of Gateway in Seliquam. If the group wishes to bypass Selkirk altogether, they can learn that the bracers have been traded to Fargon, allowing them to either follow their prize to its destination in the far north, or attempt to ambush it along either the Dianaso Pass or the tracks of the Great Train. Either way, getting to Selkirk in the first place requires passing through either Xixion and Seliquam by the western route, or Kannos, Dagron, and Quinox by the northern route.

**The Cloak:** The cloak is found inside Keris Rifts' oubliette beneath Mt. Sarnathi, in Kannos. This is the only relic found at the bottom of a dungeon, though hardly a straightforward dungeon. If the GM wishes to inject a wrinkle into this scenario, the party can breach the wizard's chamber only to discover that they are not actually the first to do so, and the relic already has been removed by someone else.

**The Other Relics:** One of the Amethyst artifacts (the rings) can be found in Southam, in the tenenbri city of Vakai, and the Chronicle of Aurannis is not particularly useful in tracking it down, assuming the party even wishes to make the attempt. The remainder are





found on other continents, presently beyond the reach of any group from Canam.

Once at least three of the relics are assembled, the continent will face a different threat; a pagus assault on northern Canam, led by shemjaza and the Ixindar homunculus Thornshroud. Regardless of how much land lies in between, the final encounter takes place somewhere on the party's home turf; for techans, on the fields of Halyc or the very walls of Angel; for echans from Limshau, on the plains before the white walls; those from Abidan may be called to defend the Bulwark from two sides at once, while those from Kannos could face a guerilla war in the hills or a massed charge of cavalry on the prairies, and the people of Seliquam could face an unstoppable force driving them out of the mountains towards the sea.

## WHO THEY MEET

The Amethyst arc carries players to almost every corner of the continent. In the northwest, they will encounter the miners of Selkirk, the narros of Fargon, and the cosmopolitan nations of Seliquam, all of whom are willing to at least give them the benefit of the doubt, echan or techan. If an echan party plays their cards right, they might even make a not-unfavorable impression upon the laudenians as well. In the southeast, they will encounter initially hostile chaparrans, definitely hostile Malkut soldiers, and potential allies among disaffected Malkut rebels. In the northeast, they will find agents of York willing to help in covert action against Mann, initially antagonistic chaparrans from Arkady (who will change their tune once the pagus start to appear in greater numbers), and angry farmers and townsfolk who would rather see the world burn than ally with the fae.

At some point, PCs of both flavors will have to deal with the inhabitants of the heartland kingdoms; the damaskans (and others) of Limshau and the human echans of Abidan and Kannos. Once the party has acquired several of the relics, the rulers of these lands will take a particular interest in them. These kingdoms are directly in the line of fire for pretty much any consequences the players may provoke, and will be the hardest hit in the end by the pagus assault.

Techans who have had any positive dealings with the fantasy world will at this point have to make a choice, as it will become apparent that fulfilling their mission will ultimately result in the closing of Attricana and the destruction of the echan world, with calamitous

consequences for its inhabitants – not only fae, but those humans who have allowed enchantment into their being as well. A good-aligned party may choose to rebel against their orders – at which point they will need new allies, as they will almost certainly be hunted by their former comrades. Gimfen, of course, will be happy to help them, as will many of the people of Limshau. Narros are largely indifferent to techans, but those from Fargon and much of the population of Seliquam will count them as allies if they turn to Selkirk for sanctuary against the other bastions (as Selkirk has no particular wish to see the echan world destroyed).

An echan party might even seek the assistance of techans. Though groups with fae members or wizards are not permitted to enter bastions (except under highly unusual circumstances, which this might prove to be), exclusively human or even mixed human/gimfen groups might be permitted to enter and confer with the bastion authorities. They are unlikely to receive any solid help from that angle – unless the bastion finds a way for that help to benefit themselves – but at the very least they should be permitted to resupply, gather news, and briefly relax with a few modern conveniences.

Both types of parties are likely to encounter dragons at some point. For a techan party, this will almost certainly be for the first time, and how the players respond to them would be considered the litmus test when dealing with all echans from then on. The most likely dragon to be encountered would be Genai himself, if the characters venture into his namesake enclave for information, though in this case they are more likely to meet his human disguise, David Obatala Chen. Noble dragons can be found anywhere, and if the party travels through Quinox to reach Selkirk instead of through Seliquam, they might encounter their famous dragon knights or even Rochka of Rime herself – who may see in the Amethyst quest an opportunity to elevate her clan in the eyes of her draconic peers, and offer assistance accordingly.

When infiltrating Baruch Malkut, the players will find an ally with Bilford Gram, supporting the group with supplies and information in their journey. They may also be assisted by agents of Taskin-Kada and Gnimfall, and possibly by Kannosian war hawks eager for a chance to provoke conflict with Darius Konig.





## OPPONENTS

The Amethyst quest forces everyone encountered to take sides. Vast kingdoms that are aware of their activities will offer services while enemies will send armies to stop such help. If tracking the clasp through Baruch Malkut, a military engagement between Limshau and Malkut will almost certainly occur to help smuggle the information from the kingdom. This may be the final stroke to spark a war, and since there are those within both Kannos and Abidan who *want* this to happen, the player characters may find their efforts at stealth sabotaged by their own ostensible allies.

Depending on how one approaches them, Selkirk could be an ally or an enemy, and the rest of Seliquam is full of so many conflicting alliances that finding an opponent there is not difficult. For a techan party, if they do not deal fairly with Rochka of Rime, she might decide to bring an entire brood of frost dragons against them and attempt to claim the Amethyst relic herself. The Obsidian Mages have reasons of their own to take interest in the quest, and might seek to bring the artifacts back to Victrix for study, or more nefarious purposes. Should the party attempt to steal the bracer enroute to Fargon, every narros between Thos Thalagos and Finer is likely to become a foe.

Any of the bastions, or all of them, have the potential to become opponents as well. Obviously, if the party must sneak into Mann to steal the buckle, agents of the mysterious city will track them across the continent to get it back – but they might do so regardless, as above all the rest, Mann has the strongest desire to rid the world of magic. A techan party that turns their back on their own authorities will also find themselves hunted by their ex-comrades in short order. The normally ambivalent Selkirk would take it amiss if their alliance with Fargon were to be disrupted by opportunists. Even Sierra Madre, otherwise not involved in these proceedings at all, could choose to oppose if the events the players unleash look to be too world-shaking for their comfort.

All of this may pale in comparison if the Saints take notice. These techan overlords seek to prevent the success of the quest. No one knows how they know. They will use the resources of bastions they are secretly in league with to send forces to stop the players. When the heroes are found, perhaps the Saints will send MAX to doggedly pursue the players through every day of the quest until it is finally dealt with. Being so initially

overpowering, this force of science should strike fear in the groups, always on the run from this goliath.

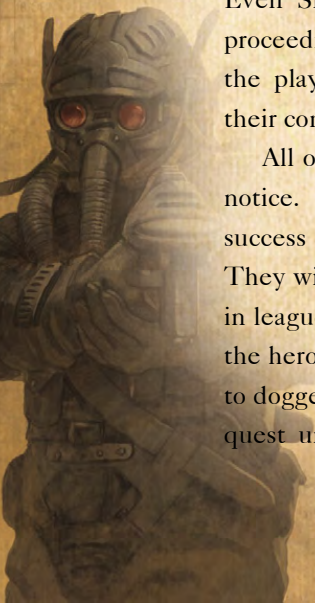
Worse even than MAX, however, is Thornshroud. This Ixindar construct has been searching for a new route through which the shemjaza can lead the pagus into Canam, and will eventually find a path through the mountains north of the Grand Lakes. It is inexplicably drawn toward the Amethyst relics, and should it encounter an unwitting party of adventurers, it would take no mercy.

## PLAYER ARCS

Though the quest will take the players across the continent, their motivations for following it should be rooted at home. For techans, this is a matter of their entire way of life – they could be the saviors that finally make all Earth once more habitable for their kind. For echans, it is not their lifestyle, but their actual lives that are at stake, for if the white gate closes, the power that keeps them alive will disappear; millions of fae and enchanted humans will turn to dust in an instant... but Ixindar will not close, and without Attricana's balancing influence, the entire world could be delivered to Mengus.

Of course, the PCs (and even the players themselves) might not be aware of this at first. They might merely be following the orders of a superior, or wish to protect loved ones at home, or be offered fabulous rewards in exchange for their assistance. As the quest goes on and they see the impact that their actions have on the world, it should be constantly reinforced: this chaos could come to your homes, your families, the things and people that you care about – unless *you* take a stand.

With a techan group in particular, it is critical to distinguish ethics and survival. It is assumed that a techan party is at least paramilitary in origin, and operating according to instructions from a higher authority. Disobeying those instructions has the potential to cut them off from their source of supplies, if not result in them being hunted by their own side. At the same time, their commanders are likely to be ruthless and consider the lives of fae and echan humans to be worth less than those of the bastion—if they are worth anything at all. Based on past experience, we assume that a techan party will be good-aligned and will eventually disobey any orders that direct them to exterminate fae populations, but they may not be aware that Attricana's closing would kill off millions of fae and potentially humans.





They may be acquiring these artifacts for no reason other than that they have been ordered to. Maybe they think the world should belong to science but are not enlightened on the sacrifices to that result. They may have been led to believe that the fae would be sent back to their realm and that everything would fall back to science's control. In the end, the group will have to come to terms with their conscience... or not.

## WHERE IT ENDS

Once at least two more Amethyst relics have been found, Thornshroud and the shemjaza will discover a path around the Grand Lakes and launch their assault upon Canam with a massive army composed of every free range pagus they can get their claws on. The extent of the damage depends on where the party is from: the final encounter will always occur practically on the player character's doorstep, with the horde devastating (though likely not outright destroying) every nation in its path as Thornshroud makes a beeline for the relics. In the end, the players must rally what allies they can and fight a nigh apocalyptic battle to prevent the demons gaining a foothold on the lands of civilization.

Though with only three or four relics they do not have the ability to either close the gate or make Amethyst whole again, the players should find some way to use what they have found to defend against the pagus – some display of divine intervention. What form this takes, the players should be encouraged to suggest, and whatever it is, it only works this once; after that, the relics become inert and must slowly build their strength again.

In the aftermath of the battle, kingdoms and bastions may be crippled, and rogue pagus and shemjaza will disperse across Canam to potentially threaten future adventurers. The movers and shakers of the world will be concerned with rebuilding and re-securing their authority – and then with finding the remaining artifacts spread across the world, to ensure that such power remains in 'safe' hands.

## CRASHING THE SLAVE MARKET ECHAN

This arc may be all-encompassing or be merged into other arcs for a massive tangent plotline. This arc is

personal, more intimate. It has fewer monster fights and more role-playing. It deals with a group of players proudly following one of their own as they risk everything to save the one they love.

## HOW IT BEGINS

Ask the group for a volunteer to lose a fae who is dear to them – let them define exactly who – to a Baruch Malkut raid. If there are no volunteers, instead introduce an NPC with a tale of woe and enough gold to persuade the most hard-hearted mercenary. Fearing the worse, the party must race against the clock to find the captive before they are broken.

## WHERE IT TAKES THEM

This arc leads the party into the very heart of the most hated kingdom in Canam. A frontal assault, of course, is suicidal; the group must find a way to pass without remark through the fens and towns of Baruch Malkut. This involves several complications. For starters, they don't even speak proper English in Baruch Malkut, but a weird, limited argot with an almost comical accent, which is nevertheless full of so many shibboleths that even a fluent speaker might have difficulty passing for a native. For another, the towns are held under the most regimented religious authority: church services are regular and mandatory, everyone knows everyone else's business, and strangers are regarded with immediate suspicion until they prove themselves loyal. The party must travel through many such towns before they reach their goal. Outside the towns, things aren't much better, as the roads are patrolled regularly by Malkut troops and the swamps between them by Baruch thuggees practicing their skills on unwary travelers. If the party includes fae, they must learn to pass for slaves, and if there are no humans to accompany them, they must learn to pass for broken slaves trusted to move about on their own. No weapons can be carried within sight of civilization, so if they get into trouble, their only recourse is to run for their lives.

Finding the target is not easy, as it is impossible to tell for sure which slaver caravan is responsible. In Baruch Malkut, only the nobility and the clergy know how to read, so there are no records or notices to consult, and the average citizen can't tell one elf from another – and would certainly report any suspicious questioners looking for a particular slave. After several harrowing en-





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counters, in which stealth and trickery are their greatest weapons, the party will encounter a lead that takes them to the caravan – only to discover that the one they came to rescue is no longer there.

As their target drifts deeper into the kingdom, the players must bite their tongues to avoid exposure. Their leads take them to Tobias, then to Matronis, as product is shifted from location to location. The players may raid one slave train only to discover their objective is not present, and now they must help a band of chaparrans or damaskans safely out of the land. In the end, the party eventually reaches Faustis, the capital, to find that the one they seek has been sold to a member of Darius Konig's inner circle, the Order of the Cloth.

Upon liberating their target and acquiring any information they can about Baruch Malkut's secrets and defenses, they must escape to Nassau to warn their chief ally, Bilford Gram, before Konig's full might falls upon him. Dogged by Baruch thugs in every shadow and relentless agents of the Cloth, they reach the city just in time. Though they can overpower Nassau's occupying militia, they are no match for the forces marshalled at Sykar, and so Gram sends them to seek allies in Skyrose and Limshau. With these armies secured, they can return to break the siege at Nassau and set in motion the liberation of Baruch Malkut.

### WHO THEY MEET

The most loyal ally in this journey not accompanying the players will be Bilford Gram, who will keep players safe in his land. He asks for nothing but the eventual downfall of the kingdom. Alas, when his treachery to the kingdom is exposed, his life will be in danger.

Beyond them, there are few friends the PCs will encounter while deep in the kingdom. Their best allies will be the occasional band of chaparran guerillas, and the few slaves they are able to release. They cannot make a habit of this, as their presence will quickly be noticed. They may also encounter groups of rebels who can provide them with directions, and possibly abet their disguises by passing as escorts or owners, but these groups are small and relatively powerless. If they could somehow be brought together into a larger group, they might be able to do some damage – but they would also swiftly attract attention from the king's fanatics.

There are those within the civilized nations who are itching for an excuse to launch a preemptive strike against Baruch Malkut, and their agents can be found

throughout the nation. Though they are not likely to risk their cover to help a foolhardy group of heroes, should the party uncover evidence of atrocities that could sway opinion in their own nations towards war, they would certainly offer assistance to ensure that news gets out. The Taskin-Kada Watchers are the most likely to make contact, and though they can offer no assistance of their own, they are able to arrange meetings between other potential allies.

Once Bilford Gram's involvement is exposed and Nassau comes under siege, he will dispatch the party to seek aid from his damaskan wife's family in Skyrose. Though she will be desperate to help, her family will likely refuse, and even if they do not their powers are not enough to break the siege. The players will have to travel to Athaneum in Limshau to gain the support of the Feathertans, who are only too happy to strike the first blow against Baruch Malkut. The rest of Limshau's army will follow, and swiftly after will come their allies from Kannos and Abidan, who have only been waiting for an excuse.

### OPPONENTS

Everyone in Baruch Malkut is a potential opponent – even some of the fae slaves, though these are a minority, and truly loyal slaves should be easy to identify. Without a local guide, player characters will stand out as foreigners the moment they open their mouths to speak, as even those fluent in Onespeak and its lyrical accent are not necessarily fluent in the rote call-and-response formalities imposed on the communities by their religious authority.

Apart from regular military patrols, well-armed slavers, and roving bands of state-authorized brigands, the biggest opponent PCs will encounter will be bureaucracy. Even though almost nobody can read, every person who travels in Baruch Malkut must have documents explaining their purpose and authorizing the trip. These are, of course, fairly easy to forge, since most city guards haven't got a clue what they actually say – but occasionally the party might run across a guard captain of noble birth, or who mustered out of the priesthood for some reason, and who would be able to reveal their deception. Some of these clever ones can be bought off... but some can't.

Then, of course, there are the Cloth assassins. Special agents of Darius Konig himself, with authority to execute without trial and without warning, the party



***“Unlike other quests that stand before us, with Baruch Malkut, the common enemy is always man. The more we fight against the dark side of our own species, the more we are forced to realize how little we have progressed. Though many other nations claim their nobility as proof of humanity’s progress, Baruch Malkut illustrates otherwise.***

***“Darius Konig is a man, not a demon. By defeating this artifact from mankind’s past, perhaps, just perhaps, we can truly forgive ourselves for the sins we committed in the blindness of fanaticism and move ahead as a civilized species.”***

**Vincent Savarice  
Abidan**

might not even be aware of their presence until a red cloak and golden deaths-head mask appear in their midst. These are not likely to appear until the group has drawn a deal of attention, however – for lesser threats, a thuggee’s garrote is quite sufficient.

Despite what the players may think, it may not be wise to have the group directly encounter Darius Konig himself. He is highly skilled at both swordplay and magic, he has access to the largest stockpile of enchanted items in Canam, and he is surrounded at all times by fanatical warriors who would willingly give their lives for him. Any attempt at regicide would almost certainly result in a total party kill. That said, should the party attempt to infiltrate his inner circle and discover his secrets instead of trying to assassinate him, they would encounter the fiercely compelling personality of an established cult leader with a wyrm’s tongue. Though no overt magic would be involved, they might find their resolve slipping with prolonged exposure to his words.

## PLAYER ARCS

No matter what happens, this tale should have dark chapters. But one of them should not be the failure of the primary arc. Despite many storytellers believing an unhappy ending is more dramatic and interesting than a happy ending, players don’t like seeing their purpose of being flushed away. The PC whose obsession initially drives the group (though eventually shared by everyone, sometimes for other reasons) should survive to see this quest completed. The one they seek to rescue

should be saved, alive and unbroken. If another player later connects with a foe who is later halloed or killed, that’s fine, but the initial objective should succeed. This is neither the climax nor nowhere near the end of the story for any of them.

One interesting option involves having a player originally from this kingdom, or descended from Malkut refugees. Her family may even have been involved in the slave trade in the past, and facing these past demons would be an important plot thread for that character. For the rest of the party they would also be a boon, as they not only speak the language but know the traps Malkut culture lays for the unwary.

Characters from neighboring nations should not need an excuse to want to see Baruch Malkut brought low – the safety of their homes and families is threatened by the kingdom’s existence. Should they return from their quest with information of value to their country’s leadership, they would be hailed as heroes.

## WHERE IT ENDS

When the players return with a Limshau army in tow, the siege is broken and the Sykar forces are good as defeated. When their Abidan and Kannos allies arrive, the armies unite and prepare for a pincer attack to sweep across northern Malkut and shut down the slaver markets for good.

Such a war would not be resolved immediately. Though the players could have an active hand in the invasion, the war would hit a wall when approaching the marshlands of the peninsula, where armies cannot easily pass and the thuggees are in their element. With Matronis and Tobias occupied, the kingdom of Baruch Malkut would be reduced to a handful of poor towns with few resources. From there, the rival nations would simply wait for the people to rise to overthrow their king. That, however, is another story.





## RESCUE, WHATEVER THE COST

The worst fears come to pass. An important person has strayed far off course and crashed in the north. No one knows precisely where or their condition. The bastion or the players themselves feel compelled to conduct a rescue. Such a mission would take months. It could be as far away as anyone could travel, past the Bulwark, through Apocrypha.

### HOW IT BEGINS

A group of techans, either from Angel or Sierra Madre, is either offered or assigned a perilous mission. The rewards are, of course, commensurate with the risk, but the details are a little sketchy. All they know for sure is that someone very important is in trouble and it is up to them to mount a rescue. The team would have few resources. Such a long trek would have to be taken overland with as little high technology as possible, but still enough to keep the group alive. For a Sierra Madre-based group, the stakes are much higher, as the population is exceptionally naïve about the world outside. Many of the members of the team might not have even heard of Limshau or Abidan and may be completely unprepared for what awaits them. Why are they going? Are they being paid a massive amount of money from a third party? Have they been lied to (save my microfilm—er, I mean, my daughter)? Is it personally motivated? The details of the disappearance should be left open and mysterious initially—a mystery to be solved later.

### 374 WHERE IT TAKES THEM

The endpoint of the rescue is far to the north, and the navigational data the party is provided with is... not the best. Their path will take them through the winding canyons of Kesakas, the ruined kingdom of Torquil, through the treacherous forests and into the confusing landscape of Burgunasis (if starting from Angel, skip the first two). Though bumping into strange backward humans still living in a feudal society, most of the creatures the group will encounter will be frightening or wonderful, ugly or beautiful. In time they will accidentally stumble into Sana Marsh without realizing it, and have to face the terrors there. If they escape, they might mistake their map and continue north into Dag-

ron, only to realize that they are hundreds of miles off course and have to correct south and east, through Kan-nos, past the Finer Fire Pits, through Abidan, over Tethuss, and into Apocrypha. When they final reach Chronzia, they discover the wreckage empty, with signs that everything salvageable in supplies and slaves was taken into Ažhi Dahaka. Can they even survive a trek into the land ruled by evil dragons?

### WHO THEY MEET

This arc is full of strange encounters both pleasant and hostile. The first leg of their journey is beset by wild prehistoric beasts and lawless brigands. Depending on the route they took after that they could wander into an enchanted faerie woodland realm (full of elves who want to kill them) or a dark enchanted forest (full of monsters that want to kill them). Their next encounter might be with a strange hermit sitting on a floating rock who remembers meeting them before, ten years from now; or it might be with a hulking chiggoth that flings the floating boulders at them like skittles. Then of course, there's the Sana Marsh, where they are unlikely to encounter anyone helpful.

Beyond this point, the journey becomes a little less complicated, and they are likely to encounter bucolic or even civilized folk who can point them the right direction. They might even find a hidden valley full of strange, little folk who want to examine all their equipment and sell them cheap trinkets. It is all very confusing, but things are starting to get a little more manageable. That is, until they follow a road on the map that isn't actually there anymore and wind up getting roped up for some skegg's cookpot and rescued from certain doom by massive talking bears.

The players may make friends along the way and may end up never leaving this enchanted world. Low-level techan characters could easily turn to echa and alter the entire demographic of the party. This might come because of the influence of the people they meet, or it may come out of necessity as they may be out of touch with bastions for extended periods of time, especially when passing over Tethuss into lands where no good creatures walk.

### OPPONENTS

The heroes will encounter many mean-spirited monsters in their travels; from saber cats and direwolves, to



puggs, boggs, and skeggs, to dojenn and oggraks, to the shapeless wild of Sana Marsh, to even bigger skeggs riding hairy elephants and flinging puggs with catapults, to angry bears, to angry pagus, to mystifyingly cruel demons and terrifying dragons. At each stage, the players should be made to feel out of their depth (though not to the point that they are unable to face the enemy without help), so that whenever they encounter an even remotely friendly face, they gratefully seize on the opportunity to gather intel on what lies ahead. If they get in too far over their heads, they should be encouraged to run away – they have a job to do, and they can't do it if they're being eaten by some two-foot-tall grinning monkey-thing.

Their final opponent in the rescue should be nothing short of a dragon, specifically the death dragon Reaver of Light. His death would not mark the end of their journey, but perhaps this chapter.

## PLAYER ARCS

Initially, the inexperienced techan players may want to avoid the echan world as much as possible, but as time goes on, it will be unavoidable. Unlike other arcs, even in the techan Amethyst, the players should have little to no knowledge of the outside world. Some of them might not have yet seen a fae.

Because of the EDF, there is no communication with their home or the person or property they are trying to rescue. They would not even be sure exactly where they are going, making the mission seem pointless. The players may wander lost, losing hope as quickly as they lose direction. They do not have good maps, and in any case, the terrain they are passing through sometimes seems to change without warning. If the GM wishes, they might even wander further afield, suddenly coming across the sickened marsh of Tranquiss and being accosted by a Baruch Malkut border patrol, or coming out of the mountains to the astonishing sight of an armored knight riding on a blue dragon. All the while, they start asking questions about how the world came to be this way and if it is the preferred state of being. The GM is encouraged to keep much of the rulebook as far from player's eyes as possible, keeping them in the dark about locations until they reach them.

As they make friends, they should be made to care about what happens to them with small side-quests. If they wandered into Salvabrooke by mistake, perhaps a

gimfen child has gotten lost outside the valley and a tearful parent begs them to bring her daughter back. Escaping Sana Marsh with the aid of a party of Jairus Death Hunters, one of their rescuers might be dragged away by a shapeless wild and all they can do is mourn him with his fellows later. As they stumble blindly about the border between Kannos and Dagron, they might come across a ranch under attack by zombie tyrannosaurs and lend a hand in destroying the undead abominations, for which the grateful rancher offers them a good meal, a night's peaceful sleep in his warm hayloft, and fine horses to replace their long-since-defunct ETV.

By the end of the story, their dispositions have matured, their tempers have tempered. They stopped fearing that which lies around the corner. They have grown used to this new life. It would not at all be shocking if every single character had decided to stay in this world.

## WHERE IT ENDS

Where it probably won't end is back at the bastion. The entire purpose of this arc is to show techans the world outside and make them question their priorities. Once they reach their destination, what they choose to do will depend on what they find.

It could be that all this has been in vain; the person they seek is dead or escaped on their own, or the object is destroyed or simply cannot be found. Rather than go back empty-handed, they may choose to continue on as soldiers of fortune, until they can find *something* to make it all worthwhile.

Perhaps they took too long; time distortion as they passed through Burgunasis, perhaps, extending a journey of weeks into months or years. The person they were sent to find is now an echan and doesn't want to go home, or the technology they were dispatched for has long since disrupted and is now useless.

Perhaps the PCs themselves have become echan in the interim and the target technology disrupts the moment they touch it, or the one they are sent to rescue is afraid of them and won't go.

Or perhaps the thing they find is so important that everyone wants to get their hands on it: an Amethyst relic; the vital clue for technology to work within magic; the key to creating anti-magic fields with technology. Good luck getting *that* back to the bastion without attracting attention. Their fate may be to die with the





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armies of pagus converging on them. In the end, perhaps the laudenians take pity on their cavalcade of misfortune and scoop them to the sky to begin another chapter in their long and confusing voyage.

### IT'S WHY THEY CALL IT MONEY

#### (ECHAN OR TECHAN)

This is a strange arc and will appear very selfish. It should be combined with another much larger arc like the Amethyst story. The big difference here is that the players are not actually part of the larger quest; it occurs around them, changing the landscape of the world. But while other heroes are trying to save the planet, these players are just trying to survive and make a bit of cash.

#### HOW IT BEGINS

It begins with a group of mercenaries or freelancers voyaging into the lawless lands during the chaos of war to join winning sides or dive into dungeons, looking for unpilfered coins and other carrion. As the tides of war shift from castle to field and back to castle, these “heroes” keep out of notice, pinching and pilfering what they can, involving themselves in combat only when it suits their goals. Fate may have other plans.

#### WHERE IT TAKES THEM

Wherever the arc they are mirroring goes, they go – usually a few steps behind those who went there first. Eventually, events will start catching up to them, or they will start catching up to events, as the situation becomes more and more overblown so that they can no longer exist purely on the fringes.

One possible approach for this arc would be to mirror a different arc that this group has already played through with different characters, following in their own footsteps. This allows them to have a stake in the action and will discourage them from going off on random tangents.

#### WHO THEY MEET

This party will likely not meet the movers and shakers of the world, except possibly by accident or when trying to get money out of them. They are more likely to meet those caught up in the fallout of the heroes' actions; farmers and townsfolk displaced by war, bounty

hunters seeking those who attacked the slaver caravan and stole the cargo, the corrupt magistrate who was stripped of his rank after his criminal connections were revealed, and so on. They will not encounter many allies, but they might find plenty of people willing to part with coin or goods in exchange for salvation or vengeance.

#### OPPONENTS

It is entirely possible that the very heroes that the party is trailing after might turn out to be their biggest opponents, albeit indirectly, by causing the kinds of chaotic events that result in the succession of perils to the characters' life and limb. More immediate threats tend to be of the inconvenient guard, random brute, and wandering monster variety.

#### PLAYER ARCS

The ethics of slipping away in battle may wear down the souls of the group, eventually forcing a few to put their foot down. This may occur several times until the players stop dodging responsibilities and face the fact that they have to help change the world for the better. If they don't wish to, then they are part of the problem, and a real player arc won't occur.

#### WHERE IT ENDS

When the players have their fill or until the arc they're following turns into the real one for them.

### POLITICS OF CANAM

#### (ECHAN)

The politics of Canam are thorny and complex, consisting (in simple terms) of four large empires grinding at the land with dozens of smaller nations in between being treated as political lubricant. As long as the large ones don't chafe borders, all should be well. After a time, the smaller houses begin to get annoyed at the practice. While they try to muscle some control and claim some piece of dignity, the large ones play their game, threatening war but never committing to it.

Players in this group should not be part of the royal class, but loyal members just below the inner circle. They catch the direction the wind shifts before anyone else does but may not have an active role in the weather. This may appear to stifle players, but some groups



find having such an overlying story are intriguing. Eventually, the players will have a hand in actively changing history by being in the right place at the right time.

## HOW IT BEGINS

As rumblings of war are heard on the horizon, several houses grow concerned about power plays by neighboring and larger nations. What starts as a diplomatic envoy of peace to a rival house may spark a conflict that brings in other houses, maybe even one of the big nations like Limshau, Abidan, or Kannos.

Choose any of the smaller free houses described in this book, or create an original free house. There are plenty of vast open areas unclaimed in Canam to place such a pocket monarchy. It should not be larger than a few villages. One player may be part of the royal family, but never an overwhelmingly influential one. Other players could be cousins, guard captains, or loyal friends.

Come up with a reason for the party to be involved in a diplomatic mission. Perhaps the royal is being betrothed to a possible marriage in another kingdom to increase their power base with a blood-tied alliance. Perhaps they are being sent as part of a hostage exchange with a formerly hostile nation. Perhaps they are merely an envoy.

Select another free house to be the target of this diplomacy:

House Antikari is relatively independent, though its small noble house has ties to the crumbling House Torquil. They would happily sell out Antikari's sovereignty to help rekindle the fires in the larger house.

House Locus-Mallis is temperamental, prone to violence. If they break from their hold within Xixion, an aggressive push for territory may develop. If not, they may offer up riches or marriages in hope someone else will take up blades to war.

House Orchis enjoys a profitable relationship with many neighbors thanks to its proximity along the Continental Cross. It believes it can dictate terms with those seeking a treaty.

House Plicato has many young nobles open for marriage. Alas, it is often forgotten. Away from the Continental Cross, Plicato hopes a treaty will allow the Cross to be re-planned through their nation. They offer themselves up as a stopover point between the Western houses and Limshau.

House Torquil, the shadow of its greatness, continues dreaming of a time when they were one of the largest nations in Canam. Many of their nobility wish it to return at any cost. They will snatch anything offered to them and will proffer what they have left as an edge to retake their land.

House Ogium hardly has time for politics, as their continued internal conflict litters their landscape in blood. If Ogium is a neighbor, then their conflict may threaten to spill over.

House Quinox is virtually ignored by the southern lands, being so foreign in policies and practices, few other houses want to deal with them. However, to the micronations of Seliqum, they are as significant as Limshau is to the free houses along the Cross, as they control the only maintained pass through the Nankani Mountains.

House Skyrose won't deal with any nations unless they have pure fac blood. They are even wary about dealing with Limshau or Plicato.

## WHERE IT TAKES THEM

This depends on how far apart the two Houses are. They might be right next door... or they might be on the other end of the Continental Cross. The lands in between are not the focus, however. The players' arcs concern internal conflicts of the kingdom and their position within the map of Canam. If things take a sour turn, the players may find themselves at the head of an army (willingly or not), or banished to unfamiliar territory until they can find something to redeem themselves. Otherwise, most of the story takes place within the House(s) borders.

It is also essential to set a timetable for this arc. Though the modern era deals with encroaching evil, the GM may decide to change her time period to much earlier, when nations were more selfish, believing demons were the problem of the East. The GM may set the story in the distant past and border the house next to the recently fallen nation of Kardia (or maybe...this IS the nation of Kardia).

## WHO THEY MEET

Again, geography plays the greatest role here. Consult the descriptions of the free houses for who the VIPs are; if you've made up your own, these details are in your hands.





The biggest issue is who to trust. In politics, no one trusts anyone. The players would be loyal to each and to the noble they are sworn to protect, but they may seem the only sane voices in a land of madness.

The most important and exciting events of a political game, and the event that brings in the most characters is the tournament or hastilude. This event probably occurs because of the highest noble of the land wanting to put on a show to celebrate the treaty or marriage. It could also be that he just wants to spend money. The players are welcomed and encouraged to join in the festivities though such an event would neither be quick nor straightforward. It would be more than just a joust. Melee circles, horse racing, endurance events, and grand banquets would be par the course over several days. Such a festival should take up more than a few sessions. The players can talk to representatives from houses all over their half of the continent. Friendships may be forged, and enemies may be vowed. If assassination is part of the day, the GM is invited to include such a subplot.

If an external threat looms on the horizon, like armies of pagus or kaddog, the political atmosphere may shift, forcing rival houses together, forgetting pesky squabbles. Marriages may be the glue between rival families to fortify the alliance. Players may not like such partnerships, as it forces prior enemies to mix.

### OPPONENTS

In a proper political game, the PCs should be their own worst enemies. 'Politics' and 'politeness' come from the same root, and players are usually disruptive elements. Most opponents use smiles and words as their weapons. Enemies are not as clearly defined, and alliances can shift quickly. Opponents need not even be evil. They may merely be rivals from another nation with their own responsibilities. 'They have their own principles which are as valid as the players'. In this landscape, there is little black and white, only shades of grey.

Should it seem like the players need a chance to blow off steam and not get in trouble for it, the GM is invited to introduce an external threat; either a monster invasion or a different rival nation that can put the adage 'the enemy of my enemy is my friend' to the test. For a nice distraction, a random dungeon of legend and foreboding is not a bad idea either.

### PLAYER ARCS

Arcs in this kind of story don't always reach their climax with a pivotal battle. Here, they reach a crescendo with words. Players are responsible for creating much of their game as the GM needs input for such plots to play out correctly. This arc requires players to identify their goals and work toward them, with the GM providing appropriate allies and rivals.

The players may end up mingling with the nobility in more ways than one. Loyalties may be frayed, and friends may turn against each other. As the external evil begins to grow, players may have to put aside their resentment toward human or fae enemies. This may not go quickly or quietly, and arguments may spill with blood on battlefields.

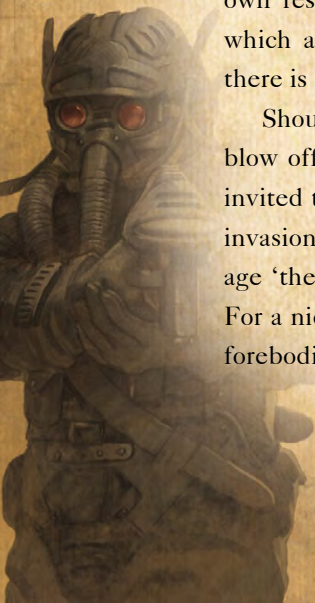
### WHERE IT ENDS

This arc begins with a political goal and ends when that goal is either achieved or thwarted. The unwilling fiancée is either married off in state, or elopes with a stablehand and sparks a war with the insulted house. The diplomatic envoy dispatched to another house to get them out of the way of a conspiracy at home learns the truth and rushes back, braving official censure, to put a stop to it. The kingdom under pagus siege finally contacts distant allies, who come riding to the rescue in a death-or-glory charge.

Whether the house survives or not is up to the GM to decide. The GM may choose to overwhelm the house in the encroaching evil, forcing an evacuation. Perhaps the players come riding to the rescue just a little too late, in time to watch a formerly hated rival die in their arms, and to take up their own swords in vengeance. The house and its nobility may crumble. The survivors may flee to neighbors. Alternatively, a glorious victory may raise the House's profile among the nations of Canam, leading to a golden age... until the next arc starts.

### STORY EVENTS

The flip side of arcs are story events. These aren't scripted ahead of time, and they happen because of player choice, not because of GM fiat. A GM might suggest that one of these may make a better story, but ultimately that decision should lie in the hands of the play-





ers, and the GM should make allowances in the overall arc for them.

## DEATH (AND FATES WORSE THAN)

*Amethyst* is at its heart a swords-and-sorcery RPG setting, and with that comes a certain expectation of the randomness of character death which may be at odds with a story-driven game. Some groups may be OK with that. Others may find it jarring to have to replace characters mid-way through an arc because of a few disastrous dice rolls. A little imagination on the GM's part can also find a way of making defeat in combat sting without completely ending that character's development: scars, either physical or psychological; being dragged away and sold into slavery, forcing a daring escape or rescue; being imprisoned in a hole half-way up a mountain with no way out except a mile-long drop; or, horror of horrors, having their prized magic sword taken away and having to go through hell and high water to get it back. Unless, of course, the player would *prefer* their character to die (either because they're tired of it and want to make a new one, or because they are old-school like that).

