

Accursed



Sand and Stone
Chris Avellone • George Ziets

MELIOR VIA

Lead Developer
Ross Watson

Contents

Writers

Chris Avellone and George Ziets

Cover Artwork

Alberto Bontempi

Interior Artwork

**Jacob Atienza, Mike Brodu,
Kamil Jadcak**

Additional Artwork

Gary Dupuis, Rick Hershey, Eric Lofgren

Graphic Design

Kevin Childress

Publisher

John Dunn

Proofreaders

**Joseph Hepler, Adam Loyd,
Kevin MacMillan**

Sand and Stone:

2

Hyphrates

3

UR-XANDRIA

5

LUXARRA

9

SPHINX, MORDEN

12

HYPHRATES HINDRANCES & EDGES

14

Hebron

15

THE HEART OF HEBRON

21

THE PORT OF PARNATH

29

HEBRON HINDRANCES & EDGES

33



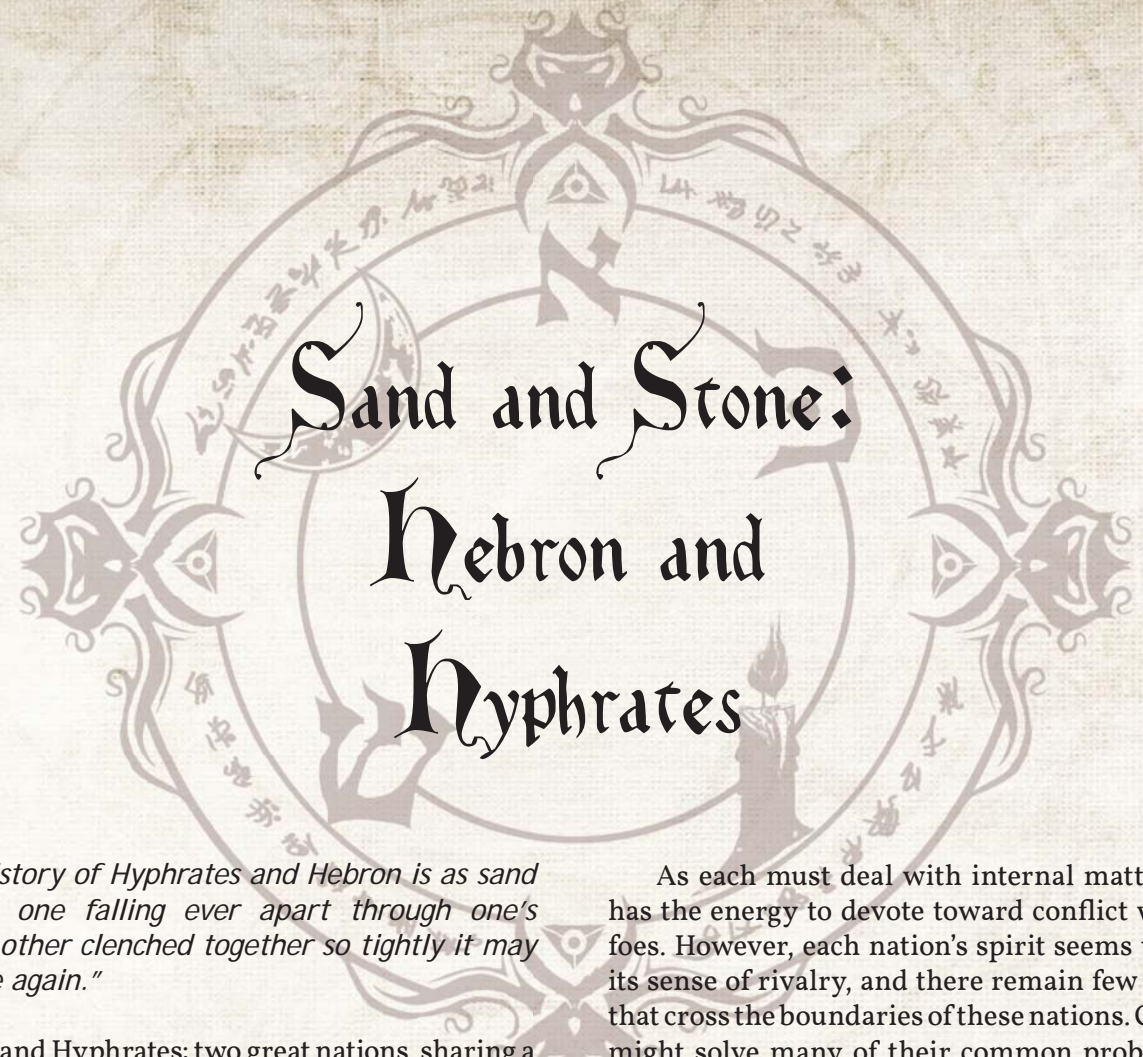
Copyright © Melior Via, LLC 2014–2016

Accursed, Melior Via, and their associated logos are trademarks of Melior Via, LLC in Cleveland, Ohio.

Contact us: info@meliorvia.com or visit us at www.meliorvia.com

This game references the Savage Worlds game system, available from Pinnacle Entertainment Group at www.peginc.com. Savage Worlds and all associated logos and trademarks are copyrights of Pinnacle Entertainment Group. Used with permission. Pinnacle makes no representation or warranty as to the quality, viability, or suitability for purpose of this product.

Publisher's Choice Quality Stock Art © Rick Hershey / Fat Goblin Games



Sand and Stone: Hebron and Hyphrates

"The history of Hyphrates and Hebron is as sand and stone, one falling ever apart through one's hands, the other clenched together so tightly it may never move again."

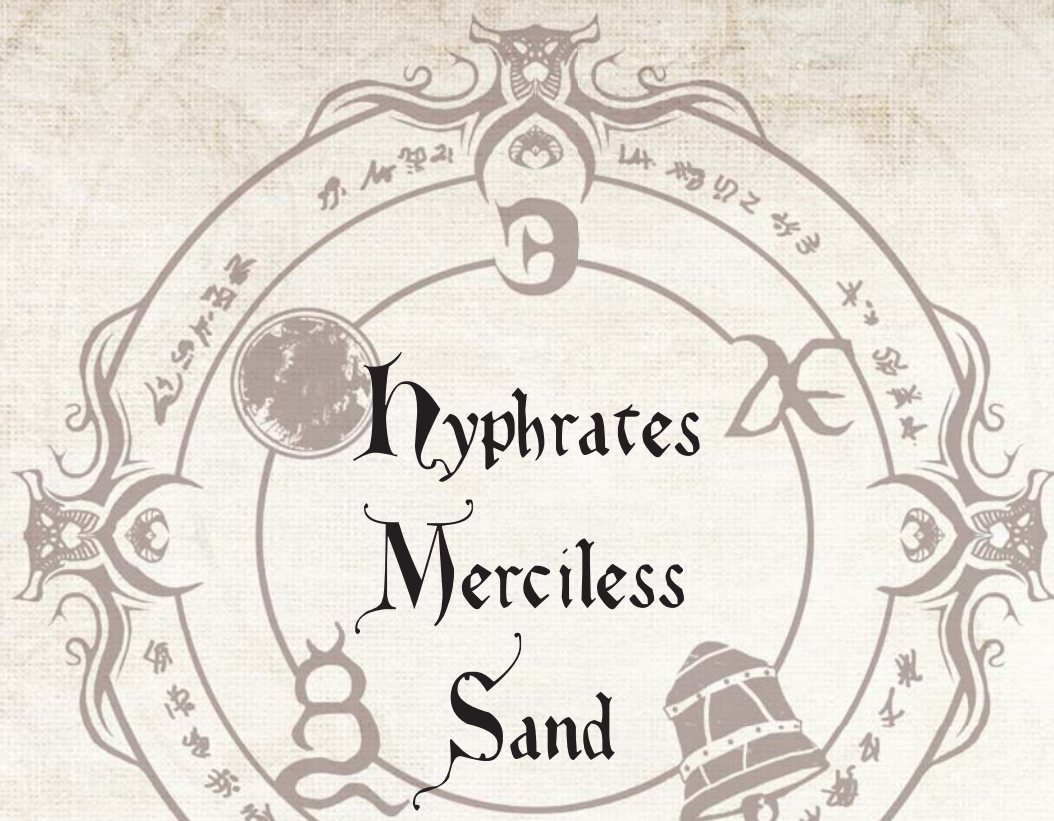
Hebron and Hyphrates: two great nations, sharing a common border and a common enemy in the forces of the Coven. For centuries, since the colonization of Morden, these two shared an enmity. In part, this was because of their nearness and competition for many resources. Their cultural differences, however, served to intensify the division as well. Hebronites are generally far more devoted to family, while Hyphratians tend to embrace personal goals. These differences often triggered misunderstandings and hostilities between the two cultures, leading to an endless series of conflicts. Much of this was swept aside in the face of the Grand Coven, when all the nations of Morden cooperated under the banner of the Armies of Light.

In the end, both suffered greatly in the Bane War, and even after the conquest's end, the two nations continue their struggles, from evils both within and without. Hyphrates chokes on sand and time, waging war with the resurrection of its glorious past, and the people of Hebron have become as cold and heartless as the banes they fought, losing themselves in steel, their seeming victory only granting the country a different death. To some extent, this suffering has decreased their hostilities toward one another.

As each must deal with internal matters, neither has the energy to devote toward conflict with mortal foes. However, each nation's spirit seems to maintain its sense of rivalry, and there remain few friendships that cross the boundaries of these nations. Cooperation might solve many of their common problems, but it seems a challenge that they cannot overcome.

The stones of Hebron and the swirling sands of Hyphrates hold many mysteries waiting to be unlocked by a curious seeker...and many threats as well. Conspiracies abound, new breeds of banes lurk in the shadows feasting on the flesh of the living, and the magic of the Crone and the Djinn have left marks that grow stronger with each passing day. Even decades after the Bane War, the remaining Witches continue to unleash new and unexpected horrors upon the inhabitants of these nations. As evil's shadow spreads, it is easy for the people of Hebron and Hyphrates to lose faith, and the feeling that any victory only delays the end. Powerful banes still pose a significant threat to each nation's survivors.

There is hope, however, in the ranks of the Accursed. Hebron and Hyphrates are nations where the Accursed can draw great strength, find acceptance, and gather allies to fight the evils the Witches have inflicted on Morden. With the Accursed standing beside the people of these realms, great good may be accomplished...or great ruin for those who seek to make the Grand Coven's victory complete.



Hyphrates Merciless Sand

The story of Hyphrates begins with two great rivers—the Iteru in the west and the Aparna in the east. According to the old religion, these rivers were sister-goddesses who raised the first Pharaoh as their foster-son and set him upon his throne.

For centuries, the Hyphratians say, their country was a lush and fertile plain. It was filled with spirits—children of the river goddesses—who brought life to the land. Native plants and fungi, consumed during religious rituals, allowed people to see the spirits, to commune with them, and sometimes to join in their dances and celebrations.

Such was the limit to any interactions between the spirits of ancient Hyphrates and the people who shared their land, until the rise of the Pharaoh Onuris. Unlike his predecessors, Onuris sought to discover more about the spirits and gods of his country, to learn their ways, and to gain the wisdom of the river goddesses themselves. This is how he first heard of the Djinn and learned the forbidden arts that he used to summon and bind her. Onuris challenged the Djinn to a game of strategy and chance, winning magical wishes for himself and his heirs for as long as his dynasty survived. Though the wishes often went awry, they nonetheless gave the Pharaohs a greater aura of magic and majesty, which they used to strengthen their grip upon Hyphrates.

As the power of the Pharaohs grew, they began to look beyond the traditional borders of their land. They assembled vast armies to conquer the neighboring nation of Hebron. Again and again, Hyphratian

soldiers poured through the passes of the Baal-Goleth Mountains and besieged the fortress of Matzeda. But because they were so far from the sacred rivers, the spiritual strength of the Hyphratian forces was weak (or so the stories say), and the invasions always failed.

Of course, the Hebronites offer a different explanation. Their scholars point to the common Hyphratian practice of appointing two or more generals to lead the invading armies—so that no single general could claim credit for a victory and threaten the power of the Pharaoh. The generals inevitably quarreled amongst themselves, making it easy for the Hebronites to repel them.

Frustrated in their attempts to vanquish Hebron, the Pharaohs turned their attention to a greater threat. Over several generations, Enochian missionaries had begun slipping into Hyphrates from neighboring countries. They offered the promise of a better life to the common people of Hyphrates, who had known little but poverty and servitude for centuries.

The Pharaohs understood the danger posed by the Enochian faith, so they brutally oppressed the missionaries. They were aided by the river goddesses, who foresaw that the Enochians would turn the people against them. Terrible battles pitted the gods and spirits of Hyphrates against Enochian warriors and priests. Wherever the missionaries succeeded in converting the populace, the gods and spirits of Hyphrates would lay waste to the land, punishing the people for abandoning the old ways.



Still, many Hyphratians clung to their traditional beliefs. Pharaoh Atepi the Great, who was perhaps the most brutal oppressor of the Enochian faith, was wise enough to grant concessions to the common people. This, more than anything else, prevented the Enochian faith from spreading unchecked across Hyphrates.

But then, quite suddenly, Atepi died, struck down by a sudden illness. The Enochians rejoiced, seeing the death of their persecutor as a sign of divine judgment. Atepi was succeeded by his grandson, Memmon, who revoked his grandfather's concessions and took a pitiless stand against the underclasses. Enraged, Memmon's people rose against him, overthrowing the Pharaoh and embracing the Enochian faith.

A cabal of rich commoners, who had been among the first to convert to the Enochian Church, established a new regime led by a Consul. Many Hyphratians devoted themselves to the pursuit of wealth by any means. Their nation grew weak, dysfunctional, and corrupt.

This was the state of Hyphrates when the Bane War began. Few Hyphratians knew anything about Hasani or his terrible wish. Instead, they witnessed the return of Pharaoh Memmon and his undead hordes and saw in them the hand of retribution. The people of Hyphrates were being punished for abandoning the old ways.

Now Hyphrates is divided between the undead realm of Memmon-Aswar in the west and the failing and corrupt Consular state in the east. Hyphratians pray for salvation to Enochian saints and old gods alike, but as yet, there is no sign that anyone has heard them.

Who Are the Hyphratians Today?

Traditionally, social hierarchies and respect for authority were important Hyphratian values—if only because those who defied the Pharaohs inevitably paid with their lives. Over time, the common people accepted their place in society. When orders came from the Pharaoh's court, they obeyed without question.

The authority of the Pharaohs was founded upon the old Hyphratian religion. Now that the old ways have been overturned, it is increasingly difficult for Hyphratians to take their leaders seriously. What right does Consul Bikheris have to rule? They shake their heads at the bickering, backstabbing merchants who claim to be running the country. Some have begun to suspect that a strong, authoritarian hand is needed again—perhaps the hand of a true Pharaoh, even if he happens to be undead.

Still, centuries of ingrained obedience are not easily overturned. The majority of Hyphratians feel a sense of powerlessness over larger events and would never dream of organizing another revolution unless they had no other choice. Instead, their dissatisfaction emerges in other ways.

More than ever before, escapism has become the national pastime, though it can take many different forms. The most common is drug addiction. A large proportion of the population are addicts, spending their days in blissful oblivion. In the past, drugs sometimes enabled the people to see gods and spirits of the old religion, but ever since the Great Betrayal, the benevolent spirits are gone. At best, addicts sink into a pleasant haze. At worst, the drugs reveal dark and malicious spirits—Unseelie Fey, perhaps—who torment those who can see them and gradually drive them mad.

Escapism also takes the form of outlandish stories that Hyphratians tell one another, featuring the storyteller himself as the hero. The more absurd and impossible the stories become, the more the audience enjoys them, and they are encouraged to shout derisively at the teller. Foreigners who have witnessed this behavior are often taken aback, thinking that the storyteller is really claiming to have performed all manner of outrageous feats, but the whole spectacle is just an elaborate game.

Games of strategy and chance are popular, too—particularly Qefet, the game played between Pharaoh Onuris and the Djinn. Hyphratians at all levels of society

mingle in the gaming halls, which are present in every village and town. In imitation of Pharaoh Onuris, the winner in a game of Qefet earns a favor from the loser, which can be called upon at any time. This custom creates a vast network of secret obligations that further complicates Hyphratian society, especially in the halls of government.

