

THE COMPASS OF TERRESTRIAL DIRECTIONS, VOL. II

THE WEST™



A SETTING
BOOK FOR



The savage seas of the West hide wonders and terrors unknown to Creation's landlubbers, mortal and Exalted alike. Those who ply the waters of the Great Western Ocean tell tales of ghostly fleets, savage slavers and demon pirates, which all sail the trade routes to threaten the unwary and send them to the ocean bottom.

However, they also speak of lost continents waiting to be rediscovered, beautiful natives waiting to be wooed and First Age treasures waiting to be plundered. Will your crew brave the West's perils to reap its rewards?

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- Mass combat stats for the forces of the Silver Prince, the Lintha Family and other Western powers, as well as dominion stats for the Mandate of Heaven
- Traits for the West's native gods and beasts



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THE COMPASS OF TERRESTRIAL DIRECTIONS, VOL. II

THE WEST™

By ALAN ALEXANDER, ERIC BRENNAN, GENEVIEVE COGMAN,
CONRAD HUBBARD AND PETER SCHAEFER

CREDITS

Authors: Alan Alexander, Eric Brennan, Genevieve Cogman, Conrad Hubbard and Peter Schaefer

Comic Scripter: Carl Bowen

Developers: John Chambers and Stephen Lea Sheppard with John "Bax" Masterson

Editor: Scribendi.com

Art Direction and Book Design: Brian Glass

Artists: Ross Campbell, DPI Studios (with Embrio and Jaysin), Andrew Hepworth, Imaginary Friends Studio (with Junkman, KingMong and Scabrouspencil), Saana "Kiyo" Lappalainen, Pasi Pitkanen, UDON (with Todd Gak, Scott Hepburn, Jorge Molina, Joe Ng, Chris Stevens and Jim Zubkavich) and Melissa Uran

Cover Art: Imaginary Friends (with Sami Basri and Sunny Ghos)

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INTRODUCTION

A ship is a bit of terra firma cut off from the main; it is a state in itself, and the captain is its king.

—Herman Melville

The ocean is deep. Island-continents rise and fall again. The West is the least populated Direction of Creation, and yet the seas are far from empty. The Wyld is always close in the West, and its human inhabitants stretch out lines of trade and commerce between the islands and archipelagos, to defend against the encroaching chaos beyond the world and those who've been touched by it.

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

The Compass of Terrestrial Directions, Vol. II—The West is a setting book, designed to provide players and Storytellers all they need to set games in Creation's oceanic frontier. From the Coral Archipelago's gambling halls through the necropoli of Skullstone, south through the Neck's tribes and the Wavecrest Archipelago's volcano gods, further south through the territories of the Lintha pirates and finally down,

OUR HUMBLEST APOLOGIES

In other publications, we promised this book would contain rules for naval combat. Unfortunately, there wasn't room. This is a book for setting, and when it came time to decide what to keep and what to cut, setting had to win out. Look for full naval combat rules in the

into the depths, to sunken Luthe, this book details the Direction of Creation least explored by mortals and least understood.

Chapter One: A History Written on Water

This chapter covers the history of the West, from the time of Creation's forgotten beginning through all the cataclysms of the past and into the world's troubled present.



Chapter Two: Jewels in the Foam

The Wavecrest Archipelago, the Neck and the culture of the Tya, female sailors who forswear their gender to pursue life on the high seas, represent three of the West's most peaceful and idyllic of societies, but in the Age of Sorrows, peace is relative. Even these jewels of the Western Ocean are shadowed by the horizon's dark tidings, and Wavecrest's volcano gods are ever hungry for sacrifices.

Chapter Three: An Ocean of Silver and Jade

The Coral Archipelago tolerates no weakness. This nation's relentless pursuit of excellence and the dominance of all who surround it—culturally, militarily and financially—leave the rest of the Western nations wary. Sea Lord Nemoran wishes to bring an entire Direction under his heel, and with the Realm faltering, there may be none to stop him. By comparison, the Denzik Merchants pursue trade and fortune with no ill will, spreading the wares of their clients across a great circuit 'round all the waterways of the world. Come, see the Denzik city-ship. No greater concentration of curiosities and treasures exist anywhere else in Creation.

Chapter Four: Mist-Webbed Isles

The Silver Prince, the Skullstone Archipelago's master, claims he's founded a utopia where the living and the dead exist side by side. Skullfolk fear not death, and labor not in life, for the souls of the dead

stay to advise their living relatives while the bodies of the dead perform all the manual labor. But the Deathlord also known as the Bodhisattva Anointed by Dark Waters lies.

Chapter Five: Demon Pirates of the Western Ocean

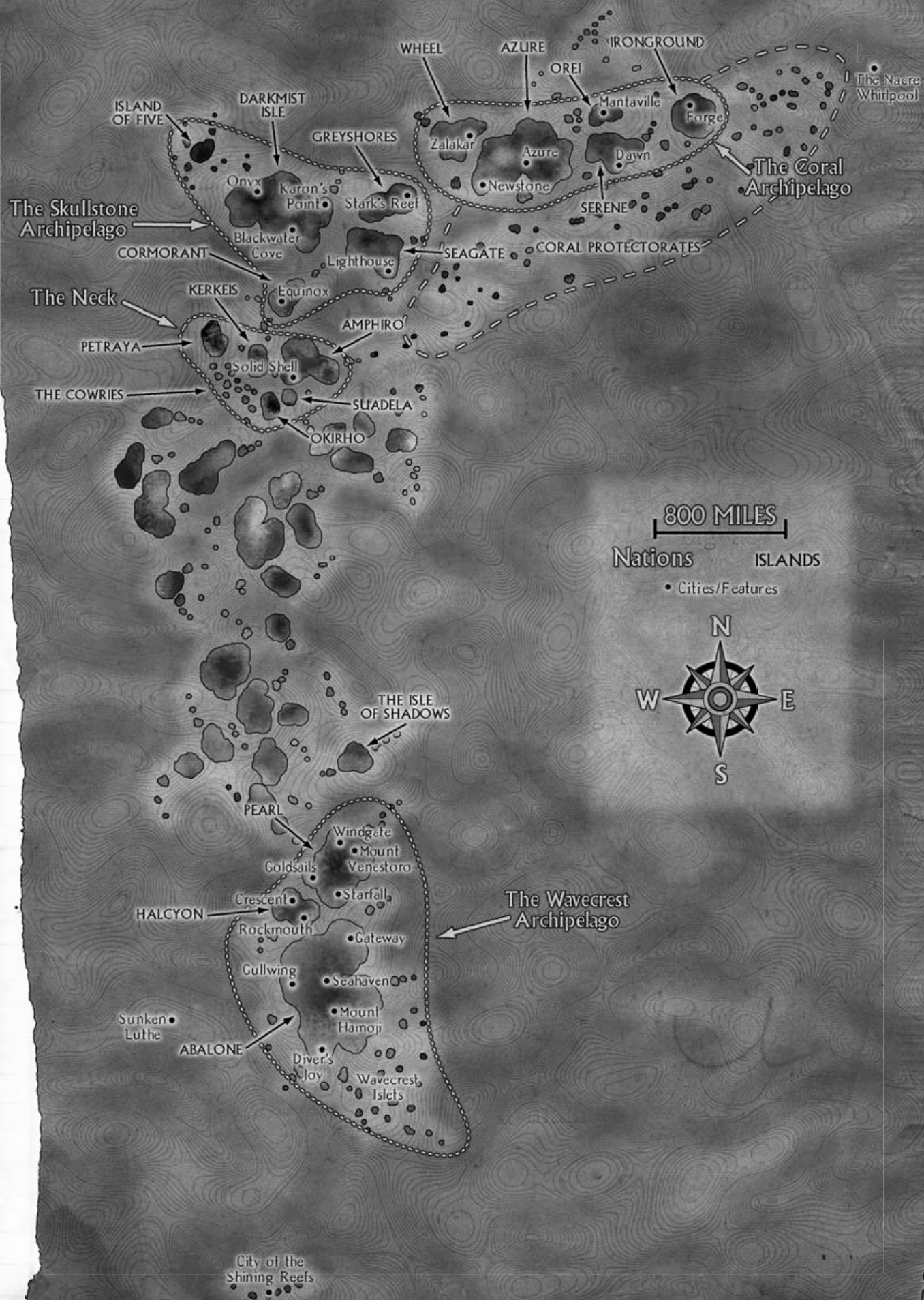
This chapter reveals the origin and activities of the Lintha Family, the most notorious and feared criminal syndicate in Creation. The Lintha claim descent from the Yozi Kimberly, the Sea That Marched Against the Flame. Through her patronage, they spread their demon-cult across all Creation's waters, and with her Chosen, they'll revenge themselves against a world that wronged them at the dawn of history.

Chapter Six: Lost in the Depths

This chapter sheds light on three of the West's hidden societies. In sunken Luthe, Leviathan's scions live out their lives in worship of their Great Whale God, and even today carry out a terrible revenge against an ancient tragedy. In the City of the Shining Reefs, the heart of the pelagial empire beats more slowly every year. Though one of Creation's oldest remaining civilizations, it lies on the verge of extinction.

Chapter Seven: Gods and Monsters of the West

The spirits, heroes and creatures native to Creation's great ocean are allies of great strength and enemies of inescapable tenacity.







CHAPTER ONE

A HISTORY WRITTEN ON WATER

Historians in the West have a few choice sayings about their profession, most of which can be summed up as, “The past is written on water.” It’s not the literal truth, but the meanings are clear and on the mark. Everything of importance in the West occurs on the ocean. The people of the West rise above any trouble, like flotsam after a wreck. Most importantly, the waves wash away what has come before, ensuring that even the greatest tragedies are eventually forgotten. Memory is short in the West; even records carved in stone and metal erode and rust away.


The beginning is, as most beginnings are, clouded in mystery and superstition. Myths abound. From nothing, a sea of lonely fire coupled violently with a being of cold emptiness, and from their union sprang the Western Ocean, which birthed the Blessed Isle. A maiden, abandoned and alone, wept, and her tears filled

the nothingness to create both the ocean and life. The first hero, Au Umba, slew the first god, whose body and blood became the Western Ocean and its islands. The Saigoth Gates appeared and defined their dancers.

These are just the most popular myths. There are many more, disparate and fanciful, sold for a song and held near the heart. Most of them are laughable, and nearly all of them suggest that the Western Ocean preceded or birthed the rest of Creation. The best efforts of the Immaculate Order over more than a millennium could not eliminate these heretical ideas.

PREHISTORY OF THE WAVES

When the sun first dawned on Creation, the rays cast by the sun’s light created the very first jeweled brilliance by reflecting off the waves of the Great Western Ocean. Ancient demons occasionally refer to



this as the “incidental invention of beauty,” a remark of subtle sarcasm. There are other things demons consider beautiful.

On the Origin of the West was a seminal First Age work on the time between nothing and something, now available only in the libraries of Mahalanka, Yu-Shan and the City of the Shining Reefs. The book’s author suggests that the Primordials designed the West with consistency in mind, if not beauty, and shaped the contents appropriately. Coral grows naturally elegant, seaweed dances in the current, fish are as decorous as rainbows, and even the islands serve to accent the morning jewels instead of disrupting them.

Theorists who hold that the Primordials were embodiments of Creation’s aspects rather than direct and intentional creators argue semantics, but usually agree that the forms the progenitors took interacted elegantly by choice and nature. These theorists grudgingly agree, in the way of academics, that this could mean that the West has a propensity toward beauty.

Before the Primordial War, creatures of those immense entities skimmed and scudded the Western Ocean frequently. Primordials seeking distractions from their peers or the Games of Divinity spent time near aspects of Creation similar in nature to them. The Ebon Dragon swam in the ocean’s shadow, the farthest depths where no light shines. Kimberly, the Sea That Marched Against the Flame, sometimes basked upon the surface. Both spawned races of creatures related and beholden to them, and both eventually surrendered to the gods and the Exalted.

WAR ON THE SEAS

The West was always ready for war. As tranquil as the ocean occasionally seems, it is a violent place. Revolt against the Primordials only made the ocean more so, and highlighted the water’s inherent ruthlessness. Storms raged across the entire Western Ocean as uncountable fleets sailed to crush each other. The only calms seen during the War were over the navies of the Exalted, at the gods’ and elementals’ commands.

Fleets of amber resin clashed with fleets of gold and silver. A warship made of a starless night crushed ships ripped whole from green jade . . . and was shattered by black-jade submersibles, invisible beneath the dark waves. Oliphem the Watcher, who only desired the safety of all on the water, was befriended, betrayed and broken. Dragons and worms swam above the ocean’s surface only to be captured by phase-collapsing squid and dragged to watery deaths. Entire peoples and species died. Chosen of the Primordials who had ruled the

oceans and islands without competition fell before the Chosen of the gods.

No one saw shimmering jewels on the water until the last Primordial surrendered.

THE FIRST REALM

Exalted, given Heaven’s mandate over Creation, did not hesitate to rebuild their fleets. Humans can walk over land and mountains, they reasoned, but not on water. It was the Old Realm’s first real frontier, and even while conquering lands in the other directions, the Solars commissioned thousands of ships. Creation’s island and costal cultures have a hundred variations on the proverb, “Make an ally of the sea or feel its knife in your back,” and the conquerors took it to heart. The first new craft launched were trim and quick warships, able to pound an enemy’s shore or deposit hundreds of armed and armored troops to any coast. Aid that pacified the reluctant costal nations was the ocean’s bridal gift to the Old Realm, and the newly formed Deliberative soon wedded the West to the empire.

Strategists suggested annexing the West last. Western nations were in greater disarray than their land-bound counterparts, and the task of rebuilding government and infrastructure would have sorely distracted from uniting the rest of Creation. The West had been ready for war, but not for catastrophe. *Something* happened to the subcontinent of Okeanos, and it tore the land mass apart.

Historians have theories: It was part of the last attack on a Primordial fetich soul. Loyalists to the world’s creators set off some terrible weapon. The last Primordial slain in the War, a name now lost, fell through the sky and pierced Creation there. Whatever the cause, the Western Continent shattered less than a year after the last Primordial’s surrender.

Evidence partially supports the theory that one of the Neverborn, as they would later be called, fell into the Underworld there. Only a vast, partial caldera remained where the continent’s central volcano had once towered over the Western islands. The caldera was shrouded in perpetual shadow not by the walls of the crater, but by a mysterious connection between Creation and the Underworld. This was the first truly new phenomenon since the advent of Creation, and stymied even the greatest researchers of the period. The Solar Deliberative quarantined Darkmist Isle, where the shadowland sat. They were unable to heal the world’s wound, even after later research resulted in sorceries and geomantic techniques that could banish shadowlands from Creation.

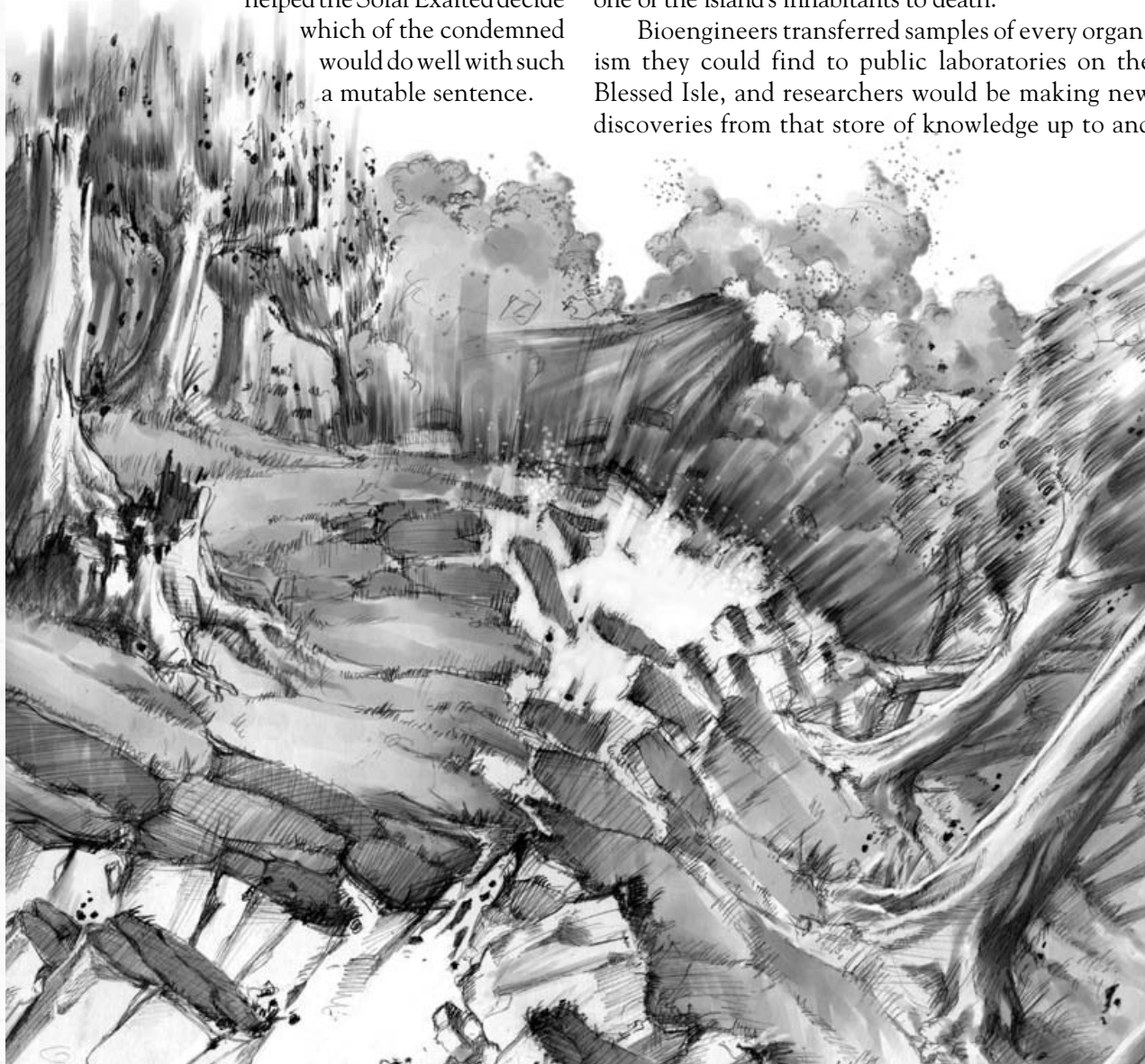
Eventually, despite the enormous distances involved and the reconstructive efforts necessary, the Deliberative moved to absorb the West. All Creation was theirs by mandate, and they claimed it. Troopships refitted after the war carried colonists thousands of miles to the nearest archipelagoes. Fleets of the Old Realm's newest warships accompanied the colonists, there to protect them from hostile natives and to "encourage" those natives toward peaceful integration.


Colonists came from two sources. The first were volunteers hoping to make better lives far from their current homes; some simply hoping to escape the terrors they or their parents had experienced during the War. The others were criminals, condemned to death should they not work hard to be productive and respectable in their new lives. Sidereal advisors helped the Solar Exalted decide which of the condemned would do well with such a mutable sentence.

There were many islands then, and most succumbed to the onslaught of colonists. Maintaining an identity separate from the Deliberative was difficult when all neighboring lands paid tribute and received the empire's protections. Some others had to be forced into submission and policed for two generations before they were truly part of the Old Realm.

Of these, Heartwind Isle and the Indigo Chain were notable cases. The inhabitants of Heartwind Isle possessed advanced biological genesis techniques. Many unremarkable plants and animals hid dangerous toxins, alarms and traps that hindered the invasion. The changes that the isle's inhabitants had made to their own physiology were remarkable and made them deadly saboteurs and often allowed them to commit suicide rather than reveal their knowledge. In the end, the Deliberative put every last one of the island's inhabitants to death.

Bioengineers transferred samples of every organism they could find to public laboratories on the Blessed Isle, and researchers would be making new discoveries from that store of knowledge up to and





past the Usurpation. The military then sterilized Heartwind Isle, though all estimates suggested that at least 0.2% of the millions of adjusted organisms on the island must have survived. Theorists in the last years of the First Age proposed returning to the island for excavations, believing that some of the organisms left behind would be nearly immortal and provide the keys to certain questions left unanswered for millennia. Today, sailors who travel too far West report an island inhabited by thousands of strange creatures; stranger, without any visible mode of locomotion, the island approaches and follows those who see it.

The Indigo Chain of islands provided a different challenge. The archipelago was so known for the famous purple dye the inhabitants produced from a local strain of sea urchin, using a special thaumaturgic ritual. The people were immensely proud of their own culture, and the thought of bending knee to invaders left them in a cold fury. The Deliberative's envoys assured the Indigo Chain that local culture would not be forced to change, but the loss of individuality that other conquests and tributaries had suffered made the people suspicious. As long as they lived among their own kind, and on the islands they had mastered all by themselves, they would never agree to be vassal to the Old Realm.

The solution was to ship every individual native to the Indigo Chain elsewhere in Creation. Most landed on other islands, but tens of thousands ended up on the Blessed Isle or in other coastal settlements. New colonists moved in to take up where the natives had left off, often settling directly into the natives' old homes and running their businesses. Over time, the people of the Indigo Chain became productive members of the societies in which they were placed. Their last defiance, which none of them ever broke, was to never reveal the ritual that created the dye for which they were renowned. It was never rediscovered.

Today, the Indigo Chain is more than a thousand miles west of Skullstone Archipelago and considered by most too dangerous and Wyld-tainted to approach. Secretly, some Guild slavers use the Indigo Chain as place to meet and deal with Western Fair Folk.

THE GOLDEN AGE OF SAILING

With the Old Realm's future secure, the savants turned their attention to more entertaining matters. They refined their warships, giving them the functions they would retain even during the height of the First Age. Form and appearance varied according to popular trends. Exalted engineers created luxurious ocean

paradises that barely resembled classic sailing ships but somehow refused to sink. Personal yachts became popular, then common, among the wealthy.


Watercraft became the efficient and leisurely alternative to travel by skyship. Ships could carry so much with so little fear that the size of merchant fleets shrank by a factor of 100 over the first century of the First Age. VIPs and people of moderate wealth traveled by skyship; wealthy sightseers, poor emigrants and most profitable cargos (especially food) went over the ocean. Even so, travel from the largest archipelagoes to the Blessed Isle (and other breadbaskets, such as the Lap) took a week or two at most.

No longer separated from the main body of the Old Realm, the West saw a boom in population and economy. The powerful claimed smaller islands as private homes and estates; experimental sorcerers and engineers especially coveted isolated cays for their work. Islands that had once operated at the subsistence level became popular vacation destinations for the moderately wealthy, shifting focus to cater to tourists. Cities with enormous dedicated recreational facilities rose.

To reduce the West's growing dependence on imported food, Lawgivers began the program of enriching certain islands. History still remembered then the vast tracts of arable land lost in the eruption at the end of the Primordial War. Importing food made the Western islands seem and feel poor, and it hindered economic redevelopment. Soon, the fast ships of the day were delivering food over hundreds of miles instead of thousands. This civil project gave rise to the Western agricultural powerhouse known today as Wavecrest. The food project also made more abundant certain drugs and poisons unique to the Western archipelagoes, an intended side effect.

It was an idyllic time, the early First Age of the West. Fleets of golden ships sailed to and past the horizons. The enormous *Wyldbriker*-class ship realized fluid chaos into solidity and then shattered it into reality, making Western travel safer and broadening the horizons. Trade ships followed occult patterns to ward off the Wyld, and Creation-engine buoys strong-armed the ocean into order. The Western floating war platform was repurposed as a glorious capital, and christened Luthe. At the time, Luthe's Exalted creators called it the crowning oceanic achievement of their Age.

Finally, the Exalted of the Deliberative turned their full attention to the Western Wyld, and forged from it a second great continent that dwarfed even historical Okeanos. Creation's borders expanded outward, and



the Western archipelagos that had existed up until then receded from prominence. No longer on Creation's edge, they were safe from the Wyld—pacified stepping stones to a vast new fertile frontier. The true height of the High First Age began.

But nothing lasts forever.

USURPATION

The Dragon-Blooded conspiracy to overthrow their Solar masters devastated Western society, economy and geography.

Island laboratories of the Celestial Exalted, popular for secrecy and security, were prime targets for the usurpers to secure, and then potentially investigate. Many were primed to repel all intruders. A number of these private workshops' defensive mechanisms were deadly enough to harm innocent populations despite their isolation.

Anti-dispersion-braided Essence-beams missed attacking ships, instead striking islands hundreds of miles away as collateral damage. Damaged or misprogrammed defense drones sought out "intruders" on far isles and shot them down. Systems designed to siphon Essence from distant demesnes found their power sources running dry and defaulted to draining the life from entire regions. Some were even intentional: at least one paranoid Solar Exalt mined islands containing important military installations near her home. Her automated defense network sent half a dozen islands to the bottom of the sea, with few survivors.

Also difficult to pacify were those naval bases still loyal to the Solar Deliberative. Most important were those built atop demesnes whose manses were remotely tied into the Sword of Creation. These distant war manses were very important during the expansion phase of the first Realm, but had to be secured. Conspirators infiltrated fewer than half the installations before the Calibration Feast of Three Hundred Knives.

The resulting war for control destroyed much. The second Great Western Continent itself was shattered into a thousand thousand islands, massively depopulated. The archipelagos Creation knows today had depended on those new Wyld-forged lands for supplies, and the supplies stopped coming.

Everything broke down. Ships no longer came from the mainland or the Blessed Isle. Trade stopped. Money didn't begin to flow between the West and the rest of Creation for decades. The patterned financial transactions the Old Realm had used to keep the Wyld at bay ceased entirely, and the jade obelisks were displaced or sunk by cataclysm, and weren't strong enough by

THE LOST WESTERN WAR MANSE

In the Far West sits a small island, no more than 10 miles long and five wide. A large fortress covers every last inch of land, and is in turn covered by a thick and waterproof roof of adamant. Communications failed first during the war in the West, leaving the fortress's soldiers alone and confused. One of the first major attacks so disrupted local dragon lines that the manse lost power instantly. Doors designed to resist deep sea pressure shut forever, severing the internal population from the rest of Creation.


All other war manses registered the location as destroyed, so no one ever visited. Only backup systems, including freshwater collectors and air generators, continued to function. The base's intended self-sustainability also served it well, allowing the inhabitants to grow their own food under a sun separated by unbreakable adamant. Dragon-Blooded officers maintained order through extreme and occasionally violent means while waiting for orders or a rescue. That was more than 1,500 years ago.

Only the most daring and ingenious explorers might discover the lost war manse and learn how the inhabitants have changed and how they will react to freedom.

themselves. Out of sight, everyone had put the West out of mind, and the Wyld crept inward, claiming vast stretches of open ocean.

Local governments collapsed, restructured themselves and collapsed again. Most Western rulers had leaned heavily on the stability of the Old Realm for their power. Governors of recreational isles especially found themselves rudderless when they had to actually lead their people. Rebellions were fast and painful, and usually misguided. With no examples of real governance at the local level, the first attempts were clumsy and flawed. Revolution followed revolution, and blood stained the oceans.

Not all the nations of the West fell into chaos, however. Wavecrest's government had primarily concerned itself with the organization and advancement of agriculture, and continued to serve in that respect. The greatest hurdle for them was to overcome the reactionary impulse to store as many years' worth of food as possible; it took the governor years to redirect energy toward building ships and trading food.



Economic stability was not the only casualty of the Usurpation. The geomancy of the West cracked under the strain of the conflict. The West had always been naturally harmonious on the grand scale, but the dragon lines were also tenuous where they stretched between islands. Some thinned, and others buckled under a greater weight of flowing Essence than they had ever before seen. Many snapped completely.

Manses became nothing more than grand buildings with occult symbols and precise, wasted geomancy as the demesnes that powered the manses died instantly. Some exploded in flares of mystical light, completely overloaded by tsunamis of Essence. New demesnes of freakish strength formed in days as dragon lines settled into new positions, and many disappeared shortly after as a new event would again shake the metaphysical landscape.

Islands sank as errant dragon lines, bleeding crackling energy into the material world, lashed through the isles' supporting stone. Wild Essence burned holes in many of the few ship captains who dared the seas at the time, including many brave Dragon-Blooded trying only to reestablish peace.

Afterward, the Essence of the West was temporarily diminished and forever changed. The entire Direction suffered diminished fertility and weakened thaumaturgy for years once the dust settled. Regions without strong dragon lines to start with took longer, even decades, to recover. Places without any calming Essence remained uncontrolled, making the Western Ocean again a Wyld danger. This greatly increased the risk of attempting to establish new trade routes—but it would be those new-forged routes that laid paths for dragon lines across the water.

Most old demesnes became permanently quiescent or remained at a fraction of their former strength. New demesnes caused trouble until available geomancers either redirected the Essence over a greater area or capped them with manses, usually just sophisticated enough to render the demesnes' energies harmless to the populace.

THE SHOGUNATE

Emissaries of the first Shogun eventually contacted the forming and re-forming governments of the West, but the emissaries offered little and demanded less. The Shogunate paid the Western archipelagoes little attention, requiring fealty only in name so that the Shogunate could impress recalcitrant nations in other parts of the world. Emissaries offered in

exchange minor resources, small enough that their loss would not hinder the Shogunate's campaigns in the Threshold mainland but large enough to help the small island nations get back on their feet. Most island governments recognized the farce for what it was and agreed. Those that disagreed lost nothing but a small, one-time advantage.

The Shogunate cemented its rule over Creation in the centuries that followed. The Shogunate then returned its attention to the islands that were, on paper, tributaries. Emissaries found themselves welcomed to self-sufficient island nations, all distinct in culture and government. The same emissaries were killed and chased off the islands when they attempted to assess appropriate current tribute *and* arrears.

War came again to the West, but the Shogunate was half-hearted in its conquest, and the island nations were anything but. Overwhelming odds and superior economy should have won the day within a year; instead, the war dragged on for almost two decades. Damage to the island nations was slight outside of reduced fleets and the legal restrictions set on them by the Shogun as they fell, one by one. In the end, absorption into the Shogunate changed very little about life in the West—these former central provinces, which had once been a frontier, became stepping stones once more for Shogunate attempts to reclaim the dream-touched archipelago remains of the second Great Western Continent.

CONTAGION AND CRUSADE

The West was one of the last places struck by the Great Contagion, and therefore one of the last to recover. Many islands began turning away all foreign ships upon hearing of the sickness that spread everywhere, but by the time word reached the islands so had the disease. Contaminated dragon lines carried the plague to the few scattered islands that avoided all human and animal contact.

The lack of a durable support network was what really made the difference. Unlike in the East, where trade routes exist and will survive regardless of how many walk them, the West's trade is fragile. Western nations could not easily band together and help each other recover after the Contagion had done its work. They were easy pickings for the invading Fair Folk, whose only complaint about the West was that the pickings were scarce. The hard-reclaimed lands west of today's islands finally sunk back into the ocean from which they'd been forged.



RISE OF THE SCARLET EMPRESS

The unnamed soldier in the Imperial Manse saved the West, just as she saved the rest of Creation. Similar to her predecessor, she considered the West secondary to bringing the Threshold mainland under her banner. Both the Empress and the Seven Tigers agreed on the need to conquer the Threshold mainland and the Blessed Isle before looking westward. No people in the West possessed the combination of ambition and resources great enough to be a serious (or even a farcical) threat to the Empress's rule, which was just another reason she could ignore them while laying the foundations of empire.

Darkmist Isle had suffered greatly from the Contagion, and the Fair Folk had paid the island more than its due share of attention. Shadowlands rippled outward from the worst atrocities and, joining, formed the web that remains there today. The Bodhisattva Anointed by Dark Water assumed power almost a century after the Empress drove the Fair Folk away. He dictated the existing structure of citizenship and power, and so the island remains.

In the end, the West became the Realm's mirror of the East. The Empress never conquered the West

because she never tried; the small return would not have been worth the great expense of conquest. Her Scarlet Empire never conquered the East, but not for lack of trying. The great lure of the East's wealth caused the Empire to gnash its teeth many times, but all its legions could only bite off a small portion.

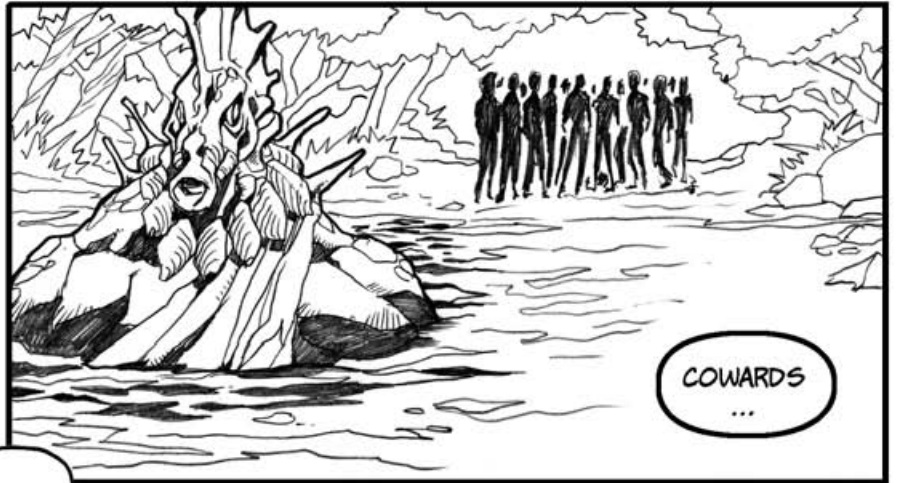
Of all the Western nations, the only significant one to ally itself with the Realm was Wavecrest, but even it had little the Empress wanted. Its largest export was food, which the Realm had in bulk. The nation was peaceful except in self-defense, so it didn't take slaves for the Realm to import. Great Houses purchased Wavecrest properties, though, building enormous villas and injecting jade into the slow-paced local economy.

Her Houses claimed other satrapies over the next two years, moving northward from Wavecrest island by island; the last such was the Neck. Most others were backwaters with nothing to offer save half-hearted allegiance and cowrie shells.

As for Coral, it offered lavish gifts in exchange for independence, and for her own reasons, the Empress acceded. But now the Empress is gone.

TIMELINE OF THE WEST

REALM YEAR	EVENT
12	Leviathan returns to sunken Luthe.
13	The Scionborn are introduced to Luthan society.
37	Wavecrest allies with the Realm.
39	The Realm takes the Neck as a satrapy.
40	The Realm establishes amiable relations with independent Coral.
67	The Realm places a bounty on the Brass Leviathan.
87	The Bodhisattva Anointed by Dark Waters appears on Darkmist Isle.
143	Construction of the Bodhisattva's manse Ebon Skull is completed.
199	The Fair Folk march to war against the pelagial fluted city Lyre of Currents.
243	The Bodhisattva Anointed by Dark Waters commits ritual suicide, promising to return as a prince clad in silver.
402	Tya Edralneth begins the tradition that bears her name.
414	Lintha Ng Hut Dukantha is born.
424	Denzik Badr arranges the formation of the Denzik Merchant Association.
521	The Skullstone Archipelago claims the island of Cormorant, formerly of the Neck.
557	First reported appearance of Demon Captain Kasua.
568	Sesus Marahd and entourage establish a monastery on the Island of Blasphemous Prayer.
592	The Lintha forge a treaty with the Shore Prince of An-Teng.
600	The Denzik city-ship launches.
670	Ten Stripes co-opts the island of Seminare for her social experiment.
677	Wavecrest founds the Western Trade Alliance to combat Coral piracy, and finds much success. Coral's economy enters a long, slow recession.
696	Foundation of the Emissaries of Perfect Water.
720	Immaculate-founded Simenarean rebellion; Ten Stripes puts it down mercilessly.
758	Coral diplomats working under Sea Lord DiBello Gerarde establish new trade routes with the North. Coral economic recession recedes.
759	Sesus Chenow retires to the Neck, concealing his location from other Great Houses.
764	The Silver Prince appears on Darkmist Isle.
765	Avishander Nemoran elected Sea Lord of Coral, and channels the new influx of Coral wealth toward the military.
768	Current day.





CHAPTER TWO

JEWELS IN THE FOAM

THE WAVECREST ARCHIPELAGO


The Wavecrest Archipelago is the largest single Western state. The largest island, Abalone, has a land area of approximately 100,000 square miles, and is the biggest island in Western Creation. The other two main islands both measure more than 5,000 square miles, and the entire archipelago supports a population of over a million people. Located toward the south and at a moderate distance from the Realm, these islands seem to bask in a perpetual verdant, sunny springtime.

Wavecrest is luxuriantly fertile and supplies food throughout the West. The archipelago is a profitable target for pirates and a lure to conquerors. Furthermore, the islands are in constant danger from the volcanoes that scar them and the Wyld zones surrounding those volcanoes. While they are kept in check by a draconian system of human sacrifices, the volcanoes remain a

reminder of the forces of nature that all who dwell in the West must know and fear. Wavecrest's ports and trading ships are civilized and easy-going, but the inner reaches of its islands are wild and untamed, tribal and lethal. Wavecrest may be peaceful and prosperous, but as is the case with all the West, the archipelago has its own dangers.

HISTORY

The Wavecrest Archipelago was not founded, as such; it merely expanded, with savage tribes worshipping the volcano gods and swelling outward into the green land and thriving seas. While there has always been enough food to survive on, the islands were not as fertile as they are now, and the islanders were forced to support themselves by fishing and raiding as well. Different tribes worshipped the different volcano gods and warred on each other. Bounded by the limits of



primitive ships, the tribes directed their aggression at each other rather than outward.

Solar savants and engineers in the First Age sought a way to increase the islands' fertility, seeing Wavecrest as a potential breadbasket that could serve the other Western islands and also supply Solar expeditions further into the West and the deep Wyld. Their efforts, though now lost to history (though see "Volcanic Fertility," p. 27) met with success. However, though this turned Wavecrest's industry from raiding to farming, it didn't dampen the incessant feuding. Tribe still battled tribe, and their numbers grew with the increased fertility that the soil could now support.

The Solars intervened again. Eclipse Caste diplomats called together the volcano gods in a mighty council that left the ground black with obsidian for centuries. The Solars promised that the gods would still receive their sacrifices, but insisted that the gods declare peace between the tribes. The leader of the largest tribe on Abalone was brought forward, clad in a mantle made from garra bird feathers, and surrendered his name to become the Feathered One, who would rule all Wavecrest under Solar guidance. The volcano gods grumbled, but were eventually forced into compliance by Solar eloquence and threats and Sidereal political pressure in Yu-Shan.

It took a while for the tribes to accept peace. Petty wars continued for decades, but attention slowly shifted from internal aggression to external trade. The new fertility of Wavecrest's soil had become a major factor in the West; with distribution coordinated from the Coral Archipelago in the north, and facilitated by First Age creativity, Wavecrest found itself undergoing an industrial revolution. The people developed new ship-building techniques and crew organization schema. The men of Wavecrest became proud of their new standing in the West, while the women found themselves with a higher place in society than most Western women, due to the importance of Wavecrest's agriculture.

The entire West was shaken by the Usurpation. Battles shattered the geomantic network and destroyed surrounding islets. Wavecrest was forced to fend off raiders who saw the archipelago as a soft target and a convenient base. The Feathered One declared allegiance to the Shogunate in hopes of protection, but was disappointed by the lack of actual assistance. The Great Contagion was a disaster. Corpses rotted in Wavecrest's fields, and dead bodies choked the harbors. The volcano gods themselves raged at the devastation to their islands and the invading Fair Folk, and streams of lava flooded across both land and seabed.

With the arrival of the Scarlet Empress, Wavecrest was again quick to swear allegiance, but in return for prompt tribute and undisputed fealty, the Feathered One requested a light hand by the satrap and as much non-interference as possible. The Scarlet Empress readily agreed, having more urgent business with the Scavenger Lands.

Within the last 100 years, Wavecrest has become conscious of the growing threat posed by the Coral Archipelago. What was once simply a matter of pirate raids has now become a full-scale trade war backed up by raiding. In response, Wavecrest originated and still supports the Western Trade Alliance. The recent disappearance of the Scarlet Empress and rumblings of war from the Realm have caused further concern, as has the Silver Prince's appearance on Onyx.

The vast untamed stretches of Wavecrest's interior still nurture tribes that have never seen the sea except in tales, and whose worship of the volcano gods continues unabated by social pressure or civilization. The politicians and merchants of Wavecrest work to solidify their hold on trade throughout the West, while the Feathered One mollifies politicians and negotiates alliances. The veneer of civilization that covers Wavecrest, with its open attitude and friendly reception, is a thin one; at the heart of the archipelago, the volcanoes still burn.

GEOGRAPHY

The Wavecrest Archipelago consists of three large islands, and dozens of tiny islets surrounding them. The little islets lack the extreme agricultural productivity of Abalone, Halcyon and Pearl, but have chosen to ally themselves with the larger islands and be considered part of Wavecrest for two main reasons: improved trade conditions and reduced raiding. Since raiding between members of Wavecrest is illegal (though it does still happen), many local islets join up for protection against their neighbors.

The climate of the Wavecrest Archipelago is mild and pleasant all year round. Rainstorms are frequent but light, and true storms are rare, occurring mostly in winter. Natives shrug the weather off, working in the rain with wide hats of braided leaves covering their heads. Sometimes, at the height of Calibration, it snows over the largest volcanoes; this is considered a good omen for the coming year. On such occasions, groups of priestesses collect snow from the slopes, and scatter it on crowds at festivals.

Wavecrest's intensely fertile soil supports large forests of breadfruit, mangoes, guavas, walnut, mahogany, teak,



banyan, maize, bananas and other fruit trees. Pigs, goats and chickens grow fat on leftovers, and the local fishers bring in fish of all kinds, as well as harvesting kelp and other seaweeds. While Wavecrest's biggest export is food, wood, pearls and coral all come in abundance from the islands and the sea. The one thing Wavecrest lacks is significant metal resources; the islands have some iron and gold deposits, primarily on Halcyon, but have to import most of what they use for shipbuilding, weapons and jewelry.

ABALONE

Abalone is the largest and southernmost of the three main islands of the Wavecrest Archipelago. This island, the home of the Feathered One himself, the ruler of Wavecrest, also serves as headquarters for the Wavecrest Navy and houses the main temple of the priestesses who appease the volcano gods. The volcano Hamoji is at the heart of the island, and a half-dozen other volcanoes are dotted across Abalone, dominating the landscape. The island's forests are mostly located on the western side of the island, facing out toward the deep ocean, and across the center of the island, while the open tracts of farmland lie on the east. While the farmlands are slowly expanding into forest territory, this has not yet become a significant

issue. Wide tracts of tribal territory and Wyld zones lie in the heart of Abalone, despite its cosmopolitan exterior. Dozens of small villages are spaced throughout the island, but the five main cities are all port towns rather than inland ones.

The main cities on Abalone are Seahaven, Gullwing, Gateway and Diver's Joy. The first three are centuries old. Diver's Joy is comparatively new, having grown up around the pearl-diving trade; the Guild is surreptitiously patronizing the town, hoping to build it up into a major center for trade, in order to get a major foothold on Wavecrest and weaken the Western Trade Alliance. Of the other cities, Gullwing might better be referred to as a town, but the inhabitants consider it a city.

Seahaven is Wavecrest's largest and oldest port, lying on the east coast of Abalone. Seahaven contains the Feathered One's palace, the Realm embassy, the Wavecrest Navy headquarters and the biggest prisons on Abalone. The buildings are of stone and wood, faced with tiny nacre tiles in the better part of town and whitewashed in the cheaper districts, and roofed with slate or thatch. The buildings sprawl into large compounds rather than rising to multi-storey heights, and brightly colored awnings overhang the streets

and courtyards. Deep gutters mark the center of the paved streets, dug to carry off the flow of water from the frequent showers. Ancient trees grow on street corners, often serving as important local landmarks. Women walk openly in the streets, and female carters and laborers bring food and timber into the city from farms across the island. The mayor of Wavecrest is Cyretha, a woman from a respected family of farmers, who has managed to win the respect of local sailors by publicly leaving all management of the docks to her male second-in-command, Jathin. Behind the scenes, she and Jathin cooperate, but in public, she disassociates herself from all sea-related business, confining herself to land-related problems and laws.

Gateway lies on the northeast coast of Abalone and serves as headquarters to the Western Trade Alliance. Much of the food that Abalone produces passes through here on its way to other islands. The city is laid out for the convenience of merchants, from the big alabaster-walled trade exchange on the Mormer Promontory overlooking the sea to the wide streets built for loaded wagons to the busy markets, where captains chaffer for cargoes. Gateway is a very cosmopolitan town, capable of handling visitors of all types, from Lintha to deathknights. If the merchants there can't obtain a particular thing, then they'll know who can, or be able to order it from elsewhere in the archipelago. The mayor of Gateway is Petrin Clubfoot, who, due to his deformed right foot, has spent all his life ashore. He is quite adroit at handling merchants and sailors.

Law in Gateway is less harsh than in the rest of Abalone. The normally rapid sentencing and imprisonment of criminals, for possible sacrifice to the volcano gods, caused difficulties with foreign crews and important visitors. The legal system now extracts fines for offenses of lesser assault, theft, damage to property or killing in self-defense. Either the criminal pays the fine himself, or the captain of his ship pays it. If neither can pay, then the criminal is imprisoned in the usual manner. In some cases, if the judge is bribed and the foreign criminal has no important connections, then the criminal won't get the option of a fine.

Diver's Joy, on the southwest of Abalone, is a young city. The actual docks are comparatively narrow, extending some distance out so that they can handle heavy ships as well as small light ones. There are local ordinances forbidding fishing and casual sailing around the pearl beds; the only boats allowed there are the small coracles that the pearl divers use. The town is dominated by the masculine pursuit of pearl diving. Of late, however, sea monsters have been attacking

by night; oyster beds have been found stripped bare, and some pearl divers have gone missing. The Guild has offered to bring in professional hunters and guards, but the mayor (Shamshung, a locally respected elder who retired from pearl diving after losing an arm to a siaka) has so far politely refused.

Gullwing looks out toward the far West and has launched dozens of voyages of trading and exploration into the Wyld—usually Guild-run and Guild-financed, but occasionally organized by adventurous brotherhoods of Terrestrial Exalted. Of late, such expeditions have become few and far between, as both the Guild and the Dragon-Blooded have more immediate uses for their jade and time. Gullwing is also the port that many of the smaller islets to the west of Abalone use when visiting the island, making it one of the most tradition-bound areas of all Wavecrest. While particular islet customs may vary, most islets have strong views on the place of women, the danger of foreigners, the threat of the deep Wyld and the general untrustworthiness of the rest of the world. Visitors from these islets take offense easily and haggle over every coin they spend, or every item they barter. Gullwing also keeps watch for incursions from the Wyld or Fair Folk invasions. Few as these may have been, there are always watchmen in the high towers that crown the port, keeping their eyes on the distant West. Gullwing's mayor is Elsed, a retired ship's captain and explorer. He has an unusually male-heavy personal staff due to the need to deal with islanders from further west.

Mount Hamoji, the central volcano of Abalone, is surrounded by miles of the Wyld's Bordermarches. The caldera is a Middlemarch. As a result, it changes shape, its silhouette on the horizon never constant from week to week (or even day to day during full moons). The Black Temple lies to the east of the Wyld zone and is the main chapterhouse of the priestesses of Wavecrest. Young priestesses are brought there to honor Hamoji (even if this requires sea travel from another island in Wavecrest), and old ones often retire there. The temple, a forbidding edifice of ebony and obsidian, contains worship fanes, holding cells for prisoners, instruction areas for novices and isolated cells for private meditation. The temple is surrounded by farmland cultivated by the priestesses. Many of the priestesses who dwell here are burly, combat-trained women who practice wrestling among themselves, and who are quite capable of managing the struggling prisoners when they are dragged up the volcano. The priestesses keep wards around the edge of the Wyld zone, and patrol regularly to deal with escaped Wyld mutations or dangerous incursions.



HALCYON

To the north of Abalone is Halcyon. Less than a tenth of Abalone's size, Halcyon is an island of breathtaking beauty, filled with gardens and farms, home to thousands of species of flowers and exotic birds, famous for its hospitable inhabitants. Even the volcanoes on Halcyon erupt less frequently than those of Abalone and Pearl. The two islands on either side of Halcyon shield it from storms, hurricanes and raiders, and the island simply enjoys the benefits. Most of the goods that Halcyon produces are shipped to Abalone or Pearl, and then exported outward from there.

Many prominent Wavecrest sea captains have luxurious mansions on Halcyon, with private docks, servants and concubines, away from the hazards and troubles of life on Abalone or Pearl. The inhabitants (and, elsewhere, the Feathered One) are less enthusiastic about foreigners or Exalted buying homes here, but so far, good behavior and financial generosity has quieted any concerns. Peleps Kaizoku Bemantis, a privateer for the Realm with a record of successes against Coral privateers, owns a home here and is locally popular.

However, there is growing ill feeling between the poor who work the farms and the rich who live in the mansions. This was less definite when only Wavecrest captains had mansions here, but over the last century, as foreigners and Exalted began to purchase property on the land or to buy entire plantations and turn them into private estates, the level of animosity has grown. The Guild has infiltrated agents among the laborers in order to stir up discontent, as it has long-term plans to bring a small mercenary army onto the island in order to seize a large area of land and fortify it. The mercenaries will claim to be acting independently but will seize what goods they can and sell them via the Guild, thus damaging Wavecrest's monopoly and increasing the Guild's market share.

Aside from staple crops, Halcyon's plantations produce drugs, such as maiden tea, hashish and coca, as well as a few more exotic Wyld-descended specimens. The plantations are worked solely by women, and the normal feelings about men doing land-based work apply even more strongly here. The plantations are located toward the center of the island, well away from the sea, and are guarded by trained attack dogs and killer apes (gorillas fitted with iron claws and trained to attack strangers) as well as human wardens. Peleps Kaizoku Bemantis sees potential for his House to exploit this industry; he intends to have a fleet of ships from his House raid the island while masquerading as Coral pirates at the

height of the drug-harvesting period. He is unaware of the Guild's plans, as they are unaware of his.

The island has two main ports, as well as the many minor private docks and harbors: Rockmouth on the southeast coast and Crescent to the northeast. **Rockmouth** is the more dangerous of the two ports, due to the neighboring cliffs; only a daring captain would attempt entry during a storm. The mayor of Rockport is Tirello, an optimistic man whose good nature tends to disarm all opposition. **Crescent** is more cosmopolitan, and is used to receiving travelers from outside Wavecrest. Its mayor is Dannisam, a retired captain from the Western Trade Alliance. Though respected for his naval experience, Dannisam is deeply paranoid, seeing Coral spies around every corner, and his recent legal reforms are making Crescent's more foresighted citizens nervous.

PEARL

Pearl is the northernmost of the Wavecrest Archipelago's large islands. Much of the Wavecrest Navy is based here, in expectation of attacks from hostile forces. Besides the usual farms and plantations, and deep jungle interior, Pearl also serves as the training ground for Wavecrest's army and state navy. Young men from across Wavecrest come here to serve for five-year terms, and to learn how to fight. Many trading vessels seek crews trained on Pearl. Pearl also houses the School of Wavecharters, an informal association for training cartographers and navigators. Headed by Belmani One-Eye, the association attracts student from all over the West, and has even been known to take pupils from Coral, if they demonstrate sufficient talent and desire to learn. The one standard is excellence.

The main towns on Pearl are Goldsails, Starfall and Windgate. There are also a dozen volcanoes across the island; the largest is Amanji, but the most notorious is Venestoro. Venestoro is in the north of the island, near Windgate, and incoming sailors have come to navigate by the volcano's plume of smoke. Irritable and always on the brink of eruption, Venestoro requires twice as many sacrifices as any other volcano in Wavecrest.

Goldsails is on the southwest coast of the island, facing toward Halcyon. Goldsails is a quiet port city, enlivened by the frequent arrival of privateers and private craft looking for somewhere to hide. Though Wavecrest's ships are usually traders or navy, a number of pirates and other gentlemen of private enterprise also operate from there. When a privateer is on the run from Coral, or from other nations, Goldsails is a convenient place to shelter. The locals are used

to fencing goods, supplying and mending ships and entertaining privateer crews. The mayor of the town, Orass (or as he is generally known, Orass the Bastard) is an outcaste Wood Aspect whose skill with a bow is legendary. He's held the position of mayor for 50 years and looks set to hold it for another 50. He doesn't tolerate disorder in his town, handing out jail sentences quickly and plentifully. He also loathes the Immaculate Order, but Wavecrest's satrapy status means that he is limited in the actions he can take against them; any Immaculates in town are watched closely by guards looking for an excuse to arrest the monks.

Starfall lies on the southeast of Pearl and is the oldest of the three ports. Legend has it that a star fell there from Heaven, marking the port with a sign from the gods. (According to Sidereal records, there is a starmetal meteor buried somewhere under Starfall, but due to a misweaving in the Loom of Fate at the time, nobody has yet been able to locate the meteor.) The fact that the port is one of the most perfectly formed natural harbors in Creation didn't hurt matters. Most trade to and from the Realm or the South comes in through Starfall, and as a result, there is a heavy Realm presence, which eases the burden on the town guard. The two cooperate well, as the Realm appreciates Wavecrest's tranquility and food trade, and the town is peaceful. The mayor is Erwis Clansten, an old merchant, but he is substantially assisted by Tramnisa, a Tya in her 60s and happy to spend most of her days on shore. Part of her success as Erwis's unofficial assistant lies in her ease at dealing with female Realm representatives or sailors.