The GM should never kill a PC outright without permission, even if it would make the story better. That's what popular, likeable NPCs are for. If dying is part of the character's arc, as determined by the player, that's something else entirely. The player may not know exactly *when* this is going to happen, but is aware that it is in the cards and can presumably plan for some suitably dramatic last words.

The same restriction should also apply to serious, long-term injury or other lasting change that might affect how the player plays her character. If the GM wants the players to come out of an epic battle with horrifying scars, that's one thing, but it is best to ask the players' opinions on what form those scars take. Often the player will come up with something more dramatic than anything the GM can envision.

NPCs are fair game, of course – the only exception being NPCs that players have created as part of their background or as part of the 'I know a guy' option, which should only be killed off with permission as well. However, getting an emotional reaction from the death of a non-player character can be tricky. A GM cannot just say, "this character is important to you" and have it

stick. To make it felt by both player and character, that NPC must have a personality. The NPC must also have hung around for an extended period in the game. Nothing strengthens an attachment like time. The longer an NPC hangs with the player group, the more the loss will be felt when death occurs. It is also important that the motive for killing the NPC be story-serving – galvanizing the PCs into action, or showing that a particular villain is utterly irredeemable (or too tough for the PCs to handle), for instance.

On the subject of villains, the common GM point is to bring back successful villains often...and more often. Be careful when doing this. For some groups, it can be good to see (and once more pummel) a familiar face again, especially if they come back bearing the scars of the last ignominious defeat. Just take care that this doesn't become a running gag if you want the villain to be taken seriously; if the players give them a humorous nickname, though, it's probably too late. Other groups want defeated villains to stay defeated. As a rule of thumb, if they take pains to make sure he's dead, they probably don't want him to come back. Also, the more epic the conflict, the less appropriate it is to undercut it by allowing the villain to escape... unless she comes back years later in an equally dramatic manner to gloat about having masterminded everything since the moment of her defeat until this moment when she shall have her revenge, muahahahaha. And then if the players *really* don't want to fight her again, let them put an arrow through her while she's monologuing.

## MAGIC AND CORRUPTION

Many *Amethyst* arcs revolve around the players' choice to follow fantasy or technology. While we provide a basic mechanic for showing which side of the divide the character falls on, this shouldn't be used as a straitjacket. Perhaps the character arc the player wants is a techan flirting with magic items, perhaps even becoming addicted to the power, but ultimately deciding that this isn't the life she really wants; the GM should allow that to play out even if, strictly according to the rules, the PC should instantly switch over to echa. While the GM should also be vigilant that the player isn't trying to abuse this leeway in order to have their cake and eat it too, the disruption rules should naturally put limits on those kinds of shenanigans.





The same applies to corruption by Ixindar. Most games that feature a corruption mechanic declare that once a character has passed over the threshold, they are no longer playable and must become an NPC under the GM's control. *Amethyst* is absolutely not one of those games. In the first place, becoming bound to Ixindar does not automatically make one an irredeemable villain, merely locks one's thinking into a certain mindset (admittedly one which lends itself to villainy *really* easily). In the second place, if a player deliberately made the choices to perform actions that would accrue corruption, it's probably because they *want* to play a corrupted character, and won't appreciate the GM taking their toys away. If the player offers to have their PC become the next arc villain, then by all means, take the offer – but don't force it on them.

### ROMANCE

The single hardest story point to role play in a game is romance. Unless the participants are already partners in real life, this can get uncomfortable fast (and still can for everyone else if they're taking it as an excuse to flirt instead of paying attention to the game), so it is important to establish limits ahead of time.

The easiest way to deal with a romance arc between a PC and an NPC is to give the player at least most of the agency over both characters; while the GM can be in charge of when the NPC appears in the story and can suggest or indicate certain actions that they should take in service of the plot, the actual roleplaying of both sides of the relationship is all done by the player.

There are two particular pitfalls to watch out for when injecting a romance arc into a game. First is the 'damsel in distress' trope, as seen in the Baruch Malkut slaver arc, above: pains should be taken to ensure that the PC's romantic partner does not just become a prize. *Amethyst* is a setting in which fairy tale concepts and cold, hard reality butt heads, and the chivalric ideal of the princess in a tower waiting to marry the brave knight who rescues her is one that is never played straight – though those in peril sometimes do end up marrying their rescuers in our little story blurbs, it usually follows years of tentative courtship after the event, and almost without exception, leaves one of them alone after the death of the other. 'Happily ever after' just doesn't happen here.

The second is the 'arranged marriage,' which conceptually is so problematic that we originally wanted to remove it from the tilen character backgrounds. It is, of course, a mainstay of feudal tradition that powerful families use blood ties to cement alliances, regardless of the personal feelings of those involved, and arranging and escorting the affianced character to the event can be a reasonable option for a campaign, as seen in the political arc above. But the real story here isn't the marriage, but how the characters feel about it. Before such an arc begins, make sure that the player has a definite opinion on the matter, and make sure not to overrule it: if, in the end, the player doesn't want the character to go through with it, then don't force it. On the other hand, if they *do* want it but are treating their betrothed as an achievement rather than a character, feel free to point out that their spouse-to-be may have other ideas.

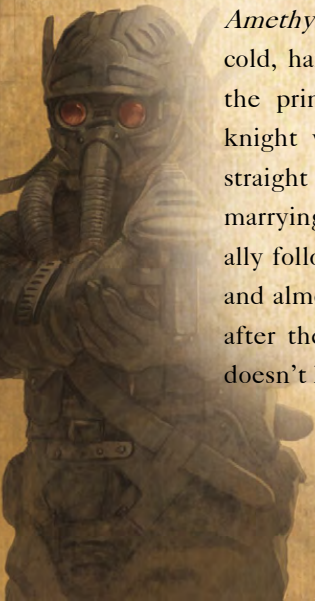
A GM must also be prepared to suddenly create a fleshed-out NPC out of the air when a seemingly unimportant act causes an attachment. The player may see a beauty from across the room or take notice of an opponent in battle. Captured alive, they reveal a truth about themselves that makes them endearing to another. Then there are the slaves. Players are bound to encounter the slave trains in Baruch Malkut at least once. A freed slave may suddenly find him or herself tagging along, and may develop an attachment to their rescuer (or vice versa). Rescuing a slave is a noble act, and good-aligned players should avoid taking advantage of the situation.

As with player character death, the GM should not kill off a character's love interest without permission – especially not as a way to provoke the character into action. A dead love is best served as part of the character's backstory, not as an in-game event, unless the player chooses to play it out. Likewise, kidnapping, permanent disfigurement, psychological trauma, or becoming bound to one of the gates should not be solely the GM's decision.

Finally, the GM should never allow a PC to become bonded solely to gain the mechanical benefits thereof.

### TWISTS

The universal truth of roleplaying games is that the GM can't stop her players from reading the whole book. While trying to keep portions of the game away from the players' eyes may encourage an atmosphere in





which they can be shocked when something truly unpredictable occurs, one should not count on it. Furthermore, some players may want to build characters around the concept of knowing something that most people in the setting don't: therefore, it should (within reason) be up to the *player* what constitutes out-of-character knowledge and what doesn't, as long as she can justify how she knows it as part of her backstory. If nothing else, this will make the character feel more important when something she already knew is finally revealed to all. Players can also be encouraged to make up twists relevant to their characters, which the GM can incorporate into the ongoing narrative.

There are a few limitations, of course. As a rule, neophyte techans should know nothing concrete about the fantasy world, assuming they are even aware that it exists. At best, they can know a few half-truths gleaned from popular entertainment, but these tidbits are more likely to cause them trouble than anything else. Similarly, characters of all sorts should know little about other people and places far from their homelands; travel is uncommon, and most peoples' information about the world beyond their horizon is third-hand at best. The GM always has the option of determining that what a character *thinks* she knows is not entirely the truth, though there should always be at least a grain of it in there somewhere.

Furthermore, the actions and motivations of the major antagonists of the setting are strictly off limits. No PC should know *anything* about the Saints or their drive to close the gates at the start of the game. Likewise, the true nature and motives of Mengus and her shemjaza, the truth of Darius Konig's longevity, or what really happened in the final battle between Amethyst and Gebermach.

If the GM is worried that the player will spoil the game for everyone else by wasting campaign secrets on trivia, that is a matter that should be handled by a frank discussion with the player; this is usually a sign that the game may be losing its shine for that player, and the GM needs to find some other hook to keep their attention.

## THE ANACHRONISM OF FANTASY

The biggest drawback when dealing with a fantasy world is the ambiguous nature of its own genre. By definition, it creates a situation that can never exist because it selectively and situationally ignores scientific laws in favor of the Rule of Cool. It is a world built on impressions of reality rather than reality itself, and deals with the aesthetics, rather than the reality, of Earth's medieval and renaissance periods. In fantasy, weapons are a personal choice and armor is designed for its visuals rather than engineered specifically to counter advances in weapon technology. Swords are the most important weapon because they look nifty, even though bows, spears, and halberds are vastly more effective in reality. Knights in Savoyard armor wielding a sword in one hand and a shield in the other lead (on foot!) troops wearing chain and lorica segmentata. And of course, there are no firearms, because everyone knows guns were what eventually did away with armored knights (which is technically true, but only after armorers spent over 300 years making armor that could stop a bullet while gunsmiths toiled to make faster bullets). These are the same assumptions made when one claims a stegosaurus and a tyrannosaurus could fight when they were never alive in the same time period.

It is impossible to correctly predict a fantasy world where society is prevented from developing because of an external obstruction. At which point, one could imagine 1000 years of weapon construction having to be re-learned (fewer people know how to make plate armor now than they did 500 years ago, and if the Internet stopped working, most would have to rely on printed books again to reclaim these skills). One would need to consider the weapons that would make their reappearance. Longbows and crossbows seem an obvious assumption (though their application resulted in them hardly ever appearing together in the same army), as would the many lengths and styles of swords and polearms, but even that is an assumption tempered with caution. The reason fantasy is anachronistic is because most real people aren't familiar with the real history, only a loose approximation of it, and this would carry over into their attempts to resurrect it if they were suddenly thrown back to a medieval level of technology. People *would* attempt to make 15<sup>th</sup>-century parade armor work on the same battlefield as katana and rapiers,





because (at least at first) they wouldn't know any better.

*Amethyst* does make *some* effort to be realistic in this regard, but we also recognize that we are building on another game's mechanics, which completely embraces the anachronism. We also allow that magic allows for situations where an enchanted blade could, in fact, cleave a man clad in full plate from head to brisket. There are also considerations for things that have no real historical parallels, such as exotic weapons (most of which are actually repurposed farm equipment, or wild impracticalities meant for show rather than for actual battle usage) and even weapon and armor shops (almost all such things would realistically be bespoke pieces, not something you'd find on a rack anywhere). *Amethyst* presents a medieval society rebuilt based on what people *expect* a medieval society to be, not necessarily what it actually *was*.

Sometimes this goes the other way, as well. People in *Amethyst* have not forgotten the science that used to run their world – they've merely discarded those parts of it that don't work anymore. Farmers are rarely bonded serfs toiling with mattock and ox-drawn plow to grow a meager field of turnips; in some parts of the world, the only difference between a real, modern farmer and their *Amethyst* equivalent is whether their harvester runs on diesel fuel versus grain ethanol, and what sort of hat they wear. Armor made from titanium or carbon fiber is prized over mere steel, and the greatest luxury a castle can boast is indoor plumbing and a porcelain toilet bowl. Even post-industrial technology that only requires minor maintenance may be in common use in a community that otherwise looks like it stepped out of a 14<sup>th</sup>-century woodcut.

While our preference is for *Amethyst* to err on the side of realism, how far the game goes in embracing fantasy tropes is ultimately up to the GM. It should also be remembered that magic is unpredictable at best, and the conditions that apply one day may not necessarily do so the next.

### ECHAN / TECHAN ORIGIN

A techan game or an echan game with the same locations and the same monsters can often have radically different approaches, outlooks, and outcomes. Even the characters themselves will have different motivation

regardless of the details of the quest. Echans or techans might venture into a dragon's lair, either to protect a nearby settlement or to claim the dragon's hoard – but for the echan, that hoard represents personal wealth and the settlement is a small town whose hetman is tired of sacrificing virgins to the wyrm, while for the techan, the settlement is a bastion whose entire way of life could collapse if the dragon decides to breathe near it, and the hoard is valuable not in itself, but for all the gold wire that could be made if it were melted down.

The biggest consideration a GM must make for parties of varying (or even mixed) origins is motivation to take a quest. Techan characters have a very strong incentive to remain at home, or at least close enough to it that they can restock and repair regularly. Without a shielded vehicle of some sort, long-range action is risky at best. The potential rewards must therefore be commensurately great to counter the risk. At the same time, echan treasure is only usually valuable to techans if it's made of metal that can be melted down, which they can take back to the bastion and exchange for credits. They can't use magic items, and they aren't going to find stockpiles of equipment that they can use. The best possible reward for a party of either composition (or both) is secrets: the location of a cache of ancient knowledge, an alchemical formula, a foundation spell anchor, a map showing a stable route through Burgunasis or the migration pattern of a pugg swarm, the right combination of words that will attract the attention of Ramkava, the truth about Darius Konig – all of these things, if they are not valuable to the characters in and of themselves, can be traded for something they need to the right person.

There are, of course, those who adventure for the thrill of it, out of altruism, or to fulfill some personal need. Though echans often think of themselves as the only ones prone to such flights of fancy, a techan party can be just as motivated to save a village full of innocents as a cadre of knight-errants. They just have to be more careful, because being paid in chickens is not going to help them if they run out of ammunition facing down the bandits that are robbing the town blind.

Nearly every basic adventure idea can switch with little effort between a techan or echan origin. Since the destinations in the quest are the same, all the GM would need to do is to create a new beginning.





# SIDEQUESTS

Adventures in the *Amethyst* setting will often have alternate starting points dependent on what part of Canam the GM is basing the story. If the GM is playing a full story-based campaign, then the location might change week-to-week. As a result, few of the sidequests detailed here mention specific Canam locations. The GM is invited and encouraged to include additional details depending on the particular area the players are in or traveling through.

## SIDEQUESTS

**Landscape:** The types of maps you can employ.

**Hook:** What forces and invites the group to take on the quest.

**Quest:** The basis of the side-quest.

**Echan / Techan Angle:** These are the variations of the quest dependent on where the quest is located or if the player group is techan dominant or echan dominant.

**Bestiary:** The noteworthy *Amethyst* monsters that make an appearance in this quest.

**Adventure:** The details of the sidequest.

**Outcome:** What rewards other than treasure and experience the group may hope to acquire.

## LIMITS OF GRATITUDE

**Landscape:** Forest with a river nearby.

**Hook:** The group is traveling through any forest in echa. Hearing the sounds of splashing and a high-pitched gurgling scream, their attention is diverted from the inviting, safe path to the river's edge.

There, the group encounters a monster unlike any they had seen before. It is ugly, with the face of an angler fish and a body of a humanoid. It wields no swords or tridents, just claws, and teeth. It's clambering up the beach towards a neirryd riverblessed. Half the fae's body has turned to water and it is near death.

**Quest:** The nariisa is only the first victim. A family of nearly a dozen dojenn has swum upstream from another forest that had recently burned down from the hands of an inconsiderate human. They found these woods ripe with stocks to feed upon. This dojenn was a straggler. The others are already moving in deeper,

feasting on found fae and making a move to attack a chaparran village.

**Echan / Techan Angle:** *Echan*—There is very little needed when a nariisa is under threat in the eyes of any civilized echan. Despite the chaparrans' xenophobia, they are still in need. *Techan*—Regardless of the group's views on creatures of fantasy, the dojenn are an imminent threat that should be dealt with promptly.

**Bestiary:** Apart from the dojenn (one at first, in greater numbers later) and the neriisa (who may or may not survive, or if she does, stick around to thank her rescuer), there are also chaparrans and other chaparran anathema within the forest. All the fae in the forest are on the defensive and may spontaneously attack any encroachers they see out of fear before realizing their mistake.

## ADVENTURE

1. If you want to develop the nariisa, she may live, but be prepared for some awkwardness. Her initial instinct will be to flee. If the players lose interest, introduce three more dojenn to verify the threat is real and constant. If the nariisa dies, her death can inspire the others to avenge the death of such a beauty. Alive, and if she trusts the players enough, she may remain, though she will not speak for at least a full day, drifting back and forth from the river and the group. She will lead them upstream as long as they don't deviate from the water. If the group exhibit violent tendencies toward the forest or her, she will take to the water and never return. On her own, the dojenn are sure to kill her, and she will be found dead upstream later. Riverblessed are formidable in their own habitat, but the dojenn have numbers and share the same benefit from the terrain.

2. Dojenn are nightwalkers and will prefer to stalk prey in the dark. When the group makes camp, the nariisa (still nameless and voiceless) will show discomfort about the idea of a fire. A party member blessed with good ears and/or darkvision and skilled in matters of stealth will be able to notice 4 dojenn rising from the waters with hardly a disturbance, their eyes reflecting a glint of moonlight and nothing else. If there is a fire, the dojenn will be aware of the players and set up an ambush. Without a fire, the players may be able to get the jump on them. The nariisa (if alive) will join in this engagement.





but ultimately fails. If the group is without the nariisa, there will be no attempt at diplomacy and the players may wonder why they are trying to be the hero when even those they are protecting are trying to kill them.

5. The final engagement occurs at the chaparran village of Babsolom. Only fifty chaparran strong, they have had little contact with humanity and will be on guard without Janeara. They will eventually thank these heroes for ensuring the safety of the riverblessed, which is revered as a goddess in these woods, a lady of the lake if you will. Without the nariisa, the chaparrans will require some diplomacy. They are frightened and believe the world is coming to an end. Demons from the underworld have risen from the water to drag them to the depths. Meanwhile, the dojenn have gathered all their numbers and will attack the village at midnight, not stopping until every chaparran and hero is dead. The group must deal with up to 30 dojenn, in a number of waves of 4-6 depending on how much the party needs to be challenged (the chaparran warriors will deal with any that the PCs do not face). Janeara will be the only allied creature in this encounter.

**Reward:** The chaparrans will offer wooden rings to all the players. These are not magical (so don't occupy an item slot, or cause disruption) but carry a social impact, granting a +4 bonus with all Charisma-based skill checks against chaparrans as long as the chaparrans notice the rings being worn. If the rings are given to anyone else, they disintegrate. If Janeara survives, she will smile, turn to water and vanish back into the river. Until the players leave the forest, they will encounter no more monsters, and the river will be calm and clean.

3. The following morning, further upriver, the players will encounter dojenn traps set to catch faeries. Faeries freed will be talkative and open to assisting the group. They will enlighten them as to the full extent of the danger and say the dojenn are pushing further north into the heart of the forest to find the chaparran village and drag them to the water to be devoured. They will also reveal that the silent riverblessed is named Janeara. You may alternatively have another dojenn here, gnawing on faeries like jerky. If so, only one fairy will be left to be rescued.

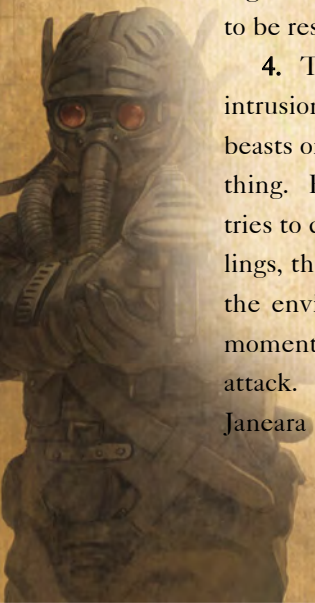
4. To add a level of chaos to the quest, the dojenn intrusion has upset the order of calm in the forest. Now beasts ordinarily peaceful are sporadically attacking anything. Even the chaparrans aren't safe. When Janeara tries to calm a panicked animal (boar, bear, flock of starlings, throng of squirrels, swarm of bees—dependent on the environment), the monster goes berserk. Another moment of unexpected reaction would be a chaparran attack. Now paranoid beyond any sense of reason, Janeara notices this and tries to smooth out relations,

## THE MONSTER MASS

**Landscape:** An open plain, or just an empty grid map. A forest pattern could also be employed.

**Hook:** Puggs are appearing more and more and are caring less for strategy than before. The group comes upon a caravan nearly overrun by the kaddog.

This encounter can be nearly passed over as the ten or twenty remaining puggs are hardly worth the unfurled battle mat. The sole survivor is a peasant, Robber Coinsworthy, almost to a noble's level of wealth from a neighboring town of Sung-Shai. He promises compensation and the glory of gallantry for helping the people against this growing pugg threat.





**Quest:** Your chosen level will determine the final climax of the quest. A chiggoth has recently been birthed, and after sleeping and eating, has begun migrating east. Puggs are a favored treat, and the resident population of fae vermin has been pushed from their burrows and huts. They are flocking all in one direction. This chiggoth should be kept secret for now. This quest involves defending this single village from a stampede of puggs. Five hundred, in fact. When the final beast is killed, everyone only has a moment to breathe a sigh of relief before the chiggoth roars from the forest, and the source of the stampede is finally revealed.

**Echan / Techan Angle:** Unlike other quests, this one has only a single encounter. It turns into a last stand scenario that will be a welcome one for any techan party. They can set demolition charges, organize pinning fire. They will have to put all their skills to the test. Echans have the harder time as they march through waves of continuous puggs.

**Bestiary:** Puggs and more puggs. If the party is higher level, then a chiggoth will make an appearance.

## ADVENTURE

1. When the players accept his offer, Coinsworthy will lead them to Sung-Shai, a modest example of a hamlet if the group has ever seen one—one church, ten houses, three taverns, one knight, five horses and a pedal bicycle that was the pride of the nobility, such that it was. They offer a pittance of a treasure, a true trifle of a reward. They are not short-changing the group: this really is all they have. It doesn't matter now if the group refuses or not. They are surrounded by this point.

2. The first attacks were not organized, and they will not be the last. Each attack is growing in strength proportionately from the previous one, with the last claiming most of the livestock in the farms. An astute observer will notice the forests on the horizon shifting from the mass of giant creature, or thousands of smaller ones.

3. They have a day to prepare. Players can enjoy free room and board and any other services offered by the small population. They'll even notch up prestigious gravestones beforehand as a show of their appreciation. Echans need a good night's sleep. Techans can spend the night placing explosives.

4. There is one knight, a 5th level human fighter, which will be the only available help. Sung-Shai boasts no magic. The battle will involve a forest on one side and an open plain on the other, at least 150 feet before the PCs' chosen battle line. The enemies consist of 500 puggs. Don't bother with miniatures; use a ruler and move it up 20 feet every round as the front line is cut down and the line behind moves to replace it. This gives several rounds of explosives, gunfire, and spells before the puggs strike. It is hopeful at least half are destroyed before they overwhelm the players. When that happens, every space around the players becomes occupied by small creatures. The battle continues to rage for 1d6+4 rounds after this; if the PCs make a good show of themselves, the swarm briefly thins and is diverted away from the village, otherwise they are overwhelmed (even if they survive) and the village suffers significant damage and casualties, if it is not totally destroyed.

5: (If 20th level) After a surely satisfying battle, the players only have a moment to breathe and ask what could have driven so many puggs into a stampede before the chiggoth roars, given the group barely two rounds to prepare before the arrival.

**Reward:** Seriously? Are the players going to take these poor people's money now that they have lost everything? If so, it amounts to another 1000 gp on top of everything else. Hardly worth the effort.

## SUICIDE IN THE WASTELAND

**Landscape:** Marsh and wetlands. Forests are a suitable replacement in a pinch.

**Hook:** The group is startled during the regular evening by the sound of a dragon's roar. The beast writhes in flames across the sky, but its wings do not flap. It is no monster of flesh but of carbon fiber, plastic, and steel. It falls over a nearby mountain in the opposite direction the players were going. There is the echo of a crash but no cloud of fire or debris. It is possible that it soft-landed.

**Quest:** The vessel is a large-body cargo aircraft that has either strayed off course or was taking a shortcut to its destination. It would have originated from the nearest bastion, but its destination is not relevant (and perhaps could be the source of mystery). The problem is more where it landed—amid a corrupted patch of land.





This could have come from a curse or from the death throes of a dark creature like a shemjaza or death dragon, or possibly from the Sana Marsh or Tranquiss if the adventure takes place nearby.

**Echan / Techan Angle:** Techans would want to check for survivors, especially if this vessel originated from their home bastion. If from a rival bastion, then there would be the possibility of salvageable technology even if there were no survivors. Techans must stick together when alone in echa. Echans would be curious as well and hopefully noble enough to search for survivors, once they discover the beast was a techan machine and not a real dragon.

**Bestiary:** After the initial crash, which will scatter most monsters in the area, some curious skeggs or boggs might come to see if they can find anything edible in the wreckage. If in the Sana Marsh, shapeless wild will be a common occurrence as well as numerous undead monsters. If the group is high enough level, the climax will also involve a death dragon.

### ADVENTURE

1. Tracking through the thick terrain, the group comes face-to-face with an enchanted cloud casting an everlasting shade over a forest of leafless trees, snaking their roots into marsh water and mud, suspending their trunks over the ground like spider's legs. The smoke trail from the crash is over a day into the darkness and hardly visible against the blackness of an enchanted night. If the group reconsiders the sanity of such a quest—balancing the potential reward, or ethical requirements—then have someone notice the smoke trail stopping and restarting several times—a clear indication of a survivor. If they can't figure that out, a signal flare should be more obvious.

2. The marsh is merely eerie at first, a reputation earned from legends only and not from accurate reports. The group loses sight of the green and blues of an ordinary world when the sinister nature of the marsh finally emerges.

3. Unfortunately, the lack of significant threats in this land is because they are converging around the crash. Nearly 40 various monsters, mostly undead, are moving to the crash and the remaining survivor, Lieutenant Leland Garret, is running low on ammunition for the weapons that have yet to jam.

4. For a techan party, there may actually be some salvageable technology. If there is an operator in the

group, there could even be an especially advanced piece of high tech that is currently disrupted that could use some help. For echans, all of this could be unfamiliar to them. If looking for just a side-quest, then perhaps the vessel was transporting a rare magical item that was improperly shielded.

5. (Optional) If you are looking for an inroad to include a vital clue to start a major campaign, this could be it for either echa or techa. This can consist of a data file for a crucial piece of information or maybe even the first of the Amethyst relics. An added option would be for Garret to reveal that one cargo crate dropped from the vessel during the crash contains something vitally important. The entire marsh knows of the intruders. Shapeless wild are on their way as would be a death dragon.

6. After escaping the marsh, Garret's fate is up to you. If he survives, the players may be obliged to take him to the nearest bastion (if there is one). If not, he will depart at the next major path of civilization—anyone with a mooring tower. One thing he will not do is go alone.

7. (Optional) To lengthen this quest, bring up the entire marsh's inhabitants to converge on the group. This would be hundreds of undead and shapeless. This is not a battle they can win and will have to run without rest to escape the cursed land. Upon escaping, a techan gunship is awaiting to gun down the corruption and pick up Garret.

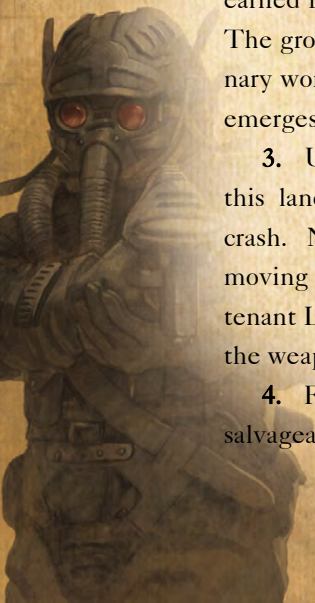
**Reward:** Any magic or technology contained in the wreckage can be recovered and claimed. Garret may or may not report the missing equipment, dependent on his relationship with his rescuers.

### PAGUS

## SOUTH OF THE WALL

**Landscape:** Snow and ice. There could be forests or a frozen lake. There is a dense layer of snow everywhere. This encounter is designed for a northern region.

**Hook:** The players are traveling briskly through the snow when a barefooted man in tattered clothes runs frantically to them. He is screaming and babbling about massive hairless men that sacked his village and killed everyone within. The militia tried desperately to fight them off, but the enemy was relentless. They didn't smile or laugh or take pride in toying with their enemy.





They just slaughtered everyone and burned everything within. This survivor decided to be a coward, seeing the carnage from a tree and ran instead helping out. This small army didn't even stay to take pride in their victory. They moved on almost immediately after, the razed village a mere temporary impediment that only served to delay their tireless walk. They are marching south, but down a different road from this one.

**Quest:** The bald fae are pagus. In fact, this is a scouting party from Apocrypha. They have been sent by a shemjaza to brave the mountains to find a route to the south that avoids water and the Tethuss Bridge. If these pagus find anything green, they will know they have found it and return to their lords and inform them of the route. It is imperative that none is permitted to return to their home alive.

**Echan / Techan Angle:** The echans should know of the pagus, and a basic history check for Abidan will reveal the details of the Tethuss Bridge, the Janoahn Bulwark, and why these pagus are so rare (characters from Abidan and eastern Kannos and Limshau do not need to make a roll, as this is common knowledge). Pagus have been spotted in the south before, but those were camps that have tried to live outside of shemjaza or dragon control (although often being equally wicked). These pagus are directly sent from Apocrypha and to ensure the safety of all Canam, the players must wipe out this scouting party. Techan players may need to be brought up to speed on the history, but when confronted with dangerous fae that may pose a threat to their homeland, they shouldn't need much convincing to take them down.

**Bestiary:** Pagus, pagus, pagus. Expect to throw every class of pagus, including a shaitar and a chief. They all must be defeated, and any that decide to run must be hunted down and killed. They are not cowards but understand the need to succeed in their mission. You may increase the level of the side-quest and include Thornshroud, though this will be a major event rather than just a distracting side-quest.

## ADVENTURE

1. This is a single encounter side-quest but may include an extended last act depending on how the encounter plays out. The pagus that just wiped out the village of Tantillis (Population 50, now 1) are keeping a good pace down the mountain pass. They will reach sea level and the beautiful beige and green fields of the

Marris Plateau by tomorrow. Where this battle occurs depends on how long the players will wait.

2. The pagus tread quickly and with purpose and will be difficult to ambush. Only needing four hours sleep and being able to sleep in their armor means they will not be caught off guard during the night. Their darkvision will assist them as well. Technically, a daylight raid will be the preferred option. If the battle takes place in the snow, there is a layer of two feet of snow everywhere, making the entire region difficult terrain. If the group waits for the fields, the tall grass will offer concealment for all ranged fire.

3. One pagus, preferably the largest unit (Shaitar or Chief), will make a break to escape if the battle is being lost. He must be hunted down, and he won't make it easy.

**Rewards:** Nothing other than the satisfaction of saving the continent. Too bad only the players will ever know of it.

## IMPOSTERS

**Landscape:** Any you have on hand.

**Hook:** Players enter a village or perhaps their destination, only to find it in shambles. Bodies lie in the open, full of cauterized holes. Buildings have either been burned or simply demolished, but by no physical force. Walls have disintegrated. An entire first floor of a tavern is missing—its upper level has fallen into its place. Whatever the group was looking for, whatever person they were hoping to find, is gone.

This was no simple monster raid. A Sciences or Engineer (Int) DC20 skill check will reveal the telltale marks of technology. This was done by advanced technology, well outside the scope of the players' knowledge. Which bastion would do this and why?

**Quest:** For reasons you may know or may be unimportant, Saints have arrived at this village because of a perceived threat by the population or the players, who they are also tracking. Assuming the PCs have no knowledge of the Saints at this point, they are most likely to suspect Mann, the highest-level bastion in Canam, but this is against their doctrine to send out military personnel to take out an echan village of seemingly no threat. It may also be too far away from where the quest is set.

**Echan / Techan Angle:** For techans, they are especially concerned. This may be a rival company or basti-





on whose interests run in antithesis to the players. For echan humans, this is a gross invasion of bastion politics on echa, and it will be a personal insult.

**Bestiary:** Saints are the highest-level techan threat and will be throwing the majority of the heaviest weapons towards the group to stop them in whatever larger quest they are on. There is an entire buzz-boy team on the ground and ready to strike.

### ADVENTURE

1. There are only a handful of free companies worldwide with the technology of this magnitude and only one bastion in Canam, Mann. Even this level of damage seems beyond them, and the only time Mann ever leaves their bastion is to track lost technology or if they are hunting one of their own. The burn holes in the victims come from a vapor rifle, which the players may or may not have heard of. A player may notice a patch of a torn uniform indicating the bastion of Mann, but it seems suspect.

If this side-quest is unconnected to the player's larger campaign, it could be that the saints are looking for a fragment of lost technology of a particularly advanced nature which has fallen into the hands of an echan that has survived the village attack and is hiding. He will reveal himself and show the fragment of technology (random piece of shiny gear, the purpose of which is inscrutable).

2. The saints will return. They will rain fire down onto the players from a flying vessel that resembles a dagger slicing through the sky. The craft flies so quickly, it fires upon the ground before the players can respond. This will be a great time to kill the survivor. After the strafing run, the vessel will come around for another strike but stop above and drop the buzz-boy team into the village ruins.

3. The team will track and chase the group until the group has been killed or until their item has been returned (or both). If the saint team is reduced to 2 or less, they will call the flyer for a pickup which will arrive in two rounds.

4. After the battle is concluded, the players can look over the bodies. They indeed are not Mann and exhibit technology even Mann would be envious of. A volatile compound is released into combat suits, reducing the saint body to mush the moment there is an attempt to open the suit or probe for information.

5. The group is left to wonder to the identity of these techans.

## ATTACK ON THE MERCHANT CARAVAN

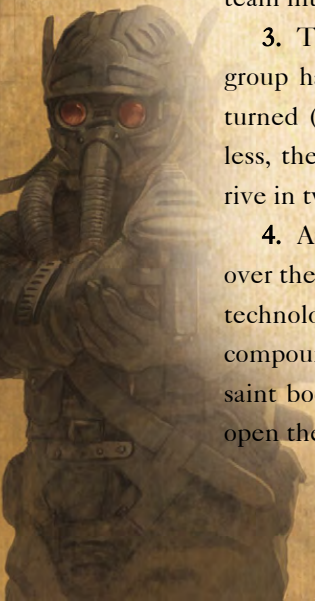
**Landscape:** A road surrounded by any terrain.

**Hook:** The players encounter a legitimate and legal caravan. This could be a half-dozen wagons or even the Archiducha, a monstrous merchant caravan of thirty-five wagons that sell what anyone could possibly look for, whether it be fine clothes, legal intoxicants, or legal flesh. The group can even rent lodging on the caravan, which never stops, allowing them to sleep during the night in comfort and safety while also covering distance. The procession uses either enchanted horses or other beasts of burden to keep the wagon train always moving. This is an excellent opportunity to pass the time and allow the player a moment of relaxation, short-lived though it is.

**Quest:** The caravan moves briskly during the night. The gallop of the players' mounts may be faster, but the beds in the caravan are softer. There are even two wagons that hold horses during the night. The caravan superintendent, Nathan Paleberry, offers 5 gp for each player each night they remain for one week as the caravan moves through a rough patch, renowned for its raiders and unpleasant denizens. That is the standard rate for sellswords, and despite the fact that players are the most trained he has seen, it would be a difficult task to increase this rate (though not impossible). During this short distraction, the players encounter a variety of small events and one or two big ones.

**Echan / Techan Angle:** Techans encountering the caravan are subject to immediate disruption effects, which may disable their own vehicle if they have one. Upon discovering their responsibility for this upset, the caravaneers are effusively apologetic and offer to tow the vehicle to a place along their route where it can be repaired. If the group has no reliable transportation, then they are in the same position as any other echans, and the offer would be even more tempting because of the attraction of comforts familiar to home.

**Bestiary:** Beyond a few minor encounters dealing with patrons, the caravan will come under attack at several points in the week by kaddog, techans, and some less common large monster.





## ADVENTURE

The first three events can happen in any order over the course of the week.

1. There are many options for a variety of non-combat encounters including a poker game, a disgruntled patron in the brothel wagon, and/or personal encounters with other travelers or merchants in the train.

2. A group of techan bullies arrives and tries to muscle their way with what they perceive to be simple fantasy folk. There is a scrambler which is basically taking up the entire road. If it is at night, its dozens of headlights are blinding. There are four thugs. This encounter should not devolve into bloodshed. If it does, then Paleberry will rethink his offer and may end it early. These techans are easily intimidated, and if shown a superior strength, they will back down. It may also be possible to force the scrambler to disrupt, in which case the techans will be forced to penitently beg for assistance from the caravan.