Hyphratians are well aware that their state is a bureaucratic disaster. The Consular regime is blatantly dysfunctional and corrupt. State offices multiply at an astonishing rate, most with conflicting claims of authority over the same functions. Consul Bikheris lacks a sense of legitimacy, even within his own court. To make matters worse, the whole government is undermined by a convoluted network of obligations and favors that exists between bureaucrats, mostly determined by games of chance. As a result, no one in government trusts anyone else.

Throughout central and eastern Hyphrates, the Enochian religion is officially dominant, but the faith is not as fervent or heartfelt as in other nations. Many people think that Pharaoh Memmon represents divine retribution for the abandonment of the old gods. For his part, Memmon is happy to encourage this belief. In some circles, the old religious rituals are quietly returning.

To the Conclave of Bishops

Stories of ancient Hyphrates depict a people who were vibrant and strong. The Pharaohs of old had to earn their respect, and when a ruler overstepped his bounds, the commoners stood firm against him. What a sharp contrast to the defeated, beaten-down people of later years!

I have come to suspect that the power of the Djinn somehow changed the nature of a society. In sealing her bargain with Onuris, she established a grip upon this country, subtly undermining the spirit of a whole people. Perhaps this is the fate of any culture that endures the power of a Witch over many years. In Hyphrates, we may be looking at our own future, if we cannot throw off the Coven's yoke.

—By the Creator's Grace,
Bishop Luciano Tierno

Ur-Xandria

The sprawling metropolis of Ur-Xandria, at the mouth of the Iteru River, is perhaps the most ancient city in Morden. Centrally planned by the Pharaohs of old, its neighborhoods are arranged around a series of public squares, connected by wide avenues.

The sound of Ur-Xandria—especially at night—is dominated by the incessant humming of huge, human-sized locusts. These creatures are survivors of the countless swarms that swept across Hyphrates in the past, devouring crops and leaving famine and starvation in their wake. At the end of these swarm events, the locusts would devour one another with cannibalistic glee until only a few very large insects remained. The lucky survivors migrated to the Iteru delta, taking up residence on the flat roofs of Ur-Xandria. These giant locusts are thought to be immortal, or at least very long-lived. Thousands of them rest on the rooftops by day, sunning themselves in the desert heat. By night, they scatter across the city to hunt vermin, but they always return to the same roof by dawn. Having one or more giant locusts living on your roof is considered lucky; a sign of divine favor.

If any emotion pervades Ur-Xandria in the present day, it is fear. Rumors of Pharaoh Memmon's imminent approach, or of spies and saboteurs within the city walls, sweep through the populace on an almost daily basis. The only people unaffected by the constant anxiety are the addicts, who wander aimlessly about in a smiling daze. Despite the congestion they cause in the busy streets, hardly anyone dares to mistreat them. The people of Ur-Xandria still remember the importance of drugs in the old religion, and they regard every addict as potentially holy.

A police force, mostly composed of Hebronite mercenaries, keeps order in the city. Many of these mercenaries are hard-eyed veterans of the Bane War, so citizens wisely avoid antagonizing them. It is a telling sign that Consul Bikheris can no longer rely upon his own people to keep his regime secure. Some among the Ur-Xandria's underworld insist that the Consul also employs a small but growing force of Witchmarked who serve as his eyes and ears in the city's shadows.

Though most of the city's populace is Hyphratian, significant enclaves of foreigners can also be found in Ur-Xandria. A large and thriving Hebronite community has persisted here for centuries. Hebronites are widely accepted in the city due to the long history of trade and commerce—not to mention the occasional war—between the two peoples. Other foreigners, especially those from Manreia and Valkenholm, are still associated with the disastrous years of the Enochian conversion, so the locals view them with greater distrust.

Ur-Xandria

- 1 - Amanaksa
- 2 - Saint Istina Cathedral
- 3 - Train Station
- 4 - Grand Fish Market
- 5 - Lighthouse



Sepiru, The Pyramid of the Living

Towering high above the rest of the city is Sepiru, commonly known as the Pyramid of the Living. According to legend, Pharaoh Onuris built Sepiru as a twin to his own monumental tomb at Luxarra. On a clear day, one can allegedly glimpse the distant Pyramid of Onuris from the very top of Sepiru.

Sepiru stands at the center of Ur-Xandria, a city within a city. Its tiers are decked with magnificent gardens and shrines. Grand stairways lead from one level to the next, and marble porticos offer access to galleries carved into the pyramid's depths. Sepiru's massive stones are whitewashed, with Enochian scripture painted across them in crimson and gold, large enough to be read from the streets below. Pharaoh Memmon has vowed to erase these "profanities" from the pyramid and replace them with words of praise to the reigning Pharaoh, as was common practice in the past.

At the very top of the pyramid are the offices of Consul Bikheris and his inner circle. In the past, this was the royal residence of the Pharaoh. Its grandeur belies the tenuous authority of the reigning government.

Bikheris lives in constant dread of spies and assassins from both Memmon and his own internal

enemies. Executions of supposed enemy agents are common, with the bodies hung from the upper tiers of Sepiru for all to see. Bikheris believes that this will comfort his citizens, showing them that the government is strong and diligent in their defense, but it only adds to the pervasive climate of fear.

Despite the incompetence of his regime, the Consul is a relentlessly optimistic man. He is willing to contract with anyone who might be able to reveal the enemy agents who are—supposedly—pervasive in the city and his court. To this end, his aides actively seek out likely candidates. Unfortunately, the targets of their supposed investigations are just as likely to be rival bureaucrats as real enemies of the state, and the hunters can very quickly become suspects themselves.

The middle levels of the pyramid are Ur-Xandria's commercial hub. The broad galleries carved into the depths of the pyramid contain the city's central markets, headquarters of mercantile companies, and offices of the bureaucracy. Every market-gallery has its own distinct personality, and all of them are ancient, dating from the time of Onuris and his successors. Perhaps the most heavily trafficked gallery is the gaming hall, where hundreds of people play Qefet at all hours of the day.

An intoxicating smoky haze hangs over the lowest levels of Sepiru, where pharmaceutical laboratories produce a vast array of mind-altering drugs, and addicts descend into blissful torpor in subterranean drug dens. In the time of the Pharaohs, these galleries had religious significance and were supervised by priests of the old religion. Now they are run purely for profit.

A common superstition that has gained prevalence in recent years—especially among the bureaucratic and mercantile classes of Sepiru—concerns a hidden cabal of Ophidians who dwell in the depths of the city. They are said to squeeze themselves through impossibly tight fissures to reach open chambers and voids in long-buried city districts, far beneath the surface. In fact, these rumors are true. The Ophidians are not aligned with the Witches or the Order of the Penitent, and for nearly a decade, they have merely tried to keep themselves apart from society at large.

Recently, the little cabal has fallen under the leadership of a woman called Tehepsut, a descendant of a priestly line whose family was disgraced and humiliated by a much younger Bikheris, long before he became Consul. Tehepsut has dedicated herself to engineering the Consul's downfall. To this end, she sends her agents to win influence over key bureaucrats at the gaming hall, laying the foundation for a coup that will, she hopes, bring down Bikheris and his entire government. The Order has recently become aware of Tehepsut's activities and is trying to find a way to stop her, since the fall of the Consular government would play directly into Pharaoh Memmon's hands. But no one is sure where she hides, who her agents are, or which government officials owe her favors.

Amanaksa: The Flaying Stone

A massive, ancient stone stands at the northern edge of Ur-Xandria, looking out upon the desert. During the years of the Enochian conversion, this was a place of execution, where the Pharaohs condemned hundreds of missionaries to die. In that era, the grasslands of old Hyphrates had already begun to give way to desert sand, and the spirits were constantly awake, soaring upon the winds as they waged their war against the Enochian invaders. Captured missionaries would be chained to the cyclopean stone, and then the Pharaoh's priests would call to the spirits, begging them to exact vengeance against the hated Enochians. Time after time, the winds would rise, carrying with them the desert sand, and lash the stone with brutal fury. The flesh of the screaming missionaries would be blasted from their bodies, until finally they died.

The rock became known as Amanaksa, the Flaying Stone, and the executions continued until the day when three Manreian women were condemned to die. Their names were Istina, Ciara, and Faviola. Like all the missionaries before them, they were chained to the rock, and the winds lashed furiously at their bodies. Then one woman's voice rose in the midst of the storm, speaking strange words and commanding the spirits to withdraw. She was answered by a cacophony of inhuman shrieks and moans. The swirling sands retreated, revealing that Istina—whose voice had been heard in the storm—still lived. Though the sand had pocked her face and arms, she was otherwise unharmed. The Pharaonic priests were convinced that her Enochian faith had triumphed over the spirits of the land, and they fled in disgrace. Amanaksa was never again used as a place of execution. Istina is now regarded as the patron saint of Hyphrates, and the image of the three women chained to the rock is prominent in local Enochian iconography.

In the present day, a city district has been built around Amanaksa. It is a quiet and stately community, populated by wealthy families of mixed Hyphratian-Manreian descent, most of whom can trace their lineage to missionaries who arrived in the early years of the Enochian conversion.



Despite the fact that the majority of its people have lived all their lives in Ur-Xandria, pure-blooded Hyphratians often refer to this district as “Little Palmyria.” Manreian visitors find much here that reminds them of their home country, from food and architecture to festivals and songs.

Not far from the Flaying Stone is the Cathedral of St. Istina, where Bishop Luciano Tierno presides over the Hyphratian church. As a friend to the Order of the Penitent, Tierno hides new Witchmarked arrivals with local families, giving them a place to stay, as they grow accustomed to the city. Members of the Order are generally accepted in the district of Amanaksa, but elsewhere in Ur-Xandria, they are wise to keep a lower profile.

Lately, Tierno is increasingly concerned about rumors that the Blood Witch’s vampires are infiltrating wealthy families in the district. If true, it seems that the banes have been inserting themselves into the retinues of prominent men and women as musicians, artists, and trusted confidantes, then using their magic to charm their unfortunate patrons. Once a family member has been charmed, the vampires bring more of their number into the household, which becomes a secret den from which to plan attacks upon the Order.

If such reports can be trusted, the vampires have also been moving leech-men downriver by barge—carefully concealed, of course—to serve them as guards and thugs. Tierno hopes to determine whether these rumors are true, and, if they are, to find out which families have been infiltrated and drive the vampires out of Ur-Xandria.

The district of Amanaksa is also home to the Pharaonic Museum, built by wealthy Manreian merchants before the Bane War. At its height, it contained splendid treasures from noble tombs in western Hyphrates, including several mummies. But after Hasani’s wish, the government suddenly closed the museum. Many people believe that the mummies in the museum came to life, so the Consular authorities sealed them inside. Recently, though, several corrupt officials have secretly reopened the museum to wealthy visitors willing to pay outrageous sums to see actual, living mummies. Apparently, the mummies have somehow been confined, at least for the moment. Bishop Tierno wants these mummies destroyed—or turned to support the Order—before they manage to escape, but local officials refuse to allow any Witchmarked inside.



Senekek

On rare occasions, one of the giant locusts that dwell on the city rooftops will be possessed by a malevolent spirit and becomes a senekek. By day, a senekek looks just like any other giant locust, lapsing into a dormant state on its chosen rooftop. But at night, the creatures rise to stand on two legs and travel the city rooftops in great leaps, serving as spies and assassins for Pharaoh Memmon. Senekeks acquire cruel weapons that they hide on their rooftops during the day. Typically these include jagged knives, metal cleavers, or short strands of hempen rope with which they strangle their victims. Because the senekek is bipedal at night, it can use its remaining four “legs” as arms, so it often wields at least two weapons in addition to a strangling rope.

When a senekek is injured badly enough that its exoskeleton is split, its innards begin to spill from the wound. On such occasions, the creature tries to withdraw from battle, so that it may consume its own viscera. Surprisingly, this can partially heal the creature. If successful, the senekek’s exoskeleton reseals.

Anyone who sees a senekek and makes eye contact with the creature is in terrible danger. Senekeks endeavor to keep their activities secret, and they remember the faces of those who have seen them. At some point in the next few days, the senekek will hunt that person down and strangle them until they are nearly dead. Then they will carefully cut open their own carapace and force the victim’s body inside, sealing the carapace over them.

The Game of Qefet

Qefet is a game of strategy and chance—the same one that Pharaoh Onuris played against the Djinn. The pieces represent an array of traditional Hyphratian characters—viziers, assassins, scribes, desert spirits, and more—and each has particular abilities on the game board. A player’s main objective is determined by drawing one of several cards at the start of the game, representing commands from the Pharaoh. These objectives range from the capture of particular parts of the board to the removal of certain enemy pieces. The two players must work to achieve their own objective while simultaneously guessing what the other player’s objective is—and preventing them from achieving it. Whoever completes their objective first is the winner.

In imitation of Onuris and the Djinn, the stakes in a game of Qefet are an obligation. The winner earns a favor from the loser, which may be redeemed at any time. Qefet debts pose a particular problem for the government, as many bureaucrats spend their free time in the gaming hall, incurring all manner of secret obligations and favors to one another.

Failing to fulfill a Qefet debt is a serious matter. Rumors of such behavior can destroy a person’s reputation and lead to a lifetime ban from the gaming hall.

This process destroys the human victim but grants the senekek a greater measure of strength and cleverness. Though most Hyphratians don't believe that senekeks are real, they have all heard tales of the creatures and superstitiously avoid looking out upstairs windows by night.

No one knows how many senekeks are currently active in Ur-Xandria. Bishop Tierno believes that their numbers are few—perhaps a score or less.

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d8, Vigor d8

Skills: Athletics d8, Fighting d10, Guts d8, Intimidation d8, Notice d8, Streetwise d8, Taunt d10, Tracking d8

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 9 (3)

Gear: Two short swords (Str + d6). Other gear varies.

Special Abilities

Armor +3: Senekek have thick, chitinous shells.

Flight: Senekeks can extend their wings to fly, with a Flying Pace of 6" and an Acceleration of 4".

Four Limbs: Senekeks can stand on their back legs, fighting with four arms. They may make two attack actions each turn, without penalty.

Low Light Vision: Senekeks suffer no penalties for Dim and Dark lighting.

Self-Consuming: During a round in which a senekek is not attacked and takes no other actions, it may attempt to consume its own viscera. Make a Vigor roll. On success, the senekek heals a wound or removes Incapacitated status. Each raise heals an additional wound.

Witchline (Djinn): Banes of the Djinn can be sensed by Mummy Accursed within 25 feet.

The Senekek's Prey

The young daughter of a prominent bureaucrat claims to have made eye contact with the senekek on a recent night. She is terrified that the creature is coming to kill her, but her parents don't believe her story—and in fact don't believe in senekeks at all. Her older brother (barely a teenager himself) has been trying to contact members of the Order who might be willing to protect his sister. Unfortunately, the children's parents refuse to indulge this "ridiculous" notion—let alone pay for it. "Kidnapping" the girl may be the only way to keep her alive, a tactic, which will surely draw the attention of the girl's parents and their politically prominent friends.

Luxarra

North of Ur-Xandria lies a vast complex of ziggurats, memorial temples, and domed mausoleums, surrounding a truly massive pyramid that rivals Sepiru in size and magnificence. This is the ancient funerary complex of Luxarra, and at its heart is the Pyramid of Onuris, where the legendary Pharaoh has been entombed for centuries.

Nearly all the historical Pharaohs of Hyphrates were buried at Luxarra, and every tomb is unique. While none of them equal the Pyramid of Onuris in sheer size, each is a masterpiece of architecture and artistry. Present-day Hyphratians insist that these tombs are not the work of human hands. Instead, they believe that the spirits and gods of Hyphrates designed and built the Pharaohs' tombs, and they did so much faster—and on a larger scale—than ordinary humans ever could. Though foreign scholars scoff at this notion, it cannot be denied that some of the architecture seems to defy gravity, and many of the tombs employ forms and structures seen nowhere else in Morden.