Windgate lies on the northwest of Pearl, facing up into the chain of islands that form the Neck. In addition to being a trading center, Windgate also acts as the main port and training ground for the Wavecrest Navy and houses the School of Mapmakers. The shipyards near Windgate are constantly busy, and the town itself is surrounded on the land side by forests rather than the usual farms. Storms are frequent here, and when they blow up, the prevailing wind always blows directly into the harbor, stripping tiles from roofs and flowers from trees. Natives have grown proud of this, and local sailors refer to the wind as "Old Grandfather." The mayor of the town is Ensan Sailmaker, whose family owns one of the biggest shipyards; his second-in-command is Mirosa Woodkin, a woman related to half the local tree plantation owners, who has to struggle to balance the port's needs against the plantations' ability to supply them. The two work well together, but argue frequently and violently.

OTHER ISLETS

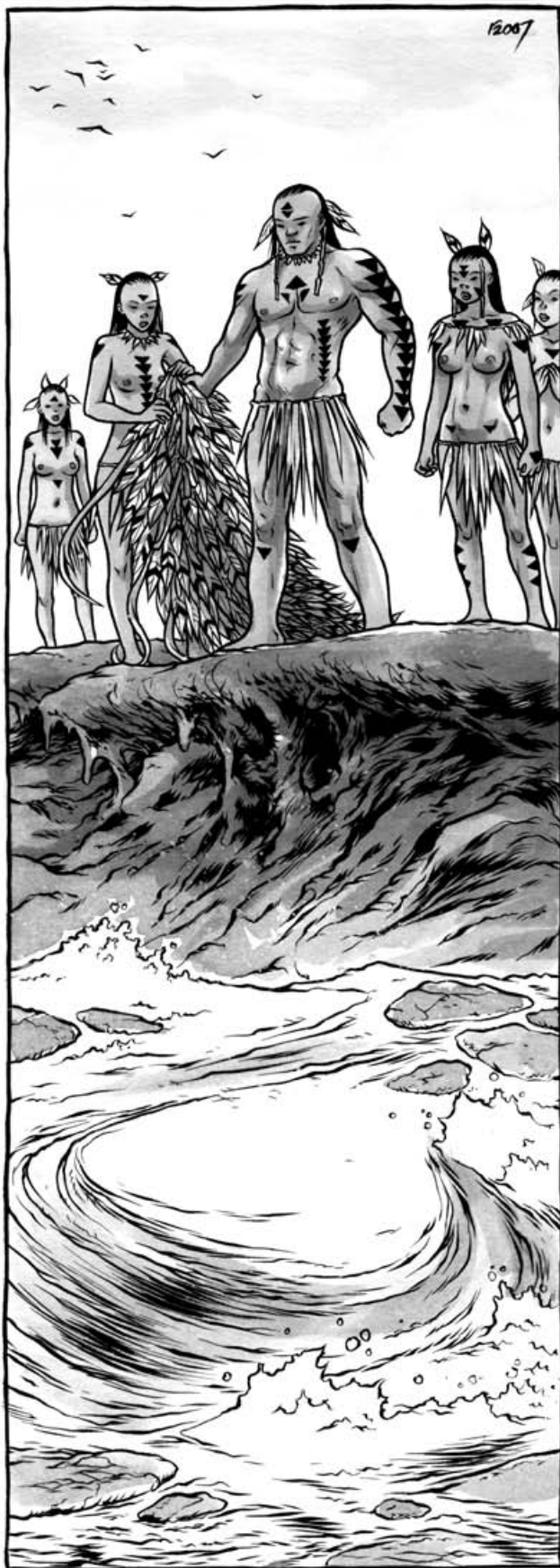
There are a number of notable islands included in the Wavecrest Archipelago, known to outsiders and to Wavecrest traders for the goods they produce or for their particular customs. Among such islets are the following:

- **Balderao**, known for the rugs its natives weave from dried seaweed through a secret process of softening.
- **Small Rock**, where cormorants in all colors of the rainbow can be caught and tamed.
- **Auragik**, where the shells of ormers can be used to trap songs and stories recited into them.
- **Tofanis**, whose sailors have been bringing black jade samples to market for the last year, and who clearly know the location of a large jade deposit.
- **Dreamwhisper**, which teams with spiders, and whose natives keep large spiders as pets, letting them run around on the people's bodies.
- **Strange Goddess**, an island close to a Wyld zone; the islet's natives bring in opaline coral to market but are clearly more Wyld-twisted each time they visit.

ISLANDERS AND CUSTOMS

The islanders of Wavecrest are widely parodied as a nation of farmers, merchants and shopkeepers. Those who do so make the error of assuming that the civilized exterior crust of the islands represents the volcanic interior. Just because the volcano gods were forced to declare a truce, or the outer cities and ports of the islands engage in polite trade, does not mean that the islanders have lost their hot warlike spirit. Grudges are still grudges, war is still war, and insults are remembered and avenged. The people of Wavecrest have been invaded and attacked for their fertile lands too often to ever trust in peace again, and whether they conquer through trade or through force of arms, they intend to be sure of their own safety by dominating the West.

Wavecrest natives tend to have skin ranging in color from bronze to gold, and hair in dark shades of purple and black. In winter, both genders wear sturdy clothing, with canvas jackets over cotton shirts and trousers or dresses; in summer, men often go bare-chested in cotton trousers, while women wear loose skirts and breast-bands, and young children wear simple tunics. Women wear flowers in their hair, and jewelry of coral or pearls with copper, while men prefer heavy necklets or bracelets of copper or gold. Tattoos are common among men and Tya, but are considered unlucky on women.




In casual conversation, Wavecrest natives are polite; this is due to the frequent wars between tribes in the past, when insults were part of the scaling-up from occasional raids to full-time feuds and open warfare. An actual shift from politeness to curt speech or even rudeness is a sign that a Wavecrest native is seriously annoyed and actively escalating the situation.

GOVERNMENT

Government in the Wavecrest Archipelago is fixed by centuries of tradition. The mayors of towns are elected by popular acclamation, and they in turn vote on the selection of the Feathered One. Unpopular mayors quickly find themselves bankrupted as all the trade moves elsewhere. Mayors can be male or female; mayors of port towns are more often male, and mayors of inland towns more often female, but this is not always the case. Tya cannot hold public office, but can serve as private advisors.

The Feathered One is the elected president of the Wavecrest Archipelago. He is named for his ancient cape of office; woven from the feathers of garga birds, and fringed with feathers from seven species of local birds, the cape is said to confer wisdom, honesty and forethought on the bearer. What's certain is that the cape protects the wearer against assassins, becoming as hard as jade (+12L/+14B soak) and bearing the wearer aloft on great feathered wings (flight at three times the bearer's dash speed), all with no commitment cost. The smaller islets have no voice in the election of the Feathered One. Their discontent was suppressed in the past, with the Feathered One and the council seldom mentioning it, and even then always as a minor issue. With the current unrest, some island-dwellers are looking for a position of strength and forming a coalition to gain a voice. Others are even more politically radical (particularly the ones without nearby volcanoes), demanding open voting, representation of all islets and even rotation of the office of Feathered One among the different islands of the Wavecrest Archipelago.

The duties of the Feathered One are to promote commerce, maintain harmony among the islands and select an admiral to lead the fleet in time of war. The Feathered One also acts as official representative for the archipelago's dealings with other powers, such as the Realm or Skullstone. Finally, in the event of continued volcanic eruptions that cannot be quenched by lesser sacrifices, it is his duty to throw himself into the volcano Hamoji at the heart of Wavecrest. The last such sacrifice occurred more



than 50 years ago, but everyone elected to this high office knows that he may be called upon to give up his life for Wavecrest.

The current Feathered One was once named Broknan and was the captain of a successful trading fleet. He was surprised to be elected to his position, but has held it for 10 years, mingling diplomacy with caution and occasional brilliance. He is intelligent and always on the lookout for a good deal. He sees the current situation as full of opportunity, as the unrest and turmoil in the West will allow him to increase its dependence on Wavecrest's supply of food. He has cut back on the regular tribute to the Realm and is plowing most of the tribute into Wavecrest's navy. However, he has been forced to use some of the tribute to put down attempts by smaller islets to claim independence from Wavecrest.

The Wavecrest Council—made up of mayors from more than 100 towns across the archipelago and three senior priestesses—convenes on the death of the previous Feathered One to debate on the selection of a new one. They remain in confinement until they have agreed upon a name. The new Feathered One is not permitted to refuse the honor. He must surrender his previous name and any offices or rank, and come to Abalone at once to take up the position. Although he may keep his wife and family, all his personal money goes into the public treasury. He lives the rest of his life as the Feathered One, unless injury or illness makes him mentally unfit for the position—and in that case, many previous Feathered Ones have chosen to throw themselves into Hamoji. There is no political route for removing an unsuitable or incompetent Feathered One. However, if his actions threaten the safety of the archipelago (as opposed to mere private debauchery) then the volcano gods, spurred on by the prayers of their priestesses, will demand his sacrifice.

LAW AND CRIME

The justice system of Wavecrest is an outgrowth of the sacrificial customs, designed to provide the necessary human material. Anyone convicted of a crime more serious than public rudeness must spend time in the local prison. Terms range from a week for petty theft or minor vandalism to years for such crimes as murder, treason or piracy. (Piracy against Wavecrest or Wavecrest's allies, that is; piracy against enemies is heroism, not a crime.) The head of the town guard in each town is responsible for the prisons as well as for maintaining law and order.

The prisons are clean and safe, and the convicts well fed, since the volcano gods take offense at blemished or mistreated sacrifices. In the past, when prison guards were caught abusing prisoners or stinting food to line their own pockets, the prison guards themselves became sacrifices. When the volcanoes begin to fume and mutter, the priestesses come to choose sacrificial victims. Serious offenders are picked before minor ones, but the prisons can be swiftly cleared of residents if the volcanoes are particularly active. Only the end of a prisoner's term can save him from this horrible death. As few locals wish to risk being fed to the volcanoes, the people of Wavecrest are unusually law-abiding. To attempt to escape from prison, or to assist in such an escape, is a serious crime that automatically receives a penalty of a year in prison (or an extra year, for prisoners still serving their sentence).

If a victim is found to be innocent after he was sacrificed, then the priestesses of the volcano that he was thrown into pay restitution to the victim's family. Traditionally, no punitive action is taken against the guards—an attitude that has caused riots in the past, followed by mass jailing and further sacrifices.

All forms of drugs are legal in Wavecrest, and many types are grown on Halcyon and shipped out from there. However, the offense of "reckless endangerment of others while incapable" carries a short prison term, and no drugs are available inside the cells. An area of each prison is traditionally reserved for those suffering from withdrawal symptoms.

In addition to the standard docking fees, the Wavecrest government takes a flat one percent tax off the top of all transactions. Tax fraud is an automatic jail sentence ranging from a week to a month. The government currently puts much of the money back into public works, such as road-building, dock repair, sanitation and ship-building. Some Feathered Ones in the past have used the tax monies for their own self-indulgence, and traditionally, no one speaks against this practice, so long as the Feathered One is willing to go to the volcano if he is called to do so.

Town and dock guards keep order in the more civilized parts of Wavecrest, and impromptu militias or tribal war bands in the more agricultural or savage areas. Rustics are supposed to drag criminals to the nearest town for formal arrest, but are likely to deal with them informally by "fining" them of everything they possess and then either chasing them out of settled areas or throwing them into the nearest volcano on the principle that the gods never object to extra sacrifices.





ESPIONAGE

Calathis, head of the town guard in Seahaven on Abalone, is also responsible for Wavecrest's spy service, the Obsidian Blade. Some agents of the Obsidian Blade are well known, while others (notably the ones who operate outside Wavecrest, and even in the Coral Archipelago) are top secret. Calathis practices thaumaturgy and has persuaded a number of air and water elementals to carry messages to his network.

Other nations also have their spies in Wavecrest, ranging from the official staffs of various diplomatic embassies to those posing as sailors and merchants. Calathis has identified some and takes care to feed them the information that he wants them to know; in other cases, he arranges for accidents, or frames them for crimes and then leaves them to serve out their term in prison, and hopefully be first in line for the volcanoes. He isn't aware of Koigure, the Coral operative who works in one of Pearl's biggest shipyards; Buodona, the Skullstone woman who is a seamstress in Abalone and works for many of the highest-ranking priestesses; or Per Dimmal, an agent of the Realm's All-Seeing Eye who has infiltrated the Feathered One's private accountants.

RELIGION

Worship divides along gender lines. The major protective deities of Wavecrest are the volcano gods on land and the spirits of the sea and sky. While both genders can pay casual respect to either group, serious worship of the volcano gods is carried out by women, while men honor the ocean and weather spirits.

The volcano gods are worshipped as a family of brothers, all turbulent and bad-tempered, needing to be constantly propitiated so that they will not consume the archipelago in flaming lava. Hamoji is the chief of the volcano tribe, but the populace honors all the named volcanoes around Wavecrest in daily prayers, led by the local priestess if one is in the area. In contrast, Wavecrest has no specific oceanic patron; the inhabitants merely pay respect to minor divinities when they are encountered. It's the responsibility of a ship's captain to make the proper sacrifices or intone the correct prayers and appease dangerous spirits.

THE PRIESTESSES

The priestesses of the Wavecrest Archipelago have two main tasks: firstly, keep the volcanoes appeased through prayer and worship so that they won't erupt, and secondly, sacrifice victims when the volcanoes do erupt in order to calm them again. The priestesses also placate Wavecrest's little gods and elementals, but

most of Wavecrest's spirit courts are kept in check by the volcano gods. The order of priestesses as a whole wields considerable political influence, and three of the senior priestesses advise the Feathered One. While the priestesses possess a main temple near Hamoji on Abalone and small shelters or shrines near all the volcanoes on the three islands, many priestesses are itinerant wanderers, traveling barefoot across their home islands. Some priestesses even have thaumaturgical training. Priestesses may not marry, but are free to sleep with whomever they wish; touching a pregnant priestess brings good fortune, and many families vie to adopt the child of a priestess. A priestess cannot keep or raise her own child, though she can visit her child if he or she has been adopted elsewhere. If a priestess is caught trying to keep her own baby and raise the child, then both she and the child are cast into a volcano.

Priestesses are highly regarded, but becoming one is difficult and dangerous. Entrance to the order is undertaken as an apprenticeship: a woman seeking membership must gain the permission of a priestess and then travel with her until her mentor considers the novice is ready to be consecrated to the volcano gods. This involves spending a day and a night praying on the brink of a volcano; perhaps two in every 10 novices die at this stage, by falling into the lava, being poisoned by fumes or being attacked by creatures from neighboring Wyld zones. Priestesses never travel by sea if they can possibly avoid it. Journeys out to the small volcanoes on neighboring islets are considered unlucky for the priestess herself and the men sailing the boat; such missions are usually given as penitential assignments. This means that small islets end up with priestesses working off penances or lacking in application.

THE IMMACULATE ORDER

Immaculates naturally dislike the current religious state of affairs in Wavecrest, and missionaries point out how much better life would be if the volcano gods lived in subjection to the Terrestrial Exalted. The Scarlet Empress refused to allow more than a show of proselytizing, being more interested in maintaining Wavecrest's food output (and its volcano-induced fertility) than bringing Wavecrest into the Immaculate faith. In her absence, however, the Mouth of Peace is permitting more and more missionaries to travel to Wavecrest, and civil unrest is rising as the Immaculate monks spread seditious heresy and the volcano gods demand more sacrifices in return for the Immaculate insults.



GENDER IN WAVECREST

As elsewhere in the West, women are generally forbidden to participate in seagoing ventures. However, the Wavecrest islands are home to substantial land-based craft industries and agriculture, activities at which women are believed superior. This division of labor separates the lives of men and women in Wavecrest, and members of each sex hold power in their own sphere. The land-based industries are important enough that women have significant influence. Men are sailors, traders, fishermen, divers, marines, shipping agents and couriers, or follow similar trades that involve the sea. Although men and women share the land-bound jobs, women make up the majority of jewelers, blacksmiths, shopkeepers, merchants, tavern owners, cooks and farmers. Unless men are unusually skilled or successful at such professions, or clearly incapable of performing seagoing work, men who hold “landlubber” jobs are viewed as lacking or inferior. Female visitors to the islands are treated as Tya (pp. 38-41), unless the visitors give significant evidence to the contrary.

Wavecrest men and women view themselves as enlightened in allowing the genders to succeed in their proper spheres. The inhabitants point to the existence of the Tya, who originated on Wavecrest, as proof of the islanders’ liberal attitudes. And there are good reasons why women should not be sailors; the existence of entities such as the storm mothers, who actively hate attractive women, is only one of many justifications. Wavecrest islanders self-righteously despise the Coral Archipelago attitudes toward women, viewing such ideas with as much scorn as the people do anything else from Coral.

After centuries of devotion to jobs such as farming, carting and smithing, the ideal Wavecrest woman is well built and muscular. Slender beauties are viewed as good for nothing except bed and ornamentation; a Wavecrest man wants a woman who can manage a productive job and bring crops from the land, and who feeds herself and her family well. Corpulence is not applauded, but muscles and buxom health are what a man expects to see in a woman. Captains and sailors may have ethereally delicate concubines, but the men marry strong Wavecrest women.

SEX AND MARRIAGE

Wavecrest has always been a polygamous society, with one man maintaining as many wives as he can afford. Some men prefer to have a different wife on each island, so that wherever they are, they’ll have a home to go to, while others have several wives living

together in a single household; the longest-married wife has authority over the other women. Many of the old farming families work this way, with the wives cooperatively looking after the land while the husband goes out sailing. Men marry early in the hopes of siring children; women usually become established in trade or farming before marrying, so that they can support themselves in their husbands’ absence. This results in young men marrying older women, which helps reinforce women’s power in society and contributes to the relative equality between the sexes in Wavecrest. The woman has experience that the man lacks, and he must depend on her to support and guide him. Same-sex relationships are common, but marriage is to the opposite gender.


This version of polygamy can lead to disagreements about the legitimacy of children born while the husband is away. There are two degrees of legitimacy in a family; the first is children who are acknowledged by both the husband and a wife, and the second is children who are acknowledged only by a wife. Children who are acknowledged only by a wife are known as “Secondborn” (or, as a derogative, “tidesweeps”), and are often badly treated inside the household and forced to make their own way in the world. Secondborn have difficulty finding decent marriages, entering into apprenticeships, being accepted as priestesses or becoming crew on good ships. Secondborn are often bitter and resentful, and many emigrate to the Neck or to Skullstone, or even to Coral. A number of Coral’s most feared pirates were once Secondborn. It is inauspicious for an unmarried girl to be pregnant, unless she is a priestess, so her family will usually arrange a quick marriage.

VOLCANIC FERTILITY

The islands of Wavecrest were once nearly as barren as the Coral Archipelago, providing the bare minimum to sustain a meager native population. Using techniques of sorcery and engineering lost to the modern day, the ancient Solar savants built great engines from the magical materials and sank the engines deep in the volcanoes that studded the area. These geomantic anchors created synthetic dragon lines that linked the engines across the archipelago. Essence from demesnes that were considered unusable due to their location (underwater or on isolated islets) was diverted to help establish the network.

The sorcerous engines converted the ferocious elemental Essence of the volcanoes into tides of fertility, which spread through the surrounding islands. Within a generation, Wavecrest was able to support five times as

WAVECREST



many islanders, and the people began to trade with the further islands as a nascent power in the region.

The sorcerous engines needed little external regulation and produced huge amounts of Earth- and Wood-resonant Essence. In an unexpected side effect, excess energy warped the areas around the volcanoes into Wyld zones; the Solar savants added cut-in motonic links to the system to drain and restabilize the afflicted areas.

The cataclysms of the Usurpation seriously damaged this geomantic web. Anchors were shaken, power links were cut off or overloaded and the whole drainage and restabilization system was shattered beyond repair. The Dragon-Blooded were aware that the early First Age Solars had terraformed the islands, using Wyld-stabilizing Creation engines, but the precise mechanics were beyond the grasp of Shogunate sorcerer-engineers. In any case, few had the time or the funds to investigate an area that was still productive.

As the centuries went by, the land became more and more fertile, and less power was needed from the volcanic engines to maintain the land in that state. As a result, the level of Wyld energies rose, and the Wyld zones slowly expanded, while the volcanoes themselves also became more active. Wyld zones now surround all the volcanoes, including those on the three main islands of Wavecrest and those on nearby islets. This has resulted in a small but constant bleed of Wyld-tainted plants and animals into the native ecologies.

The constant power flux among volcanoes has had some unusual effects on the local area, in addition to the Wyld zones that surround the volcanoes. Coral reefs have grown along the synthetic dragon lines between the volcanoes, rising from the ocean bed to the point that some of them have become visible on the surface. While the reefs themselves are not actually Wyld zones, the reefs are the result of motonic overspill, and plants and fishes can be found there that occur nowhere else in Creation. If the diagram formed by the reefs and volcanoes were to be surveyed from above, a savant with appropriate skills (Lore 3 or higher) could map the volcanoes with buried geomantic anchors, and possibly reverse-engineer the spells that bind the whole structure together.

From time to time, Wyld beasts escape the zones surrounding the volcanoes and enter the uninhabited forests that cover much of the three islands. A few even manage to mate with local animals and reproduce. Whenever such creatures are sighted, the priestesses and their heavily armed assistants go out to hunt down

the beasts. Substantial bounties also attract the islands' most daring hunters, as well as thrill-seeking Terrestrial Exalted from the Realm. Similarly, Wyld-twisted creatures escape into the sea from the small volcanic islets and must be hunted down by the Navy or freelancers.

THE INTERIOR

The three main islands of Wavecrest cover hundreds of square miles of interior jungle and volcanoes that outsiders never see. The civilized farms that extend inward from the coast never touch the deep forests. Traders must journey with armed escorts between the tribes and across the jungle, and many never emerge. Constant minor wars and feuds continue, despite the peace that the volcano gods were forced to impose. The only ones who can journey safely through the deep interior of Wavecrest are priestesses and those whom the priestesses escort. Merchants come here, and explorers, and Dynastic hunting parties, but the area is far from safe.

Not only does the jungle contain its own native hazards—giant apes, leopards, flesh-eating bats, swarms of ants, killer bees, carnivorous plants and others—but the Wyld zones that flourish near volcanoes spawn their own dangers. Even though the priestesses and the tribes that live nearby do what they can to contain the zones and prevent dangerous creatures escaping, the priestesses and tribes are far from successful.

The tribes have no political power at the moment, since they are scattered and feuding with each other; the Feathered One and the priestesses work to keep it that way, in order to maintain their own political dominance. Wavecrest is the West's breadbasket. If the tribes united, they could destroy the West or lend it an army.

THE NAVY

Wavecrest's navy numbers more than 500 ships, and is currently expanding, as the Feathered One seizes the opportunity to direct tribute funds into the naval purse. Since smuggling is not a major issue, the Wavecrest Navy's main duty is to protect the inhabitants of Wavecrest from all the threats that the Western Ocean holds. The rivalry between the Navy and the Coral pirates in particular is intense and vicious. Ten of the Navy ships are First Age trading craft, which have been adapted to military purposes and fitted with flame cannons; the Feathered One reserves these as an emergency strike force. Other First Age ships that no longer function are currently stored in caves on Abalone, guarded in the hope of eventual repair.



All sailors and officers of the Wavecrest Navy are male or Tya. Promotions are at the whim of the captain, and while theoretically they come from merit alone, nepotism and favoritism are rife in practice. In times of crisis, the Feathered One appoints an admiral to command the fleet, but normally, there is no single commander, only the separate captains, who are left to coordinate their actions as seems fit to them. The Navy consists of 100 triremes, 300 biremes and various small craft. In the case of emergency, the Western Trade Alliance would be prepared to assist with battles or evacuations.

Captain Buruku is the first among equals in Wavecrest's fleet. The Feathered One takes Buruku's counsel, and the captains listen to his orders. If war breaks out with the Coral Archipelago, he is the obvious choice to be the next admiral. He is six feet eight inches tall and massively built, with beautiful bronze skin and purple hair; men quiver in fear and respect in his presence, while women blush at the sight of him. It's obvious that he's God-Blooded, as he radiates a power that a normal mortal simply cannot match. Women and men flock to him; he has no interest in the former.

CHILD OF DIVINITY

Buruku isn't just any god's child; he is the son of the god Hamoji. Hamoji has seen the growing power of the Coral Archipelago's fleet, and wished to provide a worthy warleader for the people of Wavecrest. He came down from his volcano in human form and coupled with 100 of the most beautiful priestesses; 10 sons were born, and the 10th was Buruku. The other nine sons were tainted by the Wyld energies surrounding the volcano, and when they reached adolescence, they fled into the Bordermarches around Hamoji, lurking there to await their father's commands.

RELATIONSHIPS WITH OTHERS

Wavecrest views the Coral Archipelago with long-standing vigorous distrust and hatred; Wavecrest islanders see the inhabitants of Coral as nothing more than a pack of raiders who constantly attempt to steal Wavecrest's food and openly proclaim their intent to conquer. Any sign of Coral aggression toward anywhere else in the West is viewed as the next step in a grand plan of conquest against Wavecrest. The Feathered One and his council are working to increase the Wavecrest

Navy's size and power, on the assumption that Coral is taking advantage of the Realm's inattention and doing the same.

With the sudden rise of the Silver Prince, Skullstone is currently an unknown quantity. Wavecrest lacks its customary leverage when dealing with the Deathlord and his nation, since the dead don't need to eat and the living in the area have enough to survive on. Although the Silver Prince shows no immediate signs of animosity, the Feathered One and his council are wary of the Deathlord and his agents. The fact that the Silver Prince refrains from allying with the Coral Archipelago is small consolation.

The Neck and Wavecrest deal well together, though the Neck has little that Wavecrest actually wants. Still, the two nations maintain an alliance and mutual peace.

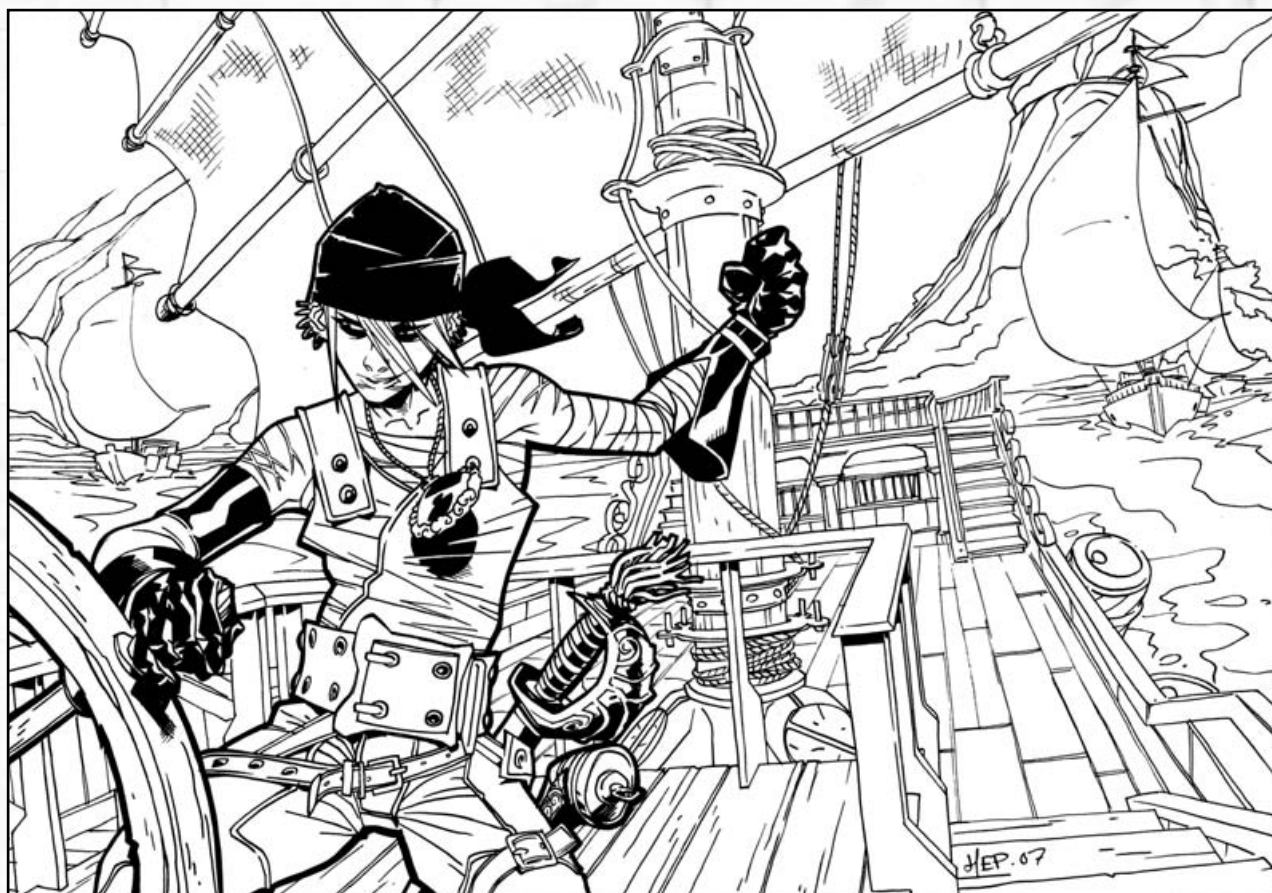
THE WESTERN TRADE ALLIANCE

The Western Trade Alliance is based in Abalone, spreading out northward into the Neck; the Trade Alliance's members deal on a daily basis with raiders out of the Coral Archipelago. The sailors of the Trade Alliance are among the finest-trained combat sailors in the world, and certainly are among the most experienced.

The Trade Alliance specializes in fast ships and light cargos. Not even the Guild itself has a higher success rate for running pirate blockades. The Trade Alliance favors single, unescorted ships that can outmaneuver pirates. This makes Western Trade Alliance ship captains independent and creative thinkers. They have fewer than 150 ships, all of them small and fast. What the captains lack in volume, they make up in sheer audacity, and there is a saying in the West that all their sailors are men because only a man has the balls to be a Western Trade Alliance sailor. (This proverb aside, the alliance *does* count Tya amongst its members.) Fifty of the ships are rigged blue-water merchants and 30 are biremes; the remaining vessels are smaller, faster craft, such as fast couriers.

Unsurprisingly, there is a rivalry between the Coral pirates and the merchants of the Trade Alliance. While there is professional respect between the two naval forces, and pirate captains have been known to let Trade Alliance ships go (minus their cargoes) if the Trade Alliance captains were particularly clever, both sides have spilled more blood than can be measured.

The leader of the Western Trade Alliance is the renowned Master Ciore, famed as one of the most skilled naval commanders of all time, and notorious



as one of the most inept hand-to-hand fighters in the world. A slightly plump man who loses his breath at the slightest exertion, he has tanned skin, sun-bleached hair and dark eyes. A born sailor and a natural tactician, he comes across in person as pleasant and rather harmless—except during naval engagements. His men love him, and most would lay down their lives for him in a heartbeat.

EXALTED IN WAVECREST

Terrestrial Exalted are frequent visitors to Wavecrest, and the population is accustomed to the Exalted's powers and behavior. The question of visiting Dynasts who commit crimes was resolved by the decree of the same Feathered One who made Wavecrest a Realm satrapy. He declared that no Exalted could be sacrificed to the volcanoes, since they were already divinely chosen and thus belonged to the gods who had selected them. Dynasts who commit crimes are fined rather than imprisoned, and reported to the Realm satrap if they refuse to submit to judgment. Outcastes are regarded as unusual but acceptable, and some have risen to high office—though none yet to the rank of Feathered One.

Celestial Exalted are regarded with far more trepidation, not to say outright terror. If they are setting up a permanent base, then word is passed to the satrap with a request for Dynastic assistance, but if they are merely passing through, then Wavecrest islanders are likely to give the Celestial Exalted anything they may ask for, in order to get rid of them. If the local satrap or any of his staff learn of the Celestial Exalted's existence, the satrap is apt to attempt the organization of an impromptu Wyld Hunt from amongst whichever vacationing Dynasts are available—but he's aware he cannot expect timely aid from the Realm and may be open to looking the other way if the Anathema leave quickly. The volcano gods themselves have a long-standing grudge against the Solars, but are still bound by the oaths that the Eclipse Castes extracted from them centuries ago. Abyssals receive an unusual degree of tolerance, since they are assumed to be from Skullstone, and thus normal visitors rather than deathly invaders. The Lunars amongst the inner tribes haven't made themselves known as of yet.

WAVECREST AND THE REALM

Wavecrest is a satrapy of the Realm, but is ruled with a very light hand. Wavecrest provides a yearly tribute of

goods and jade, officially (on Wavecrest) gifts from the republic of Wavecrest to the Realm out of respect and solidarity. This legal fiction, and the fact that Wavecrest is far from a threat, kept the Scarlet Empress content and allowed Wavecrest to save face. With the Empress gone, Wavecrest's "gifts" are now less generous. The laxity over the terms of Wavecrest's satrapy means that the local Realm satrap (Mnemon Dithrem, a noisy and undiplomatic Water Aspect whose sailing abilities have made him undeservedly popular) has less leverage with which to threaten. The Feathered One intends to reestablish full tribute and make generous gifts to whoever comes out on top of the building power struggle in the Realm, as soon as someone does.

THE CURRENT SITUATION

The Feathered One (and indeed, most of Wavecrest) can see that the Realm is on the verge of civil war. The Feathered One doesn't want to get involved. War with the Coral Archipelago, or with Skullstone, is far closer on the horizon, and potentially far more dangerous.

Civilized Wavecrest stands behind the Feathered One. Most of the captains and mayors can see that widespread war will be bad for business. If necessary, Wavecrest will pull back and retrench, to protect itself, even if this may cause famine in much of the West; but for the moment, business is normal, and everyone is keeping a weather eye on the horizon.



THE GULL'S TALON

Description: A group of five lightweight ships that serves as a fast-moving task-force for Wavecrest's navy, working on the in-fast, out-fast principle, then leaving the larger ships that come

behind to do the heavy work.

Commanding Officer: Captain Ballash Manhammer, on the Silver Gull

Armor Color: Gray and blue

Motto: None

General Makeup: Five ships, each carrying 40 sailor/marines; unarmored, but carrying swords, daggers and lightweight throwing spears

Overall Quality: Excellent

Magnitude: 4

Drill: 3

Close Combat Attack: 4 **Close Combat Damage:** 3

Ranged Attack: 4 **Ranged Damage:** 2

Endurance: 7 **Might:** 0 **Armor:** 1

Morale: 2

Formation: Relaxed

The Wavecrest Archipelago, a Magnitude 6 Dominion

Military: 3 **Government:** 3 **Culture:** 3

Abilities: Awareness 4, Bureaucracy 3, Craft 4, Integrity 3 (Religious Edict 3), Investigation 2, Occult 3 (Supernatural Etiquette 3), Performance 2, Presence 4, Stealth 2 (Spies 2), War 3

Virtues: Compassion 3, Conviction 4, Temperance 4, Valor 3

Virtue Flaw: Temperance **Current Limit:** 4

Willpower: 7

Bonus Points: 30 **External Bonus Points:** 4

Notes: The Feathered One and Buruku are sorcerers with legitimacy, while several of the mayors and sea captains are savants. Wavecrest's bonus points provide a dot each of Compassion and Conviction, two dots of Performance, and its specialties. The external bonus points provide a dot of Awareness. In the event of a Limit Break, Wavecrest vastly increases its rate of sacrifice to the volcano gods, potentially leading to riots and civil unrest.

THE NECK

The Neck is the northernmost Western satrapy of the Realm, and the second largest after Wavecrest. The Neck is what most people think of when they imagine the West: a chain of small peaceful islands whose inhabitants survive by fishing and gathering kelp. The tribes of the Neck have lived in relative harmony with the sea that surrounds them for more than two thousand years. Becoming a satrapy of the Realm has done little to change the lifestyle of these tribes, and their willingness to provide regular tribute belies centuries of activity that the Immaculate Order deems heresy. Nevertheless, a long line of obsequious chieftains, annually proffering token payments of coral and cowry shells in exchange for relative autonomy, has succeeded in blunting Realm interest and obfuscating the Neck's divine dalliances.



HISTORY

In ancient times, the isles now known as the Neck and the Skullstone and Coral Archipelagos were part of a massive island called Okeanos, which was destroyed by a great catastrophe. The great island shattered, huge swathes sinking forever beneath the waves, and only the highlands and mountains remained. According to legend, the Ocean Father favored Okeanos, and partisans of the Neck claim that being the southwestern tip of the ancient isle made their lands the most blessed of all. The people of the Neck still call their home islands Okeanos, and respond to “the Neck” as the nomenclature of outsiders.

The broken islands of sunken Okeanos retained the interest of the Solar Deliberative only long enough for them to mount underwater retrieval expeditions and quarantine Darkmist Isle (see p. 67). Luthé’s decommission and periodic fighting with the Lintha largely turned their eyes to the southwestern ocean, with most of their remaining Western attention paid to efforts to expand Creation into the Wyld.

The Usurpation scarcely raised the importance of the region, though the Usurpation led to changes. During the Shogunate, Western Dragon-Blooded favored the fertile isles of the Wavecrest Archipelago as launching points for attempts to resettle the shattered Great Western Continent. As Wavecrest was conquered by a succession of daimyos, a few tribes fled north to settle the remnants of Okeanos. Fighting erupted between these emigrants and those who already held the northern isles. Whether the newcomers ultimately triumphed, native groups drove the newcomers out or the two groups joined together, a patchwork of semi-antagonistic cultures evolved. Raids upon nearby isles were common. Too divided to present a threat and having little to offer, the northwestern islands were generally ignored by the Shogunate.


The Cyanin tribe eventually held sway over six large islands—Amphiro, Suadela, Kerkeis, Petraya, Okirho and Cormorant—and more than two dozen smaller habitable islands. The tribe dominated the native Smaragdi and Squalus tribes, and allied with the Porphura, who were given control over Okirho, and the Tautoga, who seized Cormorant. This confederation called itself Okeanos, after the sunken land from which the confederation sprang. If not for the Great Contagion, the Shogunate would ultimately have crushed the rising nation. Instead, the Wyld washed away vast expanses of the West while the populations of its enduring islands withered before the plague or disappeared into

the clutches of raiding Fair Folk. Cormorant was lost to the expanding shadowland of Darkmist, and many smaller isles vanished entirely. Driven to the brink of extinction, the remaining tribes threw themselves upon the mercies of the gods of the sea.

When the Scarlet Empress ascended her throne and sent her Dragon-Blooded agents to turn the Threshold states into tribute-paying satrapies, she referred to the isles of the West as “that serpentine archipelago that will become a leviathan if left to its own devices.” Cartographers charting Creation’s Wyld-torn shorelines sometimes remarked upon the isles’ physical resemblance to the Empress’s metaphor. Lying at a narrow bend in the long Western chain, connecting the bulk of Skullstone and the Coral Archipelago with Wavecrest and its stretch of northern neighbors, the isles of those who still called themselves Okeanos were named “the Neck” on Realm charts. Those Dynastic savants who remembered Okeanos’s existence reserved the name Okeanos for the lost isle of old.

Faced with the threat of a growing Imperial fleet, the elders of the islands saw little choice but to bend to the demands of the nascent Realm. Nevertheless, their chieftain convinced the Empress’s inspectors that his people were of slight interest to the Blessed Isle, as they posed no threat and had little wealth. The isles of the Neck agreed to provide the coffers of the Scarlet Empire with a chieftain’s ransom in cowry shells and coral, and promptly spent the following centuries doing their best to avoid the attention of their remote overlords. More than seven centuries of Realm colonialism have done nothing to sever the ancestral ties of the Neck to their ancient sea gods, and the Realm seems blissfully unconcerned with the heresy that dominates these isles, provided the token tribute arrives on schedule. Individual Immaculate monks or delegates of the Foreign Office have forced the islanders to build Immaculate shrines and abandon various little gods, but these agents inevitably leave the backwater isles sooner or later.

Since the disappearance of the Scarlet Empress, the rising power of the Underworld endangers the seas all around the Skullstone Archipelago and the Isle of Shadows. In recent years, tribute-bearing ships could not safely reach the Blessed Isle, and eventually the chieftain stopped sending them. For a full year, the Neck shipped no tribute, though the people carefully hoarded cowrie shells and coral for the time when the Realm would demand resumption. After 15 months with no word from the satrapy, the Foreign Office



dispatched a trio of Dragon-Blooded to investigate the situation. The source of the interrupted trade, a ghost ship of voracious pirates commanded by a deathknight, set upon the Dynasts' vessel, slaying Peleps Ondani and her son Peleps Baraka. The young Fire-aspected sorcerer Nellens Malakai gained some notoriety for surviving and finishing off the deathknight his compatriots had wounded. The flow of tribute to the Realm has renewed, but growing unrest in the region threatens to disrupt the shipping again.

GEOGRAPHY

The Neck was once composed of the southern highlands of Okeanos before a cataclysm sank that isle beneath the waves. The Great Contagion and the subsequent invasion of the Fair Folk also ravaged the Neck—Cormorant was lost to the Skullstone shadowland and more than a dozen isles vanished into the Wyld forever. Today, the archipelago stretches across the sea more than 500 miles from east to west and roughly 300 miles north to south. While a few of the islands bear the signs of prior volcanic activity, those fires have been quiescent since the First Age catastrophe. Many barren rocks and coral atolls share these waters, but only 18 of the islands are suitable for continuous human habitation. Five of these islands are significantly larger than the others, ranging from about 50 miles to nearly 200 miles long. The largest of these is Amphiho, followed respectively by Petraya, Kerkeis, Okirho and Suadela. The remaining habitable isles are much smaller, each measuring between one and 20 miles in length. Most of them are part of a chain called the Cowries, which stretches in a northwesterly curve from Okirho to Petraya.

AMPHIRO

Largest of the islands of the Neck, Amphiho is about 200 miles long and abruptly widens from about 50 miles on its eastern end to roughly 130 miles in the west. The shoreline is speckled with fishing villages, most of which are the ancestral homes of Squalus tribesmen. Northern villagers sometimes share a Tautoga heritage, while the southern islanders commonly show signs of mixing with the Smaragdi (particularly in and around the capital city). The steep slopes of a dormant volcano dominate the western hinterlands of Amphiho, and its valleys hold the richest soil the island has to offer.

SOLID SHELL

The capital and only true city of the Neck lies on the eastern shore of the southern spur of Amphiho, and

is built upon the quake-shattered ruins of a small First Age city. To ward off the rains of the frequent storms, the major streets of the capital are covered with arched roofs of translucent coral. As most of these sheltered streets fan out from the Coral Palace toward the beach, as one approaches from the east the entire city looks somewhat like a shimmering giant shell. The typical inhabitant of Solid Shell is bronze skinned with the gray-green hair of mixed Squalus and Smaragdi descent.

Coral Palace: Sitting aside the juncture of the city's main streets with Shell Street, this structure serves as the traditional home of the chieftain of the Neck and quarters for visiting Realm dignitaries. As the name suggests, the palace is constructed of carved blocks of coral, though its courtyard and windows are covered with translucent panels. The building is an attractive manse, but its poor geomantic design wastes much of its Essence on aesthetic nuances. Public record says that its hearthstone, the Jewel of the Wavesong, was lost when one of the early tribute vessels bound for the Realm sank during a storm. While the ship really did sink, the chieftain of that time decided to entrust the stone to a God-Blooded child of the Ocean Father, and so the stone has remained ever since.

JEWEL OF THE WAVESONG (MANSE •)

This hearthstone or water resembles a shimmering piece of translucent rose coral. The Essence of this stone subtly infuses the wearer, so water elementals and sea gods react more favorably to the character. The character's player may apply either a +2 dice bonus to all Social rolls when dealing with such entities, or reduce their difficulties by -1 (to a minimum of 1). This includes Charms that must exceed a target's Mental Defense Values to exert mental influence, but the player may not apply both advantages at once.

Shell Street: The main street of the city is covered for its full length, and its perfectly planned geomantic path runs arrow straight through the eastern port and due west to the Gate of Daana'd nearly 15 miles away.

Gate of Danaa'd: Where Shell Street meets the western shore is guarded by a great iron gate at the top of a stairway carved from the basalt of the island. The steps lead down to an enormous domed shrine to the Immaculate Dragon of Water. This old temple is a minor manse, though its hearthstone was taken to the Realm long ago.



KERKEIS

Resting at the center of the archipelago, this island is roughly 90 miles long and 50 miles at its widest. Most of the villages here belong to Smaragdi tribesmen, though the northern shores are home to Tautoga descended from the refugees of Cormorant.

OKIRHO

Dominated by the Porphura during the Shogunate, the northern reaches of this island have since come under mostly Squalus control. The isle is about 80 miles long and 45 miles at the widest, and suffers the worst incidences of raiding from island nations to the south. Elders of both major tribes often accuse their opposites of endorsing intertribal raids as well.

PETRAYA

Second largest of the islands, Petraya is approximately 100 miles long and just over 60 miles wide. Most of the villages here belong to the Smaragdi tribe, but there are still strong enclaves of the blue-haired Cyanin. Although sizable, Petraya is the furthest from the capital, so foreigners rarely visit this island.

SUADELA

This oval island is 50 miles long and nearly 30 miles at its widest, and lies only 21 miles south of Solid Shell. During the Shogunate, the pleasant isle was the private reserve of the Cyanin, whose chieftain sailed across the channel to govern the capital only five days of every month. The Contagion brought an end to Cyanin dominance, and the Squalus seized most of the island. A number of ancient shrines are carved into the coast, but the natives conduct their rites in secret. Thus far, the Immaculate Order has settled for a single temple on Suadela, set atop its highest hill.

THE COWRIES

This chain stretches over a 200-mile arc between Petraya and Okirho and is composed of the better part of the smaller isles of the Neck. When the Contagion brought low the Cyanin, many of their people fled retribution and settled on these western isles, now home to an astonishing number of God-Blooded due to their isolation and closeness with the sea. The warriors and elders of the Cowries rarely visit the capital in Solid Shell, but they send great dowries with the brides that tie them to other tribes.

LIFE IN THE NECK

Life in the Neck is not exactly idyllic, though others might believe it so. Food is plentiful, even if a steady

diet of fish and kelp can prove monotonous. Islanders supplement these mainstays with indigenous plants, including pineapples and coconuts, and imported beasts turned wild, such as boars and rabbits. The Realm asks little in way of tribute, but the Neck has little to give. Most tribesmen need work only a few hours a day to earn their livelihood, yet luxuries are hard to come by. Many bright afternoons are interrupted by sudden rainsqualls, while others are overwhelmed by merciless storms. So it is with existence in the Neck; things are easy most of the time but can grow difficult suddenly. Sail recklessly into the horizon, and it may be your tempest-laden grave.

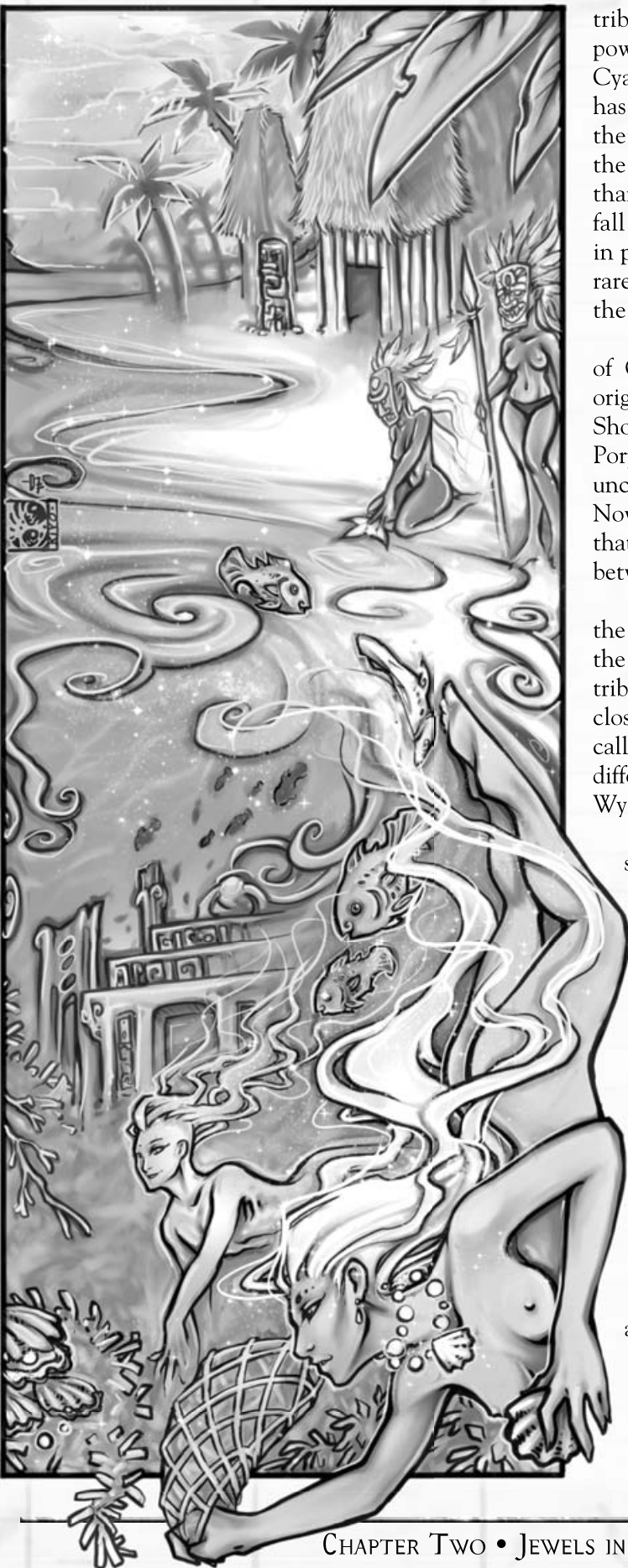
Though the people of “the Neck” answer to Realm’s call, they don’t accept that name—the islanders call their land Okeanos, after the great sunken isle from which their homes sprang. Outsiders see the isles as a peaceful collection of islands, though the republican bickering of the five tribes frequently turns into ethnic raiding. Nevertheless, the tribes of self-proclaimed Okeanos are tied together by an intricate web of intermarriages and political compromise.

THE PEOPLE

More than 200,000 natives are spread across the islands they call Okeanos. Historically, they descend from five tribes that time has held to a single fate. Culturally, the tribes have become virtually one, having spent more than a thousand years sharing the same stretch of islands and seducing the same gods of the sea. Yet their sturdy double-hulled outrigger war canoes conduct bloody raids on their fellow tribes as often as they target foreign isles.

As they all have the bronze skin typical in Western people, the five tribes of Okeanos are most easily discerned by their varying hair colors. Of course, all of the tribes are extensively intermarried, particularly within the capital Solid Shell. Within each of the tribal enclaves, a single ethnic makeup is prevalent, but one typically finds traces of one or more of the other four tribes.

Cyanin: Marked by blue hair, the Cyanin originally fled before the invasion of one of the daimyos of the Shogunate. Coming north to the isles of Okeanos, the tribe seized one island after other, through combat or alliance. For the following centuries of the Shogunate, the Cyanin were the recognized rulers of the archipelago. Efforts to expand their territory had finally attracted the attention of the Shogunate when the Great Contagion struck. The Contagion was particularly brutal to the Cyanin, and other



tribes seized the chance to drive the Cyanin from power. While there are still strong enclaves of Cyanin on the isle of Petraya, most of the tribe has retreated to the Cowries. Whether a result of their location or some unknown predilection of the sea gods, the Cyanin bear more God-Blooded than any of the other tribes. Despite the tribe's fall from power, they enjoy a certain mystique, in part because their hair shares the hue of the rare blue lobster claws worn by tribal elders and the chieftain.

Porphura: Most numerous on the island of Okirho, the purple-haired Porphura tribe originally came northward to Okeanos during the Shogunate. An alliance with the Cyanin gave the Porphura control over Okirho, which remained uncontested until after the Great Contagion. Now the Squalus hold the northern section of that isle, and violent (albeit covert) encounters between the two tribes are on the rise.

Smaragdi: This green-haired tribe is one of the original tribes of Okeanos, mostly found on the isles of Kerkeis, Petraya and Amphiho. The tribe's elders are influential, and typically enjoy close relationships with the chieftain. Historically, Squalus detractors have claimed that the differences between the tribes are the results of Wyld taint among the Smaragdi.

Squalus: Rare records from ancient Okeanos suggest that the Squalus have inhabited the southern reaches of that isle since time immemorial. Their gray hair varies in shade from that of the darkened storm cloud to that of the finest ocean mist. Legends attribute the hue to the blood of the Western war goddess Siakal and various storm gods. The tribe has always dominated Amphiho and has seized Suadela, northern portions of Okirho and a few of the smaller isles.

Tautoga: Originally, the black-haired Tautoga hailed from the south. During the Shogunate, the tribe invaded the isles of Okeanos and eventually settled on the island of Cormorant. When Cormorant fell into the shadowland of the Skullstone Archipelago after the Contagion, the tribe fled southward, mostly settling on the northern shores of Kerkeis and Amphiho. Young firebrands frequently call for the recapture of Cormorant, and tribal elders wearily refuse.



THE SIXTH TRIBE

The Neck has frequent contact with ocean gods and water elementals, and many inhabitants bear the telltale signs of descent from spirit parents. Dallying with the gods is an accepted way of ensuring the survival of the tribes, and priests sometimes practice the arts of seduction as religiously as the art of prayer. As in most of the Western nations, women are considered second-class citizens. In Okeanos, this leads to awkward situations in which young women are regularly forced to give themselves to lusty sea gods and then honored as the mothers of powerful God-Blooded. Due to the political reality of the Realm's dominance, the children of gods are encouraged to avoid Solid Shell, or any other area they might face foreign discovery. Most choose to reside on one of the Cowries or in villages in obscure corners of larger isles. Harkening to the call of the sea, many God-Blooded take advantage of their supernatural sea-born talents and serve with ships or raiding parties loyal to Okeanos.