3. An enormous beast, such as a manticore, attacks the caravan from behind. It's not looking to destroy the procession; it just wants a horse for a quick meal.

4. A bandit tribe of skeggs and boggs attacks the caravan, providing a small army for the PCs to fight against. They will start with crashing a log in front and behind the convoy, then follow with barrages of arrow fire.

**Rewards:** Beyond the payment at the end of the commission, any treasure they gain from the raiders, they can keep.

## STUMBLING UPON THE SLAVERS

**Landscape:** A small road off the beaten path.

**Hook:** The group comes upon a clearing where there are signs of recent occupation; by the look of some of the dross left behind, a merchant caravan of some sort. This area is off the normal mercantile lanes, so presumably the cargo is black-market or otherwise illicit. There are also several strange holes scattered about the area. An easy Knowledge (History) (Int) check will identify that these holes came from slaver posts—magical tethers that fae cannot escape. More skill work later and the group discovers the slavers have closed shop and moved on earlier that morning.

**Quest:** Horatio Hannover isn't world-renowned like the Fosters, but has made a mark on the local network for his evasiveness from those that pursue him. A band of four Zorahn (or Ilm, depending which is closer) custodians has been tracking him for the better part of a year, always losing sight of the caravan before a raid could be organized. With the player group less than three hours behind a slow-moving caravan and few detours on the road ahead, this could be the best opportunity to take these miscreants down before they vanish again.

**Echan / Techan Angle:** Slavery is considered an abomination in every civilized echan nation, and echan heroes should need little encouragement for an opportunity to put an end to the disgusting practice. Techans might not be fully aware of the extent of the fae slaver network, and this first encounter may come as a surprise. A party of either that is not swayed by the plight of innocents can be told that they remember hearing something about a reward for the caravan master's capture.

**Bestiary:** In this side-quest, all the enemies are human: fighters, rogues, and warlords mostly, but you can spice it up from our suggestions. The fae, although involved, should not be combat opponents.

## ADVENTURE

1. This quest only features one major encounter, but you may break it up to extend the sequence of events. Stealth is the key, as a frontal assault upon the caravan would be suicidal. Players should receive a surprise round when the encounter actually begins. The convoy consists of 5 wagons—2 made from cold-iron cages and 2 are the swag and luxury accommodations for the head slavers. The last is a supply wagon that is deployed with tents and storefronts when the caravan sets up its wandering mall.

2. If you want to break up the encounter, the players may meet a rear-guard detachment that prevents a surprise attack on the caravan from behind. They are vigilant and on alert and if killed, even silently, the caravan will notice the breach within 2 hours when they fail to check in.

3. The caravan will travel for nearly two days. The first night the convoy sets up shop, they are still on lockdown and an attack, although possible, would be more difficult. The cages are all locked with all guards







awake and on watch. Only the slaver captain is taking it easy in his wagon.

4. The next morning the caravan reaches an intersection. A half-dozen guards break off north while the remaining train turns south. If the players split or decide to follow the guards, they will encounter the custodians in pursuit. The guards are higher level and will have the jump on the custodians. The players may assist. The custodians are led by Suprayn 'Spring' Lightbringer and are appreciative of the efforts, but it may be too little too late as the caravan will vanish unless another player was tracking it.

5. On the morning of the third day, the caravan will set up its market. Contacts allied to the caravan have already sent word, and by the time the tents have been set-up, nearly a dozen prestigious wagons have arrived with buyers and their exploits. The fae are brought out and tied to slaver posts which magically root themselves to the soil and cannot be removed. They are an assortment of chaparrans and damaskans with a scattering of gimfen. A total of twelve await potential buyers. One,

under a shrouded tent, is not displayed for sale. It is a tilen elder named Klara Shoenin. She is to be sent to Faustis, destined for the same fate of all tilen, to await the death of a hundred cuts. It will be possible to engage the caravan at this point without as much danger, as the presence of customers will confound the efforts of the caravan guards to mount a defense.

6. If the players have the supplies, they may also pose as potential customers, though every customer must present a Baruch Malkut silver coin with an ouroboros (snake eating its tail) symbol etched on one side. A check on Baruch Malkut history will reveal this. A player from Baruch Malkut would automatically know this and be able to mimic such a coin. The group could also camp outside the market, out of sight, and jump a buyer before they approach and steal their currency and wagon.

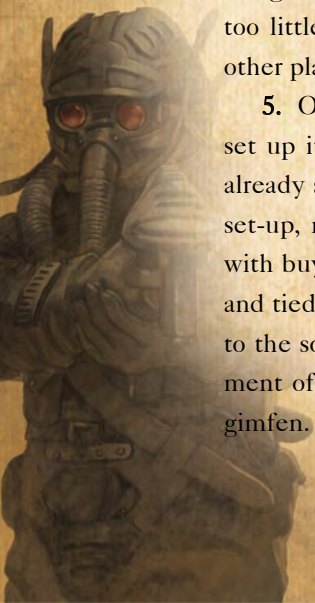
7. The buyers are a collection of landowners looking for servants and wealthy predators looking to appease their depraved sexual appetite. If the group waits until the buyers leave, the stocks will be cut in half. The tilen will remain with the caravan all the way until the train returns to the motherland. If the buyers leave with their purchases, they will depart into different directions and be nearly impossible to track on their own. Surrounding and attacking the caravan with the buyers will be harder but will prevent them from escaping.

The individual customers have no combat skills, though their guards have. The custodians would arrive the next day to help take survivors into custody if they were not located and brought here previously. If they were, don't reduce the combat strength of the encounter or add the custodians. Just assume there are more enemies and the custodians are dealing with them.

When laying out the map, place eleven scattered slaver posts around the caravans which may hold fae (depending on the time of the attack). They are not combat-effective if freed during the encounter, though they will take cover once released.

8. If the battle goes by poorly, one of the last of the slaver guards will attempt to kill the fae stocks. He will approach each slaver post and kill one a turn. He will kill the tilen if he is closest to her.

9. The custodians will deal with the prisoners, dragging them back to the nearest Limshau city for incarceration. They will also send for another caravan from a nearby fae town to help with the surviving fae and re-





turn them back to their families. The custodians will burn the cold iron cages until the metal melts to pools of sludge. They will then scatter salt and coals into the pools to contaminate them. They offer whatever rewards in the slaver's wagon as treasure. Klara, the tilen, has nowhere to go and will accompany the group (if they accept her) to the nearest settlement to their route, and she will depart then if no further loyalties are forged.

**Rewards:** Beyond the standard treasure output, there is an additional 10,000 gp in various jewels and gems.

## THE NARROS TOWER

**Landscape:** An isolated structure in the wilderness.

**Hook:** Much of western Canam is littered with now-ancient buildings constructed by those narros who left Fargon centuries ago. The purpose of these structures is unknown, but it is suspected that they are exact replicas, in the same approximate place, of important points in the Terros Age. The narros who built them had no precise memory of what these places were and why, and abandoned them almost immediately after finishing them. Uncovering some of these sites' secrets is the life's dream of many an archaeologist. Whether deliberately or by accident, the party comes across one such site that has so far escaped despoilment by kaddog or other squatters.

**Quest:** The building is large, but not massive, resembling a three-story pagoda. There is something disquieting about the land surrounding it; there is no bird-song, no rustling in the undergrowth, no signs of life anywhere nearby. The gate is not sealed, but shows no signs of having been disturbed for centuries – and indeed, the structure itself seems entirely untouched by time.

**Echan / Techan Angle:** Scholars from Limshau or prospectors from Fargon or Finer would be very interested in such a place – if the PCs are not archaeologists themselves, what they find here could be of great value to such a person. Techans may be curious to discover that despite the hair on the back of their arms standing up, indicating some sort of powerful charge in the area, their equipment seems perfectly fine.

**Bestiary:** Most of the enemies in this sidequest are animated narros statues. At the end of the quest, the PCs will encounter Nazen of Moments, a lost noble

dragon who became corrupted near the end of the Terros Age (use the stats for the adult Fallen Dragon, but she can manipulate stone instead of fire and has a sonic breath weapon instead of flame. She is also bound to Ixindar and does not generate EDF).

## ADVENTURE

1. The door is not sealed, but it is heavy, possibly requiring a few physical checks in order to get in. Upon entry, the PCs find themselves in a large hall, around the edge of which are plinths on which stand 6 narros statues engaged in poses of reverence toward a large, abstract winged shape at the center. If the party enters more than halfway into the hall, the statues animate and attack.

2. After defeating the statues, the PCs discover that the central plinth can be moved, revealing a chamber beneath. Inside this chamber is a stone elevator that descends into utter darkness. Once the elevator has descended for several minutes, each character should make a saving throw against Nazen of Moments' *sibilant whispers* (at this point it is not limited to only three targets). Targets who make their save are unaware that they have been affected at all. At this point, the elevator stops.

3. The party finds themselves in a large open chamber, far underground. The walls here are lined with smooth obsidian which somehow gives off a faint blue glow. Ahead of them along a path that leads straight from the elevator they see the shape of an enormous obsidian figure, like the one on the plinth above. The path is lined by twelve more adulatory narros statues, but they do not move if examined. At the end of the path is a tall dais on which is laid a single large sapphire gem, almost like a button. Intelligent players will refrain from pressing it, but anyone who failed their save against the *sibilant whispers* feels a compulsion to touch it.

4. If no PC touches the stone, they all hear the voice of Nazen of Moments speaking to them inside their heads. She pretends to still be a noble dragon, trapped in stone by her enemies to stop her from coming to the aid of Amethyst. She promises anything she can think of to get the PCs to release her, even the dragon's kiss of ennoblement if need be. If they still refuse, she rails against them in anger, and the six statues nearest her animate and attack them.





5. If any of the PCs does touch the stone, they all hear the dragon's laughter in their heads, and the obsidian shell surrounding her begins to crack. All twelve statues animate; the six nearest Nazen move to attack the PCs, while the six furthest away attempt to attack her, ignoring (or possibly going straight through) the PCs. The party has three rounds before the stone shell has cracked enough for the dragon to fight back. After this, she will engage them, targeting any who refused her first. If she is in danger of losing the fight, she will attempt to escape up the elevator shaft, expanding it with magic as she goes before attempting to collapse the entire structure on top of the PCs.

6. If Nazen escapes and the PCs survive, they must climb out of the pit to escape. The elevator is destroyed, but the dragon has left plentiful handholds in her hasty efforts to get away. If she does not manage to escape, the elevator can be used to exit the chamber. Should the dragon survive, she can become a possible recurring foe.

**Rewards:** The shards of Nazen's prison continue to glow afterwards, indicating their magical nature, but they do not generate EDF. A few of these shards, as well as the location of the tower, are worth up to 50,000 gp or uc to the right buyer.

*The reflection from the snow limited the vision of the pagus. They could barely make out the shapes up the path. When their eyes focused, they noticed three figures, three human men, brazen enough to block their path.*

*They were still nearly two hundred feet away. Two loud thuds rang out.*

*The pagus looked at each other with mild alarm. One-Ear with the spear, glanced peculiarly at the arrow sticking from his chest. He glanced over to a bowman, Crooked-Nose, with a similar injury through his shoulder. Elder, with the warsword, reached over and snapped both projectiles from the wounds.*

*"Fallaguuta!" he shouted a curse in their tongue.*

*Scar drew his twin longswords and tapped them together as he started his charge. The two bowmen pulled the long shafts of wood from their quivers and aimed.*

*"Dammit, Mischa, aim for the bowmen," Mahan snapped as he yanked another soil stained arrow from the snow and pulled. He fired before Mischa could*

*ready another shot.*

*The arrow struck the chest of Crooked-Nose bowman, inches from the other wound. The pagus flicked the sprinter away in annoyance as he hooked his shot and released. It flew safely wide. Mischa released and it sunk into Missing-Fingers, the one wielding two axes as he began charging. The pagus archers approached slower, firing on the walk while the others steadily increased their run. The distance closed rapidly.*

*Uriel was impatient; his demon mask concealed his mood, but his vibrating foot spoke volumes.*

*Mischa shouted, "Hold it until my blade is drawn, Kenbu."*

*Uriel's weapon was still sheathed. Another of Mahan's arrows struck the neck of Crooked-Nose, and the dying pagus fired his round into the back of No-Teeth, the one that wielded the maul.*

*The impact didn't register. Bear-Pelt, the pagus wielding a massive double-edged axe, charged ahead, forgetting Elder behind him; he was falling behind.*

*Mischa's third shot missed the injured One-Ear. He shook his head as he reached for another round.*

*"We're running out of time," Mischa muttered.*

*"I'm only going to get another shot." Mahan fired as Mischa pulled. His arrow was true and struck the other archer, Bandaged-Wrapped-Arms, in the shoulder which connected to the arm that held the bow. The countershot from the pagus missed wild a second later. His following shot would not have such a distraction. He was closer now, and his eyes could see his target, his counter, the human archer with the worn bracers. Mischa released and impacted his round into One-Ear's leg, causing a stumble, which broke his spear. The beast righted himself and continued with his broken weapon.*

*Mischa dropped the bow despite still having arrows around. He pulled the cleaver and locked his grip.*

*Uriel took the cue and lifted his scabbard from his waist, drawing the rope away from his belt. Mahan reached for another arrow.*

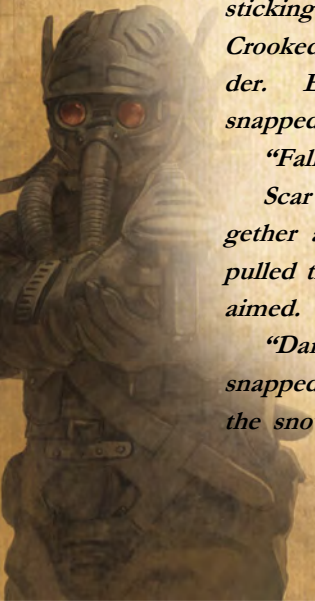
*"No time!" Mischa screamed. "Leave it."*

*"One archer left," Mahan whispered.*

*"Leave it!" he snapped as he charged.*

*Uriel jumped past the ranger, racing towards Bear-Pelt. Mahan carefully held the shot. There would be no time to pull another. He focused on the final archer and saw him release.*

*The large arrow thundered across the path, brushing Mahan's hair back as it missed. Mahan didn't blink. He sent his response, following the same path back to*





this counter. The human arrow crossed over the pagus's bandaged arm, snapped through this bow, and drove into his eye. The steel point stuck from the skull as the massive fae fell back.

Mischa tried to find the dark armor, but in the shifting forms of massive pagus, it had vanished. Uriel bowed low, head down, and back straight. Bear-Pelt brought his weapon high for a massive chop. The kenbu catapulted under the arms of the pagus.

His katana's edge came free from the scabbard and disemboweled the giant. The pagus fell hard, his weapon tumbled free from his grasp and flipped over the snow, finally embedding into the ground, handle in the air.

Mischa released one hand on his sword and side-stepped to catch the massive axe. With only one stable hand, Mischa pulled it from its spot. He spun himself around to gain energy and hurled the weapon against the enemy line. The weapon weighed nearly fifty pounds and caved through One-Ear's skull, spraying blood into the remaining eye of the remaining spearman.

Missing-Fingers, with the two axes, hurled one in hand to the approaching Uriel. Uriel slapped the weapon out of the air with a slice of his sword. The pagus tossed another as he pulled another axe from his collection strapped to his back.

Uriel cuffed that one away as quickly.

Scar with the twin swords orbited to move around Uriel.

Mischa ran up to strike the maul.

Mahan dropped his bow and removed his sticks.

Mischa attempted a clean strike to the arm but misjudged the momentum of the massive mallet. It swung down with such speed, Mischa sidestepped, allowing the hammer to send up a gust of snow in the air. Mischa launched through the cloud of white but caught a parry instead, as the hammer's long staff rose up to deflect. Mischa, not one to spar, spun his blade around the handle of the hammer and gripped the blade edge. The crossguard caught his enemy's weapon and pulled the pagus off balance.

Mischa pushed his pommel into his enemy's throat. The pagus started to fall, allowing Mischa to glance up at Elder with his warsword as he moved within reach.

Mischa didn't acknowledge the maul other than with a passing slice from the few inches of the cleaver's edge above his grip.

Mahan intercepted Scar's attempt to flank Uriel. He deflected one sword strike and firmed his bar's place-

ment as a rooted pole in the air. The pagus struck the weapon, expecting to knock it down. Mahan drew his scimitar with his free hand and orbited around the post. The pagus tried to counter with a thrust, but Mahan dodged under the strike, coming up the other side to slam the creature's elbow against the fixed post hard enough to dislocate the joint. The arm flopped down, but the blade didn't drop. It dangled like a rag as the pagus brought his other weapon around.

Uriel failed to deflect another thrown axe. The hefty edge came for the kenbu's face. Uriel rolled his head to the side as the weapon tore off his mask. A trickle of blood dripped from his nose. Uriel's eyes fell off their target as the pagus snatched another axe.

Uriel rolled over the ground and found his footing in a hardy plant. He tugged his cloak with his arm and twirled the fabric into a quick braid. Snapping it forward, the leather tail wrapped around the pagus's neck and pulled him off balance. Uriel jumped up and drove his katana up under his enemy's throat, punching out the top of the head.

Before the spear of One-Eye could drive into Uriel's side, the kenbu pulled the body of MissingFingers over to take the thrust. He then slammed his body against the dead pagus, pushing him deeper into the enemy spear until it pushed from his chest.

Uriel pressed further until the body slid to the wielder of the weapon. The kenbu shoved again, forcing both pagus back until Uriel saw a broken spear tip on the snow.

He flung his cloak and snapped the leather braid around the spear-tip. A quick flick pulled the weapon to his hand.

Uriel rolled around to drive it through the OneEye's neck. Pinned together, the bodies didn't fall. The kenbu yanked the katana from its mooring.

Mahan stepped back and allowed a sword strike to deflect off a floating post. Mahan's boot came down on his enemy's foot while his blade cut across the tendons of a leg. Mahan unlocked a bar and swung around the other to slam it on the back of the pagus's head. The fae's foot slumped to its side, and the pagus stumbled on its broken ankle. His remaining sword was still sound, and he smiled, launching from his good foot.

The charge ran past the remaining post as Mahan stepped back to gain distance. The hobbled charge was slower than before but still fast enough to carry strength.

Mahan snapped his fingers and called his remaining stick to his hand. It knocked the head of the pagus as it





## CHAPTER ELEVEN: ADVENTURES

returned. Mahan caught it and held both bars with one hand with his blade in the other and took the opportunity to step forward. The scimitar cleaved down his neck and wedged in his collarbone.

The pagus's smile was crooked from damaged nerves, and it lifted his one good arm with his one good sword.

Mahan released his grip on the sword and hardened it around both bars. The bars dislodged the head and peeled the neck from the body at the blade's slice.

Mahan spun around to catch another target, but the blackened sword of the demon armor stuck deep in Mahan's side.

Mahan winced and coughed as he stared at the shriveled human skull's smile.

Mahan pulled back from the injury and slapped the sword from the wound with this weapon.

The armor plates slid and floated, protecting under the arms when they rose, shielding the shoulders when they dropped.

*It glared its teeth.*

Its eyes were without lids and stared with hunger back to the human. It rolled its longsword over its wrist, flamboyantly, flicking Mahan's blood to the snow. Its other hand displayed its open palm and the five digits on its fingers.

"What in God's name are you?" Mahan whispered.

"I am nothing," it responded with its deep growl.

It smiled and jumped forward. It moved as no man or fae could. Jumping left and right, hopping as if weighing a feather, and as fast as a skittish cat.

Mahan brought his blade around, catching the first strike. The armor pushed in and spun around to slam an Angelite elbow into Mahan's head, throwing him back to a tree.

Mahan ducked as the blade cut through the bark without strain.

A backhand with the armor's gauntlet sent Mahan across the snow, sliding without falling off his feet.

The pagus Elder was a foot taller than the others and two feet on Mischa. His warsword was also a few inches longer than Mischa's, a fact proven with the first strike as it reached over the ranger's thrust and spiked through his leather. It sunk an inch into flesh before Mischa recoiled.

Another full swing by his opponent was caught in a parry. The beast pushed forward, scraping his blade down to Mischa's crossguard then attempting to drive the sword into the ranger's shoulder.

Mischa slid aside and allowed the warsword to con-

tinue to the snow, opening a slash to his enemy's arms. Elder quickly released his weapon and caught Mischa's blade between his palms. Elder pulled Mischa across the field but couldn't disarm the weapon.

The pagus twisted the blade, and the ranger flipped in the air rather than release his sword. Mischa yanked the weapon from the grapple.

The pagus ignored the profuse bleeding from his hands as he reached down and retrieved his sword.

*Mischa charged.*

The pagus furrowed its hairless brow and grimaced back. It swung its blade across to parry. The cleaver was a proud Kantis weapon, and it chopped the extra inches off his enemy's weapon, deflecting the point into the beast's forehead. It appeared unconcerned.

Mischa came up for a high strike but heard a shout from behind.

"Mischa!"

It was Mahan.

Mischa turned quickly to see the armor and his ally. Without a flinch, Mischa gathered everything he had in a yell and threw the sword across the path. It struck the dark armor's chest, taking the light body from its footing and pinning it high in a tree.

Mischa turned back to the pagus chief as it straightened its back and lifted its sword.

Elder swung around to catch Uriel as he flanked around.

Uriel ducked and jumped forward to thrust. The beast threw its fist back and caught Mischa as he tried to move in from behind.

Mischa fell to a tree. He glanced up to a branch above. Mischa reached to his back and pulled out his father's punching dagger.

The katana came inside the warsword's edge and sliced into Elder's belly. The pagus allowed the thrust so it could grab the crossguard of the katana and disarm the kenbu.

A cleated boot slammed into Uriel, throwing him back into the snow, plowing a white gorge twenty feet long.

Mahan struggled to his feet to look at the armor hanging from Mischa's cleaver. It was still smiling.

*Mahan hobbled closer.*

The armor split open piece by piece like a zipper. The torso opened up. There was nothing inside but darkness. The armor slid down from the tree. The head moved to the side as the collar opened allowing Mischa's blade to pass. The armor dropped to the ground.



Mahan coughed and grabbed his side, holding his scimitar with the other.

Elder turned around to face Mischa despite the slice in his stomach. He saw nothing.

Mischa drove the three-bladed dagger into Elder's neck as he fell from above. The monster finally screamed a deep lion's roar and reached its long arms behind to grab the annoyance.

Mischa pulled back and drove the blade again into the back of the head. Elder pivoted to push Mischa into the tree.

Mischa rolled in the air, pulling the weapon out, finally driving the three points into the eyes and nose.

The monster squealed.

Mahan kept his eyes on the armor. It bobbed its head to the left then bolted around the tree.

Mahan attempted to pursue but tripped from lack of strength. He fell to a knee.

Elder slowly fell to the ground. Mischa dropped to the snow and noticed Uriel rising from the crater.

Mischa's nose was out of place from a break.

Uriel carried several cuts which still bled.

"You have proven an honorable crusade," Uriel groaned. Mischa nodded and glanced over at Mahan, noticing him stumble his face to the snow.

"Mahan!" Mischa shouted.

The ranger moved even faster than the kenbu. He pulled Mahan from the snow, still breathing, but there was a quickening weakness.

Uriel checked for the critical wound. The side gash was easy to find.

"Was it a cursed blade?" Mischa asked.

"No," Mahan moaned, "just a sharp one."

Mischa tried to smile to make his friend feel at ease.

"Where's your God?" he asked with a laugh.

"Being thanked I still breathe."

"Wishing you were a vivicator now, aren't you?"

"Not going to lie, it would be convenient about now."

Uriel ripped at tattered clothes to improvise a dressing until better ones could be applied. The deep wound soaked and poured through quickly.

"He bleeds badly," Uriel said. "Covering the wound won't stop it."

"Did you just say my name?" Mahan grunted to Mischa.

"Shut up," Mischa retorted.

"You will continue this quest," Mahan whimpered back.

"Don't you dare go maudlin!" Mischa snapped. He

got even louder. "Your God can't have you yet!"

"It's not really your call."

"Your life belongs here! I reject fate and prophecy!"

"Starting to sound like Aiden," Mahan whispered.

"I reject the will of gods!" Mischa snapped. "You fight whatever plans that claim you die here!"

"Finish the quest, Mischa—" Mahan pleaded.

"Damned your exalted life with your loved ones. Your time of misery on this planet is not yet over!"

Uriel pulled the cloth tight to stop the blood.

"Swear," Mahan begged.

"Get a hold of yourself!" Mischa snapped as he brought a hand up and struck Mahan hard across the face.

"Owww! What the hell?"

Mischa clutched Mahan's face with both hands and shouted to push through the delirium.

"Those who give up aren't worth spit in paradise! God glorifies those who live. Death is for cowards. Now get up!"

Mischa pulled Mahan up and gripped his shoulders while Uriel kept the pressure on the side. They began walking back to their horses.

"I think you cut my lip," Mahan whispered.

"Suck it up, princess. If you're going to die, die standing." They sauntered slowly down the path, passing their few unused arrows. Mischa didn't care for the bows or the dropped packs. He even didn't care for the blade still stuck in the tree. He even had forgotten about the armor and where it had run. None of that mattered now.

"Mischa," Mahan moaned, "That was a powerful moment we just shared."

"It was a great final speech," Mischa replied. Moving. Those who read of this later will be in tears...until I punched you. Remember it for next time."

"Mischa..." Mahan grunted softly. "I think I found another virtue." His head fell.

"You still keeping the score," Mischa answered as he continued without burden. "The sins still lead."







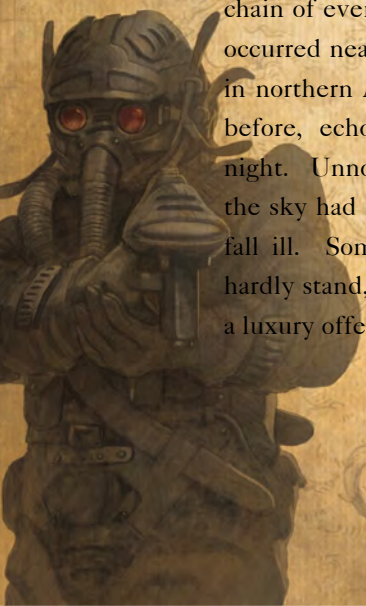
## CHAPTER TWELVE THE TAKING OF PROTO JERICHO

396 **T**he *Taking of Proto-Jericho* is an adventure for 3-5 players between 8<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> level.

A single random event can set into a motion a chain of events affecting the entire world, such as what occurred near the village of Legion's Point, a commune in northern Abidan. A thunder, unlike anything heard before, echoed from an overhead storm during the night. Unnoticed by the town, something from above the sky had fallen. Soon after, the population began to fall ill. Some went blind, others deaf. A few could hardly stand, and several became paralyzed. Death was a luxury offered to few.

Very quickly, the population ascribed the event to some divine curse, due to transgressions easy to point out by the judgmental. Eventually, prayers turned to sacrifices as desperation turned to mania. Finally, the sensible survivors fled, abandoning the sick and deranged. Legion's Point had died without the kingdom ever knowing.

This mystery will only be first that will set heroes from the sheltered lands of Abidan into the wilds of Apocrypha, where only monsters reside. There, they will uncover the secrets of Canam's most isolated land, navigate a unique political landscape, and survive long enough to stop an invasion no one back home knows about or could possibly survive.





Unlike standard adventures, *The Taking of Proto-Jericho* plays more as campaign guide than a normal adventure like those found bundled with an array of dungeon maps and descriptive slugs. As such, it may require additional preparation or a talent for improvisation.

This chapter will cover the region in exquisite detail while also creating the motivations for a quest. However, unlike a standard adventure, many of the events are nebulous, with only suggestions given based on our playtests.

For example, a tapestry of political conflict is woven involving pagus, kodiaks, dragons, demons, and lost techan humans, but a GM is more than welcome to ignore any aspect of this background, instead centering on the more typical dungeon delving. Additionally, as the campaign continues, a group of players may decide on entirely different actions based on events that occur, leading to very distinctive endings.

That being said, the ultimate goal of the heroes should be to avoid a pagus invasion of the rest of Canam. How a group reaches that goal is where fun is had.

This assumes, as often mentioned in *Amethyst*, that the heroes are in fact heroic, and despite selfish tangents and loot hunting, ultimately PCs should be expected to do the right thing. This game is written with that assumption and running the game with an evil or amoral party will be more challenging.

The GM should entertain the possibility of this campaign running off the rails and be prepared to lay down new tracks on a moment's notice. NPCs presented in the book may end up either as enemies or allies. Entire battles can be avoided. Even the foundations of the quest are dependent on where the PCs originated and how they came to be together in a dying town.

## ADVENTURE SUMMARY

A fragment of an unidentified spacecraft crashes in a valley north of town. No bastion (at least in Canam) possesses space travel, let alone one this advanced, flaunting even artificial gravity. Part of the engine core strikes a river where it contaminates the water table of Legion's Point with lethal doses of mercury.

The PCs can be tasked, paid, or take it upon themselves to investigate the source of the plague. There,

they discover it is only a fragment of a much larger vessel, with additional debris scattered north, all the way into Apocrypha. While a mercenary cell has an ETV powerful enough to traverse the water channel into Apocrypha, the PCs have no such luck and are forced to use the Tethuss land bridge in Janoah.

In Janoah, the PCs are thankfully given supplies to aide in their journey, along with a map to the village of Kross, populated by sympathetic pagus. Contacting this village, the tribal chief Axum Uruk informs of a dire situation occurring outside of anyone's knowledge in the south. The pagus population is on the rise, and there remains no cohesion. The corruption of Ixindar is not enough to prevent the pagus' true fae nature to emerge. Demons and dragons are fighting for control over these massing armies.

Meanwhile, the origin of the craft slowly starts to emerge as more pieces of the wreck are uncovered; this is not an alien vessel. The *Proto-Jericho* is a capital ship of the Saints—off-world humans that survived the Second Hammer and the following magical influx. A survivor, a crewmember rescuable by the PCs, leads the group along in hopes of encountering the largest segment of the downed vessel. However, to do so requires following the path of wreckage strung along the River Bythos where thousands of pagus reside. The river is marked by four waterfalls, the Cataracts of Bythos, the furthest of which is where the largest segment of the *Proto-Jericho* has fallen.

Nearby is Purgitose, the castle-lair of the fallen dragon Avalon of All. To add further complications, techan mercenaries and a forgotten techan atoll, Pontiac, trapped in Apocrypha since the Flood, are aware of the crash. While Pontiac seeks a technological edge, the techan mercenaries only desire *Proto-Jericho*'s primary controversial cargo: a virus nicknamed the "Mangler"—a contagious, durable, and vicious engineered monstrosity.

Developed from studying both Attricana- and Ixindar-based creatures, the Mangler is able to kill magic-touched creatures without harming anything else. If released, it could potentially kill every techan creature on the continent. Meanwhile, with pagus genetically conditioned to follow the orders of shemjaza, another newly arrived survivor has eyes to rallying the various tribes in a long overdue invasion to the south, a plan the ruling dragons don't favor.





Will an invasion occur? How will the various motivations of players and non-player character intersect? Where will allies be found? How will enemies rise? And will anyone outside of Apocrypha ever know what occurred?

### FACTIONS INVOLVED

#### THE DROOGS (IRON SONS)

A moderately powerful Iron Sons cell, the Droogs work out of a Behemoth ETV, the Clockworks, in the regions outside of York, having replaced the cell Bangers & Mash after they fell to a defecting Iron Sons group that vanished somewhere in northwest Arkady. The Saints contracted the Droogs to travel to Apocrypha and retrieve vital samples and data from the wreck of the *Proto-Jericho*. A condition of this contract was the accompaniment of a Saint advisor.

Even though the Iron Sons ideology is congruent with the Saints, the Saints still look down upon the Sons for not being more altruistic—the Saints believe they do what they do for the betterment of the planet and humanity, while the Iron Sons often lease themselves out to the highest bidder. The Iron Sons' presence is more because of their greed rather than their shared philosophy, and as such become more expendable as the campaign progresses.

#### PONTIAC

Only slightly larger than the average techan atoll, Pontiac has endured long enough to be charitably considered a bastion. However, unlike other bastions, outside aggression has prevented Pontiac from expanding. Through the centuries, Pontiac's population has shifted wildly, and technological development remained at a crawl. The people residing within the walls are prisoners rather than residents, scraping by the best they can while relying on technology to increase their odds of surviving another generation. Limited resources forced the residents to continuously recycle and reuse parts—nothing is thrown out.

The few times inhabitants have attempted to reach out from their walls, it was to raid techan ruins in search of supplies. Pontiac's survival has come via their location, their sheer perseverance, and a sizable assortment of service machines. Similar to York's zeros, Pontiac's mekteks look too primitive to function, though in their

case this is because of constant recycling of parts rather than gimfen overengineering.

The machines often serve multiple functions, swapping out parts to specialize in a mission. Unlike the zeros, Pontiac mekteks boast some impressive AI, though not to the level of independent thought. Technically, there are more mektek bodies than there are neural cores to run them. While some mekteks can run automated, others sit unattended. The pagus are prevented from stealing Pontiac's tech through a system of failsafes that require special knowledge to disable.

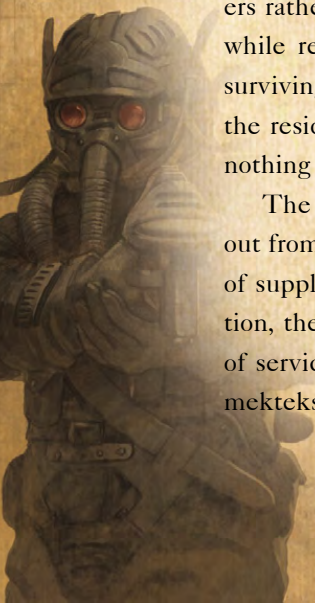
Pontiac sits in the middle of a barren desert on a natural walled plateau with many buildings carved into the sandstone. There are several points of egress but only one large enough for vehicles. Pagus rarely attempt to traverse the area, being unaware of the aquifer under the sandstone. Hardly anyone outside the immediate region even suspects they exist, as the canyons and valleys around the region create a maze few have been able to navigate. When raids do occur, those in Pontiac are quick to ensure no survivors escape to tell others of their location.

The most interesting aspect of Pontiac is how oblivious it is to the outside world. Inhabitants know of the EDF and the monsters that prey on them, but have never encountered a fae apart from the pagus. They don't know of any other human survivors or that most of the rest of the world has turned into a fantasy land. Pontiac appears initially on the sidelines, watching the PCs' quest. They eventually can intervene, offering services and help as long as it doesn't reveal their bastion's location.

#### SAINTS

The *Proto-Jericho* itself is a vessel belonging to the Saints, the lost Martian colonists who returned to Earth to find it overrun by weird creatures out of storybooks. Susceptible to disruption like everything else, Saint influence is limited on Earth (the EDF radiates from Earth despite originating from Attricana). They remain in orbit while investigating ways to counter disruption, sending only limited missions planetside when necessary. MAX, a construct known to skulk around Canam, is one such creation. The *Proto-Jericho* was running experiments in low Earth orbit, sending ground teams to retrieve samples.

However, one such sample was a shemjaza, an agent of Ixindar, who was able to use her corruption to pro-





cure her release, leading to the vessel's eventual crash in Apocrypha. The Saints know of the crash, but the EDF prevents them from locating the wreckage directly. Unable to conduct a ground scan for an extended period, the Saints have contracted the Iron Sons to do it for them.

## THRALLS OF AVALON

Most of the pagus thralls of Avalon of All are located at the Rubedo Cataract, at a village they raided and gutted. As Avalon is asleep, the pagus leader K'Tal has been claiming Rubedo as his new base of operations, though still within the realm that Avalon rules.

# CHARACTERS

## AVALON OF ALL ("CREMATORAM")

Avalon (or Crematoram to the pagus) is a typical fallen dragon. Believing himself to be an angel, Avalon claims to wish peace and tranquility to the world. He still considers himself one of the holy order of archon dragons. The issue is that his so-called 'peace' must come via *The Commandments of Salvation*—Avalon's bible that lists the 235,875 rules both fae and man must follow to be "saved." Avalon believes once the heretics of Abidan finally stop resisting, a pilgrimage can begin where loyal pagus spread the good word.

## AXUM URUK

Axum, once a vicious pagus, threw away his animalistic ways and wrote a book called *The Atonement of the Fire*, detailing the path of enlightenment for the pagus still under the shroud of control from Ixindar. Axum is not necessarily good, just hopeful that the pagus soul will separate from corruption. Axum attacks no one, especially other pagus. He believes a fate lies ahead for those like him. He waits for the moment to raise his people to a glory previously denied to them. Axum believes that no creature should rule over the pagus and should be free from all—dragon, demon, or anyone else.