Interestingly, all the tombs appear to be connected to one another, and most cannot be accessed from the outside at all. In order to reach the older buildings, explorers must enter through one of the newest tombs and then work their way inward. In recent years, the few who have braved the depths of Luxarra (and returned alive) report hundreds of carvings of hideous little creatures throughout the complex. Often they depict dwarfish humanoids, no higher than an ordinary human's knee, with a variety of animal features like the tail of a jackal, the mane of a lion, or the spotted pelt of a hyena. Some have speculated that these might be the self-portraits of the original architects, if the stories of supernatural builders are true.

Very few of the tombs have ever been successfully looted. Spirits of some kind—possibly Unseelie Fey—are still thought to exist in the depths of Luxarra. Explorers report doors closing behind them, traps resetting themselves after being sprung, and corridors shifting into new configurations.

Further complicating matters, all the Pharaohs buried in Luxarra have been reborn, raised as mummies by the power of the Djinn. They are accompanied by the servants, soldiers, and pets who were buried with them. For now, the majority of the Pharaohs and their courts seem to be trapped inside the tunnels and chambers of Luxarra, where they have begun settling old scores with one another and battling for primacy. A full-scale war between a hundred mummy Pharaohs is raging underground, dubbed "the War of Dead Kings" by the Order. No one on the outside knows who might be gaining the upper hand.

Both the Order of the Penitent and Pharaoh Memmon agree that the old Pharaohs should stay focused on their own internal struggle for as long as possible, lest a victorious faction tip the external balance of power in an unpredictable direction.

Very few people have the opportunity to visit the exterior of Luxarra in the present day. Apart from a slow barge upriver or a long and dangerous trek through the desert, there is only one convenient way to travel from Ur-Xandria to the tomb complex. Not long before the start of the Bane War, a consortium of wealthy Hyphratian-Manreian families began construction of a rail line from Ur-Xandria to Luxarra. Originally meant to encourage foreign tourism, the project was badly mismanaged and vastly exceeded its budget. A lack of funds forced the rail line to stop a few miles from Luxarra, just within sight of the tomb complex, on a wide hill overlooking the river. According to tradition, this hill was the place where the corpse of Pharaoh Gharses—an eccentric who married a Hebronite princess in an effort to secure peace between the two nations—was burned on a great pyre, his ashes scattered to the wind, a mark of profound disrespect.

On this site, the wealthy families decided to commission a gaudy train station, built in the style of the old Pharaonic court. In the end, it was only half-finished, but they named the building King's Pyre Station and resolved to gather more funds to complete the station and continue the rail line to Luxarra. Unfortunately, the Bane War broke out shortly afterward, so they finally abandoned their dream. Today, a decrepit locomotive runs occasionally between Ur-Xandria and King's Pyre Station, but service is sporadic and inefficient. Buying passage on the train is absurdly expensive—unless, of course, one of the officials in charge owes you a favor.

Lately, an adventuring company of Witchmarked—unaffiliated with the Order—have been making frequent trips back and forth from Luxarra by train. Unbeknownst to anyone else, they have discovered a secret way into Luxarra through old scarab tunnels beneath the site. The adventurers are looting artifacts from underneath the noses of the warring Pharaohs, thus far remaining undetected. Once they smuggle the artifacts back to Ur-Xandria, they sell them to rich merchants like Rajeev Sekani. The leader of the Witchmarked is a giant metal Golem—a former blacksmith who has altered himself so that he can appear as part of the train, allowing him to smuggle treasure without being seen. Though the Order knows very little about these clever thieves, they have recently learned of their existence. Bishop Tierno wants them stopped, the sooner the better, lest they draw the attention of the warring Pharaohs in Luxarra to the outside world.



The Mummy Charlatan

A Witchmarked mummy who calls himself “Atepi the Great” has begun holding court in one of the memorial temples outside Luxarra. “Atepi” is drawing a considerable following of desperate Hyphratians, playing on the fears of the people, feeding them false spiritualism, and telling them that he can speak to the gods and spirits of the old religion. Many poor Hyphratians are selling everything they own to pay for the journey by train to Luxarra, setting up camp outside the memorial temple in a makeshift shantytown.

Unfortunately, “Atepi” is not the great warrior-king that everyone believes him to be. In reality, he is a former tomb robber who was buried alive as a punishment. After he reawakened as a mummy, he managed to steal some royal regalia before escaping from Luxarra.

Events have finally caught up with the clever charlatan. Pharaoh Memmon is sending agents to discover if his dreaded grandfather—the overbearing tyrant in whose shadow he lived most of his life—has truly returned. The Order fears that “Atepi,” whether he is real or not, may pose a threat to stability in Hyphrates. And the real Pharaoh Atepi, if he finds out about the impersonator, might be enraged enough to put aside his war with the other Pharaohs and emerge from Luxarra at last.

The Reborn Dynasty

Pharaoh Memmon rules over an ever-expanding realm that encompasses all of western Hyphrates, from the Iteru River in the east to the Baal-Goleth Mountains in the west. Most of Memmon's dominion is a hostile desert wasteland. The towns, cities and farms of the past—swallowed up long ago by the desert—have risen again from the sands, restored by the power of the Djinn. Thousands of mummies fill their streets—men, women, and children who lived and died in centuries past. Some go about their ancient routines, while others mindlessly repeat a single, dimly remembered action or just stand in the ruins of their former homes, awaiting Memmon's call. The Pharaoh can command these hordes of undead with a thought, but he has so many of the creatures at his disposal that he has not yet called upon most of them, and they remain in the places where they lived their mortal lives.

The majority of Memmon's living subjects dwell along the southern coast, where fishing and trading villages still thrive. These people surrendered peacefully to the Pharaoh's authority, knowing that they could never stand against him. Their ancestors lived under a long succession of living Pharaohs who were, as far as they could tell, little better than Memmon. The Pharaoh put a mummy noble from his court in charge of each town to keep his new subjects in line.

Gideon bar Heshet, military leader of Hebron, believes that Memmon poses a future threat to his country, and he sees the southern towns as a possible weakness in the Pharaoh's defenses. Against the advice of many in his court, Heshet has devised a daring plan to secretly replace some of the mummy nobles in the southern towns with mummies from the Order. These imposters will gather support in the towns and act against Memmon at a critical moment. So far, the Hebronites have found a few Witchmarked mummies willing to serve as false nobles, but they will need additional help to infiltrate the towns, remove the real mummy nobles, and set up the imposters in their place.

In the west of Memmon-Aswar, along the edge of the mountains and the border with Hebron, runs the river Khedef. In ancient times, the people of Hyphrates saw the Khedef as a "dead" river. Unlike the Iteru and the Aparna, no goddess lived in its depths. Scholars in the present day have discovered that the Khedef repels all manner of Fey and causes their magic to fail. Creatures of the Djinn cannot touch its waters, and Pharaoh Memmon's minions must rely on the few remaining bridges if they wish to cross.

Traitors to Memmon's Court

Several important mummies from Memmon's court, including a pair of nobles, a famous alchemist of the distant past, and possibly a member of Memmon's own extended family, have recently abandoned the Pharaoh and hidden in the walled town of Bakty. This settlement lies on the western bank of the Iteru River, just north of Ur-Xandria.

Until now, Bakty has escaped the attention of Pharaoh Memmon, making it the only unconquered town on the western side of the river. But word has reached the Consul that Urukhdria has been sighted in the desert, heading directly for Bakty. Pharaoh Memmon intends to reclaim his traitorous courtiers before they escape.

Bikheris is desperate to save the town of Bakty, as it provides his only secure access to western Hyphrates. His vizier, Amenkhet, wants to hand the mummies over to Memmon, hoping that the diplomatic gesture might lead to a pause in the war, allowing the Consular government to catch its breath. Meanwhile, the Order secretly plans to send agents who can find and rescue the mummies—or at least interrogate them—before Memmon's army arrives.

The Order of the Penitent would like to understand the power of the Khedef River—or better still, discover its source of its magic. But the region is extremely remote and dangerous, reportedly occupied by savage human tribes who are skilled in some form of witchcraft, as well as strange, multi-headed and multi-armed Golems that climb the nearby cliffs like spiders.

Urukhdria, the Caravan of Tombs

In ancient times, the sacred burial site of Luxarra was forbidden to all but the Pharaohs. Their families, courtiers, and other prominent men and women of Hyphrates were instead laid to rest across the river in a sprawling necropolis. When Hasani made his fateful wish (see *Accursed* page 27), the necropolis came alive. All the greatest citizens of the Hyphratian past—nobles, generals, brilliant architects, alchemists, and poets—were reborn as mummies. Now nearly all of them serve Pharaoh Memmon.

Hundreds of the most resplendent tombs, belonging to mummies who have fully embraced their curse, have become mobile. Some are pulled by heaving undead slaves, some by teams of skeletal beasts, while others move by their own magical volition.

They form a vast caravan that crisscrosses Memmon-Aswar at the Pharaoh's will, serving as his traveling capital of Uruktria, and supporting his troops as they expand the boundaries of his realm. Uruktria is nearly always surrounded by a great sandstorm that Memmon can raise and lower at will. At the sight of this roiling storm on the horizon, even the staunchest Consular forces beat a hasty retreat.

The bulk of the Pharaoh's army accompanies Uruktria, though separate regiments operate under Memmon's numerous mummy generals. Hyphratians traditionally buried their soldiers along the Hebron border, symbolically protecting the kingdom in death. Since this land lay entirely within the bounds of Memmon-Aswar, the Pharaoh now controls tens of thousands of mummified warriors—all the dead soldiers from centuries of the kingdom's past, buried in their battle regalia.

In life, Pharaoh Memmon was a cold and brooding man—strict and severe in all things. Even in his own court, he removed many of the trappings of power, allowing himself few of the luxuries that his predecessors enjoyed. Death has not softened the Pharaoh at all.

In matters of war, Memmon is a cautious strategist. He knows that he can overrun Bikheris at any time, but that would draw the full attention of his enemies against him. Instead, Memmon pushes at the Consul's defenses, trying to undermine his enemy from within, hoping to win the war without expending his resources or revealing his full strength. Once Hyphrates has fallen, the Pharaoh's ultimate goal is to conquer Hebron, as his ancestors tried so many times to do. He will be the first to succeed.

Memmon also wants to exact revenge—or justice, as he sees it—upon the Hyphratian people and the Enochian church. When Memmon's subjects overthrew him, they slaughtered him and his family and threw their bodies into an unmarked pit in the western desert. The Pharaoh blames the Enochians for his demise and grants no mercy to the clergy or their allies.

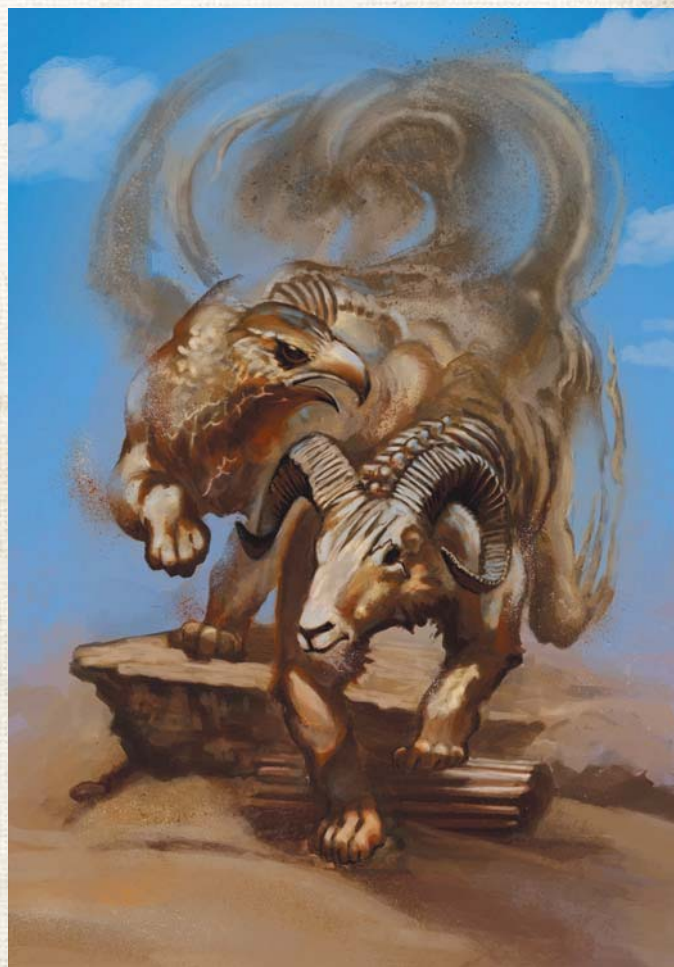
On the other hand, Memmon lives in fear of the reborn Pharaohs in Luxarra—particularly his brilliant and ruthless grandfather, Atepi. Rumors swirl of other Pharaohs, too. Some say that the very first Pharaoh, the foster-son of Iteru and Aparna who founded the dynasty, has escaped the depths of Luxarra and now wanders the desert, seeking allies to overthrow Memmon and re-establish the ancient Hyphratian state.

Sphinx, Morden

Sphinxes once existed as living creatures, highly intelligent and magical beasts with the bodies of lions and the heads of various animals like falcons, rams, and jackals. But they sided against the Enochian faith and were hunted to extinction by zealous Enochian warriors. Many years later, when the Djinn brought the mummies back to life, she also restored the sphinxes. Now they serve Pharaoh Memmon, seeking vengeance against those who wiped them out.

Sphinxes are composed almost entirely of sand. This material takes the place of the creature's lost flesh. These undead sphinxes do not look at all like corpses—observers have often likened them to animate sand sculptures. Their sandy "skin" constantly shifts, and bones are sometimes visible underneath. These glimpses are few, since most sphinxes died in the open desert and even their skeletons were poorly preserved.

When they wish to speak, sphinxes can reshape their heads into human form. However, this requires an immense effort, and they rarely choose to do so. They can also transform into a whirling cloud of sand and bones, spinning with such force that it can shred exposed flesh. Part of the sandstorm that surrounds Uruktria is composed of sphinxes in this form. They can take solid shape at the Pharaoh's will and aid his forces in battle.



Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d12 + 1, Spirit d10, Strength d10, Vigor d8

Skills: Fighting d8, Guts d8, Intimidation d10, Knowledge (Puzzles) d12, Notice d8, Persuasion d10, Taunt d10

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 8

Special Abilities

Bite/Claw: Str+d6.

Flight: Morden sphinxes have a Flying Pace of 10" and an Acceleration of 4".

Puzzles: If a potential opponent speaks to a Morden sphinx before combat is initiated, the sphinx remembers its love of puzzles and challenges it to a duel of riddles. If the opponent wins the duel of riddles, the sphinx will not initiate combat. Riddle contests are resolved with an opposed Smarts roll, though GMs are encouraged to provide bonuses for good roleplaying leading up to the contest.

Size +2: Morden sphinxes are comparable in size to lions.

Animate Sand: No additional damage from called shots; Fearless; Immune to disease and poison.

Sandstorm: Instead of taking any other actions, a Morden sphinx may transform into a proportionately sized sandstorm and make a single attack roll to hit all targets within a Small Burst Template. Every target successfully hit while under the template suffers Str + d6 damage. Neither cover nor worn armor provide any protection from the swirling storm.

Witchline (Djinn): Banes of the Djinn can be sensed by Mummy Accursed within 25 feet.

Aparna Riverlands

In ancient depictions of the two river goddesses, Iteru was the golden-haired spirit of the harvest, her arms overflowing with a cornucopia of fruits and grain. Aparna, on the other hand, was the spirit of celebration and indulgence, with a wide smile and a heavy face, beckoning the Hyphratians to forget their cares and lose themselves in drug-induced visions and dreams.

The old depictions of the goddesses were remarkably apt. Much like the goddess that shared its name, the Aparna River is wide and languid, its waters flowing tranquilly down to the sea. In ancient days, its banks grew thick with mangrove forest. The Aparna riverlands were poor for growing crops, but local plants and fungi were the source of myriad narcotic and hallucinogenic drugs.

When the Djinn raised an undead army in western Hyphrates, another Witch slipped into the east. This was the Djinn's ally, Melusine—also known as the Gorgon—who hid in the mangrove forest and gradually extended her power up and down the Aparna.

With the Gorgon's arrival, the very nature of the river began to change. Plants grew more poisonous. Melusine's banes were sighted in the forest. The local people—who had never been numerous—began to disappear, abducted by the Gorgon and transformed into Ophidians. Indeed, a large proportion of Ophidians can trace their origins to eastern Hyphrates.