Occasionally, one of the people of Okeanos Exalts as a Dragon-Blooded. Most of these lost eggs eventually come to the attention of the satrap's agents, and are transferred to the Realm whenever the next Immaculate monk or Dragon-Blooded naval officer puts into port. Historically, the majority of these lost eggs have been Water Aspects, because such Exalted have been the most likely to seed the isles of the West. The dominance of House Sesus during recent decades has made Fire Aspects nearly as likely. A handful of Water Aspect outcastes live among the God-Blooded of the Cowries, and are treated similarly to the God-Blooded.

ECONOMY

There isn't much of value on the islands of the Neck, but this is a blessing for those who wish to escape notice. In recent years, troubles led to the Neck spending 15 months without paying tribute, and it took the Realm that long to take any action over the issue. This sort of delayed reaction is certain to help anyone who might seek to turn the Neck into a base of operations.

The primary exports of the Neck are cowrie shells and coral beads, particularly as these comprise the tribute that the satrapy pays to the Realm. All sorts of cowries are viewed as symbols of fertility, birth and wealth, though only those with red shells are accepted as currency in the West. Natives value other colors of the shell, but they are typically used for crafts and decorative adornments. Coral carving is a highly developed art, and local craftsmen are proud to offer pieces

cut from translucent, black or gold coral alongside the more common shades of red, pink and white.

The Neck produces a small supply of pearls, usually brought up from the sea by God-Blooded divers, but these pearls are almost entirely reserved for sacrifice to sea gods. Various other crafts are practiced throughout the islands, but these crafts merely satisfy local needs. Production capable of reaching foreign markets is rare. Fishing nets, spears, rope and the like are all manufactured locally. The citizens of the Neck also build their own ships, favoring double-hulled outrigger canoes for ease of travel among the islands.

GOVERNMENT

The islands of the Neck are each ruled by tribal patriarchs, who appoint one of their number as spokesman for the nation. This spokesman is the chieftain of the Neck, who is expected to take a wife from each tribe and to reside in the Coral Palace in Solid Shell. In ancient times, a God-Blooded child of the Ocean Father was selected as the chieftain. As the tribes learned that loyalty to the Realm meant kowtowing to the Immaculate Order and its view of heresy, tribal elders discarded this tradition. For the past two centuries, chieftains have been purely mortal or possessed of divine lineage so weak that it's impossible to detect. The position of chieftain is not hereditary, and it does not last for a fixed period of time. Each chieftain serves until death or a conclave of dissatisfied tribal elders ends his rule.

In accord with Western chauvinism, tribal leaders and chieftains are always male. Though few would admit it, God-Blooded are female as often as male, and the females' power is hard to ignore. More than one tribal patriarch serves as little more than a mouthpiece for a powerful God-Blooded woman. Traditionally, each tribal patriarch wears a rare blue lobster claw on a necklace around his neck. As merely one in a million lobsters bears a blue shell, none but the wealthiest could afford one; however, possession of blue lobster claws is illegal for anyone other than an elder. The number of tribal patriarchs varies with the vagaries of history, but current law decrees that there cannot be fewer than 10 from each tribe.

The people of the Neck call their nation Okeanos, but are forced to recognize their Realm name. Most have become accustomed to saying "Okeanos" when speaking to natives and "the Neck" when speaking to foreigners. Technically, the chieftain of Okeanos is empowered to command the nation's military. Realistically, no martial exploit can take place without the support of the individual patriarchs, as most tribal

soldiers are loyal to their hometowns above Okeanos. The island nation has a long tradition of allowing pirates to seek haven in its ports in return for the safety of the nation's ships, and the current chieftain Bua-Shing has even managed to turn pirates into a source of information about his nation's enemies. Currently, he is weighing the value of directly supporting privateers against the risk of the Realm's wrath should things go poorly.

CHIEFTAIN BUA-SHING

Bua-Shing is an older man with the bronze skin and gray-green hair of mixed Squalus and Smaragdi heritage. The chieftain is married to five wives, one from each of the tribes, and eight of his children have yet to reach adulthood. At all times he wears the Collar of Okeanos and a canvas cloak sewn with a fortune's worth of ivory cowry shells. Bua-Shing is a quick-witted politician, with a successful history of weathering the demands of the Realm. He carefully maintains his predecessors' use of the Collar of Okeanos and mundane redirection to ensure that the rest of Creation considers the Neck harmless. Since the disappearance of the Scarlet Empress, the chieftain has pushed for regular councils of the tribal patriarchs.

SATRAP SESUS CHIDO

Almost two years ago, House elder Sesus Chenow left the Neck to pursue his desire to die in mortal combat. Satrap Sesus Chido, freed from the shadow of his grandfather, has proven incompetent. That he is un-Exalted is evidence of the scant import the Empress assigned the Neck. The fact that he is also a drunken wastrel who failed to keep the peaceful satrapy's tribute flowing has drawn the predatory attention of Houses Peleps and Nellens.



SEA RAIDERS

Description: Sea raiders are tribesmen from the Neck, who sail swift outrigger canoes against other tribes or ships. They usually attack by surprise and escape as quickly.

Commanding Officer: Varies; usually a heroic

mortal or God-Blooded

Armor Color: Black with coral or shell decoration

COLLAR OF OKEANOS (ARTIFACT ••)

This bright blue necklace of lacquered lobster claws is the traditional badge of office of the chieftain of the Neck. According to old stories, the god Baxishun delivered the collar to the only mortal child of the Ocean Father who survived the destruction of ancient Okeanos. Skeptics from the Neck suggest that the collar was recovered from the underwater ruins of the isle, while Realm savants generally ascribe more symbolic power than actual magic to the item. Careful scrutiny reveals that a thin chain of orichalcum alloy holds the interlocking blue claws tightly together. If the possessor of the collar attunes to it, committing one point of Willpower, then he can duplicate the Wise-Eyed Courtier Method Charm (see **Exalted**, p. 238) at a cost of two Willpower points per use. No Essence is necessary, which allows mortals to make use of the collar, but otherwise the Charm operates as normal.

Motto: None

General Makeup: 25 skirmishers wearing eelskin buff jackets, armed with spears and knives

Overall Quality: Good (equal to regular troops, **Exalted**, p. 279)

Magnitude: 2

Drill: 2

Close Combat Attack: 3 **Close Combat Damage:** 3

Ranged Attack: — **Ranged Damage:** —

Endurance: 5 **Might:** 0 **Armor:** 1 **Morale:** 3

Formation: These raiders are tribesmen seeking to enrich their tribe or take vengeance upon a foe.

SHORE GUARD

Description: The shore guards of the Neck spend most of their time as peacekeepers for the tribal leaders, or as a small standing armed force such as might defend the capital. Under attack by outside threats, shore guards usually act as archers.

Commanding Officer: Varies; usually a heroic mortal or God-Blooded

Armor Color: Black with coral or shell decoration



Motto: None

General Makeup: 25 skirmishers wearing eelskin buff jackets, armed with self bows and broadhead arrows.

Overall Quality: Good (equal to regular troops, *Exalted* p. 279)

Magnitude: 2

Drill: 2

Close Combat Attack: — **Close Combat Damage:** —

Ranged Attack : 2 **Ranged Damage:** 2

Endurance: 5 **Might:** 0 **Armor:** 1 **Morale:** 3

Formation: Some shore guards are housed in barracks sponsored by the tribal elders or the chieftain. Other shore guards live with their families and gather daily to report for duty.

THE TYA

Women in the West have another option to the patriarchy under which most of them live—a society called the Tya. The Tya choose to live as men. They forgo the protection of their families, give up their dowries and their right to support by male relatives and must never ask a man to fight their battles. In addition, the Tya are expected to take an extract made from certain shellfish that renders them temporarily or sometimes permanently sterile. Members of the Tya are marked by male attire and by the complex swirling tattoos on their cheeks and foreheads. Wild tales of the Tya abound throughout the West; they are said to indulge in perverse and secret rites, to have close ties with the Lintha Family and to assault and mutilate any men who offend the Tya.

The Tya are quite willing to accept recruits from among women who come from other parts of Creation, not just women of the West. Most Tya become sailors on the fleet of ships that the group maintains, while others settle on those islands that deal cordially with the Tya. Some live in Tya guildhouses and hire out as guards, mercenaries or similar martial professions. Others become merchants and traders, living above their shops and only visiting the Tya houses for special seasonal ceremonies.

THE FIRST TYA

The woman who gave the group its origin and name, Tya Edralneth, came from Abalone in Wavecrest 400 years ago. On the first day of her 35th year, Tya Edralneth walked to the harbor and announced that she had had a revelation. She declared that the gods and spirits of the sea had spoken to her, and said that the only way a woman could sail was by no longer being a woman. Drawing a knife from her belt, she cut her hair and scarred her face and shoulders, then took one of her family's boats out to sea.

The Neck, a Magnitude 3 Dominion

Military: 2 **Government:** 2 **Culture:** 2

Abilities: Awareness 2, Bureaucracy 2 (Tribal Interrelations +1), Craft 2 (Shell and Coral Goods +1), Integrity 1, Investigation 1 (Information from Pirates +1), Occult 3 (Sea-related Magics +1), Performance 3 (Swaying Sea Gods +1), Presence 2 (Being Obsequious +1), Stealth 1 (Appearing Insignificant to Outsiders +1), War 1 (Naval Defense +1, Protecting Tribute-bearing Vessels +2)

Virtues: Compassion 3, Conviction 2, Temperance 3, Valor 2

Virtue Flaw: Compassion **Current Limit:** 4


Willpower: 6

Bonus Points: 15 **External Bonus Points:** 7

Notes: Chieftain Bua-Shing is a sorcerer with legitimacy. If other sorcerers are needed, they may be drawn from the tribal elders. Powerful God-Blooded with connections to the sea make for interesting savants. The dominion's bonus points are tied up in its last dots of Performance and Presence, and in its specialties. The external bonus points are derived from Realm protection (which is reflected in its tribute-related War specialty), pirate connections (for its Investigation specialty) and the power of divine ancestors (providing the last dot of Occult). Should the Neck ever adopt a more aggressive stance, the bonus points dedicated to the dominion's Presence and Stealth specialties would soon be reassigned, and the Neck would lose the Realm's backing.

The people of the Neck are strongly devoted to their extensive families. Many citizens have domestic ties that are also religious in nature. When in Limit Break, the people of the Neck will not risk harm or offense to their kindred even if it hurts their place in the world.

Her father allowed her to take the boat, but sent a small naval cutter after her to observe what happened. Tya sailed on a course directly for the Neck, passing through the territory of Kallaberse, one of the most dangerous storm mothers near Wavecrest. The cutter following her was astonished to see Tya perform the normal rites of propitiation, and Kallaberse herself rise from the waves to accept them and wave Tya on her way with favoring winds.



The scandal brought Tya to the Feathered One's attention, and he was faced with a difficult decision. Officially endorsing Tya's actions would set public opinion against him. If he had her arrested for improper conduct, then he might offend the gods. After consultation with the priestesses of Wavecrest, he announced that Tya Edralneth had clearly been favored by the heavens and the oceans, but only those women who were prepared to cut off their hair, mutilate themselves, destroy their fertility and otherwise deny all their rights as women could be permitted to behave in such a way.

Other women came to join Tya over the years. As their numbers grew, they established guildhouses on other islands and set up in different trades. At first, all the other women took Tya's name as a prefix to their own, but as the years passed, "Tya" became a title for the group. The original self-inflicted scarring become extensive tattooing, with the only caveat being that the tattoos be unmissable and obvious. Tya herself was lost in a shipwreck while captaining one last voyage, but to this day, a tablet of nacre or jade or ivory with her name on it hangs in each guildhouse.

THE TRUTH

The storm mother Kallaberse wanted someone to carry private messages between her sisters and her; Tya wanted an excuse to be able to sail. Kallaberse sought Tya out in dreams and offered her a bargain. If Tya was prepared to give up all the privileges of being a woman of the West, and live as a man, then Kallaberse and all Kallaberse's sisters would treat Tya as a man and allow her passage. Tya agreed, and staged her dramatic "divine revelation."

Tya herself was secretly carried down to Kallaberse's court, where she still lives as a favorite of the storm mother. Although Tya is wrinkled and bowed by age, she is still healthy and vigorous, transformed into a little god through the Endowment spirit Charm, suspiring Essence from Tya veneration. Kallaberse has given Tya gull-spirit servants who carry messages to the Tya elders, and she acts as a liaison between the storm mothers and the Tya. Kallaberse values Tya's perspective on mortal matters, but keeps her secluded to preserve their secret. From time to time, Kallaberse allows Tya to explore the far depths and the distant West, with a guard of siaka-spirits and elementals.

Only the Tya elders know that Tya still lives, and whom she serves. The Tya are not minions or mindless servants of the storm mothers; the Tya simply undertake occasional commissions, carrying messages or goods.

BECOMING TYA

Any woman wanting to become a Tya will be assessed carefully by the Tya themselves. Women who actually want to be Tya are expected to understand what is involved (loss of all female rights and protections, loss of fertility and permanent tattooing) and to be able to explain precisely why they want to take this option.

Noble or wealthy families are generally reluctant to allow their daughters to become Tya, and some women must escape vigilant guards to join. Many poor families, by contrast, care little if their female children join up, and some even encourage them. It is also considered an eccentric but permissible option for widows who will otherwise be thrown on their male relatives' resources; such widows often pursue land-bound trades rather than sea-based ones.

A woman who wishes to become a Tya must take a formal oath before five other Tya, preferably including a Tya elder, renouncing all local protections and rights as a woman, and must drink the traditional sterility-inducing shellfish extract. She then receives the tattoos that mark her as a Tya. In emergencies, she may delay tattooing and sterilization.

The polite way to address a Tya is as "Tya [full name]"; a Tya elder is "Elder Tya [full name]." Tya simply call each other by their personal names.

TYA TATTOOS

The tattoos worn by all Tya are a diluted version of the scars Tya Edralneth inflicted upon herself. Their purpose is to mark the wearer, not to decorate her. However, as time went by, the tattoos have become more personalized and more stylized. Tya tattoos typically run across the forehead and cheeks and down the neck, shoulders and arms, and can extend over the chest and back. All Tya have basic jagged-line tattoos on their cheeks and forehead, in imitation of scars; as Tya get older, many add to these tattoos and modify them to soften their impact, or to make them more personal. Common themes include seaweed, stormclouds, lightning and woven patterns. The tattoos are never pictorial. Some Tya become specialized tattoo artists, and have even provided designs for iconic Dragon-Blooded imagery that has gone all the way to the Blessed Isle.

TYA LOYALTIES

Above everything else, the Tya are loyal to the Tya. (They do not refer to each other as "sisters," since they no longer consider themselves female.) Any Tya who is caught betraying other Tya, or abandoning them in a position of danger, is viciously punished.





Although an individual Tya has the right to swear her loyalty or declare her allegiance to someone else—the Feathered One, the Silver Prince, a Solar—she will never be trusted in quite the same way afterward by other Tya. However, a Tya who has been enslaved or forced into obedience will be rescued if at all possible.

TYA TRADES

The Tya are undoubtedly best known for their sailors, and the society owns a fleet of roughly 100 ships, which are crewed solely by Tya. While their primary business is trade, they also have sidelines in mapmaking, exploration and the escort business; women who must travel by sea are often sent on Tya ships by their male relatives. The Tya also produce skillful shell-carvers, physicians and deep-sea divers. Tya sailors occasionally serve on non-Tya ships, mixing freely with male crews. This can be subject to misinterpretation, not to mention outright scandal, and younger Tya are not encouraged to do this.

The Tya maintain guildhouses in most major ports of the West. These serve as lodgings for any visiting Tya, drop-points for messages and trade and places where would-be Tya can learn about the society and apply for membership. Tya guildhouses tend to walk a delicate line between self-advertisement and dignified restraint, making themselves available without actively recruiting in the street.

THE TYA ELDERS

There are 25 elders, most of whom are also house-wardens (in charge of a guildhouse). When one dies, the others choose a new Tya to replace the deceased. A new elder is bound by heavy oaths of secrecy before being told the truth about the storm mothers (see p. 39) and the original Tya. Some elders are static, occupying fixed geographical posts, while others sail with the Tya fleet.

Notable among the current Tya elders not mentioned elsewhere are Elder Sarelle, originally from Coral, who travels with the Tya trading fleet, and has numerous spirit allies; Elder Arris Sharkfang, originally from the Haslanti League, who brings an outsider's perspective to many Western issues; and Elder Tehona, once from Wavecrest, who journeys from guildhouse to guildhouse to check that they are functioning properly. All elders are mature women in their 50s, with the complex tattoos of long-standing experienced Tya.

TYA AND OTHERS

Reactions to the Tya vary throughout the West.

In *Wavecrest*, the Tya are accepted as a normal part of society. Highly placed Wavecrest officials sometimes hire Tya as independent advisors or agents. Although



there are several Tya guildhouses in Wavecrest, the oldest and central one is on Pearl, and contains copies of all Tya records. Elder Gneatha, the housewarden, is in her 80s, and too old to sail or fight now. She retains a razor-sharp mind, however, and is skilled at cartography. She handles politics with ease, taking care to stay in the Feathered One's favor.

Coral lies at the other end of the spectrum. Inhabitants treat the Tya as exotic aberrants and probable lunatics; they're encouraged to keep to the foreigners' district. The housewarden of the guildhouse in Azure itself is Elder Frantha, an ex-courtesan who was scarred when a customer threw vitriol at her. She's a good manager who knows how to handle the local authorities and where to place the appropriate bribes.

The **Neck** treats Tya much as Wavecrest does, viewing them peaceably as an eccentric part of society. The main guildhouse is on Amphiro, and is considered a vacation spot by Tya passing through. The housewarden in the main guildhouse is Elder Xula, a one-eyed Tya with a history of trading with the Fair Folk. Xula coordinates incoming trade vessels, outgoing trade goods and a group of Tya pearl-divers who work across the Neck.

Skullstone welcomes the Tya, treating them equally with male sailors and allowing them free access. While the Tya don't like Skullstone any more than other visitors do, the trade opportunities there are too good to ignore. (Fortunately for the Tya, no female undead inhabitants of Skullstone have petitioned to join the Tya yet.) The housewarden in Onyx is Elder Cathlan, an upright but aging Tya.

Other parts of the West tentatively if sullenly accept the Tya as a gods-permitted anomaly, and do normal business with them. The Tya are wary of the Guild; however, the Guild's trade links mean that the Tya can't risk offending it.

TYA AND OTHER FEMALE SAILORS

Tya don't necessarily object to the status quo in much of the West. Many consider that there is a perfectly good option for women who want to sail or have male rights: become Tya. Not all Tya are as friendly and supportive as female sailors from elsewhere might expect. Most Tya become firm supporters of the social order, feeling that everything is for the best. To ask for more than the Tya option—to claim male privileges as well as female protections and potentials—is greedy and unreasonable and unnatural. The Tya make an exception for Dragon-Blooded women, acknowledging that the Terrestrial Exalted are a case apart and cannot be strictly subjected to normal rules.

TYA RELATIONSHIPS

Just because Tya have renounced their fertility doesn't mean that they have renounced their passions. However, the sort of man who would sleep with a Tya is too often the sort of man who's doing it out of perverse curiosity. As a result, Tya often turn to each other for relationships, or patronize courtesans. Sometimes Tya formally marry local women, but this is usually a business arrangement. Tya have also been known to take water spirits and little gods as lovers, and on rare occasions, this has even resulted in the Tya becoming pregnant. Even amongst Tya without occult experience, such pregnancies are usually accepted, albeit with a share of awkward silences.

THE CURRENT SITUATION

The Tya have the storm mothers as patrons, they have allies across the West and they're a thriving, growing society. However, the Tya are not blind to the growing threat of civil war in the Realm, which would disrupt trade and hamper their operations, and they are very conscious of the rising levels of aggression between Wavecrest and Coral. A war throughout the West would quite possibly destroy the Tya in the general strife, or force them into becoming one side's permanent subordinates.

THE WAVEDANCER

Description: A single lightweight Tya courier ship; more heavily manned and armed than usual, as it is frequently given the duty of carrying small but important items, or messages for storm mothers. All Tya on board are experienced hands.



Commanding Officer: Captain Tya Atrisa

Armor Color: No armor, but all aboard wear plain gray.

Motto: None

General Makeup: One lightweight ship carrying 40 Tya, two of whom are thaumaturges; all are trained fighters, and carry swords, daggers and fishing spears.

Overall Quality: Excellent

Magnitude: 2

Drill: 3

Close Combat Attack: 4 **Close Combat Damage:** 3

Ranged Attack: 4 **Ranged Damage:** 2

Endurance: 5 **Might:** 1 **Armor:** 1 **Morale:** 2

Formation: Relaxed



OUT YOU GO, DOG!



SIR, PLEASE...

YOU THINK
YOU CAN SELL ME
CONTRABAND UNDER THE
SEA LORD'S NOSE?

I'LL SEE YOU
HAULING ROCKS IN A
CONVICT BRIGADE!
MARK MY WORDS!

BUT I HAVE A
LETTER OF MARQUE!
HONEST!



LET ME SEE
IT, LIAR.

I HAVE IT RIGHT
HERE, SIR. ALL NICE
AND LEGAL.



HM... SO YOU DO.



SO WE CAN
DO BUSINESS?

I SUPPOSE.



FIRST, THOUGH, LET
ME INTRODUCE MY
PARTNERS.

AW, DAMN IT...



CHAPTER THREE AN OCEAN OF SILVER AND JADE

THE CORAL ARCHIPELAGO

The day will come when the people of the Coral Archipelago will reclaim the glory that they once knew, and drag the West into the future they alone can see. A future without barbarism, without the Fair Folk's constant raiding. A future of civilization and law, where excellence is rewarded and weakness is expunged.


Coral is the second-largest state in the West, composed of 23 islands (all but five are small coral atolls) with a total population of nearly a million; the population of the nearby islands under Coral's protection total another few hundred thousand. Coral has little arable land, and the archipelago has always been dependent on the seas and its neighbors. Swept by cold rain and chill winds for much of the year, the inhabitants of Coral go forth in their ships built from the islands' iron palm trees to take their due tribute from the ocean around them, and

expand their zone of power. They value excellence and power, but see no reason to give pity or mercy.

HISTORY

During the First Age, when the Solars bound the West together into a glorious network of prosperous isles, Coral was a lynchpin. The administrators of Coral helped coordinate the movement of food and necessities throughout the Western archipelagos, they kept a careful eye on the fringes of the Darkmist shadowland, they organized trade and shipping between the North and the West and they viewed their surroundings with paternal eyes, anticipating the day when all would enjoy the benefits of Deliberative protection and civilization.

That day never came. The Usurpation devastated the economy and geography of the West. Terrible weapons destroyed islands, shifted weather patterns and



rendered impassible important trade routes. The Coral Archipelago was thrown back on its own resources, bereft of supply lines. Previously, the men had controlled the shipping and fleets while the women had supervised the land-based bureaucracy. Suddenly, the women's share of the work became irrelevant, while the men's ships and sailing became vital.

Over a mere three mortal generations, equitable trading quickly became protection and tribute, or open piracy. The surrounding islands pledged their allegiance to Coral, paid heavy tribute and became the archipelago's protectorates. In turn, Coral's fleets protected the islands from freebooters. The sailors of Coral began to see their mission as not only that of feeding their people but also as the task of bringing proper leadership to the whole West, raising it above barbarism and back to order. Opportunistic older captains, land-bound by age or injury but unwilling to give up command, took control of the islands while younger men were out at sea, seizing land-bound leadership roles from the Coral women. Gender relations in Coral took a blow from which they never recovered.


When the Shogunate offered patronage, Coral was quick to accept, hoping for a return to the days of glory and stability. The people of Coral were as quickly disillusioned. Although the Shogunate demanded little (at first) in terms of tribute, there was no true reestablishment of trading links, no real overarching authority and most of all, no provision of magical resources or Exalted

forces to pacify the area. The Coral Archipelago had to struggle along as it had been doing before. As the Great Contagion struck, Coral's dependence on the sea rather than the land became a blessing. People died as they did throughout the West, but there was enough food to go round. The inhabitants survived on the bare minimum of fish, harvested seaweed and piracy, but they did survive. Raiding dropped to a minimum, as every island that Coral could reach with its fleets became a potential pesthole and source of plague, and every ship was needed to bring back food or defend against the Fair Folk.

The Scarlet Empress's assumption of power eliminated the Fair Folk threat and allowed the archipelago to expand again. The Empress sent Coral no more than the minimum of embassies; she offered it terms as a satrapy, but the government of the time refused, declaring politely that Coral had no need of the Realm's protection—"for as our fleets have defended our waters for these past two hundred years, so shall we continue." Citing the distances involved (almost 3,000 miles of pelagothrope-infested ocean), Coral's lack of resources and more pressing concerns to the North and East, the Empress accepted. A string of gifts from each new governor and favorable trade arrangements kept her satisfied.

The Guild, on the other hand, did not ignore Coral. Members of the Guild viewed the archipelago as a resource that could be developed to dance to their tune, seeing its attitude toward piracy and control as





compatible with their own commercial attitudes. They promptly funneled jade and goods through Coral, boosting it as a trade center. This investment allowed the captains of Coral to upgrade their ships and improve their trading links, making connections with Chiaroscuro, Nexus and further beyond. Azure, the largest island and de facto capital of Coral, became home to a vigorous slave trade. Within a century, Wavecrest had formed the Western Trade Alliance in response.

The Guild has continued its investments, and Coral has continued to expand. However, the Sea Lord and Coral's administrators view the Guild's jade as precisely what it is: an attempt at buying Coral. They use the bribe, but they have not been bought. They still pursue their own vision, of Coral restored to its former power, ruling the West, raising the other islands from barbarism to excellence and even, in time, becoming a peer to the Realm.

GEOGRAPHY

The Coral Archipelago is hard, weather-beaten land, with cliffs sculpted by the ocean and nigh-sterile soil. After centuries of habitation, Coral has been heavily developed, and the only true patches of forest are the iron palm plantations. Plantation owners hire (or kidnap) sorcerers to renew blessings of fertility on the soil. Elsewhere, the atolls are ugly compounds of defensive fortifications and pleasure palaces; docks are lined with ballistae and catapults, guard-posts and signal-towers, and vibrant towns are filled wall to wall with taverns, brothels, casinos, restaurants, gladiatorial pits, merchants and gutters for the poor.

Most large tracts of arable grow iron palms, but wealthy families own the smaller pieces. They live behind compound walls, where the women of the households cultivate whatever will grow and placate the gods and elementals of the crops. Some families demonstrate their ostentatious wealth by devoting the area to flowers and landscaping, while others cultivate their self-sufficiency, growing food. For an outsider to be invited into the private gardens of a wealthy Coral family is an even more significant demonstration of trust than simply being invited into a house. The rest of the land doesn't produce enough to grow anything more than a few straggly berry bushes or stewable weeds. Only the poorest of the poor would descend so far as to take advantage of those.

AZURE

The capital of the Coral Archipelago, Azure is the name of the principal island and the largest city on that

island. The Sea Lord dwells there, and many of the plutocrats spend much of the year on Azure, politicking, plotting and working to expand their own islands' interests. It's also the location of the Mouth of Siakal, where the Navy brings its booty and keeps its records. In addition to offering staggering luxury side-by-side with harsh brutality and remorseless standards of excellence, Azure is also the only place to buy a privateer's license.

Azure is a port city that caters to a pirate's every need. The people know how to entertain a crew: get them laid, liquor them up and take their money. However, Azure isn't the best place to do business unless you are an official Coral pirate. Selling anything that looks as if it were obtained by piracy, from a piece of booty to a pirate ship, is certain to attract the attention of the Admiralty Court (see p. 49).



The city of Azure shows the impact of centuries of wealth. High watchtowers at the ports are full of defensive weaponry, but also fly the silk standards of famous pirates currently in residence. Iron palm plantations and wealthy mansions lie at the center of the island, taking advantage of the rare fertile soil. While there are a dozen other ports on the island, all visitors flock to the port of Azure itself, and no notable pirate or plutocrat would go anywhere else. The city's gambling houses are famous, and a newcomer to the archipelago can build his reputation there, on how much he is prepared to stake and how much he wins.

The other ports are for basic trade—food, cloth, metal and other necessities—and house some of the best shipbuilders in the entire Coral Archipelago. Famous pirates come to them to commission new crafts. The Asberote family, on the northeast coast of Azure, work with iron palm wood and imported iron from the distant north to build galleons that can resist the most vicious of gales, while their rivals, the Suskin family, specialize in speed, building lightweight cutters.

ELSEWHERE IN CORAL

Mantaville, on Orei, is the second-biggest gambling city after Azure, and Mantaville's residents claim their city has better odds and fairer houses. Newstone is the southernmost port on Azure, and is the first resort for all ships coming back after raiding Wavecrest or the Neck. Wavecrest captains journey to Newstone under flags of truce, in attempts to buy back particularly valuable items of cargo before they're shipped deeper into the Coral Archipelago. Dawn, on Serene, handles much of the slave trade, and has a high Guild presence. Lately, with the slave trade slowing down, Dawn's fortunes have begun to dwindle, and Serene's plutocrat (Kamishe Turannon,





a Guild member himself) is growing concerned. Zakalar, on the island of Wheel, is the best iron palm source in all Coral, better even than the Azure plantations, and houses the most innovative shipwrights. While the shipbuilders on Azure have made their reputation and are secure in their fame, Zakalar shipwrights are young and inventive, ready to break new ground in the field. Ironground lies to the far east of the archipelago, and receives much of the shipping coming in from the North, particularly metal and gems. The capital of Forge supplies all Coral with weapons and ship-fittings.

Among the better-known smaller islands of the Coral Archipelago are Inero, Pakuta and Bait. Inero lies to the north, and is prone to violent storms and icy winds in winter. The inhabitants have developed ways of drying seaweeds to produce workable threads and fabrics, and also keep vast colonies of silkworms in underground halls heated by great charcoal furnaces; many poor children die young, slowly poisoned by smoke and fumes while keeping the furnaces stoked. Pakuta was an important nexus for messenger ships and thaumaturgical communications during the First Age; the smoldering ruins have long since been built over, but investigations into the caves beneath the atoll turn up occasional small First Age wonders. The plutocrat of Pakuta, Damilo Engib, has all known entrances to the caves guarded and attempts to keep a monopoly of all finds. Bait lies on the southeast of the archipelago, near the Protectorates, and serves as an entry-point to the archipelago for many immigrants. Because of this, the island's administration has become particularly skilled at directing workforce to openings across the archipelago, and Sea Lord Nemoran himself values Bait's ability to keep a finger on Coral's need for labor.

THE CORAL PROTECTORATES

Although Coral has many petty islands in all directions (perhaps 200) that pay it tribute and accept Coral's protection, the band of 75 small islands to the south and east is known to all citizens of Coral as the Protectorates. These islets tend to be counted in as part of Coral by most of the West—both politically and geographically. They're a subjugated group of separate island-states, protected from the Fair Folk and from pirates, but otherwise subject to Coral's will.

During the First Age, these islands served a combination of purposes for the empire-building Solars. Some islands were private dwellings, sheltering manses or laboratories; others were producers of food, fertile and prosperous, if not on the scale of Wavecrest; and others were trade outposts and transit points for merchants

and explorers on their way out toward the further West. The islands were hit particularly hard by the Usurpation. The Terrestrial Exalted tore apart those islands in search of hidden Solars. With the whole Western Ocean in chaos, their homes wrecked and their trade cut off, the islands turned to the nearest center of power: the Coral Archipelago. Each island kingdom pledged its fealty to Coral, until the majority were all sworn to provide tribute.

Coral played the islands against each other, offering them separate terms and secret arrangements in order to stop them forming a power bloc that might have hampered negotiations. In a few cases, powerful leaders were assassinated, or "pirate raids" were used to panic the island population into coming to terms. Coral's motives were a combination of genuine protection and not wanting to lose potential tribute. While the islands weren't on a par with Wavecrest, they were more fertile than Coral itself, and regular supplies from the Protectorate islands made Coral's survival and expansion far more sustainable.

Over the centuries, the Protectorates have expanded, and Coral has also claimed other small islands within its reach in all directions. The Protectorates don't have voting rights in the Sea Lord's election, or any formal representation, though they can bribe plutocrats. The leader of each island is free to govern as he wishes, as long as the island pays Coral's tribute. Open treaties with "the enemies of Coral" (in practice Wavecrest, the Fair Folk and hostile pelagothrope tribes) are forbidden, but under-the-table deals are common, and some Protectorate islands are nests of barbarism, ancestor-worship or dream-eaten slaves. When these are found, Coral roots them out with its convict battalions; if necessary, every man and boy on a turncoat island is put to the sword.

The Protectorates are free to deal with the Realm if they wish, and Immaculate missionaries have found the islands fertile ground for conversion. However, those Protectorate islands with widespread conversion to the Immaculate faith have their tributes raised, and their citizens are less likely to be allowed to immigrate to the Coral Archipelago. Such islands often end up isolated from their neighbors, mistrusted by other Protectorates and beholden to Immaculate funding necessary to pay the raised tribute. A few such islets have attempted to secede, placing themselves under the Realm's protection and refusing Coral's guiding hand. Such islands inevitably suffer heavy attacks from anonymously Coral-funded threats, and rarely last a year.



Notable Protectorates include the following:

- **Finreef**, to the north. Siaka spirits are common near Finreef, and many humans have traces of God-Blood, with harsh gray skin, white teeth and small dark eyes.

- **Shensu**, to the northeast, near the Nacre Whirlpool. The Whirlpool is a Fair Folk outpost, and Shensu is constantly on watch for Fair Folk raids; men from Shensu are accustomed to harsh discipline and constant vigilance, and rise swiftly in the Coral Navy.

- **Jushir and Kanir**, twin islands to the southeast, alike in all but one point. Kanir has converted to the Immaculate faith, and hosts a monastery for the Order that serves as a jumping-off point for missionaries. Jushir remains steadfast in worship of the Ocean Father and the gods of sea and sky. Despite this, the two islands remain in close accord, even as Kanir's tribute rises every year.

- **Arendin**, to the southwest, on the edge of the main Protectorates. Arendin looks toward the reefs fringing Skullstone; the island hosts a small garrison and serves as a watchpost, and has part of its tribute rebated in consequence.

- **Komannu**, far to the north-northwest. Komannu has secret traffic with the Haslanti League, and Komannu's leader, Savaron Iruka, wishes to break free from Coral's hegemony and become a lynchpin for trade between Skullstone and the North.

Tens of thousands from the Protectorates want to become full citizens of Coral. They dream of rich and brilliant futures as Coral pirates, merchants or anything that could support a life of luxury, and they're prepared to take any job, however menial, as long as it means working within the Coral Archipelago itself. Coral appreciates this constant flow of cheap labor, and although the bureaucracy conducts regular checks for spies from rival nations, there's always room for more immigrants. And the dream is true; a Protectorate immigrant with skills, ability and drive can rise to become a plutocrat or even Sea Lord. Coral truly values excellence, and will accept it from wherever it may come. But for every immigrant from the Protectorates who achieves success, hundreds of others work hard and die in poverty.

GOVERNMENT

The Coral Archipelago is ruled by the Sea Lord, an elected dictator. He's normally chosen based on promises of large public works and lavish festivals, funded mainly through tribute and plunder, sources of income that also provide the islands' high standard of living without collecting taxes. This is an occasion for

candidates to show that they can raise Coral to hitherto unknown degrees of wealth and prosperity. The Sea Lord is expected to be an administrator of such a high standard that he can easily afford the public works and the festivals; keeping the basic finances running and the islands fed and defended is assumed to be the bare minimum. Each successful Sea Lord raises expectations a little higher.

The Sea Lord must be a martinet; it is his duty to keep the islands fed and defended, and in the worst cases, to decide who and where must be sacrificed for the greater good. When the Fair Folk attacked, it was the Sea Lord's duty to decide where the lines of defense should be drawn, and which islands or Protectorates had to be stripped of defenders in order to save others. The Sea Lord must appease the Realm while protecting Coral's interests, must coordinate strategies to oppose Wavecrest's barbaric expansion and bribery and must remain vigilant against the threats of Skullstone and the Fair Folk. The Sea Lord also assumes the rank of

THE LAST GUY

The previous Sea Lord was DiBello Gerarde. His activities in spearheading trade with the North pulled Coral out of a 20-year financial recession, and many believe he'd still be Sea Lord if he hadn't declined to run in the most recent election. He has not made public his reasons for stepping down from the post. Gerarde and Nemoran share an uneasy relationship—the Sea Lord knows the current ostentatious lifestyles of Coral's citizenry owe much to Gerarde's efforts, and Nemoran's military ambitions would be without backing were Coral's armies not bolstered with the wealth Gerarde earned. And yet, Nemoran worries that if Gerarde—who had few military ambitions himself—were to run for the position of Sea Lord again, he'd probably win. Avishander has no intention of losing the Sea Lord title now that it's his, and privately debates ending Gerarde's life to simplify things. Perhaps, Nemoran muses, he can make an assassination look like the work of a rival power. On the other hand, rumors persist that Gerarde has the protection of a supernatural sort. The credulous even say an Anathema. So Nemoran turns his attention outward while he waits for further news.

As for what Gerarde is planning, only he and his most trusted confidants know.




High Priest of the Ocean Father, and must serve the god by strengthening the inhabitants of Coral.

The current Sea Lord is Avishander Nemoran, who made his way up from raider captain to merchant lord to Sea Lord, and has drawn on his Guild connections for every obol that they're worth while preparing for Coral's expansion. He believes firmly in Coral's superiority, and feels eventual conquest of the West is not merely foreordained, but obvious. His commanding presence, effortless charisma and ability to think laterally and consider new options serve him well. In public, he is a model of orthodoxy, devoting himself to Coral, wealth, power and self-indulgence, while in private he is willing to negotiate (temporary) treaties with other nations, bargain with anyone who has something to offer him and even employ female agents and admit their utility. At the moment, he sways both the plutocrats and the military, and is one of the most popular Sea Lords in Coral's history. He is a devoted worshipper of the Ocean Father, and has made large contributions to the temple orphanages out of his own pocket.

THE PLUTOCRATS

Each of the 23 islands in the archipelago contributes a representative to the Council of Plutocrats, who assist the Sea Lord. These representatives are elected from among the wealthiest inhabitants of each island; technically they are all equal, but in practice the representatives of the larger islands have more influence. Bribing plutocrats is an accepted practice and a perfectly normal transaction.

The Council of Plutocrats has no actual power to pass laws, but advises the Sea Lord in all matters. Councilmen provide the information the Sea Lord uses to make all necessary decisions, coordinating their own spy networks, diplomats, sea captains, traders, petty gods in their debt and other sources of data. A plutocrat may shade information in order to promote his own island's interests, but may not lie or conceal information that damages Coral's interests as a whole. Plutocrats have unparalleled opportunities to enrich themselves and expand their power base, but must ultimately serve Coral rather than themselves, or face financial ruin and execution.



While the Sea Lord may rule as he sees fit, the council has the right to call for a new election, and can do this as often as once every two years. A Sea Lord who disregards the council's wishes will face regular elections, and the associated huge expenditures, until he is defeated.

On each separate island, all men are free to do as they wish, but the military bureaucracy imposes the law and extracts fines and indentures. The plutocrat of any particular island cannot give actual orders, but he can make his wishes clear to the other rich merchants and raider captains.

Notable plutocrats include Miess Daka of Shellshatter, who made his money in the silk trade, both legal and illegal; Kanate Dosso of Ironground, who holds the lucrative contract to supply the Coral Navy's weapons, and has plans to strike at shipping of Northern iron if forthcoming expansion by Coral results in more orders; Yeggra Hinsit of Ashheart, a slaver and once inhabitant of Wavecrest; and Mura Soultwister of Cold Bay, an immigrant from the Protectorates who retired from piracy into plutocracy but still goes out on raiding cruises to keep in trim.

THE ADMIRALTY COURT

The Admiralty Court regulates privateering. It hears charges against privateers, provides letters of marque for those independents willing to pay the costs and makes sure the government gets its cut of all booty—half the take, delivered promptly and with full records. The Admiralty Court also revokes letters of marque and executes privateers who have crossed the line, or indentures them to serve out their lives among the convict battalions. For the most part, the Admiralty Court is notoriously lenient. As long as the privateers have their papers in order, no blatantly friendly ships are attacked (or at least, the attack cannot be traced back to Coral) and the government gets its cut, then the Admiralty Court looks the other way.

The head of the Admiralty Court is Shanston Red, also known as "Old Blood," a vicious legal hardliner. The joy with which he previously pronounced fines and indentures is now delight in ensuring that Coral gets every jade obol, every silver dinar, every cowrie, every slave and every last splinter of the archipelago's share. While only moderately wealthy by Coral's standards, he is the recipient of an endless stream of bribes from pirate booty—the rarest of foods, the most exotic of fabrics, the most beautiful of concubines—and lives a life of dissipation and debauchery. This does not affect his performance in court; he stares from the bench with

knifelike nose and raddled face, his eyes as keen and black as a siaka's.

THE MILITARY BUREAUCRACY

The other check on the Sea Lord's power is Coral's military bureaucracy. This grew in parallel with the administration network that actually feeds the archipelago and controls its finances. The law states that no Sea Lord may ever have served in the military. The soldier-bureaucrats are loyal to Coral first, and to the Sea Lord second. This division of government between the military and the administration is one of the main points that has stopped Coral launching any major invasions so far.

Avarice goes hand in hand with literacy. No raider can work out the profit share coming to him without basic arithmetic. No pirate can sign a set of articles without reading it first. Even the poorest citizen of Coral can count up the money that's due him, and looks down on any fool incapable of mastering the written word and numbers. On a higher level, the government and military need to keep a firm and absolute record of the loot coming in. From talents of jade to cowrie shells, everything that goes in or out of Coral's finances is recorded, and the fines for falsifying or damaging state records are high.


Coupled with the financial records are the personal ones. The military bureaucracy keeps files on all its sailors, all Coral's licensed privateers, and all the vices of high-ranking visitors who may be vulnerable to pressure later. Even if Coral's diplomats choose not to descend to overt blackmail, they can always use the information for bribery.

The military bureaucracy also provides Coral's law enforcement. This is frequently a posting for hard cases who have disobeyed a captain at sea one too many times, or forward-thinking types who want a low-risk, high-opportunity position. The usual way for the Guard to resolve ongoing fights is to club everyone unconscious and drag them off to the cells. Wealthy participants have the option of paying the Guard a bribe to be merely reported and not physically dragged away or paying the Guard a large bribe not to be reported at all.

THE SIAKA AUDITOR

One heavy granite building on Azure can be entered only by mute slaves and by Querin, the current Siaka Auditor. Querin's role in the administrative bureaucracy is to continually audit everything, randomly picking transactions to seek out patterns of embezzlement or weakness. Querin supervises a group of experts who





never leave the Auditors' Building, but who have all the documents of Coral brought in to them for checking. His role was instituted 300 years ago, after a clerk discovered corruption and Wavecrest-instituted blackmail compromising two plutocrats.

The auditors who work for Querin are all female. They live out their lives inside the Auditors' Building, slave-born infants or bastards brought as children and tested to see if they have any talent for mathematics. Those with a knack for numbers and facts are educated inside the building, grow up there and die there. The others are sold off as slaves to the Guild. These women are totally uninfluenced by the rest of Coral's society, have no ties to anyone outside the building and are taught that they perform a vital service for Coral. If they show too great an interest in the people they are auditing or the world outside, they are quietly executed.

MILITARY AND CIVIL ADMINISTRATION

The gap between the military bureaucracy (headed by the Admiralty Court) and the civil administration (headed by the Sea Lord) dates back to the Usurpation and the collapse of the West. When Coral's administration lapsed, and the women in charge lost all status, the Navy and the raiders were forced to develop their own methods of handling financing and law. Meanwhile, the merchants and land-bound men built up their own systems to keep Coral fed and defended; what had been a shameful task fit only for women eventually became a worthy job suited to intelligent men. (By this time, women were considered capable only of running households.)

The civil administration and the military bureaucracy both value their autonomy, and turf wars over areas of budgeting or legality are common between plutocrats and the Admiralty Court. Part of the Sea Lord's function is to coordinate the two so that they work together for Coral's good, rather than tearing Coral apart, and the Coral diplomats (see below) are his most-used tools.

THE DIPLOMATS OF CORAL

Coral's military provides its diplomats as well as its bureaucrats. Coral diplomats negotiate treaties in other countries on the Sea Lord's orders, but Coral also expects them to act as spies, assassins and anything else that their nation may require. Unlike the rest of Coral society, where upward mobility is available (theoreti-

cally) to all, diplomats in Coral are drawn from a few specific families and groomed from childhood, trained in martial arts and military tactics, as well as the arts and graces of dozens of different nations. On reaching their teens, these officers serve as spies, escorts for elder statesmen and even elite military forces, leading strikes against valuable targets. The most senior answer to the Sea Lord alone, working as his top-level agents and commanders.

TAXES

There are no taxes in the Coral Archipelago. Any man, rich or poor, can go about his business and never pay a single coin to the government throughout his life. The government is entirely supported by the trade ventures it undertakes, the loot and slaves it sells, the casinos and brothels it runs and loans from the Guild. Coral is the ultimate dream of the self-made merchant, a place where the government doesn't tax people on their success—merely on their failure.


In practice, while nobody has to pay the government any money, donations to individual bureaucrats (clerks, auditors, guards, permit issuers, plutocrats and the like) make life go much more smoothly. A functionary can't refuse to do work just because he hasn't been bribed, but he can reschedule it to after all his other tasks. The usual amounts for most bribes have become settled through custom, and (for a small donation) visitors can obtain a list of the expected gratuities for most public services.

THE FLEETS OF CORAL

Spurred on by dreams of supremacy and the urge to power, Coral's sailors spread out across the West. Even the merchants of Coral are part of this invading force; they will cooperate with the Navy or with privateers to help Coral gain control of an area. One of Coral's classic gambits, frequently employed on future Protectorates, is to have the Coral Navy or raiders cut off regular shipping to a particular area and profit from raiding the supply lines, while the merchants replace the usual providers and sell their wares at a high price to the captive market.

NAVY

In Coral, the merchants are wealthy and powerful, the administrators are valued and the raiders are popular heroes—but no career is more truly esteemed than that of the Navy. In addition to keeping a share of all goods that they capture (recorded by the military bureaucracy), after two decades of honorable service all recruits are allowed



to retire with substantial pensions. These generous terms make Coral's navy attractive to individuals from across Creation, and pull a constant influx of raw young men from both Coral itself and the Protectorates.

The Coral Archipelago's navy is the largest in all the West, numbering more than 1,500 ships. Perhaps 30% of ships are triremes, 40% biremes and 5% are trireme tenders, dedicated to the upkeep and condition of the triremes. The remaining ships are small craft manned with marines. It would seem almost impossible to maintain with the archipelago's population and resources; however, the high esteem in which a naval career is held, the constant influx from the Protectorates and the recruits from across Creation not only keep up the numbers but allow expansion. In particular, the Coral Navy attracts experienced men from other navies who lost their posts or their ships on grounds of immorality, greed or anything except incompetence.

The Coral Navy accepts only male recruits. Apart from a general starting prejudice against foreigners, anyone can achieve any rank in the navy. Wealth can buy rank, or effort, ability and courage can earn it, but bloodlines and family have nothing to do with it. Some of the most famed and feared captains in Coral's Navy have been foreigners who rose to power through their own merits.

Admiral Tirak commands the Coral Navy. A man of moderate height and build, on first acquaintance he doesn't seem the sort of person who could strike fear into the hearts of hardened pirates, or quiet a quarterdeck with a single word. However, there is something feral about him; only the bravest man can meet his eyes and not recoil. Tirak doesn't walk, he stalks, and the wise know to scatter when they see him coming. He doesn't fight his own battles (he has bodyguards for that), but is a premier strategist, both at sea battles and at Gateway, and his skill at coordinating navy, pirates and privateers has made him a powerful and respected man. Tirak assesses everything in terms of potential future forces, and has private files on all known Exalted in the West.

PIRATES AND PRIVATEERS

In Coral terminology, Coral's pirates are citizens of Coral who make their living raiding on the high seas, while privateers are non-citizen pirates who have sworn an oath never to interfere with ships belonging to Coral or Coral's current allies. Citizens of Coral draw a clear distinction between the two. Other Western nations are not so discerning.

Pirates from Coral generally hold to certain standards. They don't kill victims who have surrendered,

though the pirates may hold such victims for ransom or sell them as slaves. The pirates are prepared to take a tribute from an enemy ship rather than attack it, if the enemy captain is willing to negotiate. Once in battle, all options are open, but before and after battle, a man of Coral is expected to keep to sea discipline, obey his captain's orders and not waste resources, whether they are booty or possible slaves. Privateers are far more vicious and wasteful, and confusion between the two has done much to worsen Coral's reputation.

After paying a hefty licensing fee, privateers are officially recognized, and are able to sell their booty in Coral's markets. If they are particularly successful, Coral's ambassadors (often the famed diplomats) may even ransom the privateers and their ships from enemy powers, should the privateers be captured. Privateers must give half their profit from sold goods and slaves, and half the sale price of their prize ships, to the Sea Lord. There are Guild representatives in Coral ports at all times, and if a privateer can't find a buyer, the Guild is always happy to buy booty at half cost. Even though this can mean a loss, many captains are glad to get rid of troublesome or bulky cargo this way. In an emergency, non-privateers can purchase interim letters of marque, at the cost of 60% of the price of the goods.

Because of the rapidly changing and essentially unorganized nature of these privateers, it is difficult to estimate their numbers. At any given time, there are between 250 and 400 ships operating under Coral's letters of marque.

SELLING STOLEN GOODS

Selling pirated goods is costly business in Coral for anyone who doesn't have letters of marque and reprisal. Only citizens of Coral, or those with a privateering license, can legally sell pirated goods. The penalty for violation is everything the seller owns, together with indentured servitude if his worldly goods don't match the value of whatever he was trying to sell.

ALLIED TRADERS

The captains of vessels that regularly deal with Coral receive special papers to identify them as Coral allies. When a pirate vessel closes to within hailing distance, the captain of an allied vessel announces that he has a certificate of passage, and the pirates send over a representative to inspect it. If it is valid, they release the ship. These papers are changed every month, so old papers cannot be kept or copied. They are sold directly on the Sea Lord's authority, and any captain willing to pay the price can buy immunity from



Coral's pirates. The Sea Lord maintains tight control over the trade; anyone caught buying or selling counterfeit certificates is declared an enemy of Coral, with a price on his head.

As a matter of policy, the Coral Archipelago gives all its allies papers. In the recent time of political confusion and Realm civil strife, Sea Lord Nemoran has cut down on the number of such papers, and even the Guild has only had papers granted to a few Syndics, giving them a monopoly on trade. Everyone else must purchase papers, but for the general convenience, diplomats from the Coral Archipelago are available in every port. The Realm has not yet taken formal notice of this clear provocation.


SOCIETY

Coral's society is founded on the urge to rise in power, ability and wealth. Citizens of Coral draw clear distinctions between sharp practice, intelligent precautions and the extraction of maximum benefit from a situation on one hand, and treachery, deliberate waste and betrayal of Coral on the other. Everyone admires an achiever; priests of the Ocean Father speak movingly of the god's control of every wave of the ocean throughout the West, while children are raised on stories of boys similar to them who rose to become heroes and leaders through effort and ability. The traders of Coral have no time for charity deals, unless it's in the interest of future goodwill and pressure, but see it as simply natural to want to make the best deal for themselves that they can, and expect any intelligent dealer to do the same. The poor are ground into the gutter, sold as slaves or put to indentured labor, and the rest of society approves of this, since the weak deserve no better. Mutual assistance is a virtue, but pity is a waste of effort. And ultimately, Coral knows that it will rise to lead the West.

Other than the Sea Lord and the plutocrats and military, Coral has no nobility or other official class distinctions, and no aristocracy of blood. On the other end of the scale, the state is rich enough that nobody starves, but those who depend on the Sea Lord's bounty for sustenance must wear special clothes in shades of drab brown to mark their shame, and are given the most menial jobs (or make-work, if no useful work is available) in government-funded business ventures. The only way for the poor to gain any status or respect is to join the military. The wives of such poor men are housed in barracks at the state's expense, and set to sewing uniforms and sails.

Coral has no formal universities, and the only schools are harsh temple-run ones. Those who can





afford to hire private tutors for their children, and several families often join together and share funds to hire tutors for their sons. Girls are educated to handle household accounts and local training, but nothing further. The Naval Academy in Mantaville handles state-financed young officers from Coral's navy and self-financed Coral pirates, teaching such matters as navigation, ship-handling, discipline, accounting and the laws of dozens of nations; the academy has provided diplomats and naval captains to Coral over the centuries.

Traditional dress on Coral is a naval uniform, for men; pirates wear similar clothing in a more dashing cut, while merchants wear naval uniforms of heavy silks and imported wools. A man's clothing should demonstrate his personal wealth and the skills of his women. Women wear long heavy dresses outdoors, and thin linen or silk indoors.

GENDER AND MARRIAGE

Women are lesser beings in Coral. It isn't meant unkindly; any decent man feels properly responsible for the women in his care, and treats them well, gives them little indulgences, trusts them to administer his household and so on. But he wouldn't consider letting them sail, or take up a military career; a true man doesn't force women into roles that they aren't fitted for, where they would be unhappy.

Only men can vote. Women may own property, but are technically under the authority of their fathers, brothers or husbands. Women's only path to autonomy is acquiring wealth, and two of the major trading firms are headed by women, but even prosperity doesn't make them equal to their male counterparts. Women are expected to associate only with other women and with their family members; custom restricts women to domestic duty and household finances. Only lower-class women go to the market, or run stalls or shops. One of the more publicly acceptable ways of gaining a social position is for a woman who's the wife or kin of a famous pirate captain to join a trading firm and handle his finances, booty-fencing and land-bound investments.