Secretly, Axum informs Janoah whenever a large pagus army forms to strike the south, allowing the city ample time to prepare and fortify. This agreement was made with neither a formal offer nor trade. Janoah doesn't depend on Axum for the advance warning,

though it is appreciated and has reduced casualties on the human side.

## HAEZOR URUK

Axum's elder son, Haezor believes in his father's vision and may be the only one worthy to succeed him. He becomes an accompanying NPC through the adventure, but his survivability may come into question. Haezor exhibits shocking intelligence and dreams of traveling across Tethuss as a free pagus to join the ranks of Limshau. His weapon is an ugly, oversized rendition of a Limshau odachi.

## HUY'UK K'TAL

K'Tal is an intelligent and ruthless pagus who leads the Thralls of Avalon. Although not an elder pagus, K'Tal has already exhibited above average intelligence. When the *Proto-Jericho* crashed, K'Tal took his opportunity to slay his master, Mal'Kan Apoc and assume control. Although initially loyal to his god, K'Tal soon becomes intoxicated with the power of techan weapons, and after wiping out a rival pagus village, plans on turning his gaze towards displacing Avalon and seating himself as the first pagus emperor of Apocrypha.

K'Tal's rise to power is unavoidable in the story, but what he does with said power can be adjusted based on the flow of the game. K'Tal may fall in line and lead Crematoram's army in a push across the Tethuss Bridge or embarks on a crusade to unite the pagus of Apocrypha under his banner. Regardless, K'Tal will become too powerful if left alone. Although he can initially be approached, ultimately, he cannot be reasoned with.

## KITIA KHIRO

The lone survivor of the *Proto-Jericho*, Kitia presents herself as a victim, once an oblivious engineer on board the vessel. She often mixes truth with deception in hopes of deflecting suspicion. Her objective is to prevent the *Proto-Jericho* from falling into anyone else's hands. Kitia initially shares her people's resentment of magic but is not the fanatic she is expected to be.

Kitia may develop personal feelings for her rescuers and elect not to retrieve the virus. However, she will always remain stalwart in her conviction to prevent the technology of her vessel from falling into anyone's clutches. She may have an opportunity to hijack the *Proto-Jericho*'s functioning systems and use that to de-





## CHAPTER TWELVE: THE TAKING OF PROTO JERICHO

stroy it or turn its weapons on her enemies. She may even attempt to send a distress signal, though rescuers will be hostile to everyone except her.

### KRO'AS KAOS

Kro'as Kaos is another sympathetic pagus, the younger son of Axum, in control of the small village of Moeno. He offers to escort the group to meet his father and explain their mission.

## EPISODES

Here is a summary of episodes in this campaign:

### GATHERINGS

The PCs, whatever their origin, find themselves on the road eventually leading to Legion's Point. There are different entry points for techan and echan groups.

### FALL OF LEGION'S POINT

The PCs enter the village to find it deserted save for dying inhabitants. The PCs will investigate the crisis and discover the source of the contamination from the local river. There, they will find the cause of the plague of Legion's Point—mercury poisoning from a broken reactor core, still dripping into the water supply. As the PCs track the wreckage, they encounter strange monsters previously foreign to this land, some appearing as victims of recent surgery. Given the breadth of fallen wreckage and the size of the debris found, it is plainly evident that most of the wreck crashed north of Abidan in Apocrypha.

## 400 BRIDGE ON THE RIVER GIHON

The PCs have only one safe way of crossing into Apocrypha, over the Tethuss Bridge. They'll be required to travel to Janoah and seek permission to cross the bridge, which is no easy task. Being several kilometers long, the crossing will take more than a day. On the other side, the PCs are aided by other pagus, who inform the PCs that refuge can be had in Kross.

### ANGELS & DEMONS

The PCs are introduced to Axum and the pagus village of Kross. Axum educates the PCs on the land of Apocrypha, warning of the wide variety of threats awaiting

them. Before the PCs leave, a pagus band attacks Kross with its leader wielding an advanced techan weapon. Not only have the pagus found fragments of the wreckage but are acquiring weapons from it as well.

Axum knows of the migratory tribe that struck Kross and helps the PCs locate them. It is there they recover a survivor of the crash, Kitia Khiro. She explains that the vessel is the *Proto-Jericho*, a ship she claims is from the bastion of Porto—a legendary utopia of technology from across the ocean. Kitia, with Axum's help, determines that brunt of the wreckage fell near the River Bythos, but to follow it requires crossing the Fork.

Axum offers supplies for the PCs as well as the help of a local guide, Axum's own son, Haezor. The united group travel to the Fork.

Elsewhere, the remaining survivors from the migratory tribe are killed by the Droogs.

### FRAGMENTS OF CARBON

Partway through the journey, the PCs comes across a chunk of technology which Kitia denies being from her vessel. An automated machine from Pontiac then ambushes the PCs and attempts to escape with the technology. It is clear that there is some residual technology still residing in Apocrypha that has been spared disruption thanks to the natural immunity radiating from pagus and shemjaza. Kitia knows nothing of this but warns that Porto technology cannot fall into anyone's hands.

The PCs arrive at the Fork and discover that kodiaks from out of Uzu have had the fortress under siege for several days, seeing the falling star as an omen to attack. Although the PCs may act diplomatically toward the kodiaks, they could also use them as a distraction to sneak across the Fork. The kodiaks have successfully created a settlement near the Lake of Gods, but continued raids have forced them to secure the Fork to limit pagus traffic to the west. If the PCs help, the kodiaks can be called upon to be allies. Crossing the Fork, the PCs begin following the Cataracts of Bythos.

### RHYMES WITH ORANGE

A patrol from the Droogs ambushes the PCs at the Nigredo Cataract while searching through a piece of the wreckage. It is clear the Droogs are a scouting party for a larger force. The PCs also discover evidence that the vessel is actually from Mars. They can confront Kitia



about this. Regardless, she insists each fragment be destroyed. The Droog raid also points to them also tracking the wreckage.

However, the following cataract, Rubedo, is also the location of the Thralls of Avalon, and the Droogs will undoubtedly be ambushed there. The PCs can attempt to sweep in and save the Droogs or let them fall. If they do, the thralls will appropriate the techan weapons and even take control of Clockworks.

However, if the PCs intervene, the two sides can unite, forcing the pagus to flee north towards Albedo. Regardless, the PCs will discover the Droogs have their own Saints like Kitia.

## ALMIGHTY RISING

The PCs reach the main wreck of the *Proto-Jericho*...

## GATHERINGS

How the PCs become involved in the story depends not only if they are techan or echan but also by how badly they need money.

## A FANATIC WITH A VISION (ECHAN)

The PCs' reputation precedes them, and they are approached by a local fixer, Maximillian Gray, either on the street or in a local pub.

***"All you need is a rainbow to pave the path ahead. What leads you, eh, virtue or gold?"***

< PCs' response >

***"I represent an extremely prosperous businessman with interests you may share. He is seeking strong arms and stronger steel. Make for the white house with the iron fence. Payment is half up front, half on completion. Show the guard this stamp, and all will be right with the world."***

The paper has a stamp crest of a minor house of lackluster nobility, Sinclair, just outside of Abidan's borders. They own three farms, a dozen servants, ten horses, a bicycle, and a broken alcohol tractor.

The house is two floors of red brick and white wood.

Led into the office of Lord Sinclair, they find a man with barely five years left on his life.

***"Let's cut the gristle from this argument, shall we? 1,000 sovereigns down payment for each on a signed contract. Another 1,000 each on your return. I won't insult you by lying about possible legal ramifications of breaking this deal. Anything you claim is yours...save for the final prize, which I will describe but not explain. I need people worn from the world—the hard types that walked for years on bare feet before being given shoes. Gray knows how to spot them. Let's hope he isn't wrong."***

< PCs response >

***"The item is a cylinder, we've got an etching here. On this cylinder is printed type so you can spot it. It hides north of a town called Legion's Point, a week, tops. Gray will have anything else you may need regarding maps to the town."***

Sinclair can be convinced (Diplomacy) to up the price on delivery to as much as 2000 gp (though be aware, the PCs will most likely not be collecting).

The etching reveals a copper cylinder six inches long with the words "*33497-Group 5*" printed on it.

The PCs will probably notice the indentured servants around the house, including a few fae. A close examination sports the marks of ownership placed upon them by the slavers of Matronis. It's a sure bet, one of these is a broken concubine. There are three fae (two damaskans and a chaparran) and five humans, all property (slavery is illegal in Abidan, but this house is technically not within the kingdom, so the PCs will achieve little by reporting Sinclair to Abidan authorities).

There are also fifteen guards all well armed at any point in time including a burly brute nicknamed "*Tiny Thomas*." The PCs may attempt to free the fae and liberate the keep, though the fifteen guards will double in number three rounds after the alert is raised.

The PCs can decline the offer, but at some point, afterward, someone should bring up the obvious—if this lord is as depraved as he appears, what could be so important, and wouldn't he surely find another party will-



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ing the carry out his mission? If noble, the PCs can take the mission on themselves to acquire the item to use as leverage.

### REVERSE ENGINEERING (TECHAN)

The PCs find themselves in the bastion of York. If the group is native to the bastion, then this is an assignment. If they are a mercenary free company, then Maximilian Gray becomes an envoy for the government-run military conglomerate of the bastion. Otherwise, he is only a messenger.

This may occur inside a bastion or Gray may arrive via helicopter, dressed in a black business suit (with fake leather tie), locked steel briefcase hanging from a hand. Such a sight would stand out wherever the PCs may reside.

***“There is a commission available. Your window of acceptance is six hours, then it goes to someone else. Your group came on the top of a concise list of qualified companies. If the list is wrong, tell us now, and we’ll amend it.”***

*<PCs response>*

***“I cannot reveal more than that without a signed affidavit of non-communication from everyone involved. This is “eyes-only” intelligence I’m handling and no one, not even other cleared personnel are privy to it. The codename for his operation is ‘Almighty Fallen.’ All open communication shall refer to it as ‘Roman.’”***

Max will open his briefcase and hand out forms and pens for all to sign. They are in triplicate.

***“The pay is 500 credits up front, payable in any bastion’s scrip; another 2,000 upon completion. We will also offer compensation for any salvage found—A caveat in the contract insists anything recovered of marked technological advantage be tendered to us in addition to the objective detailed in the briefing. This is non-negotiable, though the recovery fee may depend on what you find. From our***

***limited intelligence, we believe there may be other examples of technological superiority at this location. You will serve the entire human race if you are honest about what you recover.”***

*<PCs response>*

***“Firstly, though we will divulge details of the mission, we will not disclose how we acquired the intelligence. The vessel, an aircraft obviously, fell hard in the middle of the Frizzel peaks approximately 500 kilometers from here as the Wasp flies. We currently lack experienced field operatives, and we need this handled quickly. It would be easier and faster to trust you with such a mission than pull operatives from other fields and prep them for this. Time is of the essence. We are not sure what else the craft was carrying, but we do know of its importance.***

***“The intelligence lists a crate labeled as 33497-Group 5. The crate is designated TS-Alpha, which we believe indicates the highest security protocol available. We need whatever this is plus any data still contained in the computer systems if by some miracle they still function. After completion and recovery of any other technology of consequence, you are ordered to destroy the craft by whatever means to prevent anything being tracked back to you or us. Don’t bother asking questions. There are no more answers.”***

### TO REST THE FALLEN (EITHER)

The PCs may also become involved through the discovery of the destruction of Legion’s Point. PCs may stumble on the site purely by accident or find a survivor moments before death. PCs may also be contacted by a family that fled or is inquiring about a loved one that lived in Legion’s Point before the mail stopped.

If the group is paid by a family, the group may stop after finding the village destroyed. They also may stop once they discover the source of the contamination. By taking pity, the group may be encouraged to see this



through until the fallen have found peace. Though this entry point seems to be the simplest, it also hides the most for the story, leaving everything to a surprise when it occurs.

The group, regardless if they are techan or echan, would be traveling on a back road after a previous mission. A random member foolishly got them lost insisting on a shortcut. They travel as the road becomes increasingly narrow.

When the child/woman is seen, she is dragging a disfigured foot, is sweating profusely despite the chilly temperature, and when a PC holds or touches her in any way, her skin begins to flake off. She is covered in rashes and sores. Hair falls out in clumps.

***“They say we have sinned. How have I sinned? Will I go to heaven? Will I?” She groans quietly through final breaths.***

*< PCs response >*

***“I’m sorry. I’ll behave during sermon. I will.”***

*< PCs response >*

***“We are forsaken...have been...since the blue fire fell from the sky...” she trails off and dies.***

No healing at this point will save her...the damage is too far gone. A successful DC15 check (Heal, Sciences, appropriate Knowledge) will reveal that this is the result of poisoning, not magic or disease; a second DC15 Sciences (Int) check can reveal that it is specifically mercury toxicity (echan groups may or may not be aware of the toxic properties of mercury, as it does not affect fae). No magic here...just a mystery. To cause this much damage requires substantial contamination.

As the group pushes further down the road, they will arrive at the village and realize the entire populace has succumbed to this affliction.

## THE FEEL OF THE GAME

A techan and echan game will feel somewhat different. For one, an echan party is not made aware of what they will find and should have no knowledge the “dungeon” is a downed spacecraft. Further, everything inside will feel entirely foreign to them. If the group has humans

or humans born originally from bastions, they would be aware of the technological nature of the dungeon when they arrive but may not know of its origin or what to expect inside. Similarly, they would hit enormous obstacles with doors and functioning security systems. They may be aware of the creatures inside, but the dungeon itself would be alien to them.

Conversely, a techan group may be made aware of where they are going, but the creatures inside would be a surprise. They must deal with EDF and come to terms with the mystery about how the ship fell, and more importantly, where it came from. As a result, there are two distinct adventures here dependent on where the PC comes from. This is not a failure if the PCs are unable to figure out everything. As long as they survive and keep being heroes, everything should be ok.

## FALL OF LEGION’S POINT

Legion’s Point is an farming community on the fringes of Abidan, settled by expatriates from Baruch Malkut decades after the legendary Caravan of the King. They traveled far before finding a patch of land they could be content with. They had no desire to associate with the outside world but weren’t frightened by encounters when they occurred. Though they did not share their homeland’s xenophobic views of the fae, the population is still exclusively human.

Further, though they are no followers of Darius Koning’s twisted religion, they still have a few articles of faith in common with the “Blessed Kingdom.” They still held an apocalyptic view of the world, believing the final rapture had yet to come. In truth, it was little more than a commune with all rules dictated by the pastor, Reginald Goodchild.

Goodchild immediately declared the blue comet a harbinger of doom and insisted on constant prayers to stave off God’s wrath. In his sermon, he preached the impending doom of mankind, convincing the population that the world was dying all around them. The lack of any visitors for months afterward all but confirmed it (Legion’s Point is nowhere near any major road and message-riders and caravans from Abidan rarely travel there).

By the time the first child got sick, Goodchild had the entire commune in a state of panic. After faith





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failed to heal the child, the pastor declared that the grip of God's hand was slowly moving around them, and they had to release the town of any sin. The child was euthanized under prayer and sacrifice, and the town was spared another incident for four weeks. This time, it fell to the oldest of them, a wise elder never thought to be with sin.

Still, Goodchild pointed a finger, and the possibility of humiliation was so high, the elder refused food and water and starved to death. The next case would occur less than a week later. A fourth followed before the third could be dealt with. More followed. Some died, but most were either disfigured or rendered blind, death, dumb, or insane. A few slipped into comas and never woke.

Overcoming fear, a few finally slipped away against the wishes of Goodchild. The rest remained, waiting for a death they had all were convinced had fallen to everyone else in the world. They considered themselves the lucky ones to be spared last.

### PLAYER INSERTION

The PCs hardly realize they enter town until they push past the substantial growth around the commune and walk into the single street. Read or paraphrase the following.

*The smell strikes you the moment the pleasantries of flowers and ferns falls behind. Your nose sticks up not from the smell of death, but from dying, from the scents of lungs counting down their final moments, from muscles withering, from sores bleeding and infecting. It reminds you of old garbage and expired eggs sitting in the sun for weeks. You pass a stable and see stacks of hay but no animals. A moment later, you notice a corral with no horses. It isn't unusually hot, and the flies have yet to swarm. The slight fog in the air wafts from small wooden huts gutted by intentional fire. Within the charred but cool cinders are the fragments of animal bones to mark the missing livestock.*

The PCs come across the following locations in whatever order (though in sequence is preferred):

### GRAVEYARD

Read or paraphrase the following:

*You stop at the cemetery. Planed for a dozen plots, every cavity has been filled. A few new crosses have been set into the walking path, making it impossible to pay respect to one without insulting another. The years ranged from the wise elder to the innocent child. One body, with no room to be buried, is wrapped tightly in white cloth and resting outside the church.*

### CHURCH

Read or paraphrase the following:

*The cross still hanging at the head of the church features copper rings at its ends, the marks of a sect not seen in this part of the land. An abridged version of the Helios Codex rests on a podium under the yellow tint of stained glass. Despite the neglect of the hamlet, it appears someone has been dedicated to maintaining the church. No dust sits in the air; no rodents scurry about. The A-frame is the tallest construction in town, and you can see the thick wooden supports holding the roof in place. You can even spot the faint words carved into the frame, running across the supports. With them so high, you have no luck in reading them. They are words meant only for God to understand.*

*Beyond the golden tint from the column of light beading upon the podium, a dozen candles among hundreds burnt flicker away their final moments. Huge clumps of wax have solidified down pedestals—the results of days of unanswered prayers. A smaller door to the right leads to the bedchamber of the pastor. A door to the left leads back the crowded graveyard.*

If the heroes see to the pastor's chamber, read the following:



***The aroma about the town curls your lips as you enter, pungent and nearly nauseating. A human body should not give out this smell unless cursed by some wicked shaman. The withered body rests with bent limbs and mangled fingers over the sheets. Flakes of white skin litter the mattress. About the room hangs various oil paintings of divinity, all conveniently parading the same heroic heavenly figure through blooming flowers, adoring children, and submissive livestock. One even has him walking on water. His resemblance to the decaying man on the bed is beyond uncanny. He is still well dressed, and the floor appears to have been swept recently, an act he could not have done himself. A jug and glass sit filled with water by a night table. A rosary of pearls and black marbles dangle from his digits.***

As the PCs check the man, he opens his eyes and exhales a smell so pungent, the nearest PC is hit with a DC15 Fortitude saving throw to resist not rolling away to vomit.

The man is the pastor—was the pastor, as his mind has decayed beyond recovery. No healing or spellcraft can bring him back at this point. Upon waking, he groans and tightens the grip on his rosary the best he can.

Inquisitive PCs at this point can study the pastor in hopes of a diagnosis, repeating the skill checks noted above. PCs gain +2 to their checks if they study or sample the water, which tastes slightly sweet and metallic. If this is the second attempt, the checks are made with a +4 bonus.

**Note:** If the heroes are not particularly heroic, the rings in the cross can be broken away and sold for 5gp each. There is also some bronze and jade jewelry worth 2gp on the podium. The abridged *Helius Codex* will fetch 5 gp at Limshau. If the PCs are particularly callous, they can pry the rosary from the pastor and sell it for 50 gp.

## WARD

Read or paraphrase the following:

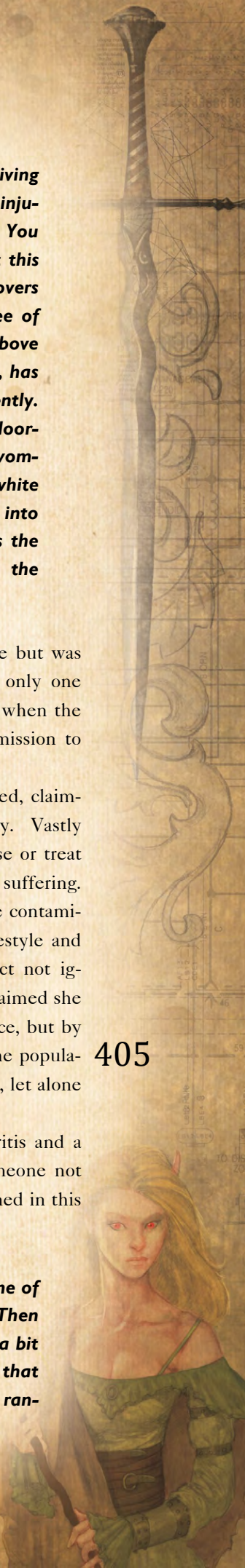
***Not much of a hospital, this simple receiving room built onto a house served the few injuries the farmers sustained in the fields. You have seen shoddier conditions—at least this ward has clean sheets and mosquito covers along with basins at every bed, all three of them. The same ringed cross hangs above every pillow. This ward, like the church, has been maintained diligently until recently. Your attention is diverted to an open doorway across the small room as a young woman in white and blue coveralls and a white cap to hold in the hair walks obliviously into the room. Upon seeing you, she drops the wooden bowl, cracking and splashing the water across the floor.***

Daniella Isham practiced traditional medicine but was never much good at it. Still, she was the only one trained to irrigate wounds and sew cuts, and when the curse fell upon the town, she took it as a mission to solve the problem.

Although some turned to her, many refused, claiming only their faith was required for recovery. Vastly underequipped and inexperienced to diagnose or treat such an outbreak, she did her best to alleviate suffering. Mercifully, she has resisted the effects of the contamination. This is more due to her healthy lifestyle and rugged immune system than her faith, a fact not ignored by the dying around her. Some even claimed she was a witch and tried to serve her as a sacrifice, but by this point, the spirit had been taken out of the population, and most couldn't even stand up straight, let alone hold a pitchfork and torch.

By this point, Daniella suffers from arthritis and a weakness in her limbs, a weak state for someone not even into her 30s. She'll discuss what happened in this town the best she can:

***“Lara Marigold was the first. She was one of the lucky ones. She was taken quickly. Then came Walter Routh, an elder. He took a bit longer. Arthur Vettel...fell into a coma that lasted seven weeks. Seemed completely random.”***





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She grabs a diary and opens it to a strap.

***"Children often started with rosy cheeks, others with sore joints. William Brown went blind, Tucker Mathews, deaf. Both suffered from severe and rapid arthritis, despite neither being older than ten."***

She flips through a few pages.

***"Severe nausea, total lack of motor control, profuse sweating, black urine, red discharges, lack of memory, reduced mental awareness...and death."***

***"And the faith shall lead them. Most refused my help, blamed me when prayers failed. I've developed an irregular heartbeat this past week. I had truly thought as they...that the world was dying, and we were the last of it. Is the world still alive?"***

*<PCs response>*

***"Then it is just we that were cursed. Perhaps the damned are condemned to Malkut and those escaping risk the true mark of his wrath. Maybe I was spared because I refused to accept faith as the answer. Even when they turned to euthanize those that suffered, it didn't stop it—what God would ask for such a sacrifice anyway?"***

If the group wishes to help, they are permitted one final attempt to attempt the skill checks from before. This is the last opportunity to diagnose the problem before being handed the answer up the river.

If the PCs accurately diagnose the situation, they can quickly eliminate an airborne pathogen; the pattern suggests an ingested poison. The cattle didn't appear affected, so it is unlikely to be in the food, but the fish from the local river, the Canto, would be an obvious place to start. A successful DC15 Knowledge (Nature) or an Sciences (Int) check will reveal that not only are the fish laden with high doses of mercury, but the entire Canto river system is contaminated as well. The saturation is so severe, sediment has coated rocks on the shore. An intuitive PC should realize that this could not

have been a single massive dump but continuous pollution since this all began. Isham points out that the river Canto runs up to the Frizzel range, where the blue comet crashed.

Isham will not accompany the PCs further. Realizing the truth, she will have little reason to remain as the solitary survivor. She will finish her duties, recording everything that happened, and abandon her town and head for the nearest city. She will seek medical attention as soon as she can and impart her books for history to record the fate of Legion's Point. The PCs may insist on escorting her, in which case she thanks them, but has nothing to offer them for their trouble. This will have no effect on the timeline of the rest of the adventure.

### IN SERVICE TO PROFIT

Read or paraphrase the following.

***Elsewhere, a large but weathered Behemoth echan terrain vehicle looms behind a group of mercenaries—an irregular group of mixed armor and weapons. A poorly painted nickname— "Clockworks"—is plastered on the side of the vehicle.***

***"Why would you call yourselves the Droogs?" The mercenaries are asked.***

***"Why not?" the lead responds.***

***"Touché—my fault for asking."***

***"What is it you require, My Gray?"***

***Maximillian Gray addresses the techan mercenaries.***

***"The pay is 1,000uc up front, another 3,000 upon completion. We'll offer compensation for any salvage found—we want it back. This is non-negotiable, though the rewards may increase depending on what you find. You will serve the entire human race if you are honest about what you recover."***

***"I don't care about causes...this is about the coin," the techan leader interjects.***

***"Once again...touché. The target is somewhere in the middle of the Frizzel range. Time is of the essence. The intelligence lists a crate labeled as 33497-Group 5. Retrieve it —"***



*“Easy enough,” the mercenary interjects. The tag on his uniform reveals his name as Booker.*

*“Do you not wish to hear the details?”*

*“None required. Except for one question. Anyone else looking for this thing?”*

*Gray smiles.*

*“Of course, anyone else you find along the way should be considered competition and treated accordingly.”*

## CRUMBS OF TITANS

The path following the river takes a full day, involving steep hills approaching the Frizzel mountains. The ‘mountains’ themselves can hardly be called such, being merely tree-topped foothills of the distant Alanakas, and require little effort in scaling. The Canto river is equally modest, occasionally narrowing to little more than a creek.

The PCs discover additional evidence of contamination, including dead animals along the riverside.

As one PC is examining the water and a group of dead natural animals along the beach, another PC notices something rising from the sea.

*What appears to be a small islet of dirt and scattered rocks rise up to reveal a gaping maw of jewel-like teeth and bloodshot eyes. Rocks protrude from its arms and legs, and as it stands, it looms above you all. It is not pleased, and charges from the water towards you.*

This is an oggrak reaver; however, it appears hurt. Perceptive PCs before or after will notice wires and surgical scars covering the creature, including a portion of its brain removed.

## ENCOUNTER

1 Oggrak Reaver

After it is slain, the PCs will notice various surgeries the creature has undergone.

## OGGRAK REAVER

CR6

XP 2,400

CE Large humanoid (fae)

Init +3; Senses low-light vision; Perception +12

Aura Jagged Flesh (1d10)

### DEFENSE

AC 18, touch 8, flat-footed 18; (+2 armor, –1 Dex, +8 natural, –1 size)

hp 65 (10d8+20); regeneration 10 (conditional)

Fort +9, Ref +2, Will +5

Resist 10 thunder

### OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft., climb 20 ft.

Melee slams +12/+7/+7 (2d6+6)

Ranged rock +13 (3d8+12) plus knocked prone

Space 10 ft.; Reach 10 ft.

### STATISTICS

Str 23, Dex 8, Con 15, Int 6, Wis 10, Cha 11

Base Atk +7; CMB +14; CMD 23

Feats Cleave, Improved Initiative, Improved Overrun, Iron Will, Power Attack

Skills Handle Animal +8, Perception +12; Racial Modifiers +4 on Perception

Languages gutturan

SQ Stone shift

### SPECIAL ABILITIES

**Jagged Flesh (Ex)** Any creature that starts its turn within 5 feet of the reaver, takes (1d10) slashing damage.

**Regeneration (Ex)** If the reaver is in contact with solid stone, it regains 10 hit points at the start of its turn if it has at least 1 hit point.

**Stone Shift (Ex)** The oggrak reaver sinks into a stone wall or floor, rendering it invisible and immune to attack. It can move up to 10 feet in this state. It uses movement to emerge; if it appears within 10 feet of any Medium-sized or smaller creature, that target is knocked prone.

## ALMIGHTY FALLEN

A few hours up the mountain and along the river, the PCs encounter the source of the contamination. Read or paraphrase the following.

*The source of the contamination is evident as the sky above you—a massive and jagged chunk of metal the size of a small keep with debris scattered around it. A ring-like assembly of wires and magnets still spins around a larger superstructure, and the entire wreck emanates a distinct hum. No details reveal its purpose or origin, other than the fact that at one point, something had surrounded it. Every corner and side of the wreck ends in twisted wires and metal beams, meaning it was a small piece of a larger whole. The vegetation radiating from the impact point*



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***appears dessicated, and behind the wreck reveals the flattened and broken trees from the path the wreck took on its descent.***

A successful DC15 Perception (Wis) check will reveal silver liquid dripping from the wreckage into the river.

If a PC is techan or if the group makes a successful DC15 Sciences (Int) check, it will become evident that this structure is radioactive given the damage to the surrounding vegetation. However, magical disruption is suppressing the effects unless PCs linger too long next to the wreckage. Every hour near the vessel, each character suffers one level of exhaustion. If reaching level 4, level 1 becomes irreversible, and if reaching level 5, level 2 becomes irreversible (no saving throw).

A successful DC10 Engineer (Int) check will determine the wreck is a power reactor of some kind, but one the likes of which should be powering a small city. The metal is well-refined, but radiation prevents scavenging anything useful from this. A successful DC10 Perception (Wis) check will reveal the glints of metal further up the mountain, within the forest.

The PCs will eventually stumble on additional fragments from the wreck, though none larger than the reactor leaking into the river. Most are pieces of sheet metal, also refined but impossible to salvage given their size.

Further up, a PC will find a large cage with thick bars broken open and suspended from the trees. Following the path of wreckage, other PCs will stumble on several more in the same condition. One was not slowed by the forest canopy, and slammed hard into the ground, killing what looks like a skegg inside, also the victim of medical experiments.

Though they may continue to search, they will not locate the crate they were dispatched here to find; it is not in this part of the wreckage.

Eventually, the PCs will track the fallen wreckage into a clearing; read or paraphrase the following.

***You can spot in the far distance another fragment of wreckage—catching only the glint of distant debris. However, said fragment sits on the opposite side of a massive torrential expanse of water, one you recognize as Gihon—the waterwall dividing the pagus-controlled lands of Apocrypha from the rest of Canam. The fragments and***

***wreck behind you, the fallen trees, create a clear line of descent leading to the opposite distant shore and surely well beyond.***

There is no safe way to cross Gihon, no matter the technology or magic the PCs possess. Gihon is several miles across. The only safe way to enter Apocrypha is by crossing the Tethuss Bridge in Janoah, which is several days northwest following the Gihon.

### BRIDGE ON THE RIVER GIHON

Janoah is a civil metropolis, and one of the largest echan cities in the world. It also takes pride in its regulations regarding weapons; PCs must either surrender their weapons to the guard for the duration of their stay, or allow them to be peace-bonded (if echan) or the ammunition removed and surrendered (if techan). The guard will provide receipts and runners will be sent to retrieve the weapons or ammunition to any gate when the PCs choose to leave.

Read or paraphrase the following.

***The gothic spires of Janoah's many cathedrals stick up from behind its impressive wall as you approach. There are many roads to the city, all of which are policed. Through the open gates, you notice the large but labyrinthine streets all inclining uphill, ultimate connecting the remote castle that fringes on the opposite wall of the city. Beyond that lies the bridge and the only safe way into Apocrypha.***

The guards will stop and question any heavily armed group, and if their answers are unsatisfactory, they will be turned away. Although PCs can undoubtedly attempt to bribe themselves past the gates, even employing magic or traditional deception, the PCs will eventually be caught by law enforcement patrols or by members from the Order of Abraham.

If any PCs reveal their real purpose, the response is unsurprisingly resistant but open to compromise; this is above their level. If the importance of the mission is stressed more than the possibility of reward, they will connect the PCs with the Watch Commander of the



Bulwark. If a PC is from Abidan, she can use connections, and potentially a successful DC15 Knowledge (History) (Int) check to know where to go and who to ask to get past certain levels of security and find the Watch Commander personally. If the PC is from Janoah itself, this check gains a +5 bonus.

Techan PCs will be relatively safe from disruption in the city, as there are not many fae or actual magical practitioners present; however, most of the roads are too narrow for ETVs, and such a vehicle will need be kept locked outside (and will remain so for the rest of the adventure).

The Watch Commander, **Sir Genuille Twen**, is open to the idea of allowing the PCs to cross north, but only if convinced that the purpose is to prevent the pagus access to any technology that might have fallen in the north.

If the PCs attempt to bribe or claim their mission is anything but altruistic, Twen will forbid the characters access to the bridge for their own good, forcing another solution. It should be obvious by this point that bribery will not get them very far in Janoah, and even if their motives are purely mercenary, they should get good at pretending otherwise. Any Knight of Abraham will be able to pull the strings required to get the PCs across the Bulwark with their equipment, and there are plenty of them about. If a PC is from Janoah or is exceptionally skilled in the art of diplomacy, the group can be supplied with horses if they do not already own them.

Read or paraphrase the following.

***The massive gates of the Bulwark groan open, revealing the bridge beyond. Numerous knights of the Wall look down on you from above, questioning your sanity. The bridge is a natural construct, though any vegetation that could have grown over it has long since died from centuries of war. The bridge is known to run for forty miles, meaning you'll be crossing it for more than a day.***

The PCs will likely need to camp overnight on the bridge. Thankfully, at 60 feet across, they are unlikely to slip and fall to their deaths.

***Elsewhere, down by the Gihon crossing near the wreck, the Clockwork Behemoth effortlessly drives into the water and begins crossing.***

## THE KROSS

The PCs camp without issue and traverse the expanse without even an encounter. As they reach the opposite side, read or paraphrase the following.

***You expected an apocalyptic hellscape of scorched trees and salted earth. Instead, you find a pristine expanse of rolling green hills and unhindered forests. The countryside is shockingly lavish, with the only barren and despoiled region being the bridge behind you.***

The PCs have entered the Caledon Isthmus with hundreds of square miles of land around them. Magic in this region flows with the waters from the Grand Lakes, resulting in increased disruption all around Caledon and also increased wildlife, flora, and a noteworthy lack of pagus. Armies prefer to push through this region towards the bridge and not linger. There are open and rolling fields, but no roads apart from a large overgrown path to the northeast, obviously the route that the last major invasion took. Common sense would suggest not going this way. Any advice from Janoah would have directed the group to travel northeast, ultimately following the eastern cliffside until entering greater Apocrypha.

Following that advice will involve two days of travel. Heading in any other direction will eventually result in the PCs reaching a cliff with a hundred-foot drop-off to torrential waters below.

The following two days pass without incident, though with the unsettling dread that something should be happening, almost as if the pagus are missing or Apocrypha is not as inundated with pagus as the rumors claim.

Afterward, read or paraphrase the following:





## CHAPTER TWELVE: THE TAKING OF PROTO JERICHO

*Two days without a sign of intelligent life, or any life for that matter, outside of magically imbued flora, and you begin wondering what the fuss was all about. Then, over the hill, at the edge of the horizon, you notice the tell-tale indicators of agriculture—poorly conducted agriculture.*

If there are echan characters or any characters trained in Knowledge (Nature) (Int) present, insert the following.

*You notice obvious deficiencies in farming techniques to prevent wind erosion. Whoever is farming lacks a fundamental understanding on how to preserve topsoil given the prevailing winds in the region.*

Continue with the following:

*To the east, you notice a group of pale, tall humanoids stalking the farmland—the unseen villagers evidently unaware of the coming raid.*

These are pagus—potentially the first time these PCs have encountered them. They have a keen sense and may detect the PCs approach. The PCs may attempt an ambush, with the fight occurring in the cultivated wheat fields.

### ENCOUNTER

4 x Pagus Strifebringers

1 x Pagus Battlesworn

**410** The pagus battle to the death as long as the battlesworn is alive. Once killed, if only one strifebringer remains, it will flee. If the PCs allow the pagus to escape, an arrow will fire into its back, killing it.

The arrow was fired from the now revealed farmers, three of them, who are also pagus. One adult male, one adult female, and a male child—all armed.

They are neither a threat nor evil, and the father lowers his longbow after killing the pagus. None of them speak English, only Paggin. The father, Ma'lik Kallo speaks calmly but is clearly inquiring to the characters' presence.

He will offer a meal and lodging and hope the characters understand that. In the morning—or immediately

if the characters refuse the offer of food and shelter—Ma'lik Kallo will lead the characters to the village of Mocno.

### PAGUS BATTLESWORN

CR 4

XP 1,200

LE Medium fey

Init +6; Senses darkvision; Perception +0

#### DEFENSE

AC 20, touch 15, flat-footed 17 (+4 Dex, +1 dodge, +5 armor)  
hp 44 (8d6+16)

Fort +4, Ref +10, Will +6

#### OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee maul +9 (1d8+6/x3)

Ranged short bow +8 (1d6/x3)

Special Attacks brutal slam, direct approach, onslaught

#### STATISTICS

Str 18, Dex 18, Con 15, Int 12, Wis 10, Cha 14

Base Atk +4; CMB +8; CMD 22

Feats Dodge, Mobility, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (maul)

Skills Acrobatics +16, Climb +10, Escape Artist +16, Handle Animal +6, Intimidate +12, Ride +10, Survival +10, Swim +6

Languages Common, Paggin

SQ focused aggression

#### SPECIAL ABILITIES

**Brutal Slam (Ex)** Instead of using *onslaught*, a pagus battlesworn may push the hit target back 10 feet and knock it prone.