In the present day, everyone who drinks from the Aparna suffers a debilitating disease that petrifies their bones. The disease is horribly painful, inevitably fatal, and affects everyone who lives in the region. Only Ophidians and other creatures of the Gorgon seem to be immune.

Under the Gorgon's influence, the river has also petrified most of the native trees and plants. Along the banks of the Aparna, the lush green foliage is gone, replaced by the skeletal stone trunks of mangrove trees. However, Melusine's chosen plants—those that are poisonous or otherwise intoxicating—continue to thrive, tended by a dwindling, wretched population who whisper superstitious prayers to the Witch as they once did to their river goddess.

The Sanctuary of Melusine

In the foul, mud-choked Aparna delta, Melusine built a sanctuary for herself, hidden from the eyes of the other Witches. A vast, primordial mound of slime and muck rises in the midst of the languid current. Digging into the mud reveals a writhing mass of giant, poison-secreting caecilians—blind and wormlike, thousands of them are twisted together, forming a barrier several feet thick. Beneath the squirming caecilians is a solid surface—the outer wall of a colossal stone sphere.

The sphere is smooth and featureless, with no visible entrances or exits. The only way inside is to speak a magical word, which is known to Melusine, a few of her trusted Ophidian servants, and no one else. When that word is spoken, a secret door on the surface of the sphere slides open, allowing access to the interior.

Inside the sphere is a vast labyrinth of stone. Bizarrely, the sphere has its own internal gravity so that those inside are always oriented toward its core. It consists of at least five layers, like an onion, each filled with twisting stone passageways and galleries, guarded by Melusine's hideous banes. Invaders must seek out the secret floor panels that lead from one layer to the next, each of which can only be opened with the appropriate incantation. At the core is a spherical space where gravity is controlled by Melusine's will. This seems to be a refuge for the Gorgon—a place of power—and she is always aware when it is infiltrated. But it undoubtedly contains some of her most carefully guarded artifacts and secrets.

Hyphrates Hindrances

A player whose character is from Hyphrates can select from the following Hindrances, in addition to those listed in the *Accursed* setting book.

SOUR DEAL (MINOR/MAJOR)

The character made a deal using wish magic, and now bears the burden of fulfilling his side of the bargain. However, the debt can never be fully repaid, due to the essence of the original bargain. The character is regularly compelled to perform some inconvenient favor to one of the Djinn's servants when a contact is made. There must be some way to solve the problem without the character endangering his life. At the start of each game session, flip a card. For a Minor Hindrance, an NPC appears demanding a favor on a 3 or less. For a Major Hindrance, an NPC appears demanding a favor on a 6 or less.

TRAIL OF DUST (MINOR)

Requirements: Undead, Construct

The character's body is constantly decomposing, leaving small fragments of dust, sand, and grit behind. Any opponent attempting to track the character or identify him when he is in disguise or hiding receive a +2 to their roll. Note that, in spite of the fact that the character appears to be visibly decomposing and fragmenting, the body never actually loses any mass or volume. The trail manifests as if from nothing.



Hyphrates Edges

A player whose character is from Hyphrates can select from the following Edges, in addition to those listed in the *Accursed* setting.

ANATOMIST TO THE DEAD

Requirements: Veteran, Mummy, Smarts d8+

The Mummy has spent so much time among the unliving that he recognizes the physical limitations of them. When attacking a foe that is normally immune to called shots or wound penalties, the Mummy's attacks can still cause wound penalties or gain the bonuses from called shots as normal. In addition, with a successful Smarts test, the Mummy can share this information with allies, so that their attacks also cause wound penalties and gain bonuses from called shots.

MAJESTY OVER THE UNLIVING

Requirements: Seasoned, Mummy, Spirit d8+

The Mummy recalls the full glories of the past age, and knows the role that was its purview. It now conducts itself with an air of authority, which other Undead creatures can recognize. Any Witchmarked or bane that is no longer alive—including Golems, Mummies, and Revenants—senses an air of tremendous power about the Mummy. When interacting, with such undead, the Mummy gains a +4 Charisma bonus.

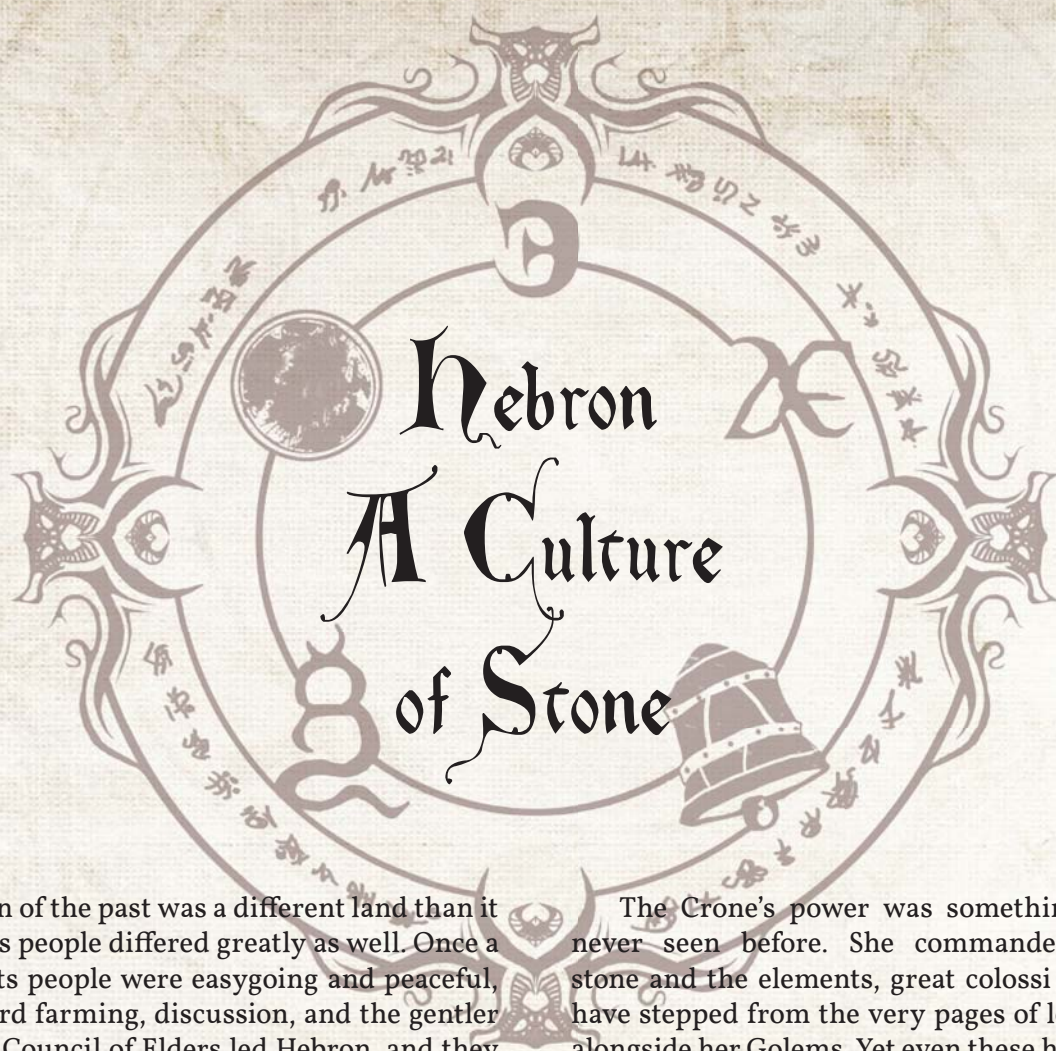
RECOVERED ADDICT

Requirements: Novice, Vigor d6+

During the character's prior life, he was a heavy user of hallucinogenic and narcotic substances. He retains a high tolerance to any intoxicant and is skilled at identifying the effects of most drugs and poisons in others. The character receives a +2 bonus to any Vigor tests to resist poisons, toxins, or drugs. In addition, he receives a +2 bonus to any Knowledge or Streetwise tests regarding pharmaceuticals.

Gods and Spirits of Hyphrates

Were the "gods and spirits" of ancient Hyphrates real or imaginary? No one knows for sure. Some scholars suspect that they were actually Fey, of both Seelie and Unseelie varieties. The river goddesses, they speculate, may have been queens of the Fey folk, nearly as powerful as King Auberon himself. Most Hyphratians frown on such notions, and we will probably never know the truth, since the Seelie Fey are gone and may never return.



The Hebron of the past was a different land than it is today, and its people differed greatly as well. Once a quiet nation, its people were easygoing and peaceful, disposed toward farming, discussion, and the gentler pulls of life. A Council of Elders led Hebron, and they were often given to long discussions and the tedious back-and-forth of politics. Harvests, grove-tending, trading, and raising a family filled the days of the people of Hebron, as they lived and labored on their communal farms, the kibbutzim, that dotted the land and fueled the wheels of the nation.

Rarely touched by war or conflict, Hebron's greatest enemy was Hyphrates to the east. Even so close, the threat their rival posed seemed to live only in suspicions and curses on the lips of the people of Hebron, and in rumored plots and conspiracies, rarely in open conflict or war. While invasions and skirmishes dotted the two nations' histories, looking back, Hebron had never known true war. Until the coming of the Grand Coven.

The Bane War tore through Hebron as a storm of Golems and constructs, the Crone at their head like a blade of lightning stabbing deep into the heart of Hebron. Unprepared for this new enemy, the nation moved slowly, ponderously against the invaders. Both the Council of Elders and the military debated strategies in the halls of Parnath as soldiers died and communities fell beneath the tread of the Crone's army.

The Crone's power was something Hebron had never seen before. She commanded giants from stone and the elements, great colossi that seemed to have stepped from the very pages of legend to march alongside her Golems. Yet even these horrors were not enough; she conjured forth even subtler, viler threats in the form of dolls and fetishes that clicked themselves together at night and threatened even the Hebronites in their homes. Nowhere was safe. Fear reigned on and off the battlefield.

The Hebronites were forced to shed their values, piece by piece, each one chiseled by the increasing violence of the Bane War. Peasants, farmers, townsfolk, all were initially willing to let the military bear the brunt of the fighting. Undermanned and largely untrained, the military was ill-prepared for the banes and spells the Crone unleashed as she marched deeper into Hebron.

The Hebronites were forced to adapt or die, and adapt they did. Ruthlessness needed to be matched with ruthlessness, and the time for debate in the Council of Elders was at an end. Backed by the greatest military leaders of Hebron, Gideon bar Heshet seized control of the Hall of Elders in Parnath, silenced dissension with bared steel and even sharper words, and then sent the Elders back to the corners of Hebron to prepare their people to fight.

Heshet's coup saved Hebron...and destroyed it at the same time. After the horrors inflicted on the land, after the great sacrifice of the soldiers of Matzeda, the destruction of the kibbutzum, the razed farmlands, there was little left of the culture that had made Hebron great except ruined stones and fields of dead. Its people who survived the war had been reborn.

Cold, militaristic, and uncompromising, Hebron survives under Heshet's militaristic rule, yet it is slowly dying in the war-torn culture that exists in the aftermath of the Bane War.

Hebronites Today

"Gone is the laughter of children, replaced with nighttime rhymes and the whisper of steel."

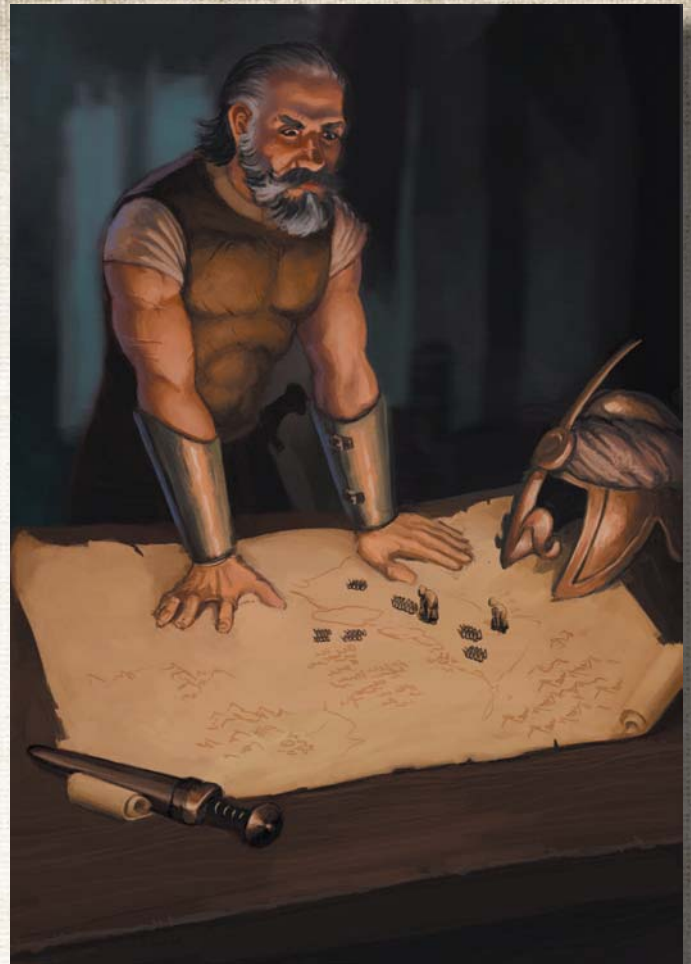
There is an expression in Hebron: "Hebron is Heshet." Its cultures, its military, and its outlook mirror their leader's ruthless pragmatism, his focus, and his emphasis on action. Sacrifice, focus, devotion, and training are hammered into Hebronites with an iron fist, and there is little room for anything else. Life continues, most certainly, but what life is it? It is a question that many Hebronites ask, a question that grows with new voices every day.

While not said in their presence, it is also said that with Hebron's victory, a new race of banes was born: Hebronites themselves. Cruel to say, but the spirit of the people was stripped away in the war, and replaced with a methodical, tactical approach to life. Even family ties have been broken, the country becoming stronger and weaker as the military took hold of almost all aspects of life.

Family pride in Hebron is in military service, and there is a new shame in families for whom members are deemed unfit for training or are born or suffer any handicap that prevents them standing side by side with their fellow soldiers on the battlefield. Often such families are ostracized, even taunted or driven from towns and communities into the wilderness. Even worse, the handicapped are often seen to be "bane-touched," a cruelty that has little basis in fact, but has certainly made a misery of their lives in the wake of the Bane War. Some families have taken their lives to avoid the shame...and there are even worse stories of what happens to deformed children once their defects are revealed. It is said that for the grave of every soldier that died in battle, there's another grave that marks a child who never was given the chance.

Hebron Military

Any discussion of Hebron culture must involve its military; the two are one. The standing forces of Hebron are awe-inspiring; neither the lash nor the



human spirit is spared in achieving combat perfection. While not the greatest army in Morden in terms of raw numbers, their discipline and training is second to none. One is expected to serve until they sacrificed their life on the battlefield, and many Hebronites have done just that.

It is said that every Hebronite is expected to take up a maul in service to their country. The saying is both a metaphor and literal: The Hebronite-style maul is distinctive, easily recognized by the combination of a pickaxe head on one end or a spike in the handle that can be driven into constructs like a crowbar.

This weapon proved the most effective melee weapon against the Golems that formed the bulk of the Crone's forces, and quickly became the primary weapon in any soldier's arsenal. While almost every soldier bears such a maul, Hebron soldiers train in a variety of anti-bane weapons and techniques, especially if they serve in divisions devoted to hunting certain banes or constructs (see *Sons and Daughters*, page 17).

Hebronite children are separated from their mothers at age seven, which is considered the coming of age in Hebron texts. They are sent to fighting camps, either in walled compounds within the larger cities (such as Parnath), or remote communities in the

outlying territories. There, they undergo strict rituals of deprivation and combat and come back with much of their childhood stripped away. These camps have been nicknamed “steel kibbutzim,” settlements that now raise soldiers rather than crops. These training camps can take several forms depending upon the nature of the military service.

In the recent years, there has been a growing number of military camps instilled inside towns and communities that teach children the principles of gathering intelligence, presumably to be used against other countries. If they survive the training period, which usually lasts three to five years, the child in question enters military service. This is not an option; every citizen is expected to undergo military training, and serve in the armed forces until they lie six feet in the ground. The concept of retirement or serving in civilian life (which occurs) is often looked down upon as selfish, lazy, or unpatriotic.