Polygamy is acceptable, and a man is free to take as many wives as he can afford. Marriage is registered at a local temple of the Sea Lord, in order to avoid later disputes about inheritance and finances. Divorce is also carried out at a temple of the Sea Lord, and is available to both men and women on simple declaration; on dissolution of a marriage, both parties regain the original money that they owned at the time of the marriage. Naturally, the man keeps any profit that has

WOMEN AND POISON

Many women are forced to go into business or take the reins of their households after their husbands or other male authorities have died. Some women decide to speed up the process. Since gardening, herbalism and healing are all acceptable occupations for a woman behind her household walls, many women of Coral know what substances can make a man ill, what can keep him ill and what can kill him. If the man is known to be sick or a habitual user of drugs already, so much the better.


Of course, this is a gamble. The household may simply fall apart in the wake of the man's death, or the woman may be unable to take up the business or trading that the man used to handle. Also, if the woman is convicted of poisoning, she will be indentured to service in a state-run brothel for life, assuming that her family doesn't simply kill her once her crime has been discovered, and then pay the fines for it.

accrued in the meantime. Children must be recognized by the father to be legitimate; if not, they are left on the streets to die, or thrown to the sharks. Some slavers conduct regular sweeps of the streets, collecting abandoned babies and toddlers, and sell them to the Guild or the Fair Folk.

LAW AND JUSTICE

All crimes committed in the Coral Archipelago carry a monetary value; everything is a crime against the state, and must be repaid to the state. Instead of such common punishments as exile, mutilation, slavery or death, criminals in Coral are either fined or must become indentured servants for a specified duration. Once they have repaid the value of their crime in money or labor, they are free. Half the fine for a crime is paid to the Sea Lord and half to any victims. (In the event of murder, the victim's half of the money goes to any dependents of the victim; when a man is killed and this is paid to his wife, it's often referred to as "a whore's dowry," given how many women have to turn to prostitution to support themselves.)

For a healthy young man convicted of a crime, an alternative to indenture is military service in the archipelago's convict brigades. Convict-soldiers are used as shock troops and laborers; if they capture an amount of booty equal to their indenture, they are



immediately freed. They pay the Sea Lord loot equal to the cost of their indenture, and may keep any additional treasure. However, convict brigades are rarely deployed in situations where taking loot is likely, and those troops not killed suppressing rioters or quelling rebellious natives are often reduced to near-cripples by the manual labor to which they are set when not deployed in the field.

Visitors are just as subject to the laws of Coral as permanent residents. However, visitors are subject to a higher rate of fines. Visitors are also permitted to hand over slaves or personal servants to serve out indentures on the visitors' behalf; when the slave or servant finishes the indenture, he or she becomes a free citizen of Coral.

LEISURE

The largest cities of Coral, including Azure, are infamous as places where every possible commodity is for sale: drugs, slaves, lives, deaths. When the citizens of Coral work, they work; but when they relax, they give themselves over to leisure. Drugs are common, and while only a fool would incapacitate himself, physical enhancers of all kinds are frequently used. The natives are as keen to visit the brothels, casinos and other hives of leisure as any foreign visitors are, and as long as a man can pay, he can do as he wishes.

The rich, the foolish and the desperate also come to wager their fortunes in the archipelago's gambling halls. In addition to more conventional forms of gambling, some risk-takers attempt to redeem their monies in the infamous black casinos, where losers forfeit their lives, and the wealthy watch their inferiors play games of life and death. Two of the largest casinos have highly popular back rooms where the jaded and the reckless come to bet all manner of intangible commodities, including their youth, talent, health and sanity.

RELIGION

The Ocean Father is revered by all Coral islanders, male or female, rich or poor; he was patron of the original Western Continent, and Coral in turn shall rule the entire West. Local art portrays him as a fabulously rich sea captain, with his loyal crew and sons following him into battle. In Coral hagiology, his wife is Sadara, the local earth goddess, and his sister is Siakal, the war goddess. Sadara is the Cold Mother who brings forth strong sons to serve her husband, and nourishes the iron palm trees, while Siakal is the Mistress of Slaughter and Sharks who brings destruction to the enemies of Coral. Women sacrifice to Sadara

BET YOUR LIFE

The two largest of the black casinos, the Diving Sea Snake in Mantaville and Vason's Luck in Azure, house one of a pair of First Age artifacts found 200 years ago. These artifacts enable gamblers to lose and win almost anything imaginable. Rich old men frequently bet large portions of their wealth against impoverished youths willing to bet a decade or more of their own lifespans. These two casinos—or, indeed, any of the black casinos—are a haven for Fair Folk. The Coral Archipelago has no objection to welcoming the soul-drinking creatures of fathomless chaos through its portals, as long as they pay (cash) for any crime that they commit, and otherwise abide by the nation's laws. One of these, Blue Sanata, is actually a spy for the Pearl Court of the Fair Folk, and can put seekers in touch with it—for a price, of course.

However, the most important inhabitant of the black casinos is Plentimon of the Dice, the god of gambling. He spends three seasons of the year in mortal form, managing the Diving Sea Snake Casino. The Diving Sea Snake offers generous credit to anyone Plentimon deems eligible. He treats failure to pay those debts as a personal affront to his honor, and those who do not pay after the first warning die in horrific and unlikely accidents. Plentimon himself acts as a broker for gambling involving the Fair Folk, or the First Age device in his basement, but will also gamble personally with anyone who cares to take the risk.

and deal with the spirits of the land, but men sacrifice to Siakal. Lesser spirits garner the odd prayer or offering from captains passing through the gods' part of the sea, and a libation of wine is always made in iron palm plantations before any trees are cut down. Shrines to petty deities of gambling are also common in almost all casinos (except Plentimon's) and always have a few sticks of incense lit.

There is no such thing as religious charity to the poor; there are, however, harsh temple-run schools for promising boys who couldn't otherwise afford any education. The temples train them for the military or for piracy. Successful graduates of these schools are expected to make generous donations in later life, and in return skim the cream of the crop of new graduates for their own ships and enterprises.

SLAVERY

Slavery is not only legal in the Coral Archipelago but one of the nation's big industries. While no native of Coral may be enslaved (indenturing is considered quite different), citizens of Coral are free to own as many slaves as they can afford. Most slaves provide manual labor in the iron palm plantations or the shipyards, where they are worked until they drop and then sold off to the Fair Folk or sacrificed to Siakal.

Occasionally, a slave turns out to be a Coral citizen who was kidnapped and sold while unable to prove his true identity. This is a high crime, and is investigated with the utmost rigor of the law; anyone convicted of selling a citizen into slavery will be fined everything he possesses and indentured for life.

WEALTH

Many outsiders see Coral's insistence on wealth and power as indicators of Coral's morality, and stereotype citizens of Coral as greedy merchants or avaricious pirates. A successful man of Coral, be he sailor, merchant or pirate, believes that effort and excellence are rewarded. Hard work, ability and intelligence bring success and wealth as a matter of course. If a citizen of Coral is wealthy, it is because he has achieved it himself, and he therefore deserves that wealth, and deserves the respect that goes with it. The rich and powerful have proven their ability and fought their way to the top; the poor have failed and merit nothing better than a menial job sweeping the street or laboring on the iron palm plantations.

The lower classes have different views, but in Coral the poor are voiceless.

FOREIGN RELATIONS

Having the Coral Archipelago as a neighbor is like having siaka in the water nearby. The inhabitants of Coral are pirates, hard dealers, plutocrats, hungry for conquest; however, they offer protection from their attacks, and protection from the Fair Folk and the undead. The islanders' rule is stern, but under it, everyone is free to rise. Whether by coming to terms with them, or defending against them or paying them off, everyone within the range of their ships must make some sort of response to them.

CORAL AND THE REALM

While Coral understands the Realm's general attitude of paternal rulership, Coral views the West as Coral's own territory—past, present and future. Thus, Coral treats the Realm more as an equal power than as

a vastly superior one. The Sea Lord sends regular gifts to the Empress, and orders Coral pirates to avoid obvious Realm shipping (privateers are less discreet), while looking for an opportunity to expand Coral's influence and further shut the Realm out of the West.

For the Realm's part, some young patricians and even Dynasts find Coral's attitude intoxicating, viewing Coral through romantic eyes as a meritocracy, a place where anyone can rise to his true level of ability.

CORAL AND OTHERS

Coral's expansionist attitude toward other nations is fuelled by slightly different reasons in each case. Individual outsiders are welcome to Coral, however—especially those able and willing to aid Coral in its designs. Those who have the strength and ability can win respect, and those who have the money can buy it.

Wavecrest: Coral views Wavecrest as a nest of barbarism, where the inhabitants appease gods in primitive ceremonies by throwing people into volcanoes. Wavecrest's navies are admirable, and its agriculture will some day help feed the entire West under Coral's supervision, but Wavecrest's political system is moribund and its alliance-building is a hindrance to Coral's ambitions. Coral doesn't dislike Wavecrest: Coral pities Wavecrest, and looks forward to some day bringing its people under proper guidance. In the meantime, Coral works to break down the trading links that Wavecrest promotes, in order to substitute Coral's own.

The Lintha Family: Bad as Wavecrest is, the Lintha are worse. They're demon-worshipping inbred cannibal maniacs and an outright cancer on the ocean. True pirates of Coral dislike being compared to these scum, and take any excuse to sink their filthy ships. In the Sea Lord's opinion, the entire race will need to be rooted out; even the women and children are hopelessly fouled. But in the current political situation, Coral is negotiating for an alliance, to keep the Lintha Family at bay while Coral expands and consolidates further.

The Neck: Coral has a long-standing tradition of raiding the Neck. While it's not an official Protectorate, Coral does a great deal to ward off Fair Folk attacks, and in return claims what Coral considers its due in food, young men and women and other resources. People of Coral view the inhabitants of the Neck as untaught and rural, distant relatives who need a firm hand and education.

Skullstone: Coral views Skullstone with justified wariness, watching it for signs of planned expansion or possible war. Coral's ships treat Skullstone galleys with careful respect, and Coral pirates and privateers only raid Skullstone ships when the Coral pirates can be sure

of doing so without getting caught. No sane citizen of Coral wants to be the one who starts a war.

The Guild: The Guild gains from an expansionist Coral, but not from Coral becoming the dominant power in the West and having no further need of it. The supply of slaves from Azure has slowed down, as the people of Coral have chosen to conscript prisoners of war or use them for labor rather than sell them on. Trade has slipped in favor of aggressive piracy and conquest—not that the Guild disapproves of piracy, but it doesn't bring in the regular flow of jade that trade routes do. The Guild is on the verge of using its loans to the Sea Lord as leverage to contain the current political situation. Some of the Guild's merchant princes prefer more forceful options, ranging from crushing tariffs to assassination, but conservative voices argue the uncertainties of war make such options a bad investment. In either case, the Guild is sending agents into Coral to be ready for all eventualities.

The Tya: Coral has two major issues with the Tya; they're closely allied to Wavecrest, and they're women. The archipelago tolerates a single Tya guildhouse on Azure, and accepts visiting Tya with money to spend, but firmly discourages recruiting, and expects the average Tya to be unstable, insane, a spy or all three.

The Emissaries of Perfect Water: Coral admires the Emissaries—the Coral Navy's constant battles with pelagotherpes and Fair Folk raiders amongst the islands of the outlying Protectorates ensure the people of Coral have a healthy respect for anyone willing to devote his life to protecting Creation from the Wyld. The Emissaries don't fully reciprocate. Coral does a fine job of defending its territory from the Wyld, which is an argument for leaving Coral be—it's one less front for the Emissaries to worry about. On the other hand, Coral is a major Guild foothold, Coral's connections to the Realm seem stronger the closer the Emissaries investigate and should Sea Lord Nemoran turn his full concentration toward expansion, Coral is likely to become as much a threat to the rest of the West's well-being as any foreign power. The ideological conflict between Emissaries from Coral and from elsewhere now builds toward a schism—a crisis not a single Emissary wants, but none see how to avert.

EXALTED IN CORAL

Coral society's opinions of the Dragon-Blooded are complex. Coral admires personal excellence but dislikes inherited merit. The Dragon-Blooded possess both in equal measure. Coral culture exerts subtle pressure toward its outcasts—especially its female outcasts—to



make the journey to the Blessed Isle and take the coin or the razor. Those Terrestrials who stay (and don't join the Emissaries) have risen far, often to plutocrat and even once to Sea Lord, but the *child* of an outcaste must live up to his parent's legacy amongst a people who will always assume his upbringing gives him an unfair advantage. Many patrician families in the Realm have an outstanding adoption offer open to children of Coral outcastes. After centuries of this drain, the blood of dragons in the Coral Archipelago runs thin.

Anathema are not welcome. Similar to most of the rest of Creation, Coral citizens are raised on stories of the terrible monsters who almost destroyed the world, and the host of Dragon-Blooded saviors who stopped the monsters. Everybody remembers the boogeymen of legend. Coralites don't have high-minded philosophical justifications for their hate and fear of the Anathema, and don't need such justifications—the people of Coral demonstrate the same reflexive distrust found throughout most of Creation.

With the Wyld Hunt so far away, Celestials who go public in Coral won't be harried by the Dragon-Blooded Host, but they will have bounties placed on their heads by plutocrats and other rich citizens, and will see fear in the eyes of nearly everyone the Celestials interact with.



THE IRON FIST

Description: A group of seven medium-weight Coral pirate ships that can take on a small trading fleet. While they often operate individually, they frequently work together in order to bring down larger prey.

Some of the captains

and officers on the ships are God-Blooded or have minor thaumaturgical Charms or enchanted items.

Commanding Officer: Captain Quenten Daggerhand

Armor Color: Varies

Motto: None

General Makeup: Seven ships, each carrying 60 pirates; unarmored, but carrying swords, daggers, harpoons and lightweight throwing spears

Overall Quality: Good

Magnitude: 5

Drill: 2

Close Combat Attack: 4 **Close Combat Damage:** 3

WHY IS CORAL INDEPENDENT?

The Empress's reasons for ignoring Coral have been pretext since her plans for conquest of the Scavenger Lands were indefinitely delayed. Coral is strong in numbers and population but lacks supernatural might. For all Coral's talk of excellence, the archipelago would be an easy target, though time-consuming. The Empress knew this.

The Realm has little use for cowrie shells, yet Coral can spend what loot the inhabitants plunder on more valuable goods, much of which Coral makes available to the Realm through gifts and favorable trade deals. The Empress extracted great value from the Western satrapies indirectly through Coral piracy. She cultivated Coral's expansionist agenda, the archipelago's refusal to accept the Immaculate Philosophy and even Coral's attacks on Realm shipping. Coral functioned as a check on the power of her Great Houses in the West, an isolated Direction that might otherwise have served as a staging ground for succession or coup attempts from her more rebellious children. And finally, should she ever have sensed rebellion brewing amongst her own generals, Coral would have made a fine excuse to send them far away on a time-consuming campaign of conquest with few immediate rewards or opportunities for glory.

Ranged Attack: 4 **Ranged Damage:** 3


Endurance: 7 **Might:** 1 **Armor:** 2 **Morale:** 2

Formation: Relaxed

THE DENZIK MERCHANTS

It begins as a speck on the horizon. The sharpest-eyed see it first, still unable to tell it from a sailing ship. As the speck draws nearer, inexperienced lookouts mistake its many sails and great breadth for an entire fleet. Soon, it is close enough for even the untrained eye to make out the vast expanse that carries the Denzik over the Great Western Ocean, their legendary city-ship.

The city-ship is a haphazard construction of woods from across the West, South and North. Wind propels the city-ship, caught in its thousand sails of canvas, silk, woven yeddin hair, a dozen different sorts of hide and any other sail-material conceivable propels the city, as do hundreds of vaguely coordinated paddles and rowers.



The Coral Archipelago, a Magnitude 6 Dominion
Military: 4 **Government:** 3 **Culture:** 2
Abilities: Awareness 4 (Superior Diplomats 3),
Bureaucracy 4, Craft 3 (Public Works 3),
Integrity 4, Investigation 4, Occult 1, Perform-
ance 2, Presence 4, Stealth 3 (Spies 3), War 4
(Pirates! 1)
Virtues: Compassion 2, Conviction 4, Temper-
ance 3, Valor 5
Limit Break: Valor **Current Limit:** 4
Willpower: 8

Bonus Points: 30 **External Bonus Points:** 18

Notes: Sea Lord Nemoran and Shanston Red are sorcerers with legitimacy, while several of the plutocrats are savants. Coral's bonus points contribute a dot each of Bureaucracy, Craft, Integrity, Occult, two dots of Presence, the Superior Diplomats specialty, two dots of Spies and the Pirates! specialty. Coral's external bonus points, squeezed from the Protectorates and other island nations, provide the Public Works specialty, the last dot of Spies, the last dot of Valor and the second dot of Compassion.

In the event of a Limit Break, Coral attempts to expand, striking at all nearby targets while raising the tribute on all Protectorates.

ORIGIN OF THE DENZIK

In Realm Year 424, Denzik Badr formed the Denzik Merchant Association. She had surprised everyone in the extended Denzik family scarce years before with her business suggestions and ascended from unwanted daughter to respected mistress of the Chiaroscuran family's import and export concerns.

Badr wielded her newfound influence and the rapidly multiplied wealth of her family like a scalpel. Her quiet warnings made the other merchant families and concerns nervous about the Guild, and she used this fear to weave them all into the strong consortium they are today. It took the Denzik family name in honor of her efforts. The consortium's primary intention was not to increase profits but to form a resistance to the Guild's sphere of financial influence, and the consortium succeeded.

The lives of mortals are not long, but Badr lived an exceptional span. One hundred seventy-eight years ago, during the last years of her life, Badr inspired the Denzik merchant consortium to fund the most ludicrous

financial venture in living (including Dragon-Blooded) memory. The consortium's wealthiest members pooled their money to commission a vast number of durable barges, linked with rope and chain into a single "vessel" the size of a city. The Denzik family, Ismat Export, Sudi Trading, the Varangian Shandar Caravan Company and a dozen lesser entities all left themselves inches from the bottom line. The city-ship took two years to design and eight to build.

It might not have happened without one member of the consortium. Through a series of chance events, mildly famous entrepreneur Utmin Ahara found herself swimming in money and opportunity. Two long-shot investments paid off, a close friend died and left her an inheritance and Ahara happened to find and return a Chiaroscuran noble's cherished pet for an absurdly large reward—and she tripled it all with one bet at the dog races.

Utmin spent her new wealth bankrolling curious ventures of unreliable financial return. She sponsored poets and artists, tried breeding furnace rhinos in captivity (a disaster) and funded archaeological expeditions. Mostly, she was just looking for some big investment for her fortune. One of these last paid off.


Her team found a vast underground storage area, far beneath Chiaroscuro, containing row after row of self-powered paddlewheels. Seeing them gave Utmin the idea she'd wanted, and she immediately approached the consortium. Most laughed at her plan, but Badr had the same vision as Utmin, and still had enough influence to push the rest of the consortium.

Most believe the rest is history. The Denzik consortium scrounged up the money, built the city-ship and birthed the legend. The city-ship launched more than eight mortal generations ago, and it has taken on a certain legendary quality in those places it visits.

People with longer memories are less impressed, especially members of the Great Houses Nellens and Peleps. The former secretly helped fund the city-ship's construction out of a desire to engineer greater difficulties for the Guild. House Peleps's fleets are familiar with the city-ship, and it benefits from their protection for more than a third of its annual circuit.

THE DENZIK TODAY

The Denzik began as agents of individual groups within the consortium as well as paid sailors and maintenance personnel. Over time, the Denzik have intermarried and become nearly one political and ethnic group. Most Denzik incorporate the name of their forbearers' original company into their family



names but owe allegiance only to the city. The Enzo Ismats try to best the Sevenfold Shandar family in the sculpted bamboo market, but both knowingly enrich the city with their schemes.

Now, the city-ship pays out dividends to its shareholders. Each time Denzik merchants boat to a city for business, a city official travels ashore for the sole purpose of dispensing dividends. The Denzik family holds the largest number of shares in the venture, and has slowly been buying others' interests in the city-ship.

Other major shareholders include Ismat Export, the Tri-Khan of Chiaroscuro, the Western Trading Alliance and House Nellens (through a half-dozen fronts). The charter forbids the Guild from holding shares in the venture. One-time investors who join the Guild are invited to sell their shares, if somewhat under value, before the shares are confiscated. The Denzik have, since the city-ship's founding, confiscated more than 200 talents' worth of shares from people or businesses found to be fronting for the Guild.

The Denzik family relocated itself in full to the city-ship just over 76 years ago. The current matriarch, a daughter of Badr called Denzik Hala (as long-lived as her mother), made the floating city her family's base of operations in order to avoid being crushed by the Guild's inexorable march.

The Denziks' culture has also developed after over a century of undirected growth. As the founders (and hidden benefactors) expected, the Denzik focus on profitable ventures. But their culture and leaders discourage falling into any patterns. They see that as the Guild's rubric, finding something that works, then refining and dominating that venue to profit, and they consciously choose to oppose it. The Denzik have a number of consistent ventures that keep them in the black: Realm weapons in the Threshold, Western art in the South and East, Southern foods and spices in the North and East, sand from the South for ice-covered Northern streets, etc. The Denziks' real profits come from more creative (and much less dependable) investments, such as the much-advertised year-long ocean tour.

CLANS AND ALLIANCES

Inhabitants of the city divide themselves up into clans along two lines. Clans are relaxed brotherhoods; members offer others light assistance, advice and resources and expect the same in return, but they rarely keep serious track. The first clan division is by blood, and most distinct blood clans descend directly from agents of the city's original investors. Three of these are divisions of the city's most prolific family, the original Denzik:

Ashida Denzik, **Uffah Denzik** and **Reyht Denzik**. The distinct family lines serve to distinguish members of the Denzik family proper from the Denzik as a whole. Other prominent blood clans include the **Enzo Ismat** and **Uname Ismat** clans, which compete every chance they get; the **Sevenfold Shandar** clan, which includes five internal divisions because two have died out; and the **Sudi** clan, which welcomes members of dubious relation and enjoys competing with other blood clans, especially in the realm of recreational animals.


The other axis denotes product or profession. Joining one of these *chandler clans* is not required for a Denzik to work in a given field, but the chandler clans offer support and expertise. Many clans have at least a half-century's experience shipping a given material and provide expert knowledge on how to profit in that line of work. Choosing not to join an appropriate chandler clan is usually a sign of mistrust or great secrecy, and few secrets last long on the water, even on a ship as large as a city. Most chandler clans go without names; Denzik reference them simply as "the soft furnishing clan" and "the paper clan." When competition or rivalry creates two equal clans at once, Denzik use the clans' foremost members to differentiate them, for example, "Albatross's silk clan."

Membership in a chandler clan is fluid. Joining is a simple matter—receiving advice or assistance from a current member suffices. For some, the blood clans are nearly as fluid. One can only be a member with the right sort of blood, but the bloodlines have intermixed since the city's launch, so blood clan membership is more a matter of admitting kinship than formal initiation. People of mixed descent can shuffle from one blood clan to another with no ill feeling as long as they don't take undue advantage of membership.

A Denzik may belong to any number of clans. A mixed-descent entrepreneur could be a part of the Reyht Denzik and Sevenfold Shandar blood clans while also enjoying membership in the statuary, dried fruit and iron ore chandler clans. A Denzik who acknowledges membership in only one chandler clan is either a poor merchant (of commensurate low status), young and not yet spreading her wings or a genius in her narrow field.

Any inhabitant of the city with an idea for turning a profit may pitch it to the Financial Council. Denzik Hala heads and dominates the council, mostly using it to rubber stamp investments she suspects will be profitable . . . or just interesting. Ventures that turn a profit pay back the city's loan with interest. Failed investments are forgiven, but successes and failures are public. Denzik increase or diminish status accordingly, and they consider not learning from failures to be the worst stupidity.





The more people support a single idea, the more resources it garners. Denzik Hala believes that more minds and more hands make an enterprise more likely to succeed. The city has the free funds to lose small fortunes, and larger failures create more meaningful lessons.

Denzik call such cooperative ventures alliances. Alliances are (usually) strict business ventures with their own bylaws, with the responsibility shared among many. The term, at first used as the rest of Creation does, took on connotations of its own during the city's cultural development. An alliance differs from a clan in the level of each participant's activity and in the degree of organization. Each alliance is a miniature company, assembled for the purpose of making a profit from a single project. Some dissolve after a single trade (especially spectacular failures); others have remained for years with the same business plans circuit after circuit. The Dulled Blade Alliance has bought broken, bent or otherwise useless weapons for almost nothing and sold them to historians for more than a century, and the Rainbow Cushion Group has been moving embroidered pillows around Creation for decades. The Hearth Cat Trading Venture was a resounding success but knowingly flooded the market and disbanded (its members intend to reconvene two years after the animal's average lifespan), while the Steam Hawk Taming Initiative evaporated after less than a season.

The people investing the most into an alliance's venture manage it and make the major decisions, while lesser investors do more of the grunt work. It's true that the actual capital comes from the city's coffers, but the amount each individual requests determines how much reputation each stakes. All Denzik should learn from a failure equally, but a failure reflects more directly on those who made larger requests for money. Individual Denzik do not invest money, they invest status.

DRAGON-BLOODED DENZIK

Terrestrial Exalted are not citizens. There are currently a half-dozen Dragon-Blooded living among the Denzik. Two were born to the life, but even they are no longer considered normal inhabitants of the city. Dragon-Blooded are not allowed to belong to any clan or hold shares in any alliance, and they may not sit on the Financial Council. They may own shares in the city-ship endeavor itself, and four do.

Instead, the Dragon-Blooded are respected and valued independents. They cannot request city funds for a project, but enterprises may hire them; the two sorcerers are especially valued. Denzik entrepreneurs pay their Terrestrial freelancers from funds allotted

by the council, and Dragon-Blooded are exempt from the city's currency of changing status. Because of this, a Terrestrial used in a failed endeavor still gets paid and comes out ahead. But even an Exalt can drop in demand if she ruins every venture that involves her; attaining that reputation prompts the Dragon-Blood to shape up or get off the ship—it's hard to enjoy the city's entertainments without status or real money to trade. None of the current Dragon-Blooded inhabitants have such a reputation.

All Terrestrials who live on the city-ship help with defense. Each Dragon-Blooded has an individual agreement with Denzik Hala requiring his full cooperation defending the city in exchange for something, be it money, favors owed or promise of sanctuary.

LIFE ON THE SHIP

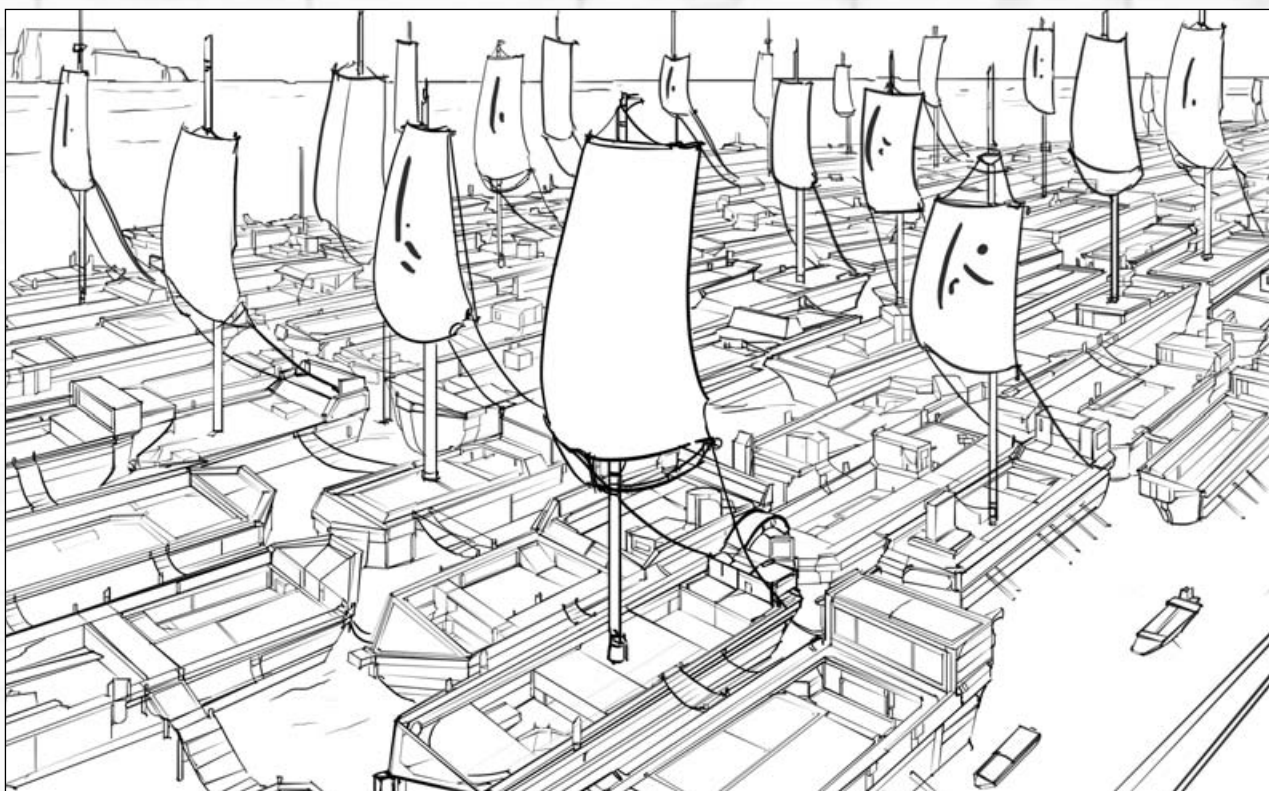
Lifelong inhabitants of the Denzik city-ship don't spend much time on other ships or in other cities. They call their home and mode of transport "the city" or more rarely "the ship." They may refer to it as "the city-ship," but almost exclusively for foreigners' benefits.

Laws are few and simple (much more so than the Denzik's system of status). Murder, theft and other wrongdoing are punished harshly, much as on a standard ship. Other laws are specific to the Denzik and mostly related to safety, such as remaining on one's home barge when a storm draws near. Common punishments include the lash or the rod. Trouble between individuals comes before the Financial Council, which means each party ends up arguing its case to Denzik Hala.

The council recognizes alliances as agreements between individuals, not as individuals in their own right, so issues between alliances must be phrased as contention between single members of each alliance. Intra-alliance troubles usually fall under some sort of rules set in the alliance's bylaws. Bylaws often name someone within the alliance as an arbiter, which prevents most matters from going to the council. Unofficial alliances, those without any charter, fall under standard practices.

At sea, Denzik rise when necessary to perform the everyday labor that all share. Doing available work about the city-ship, which is mostly making repairs, fishing, working the paddlewheels and performing general seamanship, is the slowest but surest method of increasing status.

In effect, manual labor is an investment in the vast enterprise of the Denzik city-ship, and the return is greater trust and the respect of one's fellows. This is much slower than the astronomical rate at which a successful trader can rise, but is dependable. The result



THE STANDARD PRACTICES

These are assumptions the Denzik make about an alliance (or any cooperative business effort). They're considered fair play unless the people involved agree to other terms. The Financial Council also considers them standard practice for alliances without a specific charter.


- The alliance exists to achieve a stated purpose (usually to turn a profit on a trade or series of trades).
- Shares exist in the possession of all members of the alliance, issued in proportion to risk.
- Shares may be exchanged as a trade good; assumption of risk transfers along with shares.
- A member's vote carries weight proportional to his shares.
- A member profits in proportion to the number of shares he possesses.

is that lower-status Denzik do more of the work, which includes running the alehouses and administering the dog races. Likewise, Denzik who take advantage of the work that other Denzik perform by patronizing those places diminish slightly in status. In this sense, status becomes a vague currency, completely opaque to outsiders and mostly transparent to natives.

Denzik sleep at night or when their shifts demand. A significant number work nights, so many homes are expertly sealed against light. Diets vary by status just as they do in other lands; some have access to delicacies throughout the year, and most eat fresh fish and dried fruit.

Each of the 125 barges that make up the city-ship is equivalent to one neighborhood. City custom treats each barge as a single entity when it comes to unified regulations (which differ based on construction materials and location within the city-ship), in community debates or grievances and occasionally in punishment. The highest-status inhabitant of each barge is automatically the spokesman of the district. When necessary, the spokesman may speak for her entire barge; occasionally the council mandates this. Inter-barge conflicts rarely escalate *too* far—everyone knows that damaging the ship, and *especially* threatening its buoyancy, is a high-severity, low-tolerance infraction regardless of provocation.

Denzik spend their free time between ports of call fraternizing, free from the eyes of foreigners. Denzik also spend time inventing the get-rich schemes that the city encourages, wrangling the alliances they may need to succeed and petitioning the Financial Council for funds. Audiences are easy to obtain, as only a thin veil of bureaucracy shields the council. To encourage



the flowering of all ideas, no matter how crazy they may seem, Denzik Hala ensures there's no shame or loss of status in being turned down, and even the city's favored sons do not have blank checks.

The city changes its demeanor completely when the ship stops at one of the coastal cities or towns on the city-ship's route. Planning halts, and the merchants put existing plans into action. Smaller boats leave the city-ship in a swarm, traveling the few miles from city to shore.

Fewer merchants deal with the smaller towns or coastal tribes, and sometimes the city barely slows down. These Denzik take faster ships to and from the coasts where they have business, and the city barely notices. At moderate towns, or when the Denzik can treat with more people (an entire island or a massing of tribes) at once, the city-ship comes to a stop for six to 18 hours—most of a day. That's plenty of time to seal most deals, and Denzik who need more time can use the faster ships to return to the city.

The largest cities, for example, Chiaroscuro and Cherak, demand more attention. Denzik fight the seas for up to two days to stay near a major metropolis. They spend most of this time moving cargo, haggling and entertaining clients. These stops see the most visitors to the city-ship, temporarily swelling the city's population by as much as 5,000.

TO OUTSIDERS

The Denzik merchants are well-known among most oceanic cultures in Creation. The merchants appear on the horizon, swarm the shore and crowd the local population centers.

Some Denzik trades happen every year when the city-ship comes by. Others are one-time events, and many new enterprises leave the sellers questioning—not the Denzik as a whole, because the legend is too strong, but the individual. Whether or not potential buyers are equally confused depends on the Denzik merchant's scheme. Successful investments always make perfect (if surprising) sense to the final consumers, while failed or ailing ventures appear strange, even ludicrous, to the intended market.

“You haggle like a Denzik” means “You’re all over the map.” The person in question is unpredictable, sometimes expertly wringing every last quarter-dinar out of a deal, other times underselling or expecting absurd prices for an unwanted good.

“The contents of a Denzik hold.” This means “something rare, timely or just damned curious.” Denzik

merchants collect trade goods from nearly all the ocean coasts of Creation. As experimental merchants, they reveal unexpected cargo often enough that they are known for it—though they also often profit from the surprise. Denzik also aren't afraid to hold onto what they have until the ripest time to sell, provided the cargo is imperishable or reliably preserved. After all, they'll get to someplace with a buyer sooner or later.

LOGISTICS: LAYOUT AND COURSE


The haphazard look of the Denzik city-ship surprises most visitors. Each barge is rectangular, about 100 yards by 50 yards. Five-yard-long ropes bind it to six of its neighbors. Each row of barges is staggered with respect to the next, so every barge has another at each end and shares both halves of its length with a barge on each side. A barge typically has one rope bridge to each adjacent vessel, but high-traffic areas sometimes warrant more.

The ropes that hold barges together, and the rope bridges, are designed to give under the stress the worst storms can produce; heavier, longer ropes or chains of 10-yard length then keep the city together while allowing more slack. During storms, strict procedure dictates that each Denzik keep to her own barge and ensure its survival. When a storm appears on the horizon, the service industry shuts down, and people return to their homes. It's better to lose a few hours' productivity than to lose lives, crushed between storm-tossed barges.

Each barge is required by law to possess its own sail and paddlewheel, as well as an adequate supply of water, dried meat and fruit, fishing line and hooks, caulk, tools and materials for emergency repairs. All Denzik know how to sail and where the city is going, and thus enough to raise or lower the sail when it would help or hinder the ship's travel. Failure to do either is only a minor offense unless repeated.

A barge's inhabitants must also keep it in good repair. Allowing a barge to remain damaged is a major offense. The ship gets its disordered look from the variety of materials used for repair work—the Denzik patch holes and sails with whatever woods they can manage. Over the years, each barge has acquired an individual look and reputation from which the barge takes its name. Even visitors can easily tell the *Lustrous Teak-and-Taf-feta* from the *Startling Cotton-Crest Pine*.

Every fifth or sixth barge focuses on the service industry. These are colloquially known as “tea” or “ale” barges, for their most popular hangouts. These barges contain amenities from brothels and cockfights to dueling clubs and poetry readings. The Denzik have



absorbed entertainments from around the coasts, since they travel everywhere and often have occasion to show potential buyers a night on the town. Even these vessels devote significant space to long-term cargo.

Barges that occupy the outermost ring keep and maintain the boats, collectively owned by the entire city. Boatkeepers earn more status than most manual laborers, since boatkeepers are necessary for the city's survival. Beyond the last barges sail the city's scout ships, keeping watch for their destination but mostly for pirates.

The outermost barges are also equipped with weapons and manned with warriors for just such occasions. Ballistae and catapults are kept in good condition, as are the city's 36 light implosion bows (see **Wonders of the Lost Age**). With enough advance warning, warriors can shift the bows to prepared emplacements to better meet the enemy. These volunteers dedicated to defense are enough to warn away most pirates, and even some small navies, but they are all the military the Denzik have. All told, these warriors are about 500 strong with another 1,000 available as rough militia.

All barges have paddlewheels, but scattered throughout the city are nearly two dozen self-powered First Age paddlewheels. Their presence and identities are not secrets to the Denzik, but foreigners have no idea which barges hide the rare treasures. Even when functioning, it requires a difficulty 3 ([Intelligence or Perception] + Sail) roll to find the nearest. A half-dozen artifact paddlewheels are nonfunctional; anyone able to repair them would earn the respect and gratitude of the Denzik.

Also hidden on several city-approved barges are more than 100 carefully stashed winterbreath jars (see **Oadenol's Codex**, page 32) used for special cargo. When the chill won't keep something fresh, the Denzik also have more than 60 cargo preservation spindles (see **Wonders of the Lost Age**, page 59) rated Artifact 1-3. Any may be requested as part of a business petition. Doing so increases the chance of being turned down significantly (and preservation spindles often require the help of a Dragon-Blood), but some Denzik have made fortunes using them.

About 20 "barges" at the center of the city have no room for cargo. Instead, they are the mansions of the rich and powerful. One belongs solely to Denzik Hala, and one is set aside for the Financial Council and its small bureaucracy. The others all contain large and luxurious suites for those of great status.

WHERE THEY GO

Between high winds and doldrums, occasional storms and corrupt gods' ocean tollways, the Denzik city-ship maintains a speed approximately five-sixths that of a normal sailing ship on the high seas. (See the Storytelling chapter of **Exalted**.) The Denzik make about 2,000 miles in a solid month of travel.

The city-ship follows a regular path. The city-ship rarely deviates for reasons other than safety, since the Denzik make plans for each stop. Visiting a city off the beaten path at the expense of one on the schedule is unfair and unprofitable. On the other hand, the Financial Council keeps records of all ongoing enterprises; if someone convinces Denzik Hala that the net benefit is positive (and it must be overwhelmingly so), she may authorize a change in course.

The city-ship's course takes it past all the major Western islands and south and east into the Inland Sea. The city-ship benefits there from the protection of the Imperial Navy and the merchant fleet, not to mention the halo of calm weather that surrounds the Blessed Isle and the plentiful food there. The Denzik city-ship performs a full circuit of the Inland Sea, ignoring only the cities of the Scavenger Lands, and heads north through the Grand Strait before going directly west to reconnect with its beginning. Many more details go into the course-plotting.

Ascending Air sees the Denzik city-ship leaving the Wavecrest Archipelago for the long journey to the City of the Steel Lotus. Moderate tribute to the Lintha, combined with the city's significant defenses, keep the Denzik mostly safe from those dread pirates. Catching occasional currents allows the Denzik better speed than the city-ship usually achieves. They then follow the coast northward until they break across the Inland Sea to trade with several coastal towns on the way to Arjuf. The island of Sweet Radiance merits a brief stop as the Denzik's course takes them to the Inland Sea's Southern coast, where they trade with the Lap, Paragon, Chiaroscuro, Yane and Kirighast.

This timing is not incidental. The Denzik's time trading with the Southern coast coincides with much of the season of Water. It is temperate, and supplies are plentiful, making restocking the city's provisions after the long journeys from the Western archipelagoes relatively cheap. Ready access to food for the entire circuit through the Inland Sea means the merchants can devote more space to trade goods rather than salt-ign away months' worth of nourishment.



Rather than following the Threshold's coast onward toward Thorns, the Denzik cross the Inland Sea again to deal with Noble, Sion, Sdoia, the Imperial City and Pangu on their way North. Avoiding the Scavenger Lands ensures the Realm's continued goodwill.

The city-ship moves west from Cherak to deal with the cities and towns along the Northern coast, up to Wallport. By this time, the dominant season is Wood. The Northern coast is warmed enough to make access trouble free, at least by sea. The Denzik are usually the first merchants coming into the North each year, and their timing and their bulk gives them a significant edge. They also get to purchase the North's earliest harvest, cheap because the farmers all know that they will have more chances to store for the winter.

Again crossing the Inland Sea back to the Blessed Isle, the Denzik trade with Chanos, Bright Obelisk and smaller towns from there to Eagle's Launch. This is the Denzik's last major chance to stock up on many comestibles, including salted beef or pork and varieties of dried or fresh fruit.

The Denzik backtrack a couple of hundred miles from Eagle's Launch to head North. They follow the Grand Straits around the coast, and meet and treat with the various barbarian tribes there, trading weapons and tools. At least one large group of disparate cultures times an enormous annual moot to coincide with the Denzik's arrival.

Business draws the Denzik again across the Great Western Ocean once there's nothing more keeping them in the North. The Denzik lay away as much food as possible (much of it purchased in Eagle's Launch, but some also from Northern peoples) and catch as many currents as they can to get across to the Coral Archipelago as quickly as possible, typically arriving by the middle of Ascending Fire.

The season ends just before the merchants finish with Wavecrest, and spend any extra time until Calibration in sight of the islands. Denzik tradition and superstition dictate that the city-ship anchors offshore of Wavecrest during Calibration.

Commanding Officer: Yozou Yellowtail, a young Dragon-Blooded outcaste

Armor Color: Crimson on blue

Motto: "Water and blood!"

General Makeup: Ten troops in chain shirts armed with composite bows and short swords

Overall Quality: Excellent

Magnitude: 1

Drill: 3

Close Combat Attack: 2 **Close Combat Damage:** 3

Ranged Attack: 2 **Ranged Damage:** 2

Endurance: 6 **Might:** 0 **Armor:** 1 **Morale:** 3

Formation: The Eighth watches over one barge and represents the standard Denzik defense unit. The Eighth actually has 10 more troops, usually stood down to ensure fresh troops on duty at all times. Some units maintain light implosion bows.

The Denzik City-Ship, a Magnitude 3 Dominion

Military: 2 **Culture:** 2 **Government:** 2

Abilities: Awareness 5 (Trade +3), Bureaucracy 5 (Trade +2), Craft 2, Integrity 2 (Economics +2), Investigation 1, Performance 3 (Encouraging Trade +1), Stealth 1

Virtues: Compassion 3, Conviction 4, Temperance 1, Valor 2

Virtue Flaw: Conviction **Current Limit:** 2

Willpower: 7

Bonus Points: 15 **External Bonus Points:** 9

Notes: Denzik's bonus points are in its specialties and its fourth dots of Awareness and Bureaucracy. The city-ship's external bonus points increase both to five dots and add another point of Trade specialty to Awareness. The city-ship's Virtue Flaw moves it to ignore its good nature and harm itself and others for profit's sake.



DENZIK EIGHTH DEFENSE

Description: Denzik volunteers armed with composite bows, fire arrows and spears for close combat. They depend on chain shirts and cover for defense.



I'M HERE,
DEATHKNIGHT.

MORAY... YOU USE
THAT WORD LIKE
IT'S AN INSULT.

I THOUGHT
YOU'D PREFER IT
TO "TRAITOR."



CAREFUL,
DARKTIDE. I'M NOT
THE ONE WHO'S
SOLD MY SOUL TO
THE SILVER PRINCE.

EVEN AFTER
EVERYTHING HE
DID TO ME, I
STILL NEVER LET
HIM RULE ME.



CONGRATULATIONS.
SO WHAT DO YOU
WANT?

I CAME TO WARN YOU
ABOUT EBON SIAKA.

OH, DID YOU NOW?



SHE'S JEALOUS
OF THE FAVOR THE
SILVER PRINCE
SHOWS YOU.



THIS ARCHIPELAGO, IT
SEEMS, JUST ISN'T
BIG ENOUGH FOR THE
PAIR OF YOU.

FUNNY... THAT'S
JUST WHAT SHE
SAID YOU'D SAY.



CHAPTER FOUR

MIST-WEBBED ISLES

The Skullstone Archipelago lies north of the Neck and west of the Coral Archipelago. Site of the largest shadowland in the West and abode of the Deathlord alternately referred to as the Bodhisattva Anointed by Dark Waters and the Silver Prince, Skullstone stands as a testament to the power of its master and the inevitability of death itself.

The nation has a population of just over 400,000 living souls. There are no accurate records of how many dead serve the Bodhisattva, but the number of ghosts is thought to be at least equal to the living. Some outside observers suspect that the number of zombie and skeleton slaves in Skullstone may exceed one million. The largest population center is in Onyx, with a population of about 250,000. The next largest population centers are Stark's Reef on Greyshores (60,000) and Equinox on Cormorant Island (45,000).

HISTORY

While the peoples of the Neck and the Coral Archipelago view Skullstone with trepidation, not even the savants of those nations realize how closely connected the three nations are. Long ago, in the immediate aftermath of the Primordial War, these three island chains were actually part of a single large sub-continent about one-fourth the size of the Blessed Isle. Known to history as Okeanos, this great island nation produced many of the finest sea-going vessels piloted by the Solars in the Western theater of the Primordial War. The people of Okeanos considered themselves "children of the sea," and the nation supposedly had the blessing of the Ocean Father.

THE CATAclysm

The glories of Okeanos did not last. Very early in the High First Age, the entire nation was wracked by




a cataclysm of devastating proportions. The subcontinent sank, leaving only its highest mountain peaks behind. The rest of Okeanos, including glorious Amphion, was lost beneath the sea.

The early Lawgivers used their powers to mitigate the damage as much as possible, rescuing the survivors of the subcontinent and preventing the resulting tsunamis from reaching the mainland. In the aftermath of this disaster, observers discovered something ominous—one of the newly formed islands (the one nearest the former location of Amphion, in fact) was perpetually shrouded by a miasma of dark fog. When Solars investigated, they discovered what they had previously thought impossible: the island somehow existed simultaneously in both the lands of the living and the dead. Twilights dubbed this heretofore unprecedented phenomenon a “shadowland,” the first stable example of its kind in recorded history.

At this early point in the High First Age, even the Solars had only a limited understanding of the afterlife. Before the Primordial War, the deceased reincarnated almost immediately. After the war ended, savants and priests noted that for many individuals, there was a lengthy delay in reincarnation, often decades or longer. However, not until the birth of the shadowland on Darkmist Isle did Solars first learn of the Underworld, an entire realm of death and decay coextensive with Creation and populated with the ghosts of individuals who refused to reenter the cycle of reincarnation. Most frightening of all, the entire death realm was maintained by the vast chthonic power of the Neverborn, those Primordials who fell in battle, and whose immense tombs floated at the lowest level of the Underworld around a bottomless pit that pulled at the very souls of any who looked into it.

Darkmist Isle was quarantined by order of the Deliberative, with access limited only to highly classified exploratory missions undertaken every century or so. Even then, only Celestial Exalted could visit, as the Deliberative feared that Dragon-Blooded, with their (relatively) short lifespans, might be tempted by the possibility of extending their existences as ghosts. Eventually, as Creation expanded, all but a few Exalted had forgotten the island, which was both relatively isolated and also dwarfed by much larger territories fashioned further West from the very Wyld itself. This state of affairs continued up until



the Usurpation, at which point the Dragon-Blooded quickly learned exactly what a shadowland was, as the Solars were adept at fashioning new ones.

POST-USURPATION

For its part, the Shogunate largely ignored Darkmist Isle, as the Shogunate did much of the West. While the dangers of shadowlands were by then well known, the one on Darkmist seemed quiescent and small (at least in comparison to the immense one created by the Dragon-Blooded themselves at Marama's Fell). The Western Dragon-Blooded focused their attention on the more commercially and strategically important Wavecrest Archipelago and ignored the tiny shadowland.

When the Contagion came, most of the Western islands had most of their populations grouped together in close-knit villages. Even major Western cities tended to be tightly packed. In many island communities, the virulence of the plague forced leaders to make draconian decisions, often exiling entire families from the island if even one family member showed signs of the sickness. In the islands of the North, such refugees almost invariably went to Darkmist Isle, the only place left to go. Some refugees died on the shores of Darkmist only to rise again miraculously as ghosts to continue "living" with their families. Other refugees managed to avoid the Contagion or even recover from it, as if the disease, created in the Underworld to use against the living, somehow lost its virulence in the realm of the dead.

The population of Darkmist grew even more when the Fair Folk invaded. While unstoppable in most places, the Fair Folk seemed terrified of entering the Darkmist shadowland, as if its dead, sterile atmosphere could drain them of the chaotic energy that spawned them. Still more refugees from the surrounding islands fled to Darkmist for safety, even as the death toll inflicted by the Fair Folk weakened the barriers between life and death until they finally broke. By the time the Fair Folk were repulsed, the Darkmist shadowland had grown to twice its previous size, and additional shadowlands sprang into existence on the surrounding islands as their major population centers were razed. These shadowlands tore at the fabric of Creation, forming a nebulous maze throughout the affected islands. Dubbed the Web of Shadows, this maze made it difficult for even the most skilled pilots to journey from one of the islands to another without at least temporarily entering a shadowland area and becoming vulnerable to its frightening denizens. The Web of Shadows also allowed the dead of Darkmist easy access to the other affected islands, and while the archipelago would not be christened for years to come, the Skullstone Archipelago was born.


THE COMING OF THE BODHISATTVA

Initially, the people who came to dwell in these chthonic isles fared better at the dawn of the Scarlet Empire than most Westerners. In the aftermath of the Contagion and Fair Folk Invasion, Wavecrest, the Neck and Coral all fell to varying degrees of social anarchy as village leaders and national bureaucrats alike succumbed to the disease. On Darkmist, however, these lines of authority grew stronger. When Grandfather died of old age, his wisdom was not lost. Instead, he continued to advise his family for years to come so long as they paid suitable homage to his memory.

For increasing numbers of islanders, death became preferable to life. There was little edible vegetation in the shadowland, and livestock brought from outside remained malnourished. The living were a sickly breed, pale and jaundiced with a disturbingly high infant mortality rate. Increasingly, young people committed suicide so as to enter death with their looks or physical strength intact, rather than waiting for natural death and risking an eternity in decrepitude. Young, inexperienced leaders crossed over into death and bullied their way into power. It seemed that even the people of the shadowland were subject to the same slow decline that the lands of the living faced, until a savior appeared.

The Bodhisattva Anointed by Dark Waters made himself known in Realm Year 87. Unlike his fellow Deathlords, the Bodhisattva did not seize power through brute force. He presented no powerful retinue of war ghosts or a terrifying display of occult power. He did not even identify himself by the title of Deathlord. He presented himself almost as a mendicant, preaching a gospel of the living and the dead working together to create "the New Order," a new form of society in which living and dead were equally valued. But there were limits to his humility. His sermons were laced with powerful mind-altering Charms that captured the imaginations of his listeners, and those few ghosts who sought to challenge this brash evangelist saw their corpus ripped casually to shreds. Nor did the Bodhisattva limit himself to Darkmist Isle, as he traveled to the other islands at will to spread his New Order gospel with nothing more than a one-man reed boat to protect him from the ravages of the Web of Shadows.

Chief among the New Order's doctrines was the concept of "the righteous dead." While death was the natural fate of all who live, not all were worthy of life after death. As the Deathlord gained cult-like authority over the people, he reached out to the five most influential leaders and offered them positions as his first Dark Judges, ghosts who would evaluate the lives of



those on the brink of death and determine who should be called upon to continue serving the community as ghosts and who should immediately reenter the cycle of reincarnation. If some among these Dark Judges were once the most outspoken critics of the Bodhisattva transformed into his strongest supporters in the twinkling of an eye, such reversals were seen only as proof of the rightness of his cause.

As the New Order philosophy took hold, the people came to attribute enormous social status to those who “accepted the burden” of continued ghostly existence. One important factor in this status was reflected in the disposition of the deceased mortal’s remains. Those who continued on as ghosts were provided with lavish shrine tombs so that the people could regularly leave gifts and grave goods for their ghostly benefactors. Those who reentered the Great Cycle needed no such anchors to their previous lives. Far from receiving lavish tombs, those who went on to reincarnation simply weren’t buried at all. Their remains became property of the state and subject to reanimation.

In the earliest days of the Bodhisattva’s New Order, all newly created zombies and skeletons served the government, providing manual labor for massive public works projects. The extinct volcanoes on Darkmist and the surrounding islands were quarried for basalt and obsidian, which zombie slaves then used to construct the Bodhisattva’s great manse Ebon Skull, carved into the side of the largest volcano, Mount Vashti. When the manse was completed, the Deathlord commemorated the event by christening his entire kingdom Skullstone and dubbing his subjects “the people of the Skull,” or simply Skullfolk.