**Direct Approach (Ex)** The pagus battlesworn makes a charge attack as a standard action against any target in range. The pagus battlesworn does not grant opportunity attacks or flanking bonuses until the beginning of the pagus battlesworn's next turn.

**Focused Aggression (Ex)** When the pagus battlesworn is first injured in battle, he makes (and must make) a melee attack against the enemy that triggered *focused aggression*. If the triggering attack was ranged, the pagus can replace his melee attack with a charge. The pagus gains +1 to attack and +2 to damage against that enemy until the pagus or the enemy is dead.

**Onslaught (Ex)** When the pagus battlesworn hits with an attack, it may move 10 feet after the attack is resolved. This movement does not provoke opportunity attacks.



## PAGUS STRIFEBRINGER

CR 4

XP 600

LE Medium fey

Init +6; Senses darkvision; Perception +0

### DEFENSE

AC 23, touch 15, flat-footed 17 (+4 Dex, +1 dodge, +5 armor, +3 natural)

hp 44 (8d6+16)

Fort +4, Ref +10, Will +6

### OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee maul +9 (1d8+6/x3)

Ranged short bow +8 (1d6/x3)

Special Attacks direct approach

### STATISTICS

Str 18, Dex 18, Con 15, Int 12, Wis 10, Cha 14

Base Atk +4; CMB +8; CMD 22

Feats Dodge, Mobility, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (maul)

Skills Acrobatics +16, Climb +10, Escape Artist +16, Handle Animal +6, Intimidate +12, Ride +10, Survival +10, Swim +6

Languages Common, Paggin

SQ minion

### SPECIAL ABILITIES

**Minion** If the pagus strifebringer suffers more damage in a single hit as his hit dice, it is killed (8d6 = 8 damage or more in a single hit). As a result, the strifebringer has half experience.

**Direct Approach (Ex)** The pagus strifebringer makes a charge attack as a standard action against any target in range. The pagus strifebringer does not grant opportunity attacks or flanking bonuses until the beginning of the pagus strifebringer's next turn.

## ANGELS & DEMONS

Read or paraphrase the following.

*The collection of huts is poorly built from fallen logs and animal skins and surrounded by more badly managed farmland. The population of pagus see you and respond with raised weapons. They do not advance. One larger than the others and unarmed pushes through the others and approaches. "We go Janoah to warn of invasion," he says, "you need not seek us."*

This is Kro'as Kaos, son of Axum, and the only pagus in Moeno who understands Englo-Lingo (which he speaks in a very precise and clipped manner). He is unaware of the fall of any technology but understands the importance if humans are willing to risk crossing north to investigate. Since pagus do not disrupt technology given Ixindar corruption, access to technology would offer pagus a significant advantage. Kro'as Kaos is also fully

aware how said weapons could aid their struggle for survival as well, and hopes his father will agree.

Kro'as Kaos will offer PCs room and board for the night, as next morning, he will personally escort them to Kross further north. Moeno is little more than a hamlet with barely fifty adult pagus, so there is very little the PCs can do unless they wish to talk Paggin with the locals.

The next morning, Kro'as Kaos is prepared, listed as a battlesworn and accompanied by four strifebringers from his own retinue and enough horses for both his group and the PCs if they don't already possess them.

From Moeno, the pagus push their mounts to reach Kross by nightfall, crossing a similar landscape as before, though the destination is significantly more impressive.

Read or paraphrase the following.

*Where Moeno was archaic and unrefined, the village of Kross at least offers the illusion of civility, with building practices mimicking the best it can the traditional building methods seen across the lands to the south. A few even sport second levels. There are trodden paths marked as roads, boardwalks, and mills. Farming practices appear more refined and not doomed to eventual erosion. However, it still appears the majority of the population are carnivores. There are no markets as you recognize them; everything seems based on the barter system.*

*A few members of the population notice your group and alert the others. There is no armed response given the pagus already with you, more a few looks of concern and confusion. A few shout back in Paggin. As you close in, one massive pagus steps from a building, notices you, and walks up.*

*"I am Axum Uruk, and best you turn back. We will be the last friendly faces you will see here."*

Axum is a pagus chieftan, a powerful one, and has little interest in selfish concerns. He will only allow the characters safe passage if the truth is revealed. Any other attempts he will rebuke. Unlike his son, Axum is aware





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of the impact, having noted it from many weeks back.

In his opinion, Apocrypha and everything within it belongs to the pagus, including any fallen technology. Axum wishes to use such technology to protect his people and to ensure the uncivilized pagus in the north do not threaten anyone, most of all him and his followers. Uruk would desire that technology for his people if he can get it, but would rather see it taken by southerners or destroyed rather than fall into the hands of the northern pagus.

### THE GRIST MILL

Before the meeting can be concluded, an alert bell is chimed, forcing Axum and all these able-bodied men to leave the meeting and race to the alert. The characters can obviously follow.

Read or paraphrase the following.

***Axum snaps in his native tongue to a sentry, who responds quickly. Axum translates.***

***"A band of rivals is approaching from the north. You may aid if you wish my people's graces. Else, I suggest you start for home before they arrive."***

If the PCs accompany Axum, he and his guards will move towards the distant grist mill.

Read or paraphrase the following.

***The grist mill wheel towers sixty feet next to a huge building boasting architectural talent not congruent with the rest of Kross's population. The water cascades from atop a rocky waterfall and into a creek that flows to the east. The local workers are attempting to stand their ground against raiders. You hear a loud crack, and half the building vaporizes, tossing debris across the field. The raiders reveal themselves, pagus as expected, but several are clearly wielding advanced techan weapons. They don't know how to hold the firearms, but apparently, don't need to.***

These are nomadic raiders, the Ca'Gel Tribe. Kross and his people divide to take out the peripheral bandits, with Axum hoping the PCs will take out the ones wield-

ing advanced weapons.

### ENCOUNTER

#### 12 x Pagus Strifebringer Minions

#### PAGUS STRIFEBRINGER

CR 4

**XP** 600

**LE** Medium fey

**Init** +6; **Senses** darkvision; Perception +0

#### DEFENSE

**AC** 23, touch 15, flat-footed 17 (+4 Dex, +1 dodge, +5 armor, +3 natural)

**hp** 44 (8d6+16)

**Fort** +4, **Ref** +10, **Will** +6

#### OFFENSE

**Speed** 30 ft.

**Melee** maul +9 (1d8+6/x3)

**Ranged** short bow +8 (1d6/x3)

**Special Attacks** direct approach

#### STATISTICS

**Str** 18, **Dex** 18, **Con** 15, **Int** 12, **Wis** 10, **Cha** 14

**Base Atk** +4; **CMB** +8; **CMD** 22

**Feats** Dodge, Mobility, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (maul)

**Skills** Acrobatics +16, Climb +10, Escape Artist +16, Handle

Animal +6, Intimidate +12, Ride +10, Survival +10, Swim +6

**Languages** Common, Paggin

**SQ** minion

#### ECOLOGY

**Environment** Any except near water or mountains

**Organization** pair, warband (3–6), or patrol (7–11) or invasion (50–5,000)

**Treasure** standard (maul, scale mail, other treasure)

#### SPECIAL ABILITIES

**Minion** If the pagus strifebringer suffers more damage in a single hit as his hit dice, it is killed (8d6 = 8 damage or more in a single hit). As a result, the strifebringer has half experience.

**Direct Approach (Ex)** The pagus strifebringer makes a charge attack as a standard action against any target in range. The pagus strifebringer does not grant opportunity attacks or flanking bonuses until the beginning of the pagus strifebringer's next turn.

The weapons can be retrieved, but the energy cell is incompatible with any energy cells the characters could possess and only possesses half its remaining capacity. Axum and his retinue kill the remaining pagus raiders.

Axum knows of this tribe and their migratory patterns. It would not be difficult to track the Ca'Gel movements and discover where they recovered the technology. The PCs are in Axum's good graces for aiding in defense of his tribe, but he would be indebted if the PCs volunteer the techan weapons. Echans have no reason to refuse, since they are unlikely to be able to use the weapons themselves, and techans should be



reminded that the unshielded power cells will exhaust within a few days, making them easy to recover on the return journey if necessary.

Depending on Axum's feelings towards the characters, he will offer food, any weapons they may have to spare (nothing magical), any information he may have on the local region, as well the promise that if they make it back to the village, the population will shelter them at the cost of their lives, ensuring safe passage back to Janoah. Axum may also offer the services of his elder son, Haezor (a battlesworn) to lead the PCs along Ca'Gel's path.

## THE SURVIVOR

It's less than a day to track the Ca'Gel's path, away from any forests, over rolling fields, until approaching the fragment. Read or paraphrase the following.

*The original vessel must have been an intimidating sight—this fragment is the largest seen thus far—an outer section of a larger craft, five stories counting the rows of windows along one side. Debris lie scattered around for hundreds of feet gathered into piles by the pagus still foraging around, with two larger individuals wielding very large hammers slamming into a still sealed door upon a smaller chunk of debris near the base of the wreck. Despite the technology already scavenged from open areas, they are obviously trying to access this smaller piece closed off to them.*

There are only five pagus of the Ca'Gel tribe here, those responsible for the gathering of useful technology from the wreck.

## ENCOUNTER (XP 8,900)

3 x Pagus Strifebringer Minions

2 x pagus shaitar

There is nothing else salvageable from around the wreck. The smaller chunk of debris is actually an escape pod that has soft-landed.

A successful DC15 Engineer (Int) check can open the pod. Otherwise, the PCs can try to physically open the door, through this would be more difficult, requiring a successful DC25 Strength check. A successful

## PAGUS SHAITAR

CR6

XP 2,400

LE Medium fey

Init +6; Senses darkvision; Perception -1

### DEFENSE

AC 23, touch 15, flat-footed 17 (+5 Dex, +1 dodge, +7 armor)  
hp 75 (10d6+40)

### OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee morningstar +10/+5 (1d10+6/19-20)

Special Attacks kinetic transference

### STATISTICS

Str 20, Dex 20, Con 18, Int 10, Wis 8, Cha 14

Base Atk +6; CMB +11; CMD 26

Feats Combat Reflexes, Dodge, Mobility, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (maul)

Skills Acrobatics +18, Climb +12, Escape Artist +16, Handle Animal +8, Intimidate +16, Ride +12, Survival +10, Swim +7

Languages Common, Paggin

SQ fury of Ixindar, unfocused aggression

### ECOLOGY

Environment Any except near water or mountains

Organization part of a warband (with 3–6 other pagus), or part of a patrol (with 7–11 other pagus)

Treasure standard (morningstar, half plate, other treasure)

### SPECIAL ABILITIES

**Kinetic Transference (Ex)** As a full round action, the pagus shaitar can make a single morningstar attack. If the target suffers damage, it is knocked prone.

**Fury of Ixindar (Ex)** The pagus shaitar deals an additional 1d6 damage against prone foes.

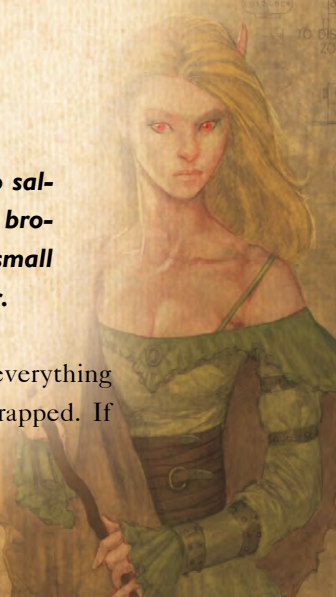
**Unfocused Aggression (Ex)** If the pagus shaitar suffers damage, he automatically confirms any critical threats until the end of its next turn. If someone inflicts a critical hit on the pagus shaitar, the shaitar gains a +1 bonus to attack and a +2 bonus to attack rolls until it is killed (or 1 hour)

DC20 Sleight of Hand (Dex) check could rewire the hatch controls with a little trial and error. The PCs may also attempt communicating through the hatch if suspecting someone may be alive inside. If the occupant believes humans are outside and the threat has been removed, she will open the hatch willingly.

Read or paraphrase the following.

*The hatch opens and within you find no salvageable technology. Instead, you find broken circuits, empty ration containers, a small bed, and an emaciated female passenger.*

This is Kitia Khiro. She is petrified given everything that's been happening while she has been trapped. If





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the PCs are human, Kitia will hesitantly accept their help. If they are fae, she initially shrinks away from them in terror, before visibly attempting to calm herself. Her introduction follows.

Read or paraphrase the following.

***My name is Kitia Khiro. I'm an engineer...of what was left of the Proto-Jericho.***

<Where are you from?>

***From across the ocean, the bastion of Porto. And yes, no doubt what you've heard of us is true. And I couldn't miss it more than now. Alas, we're as susceptible to disruption as anyone else.***

<What are you doing here?>

***I was not privy to the matters of our mission, but it was not our first outing. Some days, it's just observation, but I felt this one was more urgent, something that prompted us flying all the way out here. In retrospect, I can't see how it could have been justified. I only knew we were acquiring samples...animals. Maybe for a zoo.***

Characters who know three or more languages may attempt a DC20 Perception (Wis) check to realize that the accent Kitia is speaking with is fake; an amateurish and inconsistent attempt at an old-world Portuguese accent by someone who has only ever heard one from incomplete archive data (it isn't even true Portuguese, but Brazilian, not that any of the PCs have any way of knowing that). This is the first opportunity they have to guess that she is not telling the whole truth.

Through analyzing the scattered wreckage, PCs will discover a pattern, indicating a straight-line connection with the wreck found already in the south near Legion's Point. This would indicate more fragments would be north-west of the PCs' current location. If he is present, Haezor will add that journey will lead the group to the Cataracts of Bythos—a series of waterfalls along the Bythos river controlled by pagus thralls under the fallen dragon Crematoram. And to reach the cataracts, the PCs would have to cross the Fork—the keep guarding the only bridge, which is also controlled by pagus.

### KITIA KHIRO

CR 7

#### XP 1,200

Any Medium humanoid (techan)

Init +6; Senses Perception +8

#### DEFENSE

AC 22, touch 16, flat-footed 16 (+6 armor, +6 Dex)

hp 85 (10d8+40)

Fort +5, Ref +7, Will +3

Immune poison

Resist 5 fire, acid, and cold

#### OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft

Melee Slam +13 (1d6+6)

#### STATISTICS

Str 14, Dex 22, Con 18, Int 18, Wis 16, Cha 16

Base Atk +7; CMB +9; CMD 25

Feats Acrobatic, Athletic, Agile Maneuvers, Combat Expertise, Combat Reflex, Weapon Finesse

Skills Acrobatics +8, Climb +10, Engineer +8, Perception +8, Sciences +8, Sleight of Hand +5, Stealth +8

Languages English, Englo-Lingo

#### SPECIAL ABILITIES

**Passive (Ex)** Kitia is not combat trained and will not get involved in combat; these stats are listed in case the adventure goes sideways or if Kitia is forced to roll Deception or Perception checks.

Kitia will insist on accompanying any journey to the *Proto-Jericho*. Haezor will follow. Kitia may add that from what she could determine from limited information, it was the rear half of the vessel that broke apart, and the front half should be relatively intact.

Haezor will lead the group to the Cataracts of Bythos.

Elsewhere...read or paraphrase the following.

***Only six survivors remain of the Ca'Gel tribe that remained behind, with their bodies strewn across a trodden path. The corpses display gaping holes and scorched limbs. A figure saunters through the carnage, approaching one that had wielded one of the advanced weapons scavenged from the Proto-Jericho crash. The figure crouches to retrieve the weapon. It's Booker from the Droogs.***

***"It's like giving a knife to a baby... eventually, you'll only hurt yourself." He examines the firearm. "Still got one round left in the cell."***



**Another mercenary approaches from behind, a woman tagged as Kolisang.**

**"Ryan's back," she says. "Claims there's a large fragment several clicks west, probably where they got the weapons."**

**Booker stands.**

**"We have a destination then."**

**"Perhaps not," Kolisang responds, "looks to have been picked clean, and there's more. Competition, from the south. They found a survivor."**

**Booker takes note, then returns to their idling Behemoth.**

**"Figured on competition, but I thought we had the only survivor...Mr. Bryce," Booker approaches a male techan similarly dressed to Khiro.**

**"All that matters is the cargo," Bryce responds, "...if a rival team has acquired another survivor, they cannot be allowed to return."**

**"I assume you mean the other team... what of your guy?"**

**"Rescue preferred...collateral if necessary, just as it is with any of you."**

**Booker smirks and climbs aboard his vehicle.**

**"Glad to know you care."**

## FRAGMENTS OF CARBON

A day of travel will pass without incident. The PCs can take this opportunity to talk to Khiro, who will offer convincing tales of Porto's technological superiority. Saints research their cover stories thoroughly, so even if a character is somehow familiar with the description of Porto, the story checks out.

However, at this point any character (not just those with linguistic training) can make a DC20 Perception (Wis) check to notice her accent is wandering all over the globe.

**"Porto appears as a forest of glass shards from a distance, towering spires of white. The buildings not tipped are covered in green. No outer walls—just a perimeter field that has never missed an intrusion. Thankful-**

**ly, the land is not as wild and ungoverned as this one. Nearby echan nations prevent anything hostile from getting through, just as we prevent anything from the water reaching them. Tech doesn't survive long out there, so we do our best with what we have."**

If characters ask questions, Khiro is happy to talk, but will often swing the conversation by asking about them: Where did they come from? Why did they dare push into this land? What are their intentions upon reaching the *Proto-Jericho*?

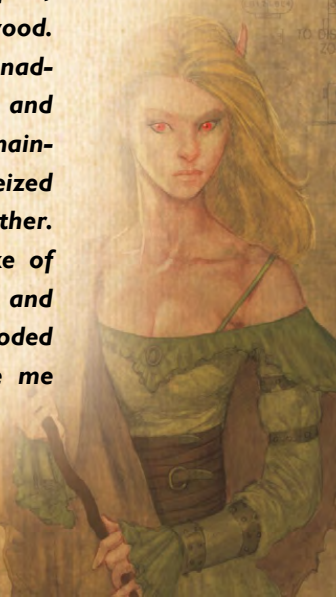
Kitia Khiro is not evil, or even as amoral as many Saints—instead she believes mankind was denied its potential with the return of magic, and once the playing field is even, the can species return on its path to the future. If a PC or PCs are techan, Kitia will be more approachable, especially if they are a lone techan among echans. If the PCs are all echan, the conversation will be more difficult as Khiro doesn't wish to create tension and doesn't really know what to say to them. The friendlier the PCs are, the friendlier Khiro is likely to be in return.

Haezor is quiet and doesn't encourage conversation. He only desires an edge in defending his people, regardless of what it may be. If his people cannot retrieve the technology for themselves, then he will ensure it not fall into enemy hands. If the Thralls of Avalon can be defeated as well, so much the better.

## FOREIGN FRAGMENT

Later that same day or half-way through the next, read or paraphrase the following.

**You notice a tree twisting through an ancient vehicle, lifting the wreck above the ground. The branches have peeled it apart, crucifying the car across the span of wood. The wheels are a forged, soft alloy with inadequate tread for unpaved terrain. Red and black and flaking from rust, the one remaining door taps in the wind on its last unseized hinge. A stainless exhaust refuses to wither. There's a license plate sporting a flake of blue on a sequence of three numbers and three letters, and under it, a badly eroded phrase you can barely make out—"Je me**





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**souviens". A stack of garbage sits piled near-by the vehicle.**

**Note:** If the party's primary language is Englo-Lingo, pronounce the French motto properly (there's enough French in the Lingo vocabulary that it's familiar to them). If their primary language is English, pronounce it 'jay may soh-vee-enz'. This isn't important to the plot but will help reinforce the cultural differences between the west and east of Canam.

The PCs, regardless of their background, cannot identify the make or model of this pre-Hammer vehicle, but it is surprisingly intact—the tree effectively supporting it above an earth that would have swallowed it. There is considerable corrosion save for the few fragments of stainless steel. The vehicle still features an engine and a drivetrain, though naturally they have seized.

Kitia will remark that this, "*is not of Porto.*"

If the PCs examine the stack of garbage, they will notice it as little more than an organized assembly of metal and electronic components, but will also see that the stack is surprisingly rigid—resisting attempts to dismantle it. When the PCs decide to be more forceful, read or paraphrase the following.

**What you thought initially was the stack of garbage finally collapsing was, in fact, it constructing itself, as the machine was hiding in plain sight. Joints lock and limbs fasten and unfold. A torso spins into position, and finally, a head, little more than a pair of eyes sitting atop a stalk, rises between the shoulders. At twelve feet tall, this organized mess attempts to look humanoid. It then reaches up to the wrecked vehicle and attempts to tear out a piece.**

This is a Pontiac MekTek—a salvage robot designed to retrieve technology from around the bastion and return it. It is not hostile, though will activate military protocols if directly attacked.

If ignored, the MekTek will remove the stainless steel from the wreck and flee at full speed back to Pontiac, which is a full day northeast (in the opposite direction from the players' destination). It can also be destroyed, but there is little that can be gleaned from the

wreck unless a PC can succeed at a DC20 Engineer (Int) check. If this occurs, it is revealed this machine is more advanced internally, but a crude exterior probably assists in resisting disruption. However, sourcing the location of Pontiac from the destroyed MekTek will be all but impossible. A DC20 Knowledge (Nature) (Int) check will reveal the tracks it left coming from the northeast.

Kitia will remark that Porto technology cannot fall into anyone's hands, especially whoever is controlling machine like these.

### MEKTEK

CR 8

**XP 3,200**

N Medium construct

**Init** +5; **Senses** darkvision 120 ft., low-light vision; **Perception** +8

### DEFENSE

**AC** 20, touch 15, flat-footed 15; (+5 Dex, +5 natural)

**hp** 79 (9d10+30)

**Fort** +6, **Ref** +10, **Will** +6

**DR** 5/adamantine; **Immune** construct traits

### OFFENSE

**Speed** 40 ft.

**Melee** 4 slams +13 (1d6+5)

### STATISTICS

**Str** 9, **Dex** 20, **Con** —, **Int** —, **Wis** 11, **Cha** 1

**Base Atk** +9; **CMB** +15; **CMD** 24

**Languages** none

**SQ** Piston Legs

### SPECIAL ABILITIES

**Piston Legs (Ex)** As a standard action, the MEKTEK can move 60 feet.

The PCs can ignore the MekTek and continue on their journey, or they can investigate its origin and discover a Pontiac outpost.

## PONTIAC

Read or paraphrase the following.

**The forest ends and opens into an expanse of semiarid desert marked with sand and loose gravel. This terrain does not look as though it truly belongs here, but as if it were plucked from somewhere else in the world and dropped here unceremoniously. Spiny bushes dot the landscape. In the blurry distance, you notice buttes, mesas, and hoo-dooos, surely destined to complicate your journey.**



The outpost is not visible from the ground given it is hiding behind the aforementioned mesas and buttes, sitting within a valley. Nothing enters the desert that they don't know about, and if the PCs cross into the desert to continue their search of the MekTek's origin, one will cross a laser fence virtually impossible to notice—requiring a DC20 Perception (Wis) check. The actual bastion sits much further north on the opposite side of the River Bythos.

It's several more hours before the PCs even reach the mesas, revealing a natural maze within, with snaking paths that double back and hit dead-ends. Although PCs could climb the mesas, they would still have to cross the expanses between them. In actuality, the maze is not particularly complicated to understand, and a successful DC15 Knowledge (Nature) (Int) or Perception (Wis) check will reveal patterns in the landscape PCs can exploit to not get lost; it is only time-consuming, costing another six hours and potentially reaching nightfall.

Along the navigation, a PC will notice the clean and old bones of pagus, killed from gunfire.

Eventually, the PCs will enter a clearing, read or paraphrase the following.

***You see what can only be described as a village of garbage. Every structure is clad in various mismatched plates from multiple sources, including ancient techan ruins, aircraft, ground vehicles, reinforced with stone and clearly more technologically advanced than the outward appearance. Weapons atop the outer wall bear down on any targets that approach their walls.***

The PCs may approach peacefully and will be greeted by an armed emissary, **Elias Crews**, along with a dozen armed MekTeks behind them.

Fae PCs will be hailed at a distance and warned to stop, with guns leveled to make sure they understand. Haezor and any pagus PCs will draw extra attention, but if they make no hostile moves they will not be fired on. If any PCs are human, Elias will appear friendly. If techan, Elias will be overjoyed. Those in Pontiac have not seen evidence of human survivors since everything went to hell five centuries ago. Elias welcomes the PCs to **Blackbird**—Garrison of the Settlement of Pontiac. The people here speak a language similar enough to

Englo-Lingo to be able to be mutually understood, with a little difficulty. If the PCs only speak English, communication should be in broken sentences.

Disruption is prohibited inside, but if the PCs do not radiate, they may be granted entry (the guards will be leery of any gimfen, but after having a weird sort of wand waved over them, they'll be allowed in). There they can acquire up to TL2 technology, though Pontiac doesn't accept UC, only barter. Any party members who generate EDF will have to stay outside, at least 50 feet away from the walls. If party contains no techans, Elias is willing to barter supplies but will refuse to offer any aid, although he will be slightly friendlier once he learns that Pontiac are not the only human survivors.

Elias can explain the history of the bastion. Pontiac was formed when refugees from fallen cities across the land (which they still refer to as 'Canada', being confused if anyone says 'Canam') congregated within the badlands. From there, they were able to reach out and retrieve operable technology and develop. At less than 20,000 people, Pontiac can hardly be considered a bastion, though it is still far more substantial than the atolls found elsewhere in Canam. There are a dozen atolls around the city, with Blackbird the most southern location and the only one south of the river.

People survive the best they can, scavenging found technology from the nearby fallen cities. With a lack of massive disruption from resident fae, much of the original landscape remained untainted, including several old cities. Thankfully, the pagus ignore the ruins, so were mostly unaware of what could have been gleaned from them. After so many years, most anything useful has already been pulled, though occasionally, some exceptions have occurred, mostly refined materials and precious minerals. The MekTeks fill out the population and do the majority of the grunt work outside the city. The pagus have been increasing in number and have closed Pontiac off from the northeast—the bastion is feeling the pressure, but until recently, they believed no other humans had survived. What a shock it must be to discover millions of humans living only a few hundred kilometers south.

Pontiac is also unaware the pagus are divided themselves and assumed they are all hostile. Those in the city are proud of what they have accomplished and don't wish to leave. Knowing of the crash of *Proto-Jericho* would be too tempting to resist, and if aware of the wreck, Pontiac would surely send an army of





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MekTeks to acquire as much as possible, something Kitia would surely be against.

That being said, it may be possible to negotiate a truce and even work alongside Pontiac in securing the wreck, though only the promise of technology would seal such a deal. With Kitia being adamant about not sharing ‘Porto’ technology, techans can offer some of their own in exchange: Pontiac is too desperate to refuse.

### THE FORK

The PCs round a hill and notice the River Bythos splitting into two smaller rivers much further away. Read or paraphrase the following.

***The Fork appears as a bridge splitting from its southern perch into two separate paths leading to either side of the River Xigax. Xigax merges into Bythos, which then continues north, where it meets the four Cataracts. At the division of the bridge sits a keep rooting itself into the wild rapids below. The keep is rudimentary but shockingly well-made given its precarious placement in the middle of a rampaging river. You almost miss the minor detail that the keep is currently under siege.***

Approximately 500 kodiaks are currently assaulting the Fork. Lacking any siege weapons, the massive bipedal bears are relying on their imposing size to break through the gates at the foot of the keep. Being upon the bridge, kodiaks can be seen falling into the rapids and vanishing under water when enough arrows strike them.

This is a losing fight. The kodiaks are on edge, but may be approachable if the PCs are careful. They won’t instigate a row as their war is with the pagus. Unfortunately, none of them speak English, only their native tongue of Argose. Unless they can be communicated with, the kodiaks have no desire to listen to the advice of outsiders and will threaten those that attempt to interfere with their hopeless siege.

If a PC is able to speak Argose, the lead kodiak, Ajuk, will explain their crusade.

***Our kind live within this land and have as much a claim as the thin ones. We have***

***people in the mountains—those that await us. We have struggled to cross these waters for many years, to rejoin with our tribe. Many nights back, we noticed the falling star and took it as an omen—our call to advance. Our fate waits for us on the other side; our crusade is right, and we will cross this bridge fulfill our destiny.***

If (as is more likely) no PC can speak Argose, Ajuk attempts instead to explain with crude drawings in the dirt, which convey the general sense of what’s going on but no details.

The kodiaks are attempting pure brute force to break through the gate of the Fork, and unlike the pagus, are not fearful of water. The ferocity of the rapids is the danger, not the water itself, and kodiaks that fall and are not killed often make it to shore several miles down the river on this side. The water is too swift to cross without the bridge. A hundred of their kind have already been killed. If the PCs help the kodiaks take the Fork, the bears will be eternally grateful and can be called as a military force later in the story.

However, this does involve somehow breaking through the gate of the Fork and defeating the hundred pagus guarding within (it’s not an unusually massive fortress). Without assistance, the kodiaks are doomed and will kill themselves outright in their quest. The gate itself requires 500 points of damage to break and has resistance to cold, lightning, and necrotic damage as well as bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from non-magical weapons.

### COMPOSITION OF THE FORK

The Fork is a three-story keep sitting upon stone supports in the middle of the river. The bridge runs towards the stone and wood gate on the south side, splits inside the keep, then exits out of two gatehouses on the north side. If the PCs are able to crawl underneath the bridge, they can attempt to cross without passing the gatehouses, noticing a weakened section of stone under the keep where the pagus put in a latrine. If said section suffers 30 points of damage, a small 5-foot x 5-foot section of the floor breaks away, allowing entrance into the keep. From there, the PCs gain access to the ground floor, where a small number pagus are working on fortifying defenses. Most sit atop the keep where they rain fire on the kodiaks below.



## ENCOUNTER (XP 4,400)

### 12 x Pagus Strifebringer Minions

The PCs may attempt stealth, as the pagus are distracted by the siege. If the PCs are loud in their fight with these pagus, there is a 25% chance that three more pagus will join the fight each turn.

The PCs can also attempt to open the gate, though the pagus have congregated at that location. Raising the gate requires a successful DC20 Strength check. Once the gate is open, the kodiaks will storm the Fork and wipe out the remaining pagus.

The kodiaks will remain at the keep for now and eventually venture north, taking a different route as the PCs. They will catch up and help the PCs when the time is right. If the PCs cross without assisting the kodiaks, they will never be seen or heard from again and if the PCs return this way again, they will find the keep occupied by pagus with the attackers killed.

The passage up the river is marked by the Cataracts of Bythos, each seven hours travel from one another.

#### PAGUS STRIFEBRINGER

CR 4

XP 600

LE Medium fey

Init +6; Senses darkvision; Perception +0

#### DEFENSE

AC 23, touch 15, flat-footed 17 (+4 Dex, +1 dodge, +5 armor, +3 natural)

hp 44 (8d6+16)

Fort +4, Ref +10, Will +6

#### OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee maul +9 (1d8+6/x3)

Ranged short bow +8 (1d6/x3)

Special Attacks direct approach

#### STATISTICS

Str 18, Dex 18, Con 15, Int 12, Wis 10, Cha 14

Base Atk +4; CMB +8; CMD 22

Feats Dodge, Mobility, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (maul)

Skills Acrobatics +16, Climb +10, Escape Artist +16, Handle Animal +6, Intimidate +12, Ride +10, Survival +10, Swim +6

Languages Common, Paggin

SQ minion

#### SPECIAL ABILITIES

**Minion** If the pagus strifebringer suffers more damage in a single hit as his hit dice, it is killed (8d6 = 8 damage or more in a single hit). As a result, the strifebringer has half experience.

**Direct Approach (Ex)** The pagus strifebringer makes a charge attack as a standard action against any target in range. The pagus strifebringer does not grant opportunity attacks or flanking bonuses until the beginning of the pagus strifebringer's next turn.

## RHYMES

## WITH ORANGE

The PCs follow along the Bythos river until finally reaching the first waterfalls. Read or paraphrase:

*Rising above you stands a steep hill and the first of four waterfalls, the Nigredo Cataract, cascading down to you from a 150-foot high cliff marked with black stones above. The sides are not precipitous, allowing a challenging but not impossible climb up the sides of the cascade. Wedged into the base of the waterfall sits a larger fragment of the Proto-Jericho, what appears to be part of the side of the craft, two floors' worth, both exposed to the elements and half flooded with water.*

The wreck is in bad shape. A successful DC15 Perception (Wis) check will notice that it has apparently been cleaned out already by someone else, as there is nothing worth salvaging; everything not nailed down is gone. A techan with a successful DC10 Intelligence check or a non-techan with a similar successful DC20 check will identify indicators of a laboratory. Kitia will confirm that assessment but claims to be unaware of the *Proto-Jericho's* mission. Have Kitia make a Bluff (Cha) check in case the PCs don't believe her.

As the player approaches the base of the waterfall, two mercenaries from the Droogs ambush them. These are two snipers from atop the waterfall that are attempting to take out the PCs while avoiding Kitia. They intend to slow the group down and perhaps kill one or more PCs.

## ENCOUNTER

### 2 x DROOG SNIPERS

The snipers enjoy vantage points from atop the waterfall, 200 feet away and up. The sniper weapons are equipped with flash suppressors, and the noise of their shots is distorted by echoes and the running water; PCs suffer disadvantage when attempting to locate the snipers' positions either by sight or sound.

The snipers are in cover, with an already set DC 25 Perception (Wis) check required to find one's location. If the snipers believe their location has been compromised, they'll employ stealth to shift and gain another



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### DROOG SNIPER

CR 7

#### XP 1,200

Any Medium humanoid (techan)

Init +6; Senses Perception +8

#### DEFENSE

AC 22, touch 16, flat-footed 16 (+6 armor, +6 Dex)

hp 85 (10d8+40)

Fort +6, Ref +7, Will +2

#### OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft

Melee Combat Knife +13 (1d6+6)

Ranged Sniper Rifle +13 (3d8+18)

Special Attacks Pervasive Wound

#### STATISTICS

Str 14, Dex 22, Con 18, Int 14, Wis 13, Cha 13

Base Atk +7; CMB +9; CMD 25

Feats Acrobatic, Athletic, Agile Maneuvers, Combat Expertise, Combat Reflex, Weapon Finesse

Skills Acrobatics +10, Climb +10, Perception +8, Stealth +8;

Languages English

SQ Hawkeye, Natural Predator

#### SPECIAL ABILITIES

**Hawkeye (Ex)** The sniper has a +2 bonus with his sniper rifle if firing from cover.

**Natural Predator (Ex)** When using the sniper rifle, the sniper turns any hit into a critical hit if attacking from cover.

**Pervasive Wound (Ex)** Once per hour, when the sniper scores a critical hit on a target, as a quick action, the sniper inflicts a continuous injury, inflicting 5 damage at the beginning of the target's turn until the sniper is dead, the target is reduced to below zero hit points, or one minute has passed. A target can only suffer one pervasive wound at a time.

vantage to fire. If this becomes too difficult, they will use stealth to escape.

During the battle, Kitia will accidentally slip out of cover, but the Droogs will not fire upon her. Afterward, regardless of the situation, it will become obvious someone else is tracking them. If one or more snipers are killed, they will be revealed as a mercenary company with identifiable markings but no information on their employer. (If this party has previously completed the *Hearts of Chaos* adventure module, they will be able to identify the Droogs as an Iron Sons unit).

It will be evident that they were under strict orders to not harm Kitia. Whoever the mercenaries are, they are by this point obviously ahead of the PCs.

### SUSPICIONS

It may be possible, primarily by this point, that the PCs may suspect Kitia's motives. If a PC succeeds at a DC15 Perception (Wis) check, they will notice the

identifying markings and language across the wreck mentioning test subjects.

A techan succeeding on a DC15 Knowledge (History) (Int) check will remember hearing that Porto has two official languages, Romanic and Inglese – but everything here is written only in English. A character who knows three or more languages will also note that the English used is the pre-Hammer form, not one of its various successors. If the PCs confront Kitia and she fails a Bluff (Cha) check, she may be forced to reveal more.

Kitia is not lying about being an engineer for the *Proto-Jericho*. She indeed has no combat experience. However, she will divert from admitting her people's origin and instead admit her vessel was collecting samples from local fauna—magically imbued creatures specifically. The lab staff were isolating them from outside magical influence and attempting to prevent ship-wide disruption. Kitia only assumes something got out, and the resulting disruption forced the vessel down.