This can be forgiven if the individual continues to serve in other ways, however. Not all citizens, especially the elderly, can be expected to march in formation or fight hand-to-hand against Vargr or Golems. Citizens unable to serve in military units often are trained in support, including field medicine, interrogation, alchemy, and war-supporting trades (carpentry, blacksmithing, and more). Alchemy, in particular, is seen as a blossoming field, even with the mistakes and harm that it has caused in many battles across Hebron (notably the alchemical sea of fire that erupted during the Jackal’s first attack on Parnath; see page 24).

Accursed traveling in Hebron gain some degree of respect if they know how to handle themselves in a fight, although even Accursed given to pursuits seen to benefit the war effort (alchemy, blacksmithing, medics) can find a place within Hebron if it is clear how their skills can be made to benefit the military. Alchemists may even be commissioned or paid to lecture and share their trade with military colleges in Parnath, although they may find that once their teaching assignment is over, they are quickly shown the door and not called upon again.

Military Divisions

The Hebron military is broken into several divisions, specialized depending upon the nature of the threats they face. Divisions trained to fight colossi often wield different weapons and employ different tactics than divisions trained to hunt Vargr, for example.

Hebronites often prefer traveling light and traveling fast ever since the Bane War—they learned

“Sons and Daughters”

Hebronites have a long tradition of caring for their weapons and love decorating them. Often, their standard weapon (pick-maul) will contain inscriptions of campaigns or banes they have fought either on the shaft or head of the hammer. While other artistic pursuits of Hebron have been lost in the wake of the Bane War, at least one has survived in the artistic inlays of their weapons.

“Sons and daughters” is an expression that refers to Hebronites obsession with their weapons, and can be meant either respectfully or as an insult depending upon the delivery. The expression has its origins in Manreia (although it has spread across Morden), and it refers to the Hebronites’ care of their weapons and their armor, as if they were their true sons and daughters...something the people of Manreia both admire and scoff at (Manreia bears little respect for how Hebronite children are now raised).

According to the tale concerning the expression’s origin, the term was first used after a Hebronite envoy to Manreia displayed her maul at court (initially to make a firm point concerning a threat) where she discovered her audience was more fascinated by the intricate carvings etched into her weapon than her delivery, and much of her visit became filled with questions concerning the crafting of the maul. When asked if her children held the same style of weapons, the envoy stiffly said that she held her “sons and daughters” close at hand at all times, and clasped the weapons at her belt to emphasize the point.

quickly that heavy armor does little to protect a soldier when struck by a bane, especially a Golem. Hebronites know that when fighting most banes, the best defense is to not be there when the blow falls, and that requires agility and freedom of movement. As such, the military is trained to ride hard and fast and strike from a distance whenever possible (horses are prized), and there is no shame in hit-and-run tactics against a superior foe, especially a slow-moving one.

This training is especially useful as the colossi that thunder across the countryside require that the military move quickly to warn towns in its path or change the path of the colossus itself.

The military is trained to be flexible, and they are well-aware that tactics and armament should be tailored to the enemy one is facing across the battlefield, not to the enemy you hope to fight. While the majority of Hebronite soldiers prefer to travel light, when facing human opponents (such as mercenaries who served in the Crone’s armies, or Hyphrates invaders), they don

heavier armor and more conventional weapons to deal with the threat.

Divisions often choose colorful, inspiring names depending upon their purpose, which seems to complement the artistic obsession with their weapons. Some take on hymns and teachings from religious texts, others take names from battles or enemies slain, and some take names devoted to their craft. For example, one of the most famous anti-Golem units are known as the Stonemasons, referring to their skill in reducing Golems to rubble.

ANTI-BANE UNITS

Anti-bane units are trained specifically to hunt down non-Golem banes. While these banes are not as numerous in Hebron as Golems, Hebron still has divisions devoted to fighting various types of banes and are armed with weapons to exploit their weaknesses. Anti-Vargr units have silver weapons, sacks of salt may be used against Shades (even employing salt-laced ammunition), and arrows with blackened tips of wood against vampires. Divisions ruthlessly study their enemies' weaknesses and exploit them. At times, these anti-bane units may not be formal squads. Hunting vampires, for example, has more the feel of a stealth squad and military intelligence (and forensics staff) to track down the beasts, while an anti-Vargr or anti-Mongrel unit may have more of the feel of a hunting expedition, with bloodthirsty dogs, ranged weapons, spears, and nets with silver hooks for snaring their prey.

Some famous anti-bane companies include the Witchbreakers (which are also rumored to be an internal affairs group of sorts, an inquisition within the military), the Light's Rage (anti-vampire), the Burning Sickle (anti-Mongrel, and now anti-stricken

as well), Seven in Sunset, and the 13 Silvers (anti-Vargr, named for the 13 silver daggers used to kill Scourge, one of the most hated Vargr predators in Hebron).

ANTI-GOLEM UNITS

Hebron was hit hard by the Crone's legions of tank-like Golems. As such, Hebron soldiers carry a combination pick-maul intended as a standard weapon. This weapon has proven to be one of the best fallback weapons against Golems and colossi, whether using the flat of the maul to smash through stone and marble, or using the pick for prying apart their fractured victims and dismantling them into their component parts. Maul-wielding troops are often supported by pikemen, trained to brace their heavy steel weapons against the ground to keep a Golem at bay or impale them with their own strength as they move inexorably forward.

Many units also have alchemical support, using cannons and firearms with crafted shells that spit fire, shrapnel, and more, as well as alchemical fire. A "fireworks" show in Hebron has a much more violent meaning and purpose, but the joy onlookers feel in watching an enemy Golem or bane lit up with Hebron fire is unmatched. Some more notable anti-Golem companies include the Stonemasons, the Quiet Ground (named for returning Golems to the earth), and the Seven Hammers.

The weapons that anti-Golem (and anti-colossus) units wield are sometimes taken from the constructs they hunt, both as trophies and because they are surprisingly effective against their own kind. Battering rams or hammer heads made from the spine, hand, or even forearm of a colossus has proven incredibly powerful, although there have been times, such as with the Hammer of the Patriarch (see page 20), where the owner may return to reclaim what was lost.

ANTI-COLOSSUS UNITS

Hebron is plagued with another curse of the Crone; giant colossi roam the country, besieging towns, cities, and laying waste to anything in their path like great roving storms. The comparison is apt. Fighting these juggernauts is like fighting the weather, or fighting the ocean...while tales of bravery in the face of these beasts are many, so are the graves of the soldiers who fell in battle against them. Serving in anti-colossus units is either a mark of bravery or suicide. Some famed anti-colossus companies include the 400 Kills (so named not for the colossi destroyed, but the murders of their own they seek to avenge), Into Dust (which is what the soldiers seek to do to these constructs), and the Stone Tide Hymn (an old hymn said to put the earth to sleep in winter).

Beasts to Hunt Beasts

Some anti-bane units employ a disturbing technique in their hunting, a practice that is growing in Hebron: they employ tortured, maimed, or other banes to sense their brethren. Some of these banes are actually Accursed, some who serve willingly, others who do not. They are used (and treated) like hounds to kill their own kind, and rewarded—or tortured—depending upon their success or failure.

Anti-bane units, in another dangerous practice, also capture banes for study and for "practice" in the military camps. Some of these banes are Accursed, but the Hebronite military does not always care to make that distinction, and few Hebronites would defend any Accursed who have been enslaved.

Attacking a colossus often requires the same level of planning as invading a nation. The attack occurs only when Hebron has chosen the battlefield (anti-colossus units will always attempt to lure their target to ground that favors the soldiers), and they will attack only when they are certain the nature of the colossus is known...engaging a colossus when first sighted is considered tactically unsound. The goal is to use horse units and split-and-regroup to lure a colossus into traps and ambushes. Since the banes are not typically bright, this usually has a high success rate...with "success" loosely described as not losing more than half of the soldiers against the beast.

Anti-colossus units are typically broken into scouts and riders, who serve as bait and distractions to circle the colossi and lead them into defiles and canyons. Once a colossus has been trapped, then the other divisions set upon them with siege weapons and heavy artillery. While this can often distract a colossus from its course toward a town or community, it rarely destroys these gargantuan creatures.

Anti-colossus units are trained to use the terrain to their advantage, and they recognize that Hebron itself can be used as a weapon. Sinkholes, quicksand, even specially prepared trenches (many of which were built during the Bane War) where the giant constructs can trip and fall have proven effective. Two prominent battlesites for fighting colossi include the Shifting Hills, a former agricultural stretch of land that collapsed into sand vortexes during the war, and an ancient Hebron burial site called the Field of Wells, where the many deep burial pits are perfect for shattering the legs of colossi who step into them. Even so, a pinned colossus is often resistant to many conventional weapons, and the goal is frequently diverting rather than destroying them.

In addition to the divisions above, there are believed to be many other secret divisions within the Hebron military, some devoted to watching for bane infiltration within the ranks, others to root out witchcraft or Hyphrates spies. Hebron military culture responds quickly and decisively to threats, especially after the Bane War, and divisions have been created to investigate—and eradicate—any new dangers that threaten Hebron and its people.

Dealings with Hebronites

While the military maintains a firm hold over Hebron, the art of diplomacy is not yet lost. Any dealings with Hebron and its people, however, should be approached tactically, and care taken with speech and mannerisms, even in seemingly civil circumstances. In many respects, trades, contracts,

and negotiations with Hebron is much like waging a war that one can best hope to endure, and even rarely win, although winning often does not feel much like a victory. There are a number of taboos and cultural pitfalls to avoid when dealing with Hebronites, and an unskilled negotiator may soon find himself ostracized or worse while attempting to seek aid or gain information.

The best practice for diplomats is to study Heshet himself; many of his mannerisms are upheld by his people as virtues, and these virtues were seen as instrumental to Hebron's survival as the rest of Morden fell. As an example, Heshet's impatience with dignitaries or time-wasters of any sort is legendary. While he recognizes the responsibilities of his office and makes himself available to dispense judgments and dictate policy, his patience has limits. He detests gestures, tokens, and gifts. The moment he senses someone is wasting his time, he will slam his fist down like a gavel, "urging" the speaker to get to the point or be gone.

Travelers in Hebron would do well to heed this. Hebronites value action over words, and many of them still remember the bickering and dithering in the Hall of Elders when the Crone was slaughtering their people. Diplomats, prophets, religious leaders, preachers are all viewed with disdain unless their words serve as an inspiration to the armed forces and the war effort...and as far as Heshet is concerned (and he has said time and time again), taking up the maul is a better example than a flowery stream of metaphors. This has caused some discrimination and prejudice against musicians, poets, and others artists who once made a strong living in Hebron's libraries, galleries, and bazaars.

Any foreigners, not only the Accursed, face prejudice and discrimination in Hebron. The stream of refugees from other countries is seen as one of the largest problems facing Hebron's infrastructure, and this influx of "parasites" has caused Hebronites to view these foreigners as weak, unwilling to work, and even more offensive, living proof of why these other nations fell while Hebron remained strong. This is at odds with the fact that many refugees on Repentance Road are Hebronites, but when "refugees" are referred to in Hebron, the focus is often on foreigners, not their own people.

Regardless of the truth of the matter, there is now a disdain in Hebron for anyone seeking a handout or charity, and such individuals are often viewed with contempt. When not able to find work in Parnath, few tears are shed for any refugees that end up bound for Port Sorrow, sometimes with the sneer that "at least they'll be put to work."

It is unfortunate that many prejudices were spawned from the Bane War itself, and not simply

the Accursed. Hebronites suffered greatly under the mercenary armies employed by the Coven, and while Hebron and Hyphrates always viewed each other with distrust, the eruption of the past in their neighboring country has turned this distrust to animosity, and many of the traits that are believed to have led Hyphrates to its doom are either illegal—drug use—or viewed with disdain. For example, it is considered bad form to use the words “I wish” in the presence of a Hebronite. This will often spark a glare and a retort about what wishing did for Hyphrates and the world. In addition, Hebronites consider dreaming and wishing as the practice of fools who could be spending their energy creating the future they envision.

While military service is a pillar in Hebron, so is sacrifice. It is honorable to have lost a family member fighting in the war. It is considered the duty of every family member to remain outwardly strong if a loved one dies in battle, and to channel their hate, anger, and grief to striking back against the banes and the Grand Coven. Weeping, crying, and shedding tears are all seen as signs of weakness, and frowned upon. That said, paying respects to a family’s sacrifice and also being able to cite the battle where the loss occurred is considered high praise to a Hebronite, and it may serve a speaker well where other social pleasantries and consolations may fall flat. Along these lines, Hebronites greatly respect anyone willing to sacrifice their possessions, their health, or even their lives to help another. Accursed who fall in battle may end up causing a cultural shift through their sacrifice that may change perceptions for other Accursed for the better.

Hebronites do not commonly accept gifts or charity—and sometimes gifts can be a grievous insult for those not aware of the nation’s history. As an example, those unfamiliar with the horror of the Rhyming Night often find Hebron’s attitude on dolls, statues, and figurines to be excessively paranoid. Throughout Hebron, any such items are destroyed, smashed, and reduced to smithereens when found. It is considered a grave insult to offer a child a doll as a plaything, the gesture viewed as wishing death upon them. In addition, inviting a Hebronite into a home with statues, dolls, or figurines is an equally grave insult, and is interpreted as the host saying they hold little regard for their guest’s safety or their lives. Those aware of the Rhyming Night and the cruelties that the Crone inflicted upon Hebron are more understanding of the Hebronite viewpoint.

Hebronites are tough negotiators because they rarely negotiate at all. “Agree or repent” is sometimes said, the last part referring to ordering a stubborn negotiator to leave by way of Repentance Road. This makes them frustrating to deal with in trade, in politics,

The Hammer of the Patriarch

Weapons shaped from chunks of maimed colossi have been both a source of pride and loss for Hebron. One of the most famed weapons fashioned from a damaged colossus was a battering ram, taken from the severed forearm and clenched fist of “the Patriarch,” a colossi that arose from an ancient tribal burial cave in Baal-Goeth.

The forearm was shattered from its body in battle with Hebronite troops who then drove off the colossus. When used against other colossi and Golems, the new battering ram proved incredibly effective. This ram was responsible for felling many other colossi in the year to come, until the Patriarch returned and reclaimed its arm in a bloody battle near Repentance Road.

It is now said to be carrying its own arm as a club, its surface coated with the blood and remains of the troops that once held it proudly. If any Accursed can reclaim the Hammer, it will make them heroes, rallying further support for their cause in Hebron.

and other disputes, they see any form of negotiation and contracts as something better left in Hyphrates.

While stubborn, Hebronites are often pragmatic in their contracts; however, they deal as fairly as they believe they should. Many a merchant and diplomat has ground their teeth to stubs attempting to broker a deal or treaty with the Hebronites. Still, while the deal may not be profitable, it is usually fair.

The Growing Storm

Hebron today faces countless threats within and without, but there are three that are at the forefront in the minds of most Hebronites today. One threat stems from a growing segment of the populace that hungers for gentler times and seeks to end the military’s stranglehold on the nation, a revolutionary movement called the Heart of Hebron. Another is a growing threat from a new breed of banes, the stricken, spawned by the Chimera that take the parts of their victims into themselves to feed...and for perhaps a more sinister purpose. The third threat is a survivor from the Bane War, a Revenant called the Jackal, who refuses to be silenced until Parnath has fallen and Heshet along with it.

Between these mounting threats, Heshet is fighting a war on multiple fronts, politically and militarily. If he doesn’t receive help soon, Hebron itself may fall into civil war or fall entirely.

The Heart of Hebron

Hebron has undergone a tremendous cultural shift that has polarized the population. Gone is the friendly, casual outlook of many Hebronites and replaced with a totalitarian, ruthless view of one's role in society. The oppression of the new Hebron regime has not set well with people within the walls of Parnath and without. Still, some endure. Some see the need and are silent. Some recognize the military and its policies are a necessity, and without them, Hebron itself would have been lost entirely to darkness. But with the seeming ebb of the Bane War and Hebron "surviving" the conflict, there are other Hebronites who hunger for a return to normalcy and mourn what their country has become, and their voices—and actions—are growing stronger by the day.