Zombie divers scavenged the ocean floor, bringing back huge catches of fish and kelp to satisfy the public’s food requirements. More importantly, the zombies could search the ruins of sunken Amphion for lost treasures. Although virtually no Okeanos artifacts survived the millennia beneath the sea, the zombies delivered vast quantities of gold and precious gems to the Bodhisattva’s coffers, as well as limited quantities of magical materials. At the Deathlord’s direction, Skullfolk traders sent out their first vessels in centuries to the nearby islands, astonishing the people of Coral, who had assumed that no one could survive in the shadowland, let alone come out again with gold and silver.

Initially, the people of Coral wanted nothing to do with the strange pallid traders who claimed to be emissaries of “the Skullstone Archipelago.” Soon, though, the Sea Lord of that era realized if he would not accept their gold, his rivals would. Besides, for all



their wealth, the Skullfolk seemed comically unaware of current exchange rates, and were willing to pay absurd amounts of gold for inferior slaves and half-dead livestock. What the Sea Lord could not have known is that the traders couldn’t care less about quality. In the hands of a skilled necrosurgeon, even the weakest of specimens could produce a functional zombie, and within a few years, the once-silent streets of Onyx were busy with the clatter of skeletal horses pulling carriages attended by zombie coachmen.

The Bodhisattva Anointed by Dark Waters ruled openly over the people of the Skullstone Archipelago until RY 243, the 100th anniversary of the completion of Ebon Skull. In that year, the Bodhisattva issued a proclamation announcing that he had succeeded in laying the foundation of the New Order and that he had faith in his followers’ ability to build upon that foundation. Accordingly, at year’s end, the Bodhisattva himself would return to the cycle of reincarnation, leaving his subjects to the ministration of a Council of Regents. He also assured the people that in his people’s time of greatest need, he would return to them, reborn. But instead of a humble teacher and holy man, he would return as “a prince clad in silver” who would lead Skullstone to its rightful destiny at the forefront of Creation.

True to his word, on the last day of Calibration, the Bodhisattva committed ritual suicide in front of a crowd of nearly 10,000 Skullstone citizens. Hundreds committed suicide on the spot as well, in hopes of being allowed to attend him in his next life. On the first day of the new year, the eldest member of the Council of Regents publicly read the Bodhisattva’s last will and testament, in which he left a zombie slave and two ounces of gold to every household on the Archipelago, an extravagant gift that had the perverse effect of instilling a powerful materialist streak in the citizenry. Demand among the citizens of Skullstone for undead slaves soon outstripped supply, and it was not uncommon for a status-conscious citizen to report his neighbor for capital crimes (real or fictitious) and claim rights to the neighbor’s corpse as a reward. The Bodhisattva also left behind a strong bureaucracy, the beginnings of a powerful navy and a state religion that commanded a devotion from its people just as strong as that of the Immaculate Philosophy on the mainland.

None of the Bodhisattva’s followers had any clue that, as a Deathlord, he simply could not die from anything as mundane as ritual suicide. In due course, his body reformed in the Underworld, and after changing his form, he reentered the Skullstone bureaucracy, assuming the identity of one of the Dark Judges. Using a succession





of false identities, the Deathlord subtly manipulated affairs for the next 500 years, until his prophesied “Second Coming” was at hand.

THE REGENCY

After the Bodhisattva’s “death,” the Skullfolk set themselves to building a utopia according to their spiritual leader’s principles and ruled by the self-perpetuating bureaucracy he established. The highest level of authority belonged with the Council of Regents, the 12 oldest and most respected ghosts in the archipelago who ruled over Skullstone in the name of the Bodhisattva until the coming of the Silver Prince. Below them were the twin bureaucracies: the Ministry of Day, which regulated the activities of the nation’s living populace, and the Ministry of Night, which protected the interests of the dead. In theory, the two ministries were coequal in power. In practice, the Ministry of Night held jurisdiction over any controversy in which one of the dead was involved, and once the Ministry of Night became involved in a case, it rarely ruled in favor of the quick over the dead.

The number of the Dark Judges was increased, with two panels of five judges each on Darkmist and one panel on each of the other major islands. These judges reviewed the lives of every Skullstone citizen who approached death to determine who would be obligated to continue on as a ghost and who would pass on into reincarnation. The criteria to be used by the Judges were left deliberately vague, and a particular Judge might be just as willing to confer “righteous dead” status on a favored artist, playwright or even courtesan as the Judge would a respected bureaucrat or businessman. Although the Dark Judges’ standards were somewhat subjective, in practice they stuck to a rough mathematical formula: no more than one soul in eight could become a ghost. The rest would see their souls pass on and their bodies used as fodder for Skullstone’s ever-burgeoning zombie slave market.

As the years spent waiting for the Silver Prince stretched into decades and then centuries, a certain amount of decadence crept into the functioning of the Skullstone government. Decisions as to who would arise as a righteous dead and join the Ministry of Night were increasingly based on how much money the dying could offer the Judges in bribe money. The Ministry of Night itself increasingly used feeble pretexts to involve itself in cases that should have been decided by the Ministry of Day simply to advance the interests of some third-party ghost. The corruption led to increasing frustration not only among the living but also among those of the dead who lacked the proper political connections.

This simmering resentment was exactly as the Bodhisattva had planned. After watching and subtly guiding Skullstone for more than five centuries, the Deathlord knew his people well. One cannot have a reformation without something to reform. In the spring of RY 764, a strange man, pale and haggard but still very much alive, appeared in the city of Onyx on the steps of the Ministry of Night and proclaimed himself the Herald of the Silver Prince. The so-called Herald was quickly arrested by city guards and charged by the Dark Judges with heresy and sedition. Undaunted, the Herald challenged the Dark Judges’ authority over him, displaying a knowledge of the Bodhisattva’s scriptures that surpassed even their own. The Judges were divided, with some willing to believe the stranger’s claims. The majority, however, refused to accept the Herald’s claims about the Silver Prince’s imminent arrival and condemned him to death by immolation at the base of the Ebon Skull. Almost the entire population of Onyx turned out to see the Herald’s execution, with much of the mortal populace loudly condemning the Dark Judges for the unfairness of the sentence.

Just as the crowd was on the verge of rioting, however, the Herald himself called out to the people, castigating them for attempting to prevent his death. “Death is not the end,” he cried, “and my death opens the way for he who is to come forth and rule! May you all be as eager to face your deaths when they come as I am to face mine!” With that, the Herald demanded that the executioner set him alight. Even as the fires consumed the Herald, he never cried out, but instead sang hymns to the glory of the Bodhisattva and to the truly righteous dead.

When the Herald finally died, the flames around him turned to silver and erupted into a bonfire. Out of this unearthly blaze stepped a powerful figure, clad in robes of silver draped with razor-sharp soulsteel shards and wearing a mask of polished ivory who called out: “People of Skullstone, behold your prince, the Bodhisattva reborn whose coming was foretold! Peace unto those of you who kept my teaching of old, and woe unto those who have corrupted my scriptures for your own purpose!”

And with that, the Silver Prince pulled out his grand daiklave, Howler in Darkness, and instantly slew those Dark Judges who had voted for the Herald’s execution, as well as dozens of other prominent ghosts in attendance whose sins the Prince seemed to know intimately. As the Silver Prince struck down those whom he judged wicked and vowed to purge their influence from the New Order, an unprecedented religious fervor swept over the people of Onyx. The word soon




spread to the rest of the archipelago—the Bodhisattva is reborn, the Silver Prince has come and the destiny of Skullstone is at hand.

THE SILVER PRINCE

The reformation of the Skullstone government was ruthlessly efficient. The Council of Regents was disbanded, with the Silver Prince assuming total control over the entire nation and those regents of questionable loyalty disappearing in the night. In the council's place, the Silver Prince established two separate elected bodies—the Elder Council, whose members are voted on by the nation's ghosts, and the Younger Council, who are chosen by the living. The Silver Prince also reformed the twin ministries, merging them into a single body, the Ministry of Day and Night. Although the new Ministry is completely integrated between living and dead, the dead still hold almost all positions of any importance. However, the dead no longer hold exclusive control over the right of promotion. Instead, mixed review boards containing both living and dead monitor the character, loyalty and

job performance of all living bureaucrats, and those of particularly outstanding potential are rewarded with promotion into the upper echelons—provided they were amenable to ritual suicide first. Some cunning mortals even managed to manipulate this process to their own ends, taking their own lives while at delicate junctures in important projects in hope that their superiors would elevate them to ghost status simply to ensure the projects' completion. Often such audacity is even successful.

The Silver Prince also rewarded particularly loyal subjects with appointments as Dark Judges, as many of that body had been slain when he seized the reins of power. The Deathlord also altered the traditional role of the Dark Judges, expanding their authority over the living and installing them as the head of the priesthood of his powerful death cult, which also served as the Silver Prince's secret police. The greatest reward presented by the Silver Prince, however, is one he has only doled out a handful of times in the past three years—Abyssal Exaltation. He has granted five Black Exaltations, four to his most favored mortals and once



on a Solar Exalt who he tortured into submission. The former Solar, now an Abyssal called Fallen Wolf of the Cutting Sea, was an unruly servant, however, and the Silver Prince later exiled him.

Today, while the Silver Prince is the undisputed master of the Skullstone Archipelago, he has little to do with its daily internal affairs. Such mundane concerns are left to his bureaucracy, now purged of any hint of disloyalty or apostasy, while the Silver Prince turns his attention to matters of expansion. In addition to its already sizable merchant fleet, Skullstone has secretly built a significant fleet of warships. Thus far, the Bodhisattva keeps the size of his navy secret, with most ships docked at his hidden shipyards on Island Five. Even those ships on regular patrol typically conceal themselves within the murkiness of the Web of Shadows until the ships emerge from its black fog to surprise doomed pirates. Many of the Deathlord's ships were built with carefully recovered First Age techniques as well as necromantic principles, but such wonders take time to create, and the Silver Prince has no desire to tip his hand until he has enough First Age caliber warships to crush his regional rivals.

GEOGRAPHY

As far as most savants know, the Skullstone Archipelago consists of four islands: Darkmist, Greyshores, Seagate and Cormorant. Other than the Bodhisattva's deathknights, no living person is aware of the fifth island in the archipelago, suitably dubbed "Island Five" by the Deathlord. Summoned into Darkmist's orbit by an unresolved Wyld anomaly during the Great Contagion, Island Five is Skullstone's greatest state secret.

Darkmist was Creation's first shadowland, and after its initial manifestation, the shadowland just barely covered the entirety of the island. The shadowland expanded in response to the Contagion, however, and today, the Darkmist shadowland extends more than 50 miles from the island's shores. The original shadowland also connected with dozens of much smaller shadowlands across the region created by the Contagion and the Fair Folk Invasion, forming a great labyrinth of roiling black fog called the Web of Shadows. While this Web is mostly static, the black fog from which the Web of Shadows is formed fluctuates according to tides and weather patterns. Consequently, while it is possible to navigate through Skullstone waters without entering a shadowland, only the foolish and the reckless would attempt to do so without knowing the proper navigational routes. Skullstone's navy

employs a great many zombies drawn from the ranks of the foolish and the reckless who braved the Web of Shadows only to be drawn inside it when the winds shifted unexpectedly.


DARKMIST ISLE

The seat of power in the Skullstone Archipelago, Darkmist Isle is home to the main offices of most Ministry agencies, as well as half the Dark Judges and, of course, the Bodhisattva himself. The capitol of the entire nation is in the city of Onyx, which was built into the base of the extinct volcano, Mount Vashti. Higher up the mountain rests Ebon Skull, the Bodhisattva's personal manse and the seat of government for the entire nation.

While Onyx is by far the largest city in Skullstone, there are about seven smaller towns dotting Darkmist's coast. For the most part, these are simple villages, loyal to the Bodhisattva but lacking any particular resources. Two are somewhat notable, however. The town of Karon's Point, on the northeastern shore of Darkmist, is the site of a small manse called the Palace of the Black Soul, which the Bodhisattva has provided to the Knight of Ghosts and Shadows, a recent defector from the court of the Bodhisattva's rival, the Lover Clad in the Raiment of Tears. Similarly, the town of Blackwater Cove on the southern side of the island is also home to a small manse, the Tower Against the Maelstrom, which the Bodhisattva has bequeathed to the Dusk Caste Ebon Siaka, the eldest of the Deathlord's deathknights and the admiral of his Black Fleet. Blackwater Cove is also commonly used as a port of call for ships of the Black Fleet, particularly those whose crews would not be permitted to visit the shipyards on Island Five (see pp. 76-77).

ONYX

One of the most populous cities in the West (and certainly the most notorious), Onyx was the first city constructed by the refugees who first came to the shadowland so many centuries ago. The first buildings in Onyx were crude thatch huts constructed mainly from reeds. Over time, the early Skullfolk learned that ebony and teak could grow even in the shadowland, and both types of tree still provide construction materials today. However, the principle building material in Onyx is basalt. Nearly every building in Onyx (and the rest of the archipelago) is fashioned from the jet black volcanic rock, with wood primarily used today for furniture, roofing and building signs. Roof construction typically consists of a thin layer of teakwood slats covered with obsidian shingles, which cause roofs to glisten darkly



in sunlight. A small number of public buildings even incorporate limited quantities of soulsteel into their construction, including some of the most famous structures in the archipelago.

Surrounding most of the city is a wall constructed entirely from the blackened bones of some ancient behemoth and reinforced with soulsteel bands and rivets. The wall extends up Mount Vashti and connects to Ebon Skull. At the opposite end of the wall stands the mammoth Bone Gate, the primary entry point to the city, although there are several much smaller gates built into the wall and accessible only by the city guards. Outside the walls stands a small shantytown of reed huts. Referred to by the locals simply as “outside of town,” these crude dwellings are home to Onyx citizens who for one reason or another have suffered a serious demotion or some other economic tragedy that has rendered them too poor to afford living space within the city.

THE THEATRE MACABRE

Surprisingly to some, the Theatre Macabre is the building in which the Bodhisattva holds the most pride. A symbol not only of his power but also of his appreciation of the arts, the Theatre is a massive enclosed arena used for the production of elaborate plays and operas referred to as “necrodramas.” Famed for their startling violence, most necrodramas employ both living and unliving actors. Skullfolk ascribe great social status to performers in necrodramas, much more than actors and singers anywhere else in Creation, for two reasons.

The first is that the Bodhisattva’s patronage of the arts means that the very best singers and actors of the Theatre are awarded righteous dead status, and the performing arts are viewed as a potential route to immortality that would otherwise be open only to the greatest generals and most brilliant bureaucrats.

The second reason for the popularity of necrodramas is far more subtle—many of the necrodramas themselves are magical plays penned by the Bodhisattva under various pseudonyms and augmented by powerful Linguistics Charms. Consequently, the audience attending these plays invariably leaves happy, spiritually revived and usually receptive to whatever message the Deathlord magically wove into the text. Such subliminal messages usually reinforce the audience’s beliefs about the moral rightness of the New Order, the importance of loyalty to the state and the ultimate necessity of death itself.

Three types of actors perform in necrodramas. The greatest actors of the archipelago are almost all dead,

rewarded for their thespian skills with ritual suicide and the chance to perform for eternity. Living actors generally play supporting roles, although particularly gifted ones often understudy for ghostly stars and a handful play leading roles that specifically call for live performers. Finally, some actors are actually mindless zombies limited to non-speaking roles. While no smarter than the typical zombie, zombie actors are designed specifically to play a particular role in a necrodrama, typically that of an extra or a stunt person. Such zombies perform their roles flawlessly, although they have no ability to emote, let alone improvise, and many of the most talented performers refuse to share the stage with zombies.

While the Theatre Macabre is the oldest of the necrodrama theaters and by far the one with the greatest pedigree, several other such theaters are found across Skullstone. In particular, the theaters in Cliffhaven (on the eastern coast of Darkmist) and Port Jyna (on Greyshores) are well-known not only for their serious necrodramas but also for bawdy comedies and violent passion plays with all-zombie casts specially trained to perform simple roles.

THE COLLEGE OF NECROSURGERY

While all the Deathlords make use of necromancy, none have progressed as far as the Bodhisattva in incorporating death magic into the very fabric of their domains. The great College of Necrosurgery is a testament to his efforts, a sprawling structure whose design is based on the legendary College of Biothaumaturgy that once stood on the Isle of Voices, the First Age predecessor to Versino. Within the College, the Bodhisattva and his followers pioneered techniques by which both mortal and ghostly savants could duplicate the simplest techniques of necromancy. For most of these students, their training would come to naught. Neither ghosts nor true mortals can be initiated into necromancy. Ghost-Blooded mortals can, however, and more than half the living population of Skullstone has enough Ghost-Blood heritage to qualify.

Even mortals who cannot master Iron Circle Necromancy still benefit from attending the College, however, as all students are required to study necrosurgery, the art of preparing corpses for necromantic rituals. While only a true necromancer can actually raise a zombie, she can save herself a lot of time by having one or more trained necrosurgeons on staff to prepare the body in advance. Since Skullstone’s entire economy is based on dead labor, necromancers would never be able to keep up with demand if each



one had to prepare every corpse from scratch, and in many ways, exceptionally skilled necrosurgeons are considered as important to the Skullstone economy as the actual necromancers.

Part of this accord is due to Skullstone's natural bias in favor of the dead over the living. As a practical matter, only living Ghost-Blooded can learn necromancy, but each necromancer will lose his powers upon death. The system favors the dead over the living at every level, so it's only natural that necrosurgery skills that can be mastered by both the living and the dead should be viewed as more valuable than those skills which can only be mastered by the living. Needless to say, a living necromancer who uses his powers to abuse the dead will face the severest sanctions if his indiscretions come to light.

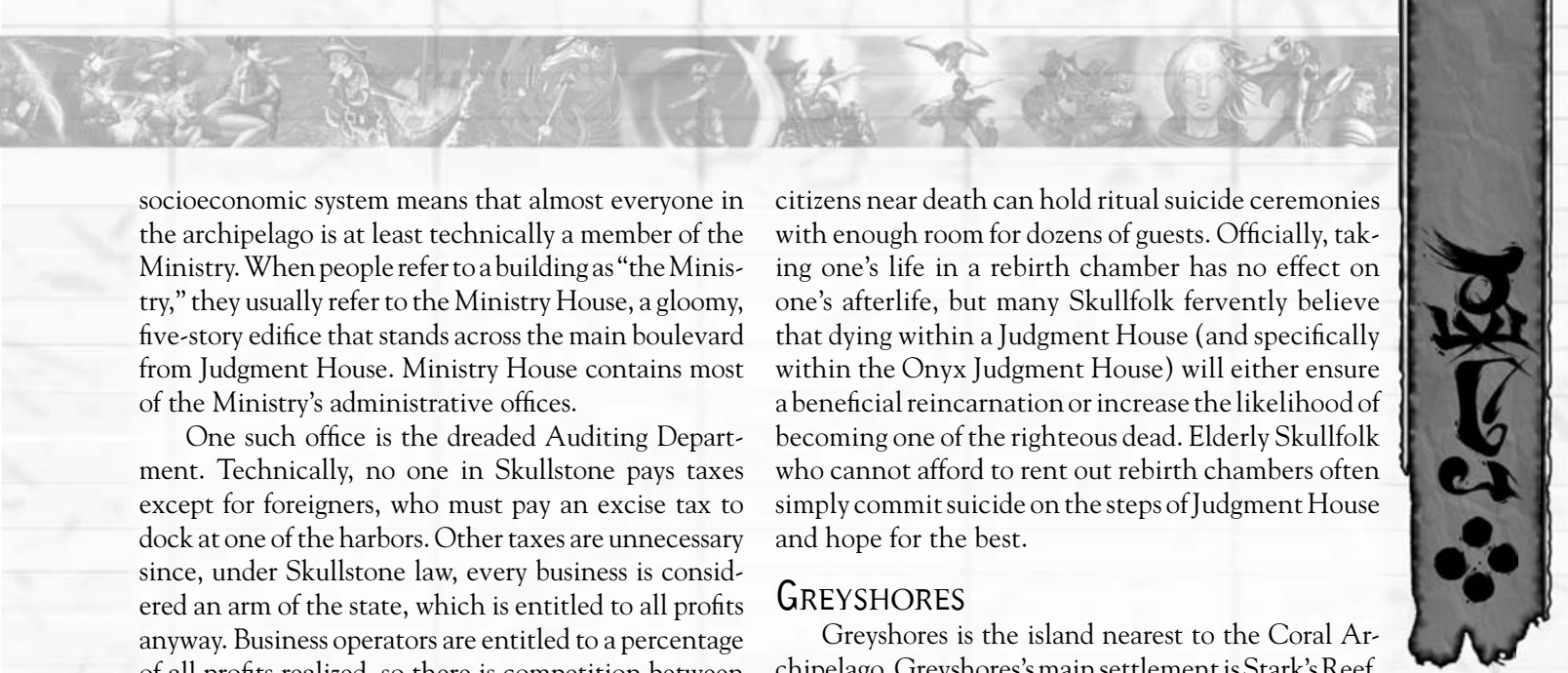
The College of Necrosurgery is actually a cluster of six buildings—five buildings of moderate size arranged in a ring around the sixth, an enormous tower seven stories tall and 400 yards in diameter. Three of the five outer buildings house classrooms for new initiates, experienced necrosurgery students and necromancy initiates. A fourth contains dormitories for the students attending the College. The fifth outer building serves

as the “morgue” for the entire facility. Designed by the Bodhisattva personally, the structure incorporates stones taken from near the Elemental Pole of Air into its construction, and the entire building remains near freezing temperature regardless of the season. The central building contains administrative offices and faculty housing. More importantly, however, the central building is where the actual work of necromancy is performed. While students study the necromantic arts in the outer buildings, most graduates contract with the government for employment as a licensed necrosurgeon or state necromancer. Necrosurgeons usually rent out space in the large central building until their reputations have grown to the point that they can branch out and open up necrosurgery clinics of their own. All necromancers work directly for the state and receive free workspace either at the College or in a satellite facility elsewhere in the archipelago.

MINISTRY HOUSE

It is a misnomer to refer to a single building as housing the Ministry of Day and Night. The Ministry's role in Skullstone society is both expansive and invasive, intruding into nearly every aspect of Skullfolk existence. Furthermore, the nature of the Bodhisattva's





socioeconomic system means that almost everyone in the archipelago is at least technically a member of the Ministry. When people refer to a building as “the Ministry,” they usually refer to the Ministry House, a gloomy, five-story edifice that stands across the main boulevard from Judgment House. Ministry House contains most of the Ministry’s administrative offices.

One such office is the dreaded Auditing Department. Technically, no one in Skullstone pays taxes except for foreigners, who must pay an excise tax to dock at one of the harbors. Other taxes are unnecessary since, under Skullstone law, every business is considered an arm of the state, which is entitled to all profits anyway. Business operators are entitled to a percentage of all profits realized, so there is competition between rival managers, but the amount of profit a manager can take is determined by the Auditing Department, which also investigates fraud or embezzlement against the government.

Another office housed in Ministry House is that of the Skullstone Guard, which serves as both the principle law enforcement agency in the archipelago and as the Deathlord’s standing army in case of invasion. The Guard has been under the command of General Caron Mustaigne for the last 78 years except for one brief period—he was removed from office four years ago for refusing to participate in the execution of the Herald of the Silver Prince on the grounds that the Herald had broken no laws of Skullstone. When the Silver Prince assumed power, one of his first acts was to reappoint Mustaigne to his former post. Although Mustaigne is the chief law enforcement officer in the land, he shares authority over military matters with the Abyssal Exalt Ebon Siaka. Despite Mustaigne’s actual age, he died young and appears to be in his late 20s.

JUDGMENT HOUSE

Across from Ministry House lies Judgment House, or one of them, at least. In fact, there is a Judgment House in every major city in Skullstone, although the largest and most respected is the one in Onyx. The Onyx Judgment House, just as each of the others, serves as the seat of office for a panel of five Dark Judges. On the top floor of Judgment House are the chambers of the Judges and the courtroom in which they hear civil controversies brought before them. Judgment House also holds office space for those clerks who openly work for Dark Judges (although many employees of the Dark Judiciary are “off the books”). Most importantly, each Judgment House contains several lavishly decorated “rebirth chambers” in which

citizens near death can hold ritual suicide ceremonies with enough room for dozens of guests. Officially, taking one’s life in a rebirth chamber has no effect on one’s afterlife, but many Skullfolk fervently believe that dying within a Judgment House (and specifically within the Onyx Judgment House) will either ensure a beneficial reincarnation or increase the likelihood of becoming one of the righteous dead. Elderly Skullfolk who cannot afford to rent out rebirth chambers often simply commit suicide on the steps of Judgment House and hope for the best.



GREYSHORES

Greystones is the island nearest to the Coral Archipelago. Greystones’s main settlement is Stark’s Reef, a bustling port city that is the chief trade hub between Skullstone and Coral. While the Web of Shadows covers relatively little of the island itself, almost all of the eastern half of the island is surrounded by a maze of coral reefs that makes navigation even more treacherous than traveling through the Web. Stark’s Reef was named for Captain Zhuroku Stark, a pirate turned privateer who swore loyalty to the Bodhisattva during his first reign. Stark was the first to successfully find a safe route through the deadly reefs, thereby making trade with Coral practical.

Today, Stark’s Reef is home to a number of trading warehouses, including some rented out to Coral traders and to the Guild. Stark’s Reef is also home to roughly a third of the Black Fleet (or at least of that part of it that is publicly known to exist), as well as the port of call for a number of brigands and privateers who sail under the Skullstone flag. Moray Darktide usually makes Stark’s Reef his port of call, and the Silver Prince has granted Darktide use of a small demesne near the center of the island. The Deathlord might even be willing to cap the demesne and build a manse on the property should Darktide prove his loyalty sufficiently.

SEAGATE

Seagate Island is the farthest Skullstone territory from Onyx and has always stood at the periphery of the Deathlord’s power. The city of Seagate was constructed during the First Age. The Solars discovered a small demesne, barely sufficient to yield a level-one manse, located in a bay on the island’s eastern shores. As it happened, offshore were treacherous reefs and other underwater hazards that made navigation difficult. To resolve the problem, the Solars constructed a series of dikes from adamant, pumped out the water in the bay and constructed a manse-lighthouse on the site.



The manse's Essence was just enough to keep the lighthouse beacon perpetually lit, and over time, a small city grew around the manse in the shadow of the adamant dikes that held the seas at bay.

When the Silver Prince seized authority over Skullstone, the people of Seagate were among the few to put up more than token resistance. Living at the edge of Skullstone's authority, the Seagate islanders thought that the time was right to overthrow the local Dark Judges and declare independence from the rest of the archipelago. The islanders could not have been more mistaken.

Once control of Darkmist Isle was secure, the Silver Prince made Seagate the second stop on his itinerary. Announcing his presence via a towering illusion, the Deathlord bade every islander who wished to remain a part of Skullstone to swim out to the Silver Prince's ship. A few dozen did so. Then, using long-forgotten knowledge of the Seagate Lighthouse's control systems, the Silver Prince opened up the dikes and flooded the city. The vast majority of the citizens were killed outright, and not one returned as a ghost. Today, the lighthouse continues to serve as a beacon in the night, but Seagate's population is a fraction of what it once was. The survivors now dwell in the few buildings that have floors above sea level, traveling from building to building in crude paddle boats. The Web of Shadows now covers the city, with only the top third of the lighthouse rising above the mist to continue warning the island's rare visitors of the dangers they face.

CORMORANT

Cormorant is the southernmost island in the Skullstone chain, and the nearest to the Neck. Before the Contagion, Cormorant was one of the most populous islands in the Neck, complete with a small Shogunate naval base on the northern shore. The Fair Folk utterly destroyed the naval base and the surrounding villages before withdrawing as the Web of Shadows reached out to claim the ruins. Today, the island is Skullstone's, though Cormorant represents the largest contiguous area that remains permanently in the land of the living. While most of the other islands are dotted throughout with small shadowlands, Cormorant has only a single shadowland, which takes up the northernmost half of the island and extends north into the sea. This shadowland cuts right through the heart of a town on the east coast fittingly known as Equinox. Because half of Equinox remains in the land of the living, the town serves as a major trade hub, as well as a meeting place for diplomats from other lands who wish to meet with agents of the Silver Prince but lack the nerve to travel into the shadowland itself.


Cormorant was the last major island to become part of Skullstone. The island remained sparsely populated after the Fair Folk were repulsed, as the islanders of the Neck viewed the shadowland on Cormorant with superstitious dread. In RY 521, Skullstone itself decided to colonize the island, beginning with the dead northern half before slowly expanding out into the living southern half. Eventually, these colonists built trading posts on the southern half of the island and essentially invited disaffected islanders from the Neck to relocate there. The largest such trading post is a moderately sized town of 15,000 (all living) called Bountiful Sunrise whose population is lavishly subsidized by the Skullstone government in order to demonstrate the benefits of peaceful co-existence between the living and the dead.

When the Silver Prince assumed power, he personally visited Bountiful Sunrise to assure its people that their indolent lifestyle would continue as long as they remained loyal to the New Order. Accompanying him were several spies whom he left behind to infiltrate the living of Cormorant and watch for any sign of disloyalty. These spies are armed with a First Age neurotoxin, enough to poison the entire water supply of Bountiful Sunrise and ensure that the shadowland expands considerably.

ISLAND FIVE

The landmass known as Island Five is easily the most unusual of the islands in the Skullstone Archipelago because, in most senses, Island Five does not exist. In the First Age, the Solars greatly expanded the frontiers of Creation with powerful Wyld-shaping Charms, creating new territories whose continued existence depended on social interaction with the more stable parts of reality. As the First Age fell to Contagion and the Fair Folk, Creation underwent massive upheavals, and vast stretches of these artificial territories winked out of existence when everyone who knew of them died out.

Island Five was one such territory, a penal colony that once existed more than 2,000 miles west of modern Skullstone. The death toll in the colony was almost complete, but one survivor, a convict, was blessed with natural resistance to the Contagion. Because of the prisoner's continued existence, the island endured, but through a quirk of the Wyld, the expanse of ocean surrounding the island did not. As geography warped to accommodate the new status quo, the island relocated to within the Skullstone shadowland where the Wyld could no longer affect the island. The prisoner, who had survived the deadliest plague Creation had ever seen,



was promptly torn apart by the dozens of hungry ghosts that arose from the bodies of his fellow inmates.

The circumstances surrounding Island Five's transportation into the shadowland are the source of the landmass's most unusual property. Metaphysically speaking, Island Five does not exist. Accordingly, it cannot be perceived through any means by anyone more than 100 yards from its shores. In the aftermath of the Fair Folk invasion, Creation was full of such strange anomalies, most of which were resolved by the Sidereal Exalted as part of their normal duties. Because Island Five came to rest in a shadowland, however, the Sidereals never knew of Island Five's existence. The Bodhisattva discovered the island by chance and after conquering the hungry ghosts who populated it, he realized that it was the perfect place to build his secret factory-cathedrals. The island was quite literally impossible to find unless the searcher were piloting strictly by the stars of the Underworld, and even then, only the most skilled pilot could navigate to the shores of an island he couldn't see.

Island Five is the Bodhisattva's most carefully guarded secret. Other than his deathknights, no living person is aware of the island's existence, and only those dead whose loyalty has been magically secured are told of it, let alone allowed to visit there. A handful of ghosts permanently bound into service to the Deathlord make their homes on this island, along with several dozen nephwracks loyal to the Bodhisattva's goals. These ghosts oversee the island's two main facilities.

The first is the Bodhisattva's secret shipyards and his massive factory-cathedral, the **House of the Sea's Cold Embrace**, which supplies the secret fleet with artifact weaponry and materials. The Deathlord has carefully maintained the fiction that his Black Fleet consists of only a few dozen ships designed according to modern ship-building principles. The true bulk of the Black Fleet consists of nearly 50 vessels dry-docked at Island Five, each of which is built according to First Age design principles and is individually a match for all but the most advanced ships in the Realm. If events do not force his hand, the Bodhisattva plans to keep his fleet a secret until he has an even 100 ships, enough to destroy an entire imperial fleet and more than enough to crush all of his regional rivals.

The other facility holds the secret that lies at the heart of the Bodhisattva's entire kingdom: **the Foundry of Souls**. The Bodhisattva's entire religious philosophy rests on two assumptions—first, that everyone who dies in Skullstone will eventually be reincarnated according to his worth and his loyalty to the Bodhisattva, and second,


that those who continue to exist as ghosts merely delay their eventual reincarnation out of obligation to the state. Both of these assumptions are utter lies fabricated by the Bodhisattva to take advantage of the Skullfolk's desperate need for hope of a better afterlife.

The truth is that *everyone* who dies while within the Web of Shadows, without exception, returns as a ghost. Upon death, however, such newborn ghosts are drawn instantly to the Foundry of Souls like iron filings to a magnet, snatched up so quickly that others present at the time of death never even notice the newborn ghosts' manifestation. Once captured, the ghosts are held in storage, oblivious to everything around them until they are judged. Those considered by the Bodhisattva or his agents to be necessary to his long-term goals are returned to Skullfolk to the jubilation of their families. The rest, roughly seven out of every eight souls, remain trapped within the necromantic mechanisms of the Foundry, where they are shaped into soulsteel by the nephwracks in the Bodhisattva's employ and then forged into material components to be used by the Skullstone society.

This is the dark horror that lies at the heart of the Skullstone Archipelago. Each of the thousands of zombies and skeletons used as slaves for the Skullfolk is held together by several feet of soulsteel wire. Most of the public buildings are reinforced by soulsteel girders. Every one of the ships in the Black Fleet contains massive amounts of soulsteel components. The Bodhisattva's own armor consists of more than 200 individual soulsteel pieces woven together with soulsteel wires. And every single one of these individual components was once a living being who went to his death expecting that his loyalty to the Deathlord would secure him a better place in his next life.

The unholy mechanism that allows the Foundry to function is not a creation of the Bodhisattva's ingenuity. Deep within the Foundry, hidden within a labyrinth armed with deadly traps and patrolled by scores of nephwracks, lies a small plain room containing only a pedestal. On the pedestal lies a small stone—a pebble, really—cut from the tomb of the Bodhisattva's Neverborn master, Principle of Consumption. This tiny stone, dubbed “the Hungry Stone,” represents the Bodhisattva's connection with his master and with the labyrinth itself. The Hungry Stone draws the newly dead to itself and keeps them paralyzed, insensate and ready for processing. The Hungry Stone empowers the Foundry's amazing and terrifying influence over the dead caught within its range, a range that grows ever farther as the Web of Shadows continues to expand.





LIFE (OR NOT) IN SKULLSTONE

Mercifully unaware of the true nature of the Bodhisattva's New Order, most Skullfolk lead lives of bourgeois indolence. The typical citizen works a 40-hour workweek, with plenty of time to enjoy the latest necrodrama or other diversions while the zombified remains of former neighbors attend to menial tasks. Thus, the Skullfolk have developed a culture all their own and unique in all of Creation.

ISLANDERS AND CUSTOMS

The living citizens of Skullstone appear biologically identical to those of Coral, although the Skullfolk seem extremely pale and sickly in comparison. This pale appearance is largely the result of Skullstone's perpetually overcast skies, even over those areas outside the Web of Shadows, and their sickly demeanor is the result of a society in which menial labor is performed exclusively by undead slaves. Besides, Skullstone citizens typically make little effort to keep themselves healthy, since their society so often rewards death.

The pale demeanor of Skullstone islanders is accented by their clothing choices: virtually all clothing worn on Skullstone is black. Originally, this fashion was the result of necessity. The unwholesome vegetation of Darkmist invariably turned dark gray or black when processed into fabric, and Skullstone was home to no natural sources of colored dyes. Over time, the somber apparel became part of Skullstone tradition to the extent that ostentatious displays of non-black clothing are considered tacky even now that Skullstone trades extensively with other lands. Not all clothing is black—white, gray or dark blue accents are common, and modern tradition often calls for all white funeral garb—but anyone wearing bright colors immediately identifies herself as an outsider.

For most of Skullstone's history, the Skullfolk diet consisted chiefly of red widow, a large, meaty non-poisonous spider that was the only indigenous animal life when Darkmist was first settled. Red widows are large, crab-like aquatic spiders that come ashore to breed and lay eggs. The name is taken from the spider's red, lobster-colored carapace and from the fact that females kill their mates after sex. Early Skullfolk subsisted almost entirely on red widow meat for centuries—supplemented occasionally by worms, cave slime or bat wings—until the first trade missions to Coral introduced other foodstuffs. Even then, it remained impossible to effectively breed livestock within the shadowland, and so the spider remains the main staple of the Skullstone diet.

GOVERNMENT

The modern Skullstone government is a rigidly controlled bureaucracy with slight theocratic overtones. The Silver Prince is the undisputed ruler of the entire archipelago, both temporally and spiritually. However, he gives every appearance of leaving most political matters to his subordinates. This is an illusion, of course; spies among the Dark Judges keep the Prince constantly informed of any political developments that could undermine his goals.

Beneath the Bodhisattva are two bureaucratic entities: the Dark Judiciary and the Ministry of Day and Night. The Dark Judiciary governs all affairs pertaining to religious law, including determining whether a dying mortal is entitled to become a ghost. Each Dark Judge is assisted by a retinue of clerks, both living and dead. In addition to various administrative functions, these clerks essentially serve as the secret police for the archipelago, as the Judges also have primary authority for identifying and punishing heresy and treason. Many of the clerks serve the Judges secretly, publicly maintaining positions in the Ministry or even the private sector. Only the individual Judges (and the Bodhisattva) know exactly who holds a clerkship, but the fact that a significant percentage of Ministry employees are also on the payroll of one or more Judges is well-known.

The Ministry itself consists of virtually every citizen who doesn't work directly for the Dark Judiciary or the Bodhisattva. If a citizen works as a tailor, then he is licensed by the Ministry and is officially considered an agent of the Bureau of Apparel Supplies. If the citizen is a restaurateur, his establishment is considered a branch office of the Department of Food and Libations, which also licenses his chefs and service workers, reviews his restaurant to see that it meets health regulations and then takes a hefty percentage of his profits (and sends auditors after him if he fails to meet minimum profit standards).

ECONOMICS

In the archipelago, every piece of property, real or personal, is considered property of the state to held in trust for the benefit of the people of Skullstone. The definition of property is expansive and includes the very corpses of the deceased after their souls have moved on. The majority of businesses are state-owned and state-run, including the entirety of the military, the state hospitals and the educational system. Even the ancestor-cult priests and the funerary guild are considered state employees. Those who do not wish to work directly for the government or who wish to pursue some business venture outside the scope of the normal





state-run areas can petition the Ministry for a “writ of opportunity,” which, if granted, provides a license for the prospective business and a certain amount of start-up capital that must be repaid within two years.

Currency in Skullstone comes in three forms. The most valuable currency are soulsteel oboli fashioned from shavings left over from artifact manufacturing. Only the wealthiest Skullfolk trade in oboli, however, and the Bodhisattva forbids the trading of oboli with foreigners, lest enemies such as the Realm gain insight into the nature of soulsteel. Most Skullfolk trade in soulsteel scrip, in the same way that most Realm citizens trade in jade scrip. Finally, ghosts receive payment in the form of state-mandated prayers for honored ancestors and valuable Ministry positions, and ghosts can freely transfer Essence with one another. Ultimately, however, a majority of Skullfolk don’t even use currency of any kind. Ministry employees for their entire lives (and beyond), these Skullfolk never receive any physical payment for their services. Instead, an employee’s pay is added to his personal account, which is maintained by Ministry accountants, and his purchases from state-

run businesses are debited from the same account with all transactions handled via intra-agency memos, all efficiently governed by the Bodhisattva’s managerial Charms—an effectively cashless society.

To say that Skullstone has a planned economy is a gross understatement. The Silver Prince, drawing upon his knowledge of First Age economic development principles, knows exactly how many “rich,” “poor” and “middle-class” citizens Skullstone needs in order to maximize productivity and minimize the likelihood of social unrest. Furthermore, even the poorest Skullstone citizen lives in relative luxury compared to the poor in other nations. Skullstone’s huge zombie and skeleton population virtually eliminates the need for simple manual labor. The lowest occupational echelons in Skullstone are government employees who have been demoted due to incompetence or offending a powerful superior. Such luckless individuals see their government pay reduced to below the level needed to afford their former government-provided housing, and they are forced to move “outside.”

In this context, “outside” simply means the citizen is forced to reside in cheap and humble government



housing outside the city walls, typically wood construction with dirt floors. Such dwellings would constitute unimaginable luxury to the poorest citizens of Nexus or Chiaroscuro. Skullfolk, however, view those who dwell outside the city walls with the same disdain that a wealthy Chiaroscuroan would view a beggar in the street. Those condemned to live outside the city must do without most of the amenities Skullfolk take for granted because those who live outside simply can't afford them rather than because such amenities are forbidden.

One serious drawback to living outside makes it a terrible burden for those who live there—Skullstone law considers it a form of deprivation to raise children outside the city. Accordingly, when a citizen is forced to move outside, any children under the age of 12 are seized by the government to become wards of the state and raised in state-run orphanages.

EDUCATION

Education in Skullstone is compulsory from ages four to 12. Teachers are supplied by the Ministry's Commission on Young Citizens. Students study letters, mathematics and Skullstone history, and while plainly biased in favor of the Bodhisattva's political views, this education is otherwise quite comprehensive. By age 12, most young Skullfolk are as literate and numerate as similarly-aged children anywhere in Creation save the children of Dynasts.

Around their 12th year, all children undergo compulsory testing that assesses each child's mental and physical capabilities. The Commission on Young Citizens carefully reviews these tests through blind grading and then assigns each child to a mentorship/apprenticeship program lasting four years. One child might be sent to military training while another might apprentice to a tailor or a spider butcher. Prodigies, especially Ghost-Blooded prodigies, are most often sent to the College of Necrosurgery unless aptitude testing suggests a high likelihood of failure there. At some point between the ages of 16 and 20 (depending on the student's aptitude), the apprenticeship period ends, and the child is legally an adult and a Skullstone citizen. Most new citizens continue on in the occupations assigned to them by the Commission, but doing so is not compulsory. However, young citizens who wish to pursue any other career must complete a second apprenticeship period, a daunting prospect for someone who has just spent five years as an apprentice.

When a given citizen completes her apprenticeship, her master is responsible for submitting logs of


her performance, as well as his personal assessment of her capabilities, to the Commission, which will then assign her to a suitable job opening. While this system might seem to give masters a frightening degree of power over the job prospects of their apprentices, the Commission routinely conducts extensive background checks on all citizens who mentor apprentices, often to the point of actively spying on them at the slightest hint of impropriety.

LAW AND CRIME

Skullstone's legal system is intimately connected with the nation's religious philosophy. The name of every Skullfolk is recorded in the ledgers of the Dark Judges. When a citizen is convicted of a crime, there is typically no direct punishment. Instead, a Dark Judge adds a variable number of black marks next to the offender's name in the central registry. The number of black marks is determined according to the severity of the offense. Crimes are not the only factors that are recorded in the registry, however—demotions or work-related reprimands are also reflected in black marks (though rarely as many), while promotions and other significant acts in support of the state are denoted by red marks. When a citizen receives a certain number of black marks in her registry entry, for whatever reason, she is arrested by clerks of the Dark Judiciary and summarily executed. When a citizen receives an equivalent number of red marks, she is simply contacted by a judicial clerk and given one week to resolve her affairs before she is to report to the Judiciary for ritual suicide. However, the number of marks required for mandated death is quite high, and except for those guilty of serious crimes, the vast majority of Skullfolk die without being ordered to do so by a Dark Judge.

After the citizen dies by whatever means, her name is reported to a panel of Dark Judges (typically three judges except in exceptional circumstances) who review the records of her life and offer a recommendation to the Bodhisattva as to whether she continue on as a righteous dead or pass on into her next life. Since his return, the Silver Prince has publicly overruled the Judges' recommendation only once, although he has moved behind the scenes on several occasions to manipulate the Judges according to his will. As far as the general public knows, the Judges must approve a decedent for righteous dead status within three days or it is impossible to bring the deceased back as a ghost.

The only exception to the legal process outlined above is in the case of murder. The Bodhisattva's religious philosophy places great emphasis on individuals dying



in highly controlled situations. Murder is not merely a crime but also an affront to the social order. Murderers in Skullstone are almost invariably brought to justice, in large part because their victims usually testify against their murderers. After the murderer is convicted, a panel of Dark Judges immediately review the circumstances of the crime. When the murder was committed out of greed, passion or some similar context, the murderer is typically executed and summarily denied righteous dead status. On the other hand, the Judges often show leniency when the murder was committed in order to alleviate the victim's suffering. On one occasion, a murderess was rewarded with the opportunity for suicide and righteous dead status, as well as a significant promotion, after she killed her own father, who had been severely crippled in an accident.

RELIGION

Most religions in Creation are a mixture of truth and fiction, a delicate balancing act between honoring the gods who actually maintain Creation and advancing whatever moral philosophy the local government wishes to inculcate through religion. The New Order is different—almost *nothing* about it is true. The entire religion is a sham devised by the Bodhisattva in order to render his subjects pliable, loyal and above all, eager to offer their own souls up to the Deathlord to use as he sees fit.

The chief principle of the New Order is actually identical to the central belief of the Immaculate Philosophy: each person's action in his current life influences the quality of the life into which he will be reincarnated. The two religions diverge in two fundamental ways, however. First, they differ sharply on what actions will positively or negatively affect a believer's reincarnation cycle. It goes without saying that Skullfolk do not venerate the Elemental Dragons, let alone recognize the moral superiority of the Dragon-Blooded. The New Order holds that gods in general are unworthy of any sort of veneration and that only ancestors should be so rewarded. Of course, Skullfolk have little need to venerate spirits, as there are no little gods within the shadowland to demand such worship.

The other chief difference between Immaculate Philosophy and the New Order lies in their attitude toward ghosts. The Immaculate Philosophy places a duty on all people to quickly pass into reincarnation upon death and views ghosts as a blasphemous violation of the natural order. Interestingly, the New Order agrees that ghosts violate the natural order. However, the death cult holds that such violations are necessary, since, in a shadowland, only ghosts

can perform the services that mortals once begged of the capricious and uncaring gods. Skullfolk view ghostly existence as a necessary evil, and every ghost in their society is a hero who has voluntarily delayed her own reincarnation, almost certainly into a better life, in order to serve her family and her nation. The righteous dead are not like other ghosts who selfishly cling to existence at the expense of the living, but noble patriots to be admired and respected.

Or so the Dark Judges say. The reality is that the Bodhisattva views his subjects the way a farmer views the cows in his field—as a commodity to be exploited or shipped off to the slaughterhouse depending on which is more convenient. The Deathlord ensures that a small percentage of his people endure as ghosts only because he requires a minimum number of loyal bureaucrats in his employ for his powerful society-shaping Charms to function optimally and because he needs the illusion of a ghostly utopia in order to placate his regional rivals so that they do not unite against him or ally with the Realm.

In truth, every ghost in Skullstone endures only at the Silver Prince's sufferance. With but a word from him, every single one of the righteous dead would be instantly and violently sucked into the Foundry of Souls to meet their final oblivion. As the Deathlord's plans come ever closer to fruition, the day approaches when that word will be given.

GENDER ROLES, SEX AND MARRIAGE

A fairly strict meritocracy, Skullstone officially sees no distinction between women and men. In practice, of course, the overwhelming majority of naval personnel are men since the local storm mothers attack ships with female crews. This may change—the Bodhisattva's forces recently directly confronted and defeated the powerful storm mother Shakar-Anisi and bound her against harming Skullstone ships. If the Deathlord takes similar actions against the other area storm mothers, his past actions suggest that he will open his navy up to any women who wish to serve.

The New Order's views on sex itself are unusual, even by the standards of the West. According to the Bodhisattva, the purpose of marriage is to produce children so that after death citizens can rely upon the prayers of their children to sustain them until reentering the cycle of reincarnation. However, the New Order rejects the suggestion that women merely are brood mares. Married Skullstone women are socially obligated to have at least one child in their lives. Any more than that is entirely left to the woman's discretion. An exception is made for Tya who petition for



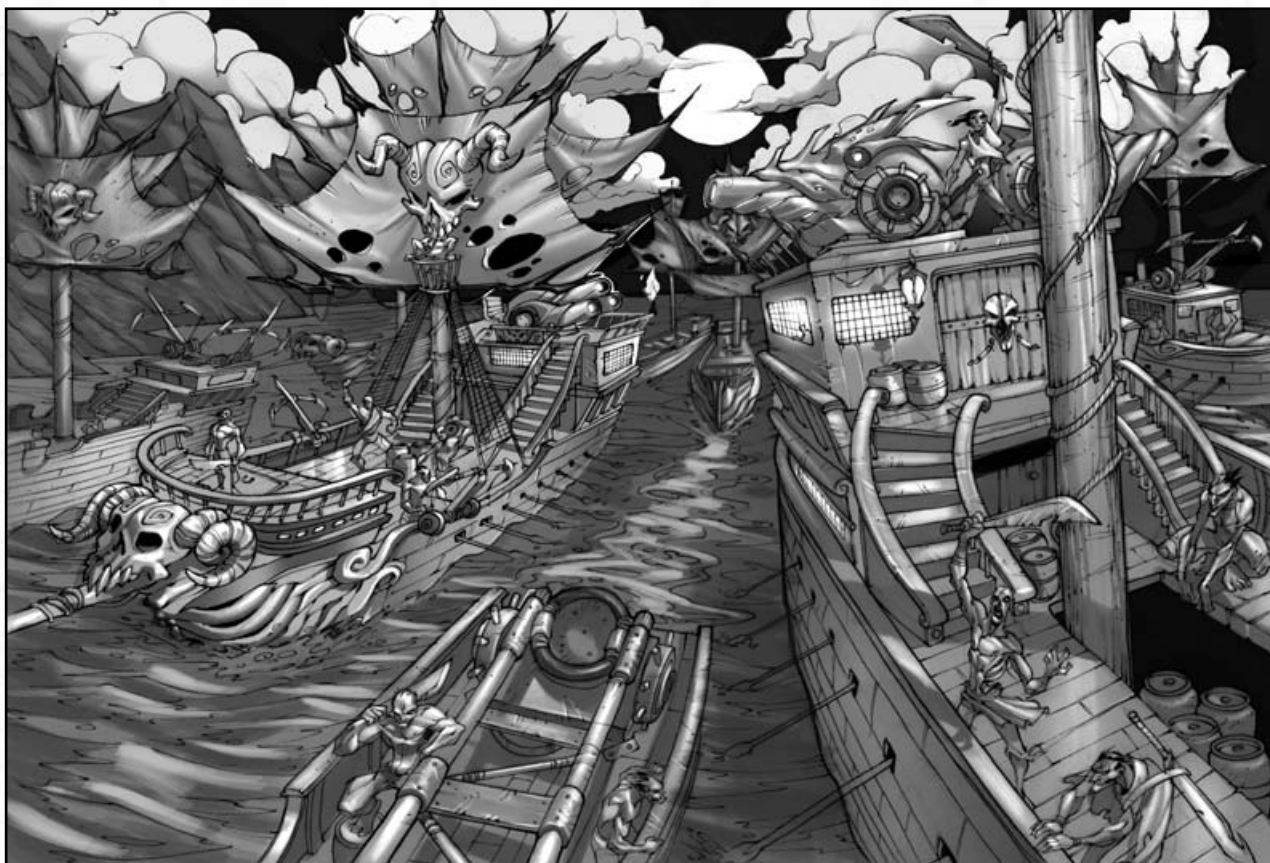
Skullstone citizenship. Skullstone generally views Tya as men and exempts them from any social stigma for childlessness.

Skullstone society places great stigma on bastard children. If it is possible to determine who the father is and both he and the mother are single, then the state will typically require the parents' marriage, if only for book-keeping purposes. If a single mother refuses to identify the father or if the father is already married, the child is taken immediately after birth and placed in a Ministry-run orphanage. The state also adopts any children produced by rape or incest. Officially, rape is punished by a substantial number of black marks assigned to the rapist's name in the Dark Judges' ledgers. Unofficially, rape victims who murder their attackers almost never face any legal sanction. All Skullfolk orphans are ceremonially adopted by the Silver Prince, and when they pray to their parents, the Deathlord reaps the rewards of their faith.

Despite the stigma against bastardy (or perhaps because of it), Skullstone religion presents no objections to sex, regardless of the gender or marital status of participants, where there is no chance to produce issue. In fact, not only are both male and female prostitution legal in Skullstone, they are respected and highly profitable divisions of the Ministry. The

Authority for Pleasurable and Genial Companionship operates state-run brothels across the nation, as well as the Black Pearl Courtesan Academy, a school for prostitutes and concubines. Both males and females can achieve remarkable status as courtesans in Skullstone, although state courtesans are required to submit to monthly medical exams and regular doses of maiden tea in order to retain their licenses.

As with most Skullstone occupations, legalized prostitution is open to both the living and the dead. Especially skilled prostitutes who have excelled at pleasuring Dark Judges and other influential people are as eligible for righteous dead status as anyone else, and the Silver Prince himself has, on occasion, summoned well-known courtesans of both genders to his bedchambers from which they have emerged with their beauty and skill preserved for eternity. For those with cheaper budgets or less discriminating (or merely *particular*) tastes, several bordellos also offer the services of zombie prostitutes of both genders. Such macabre lovers, while perfectly acceptable to most Skullfolk, are considered repugnant to most visitors to the island . . . most, but not all. The College of Necrosurgery has sold quite a few zombies programmed to function as sex toys to the Guild and House Cynis.