Kitia will further admit the *Proto-Jericho* was in the vicinity because they were attempting to retrieve samples of creatures touched by Ixindar—those not radiating disruption but are themselves magical. However, against protocol and if Kitia trusts the PCs (depending on their relationship this far), Kitia may admit that whatever project it was for, it had nothing to do with resisting disruption—she's an engineer, and nothing they were working on was related to her expertise.

If the PCs still don't believe this and push for more, Kitia may, depending on her confidence in the PCs, admit that they were working on a biological agent, intended to remove the magic from echan creatures and thereby reduce the extent of the EDF. If informed that this would inevitably result in the deaths of every fac and even some echan humans, she will be horrified and may not believe them, as she is not sufficiently familiar with echan biology to realize that they need magic to live.

If PCs suspect she is lying about her origin in Porto and confront her about this, she will admit the lie, but tells the PCs that if she tells them the truth, her own people will hunt them down and destroy them to prevent it from being revealed. Only strong persuasion or the threat of killing her or leaving her behind will get her to admit that she is from Mars, a lost colony that is attempting to end the world of magic. Her people are paranoid about their technology and their identity being



revealed. They will kill anyone that has been in contact with the wreckage. The only way she can think of to ensure the PCs' safety is to destroy it and hope that the Martians believe they have been killed too.

## RUBEDO CATARACT

Several hours further up the river lies the second waterfall, the Rubedo Cataract. Haezor claims that the Thralls of Avalon keep a village atop the cascade, and with their sentries, they are sure to notice approaching techans. The Droogs have been lucky so far but are doubtful to survive an encounter against Avalon's army. The Thralls are large in number and ferocious.

As the PCs approach the waterfall, read or paraphrase the following

***Unlike the previous waterfall, the Rubedo Cataract is fringed on both sides by sheer cliffs. Huts hang off the edge and over the waterfall. What must be at least a hundred battle-hardened pagus chant and spar both atop and at the base of the falls. The river flowing away from the cataract is flanked by beaches of blood-stained sand.***

The PCs have caught up to the Droogs' Behemoth, as it is plowing its way towards the base of the falls. If the characters wish to see the event play out, the Droogs will be led to attack pagus by the riverside while the remaining pagus strike them from behind.

The Droogs will be quickly overwhelmed, and worse, their weapons and technology will be confiscated. The pagus will be reduced in number but not enough to make an engagement with the PCs any easier. Among the visible dead will be an individual dressed the same as Kitia.

If the PCs witness the impending attack and realize the Droogs won't stand a chance, they may potentially warn the Droogs of what is to come. If so, Booker, the Droogs' commander, will reciprocate and offer a truce, though still being aware their vehicle will not have a prayer in sneaking past the Thrall village. They can work together to find a way to strike at the pagus or create a diversion to allow the Clockwork to get past the cataract.

The Droogs also have Bryce—another Saint wearing the same uniform as Kitia. They do not recognize each other but do acknowledge the other's existence. Kitia,

is friendly to the characters, will warn them of someone like Bryce (*"Whatever he offers will never be paid"*). There are six members of the Droogs, but the only ones given names are Booker and his deputy, Kolisang.

If left to die, the Droogs will be wiped out, and their vehicle dragged up to the Cataract village to be dismantled and repurposed. Weapons are also removed as well. In truth the Thrall village is only partially occupied, once boasting a population of several thousand, though most have left to surround the main wreck of the *Proto-Jericho* at the next Cataract.

There are 70 Pagus Strifebringer Minions in this village, so it is best the PCs not openly start a conflict. However, Haezor will remind them that if the Thralls get their hands on any technology, it will not go well for his people, and may urge them to try to retrieve the weapons.

The PCs can attempt to infiltrate the village after the fight to recover the weapons or even steal the Behemoth. They will find the displayed bodies of the crew, including the individual wearing the same uniform as Kitia, which she will admit is probably from her people.

If the PCs join up with the Droogs, and a fight takes place, then the Droogs suffer heavy casualties, leaving only Kolisang, Booker, and Bryce as survivors.

Once the PCs push past the village, they can continue onto the Albedo cataract.

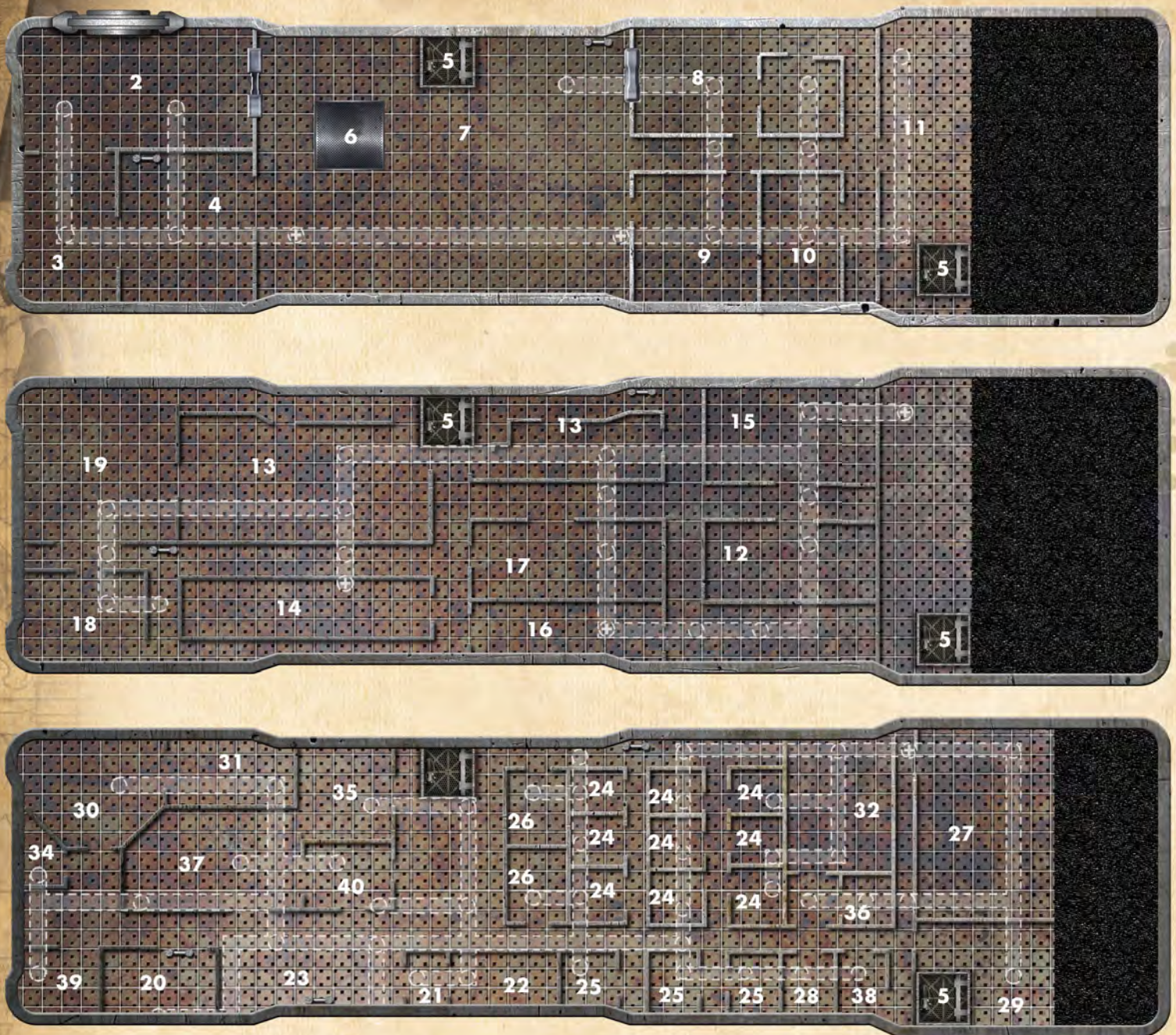
## ALMIGHTY RISING

Read or paraphrase the following.

***The white cliffs of the Albedo Cataract would be an impressive sight in itself. Three hundred feet high, the horseshoe-shaped waterfall is defiled by the eight-hundred-foot-long slightly slanted wreck of the Proto-Jericho. Considering the amount of wreckage found along this epic voyage, the original vessel must have been enormous. Thousands of worthless fragments sit scattered about within the trees and sticking up from the water. The hulk itself balances precariously off the edge of the waterfall, with much of the structure hanging over the immense drop-off. There is also an army of pagus, thousands of them, surrounding the vessel, both atop the cataract and around***







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the base. They all keep their distance from the wreck, with bodies marking the distance between the perimeter and the vessel. At the edge of the horizon, further upriver, sits the immense thousand-foot tall Xanthosis cataract, and the equally tall tower of Purgitose, home of the fallen dragon Crematoram.

The pagus have formed a ring around the *Proto-Jericho* due to its active defense system that incinerates any non-Saint approaching within 100 feet. The pagus chief, Huy'Uk K'Tal, has spent this time trying to locate weaknesses in the defense by throwing pagus con-

stantly at the vessel. They have also attempted to destroy the defenses to no avail.

K'Tal is desperate to gain entry, hoping whatever is inside will give him an advantage to rebel against the still slumbering fallen dragon.

The pagus are not actively looking outward, being focused on throwing themselves at the vessel and attacking it from a distance. Some are even launched from catapults at the wreckage, only to be vaporized en route—their charred bones striking the hull.

Kitia will admit that she can approach the vessel without being fired upon, along with anyone within ten feet of her. She also remarks the wreck is in shockingly good condition considering there are operating lights



and defensive weapons, and most likely internal operations may be functional as well. This part of the vessel appears comprised of several levels. Because of the amount of damage, Kitia is certain the automated defense systems won't last forever, and eventually, the pagus will find their way inside.

## ENTRANCE

There are potentially three methods to enter the *Proto-Jericho*.

## ASKING NICELY

Depending on player composition, one or more may be able to approach the pagus Huy'Uk K'Tal, promising to allow him to accompany them inside the vessel to shut down the defense system. The PCs can claim they all need to enter the vessel together to suppress the defense system, and K'Tal will insist any additional spots around Kitia (and Bryce, if he survives) be occupied by pagus. Of course, that does mean the PCs will be allowing an evil pagus inside the ship, but it should be easier to double-cross their escorts once inside.

## FIGHTING

Dumb but plausible. The PCs may ambush a section in the periphery, battling off twenty pagus strifebringer minions and racing into the perimeter where the pagus cannot follow. Some have ranged weapons, but once the PCs get close enough, they will eventually be safe from the pagus.

Additionally, if the characters have somehow managed to transport their ETV this far or have acquired the Clockwork from the Droogs, they could merely ram through the periphery with Kitia exposed atop the vehicle to alert the Jericho's defenses. However, something will happen, and the vehicle will break down and disintegrate, killing the drivetrain mere meters from the *Proto-Jericho*, meaning the PCs will not be able to use the same route to escape. Also remember that the ship is sitting in the middle of a rushing river, further complicating an approach.

## SNEAKING

The Bythos river here is deep and wide and PCs may be able to sneak under the water all the way to the base of the cataract, then climb shrouded by the falling water all the way up the cliff, entering the vessel from the undercarriage. The climb is not easy, requiring several

successful DC15 Athletics (Str) checks and taking hours. There are ledges where the PCs can rest, hoping the pagus don't notice. There are weapons underneath the ship as well, and it will fire upon any creatures attempting this tactic unless Kitia is with them.

## FROM ABOVE

There is a top-side hatch, but there are still operable weapons trained to kill anyone not a Saint. It is not impossible to attempt entrance, but it would be the most difficult option of the three.

## ENTRANCE

If the PCs approach from the side, atop the cataract, they will enter through the open Launch Bay #1. If they approach from under the waterfall, they enter through what's left of Engineering #11.

In landing on top of the Jericho, they will enter into through the Top Access Hatch #20.

## ACCESS DUCTS

The Jericho features an air/access duct network between the levels. When appearing on a map, these network above the ceiling and, as indicated, contain entrances pointing down. Access ducts are barely 5 feet across and require individuals to crawl while inside. Whenever an access hatch is listed, there is also a retractable ladder that extends down from that point. However, all ladders are retracted, and to extend the ladder requires a successful DC15 Engineer (Int) check.

## DOORS

There are three types of doors in the ship—standard hatches (which automatically opened during the crash), smaller standard hatches and sizeable hydraulic breach doors. Each of these latter two are locked.

**Breach Door.** These Large doors require a successful DC15 Engineer (Int) check to hack into if the ship has power or a successful DC25 Strength check to force open. These also have 200 hit points and are resistant to cold, lightning, and necrotic as well as bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical weapons. If hacked, the damaged doors only open half-way, only allowing Medium-sized creatures to pass. In certain situations, only one side is locked, allowing the other to be opened with an easier successful DC10 Engineer (Int) check.





**Small Hatch.** These Medium doors require a successful DC10 Engineer (Int) check to override if the ship has power or a successful DC15 Strength check to force open. These also have 50 hit points and are resistant to cold, lightning, and necrotic as well as bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical weapons.

## GROUND FLOOR

The ground floor of the *Proto-Jericho* is not the ground floor of the spacecraft, but only the lowest level of this fragment. Because of its location upon the cataract, the entire level sits under three feet of water. There is also no light outside of the odd outside window—meaning rooms not sharing an outside wall will be in complete darkness. The metal is worn and jagged, and impact damage along with water erosion has removed all labels and indicators. As this level is designed as a launch deck, the ceiling is a surprising 60 feet up, leading to girders, crossbeams and non-functioning lights.

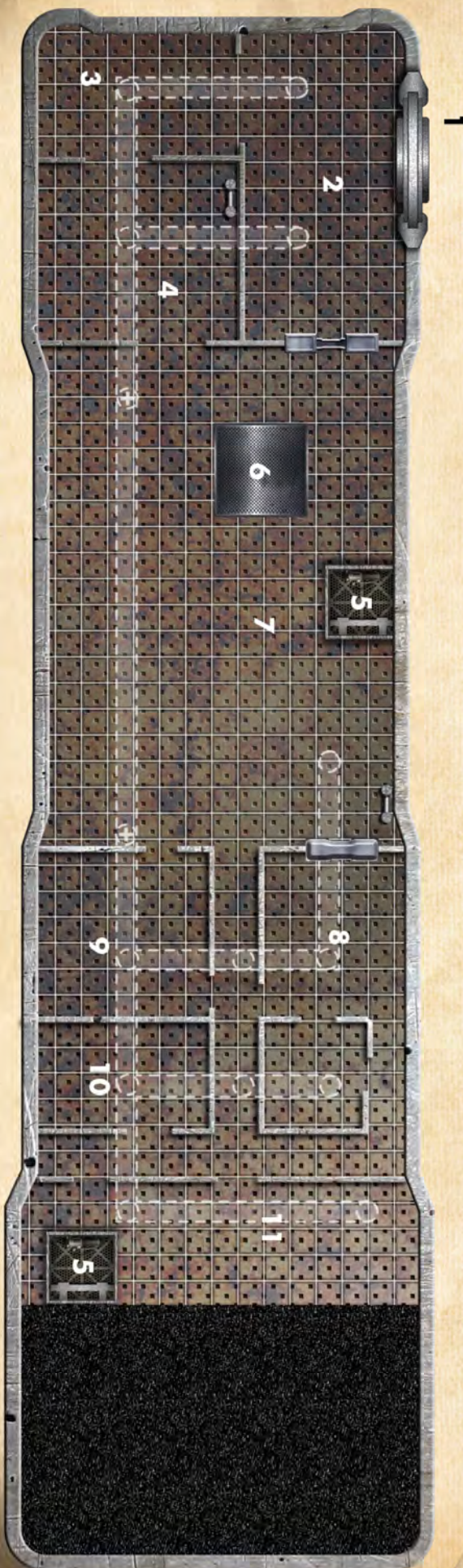
### 1. LAUNCH BAY HATCH

The hatch on the side of the *Proto-Jericho* is Huge, and thanks to the crash, is partially ajar, large enough for Medium-sized humanoids to enter. A successful D25 Strength check can push the massive door open further to allow Large targets to enter; another successful identical check is required to open the door fully to allow Huge targets to enter.

### 2. LAUNCH BAY (SINGLE)

Worn English lists this cavernous room as a “Caldera Launch,” but no such aircraft sits within. The room is designed to accommodate a single vessel with an open set of hatches to the south meant to accommodate a spare. The eastern door is a massive double airlock door. Opening the door will lead into Area 6. If the door cannot be opened, PCs may have the cut through the Launch Bay Reserve.

PCs will also notice the first two of many crawl duct entrances in the ceiling. Being so high up, these are nearly impossible to access without access a computer terminal to extend ladders. However, the water on this level has shorted all the electronics.





### 3. LAUNCH BAY RESERVE

The door leading into this area from Area 2 is half-ajar, though the one leading into #4 is closed. Another Caldera would be sitting here if it hadn't launched during the crash. As such, this room is empty, just as with Area 1. However, a spawn monster crossing a crab with a lobster has accidentally drifted into this area from the outside. It rises out of the water to block access to the rest of the *Proto-Jericho*.

### ENCOUNTER

1 x Crobster

| CROBSTER   | CR 7 |
|--|------|
| <b>XP</b> 3,200<br>N Lareg aberration<br><b>Init</b> +7; <b>Senses</b> darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +19   |      |
| <b>DEFENSE</b>   |      |
| <b>AC</b> 22, touch 12, flat-footed 19 (+3 Dex, +10 natural, -1 size)<br><b>hp</b> 85 (10d8+40)<br><b>Fort</b> +7, <b>Ref</b> +6, <b>Will</b> +9<br><b>Immune</b> poison   |      |
| <b>OFFENSE</b>   |      |
| <b>Speed</b> 30 ft., swim 20 ft.<br><b>Melee</b> 3 claws +14 (1d10 + 7 plus grab)<br><b>Space</b> 10 ft.; <b>Reach</b> 5 ft.<br><b>Special Attacks</b> Crimp   |      |
| <b>STATISTICS</b>  |      |
| <b>Str</b> 25, <b>Dex</b> 16, <b>Con</b> 18, <b>Int</b> 6, <b>Wis</b> 14, <b>Cha</b> 5<br><b>Base Atk</b> +7; <b>CMB</b> +15 (+19 grapple); <b>CMD</b> 28 (32 vs. trip)<br><b>Feats</b> Alertness, Blind-Fight, Combat Reflexes, Improved Initiative, Weapon Focus (claw)<br><b>Languages</b> none<br><b>SQ</b> amphibious |      |
| <b>SPECIAL ABILITIES</b>   |      |
| <b>Amphibious (Ex)</b> The crobster can breathe air and water.   |      |
| <b>Crimp (Ex)</b> As a move action each target the crobster is grappling takes 3d6+5 damage.   |      |

### 4. SAINT WEAPONS RESERVE

This chamber is where Saint soldiers prep for on-world missions. The PCs notice dozens of spots where weapons would be clamped into place. Most are empty save the following (a 'B' indicates bastion rather than Saint technology):

2 x *ESP Pistols (B)*  
1 x *Teleforce Pistol*  
1 x *Nuclear Pellet Pistol*

2 x *Kinetic Flash Rifles*  
2 x *EDT "Lightning" Rifles*  
1 x *Teleforce Rifle*  
1 x *Nuclear Pulse Rifles*  
1 x *Sonic Stunner (B)*  
1 x *Coil light gun*  
1x *EDT Thunderbolt*  
2 x *Net guns*  
3 x *Spider silk suits (B)*  
2 x *suits of blinder mail*

The weapons are not kept loaded while in the rack, so there are no cells to power them. A successful DC15 Perception (Wis) check will recover two M cells and 1 H cell from the water. They are still functional, but only work with non-Saint technology. If examined, any bastion tech found in the ship comes from either Porto or Angel.

The access hatch in this area is already extended, allowing a PC to access the maintenance tunnels.

### 5. ELEVATOR

This elevator is large and designed to lower large numbers of personnel. The shaft is exposed to the rest of the room—meaning when the elevator is moving, it is visible behind a lattice of crossing beams. These can be climbed with a successful DC10 Athletics (Str) check, but at the top sits an emergency seal that was activated thanks to the crash. A successful DC20 Engineer (Int) check from anyone (including Kitia) can override this hatch, allowing access to the shaft connecting this to the floor above, though it is another 60-foot climb. The elevator itself is non-functioning.

### 6. MAIN LAUNCH BAY

The primary launch bay includes a launch elevator in the center of the room that lowers vehicles into an electromagnetic catapult, which is now nonexistent. The mammoth chamber appears capable of holding several smaller vehicles, with only one still present.

Ladders here are twisted and bent, but they used to extend all the way through to the second level. They cannot be climbed easily, requiring a successful DC15 Athletics (Str) check. Atop sits an emergency seal like all the others, though this one can be forced, requiring a successful DC20 Athletics (Str) to twist open.

Two Huge airlock doors on the eastern and western walls can be unlocked on this side (unlike their oppo-





## CHAPTER TWELVE: THE TAKING OF PROTO JERICO

site sides which are locked) and opened. However, damage to the assembly prevents the doors from opening any more than halfway.

A squadron of vortex flight bots in this room will engage any targets that enter except for Kitia.

### ENCOUNTER

#### 6 x vortex flight bots.

If destroyed, a robot's M cell can be removed (this is a Saint unique cell, usable with their technology).

### 7. SOLIS

Locked still in its crane assembly is a Solis, a single-pilot antigravity fighter. Although a 1-man vehicle, it could hold a second in a pinch. This model is equipped with two EDT Thunderbolt Heavy Weapons. Alas, it

will be difficult for even a techan character to fly such a vessel. Kitia could manage in a pinch, but she is not a fighter pilot.

This vessel is also trapped inside the *Proto-Jericho*. A successful DC15 Engineer (Int) check is required to activate the ship, another successful identical check would be necessary to understand the essential functions. However, since no one is proficient with the ship, a pilot cannot add his or her Dex or Int modifier to AC.

The Solis can shoot its way out, blasting a massive hole in the superstructure and flying out, confronting the armies of pagus directly. This may also be useful if Avalon is woken and a diversion is required. Despite it being a novel idea, given how the Solis flies, under no circumstances can anyone ride on top of the vessel while it is in flight, though characters can ride dangerously under the ship via ropes.

If adequately taken control, it has five minutes of operable flight time before it disrupts and crash lands, its power core disrupted.

### VORTEX FLIGHT BOT

CR 3

#### XP 800

N Medium construct

**Init** +6; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; low-light vision; Perception +4

#### DEFENSE

**AC** 17, touch 14, flat-footed 13 (+4 Dex, +3 natural)

**hp** 34 (4d8+16)

**Fort** +8, **Ref** +6, **Will** +2

**DR** 5/adamantine; **Immune** construct traits

#### OFFENSE

**Speed** fly 50 ft. (good)

**Melee** 2 claws +5 (1d6+4)

**Ranged** detuned assault cannon +8 (1d8+4)

#### STATISTICS

**Str** 13, **Dex** 18, **Con** —, **Int** —, **Wis** 11, **Cha** 1

**Base Atk** +3; **CMB** +3; **CMD** 15

**Languages** none

**SQ** Disruption, Insurance Policy, Surveillance, Shift

#### ECOLOGY

**Environment** any

**Organization** Solitary or group (3-6 mixed saints)

**Treasure** None

#### SPECIAL ABILITIES

**Disruption (Ex)** The vortex is TL3; if disrupted, it is stunned for 1 turn—it is knocked prone. If its power cell detonates, it is reduced to 0 hit points.

**Insurance Policy (Ex)** If reduced to 0 hit points, the vortex's power cell overloads and the unit explodes. Each creature within 10 feet must make a DC 12 Dexterity saving throw, taking 21 (6d6) piercing damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

**Surveillance (Ex)** The vortex transmits all visual and auditory input to any saint acolyte or celebrant within 1 kilometer with the helmet-mounted controller. The controller can make a Perception check instead of the robot.

**Shift (Ex)** Once per turn, the vortex takes a 5-foot step as a free action.

### 8. MECH STORAGE

A massive stone from the river has driven up through this deck, spraying water and making passing through this area dangerous. It was primarily used to hold the larger powered armor Saints would use planet-side.

The fragments of destroyed Saint exo-armors and a few stolen from various bastions can be seen. Nothing worthy of salvage unless the PCs wish to spend several days fishing through the debris. However, there is one Angel Amarok in the distant corner which appears to be intact. Its power cell is disrupted but an H cell recovered from Area 4 Saint Weapon Reserve will activate the armor. However, it is equipped with no weapons. This can be rectified with a few successful Engineer (Int) checks as well as any techan weapons that the PCs have or can find around.

Like the Solis, the Amarok cannot easily exit the ship, and it will need to make a hole in the side of the vessel to escape. Given the size of the Amarok, it is limited to the rooms in this level, and cannot be used to explore the rest of the *Proto-Jericho*.

### 9. CARGO CONFINEMENT

This room operates as a brig or a containment facility when needed. There are locks on all doors leading into it requiring a successful DC20 Computer Use (Int)



check to open. Inside, PCs discover the remains of a restraining harnesses and shattered silicon nitride glass from a destroyed confinement chamber.

This chamber contains a scylla nihilimorph. It will attack anything it sees the moment it realizes there could be a way out of its entrapment.

## ENCOUNTER

### 1 x Scylla nihilimorph

If the PCs defeat the nihilimorph, the characters will notice several wires and cybernetic devices attached to the monster as well as scars from numerous operations. Kitia will note that it was not uncommon for her people to study the fauna of this new world, but the level of experimentation on this beasts points to something more.

## 10. BATTERY ROOM

These are large backup batteries for the vessel in case the main reactor fails (or in this case, is missing). The batteries here are the reason why there is any power at all in the vessel, running the lights on the upper levels, a few functioning doors, and the automated weapons outside.

Kitia, being an engineer, immediately goes to work, and determines the battery life will run out in approximately 72 hours, and there is only one functional battery left. If desired, this battery can be disassembled to create 3 H cells or 6 M cells (these are Saint unique cells, usable with their technology). This requires a successful DC15 Engineer (Int) check, but it should be known before attempting that doing so will shut down all power within the vessel, and if cut, airlock doors cannot be opened, and the pagus army outside will be able flood in to take the ship and kill anyone inside.

**Explosive.** The batteries are stable but can be destroyed. Even the non-functioning batteries are volatile. If a tank suffers 20 points of damage, it will result in a chain reaction that will destroy the ENTIRE vessel. Kitia will absolutely warn PCs about this, and will suggest rigging explosives in this area and detonate via a timer or trigger if need be: if none of the PCs has the necessary engineering knowledge, she can scavenge what is required to rig one up from this area given about an hour to work. If Bryce has survived, he will attempt to prevent this if the virus has not been found yet. Anything caught inside the *Proto-Jericho* if the batteries

## SCYLLA NIHILIMORPH

CR 12

**XP** 19,200

**CE** Large aberration

**Init** +9; **Senses** all-around vision, darkvision 60 ft.; **Perception** +12

**Aura** frightful presence (100 ft., DC 25)

### DEFENSE

**AC** 27, touch 10, flat-footed 26 (+1 Dex, +17 natural, -1 size)

**hp** 162 (12d8+108)

**Fort** +13, **Ref** +5, **Will** +13

**Defensive Abilities** amorphous; **DR** 10/bludgeoning; **Immune** critical hits, precision damage

### OFFENSE

**Speed** 35 ft., **swim** 35 ft.

**Melee** 3 bites +14 (3d6+6/19-20) plus 3 pseudopod +9 (reach 40 ft, 2d8+6 plus grab)

**Space** 20 ft.; **Reach** 20 ft. (40 ft. with pseudopod)

**Special Attacks** swallow whole (6d6 bludgeoning damage plus 6d6 acid damage, AC 21, hp 18)

### STATISTICS

**Str** 34, **Dex** 13, **Con** 29, **Int** 4, **Wis** 16, **Cha** 12

**Base Atk** +9; **CMB** +22 (+25 grapple); **CMD** 33 (can't be tripped)

**Feats** Improved Critical (bite), Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Weapon Finesse, Weapon Focus (bite),

**Skills** Perception +12, Swim +8; **Racial Modifiers** +4 Perception

**Language** None

**SQ** entropic discord, all-around vision

### ECOLOGY

**Environment** any

**Organization** solitary

**Treasure** Standard

### SPECIAL ABILITIES

**All-Around Vision (Ex)** A scylla nihilimorph sees in all directions at once. It cannot be flanked.

**Amorphous (Ex)** A scylla nihilimorph's body is malleable and shapeless. It is immune to precision damage (like sneak attacks) and critical hits, and can move through an area as small as one-quarter its space without squeezing or one-eighth its space when squeezing.

**Blood of the Creator (Ex)** If a single attack does 40 or more damage to the scylla, place a cherubim adjacent to it as a reaction. This cherubim has 10 hit points, but its attacks are identical.

**Entropic Discord (Su)** All disruption rolls are made at -2 penalty within 60 feet of the scylla.

**Swallow Whole (Ex):** Unlike other creatures, the scylla nihilimorph can swallow targets it's size or smaller.

explode will be killed instantly, and any technology left inside will be rendered irretrievable.

## 11. ENGINEERING

This chamber is mostly nonexistent, with huge sections open to the outside. This is an entrance point for PCs climbing behind the waterfall. An identical elevator found in Area 6 Main Launch Bay is located here. A



successful DC15 Engineer (Int) check can analyze the machinery, revealing how advanced the *Proto-Jericho* is—more so than anything seen before. There are no functional terminals here, but if PCs attempt an identical successful check as above, they can wire one up, revealing how much longer battery life will last (72 hours).

## LEVEL 2

Level 2 suffers from the same problem as level 2 in regards to lighting. However, it is not affected by ground water. The most interesting aspect is the gravity generator on this level malfunctioning. The moment a PC crosses from one level onto this one, she immediately falls 15 feet to the roof (suffering damage if she doesn't anticipate or cushion the fall). Debris lies scattered in every room. This gravity fluctuation can be fixed in the #12 Gravity Generator, where this effect can be reversed (with everything falling back to the floor).

Occasionally, outside walls will feature a window to the outside, and PCs can look outside to an upside-down world.

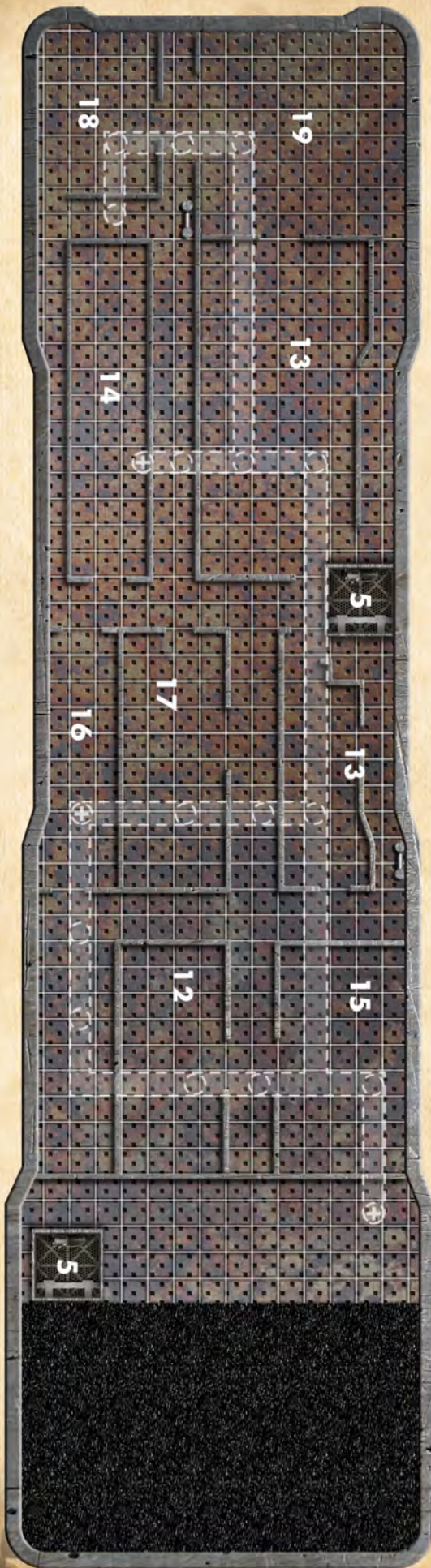
**Ladders.** There are two ladders in this level that can be climbed to the top level and vice-versa. Technically, these ladders do extend downward into the ground level, but with a sixty foot drop off, they don't make a safe descent (the ladders on the ground level are destroyed). Reaching any of these allows access to and from the top level.

## 12. GRAVITY GENERATOR

Filled with giant machines and electronics, the gravity control generator is not functioning very well. A successful DC20 Engineer (Int) check will deactivate the faulty gravity system, reverting to the gravity outside. Meaning, unless PCs have prepared, they will immediately fall to the ground, suffering damage if they don't anticipate or cushion their fall.

## 13. CARGO HOLD

This is the largest cargo hold in this portion of the ship, which is mostly empty but is guarded by a daath quadruped mech. It will not attack Kitia but will ignore her instructions to not attack anyone else. Depending on her feelings towards the PCs, she may or may not warn them about its *insurance policy*.





## ENCOUNTER

### 1 x daath quadruped

If destroyed, the robot's M cell can be removed (this is a Saint unique cell, usable with their technology).

#### DAATH QUADRUPED

CR 8

**XP 3,200**

N Medium construct

**Init** +5; **Senses** darkvision 120 ft., low-light vision; Perception +8

#### DEFENSE

**AC** 20, touch 15, flat-footed 15; (+5 Dex, +5 natural)

**hp** 79 (9d10+30)

**Fort** +6, **Ref** +10, **Will** +6

**DR** 5/adamantine; **Immune** construct traits

#### OFFENSE

**Speed** 40 ft.

**Melee** 2 slams +13 (1d8+5)

**Ranged** 2 submachine guns +14/+14/+8/+8 (1d8+5 plus pinning fire)

**Special Attacks** grenade launchers

#### STATISTICS

**Str** 9, **Dex** 20, **Con** —, **Int** —, **Wis** 11, **Cha** 1

**Base Atk** +9; **CMB** +15; **CMD** 24

**Languages** none

**SQ** Disruption, Insurance Policy, Pinning fire

#### ECOLOGY

**Environment** any

**Organization** Solitary or group (3-6 mixed saints)

**Treasure** None

#### SPECIAL ABILITIES

**Disruption (Ex)** The daath is TL4; if disrupted, it is stunned for 1 turn.

**Grenade Launcher (Ex)** As a Standard action, the quadruped can launch a grenade to any location within 80 feet. Any creature caught in the 10-foot radius from an impact point up 80 feet from the daath must make a DC 19 Reflex saving throw, taking 8d6 piercing damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one. The daath can only have six grenades loaded. It cannot use the grenade launcher against targets 30 feet or closer.

**Insurance Policy (Ex)** If reduced to 0 hit points, the daath's power cell overloads and the unit explodes. Each creature within 10 feet must make a DC 18 Reflex saving throw or take 12d6 bludgeoning damage (or half with a successful save).

**Pinning Fire (Ex)** Any target the daath hits with its submachine guns cannot move any closer to the daath on its turn.

## 14. VR TARGET RANGE

As the PCs enter this room, they notice a dojenn in the far corner rise up and charge towards them. The moment it reaches a PC, or a PC makes an attack, the dojenn will be revealed to be an optical illusion.

It will be at that point the characters notice several other illusory elements scattered about—trees, rocks, and what appears to be a gap to the outside despite this room not sharing a wall with the outside. There are weapons to be found, all Saint weapons in fact, but these are all fake imitations that fire harmless light. They work off small batteries that cannot be used to power anything else.

## 15. COOLANT TANKS

The door to this room is coated in frost, and the door is frozen shut. An Engineer (Int) check cannot open this door—a successful DC20 Strength check is required to force it open (instead of the normal DC15).

Both the main reactor and the various computers about require cooling, which are distributed through several coolant tank rooms. One tank has breached, resulting in this room being thirty degrees colder than outside.

A male chaparran is frozen solid here, having made the critical blow on one of the tanks, freezing itself in place. Thawing it will not revive the fae—he is dead. Two Saints are also frozen, same with their broken weapons and armor, having failed to stop the fae before he breached a tank with his +1 short sword (a weapon that can be removed if the fae's arm is severed). Be aware that this weapon radiates EDF, and bringing it close to sensitive ship's systems will disrupt them.

The other tanks are still sealed but breaching one will have the same effect. If the doors are open when one or more containers are breached, the super-low temperature fluid will cascade out, run through holes in the ship, and freeze the waterfall and the surrounding river solid. At least a dozen pagus in the periphery will be frozen solid as well. This will not freeze the vessel or its weapon systems.