While Heshet's military ruthlessness was tolerated during the Bane War, many people are now chafing under the new regime. Dissension is brewing in the smoke-wreathed meeting halls of Parnath, and refugees and farmers displaced by the war are lending their voices to this revolutionary movement. Quietly backing them are those who enjoyed privileged life under the Council of Elders, including the Elders themselves, although arguably it is more out of wounded pride at their treatment than a grab for power. While these dissenters do not use the word "revolution," they instead claim that "Hebron has lost its heart," and this heart must be allowed to beat again, through peaceful means or otherwise.

This movement and its many voices have fallen under the umbrella name of the Heart of Hebron. Whether all of these revolutionaries are truly part of the same group is unknown, as for the moment, the movement seems confined to back alley discussions and angry muttering in the corners of meeting houses. They admit that Hebron's focus on winning the war at any cost certainly led to their survival, but Heshet and the military are ill-equipped for the other dangers affecting the nation: the weakened infrastructure, notably agriculture, and the growing mass of refugees that walk Repentance Road and seek shelter on the outskirts of Parnath is eroding what remains of the nation's strength.

Some middle ground between the survival of the nation and the health of the nation is necessary, and Heshet seems unwilling to compromise. Conflict is imminent, and protests, actions, and even fighting in the halls of government are leading to instability and military curfews and raids within the larger cities.

THE COUNCIL OF ELDERS

Heshet did not execute the old regime when he replaced it. His reasons were pragmatic and emotional at the same time, and he frequently cites it in speeches. Countless times he has declared that every Hebronite needed to stand together against a common foe, and no Hebronite should harm another Hebronite; to do so would simply give strength to the enemy. Executing or imprisoning any Hebronite able to fight for their country seemed a waste if their talents could be turned, and Heshet felt even if the Elders themselves were too weak to take the field, they could still serve to inspire their individual communities. As furious, prideful, and indignant as the Elders were at Heshet's coup, their emotions at the time seemed trivial in comparison to fighting the army of Golems and banes that the Crone had brought to Hebron.

Now that this threat seems at an end, the Elders who survived the Bane War are a thorn in Heshet's side. While few of them openly defy Heshet, it is suspected that the remaining Council works to undermine him

The Darkwall Juggernaut

Fighting colossi is a lost cause at present. Heshet does not like to admit the number of failures and losses his troops have had in fighting these juggernauts...yet the Accursed, with their strength and abilities, may succeed where Heshet's forces have not. Any Accursed who make a name for themselves by wounding or destroying a colossus will instantly gain the favor and awe of many Hebronites, and the Order of the Penitent has begun organizing such expeditions, both for the defense of Hebron, and also to bolster their favor with Heshet and the Hebronite people.

The first such expedition was an altruistic one and an accidental one. While attempting to aid a flight of refugees on Repentance Road, a band of Accursed from the Order of the Penitent succeeded in damaging the rhino-like Darkwall Juggernaut that had plagued the region for the better part of a year. Once the tale of this victory reached Parnath, Heshet formally welcomed ambassadors from the Order of the Penitent and allowed them to establish an embassy in the city.

While the Darkwall Juggernaut wasn't destroyed, the bravery of the Accursed saved many Hebronite lives, and frequently, the Order of the Penitent will cite that battle (and its losses) when asking a favor of Heshet, although his patience for this is wearing thin.

The Darkwall Juggernaut still roams Hebron, and if the Accursed can hunt it down and destroy it, they may earn a permanent place in Heshet's war council.

in other ways to release his stranglehold from the country. Accursed looking for allies against Heshet and the military may find allies in the ranks of the Heart of Hebron...or realize the threat the Heart poses to Hebron's unity.

The growing revolutionary movement causes complications for the Accursed as well, however. While Accursed are welcomed in the walls of Parnath, prejudice fueled by the Bane War often causes Hebronites to claim that Heshet's tolerance of the Order of the Penitent is a sign that he himself may have been turned unwittingly by the forces that once almost destroyed their nation. It is also an opinion held within Heshet's ranks as well.

This murmuring in the ranks often forces Heshet to keep his distance from Accursed allies and balance his need for the Accursed against the suspicion of his people. It is a delicate situation, and often the Accursed are the ones who suffer as these ideologies wage war in the hearts and minds of Hebron, especially Golems.

The Stricken

These splintered patchwork creatures are creations of the Chimera. The stricken appeared not long after Turris Atra materialized on the northern border of Repentance Road a little over a season ago, and they are a reminder that the Bane War may be over, but the threat of the Grand Coven lives on.

While most refugees on the road were able to escape the sudden arrival of the witch's fortress, many vanished at the moment of its arrival...only to be found days later, wandering, confused and unable to recall any memories since their disappearance. Weeks later when maimed victims (human and animal) began appearing throughout the countryside, people realized that a new horror had been unleashed on Hebron, but by then, the stricken were already infesting the populace, consuming pieces of their victims in a vicious cycle to keep themselves alive.

Stricken feed on organs from the living...taking eyes, hands, hearts, and more from humans and animals to sustain their own existence. It is believed this is done because their organs atrophy quickly (and often from the damage the creatures cause themselves), and they need to assume new bones and tissue to stay alive. The absorption of these new tissues occurs over minutes...not long after the stricken gleefully tears out its own flesh to allow the new part to take hold.

Unknown to many, however, whatever body part the stricken take into their bodies (a hawk's eyes, a child's tongue, a scribe's hand) grants the stricken both the abilities of the body part and the ability to take on the perceptual memory of the stolen flesh...for

example, a stricken who took the eyes of a hawk would not only be able to see as sharply as a hawk, but it would be able to see what the hawk had seen over the past few months. The tongue of a child would allow it to speak with a child's voice (although simply) and also allow it to know all the child had spoken for an equal time period. Taking the hand of a scribe would allow it to know what the hand had written...and the hand of an excellent swordsman would also impart the swordsman's abilities onto the stricken as well. This ability makes them excellent scouts and intelligence seekers, and it is believed why these creatures were created: the Chimera is searching for something in Hebron.

Stricken are capable of blending into cities and towns and many can pass themselves off as human if they wrap themselves with enough clothes to hide their disfigurements and if they don't speak to anyone. Speaking to a stricken can reveal its horrid disfigurement (especially if it has stolen the tongue of another creature).

Even if they still look largely human, they are simpleminded. Often, they are capable of only parroting back what someone says to them, usually with a maniacal caw. Stricken who have survived many feedings are often unable to pass their grotesque features off for human.



There are very few places a stricken cannot enter while hunting. Breaking and resetting their bones to slip in and out of homes is one of their more frightening abilities...the cracking noise as their bones break and reset as they squirm through cracks in doors, fences, through barred windows, sewer grates, and openings in chimneys is a horrifying thing to hear, and it is why many such openings in Hebron cities and towns are well-sealed. Even fighting them is a horrid experience; shattering or splintering a stricken, or even tearing them apart limb by limb, is often followed by the clicking of them resetting their bones and organs in twisted defiance of death.

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d4, Spirit d6, Strength d8, Vigor d10

Skills: Athletics d8, Fighting d10, Guts d8, Intimidation d8, Notice d8, Subterfuge d8, Taunt d8

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 7

Special Abilities

Fear: Stricken are unnatural and disturbing.

Low Light Vision: Stricken ignore penalties for Dim and Dark lighting.

Regeneration: Stricken are capable of healing quickly from virtually any injury, and possess Fast Regeneration.

Organ Replacement: Any time a stricken encounters an incapacitated or recently (within 1 day) deceased individual, the stricken may take portions of the prey's body and use them to replace its own. In so doing, it acquires the memories and physical capabilities of the replacement organ.

Natural Degradation: Any organ that a stricken has replaced with another will not heal, but must be replaced after it is damaged. Further, after a week's time, a replaced organ begins to degrade on its own and must be replaced. Each day after a replaced organ begins to degrade that the stricken does not replace it, it suffers a wound level of damage that cannot be healed by Regeneration or natural healing until the organ is replaced.

Ooze: Stricken can squeeze through small gaps as if they were Difficult Ground. There must be an actual hole at least an inch across that penetrates through the obstacle (including cracks in walls, gaps under doors, or even peepholes).

Witchline (Chimera): Banes of the Chimera can be sensed by Mongrel Accursed within 25 feet.

Repentance Wall

Not all the conflicts brewing with Hebron stem from the people, but one in particular has fed the Heart of Hebron's cause in ways that could not have been anticipated. According to accounts, it seems as if Heshet's crimes have returned to him with a vengeance, born from a battle near the height of the Bane War.

The history of the war is a montage of many sacrifices: the martyrs of Matzeda, the three Hebronite princes who guarded Port Sorrow against the barge-laden Jade Golems of the Sakuran divisions, and one, almost lost in the countless list of other battles, was a standing battle known as "the Repentance Wall." There, one of Heshet's most famous anti-Golem divisions, the Thrice-Cut Circle (so named because of three dagger slashes they would make within a branded circle on their right breast), held off a wave of Golems to buy time for over two hundred refugees to make their escape.

The battle was termed the "Wall," due to the incredible skill the Circle displayed in felling Golems to create a wall to slow the march of the bane ranks that followed. The Circle was led by one of Heshet's greatest commanders, the Jackal, who took his name from how he harried those that walked with the Crone and grew stronger from their deaths. It is said the Crone herself used his name as a curse, offering countless bounties and promises of power and enchantments to any willing to bring her the Jackal's heart.

The Circle had fought many battles against the Crone's constructs, usually from ambush and hit-and-run tactics, and these tactics were used ruthlessly to buy the refugees time. While two hundred survived, many more refugees were killed, including the Circle. All the refugees who managed to escape, however, fiercely proclaimed that the Circle's bravery was the only reason they survived, and that the soldiers had given their lives valiantly to protect the innocent.

Nevertheless, the cost had been high. All of the Circle were believed dead, including their commander. The Jackal's sacrifice and the sacrifice of the Circle served as an inspiration and a tale of heroism that traveled all the way to the walls of Parnath, and refugees who once fled in terror of the banes were motivated to take up arms and help join the war effort as best they could, some of them even taking the symbol of the Thrice-Cut Circle, others wearing it on their banners, their cloaks, and shields. The symbol was seen displayed proudly in many of the huddled communities of the Canvas Sea, the refugee nation that lives outside of Parnath, and many spoke prayers to the Jackal and the Circle for their courage.

THE JACKAL'S VOW

What would have been a mark of heroism in the war over time became a curse. Three and thirty days after the Circle's sacrifice on Repentance Road, anyone wearing the symbol or displaying the symbol of the Circle began to suffer pains, pains that would persist until the symbol was cast aside. New displays of the symbol would often appear in blood, usually at sudden deadly strikes in Hebron territory...entire guard posts would vanish, garrisons and barracks would be found empty, patrols would be lost for days at a time, only to be found later in distant territories with the circle-slash marks carved on them.

These acts of terror came to their peak in the height of the summer season in Parnath, a year to the day after the battle of Repentance Wall. Burning in the high noon heat, a colossus was sighted barely a mile from the city, materializing like a mirage on its wastes, beginning a slow, thundering walk toward the walls of Parnath. Witnesses claim it appeared to be composed of stones of Repentance Road, and upon its shoulders and its back were glistening wooden platforms and shield walls...the colossus itself resembled a walking siege tower, its head hollowed out so that someone could sit within. From its shoulders and back streamed banners, bedecked in what seemed to be blood, and

corpses of Heshet's vanished soldiers hung from the sides of its head like great locks of hair, bound together. On the breast of the colossus had been scrawled the symbol of the Thrice-Cut Circle.

The colossus waded into the tents of the Canvas Sea surrounding Parnath, making its way slowly the walls, and in its wake, Vargr and other fast-moving banes terrorized the refugees that fled, like scavengers in the wake of a greater predator. As the colossus approached the gate, pummeled with siege weapons from Parnath and great iron bolts from the wall's defenses, a masked figure was seen to rise and stand atop the colossus' skull. The figure roared out what has become to be known as the "Jackal's Vow," a proclamation that thundered from the top of the colossus, with such strength and power it was able to be heard above the screams and din of battle of those that fell beneath the colossus's tread. In this speech, the figure swore the walls of Parnath would fall due to Heshet's treachery, and what had been done to the Thrice-Cut Circle would fall upon Parnath and all those loyal to Heshet.

The battle lasted only until the end of the speech. It is unclear if the figure abandoned the attack, or if the colossus itself was never intended to reach the walls and the Canvas Sea was, in fact, the target. Hammering it under a withering sea of projectiles, stones, and iron bolts, the giant's march seemed to be halted when alchemical fire shot from the walls of Parnath rained across its surface, setting fire to the banners and glistening wooden platforms—both of which were revealed to be soaked in oil, not in blood. As the colossus strode forward, it moved slower and slower, its hands raking the grounds below as the fire racing across its skin eagerly caught hold of the Canvas Sea and formed a burning circle around the city. As the flames mounted and the withering assault of projectiles from the wall smashed into it, the colossus exploded, sending embers, flaming stones, and corpses scattering across the refugee camps. Few within its radius survived.

The city fought the flames for days. The banes were driven off at great cost of life—soldier, civilian, and refugee alike. Of the masked figure that claimed to be the Jackal there was no sign, but parts of the colossus and the sign of the Thrice-Cut Circle still remain. The largest piece to survive its fiery collapse is its chest, upon which a huge symbol of the Thrice-Cut Circle had been chiseled. Although many engineers, stonemasons, and alchemists have attempted to destroy the colossus's remains, its heart seems unable to be damaged, and the sign still remains, a monument to the attack that killed so many refugees during the Bane War.

The attacks on Parnath and the outlying territories have not ceased since the end of the Bane War. While

The Rhyming Night

The Rhyming Night was one of the blackest events to strike Hebron during the Bane War. Across the nation of Hebron at the stroke of midnight, countless children were maimed when a number of manikins, masquerading as children's toys, ensorcelled the children into taking blades to their parents and then blades to themselves.

The children and the dolls were heard to be whispering the same hymn (a child's rhyme intended to uphold the virtue of sacrifice in ancient Hebron) to themselves, in concert. Some kibbutzim were completely wiped out by a child and its manikin in the night, and countless lives were lost in the larger towns and cities.

As a further cruelty, when Heshet and his council was brought word of the incident near dawn, the diorama in Heshet's war council chamber suddenly came alive, and the tiny model soldiers began singing the same hymn, taunting him until he smashed all the models of the troops of Golems and his own men with a maul. This broken table still lies in the council chamber as a reminder, although the tiny models in the diorama have all been destroyed.

the Jackal has not been seen again, his symbol is appearing regularly after terror attacks on the roads and even incursions into the Canvas Sea, slaughtering and kidnapping refugees seeking shelter in Parnath. Rumors say the Jackal will not rest until Heshet is dead and Parnath's walls have fallen. He attacks the city, seemingly at random, slaughtering innocents and leaving a wake of fear and unrest...fear which is then turned toward a suspicion and hatred of Heshet for this enemy that now plagues their lives. The Heart of Hebron, in particular, believes the Jackal to be a living symbol of Heshet's guilt and betrayal, and they are eager to learn the truth of what has led this vengeance that threatens all of Parnath. Heshet has never spoken of the Jackal beyond organizing expeditions to hunt the figure down, nor has he offered an explanation for what would drive one of his best former commanders to turn on him and besiege Parnath.

The Jackal

After facing Heshet on the battlefield, the Crone realized she needed someone as ruthless and focused to take him down. She may have orchestrated the battle at Repentance Wall solely to capture the Jackal, and if so, she chose well, indeed: the fact that he continues the war despite her disappearance is proof of the obsessive strength that drives all Revenants.

The Jackal indeed bears Heshet ill will, and through the efforts of the Crone and the Morrigan, they have made him cauldron-born, a Revenant gift from Morrigan to the Crone. Whether or not the Jackal was truly betrayed by Heshet at Repentance Wall is unknown, but the fact that he believes he was betrayed is reason enough for him to seek revenge against his commander. This obsession is so strong that the Jackal is one of the Accursed himself, seeing the Crone and the Grand Coven as the best means of reaching his obsession. If this fact is revealed, it will do little to help the cause of the Accursed in Hebron.