THE BLACK FLEET

The Bodhisattva's naval forces are referred to collectively as the Black Fleet. There is no meaningful distinction between his merchant fleet and his military forces. All Skullstone ships carry the Deathlord's pennant, a white circle on a black field, and every ship has at least some armaments. The Sea Lord's intelligence is spotty at best where Skullstone is concerned, but he estimates that the Deathlord has about 100 warships. The actual number is 229, and that only counts conventional warships that patrol Skullstone waters. The number of cargo ships is about 400.

The true heart of the Bodhisattva's fleet has not yet left drydock on Island Five. There, construction continues on the true Black Fleet, an armada built according to a synthesis of First Age ship construction and modern necromantic principles. The Bodhisattva estimates that it will take another two years to finish construction on the first wave of ships. When that wave takes to the seas, it will number exactly 100, a fraction of Coral's fleet, to say nothing of the Realm's, but every one of those 100 ships will be the equivalent of a First Age light warship armed with necrotic Essence weapons and powered by hundreds of skeleton rowers. In comparison, the best equipped of the five Realm fleets has about 30 such ships. When the Black Fleet enters battle, the ships will leave bloody timbers and pelagic shadowlands in the fleet's wake.

CAPTAIN MORAY DARKTIDE

Until just a year ago, Moray Darktide was a petty raider. Then, the Unconquered Sun chose him as a most unlikely target for Exaltation. Darktide Exalted as his ship was being boarded by Lintha pirates, and the young Dawn Caste drove the pirates away single-handedly and then safely piloted the survivors back to Onyx. A true patriot and fervent believer in the New Order, Darktide wasted no time in revealing what had happened to the Silver Prince and reaffirming his loyalty to his homeland. The Deathlord accepted Darktide's loyalty, promoted him to captain, gave him one of the best ships in the Black Fleet . . . and then dispatched him to fight Lintha pirates hundreds of miles from home.

The Solar represents an invaluable resource, but also a deadly danger, particularly if he ever discovers what happens on Island Five. The Deathlord keeps Darktide far from home as much as possible, even as the Silver Prince rewards the Dawn Caste with money, artifacts and a letter of marque that would ransom him from most captors. For now, the Bodhisattva watches his Solar pawn, always aware that, should Darktide show the slightest disloyalty, his fate will follow that of Fallen Wolf of the Cutting Sea.

PIRATES AND PRIVATEERS

While Captain Darktide is the most infamous privateer in the Bodhisattva's employ, he is not the only one. Several pirate ships under mortal captains serve Skullstone, attacking merchant ships from other nations as part of the Bodhisattva's schemes to undermine trade among the Western nations. For the most successful and ruthless captains who have proven their utmost loyalty, the Deathlord performs a potent Void Circle Necromancy spell, Suture of the Perfected Heart, which renders a mortal virtually immune to injury.

RELATIONSHIPS WITH OTHER NATIONS

Since his "return," the Bodhisattva has focused primarily on consolidating his hold over the territories actually within his shadowland, while laying the groundwork for expansion into the surrounding lands. The Deathlord moves cautiously, as his plans require him to rely on diplomacy until his military resources are overwhelming. Consequently, those who compare the Silver Prince to the Mask of Winters usually assume the former represents the "reasonable" face of the Deathlords and is someone who can be dealt with diplomatically. This is exactly the mistake the Bodhisattva wants his enemies to make.

Currently, the Coral Archipelago is Skullstone's chief trading partner. Skullstone supplies precious metals salvaged from sunken Amphion, as well as a limited supply of zombie slaves, while Coral supplies material goods that cannot be manufactured within the shadowland. Avishander Nemoran is understandably cautious in dealing with Skullstone—the Silver Prince alone is a frightening prospect, but the Sea Lord must also avoid the appearance of allying openly with the Deathlord lest he draw unwanted imperial attention. In response, the Silver Prince dangles the possibility of a secret alliance. His ultimate plan is to manipulate Coral into a disastrous war with Wavecrest or even the Realm. Then, when Coral is on the verge of falling, the Deathlord will send in his Black Fleet to crush both armies, ensuring that the death toll is high enough to expand the Web of Shadows over Coral.

The Bodhisattva has little interest in the rest of the Western islands, at least at the moment. Wavecrest is too far away to make conquest currently practical, and the nearer islands have nothing of value. Instead, the Deathlord sends diplomatic envoys to Abalone with assurances of neutrality in any conflict between Wavecrest and Coral. These envoys also subtly try to manipulate the Feathered One into an isolationist stance, in hopes that Wavecrest will sever its trading ties with the other nations and let famine spread across the West.



The Bodhisattva views civil war in the Realm as imminent, but he sees little way he can advance his interests there without giving the Dynasts a mutual enemy to rally against. With the Mask of Winters' boundless ego attracting so much of the Realm's attention, the Bodhisattva considers the Realm a negligible threat to his goals. The Deathlord considers his chief rival in the West to be the Lintha Family. A relic of the First Age, the Bodhisattva knows *exactly* what the Lintha are all about and wants none of it. If it came to it, he would rather see the West raised up by resurgent Solars than fall to a clan of inbred Yozi-worshipping cannibals with a castration fetish, and he fully supports Captain Darktide's efforts to harry Lintha piracy.



BLACK FLEET MARINES

Description:

Thanks to the massive quantities of soulsteel the Hungry Stone harvests—greater even than the stores of the First and Forsaken Lion—the Silver Prince manufactures a

higher grade of zombie than most of the Deathlords, and in great numbers. Coursing through the soulsteel wire with which they're inlaid and the remaining pathways within their dead brains are the barest echo of life's memory. They're still largely mindless, but they stride rather than shamble, and wranglers train the zombies to wield weapons and engage in boarding actions, using techniques first perfected in Skullstone's Theatre Macabre and bordellos. More importantly, the zombies' hunger for flesh is curbed, and they don't stop fighting the moment they have a single kill to feast on.

These traits represent a scale of zombie marines. Each Skullstone marine assault bireme carries two scales, as comfort is not a concern and the oarsmen are tireless skeletons.

Commanding Officer: Usually a war ghost; see **Exalted**, p. 318

Armor Color: Black

Motto: None

General Makeup: 25 zombies armed with chopping swords, wearing breastplates

Overall Quality: Good

Magnitude: 2

Drill: 2

Close Combat Attack: 2 **Close Combat Damage:** 4

Ranged Attack: — **Ranged Damage:** —

Endurance: N/A **Might:** 0 **Armor:** 2 **Morale:** N/A

Formation: The increased utility of the zombie marines comes at a price. Though they require less in the way of battlefield support labs—a necessity, as labs are difficult to transport over the sea—they require much more effort to produce. Without the House of the Sea's Cold Embrace, supplies of both soulsteel and zombies would dry up. Over the centuries since the Silver Prince perfected their creation, he has accumulated seven legions (35,000) of his zombies, but currently commits only 2,500 to his patrols, stockpiling the rest on Island Five until his true Black Fleet is finished. The rest of his army is made up of more conventional war ghosts and zombies.

The Skullstone Archipelago, a Magnitude 6 Dominion

Military: 3 **Government:** 4 **Culture:** 2

Abilities: Awareness 2 (Spies 1), Bureaucracy 4, Craft 4, Integrity 3, Investigation 3 (Secret Police 1), Occult 5 (Necromancy 1), Performance 4 (International Diplomacy 1), Presence 2, Stealth 3, War 2 (Black Fleet 1)

Virtues: Compassion 2, Conviction 6, Temperance 3, Valor 4

Virtue Flaw: Conviction **Current Limit:** 4

Willpower: 9

Bonus Points: 30 **External Bonus Points:** 9

Notes: Skullstone is a Mostly Supernatural dominion. The Silver Prince is a sorcerer with Legitimacy (and a lot of high-Essence Mandate Charms). Skullstone's bonus points are tied up in one dot each of Valor, Awareness, Craft, Investigation, Performance and War, as well as the Investigation, Occult and War Specialties. Skullstone's external bonus points go toward another dot of Valor and the Awareness and Performance Specialties.

Currently, the Skullfolk are in the grip of religious reforms. In the event of Limit Break, they'll take the principles of the New Order well past logic and sense and into mania, killing themselves *en masse* to swell the ranks of the righteous dead and turning against those elements of the populace who've shown less than absolute devotion to the ideals of the Silver Prince—or at least the ideals he espouses in public.




GO! NOW,
WHILE THEY'RE
BECALMED!

LET NONE
ESCAPE!

TIME TO BID THESE
DOGS FAREWELL.

JUST DON'T
SET MY BOAT ON
FIRE, OKAY?



CHAPTER FIVE DEMON PIRATES OF THE WESTERN OCEAN

The Lintha are the scourge of the Southwest. Pirates, crime lords, Demon-Blooded cultists and self-mutilating cannibals, they make hidden port at Bluehaven, a demon itself—the living, moving island Lintha Ng Oroo. Beholden to no wind, the Lintha Family hitches ships to great sea-demons loyal only to the blood of the Yozi Kimberly.

Every port in Creation tells rumors of these pirates: They never leave a sailor alive. They do, but only after forcing him to consume his shipmates. They breathe water through their mutations. They use mutants as slaves.

Those who work the sea have no stomach for the rumors, because they know enough. All sailors know what to do when the black and silver appears on the horizon. Resistance means death, either by the hellish magic and auharian swords of the Lintha themselves or in the coils of the monsters that tow the ships. Most

sailors give up without a fight; some bring their cargo on deck at the mere sight of the Lintha's banners.

Only idealistic fools fight the Lintha. Dragon-Blooded find their Charms avail them not. Captains who would resist face mutiny. Nations send forth great heroes at the helms of mighty ships, and even so, win few victories.

Worse, the Lintha operate also on land. Through proxies and dupes, the Lintha's criminal empire has agents in every port. They remember all who've ever served them, and call back reluctant slaves through blackmail and threat. Refusing a summons is betrayal, punished by torture and death not only of the deserter but his loved ones as well. The only path out of the Family is the Underworld.

Woe to the enemies of the Lintha. Suffering to the impure. The thinnest blood of Kimberly's get is stronger

than the mightiest bloodline of Gaia's bastards, and the Chosen of the Incarna are no match for the Chosen of the Great Mother; the Lintha's greatest champion; brother, husband and son to Lintha Ng Oroo; and Exalted of the Sea That Marched Against the Flame: Lintha Ng Hut Dukantha.

HISTORY OF THE LINTHA

This history begins before the dawning of the First Age. The Lintha were princes then. Their shapes were similar to man's, but better in all ways. An ideal Lintha was gaunt and tall, seven feet or more, with a bright green skin and pure, frost-white hair. Their grace was unparalleled, and the eyes in their long, thin faces burned crimson. They ruled over a vast continent in the Southwest at the will of their patron and parent, Kimberly, the Sea That Marched Against the Flame, whom they call the Great Mother. Their land was more than property. It was their sister, another child of the Great Mother, called Lintha Ng Oroo.


Kimberly was proud of her children. She taught them the arts of shaping Creation to their will, of crafting

works of peerless function and form and more. Their artificial soldiers and sailors guarded her children against all dangers, wielding swords that could hew islands in two and shields of greened copper that could not be broken. Lintha art and construction would endure forever.

A Lintha prince's highest honor was to father a child on their Great Mother. It was a reward for embodying all that Kimberly valued and a promise that the Lintha race would never fall. In addition to the arts that maintained their supremacy, Lintha Ng Oroo changed shape and position to protect her siblings against threats in that time. Even the mighty Dragon Kings could not assail the Lintha in their home. From this position, the Lintha were superior to all others. They were the chosen race.

The Exalted did the impossible. Given power by traitorous gods and equipped with wonders matching the Lintha's, the Exalted heroes toppled the mighty Primordial creators of the world. Creation's nature changed as eternal, boundless beings learned mortality and lost their freedom. The gods' Chosen bound the Great Mother herself inside the bones and flesh of Malfeas, her king.





With the loss of their Great Mother, the world of the Lintha came apart. They had fought in the timeless war on her behalf, sending their animated men and puissant artifacts against the Exalted only to meet equals for the first time. Orichalcum shields turned the Lintha's sharpest blades, and daiklaves of jade cut deep gouges in the greened copper of their fortresses and constructs. Exalted warriors shattered the Lintha dominion, breaking the continent Lintha Ng Oroo in a cataclysmic attack and scattering the noblest race.

Tens of thousands died then, wailing at the Great Mother's captivity and their sibling's pain. Many drowned, denied their tradition of returning to Kimbery by being consumed by the land of their birth. More died in the few years that followed, raging against their oppressors and falling in futile resistance to the blossoming Old Realm.

THE MIGHTY, FALLEN

One hundred Lintha survived. Three score were enslaved by the Solar Exalted, used for the Lintha's cunning and wisdom until their deaths. Three dozen joined the world of the usurpers, willingly abandoning their heritage and honor; their bloodlines intermingled with those of humanity, losing all that made the Lintha noble.

Three retained the pride of their race. They continued their forbidden line with each other and with their enslaved brethren, ensuring the Lintha would not disappear. They also slew, one by one, the Lintha who had betrayed their heritage, beginning the tradition of no tolerance for disloyalty.

Well into the First Age, descendants of these three Lintha sought the truth of their heritage, longtime companions devoted to one another and dedicated to recovering what their people had lost. Modern Lintha remember a few names of these great heroes. Rat Scurdeon was a fearless and cruel pirate and captain of the *Skalleng*. Sirji Tan was the princess of a Southern nation now completely forgotten. Kan Pol was a scholar and expert on his line's history, and he motivated his companions on their quest.

The group sailed across the West in search of their people's past. It took them a century, but the long Lintha lifespan served them well, and they rediscovered much. They learned of their nobility and the injustices perpetrated upon them. They declared their mission to reinvent the Lintha nation and again claim the West as their rightful domain.

Western kings and governors were displeased. Every one declared the crew of the *Skalleng* outlaws. Pirates, privateers and military ships all hunted the *Skalleng* to

claim the many bounties. Admiral Strider-of-Storms eventually captured the crew, but the Lintha were clever. Rat Scurdeon claimed protection from mighty gods and threatened curses on any who would dishonorably slay the companions. Afraid, the admiral left the Lintha in chains on their own ship, rudderless and without food or water, assuming the ocean would kill them. He was wrong.

HOME AGAIN

The *Skalleng* drifted aimlessly, slave to the currents and the winds. The Lintha drank from storms that beat upon the ship's decks, prolonging their deaths. The merciless sun burned them by day, and the uncaring stars gazed down on them at night. Dehydration had killed half of them when the ship ran aground. Given strength by desperation, Sirji Tan freed herself from her chains and looked to see where they had landed. She saw only wet blue grasses and tall trees growing out of the ocean.


Her crew had neither the strength nor the tools and materials to repair the *Skalleng*. Eating the grasses caused violent tremors of the stomach, as one died to learn. The trees bore no fruit and were anyway too distant to reach, with misshapen, hungry sharks hidden in the grasses. The Lintha were free, but condemned.

The starving looked to their dead for sustenance, but their companions had rotted in the sun and salt, and the ospreys and quetzals had torn the dead into a festering maze of blood and flesh. One survivor died trying anyway, providing a fresh corpse to sustain her friends. There was little nourishment in it, but by then the Lintha's tastes were undiscerning.

The heat grew worse, forcing the Lintha crew to hide below decks. Most kept busy with fruitless efforts to find food. Rat Scurdeon spent his time watching the horizon. When he one day saw ships, they turned out to be the Black Freighters—infamous slavers of the day.

The proud Lintha prepared for a fight to the death. But when the ships drew near, disgorging longboats of armed men, the sea beneath began to buckle and froth. From the depths rose a mass of land, water streaming from its heights. The longboats overturned, and the slavers' ships were landlocked. The Lintha's enemies fell into the sea, where the sharks consumed them.

Trees and lush vegetation adorned the island's fecund hills. The Lintha did not remember their sister, Lintha Ng Oroo, but trust overwhelmed Kan Pol. Racial memory told him she was of his blood; sadness filled him, though he did not know how much she had been diminished. He listened when she spoke, her voice echoing from a cave near her shore. She invited the



survivors to sate themselves on her limitless bounty, producing milk-heavy goats, gourds of fresh water and wine brought by quetzals, copper and iron in abundance and plentiful trees without end.

“Our Great Mother greets you,” said Lintha Ng Oroo. “She has heard your silent prayers for salvation and vengeance, and honors her favored children. You were all destined to join the dead, but you shall instead live to honor her, spread her glory and pay her in tribute as long as there are days and as long as there is light.”

As the Lintha fed and regained their strength, their sister swam westward. Rat Scurdeon’s keen eyes saw the battlements and towers of an ancient alcazar barely topping the waves. From the highest tower stepped two forms: an aged Lintha with a long beard as white as his hair and a machine of greened copper. The automaton carried the old man across the calm ocean toward the visitors.

“This is the ancestral home of the Lintha,” Lintha Ng Oroo whispered, “T’foor Na, the Place of the Stonehearted, mortals called it. The Lintha knew it as the Blue City.”

The Blue City had been the center of the Lintha’s dominion, spanning many islands. When the Exalted shattered Lintha Ng Oroo, the city fell from her back into the Great Western Ocean and had been drowning ever since. The old man drew closer, and the companions saw his blindness. He was the Warder of the Blue City, ghost of the 100th surviving Lintha after the Usurpation, who returned to his people’s ancestral home to record the tragedy that befell them and swore to remain until the last drop of Lintha blood had disappeared from Creation.

At his side was Truthteller, a creation from prehistory who could read the Lintha’s ancestral memories. When the two reached Lintha Ng Oroo, the automaton gazed into the eyes of the survivors. Tears streamed down the Warder’s face as Truthteller silently communicated the brutalities his people had suffered since their fall.

The tears ceased as Truthteller read on. “You have each sinned against the Great Mother,” T’foor Na intoned. “I see cutting of kinflesh and blood drinking, eating the roasted heart of sister and brother. You have sinned against the Mother and shall for ever hunger for the kinflesh you have tasted.” The Warder of the Blue City looked on Lintha Ng Oroo, and she read her doom in his eyes. “Go from this place. Go back to your tangled sea where you have cowered and serve the Great Mother while you can, for there is a curse on your blood that cannot be lifted.”

THE FOUNDING OF BLUEHAVEN

The Lintha’s sister returned to where sargasso clogged the waters. People of the Old Realm kept their distance, and this place had once been a holy place of the Lintha. They had come there to cleanse themselves and beg the Great Mother’s forgiveness, but these new Lintha refused the shame that the Warder had heaped on them.

They made their home among the holy weeds, trapping the *Skalleng* and the slaver’s ships in the floating sargasso and turning them into the seed of a city. Lintha Ng Oroo continued to give bounty, and from there the Lintha planned their conquest of Creation. Their piracy began with one ship, but they captured more. Each ship joined either their growing fleet or their spreading city. Those that were not swift enough for piracy or sturdy enough for construction became part of the dead-ship labyrinth.

It floated atop the seaweed, always moving. The floating labyrinth was difficult to find and, without foreknowledge, approach was suicide. The Lintha were safe there while they spread their seeds and regained their strength. They called this city Bluehaven, to honor their past and defy the ghost who had condemned them.

By the city always was Lintha Ng Oroo, protecting and nurturing her brethren. At first, the Lintha tried to repopulate their race themselves, but they were too few and infertility plagued them. They mingled their blood with humanity. It was inappropriate for a Lintha to lay happily with a lesser being, so the first generations of halfbloods came of rape.


Centuries later, when Kan Pol the Elder lay dying, he looked out over Bluehaven from his deathbed on Lintha Ng Oroo’s highest hill. He saw thousands of halfblooded Lintha working for the Mother’s glory, walking the hundreds of planks that led between the city’s dozens of districts, harvesting their sister’s gifts from her shores and navigating the dangerous drifting paths out from the city for a tour of just piracy. What he saw pleased him.

THE SECOND AGE

The upheaval of the Usurpation rocked the entire world. The Lintha took it as their opportunity to reenter Creation under a different guise.

Up to this point, the Lintha had been purely piratical. They took the wealth of any they caught on the open seas and collected it in the treasure towers of Bluehaven, refitted holds designed to entice the greedy and kill the unwary. The Lintha let their victims die or enslaved them.





TRUE BLOOD AND FALSE BLOOD

Kan Pol was the last of the original Lintha to die, and the last true Lintha in Creation. He knew that the pure bloodlines died with him, but he believed the Great Mother would reinvigorate the dwindling blood of her distant children when they had done her enough honors. The curse was a thing to endure, a penance instead of a condemnation.

By the time of the Usurpation, the noblest-seeming halfbloods called themselves true Lintha. Only Lintha whose heritage was an obvious mix were halfbloods. From convenience and pride, they forget that the last pure bloodline died with Kan Pol.

This continues today. Lintha elders accept only a few bloodlines as true and guide their eugenics accordingly. Purer Lintha blood brings infertility and dangerous childbirth, forcing the septs to sometimes breed outside approved lines just to conceive. Despite the Lintha's efforts at eugenics, even children of unions between two "pure" bloodlines display traits that should prove the lines flawed and thinning. The Lintha Family deludes itself.

Creation's societies fell to pieces during the Usurpation, especially in the West, and the Lintha filled the gaps. They sold drugs of all kinds and increased their slaving, raiding both ships and coastal villages. They also stole and resold food while surviving on the gifts of Lintha Ng Oroo, blind to how she hung lower in the water.

The Lintha dominated swathes of the Western economy. Entire societies lived or died on the shipments of food the Lintha Family provided at exorbitant prices. Dozens of small islands became slave states to Bluehaven, a de facto capital they'd never see. Many remain enslaved today. The Lintha rule as distant overlords, keeping their "subjects" land bound and ignorant of the world beyond their shores. Lintha slave states earn survival through labor, crafting the weapons, ships and tools that the Lintha do not steal.

KAN POL THE YOUNGER

Kan Pol the Younger was a halfblood, sired on a human commoner by Lintha Ba'ar, a ship's mate. Ba'ar named his son after the Lintha historian and hero, who predicted a return to former glory for the race, in a move both prophetic and ironic. Kan Pol the Younger became a poet, historian and philosopher, and the greatest and most influential Lintha thinker of the Second Age.

Kan Pol believed he understood the curse that the Warden of the Blue City had placed on the Lintha. It was in their blood, causing it to grow ever thinner. Union between two of strong blood seldom produced issue. True bloodlines are polygamous to better the chance of offspring. When Lintha conceived, mothers often died in childbirth. The Lintha race was doomed to fade into humanity's shadow. Kan Pol showed his contempt for his tainted blood and the halfblooded children he would produce by castrating himself, and his most ardent admirers followed suit. Historians trace the Lintha practice of castration to this point.


He also condemned the hunger. Every Lintha feels a lust for the flesh and blood of his brethren. Suckling infants bite their mothers' breasts. Convention stops a grown Lintha from killing his brethren to satiate the hunger, but nothing prevents feasting on the dead. The Lintha make excuses, claiming the consumption of fallen brothers and sisters keeps lines pure. Kan Pol the Younger refused to partake of Lintha flesh and wrote of his intention to be cremated.

The author's satires mocked the efforts to subvert the fate given them by the Great Mother. With age, his philosophy grew more fatalistic and his pen more acerbic. He spoke out against the great number of half-blooded Lintha and condemned any who watered their blood through congress with mortals. He especially saw the Dragon-Blooded born to the Family as pollutions of the bloodline. Younger Lintha read hypocrisy in Kan Pol's words, and one night a group of them cut out his tongue. At only 135 years of age, having survived the Contagion, the philosopher bled to death.

Kan Pol the Younger sparked a revolution of conservatism among the Lintha. His magnum opus, *The Book of the Utz Semivir*, remains today the most popular work of Lintha literature. The book extols the nobility of their race while bleakly laying out the inevitability of their disappearance from Creation. Selective reading popularized Kan Pol's philosophy into a statement that emphasizes their superiority but ignores their certain decline. Lintha today continue to willfully misinterpret Kan Pol's works.

The text's popularity spurred the Lintha to severely limit the privileges of lesser races and those tainted with impure blood. Strict control over breeding and punishment for breaking those rules became normal, including dictated castration. Lintha ignore subtler aspects of Kan Pol's philosophy that condemn fighting the inevitable decline.

Enforcement of these rules varies with the zeitgeist, but they have never entirely faded from the Lintha consciousness. Strong conservative leanings



in today's Lintha makes Kan Pol the Younger's writing and philosophies more popular than ever, and nearly every home in Bluehaven has a copy of *The Book of the Utz Semivir*.

THE CONFIRMATION

In time the Lintha Family's ambition began to drift. Their goal was clear, but the elders grew uncertain about the point of pursuing it. Deeper readings of Kan Pol the Younger's writings permeated Bluehaven's culture and distressed the Lintha. *The Book of the Utz Semivir* was defeatist, and realization crept into the Lintha intellectual society that the work held no true guidance, but many were hard-pressed to refute its arguments.

Young populists railed against the logic: the Lintha were mighty. They were many, all devoted and loyal. They had turned their curse into strength by improving base stock with their great blood. It was a matter of honor, for both the dead and living, to consume the corpses of their fallen, whether or not the flavor tempted.

They had flourished, by the Great Mother, so why did so many Lintha believe they were truly damned?

A singular event purged their society of conflict, leaving them focused for the time to come. Rafts, each bearing dozens of skeletons, drifted unerringly toward Bluehaven. Closer inspection revealed that the rafts were of more bones fused together. The dead were of all ages, picked clean by time and tides, the skeleton passengers fused to the vessels by Wyld energies.

The rafts clogged Bluehaven's harbor, halting all naval traffic. Thousands inundated the city until every inhabitant was constantly aware of the cadavers surrounding their home. Without warning, all the skeletons but one sank beneath the surface. Bobbing on the waves, the last skeleton became a green-skinned, blind old man who announced that the Lintha dead had honored Bluehaven with their presence and required a fitting place of rest.

Within weeks, the Lintha had built a vast underwater sepulcher in which they interred the bodies of their ancestors. It rests in a dead end deep within

THE BOOK OF THE UTZ SEMIVIR

Behold. I am a dry tree. And in this, I am mighty.

I drop no seed and bear no fruit. Yet, my progeny is great, my works, princely. My limbs break and burn with ease. But my kindred, abundant and opulent, destroy and bring doom to my foe.

So begins *The Book of the Utz Semivir*. The arguments therein are often flawed, missing necessary steps from certain logical proofs or depending on fallacious deductions. Some flaws were intentional, meant to call attention to specious assumptions; others were simply mistakes. Kan Pol's readers fail to notice the subtlety or the errors or ignore them willfully. They instead accept its appealing conclusions without giving much thought to the whole. Some of its basic (and most bandied) tenets follow:

Lintha blood is divine blood. The Great Mother, a Primordial, passed her blood to the Lintha so they might do her good works. Other races, not so blessed, are inferior.

Lintha will one day rule all the lands of man. The superiority of the Lintha will one day lead them to rule all of Creation for the Great Mother's glory. Some have greater power than the Lintha, but their blood is not holy; they are therefore less fit to rule. This is one of the most commonly misinterpreted passages. A deeper reading concludes that the Lintha *would* rule, were they not doomed first.

The nobility of the Lintha blood cannot diminish. Death is not the end of divinity. Eating the corpse of a brother reclaims that brother's blood for the Family and breeds it into the next generation. Even the blood of a body lost to the depths will be carried in the fish that eat him, inevitably returned to the Lintha. While the statement is accurate to the text, Kan Pol considered the Lintha nobility a constant within Creation that would not diminish in total and concluded that it would become so thin as to be worthless. The common reading of the passage, condoning cannibalism, is also completely opposite to Kan Pol's authorial intent.

The Lintha rule will be oblique. Kimberly's chosen ruled once, but lost that rule and that right. To again ascend over the rest of Creation, they must exercise a subtler control. Kan Pol believed that the Family's path of piracy and financial domination was the correct one.

Lintha who procreate with mortals are no true Lintha. Kan Pol the Younger equated thinning the blood with betrayal of the race. This conclusion in particular is currently very popular in Bluehaven, to the point where some demand the death of offending Lintha.

the labyrinth of dead ships, separate from the city itself to give the honored dead peace. The Lintha named it the Coffin Vurjawna, the Lintha home of the dead.

Where the Lintha had before been questioning and uncertain, they were now filled with pride. The arrival of their ancestors was the greatest blessing, and it reaffirmed their ambition.

THE COMING OF DUKANTHA

Dukantha was born into the Ng Hut sept 350 years ago. He was a trueblooded child and donned the imperious, cruelly ingenious nature of the Lintha as soon as he could form complete sentences. His sept lauded him as a gift from the Great Mother, an individual with nobility, grace, cunning, curiosity, a keen mind and deep ambition.


He displayed an abiding interest in the occult at a young age, and took lessons from the Family's sorcerers and thaumaturges. History also enraptured him, and he spent countless hours listening to elders' stories and poring over ancient texts. Dukantha especially studied accounts of the Usurpation and the terrors that followed.

Many criticized Dukantha for his apparent disinterest in procreation. They called his failure to prolong the bloodline betrayal, in the mold of Kan Pol the Younger's works. Dukantha ignored them or, at worst, defeated his opponents with rhetoric. All saw the young trueblood spend long hours deep in Lintha Ng Oroo's cave mouth, conversing with his sister in an unknown tongue.

At the age of 16, after a tour terrorizing the Great Western Ocean with others his age, Dukantha returned to Oroo's cave and disappeared. One year later, a boulder on the island shattered with a sound like thunder, and Dukantha stepped from the stone womb of Lintha Ng Oroo. He gathered the leaders of all the septs and commanded a feast. "Our island sister dies," he announced, "as I am reborn. We celebrate my birth and her passing."

Dukantha explained his past year during the feast, proved his tale with miracles and reshaped the Lintha with words. He had journeyed to the Great Mother and been Exalted, tasked to raise his race above the presumptuous mortals. Dukantha's return reinvigorated the race's arrogance and cruelty. He taught them new forms of worship, rituals and prayers that would





make both Kimberly and the Lintha more powerful. Lintha joined his cult by the hundreds, and he ordained many as priests. Dukantha summoned the great demon-beasts that pull Lintha ships and taught others to do the same. He shared other sorceries and methods for bringing themselves closer to the Great Mother.

The Lintha were on the road to again become Kimberly's weapon in Creation. Dukantha's mission accomplished, he returned to Lintha Ng Oroo, and once again left the Lintha Family.

AS THINGS STAND

Very little troubles the Lintha Family today. The Realm stumbles and will soon fall. The generations-old treaty with An-Teng gives the Family sole rights to smuggling off that nation's shores, and piracy elsewhere in the Great Western Ocean grows more lucrative. The Family has known financial failures, but no true disaster.

The last few decades have seen marked increases in the Lintha's already haughty position. Their offenses have reached new heights of disdain, disrespect and cruelty. Fear of the Lintha has risen proportionally.

SOCIAL STRUCTURE

All things in Bluehaven begin and end as matters of the blood. Truebloods are greater than halfbloods, and all Lintha are greater than all mortals. Those Lintha of the purest blood expect mortals to obey all direction without hesitation, up to and including complete self-abasement or suicide.

Quality of blood is never certain. Lintha take pride in their precise genealogies and pure family lines, secure in those lies, but true blood goes beyond parentage. Lintha blood is nobility and expresses itself through excellence. The Lintha expect trueblood scions to epitomize the Lintha's valued qualities. The reverse is also true: a Lintha of imperfect ancestry who earns honors through action, such as glory on the seas or vigor in ordination, must be of greater blood than records indicate. This social mobility only goes so far. One clearly halfblooded never equals a trueblood, and a mortal never equals a halfblood. This requires the septs to recognize great accomplishments from their lesser cousins only unofficially—in the record, a trueblood's deeds must be greater than those of lesser creatures.

THE LEI KIANGI

Atop of the Lintha hierarchy sits the *Lei Kiangi* and the Septian Covenant. The *Lei Kiangi* is the eldest grandmother of the Lintha, a position currently held by Wari Fan of the Gajui sept. She controls all aspects of the

Lintha Family, settling all disputes. Every person in the Family, from the next-eldest grandmother to the newest initiate in the farthest land, lives at her sufferance.

The *Lei Kiangi* may command any ship or fleet belonging to the Lintha. She may also command any Lintha, or any person residing in Bluehaven. She wields this authority for the benefit of the Lintha Family but does so only when necessary. Responsibility for defense of Bluehaven also falls on her. The *Lei Kiangi* is free to delegate to members of the Septian Covenant or her chosen representatives, but all honor and blame for their actions ultimately return to her.

No *Lei Kiangi* has ever been assassinated or deposed. Such direct politics are common between the septs themselves, especially in the conflict before the ascension of a new *Lei Kiangi*, but Dukantha created the position after his Exaltation, and the position has the blessing of the Lintha's champion and the Mother. Denying the *Lei Kiangi* would invite holy wrath.

Beneath the *Lei Kiangi* is the Septian Covenant, a council composed of the elder grandmothers of each sept. The council's only function is to advise and guide the *Lei Kiangi* when she lets them. The council's influence is real but not great, and the Greatsepts gain little by dominating its membership. The Septian Covenant meets twice each month to privately discuss Bluehaven's economy and security.

LINTHA GRANDPARENTS


As proof of good blood, age confers respect and power. The titles of "grandmother" and "grandfather" belong to those who wield influence within a sept. Every grandparent is a trueblood of significant age, and most have accrued lengthy lists of honors over their years. The titles need not be literal, though.

The Lintha Family is a matriarchal society, as benefits their worship of Kimberly, the Sea That Marched Against the Flame. Women hold all final authority and responsibility, including apportionment of finances. The *Lei Kiangi* is the ultimate expression of this, with all Bluehaven and the Lintha Family as her household.

Men work the sea, a practice influenced by the common Western attitudes toward gender roles and the symbolism of masculinity sailing upon the feminine ocean. This symbolism is visible in Lintha ship design. Their vessels are kept in excellent trim, appropriate as methods of communion with their Yozi patron, and adorned with phallic sexual imagery as homage to the ultimate Mother.

An elder grandmother rules each sept with a firm hand. Her word is law, except where it conflicts with that





of the *Lei Kiangi*. She controls the sept's budget completely, taking advice from the other elder grandmothers as she likes, and she sits in uncontested judgment over any disputes that do not cross sept lines. Each grandmother also holds responsibility for her family lines. All of her descendants are under her distinct authority, which only the elder grandmother of the sept can overrule. Grandmothers with no actual offspring claim the bloodlines of others as their own. Only a grandmother with immense personal influence can claim another grandmother's bloodline, but any Lintha woman given the position of grandmother without descendants of her own has enough to do so.

Proper guidance means making sure the family remains profitable, in good order, and aligned with the Lintha Family's overall goals. When a family line loses too much money or causes too much trouble, the line's grandmother can suffer punishments ranging from lashes to the confiscation of a bloodline. Allowing treason amongst one's children or grandchildren is punishable by death.

An elder grandmother guides her sept with a whip of jade. If she dislikes a war, she does not fund it. If she feels a grandfather is being foolish in trade, she applies greater proportions of the budget to piracy or war. When she disapproves of a grandfather's leading in piracy, she cuts spending on ship repairs. A grandmother who wants to rid herself of an irritating grandfather can hoard the sept's treasury from him.

Grandfathers have a wholly different set of responsibilities. Theirs is the duty to represent the Lintha Family to the outside world. This includes guiding their family in piracy, trade and diplomacy with everyone outside Bluehaven.

There is no elder grandfather distinction. Grandfathers in a sept earn their honors and authority, competing for wealth and power among each other, but only as much as is healthy. Too much internecine conflict brings the wrath of the elder grandmother.

The polygamous nature of Lintha couplings makes it difficult for any male of the Family to be sure which Lintha are his descendants. Historians and priests keep detailed records of official pairings and when two Lintha of any decent blood mate, which most Lintha ignore. Wealth and influence decide which grandfathers get first claim to potential descendants, and grandfathers choose the ones who please them.

Within the septs, a given grandfather's bloodlines are under his command with respect to the males' responsibilities. When away from Bluehaven, which is

rare, grandfathers command fleets and see to months of trade and slaving. They take direction from the elder grandmother only when they return to the city.

A grandfather helms a sept's fleets, deciding where they sail for plunder or trade. He balances the need to turn a profit, which drives him to keep competing fleets apart, with the need to let that competition take place, just as the elder grandmother chooses when to step between warring grandfathers. Grandfathers believe this spurs their captains to greater heights through natural pride.

None can gainsay a grandfather's decisions. War is his to declare, just as strategies are his to decide. He chooses how much effort his family puts toward piracy and how much toward slaving and other trades. A grandfather controls spy networks and foreign diplomats. When something goes wrong abroad, a younger Lintha may be at fault but the responsibility is the grandfather's. They fight the elder grandmother's budgetary assault with profits that missed the grandmother's coffers.

Any clever grandfather has enough salted away to fund a few of his own projects. Enough self-funded success forces the elder grandmother to return her support.

LINTHA FATHERS AND MOTHERS

A mother of the Lintha Family has varying degrees of responsibility for her sept's economic well-being. She usually sees to a wide spread of financial matters as suggested by her grandmother or elder grandmother. She's also responsible for executing punishments handed down by her superiors.

A father spends his time captaining a ship or, for the most honored, a fleet. Fathers are pirates, slavers, traders and ultimately at the mercy of the grandmothers who rule them.

Both fathers and mothers are expected to join the Cult of Dukantha, and though it's not strictly mandatory, they face scorn and prejudice should they refuse.

A sept's elder grandmother bestows the rank of mother or father on sisters, aunts, brothers or uncles she feels have earned it. Fathers must sire two trueblood children, and mothers must bear the same. Only the greatest accomplishments or most extravagant bribes garner enough honor for a grandmother to raise a Lintha with fewer children to the position. Likewise, bringing two purebloods into the Family isn't enough without displaying other prized qualities.

LINTHA BROTHERS AND SISTERS

All pureblood Lintha are born as brothers or sisters. Halfbloods born to the most powerful families are also



brothers and sisters, but halfbloods of lesser influence must prove their worth before ascension to the rank. Lintha children spend their youths separated from their parents in one of the island-bound academies. There, they learn the blood-stirring history and glorious destiny of their race, along with skills they will need in life, such as seamanship, bookkeeping, personal combat, commerce and war.


Children nearing graduation are responsible for rearing their youngest siblings and overseeing the academies. They discipline those younger than they, playing at crude politics that prime them for the society they will soon enter.

Older children take on responsibilities as befit their heritage. Young Lintha of both genders serve as mates on their fathers' ships. Sisters are expected to return after one year to begin taking part in running their families or septs, as well as breeding. Sisters must fight their mothers and grandmothers for permission to stay longer on the waters, making older Lintha women a rare sight on ship.

Scions of the lesser septs often have fewer options. There are more than 700 ships in the Lintha "navy," and there are far more fathers and brothers deserving of positions on those ships. Greatsepts take the choicest positions, forcing children of other septs to serve as crewmen, messengers, servants or otherwise subordinate to the dominate families if they want to sail. Otherwise, they work at trade and bookkeeping within their own septs.

LINTHA AUNTS AND UNCLES

This title can be either an honor or a demotion. Brothers and sisters who distinguish themselves as wise, cunning and able to work well with lesser peoples may become aunts or uncles. They travel to far-off lands as attachés, where they watch over the sept's business and gather information. It is a sign that their grandfathers and grandmothers trust the aunts and uncles' allegiance to the Lintha Family and their capabilities. Unlike the other gender lines, there is little difference in duty between an aunt and an uncle.



Others find it less of an honor. A father or mother in disgrace may be made an aunt or uncle, forced into exile, stripped of authority and given tasks of lesser importance away from the politics of Bluehaven. Few can recover lost glory abroad, so Lintha dishonored in this way must depend on skill and results to earn a recall to the sargasso waters.

Trueblood Lintha operate as aunts or uncles with difficulty. Responsibilities include managing local cousins, fences and spies on behalf of the sept and Family. Grandmothers usually promote halfblooded brothers and sisters to the position, as their diluted Lintha appearances allow them to integrate with mortal societies. This rank is the highest any Lintha of impure blood ever achieve. Lintha of pure blood have a difficult time doing the necessary work, especially given the hate most outsiders have for the Lintha Family. Aunts and uncles also come from the ranks of Lintha cousins, and are often initiates with no Lintha blood.

LINTHA COUSINS

Cousins are connected to the Family tenuously, at the very bottom of the Lintha Family ranks. Lintha of dilute blood are cousins from birth. They come from the lesser septs, which have weaker lineages and less influence to wield in the battle to declare a child of true blood, and from unions of noted halfbloods or mortals. Cousins are raised similarly to Lintha brothers and sisters but with significantly less attention, and cousins with Lintha blood usually gain the rank of brother or sister (or aunt or uncle) over time.

Cousin is also the term for an outsider with no Lintha blood who becomes tied to the Family. Any initiate is first considered a cousin, except for those who spend ludicrous amounts of money to purchase higher ranks. Cousins do the meanest work, almost always abroad. They are the spies who listen at doors, root through garbage and shadow persons of note. Cousins man the oars and are on the front lines for violent boarding actions. It's not glorious, but it's usually profitable.

A cousin without Lintha blood may not set foot in Bluehaven before castration. Uncastrated initiates who work in the Lintha fleet must remain on their ships during visits to the secret city. Most are required to remain below decks until the ship is 10 or more miles out of the harbor, and Lintha consider themselves within their rights to kill any mortal they see peeking out from a ship.

Once a cousin, never less than a cousin. Those admitted to this rank never suffer demotion except through death. There's no other way out of the Family. No one

expects a cousin to be unflinchingly loyal to the cause—most are motivated by money and ill-gotten gains—but that doesn't mean they get to leave their responsibilities behind on a whim. This famous restriction doesn't usually bother a person unless it's staring her in the face. Ranking as a cousin means opportunities for underhanded work and little more until her Lintha contact asks her to do something she doesn't want to do.

Refusal begins a program of calculated coercion. If a cousin can't be persuaded to accept an assignment through normal means (haggling over fees or other incentives), the aunt or uncle in authority abducts a close family member to Bluehaven as a hostage. Depending on the level of disobedience, the Lintha in charge may take additional hostages, up to an entire family, or find other things the cousin holds dear. Good behavior sees the hostages released in as little as three years. Continued defiance causes the Lintha to visit various horrors upon the hostages. Ritual castration is standard, beginning with spouses, then moving on to children and other blood relatives.

Promotion from the rank is rare but not impossible. Exceptional service in the name of the Lintha Family never goes unrewarded. Cousins most often become aunts and uncles, overseeing operations and commanding the affiliates who used to be their peers. Great honors and the display of qualities prized by the Lintha may earn promotion to the rank of brother or sister, at which point nearly all foreigners stop. Great ambition in mortals offends those of Lintha blood and risks a deadly reminder of position.


JOINING THE FAMILY

People without Lintha blood join the Family as initiates. The term mostly refers to cousins, differentiating mortal cousins from those with weak blood, but can also apply to any mortal member of the Family not permitted to visit Bluehaven. There are multiple ways to become involved with the family, and they all begin with having something the Family wants.

STARTING AT THE BOTTOM

Most initiates don't even know they're being inducted into the Lintha Family. They don't have money or valuables, but they have useful skills. This sort of initiate might crack safes, burgle homes in silence, launder money through investments with good return, fence goods without a trace or just know all the right people.

Contact is not overtly connected to the Lintha; it's just another job. Lintha scouts pick someone whose skills the organization needs and offer work just as



any other client might. Some choose to mention the Lintha Family after acceptance of the job, but most never mention it at all. They mention that there is more work if the person is interested, but nothing more than that. As soon as the person comes to the Family for something, whether or not she knows whom she's approaching, there's no backing out—of the agreement or the Family.

A Lintha cousin begins delving as deeply as possible into the new initiate's life. He digs up everything from living family (out to third cousins) and frequent associates to places of birth and the name of childhood instructors. All the dirt ends up in a local aunt or uncle's files for use should the subject be unwilling to go ahead with the initiation, or if she ever causes trouble later on.

After adequate performance in a number of missions, typically from three to eight, the Family agent makes his affiliation clear if he has not already. It is now *far* too late to escape the Family's grasp. The initiate is given two choices: undergo official initiation into the Lintha Family or be castrated and sold into slavery in a far-off land, but only after watching as all those he holds dear are tortured and their lives destroyed. It's not a difficult decision.

Initiation means an ocean voyage to a Lintha client state where the initiate swears an oath to the Lintha Family and a lesser oath to the sponsoring sept. A grandfather from the sept, generally the one responsible for the agents who brought the new cousin into the Family, receives the oath to sept, and a priest of the Cult of Dukantha consecrates the oath to the Lintha. Also present is a child or blood-relative of the initiate, who then becomes a hostage up to such time that the initiate's loyalty is unquestionable. After the ritual is complete, the initiate is considered an ancillary member of the sponsoring sept.

The Family keeps hostages on islands not far from Bluehaven. Hostages eat well and have their choice of numerous distractions, from games to drugs to books to prostitutes. Most resist at first, then realize their prison is more luxurious than the lives they would have led. Those who refuse to remain peaceful are subdued against their will, usually drugged. There is no reason to mistreat hostages, since doing so could turn a completely loyal cousin into an implacable enemy. Lintha visit the islands often to make sure their guests are comfortable . . . until an initiate misbehaves. Initiates who break their oaths leave family to suffer the consequences, and the Family makes it clear to the hostages why they are being subjected to such torture.

Lintha aunts and uncles deliver evidence of the hostage's suffering to the wayward initiate. If the initiate succumbs to the pressure and returns to the fold, all is forgiven. He will not be a trusted member of the Family for many years, but the torture ends. The initiate must then provide an additional hostage, whom the initiate himself must choose.

It is a point of pride for the Lintha that no betrayal goes unpunished. The Family hunts ex-members across Creation, using all its contacts to find a fleeing cousin in her new life and bringing it down around her before torturing the defector. Death or castration and slavery follow. This practice minimizes the number of traitors the Lintha endure.

BUYING IN

Those aware of the Family and the potential income and influence the Family represents may buy their way in. A simple gift of wealth can purchase rank within the Family. In this case, it is the person's money that the Lintha want, rather than any talent they need.


A Resources ••• purchase secures the rank of cousin without any need for a hostage. For Resources ••••, one can become a brother or sister as long as one provides a child or close relative as a hostage. A single enormous Resources ••••• gift to the Family makes one a Lintha mother or father and also requires a hostage. The initiation ceremony, complete with oaths and consecration, is still necessary.

The potential Family member must find a sponsor. This is harder than letting a sponsor find you and introduce you at the bottom rung of the ladder. A sponsor must be a Lintha mother or father who supports the foreigner's induction into the Family. The sponsor's sept keeps most of the monetary gift, with a fraction going to the Cult of Dukantha. A sept's elder grandmother must approve the sale of mother or father rank.

Any initiates who wish to visit Bluehaven must undergo ritual castration. Most cousins never visit, and many brothers and sisters are willing to work as aunts or uncles rather than suffer that. Mothers and fathers have no choice but to work from Bluehaven at least part of the time, and must therefore be castrated. Someone purchasing such a high rank must perform the castration himself.

People who buy a place in the Family often fail to realize that true Lintha will never, *ever* treat the initiates as equals. The Lintha conceal their hate behind crimson eyes and speak kind, flattering words, but they hold no respect for the initiates. This exemplifies the Lintha's power in the current Age, that outsiders *pay* to become servants.

Lintha



Initiates with purchased ranks usually end up dead after a decade or so, once their money dries up and the Lintha have milked the initiates' contacts for all they're worth. The Lintha are a deeply racist people; they hide their racism only to protect their profit margins.

CASTRATION IN BRIEF

Lintha practice self-castration to prevent the spread of trueblood seed outside their careful eugenics, as such spread would weaken the race overall. They castrate others, male and female, to likewise prevent dilution of the Lintha blood. Castration is also a common threat to hostages or untrustworthy initiates, and some Lintha practice it on mortal captives, slaves or even subordinates simply for cruelty's sake.

Performing a castration safely is a difficulty 2 (Intelligence + Medicine) roll, difficulty 4 for female castrations. Self-castration increases the difficulty by 2 and replaces Intelligence with Wits.

Lintha men and women who spend much time abroad are likely to volunteer for castration after they have sired or borne two trueblooded children.

Joining the Cult of Dukantha requires castration, and only those who've sired or borne two trueblooded children are eligible.

Halfblood Lintha are punished with castration if they ever procreate outside the assigned eugenics programs.

Anyone with no Lintha blood must submit to castration before visiting Bluehaven.

LINTHA SEPTS

The Lintha divide themselves into eight households called septs, three of which are "Greatsepts." The Greatsepts hold the most wealth and influence, and claim greater purity than other septs. All septs pride themselves on the purity of their blood and the success of their breeding, and all have unprovable, conflicting genealogies as claims to superiority. Each sept takes its name from its founder and primary ancestor.

Gajui is the current ruling Greatsept, as the *Lei Kiangi* is of this sept. The Gajui control a full quarter of all Lintha wealth and maintain 31 fleets (seven dedicated to slavery). The Gajui also invest in many independent operations, from their own brand of privateer to land-bound theft and slavery in the South. Gajui are

known for cunning in business and piracy, not for valor in battle. Few Gajui join the Sword Brotherhood, and few believe there is any future in warfare. Most of those Gajui not at sea remain in Bluehaven, preferring to do their business abroad through trusted agents.

Despite this, they have a reputation as the most cosmopolitan and least xenophobic of the septs. The Gajui sept maintains pleasure palaces in lands abroad for entertaining friends of the Lintha Family, and the sept's grandfathers often declare that they will do business with anyone, regardless of blood, sept and politics, as long as the jade is plentiful. This accounts in part for the sept's great wealth. The Gajui also have a reputation for recreational eccentricity, especially sexual.

Wari Fan, the *Lei Kiangi* and current elder grandmother of the Gajui sept, is shrewd, with has a reputation for wisdom. She's also a respected poet and painter. Lintha society talks about her frequent vacations to unnamed places west of Bluehaven, not least because she always returns with exotic treasures.

Haquen has rivaled the Gajui in all things as long as Lintha history records. Haquen wealth is impressive, if not as great as Gajui's, and the Haquen fund seven pirate fleets manned almost entirely by family—something Gajui could not possibly do. Haquen Lintha also hate the Ng Hut sept and take every opportunity to sabotage its efforts.

The Haquen passion is the Sword Brotherhood, which they founded and dominate. The sole first kur master is Haquen, as are two of the three second kur swordsmen who currently run the Brotherhood. Haquen uses the Brotherhood to maintain the sept's martial dominance by producing the very best swordsmen, and through the Brotherhood, the sept gathers information on the many Lintha who join. Desire to advance through the sept's ranks represents another form of influence the sept can leverage through the Brotherhood's leadership.

When it comes to fashion, Haquen leads, and the rest of Bluehaven follows. They say that if a Haquen brother wore a fish between his legs, the bay would be empty by noon. The Haquen lean strongly toward busy, intricate designs, and they take trends piecemeal from all over Creation. Even the least clothes-conscious Haquen captain wears ruffled silk and long, flowing scarves, which means so do half the captains of the other septs.

Sarangai is the elder grandmother of the Haquen sept. She is nearly 350 years old but still looks young. She wears risqué fashions and maintains more than 80 active trueblood suitors.

Ng Hut was a lesser sept for most of the Lintha's history. The Ng Hut were not exceptional businessmen or warriors, and their genealogies were often contested. That all changed three and a half centuries ago, when Dukantha returned from Malfeas and the sept's fortunes changed completely.

The Ng Hut dominate the Cult of Dukantha, which nearly all Lintha seek to join, though not all can muster the requisite trueblood children or equal influence necessary to qualify. The sept's political influence stems from others' fear of being ejected from the cult. The Ng Hut ordain all Lintha outcasts as cult priests, giving the sept great influence over the Family's sorcerers. The Ng Hut have also managed to turn the cult into a profitable venture; other septs keep hoping this hubris will be the Ng Hut's downfall, but Dukantha has never condemned this practice.

All septs but the Ng Hut live in the island district of Bluehaven, as near sister Oroo as possible. Ng Hut broke with this tradition almost two centuries ago when the temple portion of the island sank into the sea. They dubbed their new home the Temple District even as other septs cried out against their actions. It's the most blatant example of how Ng Hut ignore traditions they don't find convenient or useful—and most

of the traditions they favor are ones they invented for their own benefit.

Ooloo currently leads the Ng Hut as elder grandmother. For the 70 years of her reign, she has spent their funds with no apparent regard for good business and maintained several secret breeding farms in an attempt to reclaim the true glory of the Lintha race. She lets nothing, especially morality or tradition, stand between her and this goal. Some elder Ng Hut currently plot to replace (kill) her. The greatest obstacle might be her brother, Yrjow Han, who leads the Cult of Dukantha.

LESSER SEPTS

Members of these septs are trueblooded but are not the true nobility of Bluehaven. Lintha society is designed to keep the powerful and the weak in their respective places. The lesser septs' elder grandmothers keep a hand in through the Septian Covenant, and none of them are hurting—they're just small compared to the Greatsepts.

Sennong is the most ambitious of the lesser septs. The Sennong keep secrets well and possess impressive spy networks and long memories. The sept has benefited from an enormous influx of wealth in the last decade through systematic defrauding of





LINTHA NAMES AND TITLES

The Lintha system of address can be confusing to an outsider. Getting it wrong can also be very, very dangerous. First, foreigners may address a Lintha only as "Lintha." To do otherwise assumes too much familiarity. This applies also to members of the Family speaking to any unknown Lintha until seniority becomes clear. Otherwise, Lintha address each other as the elder among them choose.

One Lintha is called *Lintha Ixora Cousin Juri*. The first clearly marks him of the Lintha Family. The second marks his sept. The third is his rank. The fourth is his unique personal name; most use the personal name, often with the rank, when speaking to or discussing Cousin Juri.