## 16. RECYCLING PLANT

This fore processing plant is responsible for circulating the air, water, and waste. Alas, a Huge gash on the outside hull has torn into this chamber, destroying much of the machinery here. The PCs can take a moment to take a bird's-eye—and potentially upside-down—view of the landscape. There is considerable damage on the outside of the hull in this area, allowing PCs to climb outside the vessel to the next floor if they are unable or unwilling to try ladders. The re-entry point is Area 22 Fridge.



## 17. SHIP SUPPLIES

This is a general non-refrigerated supply area where crew members can request equipment either for casual or mission use. This is also where items are stored when taken from planetside, including various non-magical items.

Without exaggeration, every non-magical item in the 5<sup>th</sup> edition core books as well as all TL0 and TL1 equipment from the *Amethyst* core book can be found here, including mundane clothing and items from various cultures (including the bastions of Porto, Angel, and York, and echan styles from Kannos, Abidan, Limshau, and several free houses). PCs can search for a specific item—after a successful DC10 Perception (Wis) check, 0-5 (1d6-1) pieces of said item are found. Each check takes five minutes since the crash has scattered crates everywhere and there is no longer a concise filing system.

## 18. FIRE CONTROL

This system, along with others, operates the external weapons in this area. A successful DC15 Computer Use (Int) check can alter the weapons' parameters, including the disabling of the perimeter defenses, which would result in the pagus armies sweeping into the ship. Alternately, the perimeter can be extended all the way to the forest line, resulting in the deaths of over a hundred pagus as the army is forced to retreat back.

## 19. MAIN AIRLOCK

This is a Large airlock designed for humanoids in space suits rather than spacecraft. There are two chambers for decompressing. The inner room has four vacu-suits that are still intact.

## LEVEL 3

This is the top level of the *Proto-Jericho*. Damage from the impact and from weather has created numerous breaches in the roof, resulting in considerable light beaming in from holes above, so much so that lighting assistance on this level is not an issue.

The one issue with this level is the damaged Combine—a cybernetically enhanced pagus. This abomination is a jumbled collection of cybernetic and organic parts—an experiment to analyze disruption with implants, and if pagus could be turned into a slave force.

This monster is bolted into an exosuit fused to the creature's skeleton. Parts of the creature's ribcage are exposed with cybernetics spilling out. The beast sports an additional limb. The Combine escaped its lab, and, despite its limp limiting its speed, won't stop wandering this level.

The Combine will be heard first, then later seen without being alerted—a humanoid machine with a limp and a spinning blade over its shoulder. If it notices a PC, it will give chase but will resume wandering if it cannot pursue a direct path (like if a door is closed). The cyborg has limited intelligence remaining and cannot form a strategy to find another route. It will scream, bang the doors, and then move on, hoping to stumble upon victims again.

Loud noises will draw the Combine to a location.

## ENCOUNTER

1 Combine

### COMBINE

CR 12

XP 19,200

N Medium construct

**Init** +6; **Senses** darkvision 120 ft., low-light vision; Perception +0

### DEFENSE

**AC** 26, touch 16, flat-footed 20 (+6 Dex, +10 natural) or 30 with parry

**hp** 152 (16d10+64)

**Fort** +12, **Ref** +12, **Will** +10

**DR** 10/adamantine; **Immune** construct traits

### OFFENSE

**Speed** 40 ft.

**Melee** 2 scissors +19 (2d6+6, and grab), 1 saw +19 (2d10+6), and 1 slam +19 (1d6+6 and the target is stunned for 1 round)

**Special Attacks** Third limb

### STATISTICS

**Str** 27, **Dex** 12, **Con** —, **Int** —, **Wis** 11, **Cha** 1

**Base Atk** +16; **CMB** +25; **CMD** 36

**SQ** Second Wind, Clamped Down

### SPECIAL ABILITIES

**Third Limb (Ex)** When the Combine misses an enemy with either its scissors or saw by 2 or less, the target's speed is reduced to 0 until the end of the Combine's next turn.

**Second Wind (Ex)** If the Combine is reduced below 60 hit points, it gains a +2 bonus to all saving throws and AC.

**Clamped Down (Ex)** Combine deals 2d6+4 points of piercing damage to a grabbed opponent with a successful grapple check.



## BUZZ-BOY ACOLYTE

CR 4

**XP 1,200**

Any Medium humanoid (techan)

**Init** +4; **Senses** Perception +8

### DEFENSE

**AC** 18, touch 14, flat-footed 14 (+4 armor, +4 Dex)

**hp** 39 (6d8+12)

**Fort** +4, **Ref** +9, **Will** +2

**Immune** poison

**Resist** 5 fire, acid, and cold

### OFFENSE

**Speed** 30 ft.

**Melee** rifle butt +8 (1d6+2)

**Ranged** archaic rifle +8/+8/+2 (1d8+4) or teleforce rifle +8/+8/+2 (1d10+4)

### STATISTICS

**Str** 14, **Dex** 18, **Con** 14, **Int** 14, **Wis** 14, **Cha** 14

**Base Atk** +4; **CMB** +6; **CMD** 20

**Feats** Acrobatic, Combat Reflex, Weapon Finesse

**Skills** Acrobatics +8, Climb +10, Perception +8, Sleight of Hand +5, Stealth +8;

**Languages** English

**SQ** Disruption, Insurance Policy

### ECOLOGY

**Environment** any

**Organization** solitary, group (3-6 mixed saints)

**Treasure** None

### SPECIAL ABILITIES

**Disruption (Ex)** The only item that can be disrupted on an acolyte is its teleforce rifle. If disrupted, the acolyte will switch to its archaic rifle as a free action.

**Insurance Policy (Ex)** If reduced to 0 hit points, the acolyte's armor and gear disintegrate, leaving no evidence.

## SAINT REINFORCEMENTS

As the PCs explore through this level, they will eventually hear the sounds of an approaching aircraft—a Saint buzz-boy team. After the failure of the Droogs, the Saints have decided to be more direct by sending a vessel. This is risky as the Caldera is vulnerable to EDF. If the PCs open Area 20 Top Access Hatch and look outside, they will notice the approaching vessel. The PCs should have explored at least half this level or have entered Area 32 Lab Alpha when hearing the Caldera perch above. The buzz-boy team will enter through Area 20 Top Access Hatch and systematically work their way through the vessel. They will attack anything they encounter without asking questions, assuming any of their own personnel accompanying the PCs to be compromised.

## BUZZ-BOY CELEBRANT

CR 7

**XP 1,200**

Any Medium humanoid (techan)

**Init** +6; **Senses** Perception +8

### DEFENSE

**AC** 22, touch 16, flat-footed 16 (+6 armor, +6 Dex)

**hp** 85 (10d8+40)

**Fort** +5, **Ref** +7, **Will** +3

**Immune** poison

**Resist** 5 fire, acid, and cold

### OFFENSE

**Speed** 30 ft, fly 40 (perfect)

**Melee** rifle butt +13 (1d6+6)

**Ranged** plasma pistol +13/+13/+8 (1d8+6) and take a 5-foot step at any point during this.

**Special Attacks** Coordinate, Zeal

### STATISTICS

**Str** 14, **Dex** 22, **Con** 18, **Int** 16, **Wis** 16, **Cha** 16

**Base Atk** +7; **CMB** +9; **CMD** 25

**Feats** Acrobatic, Athletic, Agile Maneuvers, Combat Expertise, Combat Reflex, Weapon Finesse

**Skills** Acrobatics +8, Climb +10, Perception +8, Sleight of Hand +5, Stealth +8;

**Languages** English

**SQ** Conditional Leadership, Disruption, Insurance Policy

### ECOLOGY

**Environment** any

**Organization** Group (3-6 mixed saints)

**Treasure** None

### SPECIAL ABILITIES

**Insurance Policy (Ex)** If reduced to 0 hit points, the celebrant's armor and gear disintegrate, leaving no evidence.

**Disruption (Ex)** The only item that can be disrupted on a celebrant is its plasma pistol. If disrupted but not destroyed, the plasma pistol is only offline for 1 turn.

**Conditioned Leadership (Ex)** All acolytes that can see the celebrant can move up to half their speed as a swift action.

**Coordinate (Ex)** As a swift action, the celebrant compels one acolyte that can see the celebrant or communicate with him to make a attack.

**Zeal (Ex)** As a swift action, the celebrant compels one acolyte that can see the celebrant or communicate with him to move up to 20 feet.

## ENCOUNTER

6 x buzz-boy acolytes

1 x buzz-boy celebrant

## 20. TOP ACCESS HATCH

This ladder and airlock runs upward and opens to the top of the vessel. The PCs can enter through here if they approach the *Proto-Jericho* from the air. Otherwise, this will gain access to a jumble of debris and control surfaces, including a large vertical stabilizer that towers several hundred feet up.







## 22. FRIDGE

This fridge is very large and is designed to hold ingredients for the robotic servants in *Area 21 Kitchen*. Alas, captured puggs have stumbled in and have not stopped eating. They will attack if not drawn out from the Kitchen. Afterward, the remaining supplies can be looked through. Not much can be taken realistically, save for two weeks of echan survival rations.

## 23. MESS HALL

The mess is an open area with assorted tables and chairs, now scattered throughout the room from the impact. If the PCs have yet to directly encounter the Combine, this is a likely place for a first encounter, assuming the PCs get its attention.

## 24. INFANTRY CREW QUARTERS

These are the forward infantry quarters, nine rooms total (among many the ship once had). Four people would generally share one of these rooms. There are two sets of bunk beds, two desks, and four lockers. Many of these rooms are in shambles, with debris and broken furniture. PCs may attempt a DC15 Perception (Wis) check. If successful, the characters may randomly stumble across any one of these items in each room.

- One bag of 5 Limshau chrysos (5gp)
- One functional M cell (this is a Saint unique cell, usable with their technology)
- One pack of 20 Kannos kannons (20 gp)
- One bag of 10 Abidan sovereigns (10 gp)
- One stolen gimfen dice game
- One wooden rod totem from a chaparran wizard with no spells on it (not magical)

## 25. NCO CREW QUARTERS

Similar to the infantry, these are non-commissioned officer quarters, three total. Two people would generally share one of these rooms. There are two beds, two desks, and two lockers. Like above, many of these rooms are in shambles. PCs may attempt a DC15 Perception (Wis) check. If successful, the characters may randomly stumble across any one of these items in each room.

- One Selkirk ESP Pistol
- One Mann Solid Laser Pistol
- One topaz pendant worth 500gp

## 26. COMMAND QUARTERS

Similar to Areas 24 and 25, these are quarters reserved for command officers, two total. One person would occupy one of these rooms. There is one extra-large bed, a desk, and a large locked closet. As before, these rooms are in shambles. PCs may attempt a DC15 Perception (Wis) check. If successful, the characters may randomly stumble across any one of these items in each room.

- One Periapt of Wound Closure stashed in an EDF muffler bag. (While you wear this pendant, you stabilize whenever you are dying at the start of your turn. In addition, whenever you roll a hit die to regain hit points, double the number of hit points it restores.)
- One stolen Angelite narros Oaken idol worth 750gp.

## 27. TRAINING GYM

This large room was once employed to train soldiers as well as allow them to exercise and spar. There are padded floors everywhere, dozens of exercise machines tossed about the room, and a malfunctioning training bot that taunts the first character it sees into a fight.

It shouts the strangest obscenities in a very robotic voice and moves in to attack. These bots are intended to not inflict injury, but despite Kitia's best attempts, this robot doesn't answer to a shutdown command.

The robot will not pursue characters outside of the gym.

These various insults can include:

***"Your mother mates with unattractive animals!"***

***"Your favorite sports team sucks!"***

***"Your sexual organ is insufficient!"***

***"Your physical shortcomings are worthy of ridicule!"***

***"Your deficient IQ classifies you as mentally challenged!"***

***"You smell like dirty lubricant!"***

***"You spar like elderly people copulate!"***





## CHAPTER TWELVE: THE TAKING OF PROTO JERICHO

If destroyed, the robot's H cell can be removed (this is a Saint unique cell, usable with their technology).

### ENCOUNTER

#### 1 x Sparring Robot

#### SPARRING ROBOT

CR 8

**XP 4,800**

N Medium construct

**Init** -1; Senses blindsight 20 ft., darkvision 60 ft., Perception +0

#### DEFENSE

**AC** 23, touch 15, flat-footed 18 (+5 Dex, +8 natural)

**hp** 84 (12d8+30)

**Fort** +4, **Ref** +3, **Will** +4

**Immune** construct traits

#### OFFENSE

**Speed** 30 ft.

**Melee** 3 Iron Fists +16 (1d8+5)

**SA** Hard Strike, Wind Up

#### STATISTICS

**Str** 20, **Dex** 20, **Con** —, **Int** —, **Wis** 11, **Cha** 1

**Base Atk** +12; **CMB** +18; **CMD** 27

#### SPECIAL ABILITIES

**Hard Strike (Ex)** If a target is hit at least three times in a round by the sparring robot, the target is knocked prone and stunned for 1 round. However, the robot will not attack prone targets.

**Wind-Up (Ex)** As a quick action, if the sparring robot hits the same target at least twice in the same round, it can make one additional Iron Fist attack.

check will open the door. It can also be forced with a successful DC25 Strength check. Inside, the characters discover the bodies of two Saints impaled by falling debris.

The bridge features four chairs on rails that can move between several stations. The captain's chair is elevated with an arm-mounted computer screen. There is also a navigation station, an engineering station, a holographic plotting table, and dozens of control panels.

Once the bodies have been removed from their chairs, Kitia—or a character after a successful DC20 Engineer (Int) check—can initiate a reset which will bring the bridge online. Most of the computers are down, though the electronics controlling the weapons and flight control are accessible.

Shockingly, since there is an anti-gravity generator in this part of the vessel, it is possible via a successful DC15 Engineer (Int) check to reroute power and allow the wreck limited flight ability. This would be limited to only a speed rating of 50 ft. (using vehicle rules) for an hour.

The weapon systems can also be controlled the same as *Area 18 Fire Control*. A successful DC15 Computer Use (Int) check can alter the weapons' parameters, including the disabling of the perimeter defenses, which would result in the pagus armies sweeping into the ship. Alternately, the perimeter can be extended all the way to the forest line, as mentioned previously.

The fire control can also be reprogrammed to fire on the buzz-boy Caldera. This will destroy the vessel, but the team will already have disembarked safely. Kitia may or may not approve of this depending on her feelings by this point; if the party has already encountered the kill team and her own life is in danger, she may still prefer to take the Caldera intact in order to make her own escape.

Additionally, any functioning doors can be unlocked, remotely opened or closed and locked from this room, trapping potential threats or opening doors previously inaccessible.

### 31. BRIEFING ROOM/COMPUTER CENTER

This room operates both as a computer center as well as the briefing room for the command staff and sub-officers. The computers here are intact. Similar to the bridge, characters may accomplish one of the following

### 28. LAUNDRY

Standing water leaks from his room, and a dozen Saint uniforms are hanging. Although PCs can take them, these offer no protection and do not shield them from ship defenses.

### 29. SHOWERS

This is a sizeable shower with stalls and broken faucets spraying water into nearby drains. Although a source of clean water (but tasteless, due to repeated recycling), allowing characters to refill their supply, this is another potential entry point for the Combine.

### 30. BRIDGE

The bridge is sealed off by an exceptionally difficult locked door. Even the access hatch down into this room is equally protected. A successful DC20 Engineer (Wis)



effects with each successful DC15 Computer Use (Int) check.

- The weapon systems can be controlled the same as *Area 18 Fire Control*.
- Any functioning doors can be unlocked, remotely opened or closed and locked from this room, trapping potential threats or opening doors previously inaccessible.
- Hidden security cameras can be accessed, viewing any room on board the vessel. There is a 50% chance a camera in a room is working; if so, describe the room as if the PCs have entered it without triggering an encounter. Anything requiring an Perception (Wis) check automatically fails (PCs have to be there personally to check a room). If selecting a room with a non-techan monster in it, the creature will be visible. In the case of the shemjaza in *Area 32 Lab Alpha*, it will appear as an attractive innocent woman in a Saint uniform, pacing worryingly. The intercom is not working, and the camera will fail after one minute. (The shemjaza knows the characters are here and has shapechanged to resemble a Saint).
- The ship's log and manifest can be accessed, though it will result in consecutive successful DC15 Perception (Wis) check to sift through. Although the language used is archaic English, the log is straightforward and easy enough to understand. If the PCs have not yet determined that the ship came from Mars, this will reveal it—uncovering navigational data that plotted the course from Martian orbit. There are mentions of the hierarchy—the deacons—who command the Saints. Additionally, it reveals that the objective of the *Proto-Jericho* was to retrieve samples from local echan fauna and determine if there is a biological agent which can affect echans but not those touched by magic. Apparently, the key to the experiment was determined to be the retrieval of Ixindar-touched creatures, explaining the pagus. However, they were apparently not a viable sample, so the vessel went North into Apocrypha to locate a purer source.

## 32. LAB ALPHA

This is one of many labs on this part of the ship. It is filled with experiments and harnesses, and robotic arms to conduct experiments. This area has been destroyed

like most else of the ship. However, there are several Saints here, having killed themselves after being rendered insane by the shemjaza, also found locked in here.

The shemjaza, Rooxs Basat, has broken from her cell and is waiting for someone to free her from the lab. It used various spells and psychological tricks to kill members of the crew and release the other creatures from their containment, resulting in the crash.

Rooxs Basat is pretending to be an innocent Saint to get out of the cell. She'll maintain an illusion for as long as she can until gaining an opportunity to kill the characters (if it serves her). Though her emotional responses seem forced and unnatural, this is easily passed off as psychological trauma from the crash; a DC 20 Sciences (Int) check will reveal a telltale lack of other symptoms of shock, however.

She regards all techans as dangerous and will attempt to destroy them at the earliest opportunity. If the PCs are mostly echan, she will maintain the illusion until she has exploited the characters enough. If able to talk to the Combine, she will take control of the creature and have it kill the characters (once again, if it suits her); also, if Haezor or any other pagus escort is present, she will exert her will over them. Despite being a free pagus, Haezor has no resistance to a shemjaza's direct influence.

It is possible, though unlikely that the PCs see through Rooxs Basat's façade and sympathize with her being tortured, offering assistance for her to escape. In this case, Basat will reveal, almost casually, that the Saints were trying to create a non-magical bacteria that would be deadly to fantasy creatures. Effectively, the virus is able to alter the genetic code of the target, deactivating its magical properties, making fantasy creatures mundane. All the genetic faults fantasy creatures suffer from would no longer be suppressed, causing them to die of organ failure, cancer, or anaphylactic shock (or from environmental damage, if they possessed an unnatural form of locomotion or respiration). Though primarily engineered using data from Ixindar creatures, it only affects those bound to Attricana, as shemjaza, pagus, and many evil dragons are protected by Ixindar's stasis effect. The virus is passed via touch or fluids, can survive for days in the water supply, and because it is a non-magical virus, the immune systems of Attricana creatures completely ignore it, making it 100% infectious.





## ROOXS BASAT

CR 7

**XP 3,200**

LE Medium outsider (Ixindar)

**Init** +3; **Senses** blindsight 60 ft.; Perception +13

**Aura** Prince of the Shrouded Pearl (50 ft.)

### DEFENSE

**AC** 21, touch 13, flat-footed 18 (+3 Dex, +8 armor)

**hp** 73 (7d10+35)

**Fort** +7, **Ref** +10, **Will** +10

### OFFENSE

**Speed** 40 ft.,

**Slam** +12 (1d8+8)

### STATISTICS

**Str** 17, **Dex** 20, **Con** 21, **Int** 19, **Wis** 16, **Cha** 19

**Base Atk** +7; **CMB** +13; **CMD** 26

**Feats** Combat Casting, Iron Will, Lightning Reflexes, Weapon Finesse

**Skills** Bluff +14, Diplomacy +14, Knowledge (arcana) +9, Perception +13, Sense Motive +13, Survival +14

**Languages** saeqaar

### SPECIAL ABILITIES

**Prince of the Shrouded Pearl** All enemies within 50 feet of the rooxs suffers a -2 penalty to saving throws.

If the PCs do not befriend Basat, this information can be found without difficulty by examining the logs and notes available in the lab (that is, after all, how she figured it out herself).

Despite this virus, known as the Mangler, not affecting Ixindar-based creatures, Basat does not wish for it to be deployed, as the goals of the shemjaza are corruption and dominion, not destruction. If the saints are allowed to retrieve it, they will certainly release it in a densely populated area.

Several samples can be found here, in large cylinders labeled as *33497-Group 5*. This is what the PCs were initially sent to find. If they wish to complete their mission, they may try to take one with them. If they wish to complete their mission without risking the deaths of millions, they can use the lab equipment to sterilize the inside with the intention of delivering an empty cylinder ("How are we supposed to know the difference?")

This is when Kitia's loyalty will be tested. If she has grown to like the PCs, she will agree that the virus should not be released and will help in destroying the samples. If the battery room has already been discovered, she will suggest destroying the entire ship; there is no chance of contamination, as the explosion will sterilize the samples. However, the buzz-boy team, and

Bryce if he is somehow still alive, will definitely have other plans. There are three labs on this level, and there may be samples there as well. This can create a bizarre scenario where the PCs must make an alliance with a shemjaza.

## 34. EMERGENCY WEAPONS LOCKER

This room has been stripped bare by many of the Saints already, but there are six teleforce pistols here with one M-Cell in each. As usual, these cells are incompatible with other techan equipment.

## 35. MEDICAL BAY

This room connected with Lab Delta, but primarily functions as the medical bay for the entire ship. There are numerous diagnostic beds and robotic arms (similar to the kitchen) that can automate surgeries and minor medical procedures. There are four medical kits here, two drug kits, six nano-healers, and two of every type of dart gun injection type.

The medical bays are operational and can be activated, though having limited reserve power. The medical bay has four uses of any of the following (each activation takes five minutes) to a single creature that is laid on the bed.

- If the creature has died within the last ten minutes, it returns to life with 1 hit point. This can't return to life to a creature that has died of old age, nor can it restore any missing body parts.
- End either one disease or one condition of the following conditions afflicting the creature: blinded, deafened, paralyzed, or poisoned.
- The target is healed for 8d8+16 hit points.
- One damaged or missing organ or limb is regenerated.

After all the uses are expended, or if a radiant echan creature is treated (at the *end* of the procedure), the medical bay shuts down.

## 36. LAB CELL

This is where Rooks Basat was once being held. Here are various robotic arms with multiple laser scalpels and syringes. Basat had been held against her will and subjected to multiple experiments. There are images scattered about detailing the bones broken, limbs removed



and reattached, as well as large amounts of blood taken. If she has not yet been revealed as a shemjaza, players should notice the similarity between the unnervingly blank expression she wears in even the most gruesome images and that of the 'Saint' they rescued from the lab.

### 37. LAB DELTA

This second laboratory refined and perfected the Mangler virus. If the PCs are reaching this area first, they will find centrifuges, hot plates, freezers, induction coils, mixers, incubators, ovens, robotics, cryogenic tanks, pipettes, gloveboxes, 3-D printers, sterilizers, microscopes, and hundreds of broken glass fragments. Only a successful DC20 Perception (Wis) check will find the glass container holding live samples of the virus at the back of the room (labeled *33497-Group 5*).

This will be the buzz-team's primary target.

### 38. BATHROOMS

Nothing much here. They still flush.

### 39. COOLANT TANKS

Unlike the lower level, this coolant room has not been breached. If the doors are open when one or more tanks are breached, the super-low-temperature fluid will cascade out, run through holes in the ship, and freeze the waterfall and the surrounding river solid. At least a dozen pagus in the periphery will be frozen solid as well. This will not freeze the vessel or its weapon systems.

### 40. SURGICAL

When the *Proto-Jericho* crashed, a surgical procedure was still going on and shocking enough, safety measures have kept the subject still alive, bolted securely in a medical bed.

The PCs find a Guardian Dragon Wyrmling. Its wings were clipped (the skin was cut into) and it sports an open wound in its chest. Several talons have been removed, and the creature is on life support. If removed, the creature will die within two rounds. If rushed into the medical unit, the bay will disrupt, and the creature will die.

Only magical healing will fix this beast. It cannot communicate, but if freed, it may be difficult to move around unless guided to the top hatch and allowed to

escape. Anything else will result in the creature dying. The PCs can put it out of its misery.

## THE FINALE

This adventure can end in several ways. There are numerous factors to consider.

### THE BUZZ-BOY TEAM

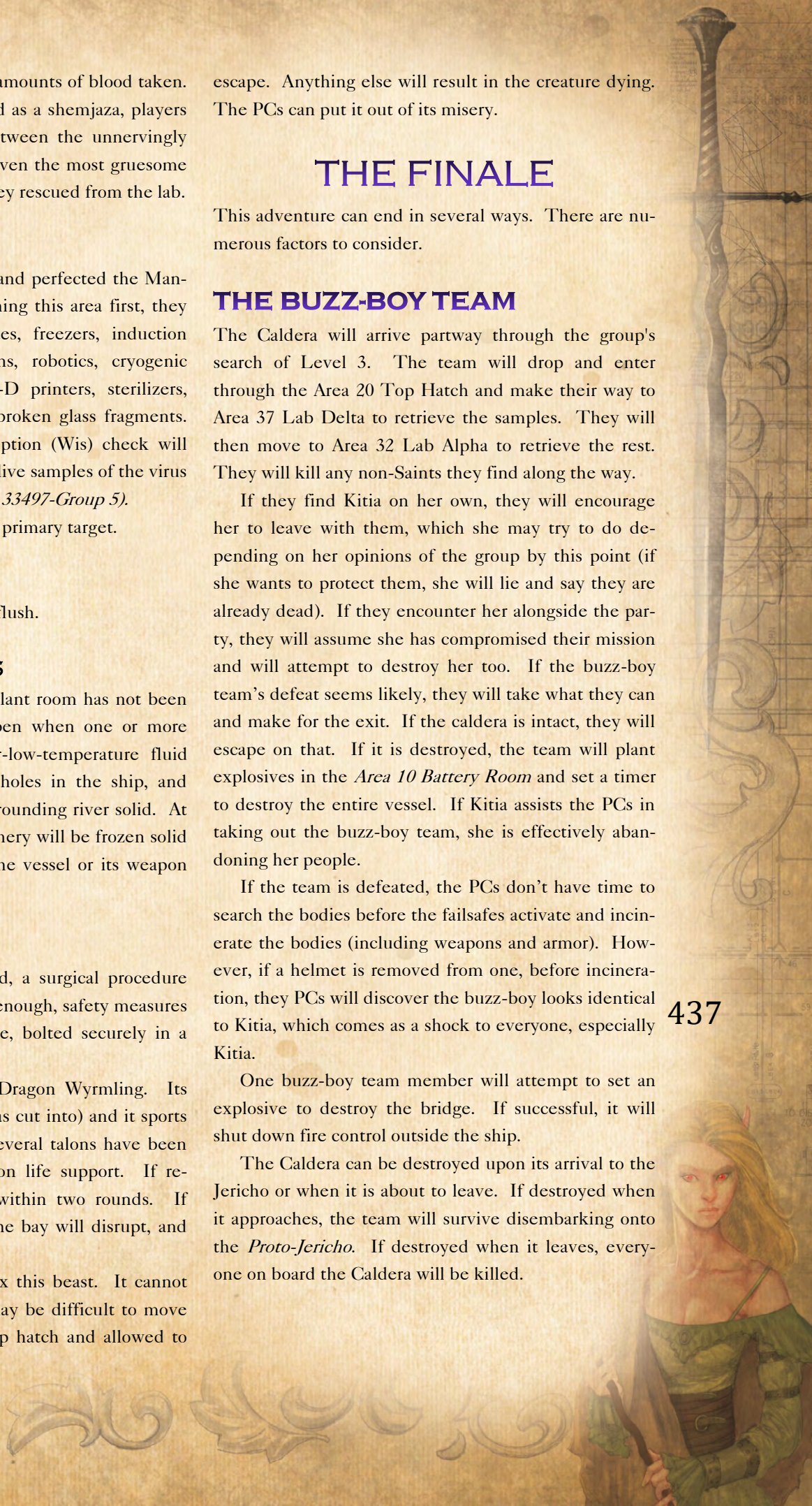
The Caldera will arrive partway through the group's search of Level 3. The team will drop and enter through the Area 20 Top Hatch and make their way to Area 37 Lab Delta to retrieve the samples. They will then move to Area 32 Lab Alpha to retrieve the rest. They will kill any non-Saints they find along the way.

If they find Kitia on her own, they will encourage her to leave with them, which she may try to do depending on her opinions of the group by this point (if she wants to protect them, she will lie and say they are already dead). If they encounter her alongside the party, they will assume she has compromised their mission and will attempt to destroy her too. If the buzz-boy team's defeat seems likely, they will take what they can and make for the exit. If the caldera is intact, they will escape on that. If it is destroyed, the team will plant explosives in the *Area 10 Battery Room* and set a timer to destroy the entire vessel. If Kitia assists the PCs in taking out the buzz-boy team, she is effectively abandoning her people.

If the team is defeated, the PCs don't have time to search the bodies before the failsafes activate and incinerate the bodies (including weapons and armor). However, if a helmet is removed from one, before incineration, they PCs will discover the buzz-boy looks identical to Kitia, which comes as a shock to everyone, especially Kitia.

One buzz-boy team member will attempt to set an explosive to destroy the bridge. If successful, it will shut down fire control outside the ship.

The Caldera can be destroyed upon its arrival to the Jericho or when it is about to leave. If destroyed when it approaches, the team will survive disembarking onto the *Proto-Jericho*. If destroyed when it leaves, everyone on board the Caldera will be killed.





## CHAPTER TWELVE: THE TAKING OF PROTO JERICO

### ROOX BASAT

If Basat is not killed when discovered or within the first five minutes, then it is a safe assumption that she has decided to not be hostile to the PCs. If so, she will maintain that truce as long as the PCs don't betray her. She does plan on leaving the ship and taking control of the pagus outside.

By this point, K'Tal is inured to shemjaza conditioning and will consider Basat a threat. Basat will ask for the characters to kill K'Tal and then she will take control of the pagus armies and lead them deeper into Apocrypha. She promises (or threatens) to see the PCs again someday.

If Avalon awakens, it will command the pagus to slaughter everything, but Basat's conditioning will supersede Avalon's over at least 70% of the horde. Basat will honor her treaty with the PCs and command the pagus to attack Avalon and bring down his keep. The PCs should not get involved as Avalon will likely kill most everything, including the majority of its own thralls. Basat will still survive this encounter and be seen heading north.

### KITIA KHIRO

Kitia's fate depends entirely on her relationship with the PCs. In the beginning, she conceals her mission and wishes the Saints to succeed. This is the default, and she will manipulate the characters however she can to ensure her survival and the success of their mission. All she cares about is returning to her people and knows that a rescue team will come head to the *Proto-Jericho*. She had no knowledge that the Mangler virus would actually be lethal to echans, believing that it would merely shut down their magical abilities.

If she has not gotten to like the characters by the time she has entered the Jericho, she will find ways to try to separate herself from the characters and signal for help, accelerating the arrival of the buzz-boy team. When they arrive, she will be rescued but not before the team retrieves the Mangler samples from the vessel. If the Caldera is destroyed on its departure, Kitia will be killed. She may also be killed by her own kind if they suspect that she has given information to outsiders.

If she sympathizes with the PCs, she may also slip away and attempt to mislead the team into thinking the party is already dead, thus sparing them from being exterminated. If she has discovered the true extent of the

Mangler experiments, she will attempt to destroy the samples during the evac by making the Caldera self-destruct. Alternatively, if she is discovered with the party, the buzz-boy team will simply attempt to eliminate her as a loose thread. She will have to escape with or without the PCs and discover a new life for herself on Earth, as she will not be welcomed back among her own kind.

If Avalon is awoken, Kitia will see the threat and offer to take control of the *Proto-Jericho*'s limited flight. She will plead the PCs to escape, telling them that she will lead Avalon off. She will actually decide instead to ram the ship into Avalon, tumbling the vessel and drag-on into Purgitose, destroying all three.

### AVALON

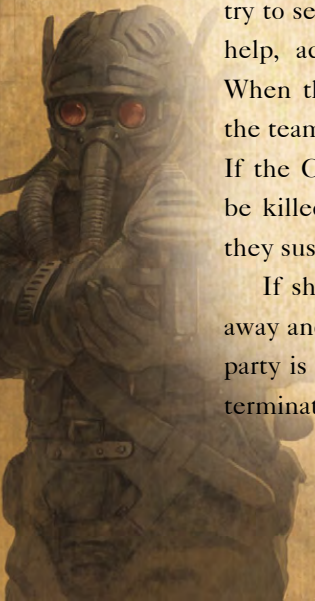
Throughout all of this, Avalon of All has remained slumbering, and hopefully will remain so. This ancient dragon is too powerful for anyone to face head-on, and has been restlessly jostling these last few weeks after the crash.

If the PCs alter the Jericho's Fire Control parameters, destroy the Caldera, detonate the *Proto-Jericho* or take it off, Avalon will fully awaken and burst from his distant keep of Purgitose. The monster will demand obedience from his thralls. K'Tal, if armed with weapons from the *Proto-Jericho*, will turn on his master, and be killed quickly for his insolence. Afterward, Avalon will direct his ire upon the ship, destroying the vessel in one minute via physical attacks and breath weapons.

The *Proto-Jericho* can focus fire on Avalon, reducing him to half hit points in the struggle. The ship can also be piloted to ram into Avalon, which will cause the Avalon to tear the vessel apart but not before it and dragon tumble into Purgitose. The various explosive chemicals about the ship will detonate, destroying all three. While Kitia will attempt to be the one to sacrifice herself against the dragon, if a PC wants to go out in a blaze of glory, let them do it instead.

### PROTO-JERICO

One way or another, the *Proto-Jericho* is fated to be destroyed. It will either be sabotaged and destroyed on the ground, crash again making a break from the cata-ract, or it will be used as an oversized projectile to kill Avalon. In case of a miracle where the ship is able to take off and not aggravate Avalon, it will decimate the





pagus as it roars over the landscape. However, it will not land nicely and will crash just south of the Fork, igniting the explosive chemicals and destroying the hulk completely (the PCs, if still aboard, can have a harrowing escape sequence to get clear just in time).

Wherever the ship lands or is destroyed, dozens of Pontiac MekTeks will arrive eventually to dismantle the vessel.

## SOLIS

The *Proto-Jericho* possesses one single functional vessel, a one-manned Solis. The vessel can be used to escape the ship if the need arises. It can also be used to engage Avalon or the Caldera. That being said, the Solis is not very powerful. If the PCs are able to escape with the vessel, it will take them south of the Fork before an automated security system will activate, forcing the vessel to set down, after which it will incinerate itself.

## THE DROOGS

If this mercenary company survives all the way to the Jericho, then only Kolisang, Booker, and Bryce will still be alive. In which case, any of these three may be killed off in a ship event to showcase the danger lying within the vessel.

Outside of that possibility, Bryce will never sympathize with the PCs, keeping his mission secret. Bryce will do everything possible to ensure its retrieval, up to and including turning the Droogs against the PCs or attempting to summon the Caldera early.

If Kitia shows signs of sympathy with the party, he will stop at nothing, even potentially sacrificing himself to signal for help, accelerating the arrival of the buzz-boy team. When they arrive, Bryce will be rescued but not before the team retrieves the Mangler samples from the vessel.

If the buzz-boy team is defeated and Bryce is still alive, he will attempt to steal the samples and escape in the Caldera himself. Either way, if the Caldera is destroyed on its departure, Bryce will be killed. If the Caldera is destroyed beforehand, he will attempt to release the virus into the Cataract.

If not stopped, the Mangler will eventually end up flowing into the Grand Lakes, but will be so diluted at this point that it will only result in a small spike in cancer rates in Abidan and Kannos, easily cleared up with

healing magic (of course, the players should be led to believe that releasing the virus will result in the death of every echan creature on Earth).

Once again, depending on player interaction, Kolisang and Booker may side with the characters in their quest. Booker has no love for echa, like most Iron Sons, but he is a mercenary and sees the Mangler as a threat to his future employment opportunities. Kolisang, however, hates echa and will side with Bryce, even to the extent of turning on Booker. Bryce is con-

### HUY'UK K'TAL

CR6

XP 2,400

LE Medium fey

Init +6; Senses darkvision; Perception +1

#### DEFENSE

AC 22, touch 15, flat-footed 17 (+4 Dex, +1 dodge, +7 armor)

hp 55 (10d6+20)

Aura unshakeable conviction (25 ft.)

#### OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee heavy flail +10/+5 (1d10+6/19-20)

Special Attacks kinetic transference

#### STATISTICS

Str 18, Dex 18, Con 15, Int 12, Wis 12, Cha 14

Base Atk +6; CMB +10; CMD 24

Feats Combat Reflexes, Dodge, Mobility, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (maul)

Skills Acrobatics +18, Climb +12, Escape Artist +16, Handle Animal +8, Intimidate +16, Ride +12, Survival +10, Swim +7

Languages Common, Paggin

SQ focused aggression, unshakable conviction, war howl

#### ECOLOGY

Environment Any except near water or mountains

Organization leading a patrol (leading 7-11 other pagus), or a small invasion (with 10-100 other pagus)

Treasure standard (heavy flail, half plate, other treasure)

#### SPECIAL ABILITIES

**Focused Aggression (Ex):** When the pagus battlesworn is first injured in battle, he makes (and must make) a melee attack against the enemy that triggered *focused aggression*. If the triggering attack was ranged, the pagus can replace his melee attack with a charge. The pagus gains +1 to attack and +2 to damage against that enemy until the pagus or the enemy is dead.

**Kinetic Transference (Ex):** As a full round action, the unbound chieftain can make a single *heavy flail* attack. If the target suffers damage, it is dazed for one round.

**Unshakeable Conviction (Ex):** All pagus within 25 feet of the unbound chieftain are immune to fear and gain a +2 bonus to melee attack rolls for 1 round after the unbound chieftain suffers damage.

**War Howl (Ex):** As a swift action, all allied pagus within 15 feet of the unbound chieftain can move 15 feet. This movement provokes no opportunity attacks. Once the unbound chieftain uses *war howl*, he cannot use it again for 1d4 rounds.



## CHAPTER TWELVE: THE TAKING OF PROTO JERICO

sidered a buzz boy acolyte while Kolisang is Droogs sniper.

### HUY'UK K'TAL

K'Tal should be killed at some point, either by the dragon, automated weapons, PCs, the shemjaza, or some other act of god (debris or coolant falls on him). He cannot be negotiated with and will kill anyone standing in the way of his glory.

He should never get his hands on any Saint technology, as he will turn on anyone attempting to stop him.

### THE THRALLS OF AVALON

The army of pagus will either be under the control of K'Tal, Basat, or Avalon. Whoever controls them by the end will dictate their future. If by K'Tal or if left ungoverned, the pagus will rampage south, potentially chasing the *Proto-Jericho* or just the PCs on foot. If so, they are relentless. If kodiaks were saved, they will intercept and engage the pagus, allowing the PCs to escape to the Fork. The kodiaks will follow and secure the keep; with reinforcements from the west, they will easily wipe out the remaining Thralls. If the kodiaks did not survive and the PCs make it past the Fork and continue fleeing south, the Thralls will be intercepted by the free pagus of Axum Uruk and once again, the PCs will be able to retreat.

If the pagus fall under control of Avalon, he will order them to destroy anything non-pagus, including chasing down the PCs. If the pagus fall under control of Basat, she will order them to stand down and then lead them north, avoiding a conflict with the PCs.

vate, destroying the weapon. The *Proto-Jericho* and the Solis will not survive this adventure.

It is likely that the PCs have been dropped off near the Fork. If not, they will have to sneak out the way they came in. There will still be hundreds of surviving pagus, and the characters are best to sneak out, lest they draw an army at their backs.

If they are caught, they may have to run for it, resulting in an extended chase lasting almost a full day. If the kodiaks have taken the Fork, they will allow the PCs past and lock the gates against the army. Otherwise, the PCs may have an issue crossing back. They are then taken in by Uruk's pagus and escorted back to the Tethuss, from whence they can make their own way back to civilization.

Should the PCs wish to complete the mission they were originally assigned (bringing back the cylinder), they will find that "Maximillian Gray" is actually a Saint agent who has double-crossed them; no matter who they attempt to return to, they will instead find another Saint buzz-boy team (which has already killed everyone else who knew about the mission) and no reward.

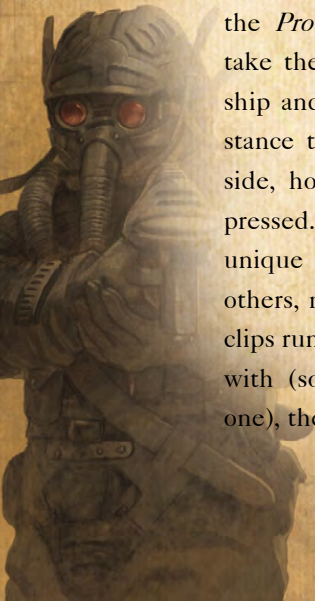
### WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

The events of this adventure reveal the presence of a powerful faction in the ongoing story of *Amethyst*, but depending on how things play out, there is likely no evidence left of their existence. Techan players may attempt to reveal the existence of the Saints to their bastions or superiors within their organization—but the Saints have already infiltrated several bastions themselves, and may take efforts (lethal or not) to plug the leak. This could lead to a political cat-and-mouse adventure or an all-out pursuit across the world as the PCs attempt to escape from forces within their own government.

Echan parties have more incentive to report on what the Saints were trying to do, but may have difficulty getting anyone to listen. Attempting to gain an audience with the ruler of one of the heartland nations or set up a diplomatic meeting with bastion leaders might be the focus of a future arc. Alternatively, if Kitia has survived and befriended the echans, she may help them take matters into their own hands by tracking down other Saint machinations.

## 440 PLAYER CHARACTERS

Hopefully most if not all the PCs have survived. More importantly, they may have salvaged technology from the *Proto-Jericho*. Kitia claims that the Saints don't take theft lightly, and will recommend destroying the ship and all the technology inside it, regardless of her stance toward the PCs. If she has come over to their side, however, she will not stop them if the issue is pressed. Not that it will matter; all Saint weapons take unique battery cells and cannot be substituted with others, meaning the weapons will be useless once their clips run dry. Additionally, if the weapons are tampered with (someone attempting an Engineering check on one), there is 50% chance the weapon's failsafe will acti-





If this adventure fits into an Amethyst relic quest that included the *Single Stone* adventure from the core-book, the PCs are able to guess that the mysterious vessel that destroyed Zellis Keep was another Saint spaceship, and deduce that they also have an interest in the relics. This can be yet another impetus to action, assuming they still need one. If they have not yet done that adventure, this would be a good time to do it, allowing them to recognize the attacking ship for what it is.

If you choose to allow Avalon of All to survive, he may actually become an ally of sorts against Thornshroud and the shemjaza-controlled pagus that will eventually make their way into central Canam. As the PCs are now the closest thing to experts the southern lands have on the geography of Apocrypha, they could be sent back to try to sway him to fight the shemjaza, though always keeping in mind, 'the enemy of my enemy is my enemy's enemy'.

If the PCs encountered the bastion of Pontiac on good terms, they might also make an effort to establish diplomatic relations with the other bastions. As Pontiac is directly in the line of fire when the pagus finally begin to march, the party might even form part of a relief team to aid, and if necessary evacuate, the bastion. They could also be called upon to defend Pontiac if the Saints attack it in an effort to recover or destroy what little they were able to salvage from the *Proto-Jericho*.

---

**BOOTING SYSTEM...**

**CHECKING MEMORY...**

**I.A.A. OPERATING SYSTEM**

**VER 7.2.**

**SHIELDING –**

**ENABLED**

**ARMAMENT –**

**ENABLED**

**MOTIVE SYSTEM –**

**ENABLED**

**MAIN DRIVE –**

**ONLINE**

**CURRENT BATTERY LIFE –**

**%99.9998**

**PLEASE INSERT DISK**

**OR**

**PLUG EXTERNAL INTERFACE**

*Tasia looked around the field.*

*"Uh...crap, keyboard," she reminded herself.*

*The grass was short, naturally enchanted to ward off weeds. Fae tell the grass to stop growing. Humans cut it. Tall trees leading to the pagoda mountain stood behind her.*

*The Parkan was unlike most other Saint vessels. It could land directly without requiring gravity anchors. The ship was large enough to ferry forty saint.*

*Only Tasia and Stone had been on it, along with their cargo.*

*It was a silver crate with round edges. Seams and crevices ran in every direction. One section had flipped open to a small computer screen along with data ports and several toggles and shielded buttons.*

*The Parkan bottom was broad and flat to accommodate thrusters and deployable cushions in hard landings. Its form was still sleek with a sloping pilot window for its pilot's chair. The co-pilot sat perpendicular behind. From there lay the massive deployment chamber that could open to the ground. Propulsion came from fixed engines on the top of the vessel. Its landing system was six thick-treaded wheels on heavy springs able to sustain an impact on landing and receive power as a ground vehicle when settled.*

*Armament came from an impressive 20mm railgun which was still in lockdown to prevent disruption.*

*Stone remained inside the ship, looking out to Tasia in the grass with the crate.*

*"Voice recognition," she commanded. She was not about to walk back into the craft and dig around for a keyboard. A word appeared on the computer screen.*

**ONLINE**

*The crate and its contents were well shielded, but the monitor was exposed to the chaos, and the display began to curl in from the right side like a roll of carpeting.*

*"R-B-X-888, enable," she commanded.*

**TASIA CRUFIX, CAPTAIN**



## CHAPTER TWELVE: THE TAKING OF PROTO JERICO

PATTERN RECOGNITION CONFIRMED

SCRAMBLE MODE –  
ENABLED

MOBILE ANTI- ECHAN EXOSKELETON –  
ONLINE

PLEASE STAND BY.  
DATA LOADED

*“Direct command processing disable,” she commanded. “Activate autonomous intelligence.”*

ONLINE

*“Access file...”*

*Tasia snapped her fingers, trying to recall the file-name.*

*“Uh, Amethyst0001.TAG. Confirm?”*

PROCESSING...CONFIRMED.

*“Access file Target0002.TAG. Terrain maps, image files. Confirm?”*

PROCESSING...TARGET0002.TAG

SELECTED FILE IS MARKED  
BY A SUBORDINATE  
CONFIRMATION CODE

*“Install anyway on my authorization.”*

PROCESSING...CONFIRMED

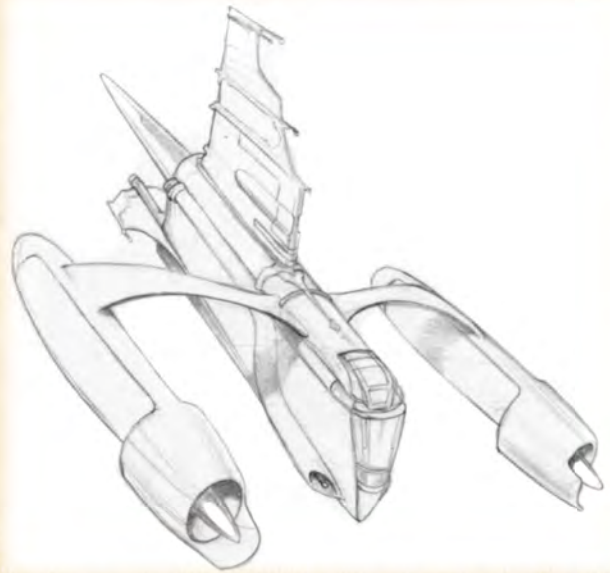
*“Enable IAA system, confirm lock and release.”*

UNKNOWN COMMAND

*“Dammit,” she snapped. She spoke clear and elevated. “Enable Intelligent Autonomous Adaptability Operating system. Confirm system keylock on my voice command and release limiters.”*

SYSTEM ACT—

*“Good evening Captain Cruxix,” a deep, growling mechanical voice echoed from the crate.*



*“Orientate yourself, MAX, its dawn,” Tasia corrected.*

*“Corrected,” it replied. The voice was male and probably given its intimidating tone, intentionally. Digital voices had reached a level as to be indistinguishable from a normal one.*

*“Thank you. EDF Saturation?”*

*“Radiant at 175% above cosmic background.”*

*“How long do you have?”*

*“Not taking into account variables, current cell life expectancy is 406 days.”*

*“Deactivate scramble mode,” she commanded.*

*Locks at the corners of the crate snapped open with a puff. The vacuum within coughed as air rushed into the gaps. The various seams parted. Crevices widened. Pieces of the container blossomed open and fell to the ground.*

*As the machine lifted, joints locked into place. Gears spun. Powerful electromagnets pulled heavy leaded-iron shield plates over exposed limbs. It shadowed Tasia as it arched its back straight.*

*MAX stood at ten feet at its shoulders. Its head was miniscule for its scale, the size of Tasia's, sunken deep in an armored housing below the shoulder line. It had no need for eyes, a nose, or a mouth.*

*It was a simple single smooth plate rounded from the top of the head to the chin with only two solid yellow lights that ran up the right side. Its legs and arms were as thick as her torso, and its only gauntlet on its left limb could swallow her entire skull in its grasp. At the end of the right arm was an intimidating weapon that reached past the machine's knee, the barrel big*



enough for her fist to sink into.

Its drum chest, packed full of electronics, armor, and EDF shielding was not built for agility. The need for resistance against disruption required a massive construct, and even then, it could not last indefinitely. The armor plates were so jumbled, they overlapped each other. A small but powerful flood torch was mounted on its shoulder.

The construct ticked like a winding clock as it shifted its legs from the crate for a wide stance. Its oversized feet sank into the soil. Its defiant armor reacted to the enchanted grass. Blades turned yellow and curled away from the cold.

"MAX, do a system check again," Tasia ordered.

"Very well," it responded. It didn't look to her. "There is a minor leak in the plasma capacitor. It will not affect range or damage potential."

Tasia walked around to the weapon on its right arm. She ran her fingers up the barrel to the segment where the electromagnetic bottle was formed before firing. There was an insignificant crack with black scorch marks around. When the weapon fired, a small ejection of superheated gas would fire out the right. Potentially dangerous for someone standing next to the weapon, but MAX seldom operated with groups. EDF leakage would not be an issue since the bubble was a magnetic field.

"Well," she responded as she flicked her nail off the crack, "just don't get hit there. Nothing else?"

"There is nothing else," it answered coldly.

"You sure?"

"There is nothing else."

"What about the motive system?"

"There is nothing else," it repeated.

"Good talk, Max," she said as she checked around for any other possible problems the computer system couldn't reveal. Tasia knew she was stalling.

"Everything okay, sir?" Stone asked from the ramp. She didn't bother looking at him as she continued her examination.

"Have you ever sent one of these things out?" she asked.

"No," he answered.

Tasia pulled away from the construct. She looked up to its featureless face, its deadness. A mindless automaton.

"Feel like we're releasing a bull in a china shop," she said.

"China shop?" Stone asked.

She turned to him. "It's a figure of—really, Stone,

seriously?"

He stopped being a subordinate and addressed the comrade he had known for some time.

"Have you ever seen a china shop?" he asked.

"I know what it is," she retorted as she returned to the machine.

"Haven't even seen a bull," Stone added quietly. Tasia walked around it again. Loyal to the moment of its death, even to the point of sacrifice if rendered inert by disruption or if restrained and unable to counterattack. A violent internal reaction of its miniature radium 226 nuclear power pack would incinerate two hundred meters of landscape and salt the earth until the flooding enchantment washed the radiation clean.

"Are you...okay?" Stone asked again.

"Why are we doing this?" she whispered.

He couldn't hear her.

"Sir?" he asked.

"Why is it so important?"

"Tasia?" he broke formality. "Are you talking to me—"

Tasia snapped a look at him, then back to the machine.

"System commit!" she shouted.

The machine ticked a few times, then quietly checked its joints with mild elbow bends and neck twists. Though silent in movement, it made a loud thunder in the ground as it began walking.

With such a wide gate, it could walk forever at a pace matching Tasia's run. It could run, but that would send a shudder in the planet others would notice to the mountains. It turned north and vanished over a hill crest.

Tasia watched it leave, then turned to enter the Parkan.

"Yeah...fine," she answered him finally. "Start up the engines, Stone."

He stepped into the co-pilots chair and pulsed the turbines into operation. They fed their power from a similar reactor to the MAX, larger with less shielding, running from Thorium 232, which ran safer without shielding in ech.

Tasia looked at the controls a moment, weighing the risk.

"Do me a favor, land on top of the mountain."

"Absolutely. It's amazing isn't it."

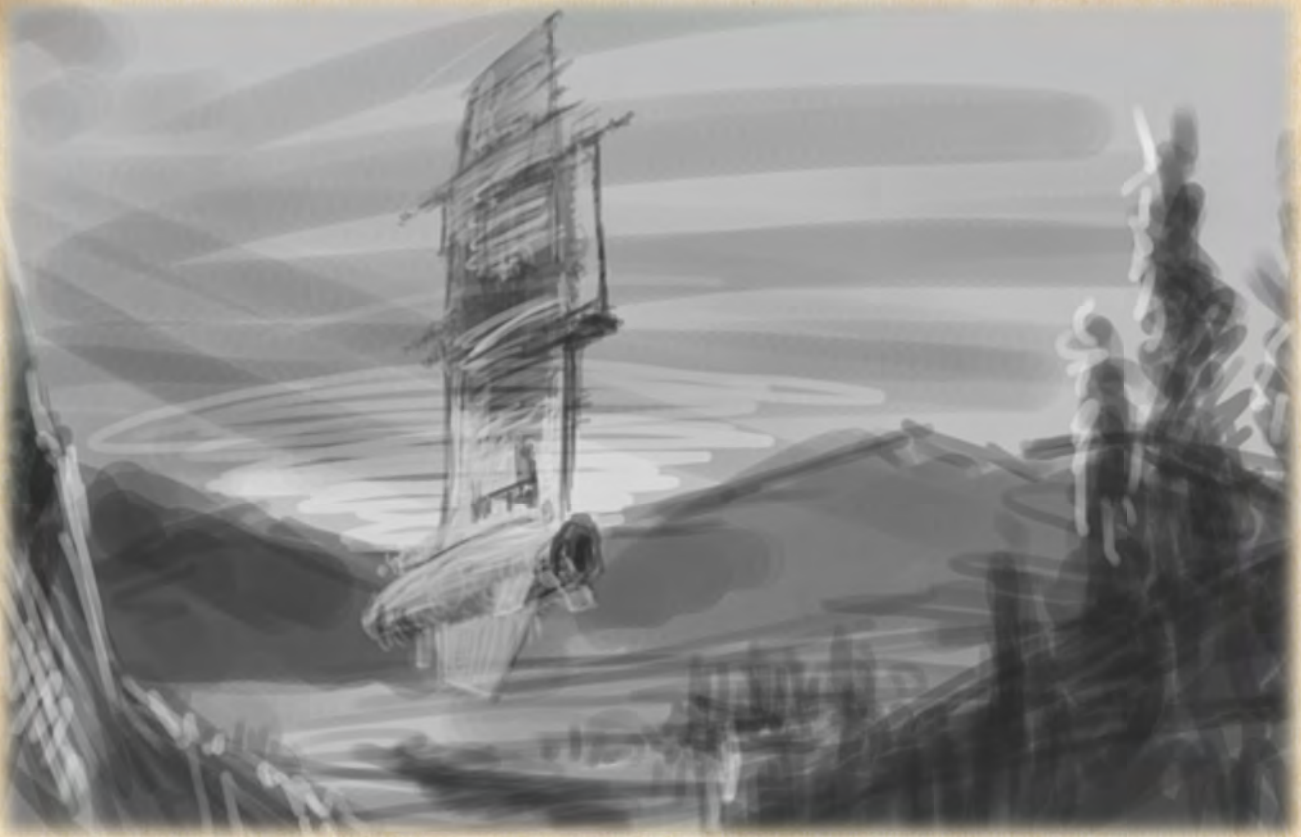
"They came here for a reason."

The vessel floated off and orbited the pagoda mountain, taking view of its unfeasible shape.

"If magic is chaos untapped," Stone muttered, "how



## CHAPTER TWELVE: THE TAKING OF PROTO JERICHO



*could it form something so majestic?” Tasia ignored him. The vessel touched upon the soft soil. The hatch opened, and Tasia exited.*

*The peak was still, no wind, which was unusual. Tasia noted the tall grass and trees. Her EDF sensor on her wrist started to beep. This place was saturated.*

*She noticed the bulge, then the four large paws, and the eyes of the massive bear. It was lazily sitting against a rock, arms hanging by its side. It stared at her.*

*“Hello,” it mumbled.*

*Tasia froze, not out of fear. Her reflex dictated that she draw her weapon and fire, act first. Just like in the forest. She should pull her plasma pistol and remove another radiant. She vaporized that Nariisa; what’s a bear in comparison. Instead, she held her ground. Stone hadn’t seen it.*

*“Stone, keeping the system on lockdown,” she said back to the craft. Stone looked out his window, noticed the monster, and understood the request. A rookie saint would have knee-jerked the Parkan’s weapons to bear.*

*“That is not wise, what you did?” Raunnis groaned. Tasia remained unflinched. She was confident Stone couldn’t hear it. “It will destroy much in its path.”*

*“I do what I am told,” Tasia replied. Her head darted to the right to notice the nymph staring at her. Tasia*

*kept calm. “You were the diviner that they sought?”*

*“Again with claims I see what others cannot,” Raunnis answered. “I listen. And well.”*

*“What did you tell them, beast?” Tasia asked, trying her best to be authoritative in the face of a giant bear.*

*“What do you offer?” it asked.*

*“I’ve nothing to trade that you could value.”*

*“When your kind leaves the skies, I cannot hear you. Tell me something no one here knows. Where is your home?”*

*Tasia slumped her shoulders. She was impatient, her time limited. The bear’s focus floated away from her and watched the nymph.*

*“A star rises in the southeast this time of year,” Tasia answered, “just before dawn. The red one is not a star, but the planet my people colonized before this world turned fell to chaos.”*

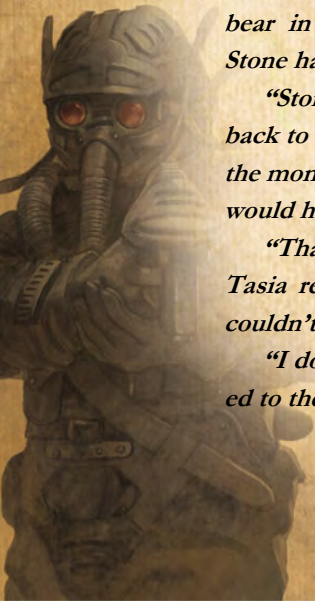
*“That I know,” it replied, “but where is your home?” Tasia didn’t answer. “You know little of where you began or where you are. Your people are odd. Most of you all move the same. Most.”*

*“I just need to know why,” Tasia muttered.*

*“Don’t we all.”*

*Tasia started to examine the gear attached to her.*

*“I don’t have anything to offer. I have a rechargeable flashlight, a watch, bags, a multi-tool, rope, my*





weapon that would disrupt and likely kill you if you held it. I got nothing."

"I'll take the bell," Raunnis replied.

Tasia flinched. She reached into her pocket and removed the bell charm Sam had given her. It rang quietly.

"It means nothing," she whispered. "There's no value in this."

"You value it."

Tasia stared at the bell, the one Sam had claimed offered the holder "lucky, long life, and good finance." Saints frowned on keepsakes. It shouldn't mean anything to her. She was initially hesitant to offer it but threw it to the base of the bear.

"Fine," she said. The bear looked down at the bell, then back to her.

"I sent men north; there was a need for it. In time, they will resume their quest."

"How many of these artifacts are there?"

"Enough to muddle your search, enough for you to pick more flowers." Tasia took a step back; her jaw creaked open. She looked back to the Parkan, confirming that Stone couldn't hear the bear. "If you desire focus, I suggest north, just as I told them. Answers will come swiftly."

"Captain Crux!" Stone shouted from the craft. "EDF spiked. We can't stay here."

Tasia looked back at the bear, still more interested in the nymph than her. Tasia turned and motioned to Stone.

"Spool up!" she commanded. She started to return but turned back to Raunnis to add, "Just so you know, when we retake this world, I won't miss talking bears."

"I will miss all of you," it answered.

"Saints aren't going anywhere."

"No...I mean I shall miss all of you, Tasia."

Tasia's brow furrowed, unclear to what the bear meant. She shook her head and entered the craft. It jumped into the air quickly.

The bear turned to the nymph.

"I like bells," it muttered.

Aboard the Parkan, Tasia moved up to Stone's position.

"Plot for flight path," Tasia ordered. "I want to fly north a moment, just to check a few things. Probably nothing."

"Confirmed," Stone answered, followed by a few specific toggle flips and button pushes on his console. "Opening drive banks for high consumption burn for orbital trajectory. Holding your call to purge." Tasia

nodded. Stone tried several times to talk, to voice some concerns. Instead, he diverted. "Congratulations, by the way, sir. Heard about the position."

"Eyeing to come along?" Tasia answered with eyes still on mountain range the Parkan was navigating through. Their altitude was increasing steadily, and the peaks were growing with snow. "I've begun to learn which knobs to fiddle with. Security details could open soon."

Stone nodded.

"Could be something," he replied. "I heard you got your pips and chevrons already?" Tasia nodded. "Can I...see them?"

"The pack," Tasia replied.

Stone reached around the cockpit and grabbed Tasia's small backpack. He unzipped and poked inside. She had a spare firearm, her popgun autoloader with serial numbers rubbed off. An additional short-range communicator dangled at the bottom.

Stone noticed a small EDF muffler bag—an odd item to carry around on a routine mission. Usually, those are carried on-person to hold energy cells when in combat, not stashed casually in the cockpit.

He unzipped, unclasped, and unbuttoned the bag and fiddled inside. What he pulled out confused him.

It was a flower with bizarre, colorful petals that flapped in the air despite being unable to support its own form and weight for flight. The long stamens curled away from the leaves and brushed his hand.

"What the hell's this?" Stone asked.

Tasia snapped her head around.

"Put that back!" she snapped.

Stone's screen flickered off. The overhead light shattered shards onto his hand. The engines coughed and wheezed after receiving a confusing burst from the central computer.

Tasia's controls locked as the primary guidance system crashed and the backup refused to kick in. The reactive control system started to fire randomly. The control surfaces began to move sluggishly.

Stone frantically tried to divert power to the backup system, but the primary insisted it wasn't frazzled as it continued sending improper instructions to the various components of the ship.

"What's our position?!" Tasia snapped as she wrestled the controls.

Stone flipped toggles repeatedly to no avail. "The RCS discharged into the cryogenic plant," he replied. "A neutron surge hit the main core. I can't get the backups online. Communications are dead. Control



## CHAPTER TWELVE: THE TAKING OF PROTO JERICHO

surfaces?”

*“Having enough trouble keeping us arrowed in the wind. If we fishtail, we’ll shred!” A roar echoed from the back of the vessel as turbines died down.*

*The Parkan began to lose altitude despite its near mach speed. Tasia turned back to Stone.*

*“Get to the drop pod! Forget recovery!” she snapped. He pointed behind her. She looked back and caught the top of the closing mountain and its peak covered in thick snow.*

*She grabbed the controls and wrenched them with everything she had. Stone didn’t jostle from his chair, lifting his head to see the approaching rock.*

*“I will not,” Tasia grunted.*

*The Parkan decapitated the mountain. It cut through the snow, tossing it over the cockpit. As the flakes flickered away, Tasia noticed the jagged jutting of rock approach. She snapped back to Stone.*

*“I said to the drop pod!”*

*The rock sliced the back half of the Parkan clean through. Tasia watched the back half of the ship replaced with falling snow and debris as the mountain claimed the engines, her gear, the cargo hold, and Stone.*

*Three feet of jagged metal sat between Tasia and the rushing terrain.*

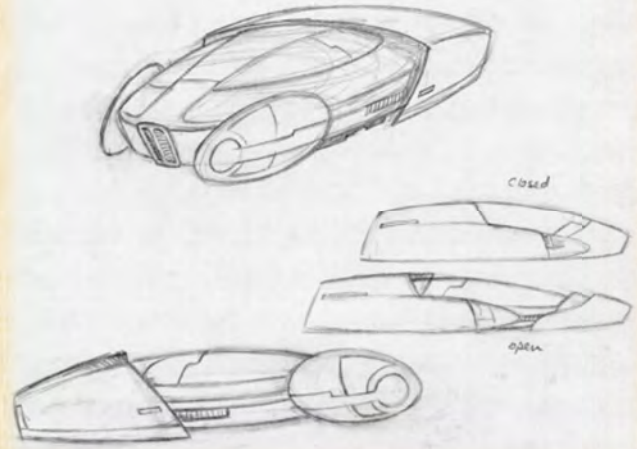
*The Parkan dipped, following the angle of the mountainside. Tasia was stone-faced. She released the control sticks and grabbed her seat. She gritted her teeth. Behind her, the disturbance at the peak started a cascade of snow.*

*The Parkan skidded down the mountain. The avalanche gained speed and size behind. Tasia’s dug deep into her chair. The ship barely slowed as the angle started to level off. A small unfrozen lake and a forest of big, thick, pine trees laid ahead. Tasia looked back at the stampede of snow.*

*The Parkan hydroplaned, surfing across the lake. A bellow of water against metal filled the cabin. The Parkan reached the other shore and kept its path through the forest.*

*The avalanche slammed over the water. Trees sheared off the useless stubby control surfaces of the Parkan, but the vessel continued unabated. It avoided slamming into the massive towering woods though undergrowth slapped by, piercing and splintering the cockpit’s glass.*

*Tasia screamed as branches pummeled the craft. Pine needles, snow, glass, and steel splinters filled the cockpit and battered her face.*



*Tasia could hardly concentrate. She barely made out the one large trunk the Parkan was bound for. Tasia stopped being worried...or scared...she was tired.*

*Branches impaled the canopy, nearly piercing her heart. The craft slammed to a stop. Tasia took in a short breath. She swallowed carefully, her neck an inch from a jagged jutting of wood. The growing grumble approached behind.*

*Tasia snapped alert and unlatched herself. She pained herself from the seat, through the sharp fragments of glass, cutting and slicing her suit and skin. She jumped from battered legs to an overhanging broken limb of wood and lifted herself from the wreckage. She rolled her legs onto the branch and reached for another, almost stumbling to the snow.*

*Her fingers, sweaty and bruised, gripped it tight and she heaved her legs to pin around the bough.*

*A wave of snow bathed the entire crash, covering the Parkan, its scar path and every mark she had made with technology.*

*The flurry settled and Tasia lost her strength, falling from her hold. She toppled and tumbled from the lower limb, pounding her back to the soft snow.*

*She coughed a few times and let herself melt a few inches into the cold. She looked above to the bright blue, a dog star casting bands past the clouds, and the cold star of magic raining its will on the new Earth.*

*It was quiet.*





*The tall trees had lost their snow in the violence and now danced their needles in the passing breeze as if thanking Tasia for freeing them from the weight. She kept her eyes to the sky, to the tear—the star—the gate—the god of this new world. As a heavier cloud brushed by, the star twinkled.*

*Tasia thought of her people, her brother, high above, in geostationary. She thought of those on board the vessel, those that would denounce her, those that would envy her.*

*EDF would muffle any radiation. The snow had erased the rest.*

*Attricana winked again at her.*

*“Stupid bear,” Tasia whispered as she passed out.*

\* \* \*

*Elsewhere, MAX thumped heavily into the ground as it marched through the forest, each step salting the earth around it. The chaparrans waited as the machine walked into their ambush. They had followed it, judged it offensive, and prepared to enact silent punishment.*

*MAX ignored them.*

*Each chaparran wielded a Kitarri black bow. The lead pulled its arrow tight, ensuring a powerful shot.*

*From the dense forest, the arrow whistled into view, striking the techan armor. It penetrated barely a half-inch before falling to the ground.*

*Another arrow soared from another position, striking the arm. It deflected.*

*MAX ignored it.*

*A volley followed, all failing to pierce.*

*The machine raised its weapon arm and aimed on a target assuming itself invisible.*

*In a tenth of a second, the shielded energy cell coiled together a toroid of superheated gas inside a magneto hydrodynamic bubble. A tenth later, the bub-*

*ble accelerated from the barrel. This was no plasma pistol shot—the sphere was the size of the chaparran’s head. When it struck, the chaparran vaporized. Nothing remained, along with the tree it hung from and the three others behind that.*

*MAX fired again and found another target. It repeated, vaporizing each fae with perfect accuracy.*

*One of the chaparrans fell onto the robot’s back, trying to drive its blade into the neck. The fae stabbed repeatedly, desperate to find a weakness.*

*MAX reached back and snatched the fae with one claw. It tossed the elf dozens of feet away face-first into a bear-sized rock with such force, the fae was killed instantly. MAX still fired its weapon afterward, incinerating the body and the rock. MAX then fired behind without looking, obliterating another chaparran as it tried a similar maneuver.*

*From its back, a multi-barreled gun appeared and swiveled to lock on MAX’s shoulder. A burst of thousands of needle-like energy bolts minced the forest in a sweep. Dozens of trees fell, along with another half-dozen chaparrans moving in to reinforce. The spray of gunfire continued in its arc until a quarter of the forest behind MAX had either fallen or caught fire. The weapon stopped, slowed its spin, and rotated back to its back, locking into a hidden housing.*

*At no point did MAX slow its speed.*

*It continued through the forest without further resistance.*





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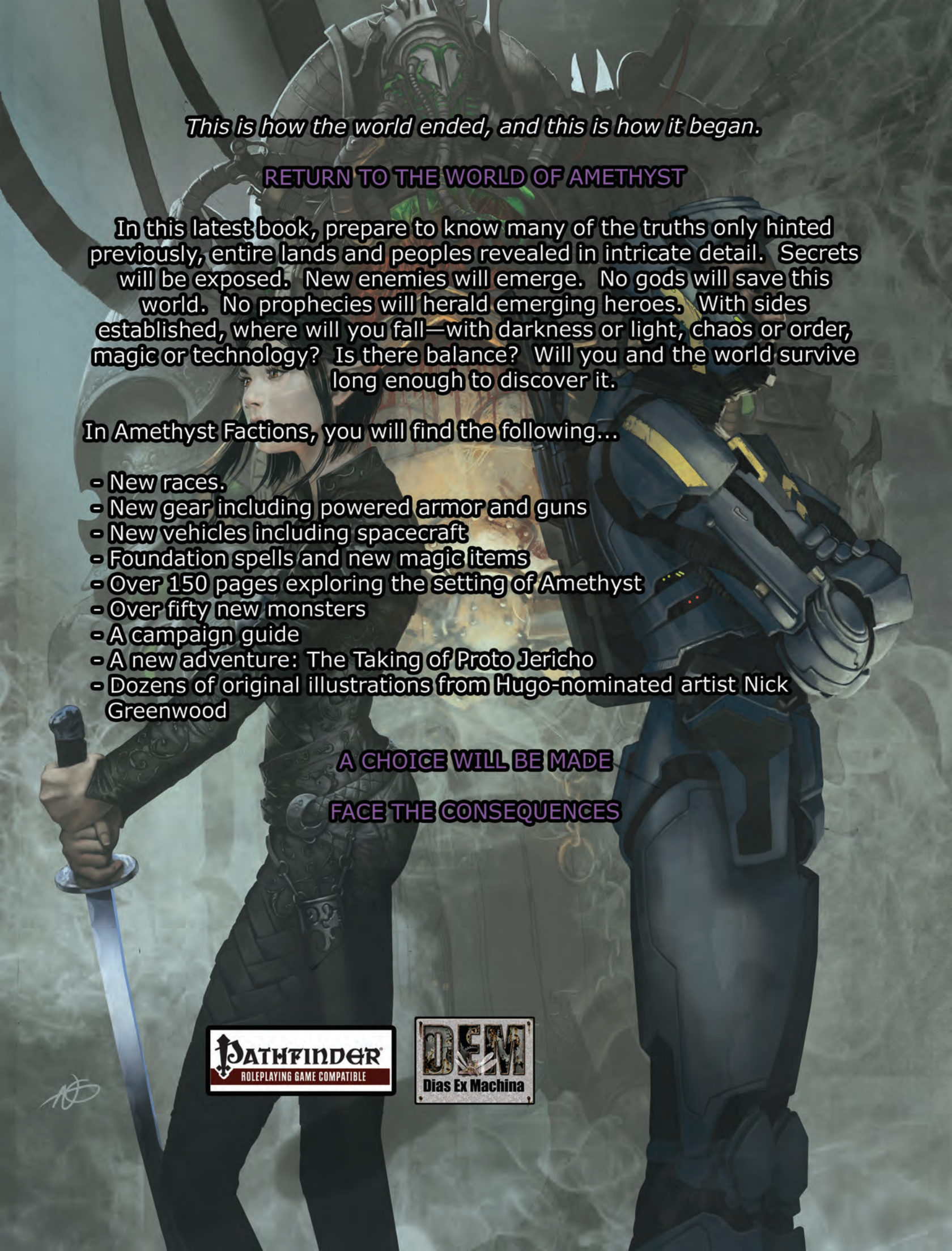
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*This is how the world ended, and this is how it began.*

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