HUNTING THE JACKAL

The Jackal employs many of the hit-and-run tactics that the Thrice-Cut Circle once employed. He attacks from the surrounding lands without warning, then recedes into the wastes when the battle goes against him...and sometimes, even when it seems he has the upper hand. In fact, his lack of success against taking down Parnath has been consistent to the point where it is unclear whether he seeks a military victory or whether he seeks to drive the Canvas Sea refugees into such a frenzy they tear down the city with their own hands. While riots and mobs have been contained in the Sea, the more refugees driven down Repentance Road (sometimes attacked and converted by the Jackal

"Mind Gates, Locks, and Those That Knock"

Many thieves—or borrowers—that come to Hebron unfamiliar with its culture are often surprised by the level of paranoia that Hebronites display with locks, gates, shutters, and doors. They are often quick to assume that Hebronites are constantly vigilant against thieves. The reason is much more complex.

As terrible as the colossi are in Hebron, the manikins fashioned by the Crone made the war more personal and frightening; nowhere was safe. It is not enough to remove all dolls and figurines from one's home. Because of their size, even tiny apertures and openings in a house can be used as entrances for these evil creations, and leaving a window, door, or shutter unlatched can put a family's life in danger. Families are trained to do circuits along the outside and inside of homes, looking for any trace of a breach, and the rhyme "mind gates, locks, and those that knock," is taught to children to make them vigilant.

Unfortunately, the appearance of the stricken (see page 22) has even made these precautions inadequate. The stricken's ability to break and contort their flesh to literally "crack" their way through slim openings and even down fireplaces and then replace the occupants has bred even more paranoia. Not all Hebronites are familiar with the abilities of the stricken (although word is growing), but they would do well to be on guard against banes capable of breaking their own bones and limbs to reach in and unlock the latches on windows and doors.

on the way), the larger the Canvas Sea becomes. Mass hysteria could cause the refugee population to flow over the walls, and not even the Hebronite soldiers could hold it back.

THE SHIFTING HILLS

The Jackal moves around frequently to avoid Heshet's forces, and Heshet would give much to learn where the Jackal hides. A shade known as the Promise claims she received a vision of the Jackal's base of operations, and that it has its roots in another conflict of the Bane War. She is correct, although it may require any Accursed seeking the Jackal to do considerable research on military history in the region to find it...and requires the Accursed to be discrete to prevent the Jackal from learning of their arrival. It is also entirely possible that the Jackal purposely left clues to his location in order to provoke Heshet into marching on it.



In truth, the Jackal resides in a cavernous sinkhole deep in the Shifting Hills, a field of vortexes that swallowed an entire town. Within the sinkhole, the town remains, and the Revenant has reshaped the pieces of the town...and parts of its dead citizens... to resemble a massive diorama of Hebron, not unlike the shattered table in Heshet's war council chamber. Unlike Heshet's council, manikins remain, informing the Jackal of all they learn across Hebron.

If any of the Accursed could find and defeat the Jackal, it would be a great victory for Hebron and its refugee population. Although if they learn the truth of the Jackal's rage against Heshet and it seems just, they may take up the Jackal's cause as their own.

Parnath, Besieged

Parnath, the great capital of Hebron, still stands, but not as it once was. One of the many casualties of the Bane War, this proud city has survived numerous attacks and sieges, only to be besieged in the aftermath of the war by a tide of refugees from across Morden, lured to Parnath by the promise of hope.

There is little hope to be had. The outlying district of Parnath is a sobering view of what lies at the end of Repentance Road. Countless refugees in tents and

camps dot the outside of the city, all refused entrance, or subjected to a rigorous screening process of skills or loyalty. Many who come to Parnath discover it is not safety or shelter, merely another disappointment. It is a tragic change to the city that existed before the Bane War. Once thriving with commerce, with learning, art, and culture, now the city seems to be being devoured by the refugee tents that clot outside its walls.

Whatever violence has been committed on Parnath, however, it has done little to stem the determination of those within and without to remain fast...life continues on, both in the refugee camps and in the heart of the city. Atop the standing walls, soldiers can always be seen, and the interior of the city beats on a strict schedule, the canvas sea surrounding it seems to have an untamed life of its own.

Parnath is composed of three great concentric walls, jagged as the districts within and without. The walls and city streets are twisted like puzzle pieces, evidence of the city's long history of expansion and ever-advancing architectural techniques. This, combined with a pride in the past that prevents many older structures and routes from being torn down and rebuilt, has created a collage of styles and districts that somehow have reached an equilibrium within the walls.

While divided by three walls, the city itself is divided into the Silent Siege (the remains of the outer wall, more a monument than a district), the Canvas Sea (the tents of refugees surrounding the outer wall), and the Embrace (the inner districts of the city enfolded within the middle and inner wall).

The Silent Siege

The first of Parnath's walls, the outer wall, is a wall only in memory and seems largely given to the refugees surrounding the city. The great crumbling stones have long since been breached, and the few remaining sections seem like islands or pillars amidst the Canvas Sea.

Much of this outer wall has been reduced to ruin at the hands of colossi and banes; some scars date back to the beginning of the Bane War, some are more recent attacks from roving colossi or from brutal attacks by the Jackal. The term "Silent Siege" comes from the sight of colossi that still lie toppled against the walls, and others have collapsed into the ground with great iron shafts embedded within them or great jagged holes in their bodies where they were struck by mortar fire or catapult stones.

The Canvas Sea—and even the city proper—are rife with fear that these silent colossi will awaken to attack Parnath again. Still, the erosion of time has weakened these colossi to the point where it seems unlikely they could pose any significant threat. The erosion is further fueled by the efforts of human scavengers seeking stone or other more permanent building materials they can carve from the remains of these great constructs.

The Canvas Sea

The outlying section of Parnath has been submerged in a mass of tents dubbed the "Canvas Sea." Refugees in tent cities clot the gates and the roads, creating areas rife with civil disobedience, disease, and crime. For many, this is all that awaits at the end of Repentance Road.

While the population of the Canvas Sea is largely Hebronites, refugees from other nations suffering from the Bane War have formed small communities and districts within the sea, called "islands." The largest islands are Manreia and Valkenholm, although almost every nation has an island within the Canvas Sea where a refugee can find kindred spirits from their homeland. If a Hebronite turns someone away, she may find help in these islands...and so may the Accursed.

The Canvas Sea is fluid as its name suggests. It shifts and recedes over time due to new influxes of refugees, through fighting between the camps for supplies or imagined crimes, through "burns" and mass arrests

from Hebronite soldiers looking for the diseased, banes, and criminals, and even worse, through attacks by remnants of the Crone's forces as well, especially the Jackal. The remains of the colossus that heralded the Jackal's first attack on the city is a known monument in the Canvas Sea, and the refugees surrounding the great chest stone with the thrice-cut circle seem numb to its promised threat, using it largely as a land marker to find their way through the throngs.

It is not unknown for the Canvas Sea to part in waves at the mere mention of a raid by Hebronite soldiers or remnants of the Crone's forces seeking easy prey amongst the refugee camps. While these dangers are ever-present, it is the constant threat of attacks by the Jackal that seem to breed the most fear in the tent communities...it only takes the cry of "The Jackal!" to send the Canvas Sea into a panic, tents rippling outwards as refugees grab their few belongings and flee, sometimes right into the arms of the Jackal's forces.

As regimented as the interior districts of Parnath are, the outlying district is anything but, crime is rampant, and Heshet does not have the forces to patrol the masses of refugees that throng outside his gates. The Canvas Sea makes it easy for Accursed to hide near the city, and at the same time, also proves an excellent hiding ground for banes in the service of the Coven. The stricken, especially, lurk almost unnoticed within the ranks of the Canvas Sea, able to slip from tent to tent and hide amongst the maimed and the mad, always gathering new intelligence on behalf of the Chimera.

The Embrace

The Embrace refers to the two inner walls of Parnath, the true remaining walls of the city. These great walls bend and twist around each other, and on maps of the city, resemble long arms wrapped around the city's center. Once this was bantered about as a friendly topic of conversation to those new to the city, even spoken of in pride as a symbol of Hebronite hospitality. Since the Bane War, however, the Embrace has been likened to a stranglehold, a slowly closing knot that chokes the heart of the city. The citizens within Parnath ruefully comment these walls now desperately hold onto themselves to keep from drowning in the mass of refugees outside—or simply to keep them at bay.

The two walls are manned by ever-vigilant soldiers and towers with great horns that are sounded when a colossus is spotted, and soldiers watch both outside the walls and within. Beyond the walls, the roads and alleys of the Embrace snake and jag throughout the city. Many alcoves and recessed doors along the streets lead to small courtyards open to the sky and sometimes

"What Falls May Rise..."

The Order of the Penitent has been sending teams secretly into the Canvas Sea to examine these colossi, especially the colossi the Jackal used during his first assault on the city. Well versed in the powers of Golems to heal themselves from the surrounding environment, the Order of the Penitent is wary that there may be some means of resurrecting these constructs if they are not properly destroyed. Aside from these fears, the Order of the Penitent recognizes that if pieces of the colossi could be reshaped into weapons, they would be powerful tools in ridding Hebron of the Crone's wandering giant constructs—and perhaps reveal secrets in how the Grand Coven, the Crone in particular, fashioned such constructs in the first place.

The Hebron military aggressively opposes any such scavenging efforts, however. This is due in part to their own fears of disturbing the colossi, and also in part because Heshet feels the fallen colossi are powerful reminders to Hebron of Parnath's military strength against even the greatest monsters of the Coven.

containing beautiful, relaxing gardens and spaces within, a reminder of Parnath's former gentle beauty.

The Embrace is a solemn change from the Canvas Sea. The city is alive with traffic and activity, but there is a regimented nature to it, and one is never far from the gaze of a suspicious soldier. One may be stopped and questioned at any time, and any citizen is required to submit to searches for any marks that may reveal one as a bane.

Under Heshet's rule, Parnath has a strict curfew. While the major streets are thronged with people during the day, they quickly clear as night falls and become silent except for the slow march of soldiers, their torchlight and methodical tread both comforting and oppressive. Anyone walking the streets after hours is immediately detained (if one runs, they are fired upon and chased relentlessly), and their identity must be confirmed. Even if a traveler's business is legitimate, those out at night are often escorted to the nearest barracks to be questioned until sunrise, as sunlight streaming in through the barracks at dawn is considered one of the truest tests to reveal a man's nature—or the presence of a bane.

There are no lack of barracks or guard posts within the Embrace. The Military District is located within the city, and Heshet's "house" (more a combination prison, garrison, and training ground) is here as well. Frequently referred to as the Iron Hourglass due to

its narrow middle between two larger structures (and also a nod to Heshet's regimented schedule), this building has Heshet's home at one end of the Hourglass, while at the other end lies the main war council building. The thin corridor between allows him easy access to his commanders and intelligence advisors as he needs. Within the war council building are a number of chambers. The most famous of these is Heshet's Inner Council, which only a few of the Order of the Penitent have seen, though it left a lasting impression.

HESHET'S INNER COUNCIL

Heshet's inner council chamber is both spartan and cluttered with unusual debris that often leaves visitors confused. There are no chairs, not even for Heshet, encouraging visitors to keep their message short.

Behind visitors as they enter, however, the chamber is composed of *memento moris* of Heshet's failures, as if chastising him that he could have prevented each loss. He still has the shattered diorama table from the Rhyming Night (see page 24), and twisted and broken mauls that were deformed against the hides of banes and constructs. While visitors are occasionally startled to see these objects when they leave, they are placed as they are so that Heshet will always have them in view when addressing anyone who enters his inner chambers. They remind him that every decision he makes in the council could destroy Hebron—or cost the life of the person who has come to him for aid.

Bordering the Military District is the prison, a seemingly unremarkable squat stone structure with no windows, more akin to a storehouse than a prison. Despite its squat appearance, the building has numerous basements and dungeons, and tunnels that lead to and from the prison to chambers beneath the Inner Council. There, prisoners are often interrogated ruthlessly, sometimes to the point of death. It is also rumored there is a hidden courtyard in the Inner Council building, not visible on any building plans, sealed with great doors and intricate locks that can only be opened in a certain combination. It is sometimes said a "night march" of prisoners and traitors are led into this courtyard after they have been questioned by the Inner Council, and these prisoners do not return.

The Embrace holds many courtyards within its expanse. The Sunlit Square, in particular, is the largest courtyard in Parnath, with candles and torches arranged like troops in formation that insure that the courtyard is continually lit. Public announcements, news, and even addresses by Heshet himself take place here, although it is more often used for military drills. In the days before the Bane War, the Sunlit Square was a large open-air market and a place for families to

relax and whittle away the day...in the modern day, it feels empty and hollow, and the torches and candles pay respect to those who lost their lives in the war.

Bordering the Sunlit Square is the Hall of Elders, the great residence that once housed the Hebron council before Heshet took power. The palatial residence has been stripped of its former comforts and turned into a barracks and storehouse for weapons and munitions for Parnath's military forces. On rare occasions, events of state still take place there that Heshet cannot perform in the Sunlit Square or in the Iron Hourglass.

The Order of the Penitent is allowed an embassy within the Embrace (other foreign churches and religious structures are frowned upon). This embassy hall, called the White Arch due to the whitewashed stone above its entrance door, is often avoided by most Hebronites. The streets around the White Arch are empty of traffic except soldiers standing guard...both to watch the Accursed and to prevent any citizens from casting stones or rotten fruit at the building against Heshet's orders. Many are the times the White Arch has been bedecked with rotten fruit and filth from angry citizens, and cleaning it has become a ritual.

While Accursed are hounded and viewed with suspicion within Parnath, they were allowed this embassy after the efforts of the Order of the Penitent in helping the nation against the roving colossi attacks. These efforts on behalf of the Hebronite people have earned them some tolerance from the populace, although that can break at any time depending upon the pressure being placed on the city (especially when The Jackal mounts an attack). Although arguably things are vastly improved since the Order's missions and diplomatic efforts began, any Accursed within Parnath should remain wary where they travel.

The Port of Parnath

The Port refers to the Port of Parnath, not to be confused with Port Sorrow, although many ships from Parnath make their way there. Port Sorrow is sometimes the final mile marker on Repentance Road for those unwelcome in Hebron, that usually includes any without trade skills or otherwise unsuitable for military service. Refugees who no longer can abide the Canvas Sea or wish to take their chances often come to Parnath's port to book passage to Port Sorrow. Obtaining passage is often easier than one would suspect, although few refugees realize that often the price of the journey is their freedom. Port Sorrow welcomes many of these refugees, due to the high turnover in their near-slave labor populations, and because they can also sell the refugees as cattle to foreign nations.

Elder Secrets

The Hall of Elders holds as many secrets as would be expected in a nation's seat of power...and even in its current role, these secrets persist. The Hall of Elders has many caches and hidden corridors that pre-date the war, and rumors say even a secret means into and out of Parnath within its walls.

If this is true, the Heart of Hebron revolutionary movement may have an easy road into the city, and should they decide to take up arms, Heshet may have a fight within his walls sooner than he suspects.

The Port in Parnath is as regimented as the Embrace, and customs at the Port is strict, in and out, as per Heshet's orders. While Heshet has a low regard for Port Sorrow, he recognizes it is his duty to make sure any supplies or people that travel to Port Sorrow are free of bane influence or else he may end up losing the last possible island of retreat in Morden. The smugglers and near-slavers of Port Sorrow are not nearly as careful with what they bring in (and they have equally little regard for Hebronites), but they are not eager to cross the Hebronite military and suffer the consequences.

Heshet is aware that the refugee stream of those he denies to Parnath is essentially creating a slave trade to Port Sorrow. He is not pleased with allowing this to persist, but this is a problem he has chosen to endure for the moment until Morden itself is stable, and he has too many threats at his doorstep to intervene in Port Sorrow's slave trade. The Heart of Hebron revolutionaries sometimes spread rumors—if they are rumors—that Heshet or his officers encourage the trade to reduce the refugee population outside Parnath's walls, although many who know Heshet would not believe him complicit in such dealings.

The Kibbutzim

Once a beautiful land of kibbutzim, little is left of Hebron's farming communities today. Most were destroyed during the Bane War, their crops put to the torch and the residents captured by the Crone's forces. Hebronites who survived fled to the fortified cities such as Parnath or across the sea, to Port Sorrow.