Lintha not of true blood have a pejorative subtitle after the sept name. Juri's full name would be *Lintha Ixora falong Cousin Juri* if he were a halfblood and *Lintha Ixora gan Cousin Juri* if he had no Lintha blood of consequence. All initiates technically have a full name that uses their sponsoring sept + *gan*, but it sees so little use outside Bluehaven and the Lintha's fleets that few distant cousins know it.

Additional titles and honors come before the rest of the name, supplanting even Lintha as the proper base address for these individuals. The *Lei Kiangi*'s full name is *Lei Kiangi Lintha Gajui Wari Fan*, but all just call her *Lei Kiangi*; the master of the Sword Brotherhood is *Dokur Lintha Haquen Father Tow-Ang*. Note how one title removes the Lintha rank from the name, since the name encompasses the rank, while the other does not.

nearby An-Teng. In the guise of An-Teng business concerns, the Sennong sell the mortal princes goods at high prices before sailing in as Lintha and robbing them. Sennong know this can't work forever, but the grandfathers are having trouble letting go of such a lucrative enterprise. One source of potential trouble is the Gajui, whose treaty with An-Teng becomes less certain with every Sennong trick.

The secrecy of the project means that the Sennong have more wealth than they can flaunt. They are currently funneling their new wealth into legitimate (by Lintha standards) ventures. Wise investment of their current capital could give them enough clout to stand beside the Greatsepts within a decade or two. The Sennong elder grandmother is Fia-Eng.

Ixora: There are no septs lower than the Ixora. Ever since a failed attempt to suborn great swathes of the Haquen fleets and business interests 30 years ago, known infamously as the Borog-Na Conspiracy, the Ixora have been barely more worthy than mortals in Lintha eyes. The *Lei Kiangi* confiscated the Ixora's wealth, burned their ships and forbade them to sail, bear arms or seek membership in the Cult of Dukantha. There is little more for the sept to do but dwindle.

But Ixora fortunes may be changing. One of the sept's remaining scions just Exalted as a Dragon-Blood, and without exception, all outcastes are inducted into the Cult of Dukantha and trained in sorcery. Such influence is exactly what the Ixora need to take the first step back toward their former glory. The Ixora elder grandmother is Trlosi. She is not welcome in the Septian Covenant, despite what the law says, and has not been seen in 10 years.


Angsana: Other septs may fall from the path of Lintha tradition, but not the Angsana. They are proper to a fault, and nearly incorruptible within the system of Lintha honor. To Bluehaven's irritation, the Angsana freely criticize others who do not meet the sept's rigorous standards. Angsana record the Lintha's glorious history as it unrolls; even if the Angsana are critical, no one can say they are unfair. Bribery and threats both fail against their unassailable Lintha sensibilities.

Greatsepts disparage the Angsana for being less profitable than normal for a sept of their size, usually prompted by unflattering records. This is true, but the Angsana fund four pirate fleets and make moderate returns on their investments. The elder grandmother, Junni Oinn, disapproves of slavery as distasteful and expensive, and refuses to fund it.

Dewantara: The Dewantara believe in the Lintha curse, because the Dewantara think they have the worst of it. Their families procreate only with difficulty, making their sept a small household. Only two children have been born into the sept in the last century, and barely more than a dozen members live in their small Bluehaven estates.

Dewantara has always been a small sept. No great glories or disgraces mark the Dewantara's histories. They ply the trading lanes of the sea like other pirates, but with no great advantage. Other septs neither hate the Dewantara nor love them. Suwar, the elder grandmother, has the Septian Covenant's respect but always advises the safe, conservative path. Any treason or heroics from the sept would surprise all Bluehaven.

Dara-Said: Malice common across the septs whispers that the Dara-Said are not true Lintha, that



their genealogies are completely fake and their blood no better than water. They look mostly human, and suggestions that they be ejected from Bluehaven or castrated and made slaves are common, though rarely serious. Others appreciate the Dara-Said's ferocity in battle, but their lust for blood is uncouth rather than sophisticated, and some say that the Dara-Said consume the flesh of mortals.

Dara-Said control three pirate fleets and five slaver fleets, but their profits are slim. Either the books are doctored or the household pisses away its money on frivolities and poor investments. The eldergrandmother, Karatull, is a belligerent dwarf with a sharp tongue and harsh words for all the world.

OTHER LINTHA LINEAGES

Lintha history holds that all Lintha bloodlines died off but the one that led to them, as guided by the three unnamed survivors of the Usurpation. This may not be true. A tribe of icewalkers in the North displays features and strict breeding rules similar to those of the Lintha, and children with bright green skin and stark white hair are occasionally born among the Haltans.

What would the Lintha Family do were they to discover such a bloodline? The instinctual response would be to wipe out those of tainted blood, but wiser heads realize that the Lintha are none too pure themselves. Envoys might try to bring the wayward sons back into the fold through flattery and assertions of superior lineage . . . and would react badly to refusal.

LINTHA TRADITIONS

The Lintha are a more ancient culture than most in Creation, and they are bound by the traditions of their history. Much of that culture has been reconstructed from fragments and stories, and other parts have been invented whole cloth, but the Lintha still take pride in their traditions.

MARRIAGE

Lintha marry only other Lintha. It's important for them to maintain pure bloodlines. Marriage is rarely for love, instead playing a part in the constant political interplay between families and septs. Marriage to a person of good blood is worth a price, which might be money, favors, goods or another marriage.

The typical Lintha trueblood has 20 to 30 spouses. She has slept with all of them at least once

but spends more time with a select few. Most marriages are within a single sept, designed to strengthen that sept's blood and numbers. Inter-sept marriages must be blessed by the elder grandmother of each; children belong to the mother's sept. As Lintha age, they tend to pair off into eventual monogamous or near-monogamous relationships.

Weddings are small ceremonies overseen by the sept's elder grandmother and consecrated by a priest of Dukantha. Grand weddings are a waste: any dowry would stay within the sept, and each trueblood marries so many times that large celebrations would consume too much time and money. Only marriage between septs breaks the rule, as they are rarer and occasions for each sept to demonstrate superiority. One wedding tradition, begun in the spirit of procreation, is that all the bride's and groom's extant spouses join the newlyweds in a tremendous private orgy.

Producing a child brings honor on the mother and the sept. Lintha men may claim children as theirs, but proof is usually impossible. The mother chooses which of her husbands was the father, often based on fondness or bribes.

Outside of marriages, the Lintha have little sex. A desired mating between two truebloods demands marriage, the method through which Lintha ensure the purity of their bloodlines. Not only is the idea of procreation with inferior beings abhorred in their society, but such an action can have serious repercussions, such as castration and exile. Lesser deterrents include fines and physical chastisement. Strict interpretations consider only intercourse taboo, but any form of sexual play between Lintha and mortals is discouraged. Still, some Lintha use the ambiguity as an excuse to demean their lessers through rape.

Halfblooded Lintha may only marry as directed by their sept elder grandmother, and they are expected to breed only with their spouses (an average adult half-blood has five). The restriction prevents the halfbloods from ruining centuries of eugenics intended to force the nobility in their blood to resurface. Punishment for breaking this rule is castration, selectively applied depending on a given arbiter's opinions.

Mortals in Bluehaven have already been castrated. Outside of Bluehaven, the Lintha care not how the inferiors reproduce.

PIRACY AND SLAVERY

As a matter of pride, Lintha create no goods. They steal or buy everything they own, and trace all their wealth to thievery.





The Family sails more than 500 ships devoted to piracy and more than 300 to slavery. Many of the Family's pirate fleets pose as honest merchants, complete with legitimate papers provided by Lintha cousins of various nationalities. These ships travel the shipping lanes disguised as normal ships, their sea-demons submerged and out of view. Victims don't realize the danger until the black and silver flies, when it's too late.

Other pirate captains dispense with the charade, flaunting their banners and monsters. Cutthroat, they relish the deaths of every crew that resists. Many consume the flesh of horrified still-living victims; the Lintha are more forgiving of eating mortals at sea.

Wearing watershoes, Lintha attack other vessels over the waves. Those with gills swim under to surprise the defenders from the other side. Their unique hooked auhzian swords help them scale enemy hulls. Some merchants are overtaken before they realize they've been attacked.

Pirate fleets typically contain four or five ships. Vessel captains are of at least brother or sister rank and have practiced piracy for at least 10 years; fleet captains are usually fathers and have 30 or more years of experience.

Slavery is a completely different business. Most Lintha consider it gauche, but the profits are too enticing to ignore. They also consider using slaves foolish for the security-conscious—Lintha use well-paid servants to ensure loyalty.

Slaving ships are large, black ships with enormous cargo holds, driven by paddlewheels. Slaves, or in rare cases, demons, turn the paddlewheels. These ships travel in convoys of 16 or more ships, hugging the coast to take prisoners, then moving the slaves directly to destinations around the world. For security reasons, slaves never see Bluehaven. If a Lintha slaver needs to offload slaves someplace before reaching a buyer, he'll use the nearby Boonsong Cay.

THE CULT OF DUKANTHA

Dukantha's ascension brought the Lintha to their current heights. Without his cult, they would have none of their sea-demons or other hellish servants. Dukantha binds the Lintha to their Great Mother, transmits to her their prayers and offerings and ensures they continue to serve Kimberly's ends.

Membership in the Cult of Dukantha is mandatory in all but name. Refusing to join cuts off the advantages

it provides. Demon servants increase the profit of piracy manyfold, the social network is expansive and the social penalties for not belonging are immense. Denying the cult makes one nearly an exile in Lintha society.

The cult claims nearly all Lintha outcastes as its sorcerer-priests. They are necessary to the benefits the Cult of Dukantha provides, and thus its massive influence over Lintha society. Most outcastes are pliable enough after Exaltation that indoctrination is fast and painless.

Ahgai Lintha Ng Hut Yrjow Han is the current high priest, a position outcastes cannot hold because of their impure blood. A grandfather of the Ng Hut always holds the position, which the title “Ahgai” signifies. Other grandfathers and grandmothers serve in the cult under him, all personally appointed by Dukantha. Yrjow Han receives visions from the Great Mother as he sleeps in Lintha Ng Oroo’s cave mouth. Most recent visions are of a coming slaughter and the sea running deep with green and crimson.

Initiation into the Cult of Dukantha is available only to Lintha mothers and fathers. The short ceremony involves an oath to obey Dukantha and ritual castration. Priests sacrifice the lost parts to Kimberly. Members of the cult in good standing may pose a question to the Great Mother once per year, which outcaste priests convey to her through the Song of the Lintha.

Dukantha himself visits his people once per year during a feast in his name. The Feast of Dukantha takes place over the five days of Calibration, during which time all true Lintha return to Bluehaven—even the Lintha find the seas dangerous during that fell time. Dukantha emerges from Oroo’s cave at midnight on the first day of Calibration to see young brothers of each sept awaiting him with gifts.

The Greatsepts present first, each offering 100 slain mortals, a talent of jade dust and a gift representing their accomplishments over the past year. Greatsepts compete to outdo each other each year with the gift. The lesser septs are not in the same league, but Dukantha sometimes picks a simple gift from a lesser sept as his favorite. The brother presenting the gift becomes Lord Eunuch and leads the feast’s events.

The next five days are a tremendous party like one would expect to see anywhere else in Creation. The Family engages in competitions and games, storytelling, meals and excesses of all kinds. During this time, Lintha ignore strict laws of breeding, believing they are under the aegis of Dukantha’s blessing.

On the last day, the Lord Eunuch receives his honors. Dukantha himself castrates the young man and

SONG OF THE LINTHA

(TERRESTRIAL CIRCLE SORCERY)

Cost: 25m

Target: Putrescent door

The Song of the Lintha is a six-day ritual of meditation on the glories of the Great Mother and the blasphemies of Creation’s rulers. On the sixth day, the caster sings a repeating three-note, seven-syllable song that crescendos as ghostly black and red flames coalesce into reality around her until the song climaxes in an inferno after 10 hours. The spell complete, a door of decaying black flesh appears before the caster. To pass through the door, one must cut a laceration in the flesh with an edge of a magical material; then, anyone present can push through the dripping wound into an exit-less cave of hard black stone.

Here is a chancre in Malfear’s body, a place where a being named Yozi can hear a mortal’s voice and choose whether to answer or excise the offending sore and its contents, casting them into emptiness and certain death. If the Yozi is sympathetic to the request, as Kimberly may be sympathetic to her progeny, she sends a servant to aid the caster. This is a demon of strength relative to how the Yozi weighs the request’s importance; Kimberly often sends Dukantha. Any aid requires a price, especially for action instead of advice, and often one unpleasant for the seeker.


Lintha use this spell to contact Kimberly, but it can be used to communicate with any Yozi. Few are as well-inclined toward petitioners as Kimberly is toward her children, and even she can be harsh. An Exalt seeking a backdoor into Malfear may find another use for this spell, but only with difficulty.

consumes the parts, leaving the brother to bleed to death on the altar. After the patron’s midnight departure, cult priests parade the corpse through Bluehaven, anointing streets and alleys with his blood. He then joins thousands of other bodies in the Coffin Vurjawna.

Each time Dukantha returns to Malfear, Lintha Ng Oroo slips a little further beneath the waves.

THE SWORD BROTHERHOOD

The Sword Brotherhood is the premier martial fellowship in Bluehaven. Members train with the augh-zian, a hooked sword featuring pointed blades on the



hilt, pommel and hand guard that can all threaten an enemy—or an untrained wielder. The sword ranges in size from one to five feet, and many Lintha fight with one in each hand.

Each rank in the brotherhood is called a *kur*, with initiates at the fifth *kur* and the single Saint of the Blade at the first *kur*. The current first *kur*, Tow-Ang, lives and practices along on the tiny islet of Eight Lupo to the song of the nearby Yun giants. Three Lintha are at the second *kur*, and they lead the Sword Brotherhood in his absence.

Brothers of the Sword settle internal disputes and internal advancement through personal combat. Advancing from one *kur* to the next consists of besting others of greater rank until the second *kur* masters agree the person is ready. Swordmasters outside of the Lintha accord no honor to the Sword Brotherhood—its style focuses on dirty tricks and inflicting lasting, crippling injuries—but any Sword Brother would argue the point with his blade.

ALLIES

The Lintha are not popular, but neither are they entirely without allies.

The Lintha dead protect their descendants. When danger threatens Bluehaven, the Lintha ancestors sail forth from the Coffin Vurjawna with ships of greened copper and weapons not seen since before the Primordial War.

Mnalif Nganto is a Lunar Exalt with a shark totem. Similar to her spirit animal, she is vicious and hungry when aroused, and there is always blood in the water near the Lintha. She commands a Lintha fleet of four ships, all crewed by her beastman children. Her ships all carry the taint of the Wyld with them, and Wyld-twisted whale-creatures pull the ships at great speeds.

The Stone Society is an association of Western Lunars and their kin who form a small independent fleet of pirates. They do good business and would be too expensive for the Lintha to force off the waters, so the two maintain amicable relations and occasionally barter to mutual benefit.

Lord Verethine, Vodonik King has an unexpected tolerance for the Lintha. Verethine and his court of elementals and gods patrol Lintha waters for the Lintha's enemies. The Family provides live humans for Verethine's famous hunts in exchange.

Other gods have no real fondness for the Lintha, but the Family is careful to always pay due respects to the many local gods whose waters they sail. Grandfa-

thers encourage their captains to be generous, and the Lintha accumulate few divine grudges.

ENEMIES

All Creation hates the Lintha, and the Lintha like it that way. Some people are just in a better position to do something about it.

Chiaroscuro's navy has little power outside Chiaroscuro's immediate vicinity, but the Lintha are also weak so far from Bluehaven. Chiaroscuran admirals have sworn to eradicate the Lintha presence, and the admirals really are thinning the herd of aunts, uncles and cousins. The Gajui sept is cutting its losses there, so the Sennong are filling the gap. They have done well so far, but the navy must soon react.

Coral pirates are skillful and far more numerous than the Lintha, but lack the Family's signature ruthlessness. Lintha are happy to crush Coral ships and take their booty; some Lintha make a practice of hitting targets just before the Coral pirates can, simply as a sign of contempt. Coral pirates and privateers have bound together to sink a number of Lintha vessels recently, attacking from distance to avoid the Lintha's sea monsters.

The Water Fleet is the chief naval power in the West and outnumbers the Lintha fleet by at least two to one. Well-equipped warships and Dragon-Blooded officers are enemies the Lintha try not to engage, but they do not always succeed. Some recent battles between the two have ended in spectacular and cruel deaths for the pirates, earning the Realm a grudging respect from the Lintha.

Realm agents have tried numerous times to locate Bluehaven, but without success. The Lintha know that the Realm is in decline (as they have "known" for centuries), but prefer not to antagonize thousands of Dragon-Blooded warriors and sorcerers. Only profits too great to resist draw them into shipping lanes that will attract more attention.

BLUEHAVEN

The city itself lies in the center of miles-wide patch of sargasso that floats on the ocean. Around a small island, all that remains of Lintha Ng Oroo, the seaweed supports dozens of foundered ships bound together by heavy ropes and walkways. Some sport new construction, such as towers and plazas for the influential. Two ruined First Age vessels, hulls shining still, beach on opposite sides of Lintha Ng Oroo and serve as home to the Haquen and Gajui septs. All told, the city supports about 10,000 at one time. That number swells to 25,000

during Calibration, and Family members up to double that number never see the city.

Skeletal ships, too fragile to live on, surround Bluehaven for miles. The Lintha leave any ship not worth repairing in the extensive ship graveyard to slowly rot, sink and defend the Family against intrusion. The graveyard is a treacherous labyrinth of dead vessels that only native pilots safely navigate.

A cul-de-sac in the labyrinth is the Coffin Vurjawna, home to the honored Lintha dead. Dead ships laid upon one another hold hordes of Lintha bones gazing down on visitors with malice. The sacred place is all too easy to stumble upon, and the dead take umbrage as easily as their living ancestors.



SWORD BROTHERHOOD DEFENSE

Description: Available should Bluehaven suffer attack, these swordmasters rush to defend the city, eager to prove their skills and cruelty against any foes.

Commanding Officer: A Lintha Demon-Blooded, but increase Melee to 4

Armor Color: Black and silver, but with red trim

Motto: None

General Makeup: 25 swordsmen wielding exceptional auhzian swords and wearing reinforced buff jackets

Overall Quality: Elite

Magnitude: 2

Drill: 2

Close Combat Attack: 4 **Close Combat Damage:** 3

Ranged Attack: — **Ranged Damage:** —

Endurance: 5 **Might:** 2 **Armor:** 2 **Morale:** 3

Formation: Often Close formation due to Bluehaven's narrow streets and walkways. Used to fighting in small groups, Lintha pirates are flexible in their arrangements, and will take advantage of whatever formation offers the most tactical advantage against whatever foes they fight.

Bluehaven and the Lintha Family, a Magnitude 4 Dominion

Military: 3 **Government:** 1 **Culture:** 3

Abilities: Awareness 2, Bureaucracy 2, Integrity 4 (Bloodlines +3), Investigation 2 (Defectors +3), Occult 2, Presence 3 (Cruel Expansion +3), Stealth 3 (Assassination +3), War 2

Virtues: Compassion 1, Conviction 5, Temperance 2, Valor 4

Virtue Flaw: Valor **Current Limit:** 3

Willpower: 9

Bonus Points: 20 **External Bonus Points:** 5

Notes: The Lintha have several savants and a few sorcerers (the *Lei Kiangi*, the head of the Sword Brotherhood and the head of the Cult of Dukantha). In season-long turns, they guide the Lintha. In turns that last a year or longer, Dukantha himself can act as sorcerer in the turn. The Lintha's bonus points are in their specialties, the third dot of Stealth and the fifth dot of Conviction. The Lintha external bonus points come from a treaty with An-Teng and purchase the +3 Presence specialty. In Limit Break, the Lintha's pride overtakes them, and they engage in suicidal raids against superior or unworthy foes while squandering their wealth on luxuries, mistakenly believing the former will fund the latter.





CHAPTER SIX

LOST IN THE DEPTHS

Below the surface of the Western Ocean, and at the edge of its horizon, secrets nestle in the depths of time and tide. Some recede with the passing of years, and if not recovered soon will diminish to nothing. Others build up momentum like a tsunami moving across the ocean floor. Barely perceptible now, the fury of these hidden forces will crash against the West's shores and cities in the time to come.


SUNKEN LUTHE

Savants across Creation know the tale of ancient Luthe, lost jewel of the First Age and symbol of the perfidy of the hated Anathema. An incredible product of Solar engineering, Luthe was a floating city, powered by the ocean waves themselves. Savants also know how Luthe fell, destroyed by an angry Solar Anathema as petty revenge against the righteous Dragon-Blooded,

and how Luthe's treasures and people were lost forever. In that, the savants are wrong. Luthe lives still, its ancient technology shining light onto the eternal darkness of the ocean floor. Luthe's people still live, as descendants of the ancient Luthans survive in brutish conditions solely through the largesse of a powerful and bitter patron who keeps them alive to satiate a twisted revenge.

HISTORY

The city of Luthe is so ancient that even during the Usurpation, most people had forgotten its true origins. Even the city's current name did not come into existence until centuries after its creation. In Luthe's earliest iteration, the city was called "Mobile Platform 3" or simply as "the Western Base," and far from a paradise, was an instrument of war. When the



Primordial War began in earnest, the first generation Solars concluded that they would need large mobile bases to avoid having their supply lines cut. They created five mobile platforms, one for each of the cardinal directions and each the size of a city.

Powerful high-Essence Charms fashioned the Western Base, most of which are now forgotten. A dozen Twilight craftsmen, supported by hundreds of Water Aspect Dragon-Blooded, raised the waters of the ocean up and coalesced it into physical structures. Once the island's structural shell was completed, the Solars installed the Western Base's unique Essence drivers, which converted tidal motion into energy to power the city's various functions, along with several hundred tons of equipment, weapons and both aerial and aquatic warships. Fully submersible, Mobile Platform 3 could move at up to 50 miles per hour either on top of the ocean's surface or thousands of feet below it. The vessel was protected by an array of weaponry mounted both above and below. On the surface, the Western Base served as landing pad and launch platform for Essence-driven skycraft. When necessary, the flight deck doors closed to completely seal the flying ships from harm. The platform was also capable of deploying its large fleet of small submersible ships whether surfaced or underwater.

THE FOUNDING OF LUTHE

Mobile Platform 3 served with distinction throughout the Primordial War. After the war's end, the Solars continued to use the platform as a military base for several centuries in the Western theater until further development rendered the platform obsolete. Rather than scuttle it, the Solar Deliberative decided to simply decommission the construct, converting roughly three-quarters of the military base into civilian property and reestablishing it as the regional capitol of the West and seat of power for whichever Solar would serve as regional governor of that part of Creation. With the inauguration of the first queen to rule the floating city instead of an admiral, Mobile Platform 3 was formally christened "Luthe." In the oldest dialects of Old Realm, the word meant "tranquility," a fitting name for an oceanic metropolis that could float calmly even in the midst of a hurricane.

Luthe soon became a marvel renowned across Creation. Still capable of movement, Luthe was never a stationary capitol. Rather, it traveled a regular circuit, moving from the east coast of Coral, down past the islands of the Neck and around the southern tip of Wavecrest and then out and around the great continent in the Far West forged from the Wyld by the Solar



AND THE OTHER PLATFORMS?

The early Solars fashioned five mobile platforms, one for each of the major theaters of conflict in the Primordial War. Each of the platforms was the size of a small city and was designed for maximum functionality within the spheres of its associated element. For example, the Central Platform, associated with Earth, was forged of white jade. The Eastern Platform, on the other hand, was carved from a single tree near the Elemental Pole of Earth, an immense log that was more than five miles long and nearly a mile in diameter when laid on end.

Mobile Platform 3 was unusual in that it was the only submersible platform, an essential design element in the Western theater. However, this platform was also the only one incapable of flight. Presumably, maintaining such great floating citadels was much harder than building one that merely floated, as Mobile Platform 3 was the only one that endured into the High First Age. Some savants claim that the legendary floating city of Bagrash Köl was forged from the remains of either the Northern or Eastern Platform. The former was forged of enchanted ice that could defy gravity, while the latter was a great wooden city held aloft by Essence-laden balloons. All reliable knowledge of the fate of the other four platforms seems to have been lost during the Usurpation, even to the Sidereals, although Vanileth, god of artificial flight, may still know the truth.

Exalted (and later shattered during the Usurpation), before turning north to curve back toward Coral. By order of the Deliberative, Luthe *never* ventured closer than 100 miles of Darkmist Isle.

THE REIGN OF AMYANA

Roughly four centuries before the Usurpation, an experienced Zenith Caste administrator named Amyana was appointed Queen of Luthe, the ceremonial title for the Western Regional Governor. Lucid compared to her more aggressive and unstable peers, Amyana served Luthe and the West well, her powerful (and arguably overdeveloped) sense of compassion motivating reforms improving the lives of the mortals under her authority. Amyana's eccentricities did rankle the local Dragon-Blooded, many of whom resented Amyana's generous programs to aid the mortals, subsidized by higher taxes on Terrestrial bureaucrats.



About a century after assuming the throne of Luthe, Amyana entertained courtship offers from Kendik Arkadi, the aging but powerful Eclipse Caste who served as Grand Admiral of the entire Solar fleet. Just as all Solars, Amyana and Arkadi were each mystically bonded to a Lunar mate. However, not all Solar-Lunar mating arrangements resulted in stable marital relationships. Amyana's mate at the time was a male Lunar named Red Coral Manta, and while they were devoted to one another, the two agreed early on that they had no sexual chemistry. Arkadi, on the other hand, had been happily married for nearly 900 years to the same Lunar until her death in combat against the Fair Folk at the Western frontier. Arkadi's mate reincarnated as a male in the form of a young sailor named Leviathan, and while Arkadi happily served as the boy's mentor and benefactor, the Grand Admiral was staunchly heterosexual.

And so it came to pass that Kendik Arkadi and Queen Amyana were married after a somewhat lengthy courtship. The relationship was largely one of convenience—they were the only two unattached Solars in the entire West, and their respective duties already overlapped. By all accounts, the marriage was a happy one. But even happy marriages are not immune to temptation. Over time, events caused Amyana to spend significant time in the company of Leviathan, who, within a century of Exaltation, had already risen to the rank of commodore. For once, Amyana's boundless compassion betrayed her, and she became attracted to the handsome and virile young Lunar. As for Leviathan, he was smitten with Amyana almost upon meeting her due both to her natural beauty and her free use of Presence-based Charms. The two first consummated their passionate affair on a torrid summer night while Arkadi was away on maneuvers. Amyana and Leviathan's time together was fleeting by the standards of Celestial Exalted. The Usurpation was less than a century away.

THE USURPATION

Surprisingly for an Exalt for his age and experience, Grand Admiral Arkadi never suspected that he was being cuckolded by his wife and Lunar second. Arkadi himself was never faithful to Amyana, but his dalliances were discreet and nonconsensual—he preferred raping Dragon-Blooded female officers and then forcing them into silence through the power of the Eclipse Caste oath. Arkadi never suspected any hint of disloyalty from Leviathan, and through his mentor's aid and tutelage, the Lunar rose to the rank of admiral within a few centuries. By the time of the Usurpation, Leviathan was the highest-ranking non-Solar officer

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in the entire fleet. None of the three Exalted attended the fateful Calibration festival that served as cover for the first strike of the Usurpation.

Grand Admiral Arkadi was caught aboard his flagship, *Inevitable Victory of the Noonday Sun*, betrayed by his Sidereal chief savant Quick-Swimming Messenger and the entirety of the Dragon-Blooded crew. Only the intervention of his second-in-command, Rokaya Many-Teeth, allowed Arkadi to make it to the deck, where he was torn asunder by an Essence cannon, his body parts flung overboard by the force of the blow.

Admiral Leviathan was aboard the light warship named *Setting Sun Glorious* when the attack began. He received simultaneous calls for help from Arkadi and Amyana, and after a moment's hesitation, chose to answer Amyana's summons, leaving Arkadi to his doom. Fighting his way past the Dragon-Blooded assassins (luckily, the *Setting Sun Glorious* had no Sidereal personnel), Leviathan made it on deck and jumped overboard. Moments later, the betrayers learned just how deadly a Lunar could be when Leviathan assumed his great Behemoth Orca form and capsized the warship with a single strike. He paused just long enough to swallow most of the Water-aspected survivors whole before setting out for Luthe, leaving the rest of the Dragon-Blooded to a watery grave.

Finally, Amyana was attacked in her bedchambers by silent Air Aspect assassins led by a Chosen of Endings. Although principally a diplomat and administrator, Amyana was still an elder Solar, one of the oldest and most powerful beings in Creation, and the traitors sought to strike quickly and quietly before she could bring her full power to bear. They failed. The soft creak of a single loose floorboard awoke Queen Amyana, and a single breath of Essence brought her full defenses to bear. Moreover, her potent Charms didn't just reveal the nature of her own attackers; her Charms allowed her to intuit the entire Usurpation motivating the attackers. By the time the last attacker's head was severed from his body, Amyana instinctively knew that the Dragon-Blooded and Sidereals had betrayed the entire Deliberative and that most of her allies had already fallen. She resolved that the betrayers would never see the fruits of her victory if she could help it.

And so, after sending a quick message to both husband and lover, Amyana fought her way to Luthe's command deck. Overriding normal protocols, she directed the city to submerge while the flight deck was still open to the air. Sea water rushed in, flooding first the flight deck and then most of the lower levels of the city. Emergency systems kicked in, automatically sealing interior doors to stop the whole city from flooding, but


thousands were killed instantly, and tens of thousands more were trapped in airtight apartments with limited food and tons of water just outside the door. Amyana also destroyed the control systems that operated the submersible access ports, trapping the city's submersible fleet inside. Finally, she programmed the city's navigation systems to send Luthe to the bottom of a deep sea trench southwest of Abalone, one too deep for all but the most powerful of Water Aspects to reach but not too deep for Leviathan in his whale form. Having done all she could to protect Luthe's resources from her betrayers, Amyana barricaded herself in the command center, hoping to hold out until Leviathan's arrival.

She nearly made it. Amyana managed to hold off scores of Dragon-Blooded soldiers and two Sidereal-summoned Second Circle demons for days before they broke through. Leviathan swam into the now-sunken metropolis to find his mortally wounded lover surrounded by the corpses of her enemies. The proud young Lunar cradled his Solar queen as she died in his arms. Then, Leviathan went to war. Armed with his great trident, Islebreaker, he stalked the ruins of Luthe, slaying every Dragon-Blooded he could find. The mortals he left alone save for those foolish enough to challenge him.

Then, his rage sated, Leviathan accessed the Deliberative's communications network and sent a coded message to every warship in his fleet. The coded order went out to every animating intelligence, directing the spirits to activate their self-destruct protocols. Some ships carried savant-engineers skilled enough to deactivate the protocols, but the majority of the Western Fleet exploded in a brilliant shower of Essence within moments of receiving Leviathan's message. Having done all that he could to avenge his lover and mate, Leviathan left his great trident on Amyana's empty throne and carried the dead queen out into the ocean, where he constructed a simple tomb for her before heading off into the Wyld with his Lunar kin.

THE LOST CITY

Though battered and sunken, Luthe was not destroyed. Despite the massive internal damage the city suffered, its special Essence batteries were intact, and they continued to absorb power from the ocean currents to fuel the city's remaining systems. The city also came to rest on the ocean floor near a natural undersea demesne that helped to replenish the city's Essence batteries. There were survivors as well. Out of an original population of nearly a million, about 4,000 survived. Mortals all, the survivors were trapped in the sunken city, unable to endure the great water pressure outside



the walls, to pilot the few Essence-powered craft that were not destroyed by the deluge or even to contact anyone on the surface to plead for aid.

As terrible as things were for these survivors, they could have been much worse. The city was designed to remain underwater indefinitely, and the Essence-powered air scrubbers continued to function perfectly. Likewise, while Luthe had always relied primarily on food goods purchased from elsewhere to feed the city's great populace, the few survivors could easily survive on the small hydroponic gardens in the bowels of the city. Also, by happy coincidence, Luthe was home to a Solar-sponsored research project designed to improve the efficiency of farm-raising fish to reduce the need for large fishing fleets, and the project's fully automated fisheries were undamaged during the Usurpation. While roughly two-thirds of Luthe was completely underwater, the rest of the city was watertight and more than large enough to provide ample room for the surviving Luthans.

Over the course of the next 700 years, the Luthans developed an insular and parochial society. Those who survived the city's descent never fully understood why it happened, but the enraged Leviathan's massacre of the city's Dragon-Blooded led many to believe that the cataclysm was the fault of the Terrestrial Exalted, a punishment for their betrayal of the beloved Queen Amyana. Over time, these vague beliefs hardened into religious dogma. Those survivors who were descended from the families of Dragon-Blooded were treated as second-class citizens—the Traitorspawn—and, in a mirror reflection of the Shogunate, Luthans reviled Terrestrial Exalted as traitors to the Solar Deliberative and enemies of all that was decent.

Things became even worse for the Traitorspawn about 200 years after the Usurpation, when a young Traitorspawn of noble ancestry Exalted as a Fire Aspect shortly after his 15th birthday. More than a dozen Luthans died in the fiery blaze that accompanied the Exaltation, and the child and his parents were all torn apart by a frenzied mob fueled by religious mania. After that, Traitorspawn were tattooed with a special mark after birth, segregated and carefully monitored. When a new Traitorspawn child was born, she was taken from her parents and raised in a child labor camp until reaching the age of 19. After that age, Terrestrial Exaltation was unlikely, and the young adult was returned from the camps. In the centuries since, 17 Traitorspawn have Exalted as Dragon-Blooded. With one exception, each of the new Exalted was quickly executed along with her entire family.

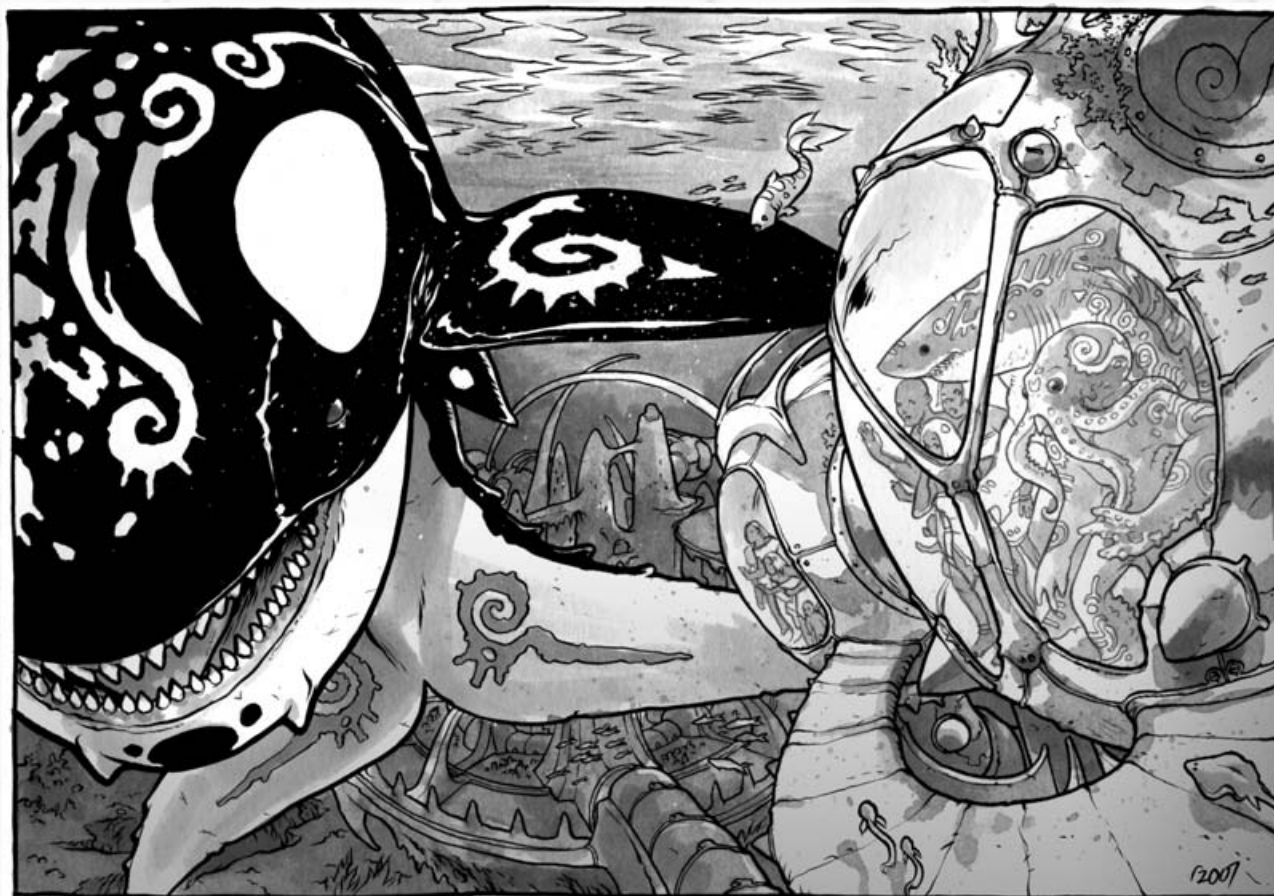
THE RETURN OF LEVIATHAN

By the time of the Contagion, Luthe had a population of about 9,000 citizens with an additional 700 Traitorspawn living in squalid conditions on the barren ruins of the once luxurious Dragon-Blooded neighborhoods. The Contagion never came to Luthe, but in the aftermath, someone else did. Leviathan returned from his self-imposed exile, accompanied by a two younger Lunars. Curious to see what remained of the ancient city, Leviathan was astonished that a mortal society had survived so far beneath the waves and delighted to learn that its people loathed the Dragon-Blooded as thoroughly as he did. Leviathan never personally visited the city, deciding that his cetacean form would be far more impressive than any mortal form he could take. Instead, he sent his Lunar subordinates, Swims in Shadow and the Sage of the Depths, to make contact with the Luthan people.

After centuries of isolation, the Luthans knew the Lunar Exalted only from myth and legend. Through a combination of Charisma-based Charms and brute force, the two visitors persuaded the Luthan people of the Lunars' identity and status as demigods. The bloodless conquest of Luthe culminated in Leviathan swimming close enough to the city to be clearly seen from its windows and domes. The sight of the Great Whale God, a legendary religious icon in the eyes of the Luthans, obliterated any possibility of resistance.

Leviathan and his fellow Lunars left, only to return one year later, now accompanied by a small tribe of pelagotheropes and an equal number of sharkmen and octopus men. Collectively, these immigrants were known as “the Scions of Leviathan,” although none were his descendants but rather those of his two apprentices. Leviathan established these Scions, whom he had been selectively breeding for centuries, as “advisors” to the ruling caste of Luthan society. Over the course of the next several decades, the Scions eventually became the ruling caste through dint of superior power as well as aggressive breeding programs. While beastmen in other parts of Creation increased their numbers through rape, such brutal tactics were unnecessary in Luthe—the mortal leaders of Luthan society viewed the Scions of Leviathan as demigods, and most willingly offered themselves in marriage to the pelagotheropes and beastmen. Only the Traitorspawn were forbidden to breed with the Scions. Of course, the Scions themselves were not immortal, and over the centuries, they became completely intermarried with the mortal Luthans.

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In the modern era, there are essentially two peoples in Luthé: Scionborn, who are descended from the original Scions of Leviathan and who are subdivided into the two beastmen lines and the pelagothrope mutants, and Traitorspawn, who are descended from ancient Dragon-Blooded. Today, there are approximately 12,000 Scionborn and 2,000 Traitorspawn in the city. The increased population has presented little difficulty to the Scionborn, as nearly all of them have some form of inherited aquatic mutations and have expanded out into the rest of the city. The Traitorspawn have no such capabilities and remain trapped in their traditional filthy communes in near-starvation conditions. Their suffering is not the result of neglect but deliberate malice—Leviathan is convinced that the Dragon-Blooded who murdered Amyana continue to reincarnate among their own descendants, and by tormenting the Traitorspawn, he inflicts misery among the slayers of his lover. That Leviathan has no rational basis for this belief does not deter him or his followers in any way.

This is what has become of once-shining Luthé—now a citadel for mortals who trade their humanity to become more like their oceanic gods and a death camp for others whose only crime was to be descended from the “winners” of a war fought centuries before.

THE GREAT CONTAGION

As noted previously, the Great Contagion never made its way to sunken Luthé. How this fact affects its citizens is a matter of Storyteller discretion. The Scions of Leviathan and their descendants most likely have immunity to the Contagion by virtue of being descended from its survivors. On the other hand, all modern Scionborn are the result of interbreeding between ancient Luthans and Scion immigrants, and this immunity may have been inadvertently bred out of the populace. Regardless, the Traitorspawn have no natural immunity to the Great Contagion, and if their hopes ever came to pass and they were delivered en masse to the surface, they might quickly succumb to history's greatest plague. Or not. It's just as likely that the Great Contagion burned itself out centuries ago, and even those without immunity are safe from its curse.



SOCIETY

Just as many societies that develop under the aegis of a Lunar Exalt, Luthé is governed according to its patron's philosophies. In Luthé's case, however, the society is warped by an overweening and compulsive hatred for a segment of its own population, a hatred driven almost entirely by a 1,500-year-old vendetta.

SOCIETAL DIVISIONS

Breeding plays an essential role in Luthan society. While there is some social mobility in Luthan society, some class boundaries are impenetrable, most importantly the divide that separates the Traitorspawn from the Scionborn. That is not the only division, however, as the Scionborn themselves are a divided society. At the top are those who trace their lineage directly back to the two original ancient beastmen races, the shark folk and octopus folk who followed Leviathan back to Luthé and thus are descended directly from Lunar Exalted. These two distinct lines take their names from the Lunars who sired their ancestors: the shark folk are referred to as Shadow Swimmers while the octopus folk are called Deep Sages. Despite their shared connection through Exaltation, the two breeds are separated by cultural tradition—Shadow Swimmers are warriors, first and foremost, while the more intellectual Deep Sages tend to be priests and savants. There is a strong social taboo against sexual congress between Shadow Swimmers and Deep Sages.

Directly below the beastmen are the pelagotheropes, who make up the bulk of the Luthan population. Pelagotheropes are permitted to breed freely with either Shadow Swimmers or Deep Sages. This is not in spite of the pelagotheropes' inferior lineage but because of it—when a pelagotherope breeds with a beastman, the offspring always takes after the beastman parent, while the offspring of two beastmen of different lineages either develops a freakish combination of mutations or, worse, appears superficially human and free of both shark and octopus mutations.

Within Luthan society, Deep Sages and Shadow Swimmers share power, albeit somewhat uneasily. The militant and warlike Shadow Swimmers hold supreme authority over all military and law enforcement matters, while the Deep Sages see to the maintenance of Luthé's infrastructure and the religious rites of Leviathan's cult.

DEEP SAGES

Deep Sages are thin humanoids who stand between five and six feet tall. A Deep Sage's skin invariably

glistens as if still wet, and his skin changes color and pattern according to the Sage's will. All Deep Sages are hairless. The most distinctive characteristic of a Deep Sage is his head—a slight dome-shape with two large, softly glowing green eyes, nostrils but no nose, and a cluster of eight small tentacles between six and 24 inches in length arranged around the mouth. Sages typically eat with their tentacles, picking up food with them and placing it directly in their mouths. The tentacles are also potent weapons, however: a Deep Sage can release a neurotoxin through his tentacles in the same manner as a poisonous jellyfish.

A Deep Sage has arms and legs just as a normal human, but her hands and feet are webbed and end in wicked retractable claws. A few Deep Sages (mainly those who come from strong bloodlines that have not intermarried significantly with pelagotheropes) have additional mutations. Poison claws are most common, but most well-bred Deep Sages have large retractable tentacles that grow out of their backs. These tentacles can reach a distance of up to five yards and usually inflict poison damage. Large tentacles are also very strong and can be used for lifting or attacking. All Deep Sages have gill slits both on their necks and over their ribs. These gill slits are fully capable of metabolizing both air and water, and Deep Sages are fully amphibious.

Deep Sages are intelligent and cunning. Despite their appearance, which most mortals in Creation would consider hideous, Deep Sages move with a sinuous grace. In fact, Luthan social customs consider their octopod characteristics sensuous and alluring. The voice of a Deep Sage is sibilant and at times gurgling. Most Deep Sages are fluent in Old Realm and in the debased Old Realm patois spoken by the pelagotheropes and Traitorspawn. Deep Sages are also capable of communicating with each other via a unique language of shifting changes in skin coloration.

Names among Deep Sages tend to be flowing and sibilant, and often lacking in vowels. Some Deep Sages have names that are nearly unpronounceable, and many Shadow Swimmers suspect the Deep Sages adopt such impossible names solely to tweak those they consider intellectually inferior. Since Deep Sages communicate among themselves through their color-based skin language, they never mispronounce or even use each other's names. Currently, the most prominent Deep Sages include Hrsh'duljha, the High Priest of the Cult of Leviathan; Shk'ktlithu, who oversees Luthé's hydroponic gardens; Throth-Shulgu, the chief savant in charge of research into First Age artifacts; and Kltja-S'bto, the Weapons Master for the Luthan Militia.

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SHADOW SWIMMERS

Descended from the powerful Lunar Swims in Shadows, Shadow Swimmers are muscular humanoids typically standing between eight and nine feet tall. The average Shadow Swimmer has bluish-gray skin, and, similar to Deep Sages, hands and feet with retractable claws. However, the feet of a Shadow Swimmer are much larger than those of a Deep Dweller or a mortal and resemble fins. As a result, the Shadow Swimmer is slightly clumsy on land but a superlative swimmer.

By far the most distinctive feature of a Shadow Swimmer is his head, which appears to be that of a large shark grafted on to an oversized humanoid body. Despite the shark-like nature of the Shadow Swimmer's head, he still has a humanoid skull and skeleton, albeit one that differs notably from that of a mortal. Accordingly, a Shadow Swimmer can turn his head with the same mobility of a mortal, and the shape of his head allows for normal human vision. Shadow Swimmers can intuitively sense the Essence patterns of living beings. They use this special "shark sense" to zero in on living targets otherwise invisible in the ocean depths.

All Shadow Swimmers are fully amphibious, with gill slits on their heads and their sides. Shadow Swimmers typically speak the adapted version of Old Realm spoken by pelagotherpes, although with some difficulty. While not intrinsically stupid, Shadow Swimmers have some difficulty enunciating complex words and so tend to use a truncated vocabulary. Among themselves, they have a unique form of communication employing their ability to sense the Essence patterns of living beings—a Shadow Swimmer can subtly modulate his own internal Essence just enough to send out messages that only the well-developed senses of another Shadow Swimmer can perceive. Absent Charms or other special powers, an observer might never even notice that two Shadow Swimmers were conversing, let alone interpret their remarks.

Shadow Swimmer names tend to be monosyllabic and guttural, in keeping with the breed's traditional brevity. Prominent Shadow Swimmers include Grokr, commander of the Luthan military; Skarg, commandant of the civil police; and Kurgo, the city's chief judge and executioner.

PELAGOTHERPES

Pelagotherpes make up the bulk of Luthan society. Descendants of the Wyld mutants introduced into the city by Leviathan himself, pelagotherpes generally appear at least superficially human. Except for gills and exceptional vision, which all pelagotherpes possess, most of


their breed are indistinguishable from Western mortals, albeit very pale ones. Most but not all pelagotherpes, however—some pelagotherpes who've descended from the original mutants with only minimal mortal interbreeding have additional mutations, such as tentacles, shark teeth, webbed hands or feet or even stranger features. Luthans have mixed views about the more heavily mutated pelagotherpes. They are closer to Leviathan and thus superior to more human-seeming pelagotherpes (and of course, the completely human Traitorspawn). On the other hand, the mutations are the result of uncontrolled Wyld exposure rather than deliberate breeding by a Lunar Exalt. Accordingly, it is forbidden for a pelagotherpe who has an exceptional number of mutations to breed with beastmen, lest the pelagotherpe's Wyld mutations taint the purity of the beastman lines.

Pelagotherpes speak a debased form of Old Realm, which a visitor to the city who knows the original tongue can master with some difficulty. If an Old Realm-speaking visitor succeeds on a roll of (Intelligence + Linguistics) at difficulty 3 (one attempt per day), she can pierce the strange accent and decipher centuries of linguistic corruption enough to communicate with locals. However, even a visitor who speaks Old Realm and succeeds at this roll suffers a -1 external penalty to all verbal social rolls while interacting with Luthans unless she actually learns the local language (i.e., her player buys it as a Linguistics specialty).

Pelagotherpe names are largely the same as commoner names throughout the Realm, most commonly "adjective-noun" combinations. However, sea-based names are, understandably, much more common in Luthe than in most of Creation. Prominent pelagotherpes include Sagacious Manta, who advises Judge Kurgo on legal issues in criminal cases; Blue Anemone, who operates the most successful tavern in the city with the aid of her homemade distillery; and Hunter of the Bountiful Sea, one of many pelagotherpes who regularly leave the city for fishing or hunting.

TRAITORSPAWN

Traitorspawn are indistinguishable from Western mortals. While the various families among the Traitorspawn can trace their lineages back to noble Dragon-Blooded houses of the First Age, such breeding is not a source of public pride in Luthe . . . but late at night, when the pelagotherpe and beastmen overseers have gone home, the descendants of the ancient Dragon-Blooded gather in their hovels to share stories of the ancient days and to whisper their hopes that, some day, the Dragon-Blooded will return to free their



descendents from their bondage and carry them up to see the sky once more.

In a tradition beginning centuries ago, Traitorspawn are marked at birth. A small tattoo on each Traitorspawn's forehead depicts the Old Realm character for "treachery." This tradition continues today even though it is completely redundant—the rest of Luthé's mortal population is so heavily intermarried with pelagotheropes and beastmen that Traitorspawn are instantly recognizable simply by their lack of gills. Because Traitorspawn cannot survive underwater, they also have no way of reaching the city's hydroponic gardens, which are heavily guarded and separated from the Traitorspawn by several inundated sections of city. Accordingly, Traitorspawn are completely dependent on their social betters for food and potable water, neither of which they receive in quantities large enough to stave off malnutrition and sickness.

Despite suffering, the Traitorspawn remain the heirs to Princes of the Earth. Today, the Traitorspawn are beaten and enslaved, but not yet broken. In the gloom of their ghettos, they still trade the old stories and still recite their ancient lineages. They still keep hold to their ancient family names and recall ancestors of legend. And, most importantly of all, the Traitorspawn still stand together. For the Traitorspawn have a secret. Four years ago, a Traitorspawn child Exalted as a Water Aspect Dragon-Blood but through luck and quick thinking was able to conceal his Exaltation from his overseers. Eventually, he came of age and was returned to his family. Every night, the young Water Dragon secretly practices his Charms and Abilities, waiting for the right opportunity to lead his people out of captivity, all the while knowing that one wrong move will mean not only his death but those of all his loved ones as well.

Traitorspawn still retain their ancient family names and use the traditional "alternating vowel and consonant" naming convention familiar to modern Dynasts. As with Dynasts and gentes, the family name comes first. Prominent Traitorspawn include Gavrane Iraka, head of the Gavrane family and descendent of the Dragon-Blood who struck the killing blow against Queen Amyana; Horukami Edivo, matriarch of the Horukami line and secret teacher of Dragon-Blooded lore; and Gavrane Tomazri, nephew of Iraka and secretly the first Traitorspawn to Exalt in centuries.

Cirese Ujeni is a young Traitorspawn who was elevated to the position of trustee over her fellows after she reported her own parents for sedition against the

ruling classes, leading to her parents' bloody executions. Ujeni has been ruthless in her suppression of dissent among the Traitorspawn and is widely hated. In reality, Ujeni has known about Tomazri almost since his Exaltation, and she betrayed her parents in order to distract attention away from him. Since then, she has used her position to target Traitorspawn who might be tempted to betray Tomazri should they learn of his existence. The possibility that she might be the first to die at Tomazri's hands if he ever started an open revolt has occurred to her as a grim and ironic necessity.

CULTURE

Centuries of isolation followed by centuries of social manipulation by an ancient Lunar elder have created a strange and unique culture within sunken Luthé. The city is ruled by small, caste-like populations of beastmen (and far more intelligent and erudite beastmen than are typically found in Creation) who maintain power by exploiting the majority population's hatred of a despised minority.

GOVERNMENT

Political power in Luthé remains with the Council of Scions, a governing body of three Deep Sages, three Shadow Swimmers and three pelagotheropes. The council's composition ostensibly reflects an equitable division of authority between the priests' caste (the Deep Sages), the warrior caste (Shadow Swimmers) and the workers (everyone else). Naturally, Traitorspawn have no representation on the Council of Scions, or any other form of political power. In practice, the workers and warriors don't have much power, either. The three Deep Sage councilors regularly commune with their Lunar progenitor, Sage of the Depths, who has been assigned to monitor Luthé by Leviathan himself. Consequently, the Deep Sages have the authority to speak for the Great Whale God, and when they do so, few have the courage to defy the Deep Sages' pronouncements. The Deep Sages have not abused this authority *too* much, but they have not been shy about threatening to do so. The three pelagotherope councilors are utterly in awe of the priests and almost invariably vote with them on every important matter, much to the chagrin of the shark folk.

Below the Council of Scions are the four main occupational divisions of Luthan society: the Cult of Leviathan (which consists primarily of Deep Sages), the military (which consists mainly of Shadow Swimmers), the Traitorspawn (who are essentially a slave class) and everyone else.