Since the end of the Bane War, Hebronites have slowly been returning to their communities, and while many communities are unsuitable for farming, a few are able to scratch out a poor living, provided one is on guard against roving banes and can endure the isolation and deprivation that can occur when the harvest fails. While some crops can be coaxed

from the land, most of the outlying territories are blighted. In addition to the banes and remnants of the Crone's forces, other, more human threats roam Hebron—deserters from both armies (and foreign armies), revolutionaries that despise Heshet and his policies, bandits and thieves, and even refugees who couldn't make it to Port Sorrow roam the land, preying on farmers and each other for survival.

The Hebronite military has been slowly reclaiming communities in the outlying territories, especially along the nation's border, or in the ruins of former kibbutzim. These occupied communities have taken on the name of "steel kibbutzim," supplementing the agricultural efforts of the community (when farming is possible) and training Hebronites for war. Children are often sent to these remote camps to train, then cast out in a final act of their training to survive and struggle their way back to Parnath (or wherever they have been ordered to return to).

The outlying territories are filled with a variety of dangers, some known, many yet to be discovered. In addition to the threats above, other evils roam the country in the wake of the Bane War, preying on those who lost loved ones and family to the Crone. One such phenomenon, the Glittering Ballroom, seems a cruel joke played on Hebron by the Fey...with potentially deadly consequences.

The Glittering Ballroom

The Rhyming Night is not the only cruelty that struck Hebron. The nation's suffering provided the Fey a wellspring to shape a personal nightmare for the people of Hebron. This horror is called the Glittering Ballroom.

Mothers, fathers, children—anyone who lost a loved one in the Bane War—are prey to this phenomena, their misery serving to feed the Fey. Chosen victims see a series of glittering lights...either down an alley, out in a field, around a bend in the road...and with it, the promise of music, laughter, and the vaguest hints of pleasant conversation and merriment.

If they choose to investigate, victims find themselves in a grand, glittering ballroom where none can exist...but families dance at the fringes: mothers, fathers, children. If the victim turns away or is unwilling to believe, the vision fades, collapsing into sand and dust and blowing away.

If the victim believes the illusion, however, one of the Fey takes on the shape of the victim's missing loved one and leads him onto the floor to dance forever, feeding on the victim's pain, both emotional and physical. The sightings and dancers in the Glittering Ballroom have grown, and the more lost ones that come to the dance floor, the more real the Glittering Ballroom becomes.

This has resulted in countless missing persons throughout Hebron, and the Order of the Penitent has offered to help Heshet investigate the phenomena and see if the victims can be rescued...if so, the Accursed may be enlisted to investigate this horror and put an end to it.

Repentance Road

Repentance Road is a heavily traveled north to south road that Heshet believes earns its name. One had best be prepared to cast aside any weakness in order to survive the journey, and the journey is as brutal as it is unsafe. Recognizing the need to instill chokepoints to slow (and guard) the flood of refugees south, Heshet's forces have constructed garrisons and watchtowers at key chokepoints along the road (sometimes called "collars"), and horsemen regularly patrol the roads, doing inspections of refugees and families making their way south.

Each "neck" and "collar" of the road often has warnings to refugees about the policies of Hebron. Even more grim, pikes showing the heads of banes and criminals warn visitors that neither is tolerated in Hebron, and Accursed are likely to be harassed at best, and at worst, shunned or attacked if they walk openly upon the road. Much like the outlying district of Parnath, the collars on Repentance Road often end up piling up with tents and encampments as refugees wait to be cleared, a foreshadowing of what awaits them when they reach Parnath.

Matzeda

Matzeda is spoken of with hushed respect, the site of one of the greatest sacrifices of the Bane War. Hebronites who lost family at Matzeda are some of Heshet's fiercest supporters—and fiercest opponents.

Travel to Matzeda is not difficult, nor is entering the city...the pass is unguarded, although creatures from the Crone's army still lurk around the fringes, as if they, too, are afraid to enter. There are numerous breaches in the walls and gates, wounds made by battering rams, siege towers, colossi, and Golems—so much so the wall almost looks like a jagged mountain range. With all the effort the Crone expended in taking the city and its strategic importance, it is strange that now it lies silent and empty.

Hebronites speak of Matzeda with reverence. For them it embodies one of the highest ideals of their culture, and a spiritual victory if not a military one. It is said that when the forces of the Grand Coven poured into Matzeda, the remaining garrison and citizens were chanting a Hebron hymn of sacrifice as they

dragged their blades across their own throats rather than allow themselves to be taken by the enemy.

One could explore Matzeda for years and not uncover its secrets. And there are many: hidden tunnels, caches of weapons and moldering supplies, the city's treasury of relics sealed behind great stone doors that not even the attackers could open...and for historians and the Order of the Penitent, ancient texts and works of art, untouched and undiscovered by the attackers. To the bold, the city is seemingly a treasure trove waiting to be plundered. To the wise, it is a place to be avoided. Few have entered and left with their souls intact—or their hearts still beating in their chests.

The winding streets of Matzeda have become a spiritual cage, binding to the spirits within, and once inside, the city streets and the haunted districts are dangerous to trespassers, both humans and banes alike. The city itself plays tricks on the mind. It is possible to lose oneself in Matzeda, literally, with each passing hour twisting an intruder's senses until they have lost all sense of place and time.

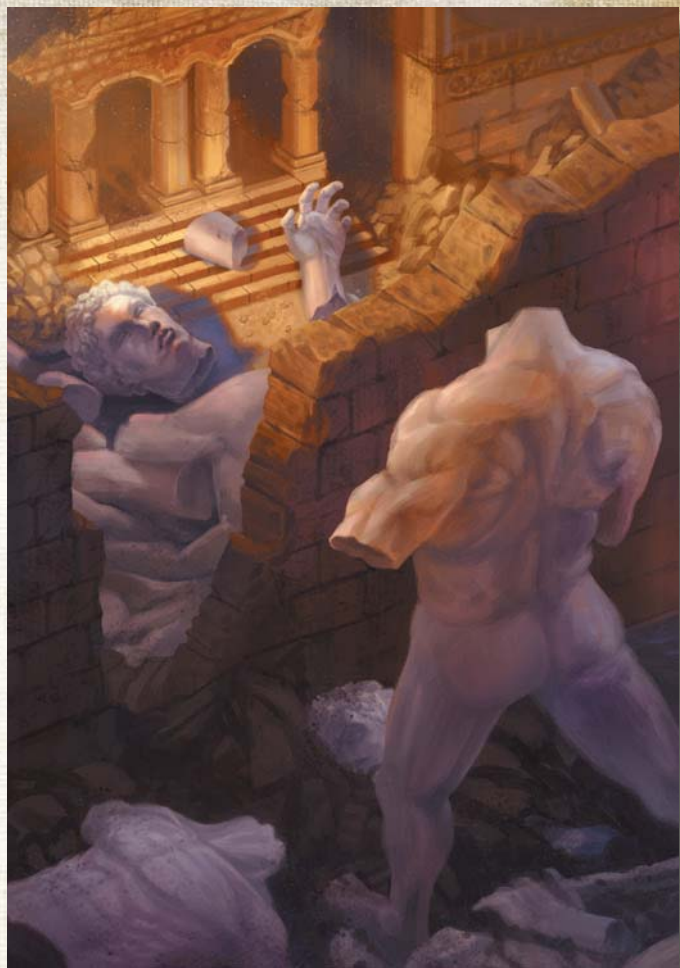
The threat comes upon a victim slowly, seemingly no matter what their purpose in the city. With each passing hour, trespassers can hear a soft, whispering chanting, although the source of it cannot be determined, it always seems just at the edge of one's hearing. As the hours build, visitors claim to hear the chanting near them, behind them, even whispering at their shoulder, but wherever they look, no one is there...but there is a terrible sense that someone is nearby. Soldiers with bleeding necks and blades are seen in the corner of one's vision, and the few who have braved Matzeda claim that if one walk its streets, it is not the chanting one should fear, but its end.

Those who become trapped in Matzeda are often found dead, either of fear, or from a strong, single cut across their necks. No blade is ever found near their body.

The Hymn of Sacrifice

The Hymn of Sacrifice chanted at Matzeda has taken on a new horror in Hebron, one which Heshet is slowly becoming aware...it is as if the hymn itself has somehow escaped the walls of the Martyr's Rest. Hebronites in Parnath and in the outlying country are reported waking from sleep, almost as if in hypnotized state, and softly singing the hymn of sacrifice. The hymn is never finished. It seems that each person speaks in fragments, and then returns to deep sleep, never remembering awakening the night before.

These incidents are becoming more and more common, and sometimes men and women wander while singing the hymn, stepping outside the walls of their homes or town, or into the darkened streets



of Parnath during curfew. They are always facing Matzeda, and some of them have knives in their hand.

The Martyr's Rest

It is believed that the Martyr's Rest has placed a curse on the country, either from those who committed suicide there or from one final curse by the Crone for Matzeda's defiance. Regardless of the curse's origin, one thing seems clear: if the people of Matzeda shall not know rest, neither shall the people of Hebron.

The means to end this curse is unknown, although the Order of the Penitent has sought an audience with Heshet to discuss the matter. Shades within the Order have revealed that a Hebronite who lost family or loved ones at Matzeda can help guide explorers into Matzeda and help end its threat, and the threat is greater than it may seem. According to oracles within the Order, when the living who chant the Hymn equal the number who sacrificed themselves at Matzeda, then the spirits will be freed from the city, and they will bear allegiance to no one, living or dead. If so, Baal-Goleth shall be the first steps of their new empire of vengeance.

Matzeda is a curse to the Crone and her forces... despite the fact its walls were breached, it is a black mark in their history of the conquest, and many of the Grand

Coven (silently) feared that the example set by Matzeda could inspire other cities and towns to do the same.

No constructs have ever been fashioned from Matzeda's stones. There are some rumors that the constructs rebelled viciously when "given life," attacking their own units until they were destroyed. Even more unusual, there seem to be more Accursed rebelling from control who were part of the banes that fought at Matzeda.

Whatever sacrifice the martyrs made, it seems to have been a contagious example for banes that served in the conflict. Whether this effect is supernatural or spiritual in nature is unknown, but either way, it gives hope that others may be turned over time through examples set by sacrifices like at Matzeda.

Golem Construction

Hebron saw more than its fair share of Golems in the Crone's armies, and they have studied Golems extensively. The Order of the Penitent has recognized that Hebron is a great source of information on these banes that could benefit the Accursed seeking to know more about their origins and strengths.

In the beginning of the war, many of the Golems were made from common materials such as stone, granite, iron, or materials taken from other nations the Crone marched through to reach Hebron. Often, there was not much incentive for her to change the materials used in construction. It was only when Hebron started mounting a fiercer resistance that the Crone began to experiment with new forms of Golems designed to outmaneuver her opponents.

As such, it is often easy to determine how old a Golem is by the material used in its construction. A Golem composed of stone from the Darkwall peaks, for example, suggests it has been around some time, possibly pre-dating the Bane War entirely. More recent Golems often are made from materials or shattered ruins from battlefields within Hebron. Initially used as a further means of taunting the Hebronite forces, the Crone began to construct Golems using stones and mortar from communities she had destroyed, and then having them march on their neighbors to demoralize them.

This had alternately the intended and opposite effect. Some communities lost their will to fight, while others, infuriated by the sacrilege, fought more fiercely. Golems born from these efforts can date their construction by when a specific community, town, or city fell during the Bane War and the stones used in its construction.

This practice did not last long, however, as the Crone underestimated Hebronite faith and pushed

them too far. When the Crone attempted to use a shrine along Repentance Road as a material for a legion of Golems, it so offended the Hebronites that they counterattacked in force...and worse, some of the Repentance Road Golems fought alongside them. The Crone is not certain why this betrayal occurred, but since that event, she became more careful about playing with Hebronite lore in her creations in case a similar aberration occurred. It is said to be the reason she did not fashion Golems from the stones of Matzeda.

As the war effort went on, and the Hebronites discovered ways of combating the Golems, the Crone was forced to begin creating more varieties of Golems with different abilities to prevent the war machine from grinding to a halt. Sand, ash, flesh (either of her allies or of captured prisoners), and other substances were not uncommon. Due to the unusual powers these Golems possess (sand Golems have been observed to be able to bring down walls, eroding them instantly with a touch), this has made fighting these new constructs a difficult process. Some of the most unusual and fascinating displays of Golem powers have emerged from Hebron, and many more may remain left to be discovered.



Many Header

While most of the Crone's banes present a potent foe in melee combat, fewer of them are capable ranged attackers. The many header provided a devastating and horrifying element of fire support to the Crone's part of the Witch Army. Even though they never constituted a major portion of her forces, the presence of even a few could be enough to change the tide of a battle. In the years since the Bane War, reported encounters with many headers have only been in isolation. This is fortunate, as a group of them would pose a substantial threat to even an organized team of Penitents.

Many headers are roughly humanoid shaped, and stand about six feet in height. However, their body is essentially composed entirely of heads. Some of the heads may be taken from statues, but others are clearly the skulls of animals and people—in varying states of decay. In place of hands, a many header uses the mouths of the heads at the ends of its arms to grip things. Upon defeating foes, many headers may take their severed heads and integrate the remains into the banes' bodies. It is unclear what motivates a many header to acquire additional heads, but the faces of their allies turned against them certainly horrify those who oppose the Witches.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d8

Skills: Fighting d8, Intimidation d6, Notice d12

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 8

Special Abilities

Bite: Str+d4.

Construct: + 2 to recover from being Shaken; called shots do no extra damage; does not suffer from disease or poison.

Elemental Breath: A many header can expel an elemental attack from up to four of its heads per turn using the Cone Template. Each head attacks with a different elemental trapping (chosen at the GM's discretion, see Savage Worlds Core Rulebook). Every target within the cone must make an Agility check at -2 to avoid the attack. Those who fail suffer 2d8 damage as well as relevant elemental effects.

Eyes Everywhere: A many header has a tremendous variety of sensory input from each of its heads. It receives a +4 to any Notice check. In addition, it can never be a victim of surprise or the drop.

Weakness (Bashing): Constructed of stone and bone, many headers suffer an additional +4 damage from blunt weapons.

Witchline (Crone): Banes of the Crone can be sensed by Golem Accursed within 25 feet.

Hebron Hindrances

A player whose character is from Hebron can select from the following Hindrances, in addition to those listed in the Accursed setting book.

HESHET'S CHOICE (MAJOR)

This Hebronite is exceedingly stubborn and focused. Whenever his suggestions are not viewed as orders, he becomes a miserable companion, suffering a -2 Charisma penalty until the next dawn. This Hindrance may not be combined with Stubborn.

FERAL BEACON (MINOR)

Whatever the circumstances of this Accursed's creation, it has left a powerful touch that stands out to other banes and Accursed. The character can be sensed twice as far by other banes. The character's mark is also distinctive, so that banes who have previously encountered him can easily recognize his identity as soon as they sense him. This Hindrance is most common among Accursed who are enslaved into Hebronite anti-bane units, as if the rigors and suffering they endure make them easier for their brethren to scent.

Hebron Edges

A player whose character is from Hebron can select from the following Edges, in addition to those listed in the Accursed setting book.

HYMN OF SACRIFICE

Requirements: Novice, Hebronite, Spirit d6+

The character has learned to harness the chants of Hebron to gain strength to resist the banes that would do the nation harm. The character may chant while performing other actions, but cannot speak any words other than the chant. The chanting must be performed at a normal speaking voice or louder. If the character is struck mute or unable to speak normally, he cannot chant. While chanting, the character's Spirit and Guts are increased by one die type for any rolls.

COVEN TAINT

Requirements: Heroic, Golem, Spirit d8+

One of the Golem's key components is discovered to have originated from a site of horrors committed by the Grand Coven. The Golem has learned to access a connection to these horrors and transfer them to the minds of those nearby. As an action, the Golem can choose to count as causing Fear -1 until the end of its turn.

SACRED COMPONENTS

Requirements: Novice, Golem, Spirit d6+

The Golem is fashioned from materials from a sacred site in Hebron or a relic of a respected individual. Citizens of Hebron are predisposed to trust him, granting a Charisma +2 only for interactions with Hebronites. The character also increases Strength by 1 die type when defending Hebron from harm (subject to GM discretion).