Exalted

THE CULT OF LEVIATHAN

In a very real sense, Luthans venerate Leviathan in the same way that Dragon-Blooded venerate the Elemental Dragons and the Solars worship the Unconquered Sun. Luthan mythology identifies Leviathan as the Great Whale God, the god of the ocean itself who came to avenge the murder of the sun goddess Amyana. The Luthans have never heard of the Ocean Father or any other Western god, and for various reasons (most often the might of Leviathan himself), no god has ever sought to control or even communicate with the people of Luthe. As an open secret, the Traitorspawn continue to worship the Elemental Dragons. The Cult of Leviathan unofficially permits this heresy in order to further cement the idea that Traitorspawn are spiritually damned.

The rites associated with the Cult of Leviathan tend toward the barbaric. Aside from the six daily prayers, the Cult engages in human sacrifice on holy days several times a year, on dates commemorating the murder of Amyana, the return of Leviathan and other important events in Luthan history. Sacrifice victims are chosen from criminals convicted of capitol offenses,

or, if no such criminals are available, randomly chosen Traitorspawn. The victim is tortured for several hours and then slowly lowered into a ceremonial pool of needlefish (see p. 158).

The vast majority of the active priesthood are Deep Sages, although some of the lesser acolytes are pelagothropes. Traitorspawn are excluded from religious activity. Shadow Swimmers, on the other hand, are generally too violent to consider religious careers, although a tiny handful do serve as temple guardians. Judge Kurgo and his retinue are technically considered religious figures when acting in their capacity as executioners, since all state-sponsored executions are carried out as part of religious ceremonies.

Although Leviathan is the only god worshiped by Luthe as a whole, he is not the only god worshiped in Luthe. A carefully guarded secret within the Cult of Leviathan is the worship of the Sage of the Depths. Over the centuries, the Lunar has become jealous of the Essence reaped by Leviathan from his mortal worshipers, and he quietly directed his beastmen progeny to begin worshiping him as well.



In addition to its religious role, the Cult of Leviathan is the de facto legislative body in Luthe, with the priests passing laws that they claim were handed down by Leviathan himself. Technically, these laws must be ratified by the Council of Scions, but no law has ever been rejected by that body since its founding. Finally, the Cult of Leviathan governs all use of First Age technology by the people of Luthe. While Luthe contains perhaps the largest collection of intact First Age artifacts still in use in Creation, actual knowledge of how these devices work is strictly limited. Centuries of Cult dogma have ingrained in most Luthans the conviction that technology only works because Leviathan wills it, and major technological breakdowns are often accompanied by inquisitorial raids by Cult leaders to round up the “heretics” whose disbelief impairs the city’s proper functioning. (See “Technology” on p. 119 for more information.)

THE MILITIA

Shadow Swimmers aren’t stupid. The typical sharkman has the intelligence of a typical mortal. The problem for Shadow Swimmers is simply that they’re too *driven*. Even after centuries of controlled breeding, Shadow Swimmers remain in the thrall of their innate shark nature. They must remain on the move. They must hunt. They must survive. Since the overwhelming majority of the Luthan military are Shadow Swimmers, understanding their nature is essential to understanding how Luthe organizes its defense.

The Luthan Militia combines civil law enforcement with civil defense, with all inductees spending part of their time enforcing the city’s laws and part patrolling outside the city’s dome for potential threats. Arguably, civil law enforcement should be more important than civil defense since Luthe has never faced any hint of attack from outside, but Shadow Swimmers don’t accept that. Just because no one has ever invaded before doesn’t mean that someone won’t try it tomorrow. A disproportionate amount of Luthe’s military expenditures are spent in preparation for hypothetical invaders that may never come.

The highest level of authority for the Militia is the Council on War. This body consists of four high-ranking officers, three of whom are invariably Shadow Swimmers and also the Militia representatives to the Council of Scions: the Warlord, the Captain and the Judge. The fourth position, Weapons Master, may be held by a member of any of the three breeds of Luthans.

The Warlord directs the actions of squads sent out regularly to patrol Luthe’s surroundings. He also plans


regular war games in preparation for a possible attack by an invading force, and barring exceptional circumstances, he will command the Militia in the event of an actual invasion. The current Warlord is Grokr, an aging Shadow Swimmer flirting with senility. He remains convinced that he will see an invasion force within his lifetime and hopes for a glorious death in battle.

The Captain (short for Captain of the Guard) oversees the Militia when it acts in its capacity as law enforcement by assigning patrols, appointing investigators and operating Luthe’s small jail facilities. Officially, the Captain’s position is grossly inferior not only to that of the Warlord but to many of the Warlord’s underlings, and many Shadow Swimmers look down on the Captain’s position. Unofficially, the actual power of the Captain as the final authority on law enforcement gives him far more influence among the Luthan citizenry than the largely ceremonial Warlord. Skarg, the current Captain, is well aware of the value of his office and uses his power ruthlessly, even as he maintains the appearance of complete deference to Warlord Grokr.

The Judge bridges the gap between the military and the religious order. All criminals in Luthe arrested by the Militia are eventually brought to the Judge for questioning, adjudication and, in the event of a guilty verdict, sentencing. There are no juries in Luthe and no defense or even prosecuting attorneys. Every aspect of the “trial” is governed by the Judge, who by law must be a Shadow Swimmer, despite the self-evident fact that Shadow Swimmers are the breed least suited for a job that requires wisdom and impartiality. This legal requirement is as ironic as it is ancient. Centuries ago, an idle remark by Sage of the Depths stating that “shark folk make the best executioners because they take such joy in their work” was misinterpreted by the awestruck Deep Sage priests to whom he’d been speaking, and the Sages promptly established it as a law of the city. Since then, the Shadow Swimmers have jealously protected their authority over Luthe’s judiciary, and the Sage of the Depths has learned to be more cautious when speaking to minions enthralled by his powerful Charms.

When criminals receive the death penalty, the Judge also carries out the executions, which are timed to coincide with the city’s religious holidays and ritual sacrifices. The current Judge is Kurgo, a sociopath who seizes almost any opportunity to sentence a defendant to slow death by sacrifice, primarily because he has an erotic fixation on the sight of churning, bloody water.

The Weapons Master is responsible for maintaining the state of Luthe’s First Age weaponry. Although traditionally held by a Shadow Swimmer, this position



is technically religious, and while not a priest of Leviathan, the Weapons Master must report regularly to the Cult as to the readiness of Luthe's armaments. As with every other piece of First Age technology, Luthe's weaponry is considered to be a gift from Leviathan, and maintaining the arsenal's readiness requires knowledge of the proper rituals as much as military experience. The current Weapons Master is a Deep Sage named Kltja-S'bto, who uses his position to spy on the activities of the other War Council members for the benefit of the Cult of Leviathan.

HOW MANY?

In times of peace, the Militia uses about 2,000 citizens, covering as it does civil defense, slave management and law enforcement. Fifteen hundred are Shadow Swimmers, and the rest divide equally between Deep Sages and pelagotheropes. Most Militia members are seasoned troops. Even without experience fighting actual invasions, they engage in extensive training operations and war games, hunt dangerous pelagic fauna and put down Traitorspawn riots.

Should the city face a real invasion with time to prepare, Grokr could swell the Militia to 6,000, calling back retired soldiers and conscripting from the citizen populace over the course of weeks. The expanded Militia would be an equal mixture of green and seasoned troops. Should an expanded Militia repel an invasion, the cultural impact of pelagotheropes in such numbers serving with distinction alongside Shadow Swimmers and Deep Sages would be considerable.

THE CITY COUNCIL

The City Council is an elected body of 13 Luthan citizens—one from each of 12 wards within the city, plus one at-large position. The City Council has little real power of its own. Instead, the City Council presents proposals to the Council of Scions regarding matters of civic concern: taxation, city planning, proposed new laws, etc. The Council of Scions has absolute authority to approve or deny any of the City Council's proposals or to amend them in any way the councilors desire. Accordingly, such proposals tend to come in two varieties—those that are utterly non-controversial and those that have the full backing of the Cult of Leviathan.

Despite (or perhaps, because of) City Council's lack of real power, the Luthan City Council is arguably one of


the most democratic bodies in Creation. The City Council undertakes a census every 10 years and draws up wards according to demographics and population migration. The new wards are then submitted to a quasi-sentient First Age computational device that draws up the precise ward boundaries so that none of the three Luthan breeds is disadvantaged politically. Elections are held every two years for all positions. The at-large councilor also holds the position of Chief Councilor and sets the agenda for the council. All adult Luthans other than Traitorspawn have an equal vote for both ward council and at-large councilor, and by law, every able-bodied adult is required to vote in general elections.

LIFE UNDER THE SEA

For the majority of Luthans, life consists largely of work and recreation not unlike that of villagers found throughout Creation. Food production is officially regulated by the Cult of Leviathan, with about 20% of the pelagotherope population (along with negligible numbers of Deep Dwellers and Shadow Swimmers) maintaining and operating the hydroponics gardens and the First Age automated fisheries. While these farmers are not considered members of the clergy, their activities are governed by the Cult, ensuring that every Luthan receives a regular ration of fresh fish, fruits and vegetables. These rations are quite generous compared to many towns in Creation, but that's not enough to eliminate the desire for black market goods, and a significant number of Luthan farmers smuggle extra food out with them to trade with other citizens.

Economically, Luthe is primarily a barter society. Private Luthan citizens are expected to provide a certain amount of free goods and services to Militia soldiers, hydroponic farmers, fishery operators and priests. Beyond that, citizens trade goods and services with one another informally. For example, a healer may establish a relationship with a local tailor whereby the former provides free medical care for the latter's family in exchange for free clothing for himself and his own family. All citizens are entitled to three square meals a day of nourishing (if repetitive) food drawn from the gardens and the fisheries.

Luthe has a thriving black market for extra food rations, as well as spices, liquor, other rare luxury goods and sexual services. The Council of Scions is well aware of the black market's existence but considers it a safety valve against public discontent. As long as luxury goods are available illegally, the people as a whole will not raise up to demand them from the Council. Besides, those who abuse the system draw the attention of the



Militia, thereby providing the city with extra sacrifices on holy days and alleviating the population drain on the Traitorspawn slaves.

Beyond the occupations directly or indirectly controlled by the city government, Luthans fulfill most of the societal roles found in small cities on the surface world. Luthan society requires tailors, physicians and apothecaries, craftsmen and carpenters, artists and performers. Citizens are generally expected to maintain their own dwellings, most of which are of First Age construction and rarely suffer serious damage anyway. When construction or renovation of public buildings is required, the City Council contracts with one or more of the city's craftsmen, arranging for additional food rations in exchange for work.

Traitorspawn are treated as slaves by the Luthan government, but as a practical matter, most Traitorspawn remain confined to their lowly hovels, forbidden to move about the city. When the City Council begins some large-scale building project, however, a detachment of able-bodied Traitorspawn are removed from their families, chained together and put to work until the job is down. Traitorspawn can also be found walking the streets, picking up trash and sweeping streets late at night under the watchful eye of Shadow Swimmer guards. Traitorspawn also perform any number of other jobs—unblocking sewage systems, gutting fish and performing other unwholesome tasks deemed necessary but unfit for decent citizens.

FAMILY

Family planning is important in Luthe. Aside from the social taboos against unregulated breeding between the city's four main ethnic groups, married couples must also consider the impact of having too many children. Currently, Luthe's automated food production systems provide more than enough food and fresh water to maintain the health of the citizenry. If Luthan population grows too fast, however, it may outstrip the city's capacity to sustain itself. Of course, the city has barely tapped the potential of the seas outside its walls to provide food, but most Luthans see the fisheries and the hydroponic fruits and vegetables as gifts from Leviathan and are loathe to spurn them.

The city's limits on procreation are currently informal. Pelagothrope couples are strongly discouraged from having more than two children. Married couples consisting of two beastmen or a beastman and a pelagothrope are exempt from this taboo, largely because beastman births tend to be difficult and it's in the city's interests to increase its beastman population. Traitor-

spawn birthrates are not closely regulated. Instead, the city keeps their numbers low by culling adults for sacrifices whenever their population grows unacceptably high (typically, more than about one Traitorspawn per five Scionborn). The bush used in the production of maiden tea is one of the many medicinal plants grown in the hydroponic gardens.

Among the Scionborn, children usually apprentice at an early age to either one of their parents or to a relative or friend of the family if one presents better job prospects than the child's parents. Apprenticeships last until the apprentice can realistically try to move out on her own and make a living outside the master's oversight. In some highly competitive occupations, that day never comes, and the apprentice works for her master until he dies and she simply takes over his shop. By Luthan law, apprentices equally divide all of their master's occupational possessions when he dies. Thus, it is unusual for a skilled worker to take an apprentice outside his family, and equally unusual for either spouse not to work (since a simple housewife inherits none of her husband's work tools if he dies while mastering an apprentice). Husbands and wives commonly work in the same profession, maintaining joint control over family businesses and joint authority over apprentices.

Divorce is illegal in Luthe, and adultery is a serious crime. Both the husband and the wife have the right to seek the death penalty against a philandering spouse.

TECHNOLOGY

Despite the passing of centuries, Luthe still possesses a massive supply of functional First Age artifacts. Even the city itself is an artifact. The city's entire infrastructure consists of an adamant-like blue material formed from water solidified into the hardness of iron while retaining its normal density. Without the city's inbuilt ballast systems, Luthe's natural buoyancy would cause it to spring up to the surface even today.

COMMON ARTIFACTS

The entire city is lit by Essence lamps, and every dwelling has fully functional plumbing and water systems, as well as environmental control mechanisms that keep the occupants comfortable even on the cold ocean floor. The city's internal communications network still functions, allowing individuals across the length and breadth of the city to communicate freely, as well as permitting the Cult of Leviathan to spy freely on the Luthan people. Even most of the furniture, clothing and household utensils used by the Luthans are made of either incredibly durable materials or of self-repairing design.





THE MILITIA

The Luthan Militia in particular takes great advantage of Luthe's First Age resources. The Militia has access to more than 5,000 shock pikes, along with 39 light implosion bows and four portable lightning ballistae (see **Wonders of the Lost Age**, pp. 76, 130 and 132). Militia soldiers do not have access to armor made of magical materials. Instead, they typically wear perfect reinforced buff jackets enchanted millennia earlier by use of the Ritual of Elemental Empowerment (soak of +7L/+10B, no mobility penalty or fatigue). For rapid transportation, Militia members use special versions of the swift rider artifact (see **Wonders of the Lost Age**, pp. 34-35). Specially designed for mortal riders, these swift riders can be used by mortals, with all energy requirements met by the city's internal power grid. Accordingly, while no Essence commitment is required to activate swift riders, they are also useless outside the city itself.

BELIEFS ABOUT TECHNOLOGY

The Cult of Leviathan maintains the city's artifacts, its elders trained by Sage of the Depths. However, their training is deliberately incomplete. Rather than initiating his students fully in the theory behind First Age artifact design, the Lunar explained the technology's inner workings as simply being the blessings of Leviathan . . . and the student himself. Consequently, the Luthan people have no empirical understanding of the devices at their disposal. If the lights in someone's quarters come on when he presses a button, it is only because Leviathan wills it. If it doesn't, then the citizen calls a repairman sanctioned by the Cult of Leviathan who first prays along with the caller for Leviathan's blessings and intercession before repairing the fault according to an ancient repair manual that the repairman views as a religious text. The truth—that the lights are self-repairing Essence transceivers that have maintained themselves for centuries and only rarely require minimal adjustments—is carefully concealed from the Luthan people, who pray to Leviathan every night in hopes that the lights will come on again in the morning.

INACTIVE TECHNOLOGY

Of course, the First Age artifacts used by the Luthan citizenry are only a fraction of what the sunken city holds. Even after its decommissioning, Luthe remained a Realm military base with significant ordnance. The exterior of the city is still ringed with a series of lightning ballistae and other Essence weapons, while the underbelly has a half-dozen Essence cannons capable of obliterating an undersea target (see **Wonders of the**

Lost Age, p. 131). These exterior defenses are currently inoperable, but a savant armed with the proper Charms could repair them.

Within the wreckage of Luthe's fabled flight deck are the ruins of dozens of First Age skyships. Most are wrecks, broken when Amyana flooded the flight deck centuries ago and then exposed to centuries of corrosion and decay, but a determined effort could scavenge enough equipment to repair at least six warbirds and one *Manta*-class troop transport (see **Wonders of the Lost Age**, pp. 41 and 43-44).

In the depths of the city lie the submersible pens. The underwater craft located here are in far better shape than the flying ships, but the underwater craft cannot be released out into the open water unless the city is lifted off the ocean floor so that the undersea doors can be opened. The city's submersible complement includes five *Resplendent Dolphin*-class undersea couriers (see **Wonders of the Lost Age**, pp. 37-38) and a dozen *Barracuda*-class undersea fighters. *Barracudas* have all of the standard characteristics of warbirds except that they move underwater at speeds of up to 35 miles per hour. Just as warbirds, *Barracuda*-class submersibles actually have open cockpits, with special built-in helmets to allow pilots to breathe underwater and see clearly.

Also within the ruins of the sunken city are an even dozen First Age warstriders made from a variety of magical materials (see **Wonders of the Lost Age**, pp. 137-160). All are capable of functioning normally underwater, and most are also flight-capable. Three of the warstriders are royal warstriders: two orichalcum models owned by Amyana and Admiral Arkadi and a moonsilver one owned by Leviathan. The rest are noble warstriders. The three royal warstriders can be found within the submersible launching area, along with four nobles. The rest can be found scattered around the city in long abandoned military barracks.

The most powerful weapon in Luthe is the city itself. If restored to full mobility, Luthe is faster, more maneuverable and better armed than almost anything else of comparable size on the seas. Under optimal conditions, Luthe could challenge an entire Realm fleet. Of course, Luthe's weaponry and mobility systems are in far from optimal condition. It would take months, even years, to repair the city to that extent.

RAISING THE CITY

Despite the massive damage Luthe has suffered over the centuries, it remains seaworthy. No repairs are required at all simply to raise Luthe to the surface. The first step in doing so is gaining access to the central

command chamber, unfortunately a place so secure that even the Luthans fear it. After 1,500 years, the defenses left in place by Leviathan remain active. These defenses include automated Essence cannons, electrified floors, dart traps using rare and deadly First Age poisons, automatons and even a dozen summoned First Circle erymanthoi bound to prevent anyone without the proper command codes from entering the chamber.



Characters who make it into the command chamber must then remove Leviathan's trident, Islebreaker, and then attune to the command console chair. Doing so is much harder than it looks, as Islebreaker is enchanted so that only Leviathan himself can lift it. Anyone else attempting remove it from the command chair must have a combined Strength + Athletics pool of 60. Furthermore, the command chair requires a minimum Essence of 5 in order attune it safely. Anyone with an Essence below 5 who attunes to the chair takes one level of unsoakable aggravated damage for every point by which she falls short. Actually attuning to the chair costs 25 motes of Essence. After that point, the new commander can communicate

with the animating intelligence that maintains all of Luthe's systems, including weapons and propulsion. The Exalted can also activate the city's long dormant bilge pumps and clear the city of millions of gallons of seawater that have flooded so much of it.

THE ANIMATING INTELLIGENCE

Shortly after Luthe was first fashioned from the sea, the Solar Exalted installed a powerful animating intelligence to operate the city's major functions — Towers of Azure. When she scuttled the city, Amyana also shut down most of the AI's higher functions, limiting it to regulating the city's Essence power grid. Should an Exalted successfully attune to the command chair, she could reactivate Towers of Azure, who manifests as an imposing male figure of brilliant blue glass. The years have not been kind to Towers of Azure, however. He has functioned at a fraction of his potential for centuries since his partial lobotomy at Amyana's hands. Although he is bound to obey any Exalted attuned to the command chair, he is eccentric to the point of addle-brained and is likely to mistake his new master for Amyana, regardless of the





Exalted's gender. Towers of Azure also has a tendency to speak in rhyme, to engage in inappropriate humor or make incomprehensible non sequiturs. Should he suspect that the Exalted attuned to the command chair might try to shut him down, Towers of Azure will almost certainly turn the entire city against his new master.

LAYOUT

Luthe's central component is an enormous hemisphere more than three miles in diameter. A number of towers and ramparts jut off this central dome. Encircling the dome is a large ring five miles in diameter. Five large pods are spread out evenly along the ring and also connect to the central dome, similar to the spokes on a wagon wheel. Essence cannons are mounted all along the outer ring, while lightning ballistae are mounted both above and below the central dome (see **Wonders of the Lost Age**, pp. 131 and 132).

The command deck is located at the very top of the central dome, which is reinforced with an enormous orichalcum plate and is virtually indestructible. Immediately below the command deck are the apartments that once belonged to Queen Amyana and her husband, plus those that belonged to dozens of Celestial Exalted dignitaries who had vacation homes in the city and hundreds of Dragon-Blooded who worked there. Except for the chambers belonging to Amyana and Leviathan (which have been preserved as shrines), all of these apartments were thoroughly ransacked of anything of value and then left as slave quarters for the Traitorspawn.

The central dome has a number of lift shafts that remain functional even today. The dome has 40 levels. The command deck is identified as Level 1, while the Traitorspawn ghetto takes up Levels 2 through 4. A large structure that was once a temple to the Unconquered Sun and is now the Temple of Leviathan takes up much of Level 5. Levels 10 through 15 contain residences, plazas, shops and even indoor parks, carefully landscaped by Traitorspawn slaves and maintained by the ancient magic of Luthe. The bulk of the Scionborn live on these levels.

The special research wings housing the hydroponic gardens and automated fisheries are on Levels 17 and 19, respectively. The Flight Deck takes up all of Level 20, its great sliding doors still open to the sea. Most of the lower levels are underwater, although there are pockets of air where emergency procedures sealed off parts of a deck. Also, parts of Decks 16 through 19 were deliberately flooded by the Scionborn in order to make

it impossible for Traitorspawn to reach the hydroponic gardens and the fisheries, thereby making them utterly dependent on Scionborn for food.

Decks 21 through 25 house the enormous Essence converters that still convert tidal action into power despite centuries spent underwater. The converters also draw considerable power from the nearby demesne, and the city has far more power than it needs to maintain its current level of operation. Automatic safety features prevent the city from overloading, but serious damage to the Essence converter control systems could theoretically cause the entire city to explode. The great array of memory crystals physical housing Towers of Azure's memory and intellect are also located on Deck 25.

Decks 26 through 30 contain the great automated mechanisms that operate Luthe's sanitation system and its water and air purification systems. Deck 26 also marked the city's "water line" when the city floated on the surface. Decks 31 through 35 house the city's great submersible pens, as well as dozens of First Age work shops used to repair them. Decks 36 through 40 are the site of the access ports by which submersibles entered and left the city. These ports are blocked shut by the city's current position on the ocean floor. The anterior Essence weaponry array is also mounted on the hull on these levels.

The outer ring connects to the central dome at five junction points on Deck 26. This outer ring consists almost entirely of propulsion mechanisms, which permit the city to move freely across the water's surface. They also contain the ballast regulators that determine the city's buoyancy. When the city floated on the surface, special adamant plates unfurled, connecting the junction tubes, the outer ring and the central dome, creating huge pools so that visitors to Luthe could enjoy swimming in the ocean's waters without worrying about such hazards as sea life or undertows. The Essence converters also ensured that these recreational pools remained at pleasant temperatures.

USING LUTHE

Storytellers who are interested in integrating Luthe and its insular culture into an existing series have several possible approaches, depending on the nature of the existing series. Alternatively, the Storyteller might choose to simply set the series within Luthe itself, allowing the players' characters to try to either reform the flaws in the city's culture or simply to flee the city for the surface—the ultimate "fish-out-of-water" story.

SOLARS

Solar Exalted will almost certainly learn of the fabled lost city of Luthe at some point, and the prospect of an entire First Age city will attract a swarm of treasure seekers. Or perhaps the Solars have memories of the city, perhaps from inheriting the Exaltation of Amyana, Kendik Arkadi or some other Solar who frequented the floating paradise. Solar sorcerers and craftsmen will be drawn to an ancient city fashioned out of the water itself in hopes of reverse engineering this marvel.

DRAGON-BLOODED

As with Solars, Dragon-Blooded will most likely be drawn to Luthe out of a desire for treasure. The prospect of Realm civil war looms closer every day, and the treasures hidden within the sunken city might tip the balance in favor of the first House to find and claim it. Even now, the Water Aspect sorceress Cynis Megara scours the West for clues to hidden treasures of the First Age, and eventually, some hint to Luthe's location will come her way. Or perhaps Gavrane Tomazri, the long-awaited messiah of the Traitorspawn, escapes from Luthe, evades the patrols outside and even Leviathan himself, and makes his way to the shores of Wavecrest, the first Luthan to see the sky in 1,500 years. What will the Realm make of the Traitorspawn's strange story? And will the Immaculate Order demand that the Realm send in the Wyld Hunt to crush this blasphemous city and free hundreds of cruelly enslaved descendants of Dragon-Blooded heroes of legend?

LUNARS

Those Lunars aware of Leviathan's involvement in Luthe tend to give the city a wide berth. Just as all Lunar elders, Leviathan is expected to shape a culture according to his will as part of the Lunars' great experiment, the Thousand Streams River. Even among Lunar elders, however, Leviathan has developed a reputation for . . . eccentricity, and it has not gone unnoticed in the Gatherings of the Lunar Exalted that Leviathan never has anything to report about his city's progress. Perhaps the time has come to see what the Great Whale has been up to. Perhaps some enterprising young pack of Lunars should investigate for themselves what goes on in sunken Luthe. Perhaps they should see that in 700 years, Leviathan has done nothing in Luthe to advance the Lunar agenda, save raise himself up as a god and punish generations of innocents out of reckless, unchecked hate. And perhaps these young Lunars might even escape from Luthe with this knowledge without being eaten by the hungry Whale God themselves.

MILITIA PATROL

Description: A scale of Shadow Swimmers. Groups such as this can be found within Luthe, swimming in patrols outside, and engaging in war games in the miles of undersea wilderness surrounding the city.

Commanding Officer: Varies

Armor Color: Blue and gray

Motto: Eerie, coordinated silence. They communicate through Essence-modulation.

General Makeup: 25 sharkman soldiers, wearing perfect First Age reinforced buff jackets enhanced with the Ritual of Elemental Empowerment, carrying shock pikes with charges sufficient for 10 ranged volleys. They continue to use the shock pikes when they close to melee distance.

Overall Quality: Excellent

Magnitude: 2

Drill: 3

Close Combat Attack: 3 **Close Combat Damage:** 3

Ranged Attack: 3 **Ranged Damage:** 4

Endurance: 7 **Might:** 3 **Armor:** 3(0 mobility)

Morale: 4

Formation: Overall Militia numbers are on p. 118. Within Luthe, they tend to travel in fangs of 10 (reduce Magnitude to 1). Patrols outside the city consist of two or three scales working together. Units engaging in war games come in all sizes.



THE CITY OF THE SHINING REEFS

The pelagials rule a scattered underwater empire whose extent even they do not appreciate. The empire's heart is the City of the Shining Reefs, a prehistoric ruin from which their tendrils of power snake out across the ocean floor to corrupt seaside communities, grasp slaves by the shipload from surface-born powers and even insinuate themselves into the courts of Heaven. Little do surface-folk know that these flesh-eaters do not merely squat restlessly in the ruins of their civilization, but toil ceaselessly to the beck and call of a dead Primordial, whose whispers reach from the heart of the Underworld to direct the pelagials' actions through the mouths of their leaders, the Sleeping Princes.

Sunken Luthe, a Magnitude 2 Dominion
Military: 2 **Government:** 2 **Culture:** 1
Abilities: Awareness 2, Bureaucracy 2, Craft 2
 (First Age Repair 2), Investigation 2, War 2
Virtues: Compassion 2, Conviction 3, Temperance 3, Valor 2
Limit Break: Conviction **Current Limit:** 0
Bonus Points: 10 **External Bonus Points:** 0
Notes: Sage of the Depths is a sorcerer with legitimacy, as are Grokr, Skarg and Hrsh'duljha. Several savants exist among the Cult of Leviathan and public services. Luthe's bonus points are tied up in one dot each of War and Craft, as well as the Craft specialty. In the event of a Limit Break, Luthe's population blames all its problems on the Traitorspawn and begins a heavy campaign of increased persecution, purges and sacrifices. These traits are fragile. Players' characters entering Luthe are likely to shatter its society in short order. In that event, Storytellers should re-write Luthe's Mandate of Heaven statistics entirely. Were Luthe to become active in outside politics without a revolution, the city's large population (compared to other Magnitude 2 dominions) and First Age resources would justify Luthe taking the Dragon Spreads Wings Expansion action immediately.

HISTORY

Legends speak of ancient races of men from the early days of the First Age, and civilizations fallen into ruin. The Lintha are one such lineage, whose origins predate the Primordial War. The pelagials are another, but while the Lintha have suffered long to finally find their star ascendant, the pelagials have squandered their power and are now forgotten by most of Creation.

The story the pelagials tell when they speak to surface-dwellers is of a race of peerless sailors whose cities suffered a mighty cataclysm. They were saved by the whim of loyal gods who transformed the sea-folk from tall, proud men into aquatic half-breeds. The pelagials, as these new transformed beings were called, rebuilt their civilization beneath the waves as it had been above.

This story is misdirection, falsehood as much as truth. The story they told in the First Age, when the Deliberative discovered them after the departure of Autochthon, was that the Great Maker had saved them from destruction during the Primordial War, reshaping

their bodies with his mastery of form. Autochthon had been prolific, and kept his counsel to himself. The Incarna and their Exalted regents found it easy to believe the Primordial had reshaped a race of men at some idle whim. It would not have been the first time.


The pelagials became a novelty to the Exalted of that Age. The Solars bent their knowledge to turn the pelagial capital into a center of undersea commerce and governance, building on the sunken skeleton of the pelagials' ruined metropolis. The Sidereals studied the lore of pelagial scholars and marveled at their knowledge of navigation and the ocean currents. The

AUTOCHTHON

Savants ascribe the greatest creations in history to Autochthon and his craft, but he built not so many as they claim. After the war, wonders created by the enemies of the gods were marked for destruction by the Incarna or the Exalted, but some treasures were too valuable to destroy. Auditors and collectors misattributed the origins of some devices and races, as the new masters of Heaven and their Exalted servants could not admit the Primordials had been anything but destructive tyrants. Legends multiplied, attributing such creations to Autochthon when their origins lay on the opposing side of the war. None now are left who remember which creations were truly his.

Lunars rejoiced in a race of companions who could ply the depths alongside them. And in undersea arenas, the Dragon-Blooded sparred with pelagial warriors in ritual combat. It was then the pelagial capital became known as the City of the Shining Reefs, glittering under the attention of the Deliberative as the pelagials' fame rose to briefly eclipse that of even the Dragon Kings.

But the reality is that the pelagials were a race saved from destruction by one of the incomprehensible enemies of the gods. He was the only one of that ancient number to look upon the nascent Underworld after the first few deaths of his fellows and foresee his own possible destruction. Bending his omniscient gaze toward the Underworld—which although new was still an echo of the Great Work of Creation that he had had a hand in shaping—he saw the spirits of his brethren come to rest in the space at the edge of Oblivion. Listening, he caught their dreaming murmurs, and their stories



of the end of all things. When he himself died, slain at the hands of the Incarna and their Exalted soldiers, his spirit came to rest on the precipice of the Well of the Void, where his dreams shaped the will of the pelagials. It is he—Whose Whispers Chain—whom the pelagials serve, and his dreaming murmurs the Sleeping Princes mutter through rotted lips, driving the pelagials' cryptic plans.

THE CITY

The City of the Shining Reefs is like some aquatic creature, which over the centuries has secreted layers of armor and shell about itself. Deep under the Western Ocean the city lies, the center of a tattered empire.

The outermost layer of the city is a coral labyrinth grown to defend against outside attack. Because the pelagials must protect themselves not just along the seafloor but from attacks coming in at steeper angles to the surface, the labyrinth is three dimensional. Within, barracks full of slave-warriors, pelagial officers and stranger things lurk, waiting for attack forces of beastmen, pelagothropes and raksha. Murder-holes, booby traps and observation points litter the maze, all lit by glowing plankton and photovoltaic creatures, creating a glittering bauble filled with death for the unwary or aggressive.

Metal-framed adamant towers set with Essence-powered batteries and lights all lay beneath the coral, remnants of Deliberative construction. Unhindered by gravity, the First Age city had sprung upward and outward, metal and glass, most of it set with pumps to fill it with air for the surface-dwelling guests who've become a rarity in this late Age.

Finally, underneath the coral maze and the First Age exostructures, lay the white marble and verdigris of the prehistoric surface city. Ancient palaces filled with rotting finery rest along the ocean floor, and here the pelagial nobility feels most at home. At the center of this ancient metropolis, now buried under the extrusion of later ages, lies the Tomb of the Sleeping Princes. To outsiders, it is a vault for the pelagial dead, for although the race is long lived and breeds rarely, they are not immortal. But those who make it within the sprawling palace find it filled with priests, serving the preserved remains of the ancients.

GOVERNMENT

Atop the pelagial hierarchy sit the living nobility, who entertain visiting dignitaries and manage their race's few remaining operations, salvaging wrecks and ancient goods and excavating artifacts lost to the depths over the millennia. Every pelagial is technically

a member of the nobility. Their race's numbers are too few to support an underclass, and so all bear titles, each more grand than the last.

Beneath the idle nobility are the Collegia, each focused on an area of special interest. As the pelagial race dies out, these schools disappear one by one, and knowledge predating the Primordial War is lost forever. The greatest is the College Martial, which produces members of the officer corps who command the slave armies and twisted beasts of the pelagials' defenses. The College Visceral produces surgeons, whose knowledge of surgery and human anatomy is unmatched by any mortal alive, and who transform land-dwelling mortals into sea-based life through torturous medical experiments and exposure to the Wyld and to ancient devices. As the numbers of pelagials dwindle, they join as many Collegia as possible, to keep this priceless knowledge the Collegia protect from dying out.

And lurking in the shadows, hidden from outsiders, are the Sleeping Princes and the priests who serve them. The Sleeping Princes are the greatest of the race, who upon death submit to the binding of their ghosts to their corpses. These spirits are bound to the will of Whose Whispers Chain, and through them, he guides the race, showing them hidden caches of Primordial power, ancient artifacts sunken to the bottom of the sea. The Sleeping Princes decree which isolated, inbred land-based communities are subverted to the Coastal Cult and taught the secret rites by which their elders are turned into mummified channels to the will of Whose Whispers Chain. In other cultures, the priesthood would use their access to the Sleeping Princes to take the reins of power, but the Sleepers see into the hearts of the priests, and the most avaricious and ambitious are sacrificed to the dead Primordial who rules them.

COLONIES

The pelagials once controlled an undersea domain stretching from the distant Southwest to the deepest rivers of the East and beneath and within the perpetual icepack of the North, but they have lost interest in all but a few of their ancient holdings, driven back to their capital by the Fair Folk's war against Creation and by the pelagials' own dwindling numbers and indolent lifestyles. Some of these colonies the pelagials have given up to a tide of beastmen scavengers and raksha interlopers, others the pelagials left booby trapped in case they one day have need of them again. Only a dozen of their holdings—ancient but still fruitful mines, a handful of cities now almost totally abandoned—bear even a token pelagial presence, usually antisocial nobles surrounded

pelagial



by legions of slave-warriors, or the odd missionary making brief vigil in between circuits of the Coastal Cults. Those places the pelagials still deem truly important but cannot spare the manpower to populate, they hide under cultured coral and stock with slave-warriors, commanded by lone pelagial officers. Some of these are ancient colonies, but others are valuable treasure troves, undersea demesnes and ancient shipwrecks stocked with the wonders of a lost Age.

EXTERNAL RELATIONS

Individually, captains, traders, slavers and the ranking members of several oceanic trading guilds still deal with the pelagials, and savants will have heard of the pelagials even through passing study of the First Age, but collectively they've been forgotten by the surface-folk, except for the leaders of the Western nations and the bureaucrats of the Thousand Mazy Paths. Assume any being with a Lore of ●●● or more has heard of the pelagials, although the location of the City of the Shining Reefs is a well-kept secret—the Sidereals purged most maps following the Usurpation in order to hide access to the troves of the pelagials from the Dragon-Blooded.

The Realm: House Peleps and V'neef sold Cynis slaves and Realm-forged steel to the pelagials under the close supervision of the Empress and the imperial bureaucracy. The Empress feared the pelagials and their troves of artifacts, and because the Sidereals went to such lengths to hide the location of the City of the Shining Reefs. The only other nation similarly situated with Essence-technology was Lookshy. But after centuries without any aggressive posture on the pelagials' part, she warily opened trade with them. Now the Realm slides toward civil war, and small factions within each House seek to curry the favor of the pelagials, offering them slaves by the shipload and talents of jade in exchange for artifacts of varying power.

The Western Nations: The pelagials treat all of the Western nations equally, trading them artifacts, exotic cures and anagathic surgery in exchange for slaves and wealth. The average Westerner, in turn, knows the pelagials as folktale demons, akin to the worst beastmen and Wyld mutants.

The Coastal Cults: At the behest of the Sleeping Princes, the pelagials cultivate Coastal Cults in remote settlements along the shores of the Inland Sea and the islands of the West. The Coastal Cults resemble the

ancestor cults of the North, but the Coastal Cults are taught the ritual obeisances of the pelagial priesthood, engaging in orgiastic rites and cannibalism under the watchful gaze of pelagial missionaries. The Coastal Cults have been in place since the fall of the Deliberative, but now the Time of Tumult has arrived, and the Sleeping Princes have decreed groomed agents should move along rivers and waterways into the continental interior of Creation, to create new vessels for the unutterable will of Whose Whispers Chain.

Yu-Shan and the Sidereals: Atop a platform on the surface of the seas above the City of the Shining Reefs, a gateway to Yu-Shan stands. The gods of Yu-Shan have largely forgotten the pelagials, most mentions of their history ruthlessly edited out of the annals of the Bureaus. A tiny handful of high-ranking gods are prey to the call of Whose Whispers Chain, and dominate, quietly bribe and eliminate those gods who realize the extent of the spread of the Coastal Cults.

These eliminations are often attributed to the Sidereals or other factions within Heaven, because cabals within Yu-Shan and the Chosen of the Maidens make infrequent raids into the City of the Shining Reefs to steal powerful artifacts or bargain with the pelagials for access to the depths of the sea. The pelagials themselves wonder why Sidereal astrology does not reveal their plans, but the Great Curse has blinded every attempt by the Sidereals to delve into the pelagials' background—every astrological forecast, blind to the influence of the Neverborn, reveals unmistakably to the Seers that the pelagials are unimportant throwbacks, relics who should have died out long ago and whose impact on Creation is insignificant.

The Silver Pact: Few Lunars outside those who ply the depths realize the pelagials still live, and none outside of the West pay them any heed. Only Leviathan and a handful of others see the pelagials' comings and goings with anything other than disinterest. Leviathan

despises their indolent and corrupt civilization, but suspects that open war with them would be too costly, given their stockpiles of ancient artifacts and their massive slave armies. He allows his pelagothropes (save for those in Luthe) to trade with the pelagials under highly specific circumstances, and any contact with the pelagials is riddled with taboos and rite, the better to keep such contacts infrequent.

The City of the Shining Reefs, a Magnitude 4 Dominion

Military: 3 **Government:** 2 **Culture:** 2

Abilities: Awareness 2 (Spies 1, Coastal Cult 1), Bureaucracy 1 (Priesthood 1), Craft 2 (First Age Technology 3), Integrity 3 (Inhuman Heritage 2, Primordial Puppets 1), Investigation 1, Occult 2 (Fading Prehistoric Knowledge 3), Performance 1, Presence 2 (Coastal Cult 2), Stealth 3 (Spies 2), War 3 (First Age Military Codices 1, Stranger Lurking Things 2)

Virtues: Compassion 1, Conviction 4, Temperance 4, Valor 4

Virtue Flaw: Conviction **Current Limit:** 3 **Willpower:** 8

Bonus Points: 20 **External Bonus Points:** 6

Notes: The City of the Shining Reefs is a Mostly Supernatural dominion. Its bonus points go toward a dot of Valor and the Bureaucracy, Craft, Integrity, Occult and War specialties. The city's external bonus points provide the Awareness, Presence and Stealth specialties. The pelagials' Virtue Flaw is hidden within their subjugation to the will of a dead Primordial—in Limit Break, they destroy themselves pursuing fruitless action dictated by the Sleeping Princes.

PELEPS REMORA, I HOPE
THIS CHERUB FINDS YOU
SITTING DOWN.

FOR WEEKS, WE'VE SURVEYED
AND SAILED, DODGING THE
LINTHA, THE RAKSHA...

SHIPBOARD STORES ARE EMPTY.
THE MORTALS MUTINIED.

IT'S JUST ME AND MY BLOOD-
APES NOW. BUT I'VE FOUND IT!

YOU WERE RIGHT, MADAM.
THE POISON WORKED
JUST AS YOU SAID.

FOLLOWING THE BEAST'S BLOOD
IN THE WATER WAS AS EASY
AS BREATHING.

IT TOOK WEEKS FOR IT TO FINISH
DYING, BUT IT FINALLY LED US HERE...

...TO THE CACHALOT GRAVEYARD.

I'M GOING DOWN TO COUNT
THE SPECIMENS.

I'LL SEND A SECOND MESSENGER
WITH A FULL REPORT AFTERWARD.



CHAPTER SEVEN GODS AND MONSTERS OF THE WEST

In the West, mankind clings to precious islands or cleverly crafted boats, and generally fears the dark depths below. The sons and daughters of humanity stand on the shores and pray to the gods of the sea for aid in procuring its bounty or avoiding its dangers. Meanwhile, the amorphous broods of the sea—whether they spring from Primordials, the Wyld or marine divinities—lurk beneath the restless mirror of the Western Ocean and frequently pull its propitiators beneath the waves.

SPIRITS OF THE WEST

The gods, demons and elementals of the West are generally associated with the sea and those things that pass beneath or across it. This section provides examples of some notable Western spirits using the same format presented in the **Exalted** main rulebook. For more spirits and information about spirit Charms,


see **The Books of Sorcery, Volume IV—The Roll of Glorious Divinity I.**

BAXISHUN

Lord of the Surf, Old Man of the Sea, the Wise Crab

The god of crustaceans, the water's edge and shoreline fishermen, Bashixun is also called the Old Man of the Sea and the Wise Crab. Most often he takes the form of a coastal fisherman, a warrior dressed in thick articulated armor made of chitin and spikes or a perverted old man. His divine form is a gigantic lobster-crab with two massive fighting claws,





a pair of smaller claws beneath and eyestalks that peer in all directions.

The Wise Crab is an honored noble of the Ocean Father's court, with his own holdings in the Western Ocean. Over the centuries, he has used his position to gather an impressive body of the recorded knowledge of Creation, from ancient books of sorcerous lore to ill-written love notes. Bashixun is possessive of his collection, though he makes little use of it. He can't even read those texts not written in Old Realm or Seatongue. The only thing he loves more than his collected works is female companionship, especially that of human females. Trading such company, clever women and exploitive panderers have managed to gain bits of lost enlightenment. The Wise Crab's servants largely consist of minor spirits of education and lore, manipulative nymphs and lobster and crab spirits.

Sanctum: From the outside, the Lord of the Surf's manse resembles a gigantic barnacle shell set within a coral atoll in the Western Ocean. If his crab-spirit guardians allow a visitor entrance, she soon finds the manse holds an eclectic collection of objects of lore. The crustacean god's sanctum lies beyond an inner doorway shaped as a massive blue lobster claw, and contains his favorite books and scrolls.

Motivation: To become a purveyor of knowledge in all its many forms.

Attributes: Strength 14, Dexterity 8, Stamina 12; Charisma 3, Manipulation 4, Appearance 2; Perception 4, Intelligence 6, Wits 6

Virtues: Compassion 3, Conviction 4, Temperance 3, Valor 4

Abilities: Archery 5, Athletics 6 (Swim +3), Awareness 6 (Notice Details +2), Craft (Earth) 3, Craft (Water) 3, Dodge 4 (Scuttle Move +1), Integrity 4, Investigation 4 (Learn Secrets +1), Linguistics (Native: Old Realm; Others: Seatongue) 1, Lore 8, Martial Arts 6 (Claw +1, Clinch +2), Medicine 4, Melee 4 (Great Axe +3), Occult 6, Presence 4 (Physical Intimidation +2), Resistance 6, Sail 1, Stealth 3, Socialize 1, Survival 1, War 1

Backgrounds: Allies 3, Artifact 3, Backing 4, Contacts 5, Cult 2, Followers 2, Influence 3, Manse 4, Resources 4, Sanctum 2

Spirit Charms: Bashixun has many spirit Charms. Some important ones are specified below.

Command Crustacean—For a single mote, Bashixun may issue a command to one or more crustaceans nearby, and they will treat it as a Compulsion until it is completed. This Charm affects any creature with a crustacean nature, even those of magical origin, though

supernatural targets require an expenditure of five motes per target. Ignoring this Compulsion requires two Willpower points, but Bashixun might simply try again. If he merely desires to converse with such creatures, then this Charm allows reciprocal conversation, and no Essence is required.

Essence Plethora—Bashixun has 10 extra motes of Essence in his Essence pool.

Excellencies—Bashixun has First, Second and Third Excellencies for the following Abilities: Awareness, Dodge, Lore, Martial Arts, Melee and Presence.

Hurry Home—For 10 motes and a Willpower point, Bashixun can immediately transport himself to his atoll manse.

Materialize—Bashixun can materialize for 75 motes.

Principle of Motion—Bashixun typically has up to nine extra actions stockpiled.

Shapechange—Bashixun can appear as a monstrous crab-lobster, a coastal fisherman, an old man or a powerfully built chitin-clad warrior.

Terrestrial Circle Sorcery—From his store of lore, Bashixun has learned many spells of the Terrestrial Circle.

Join Battle: 12 (if Notice Details applies 14)

Attacks:

As Crab

Large Claws (Clinch): Speed 6, Accuracy 22, Damage 14L (piercing), Defense -, Rate 1

Lesser Claw: Speed 5, Accuracy 16, Damage 16L, Defense 17, Rate 2 (1 each)

Special: Bashixun can attack with each of his lesser claws even if his large claws are busy maintaining a clinch, though this counts as multiple actions.

As Humanoid

Clinch: Speed 6, Attack 22, Damage 14B (piercing), Defense -, Rate 1

Punch: Speed 5, Attack 15, Damage 14B, Defense 16, Rate 3

Kick: Speed 5, Attack 14, Damage 17B, Defense 12, Rate 2

Great Axe (Shell-Cutter): Speed 6, Attack 18, Damage 21L/2, Defense 14, Rate 3 (Tags 2,O,R)

Soak: 21L/27B (Chitin armor, 15L/15B, Hardness: 7L/7B)

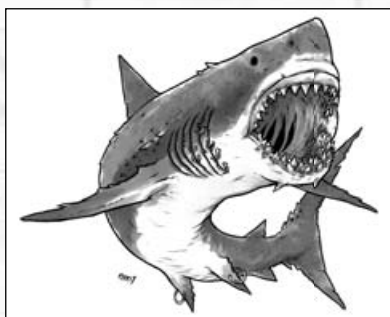
Health Levels: -0x4/-1x8/-2x14/-4x4/Incap

Dodge DV: 9 (10 with scuttle move) **Willpower:** 9

Essence: 6 **Essence Pool:** 115

Cost to Materialize: 75

Other Notes: Bashixun's axe and armor are part of his divine panoply, and they appear whenever he assumes his humanoid warrior form. In giant lobster-crab form, the armor is his carapace.



CHILD OF SAIKAL

Maw of Siakal, War Shark

The servants of the Western war god generally take the form of voracious, bloodthirsty siaka. When given suitable sacrifices, the great war sharks will

help their allies by slowing or damaging the vessels of their enemies so that they are easy prey. Unless the war sharks' matron objects, the only price the Maws ask is the right to devour enemies who fall overboard. Similar to mortal sharks, the Maws have a tendency to become frenzied at the scent of blood in the water.

The children of Siakal usually appear as particularly monstrous siaka. They fight with terrifying ferocity, yet display intelligence in their attacks and use of Charms. Alternately, the war sharks can take the form of huge siaka-men.

Sanctum: Most of Siakal's children dwell within her bloody pool in Yu-Shan. Those that leave her sanctum roam the seas in search of prey. Rarely one of the war sharks may temporarily obtain its own small sanctum should its name become known to a reverent warband, but sooner or later Siakal calls her children to return to her side.

Motivation: To devour their enemies and those of the goddess Siakal.

Attributes: Strength 13/8, Dexterity 4, Stamina 10/5; Charisma 4, Manipulation 2, Appearance 1; Perception 4, Intelligence 2, Wits 3

Virtues: Compassion 1, Conviction 2, Temperance 1, Valor 4

Abilities: Athletics 3 (Swimming +3), Awareness 4 (Smell +2), Dodge 4, Integrity 5, Investigation 3, Linguistics (Native: Old Realm; Others: Seatongue) 1, Martial Arts 5 (Bite +3), Occult 1, Presence 4, Resistance 5 (Underwater +2), Stealth 4 (Underwater +1), Survival 5 (Tracking +2, Underwater +1), War 5

Backgrounds: Allies 1 (other children of Siakal), Influence 1

Spirit Charms:

Affinity Element Control—For six motes of Essence, a child of Siakal can manipulate water around the war shark, causing the water to reshape itself, convert to mist or solidify into ice. The war shark can affect the equivalent of three barrels of water with each use of this power, and the effects last for one scene.

Essence Bite—A child of Siakal can spend three motes of Essence, and for a scene, any being that touches or is touched by the god takes 1L damage, ignoring armor and soaked only by Stamina.

Excellencies—Children of Siakal have First and Second Excellencies for the following Abilities: Awareness, Dodge and Martial Arts.

Landscape Travel—Children of Siakal may pay five motes of Essence to double their movement rate while swimming.

Materialize—Children of Siakal can materialize for 50 motes.

Paralyze—For six motes, the bite of a child of Siakal temporarily stuns its foe. Instead of taking normal damage, the target's player must make a (Stamina + Resistance) roll with a difficulty equal to the war shark's Valor. Failure leaves the victim at -2 dice to all non-reflexive rolls until the tick when the child of Siakal next acts. This power has no effect on beings with an Essence higher than the siaka.

Principle of Motion—A child of Siakal typically has one to seven extra actions ready.

Shapechange—Normally the children of Siakal appear as particularly large siaka, but when they want to speak or use hands, they take the form of huge siaka-men (see p. 153), lowering Strength and Stamina by five dots each.

Uncanny Prowess—By expending two motes, a child of Siakal may add its Valor to any Dexterity-based roll made in combat.

Join Battle: 7 (if Smell applies: 9)

Attacks:

As Siaka

Bite: Speed 5, Accuracy 12, Damage 19L, Defense 9, Rate 2

As Siaka-Man

Bite: Speed 5, Accuracy 12, Damage 8L, Defense 9, Rate 1

Punch: Speed 5, Accuracy 10, Damage 5B, Defense 11, Rate 3

Kick: Speed 5, Accuracy 9, Damage 8B, Defense 7, Rate 2

Clinch: Speed 6, Accuracy 10, Damage 5B, Defense -, Rate 1

Soak: 17L/20B (14L/15B in siaka-man form; Tough hide 12L/10B, Hardness: 5L/5B)

Health Levels: -0x3/-1x4/-2x4/-4x2/Incap

Dodge DV: 6

Willpower: 7

Essence: 3

Essence Pool: 65

Cost to Materialize: 50

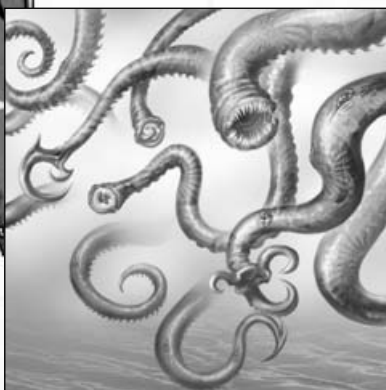
Siakal

Other Notes: The hides of the children of Siakal can be tanned and formed into lightweight buff jackets. This exceptional armor can be worn by anyone willing to risk the ire of Siakal.

SPIRIT SHARK HIDE BUFF JACKETS

(RESOURCES ●●●●)

Soak	Mobility Penalty	Fatigue
7L/10B	-1	1



ERISTRUFA, THE MIST-DEMON

*Demon of the First
Circle, Progeny of the
Dam of the Eristrufa*

The eristrufa are creatures of fog and shadow that drift across the dark oceans of Malfestas. The eristrufa's services appeal most

to sorcerers who want the creatures to confuse or slay enemies at sea. Typically, an eristrufa appears as a dense fog bank several miles across, except that this ill mist can move against the wind or tide when it must. If multiple mist-demons work together, they join into a fog bank dozens of miles long.

As with mundane mist, the eristrufa confuse ships within by blinding their crews. The mist-demons hide greater terrors, though, as those within are beset with disturbing sounds of mournful ship's bells, intermittent hideous laughter or moaning sobs of agony. Those who try to sleep in the dark fog face greater suffering, dreaming of damnation and waking more tired than when they laid down to rest. Ship crews and shore villages caught in the mist face exhaustion and madness, and most eventually perish, sometimes at their own hands.

If the mist shape is not sufficient, or if it grows angry, the mist diminishes and an eristrufa takes the form of a mass of grasping, writhing tentacles with misshapen eyes, powerful suckers, piercing claws and cutting edges. These tentacles may stretch up to 20 feet to strike a target.

Eristrufa will not set out against a victim on Venus-day, although they will not cease attack if it is already ongoing. They cannot change shape when the moon is full, and they can't abide the smell of fresh garlic. Sacrifices of blood may convince an eristrufa to leave a target unharmed, provided the eristrufa is not under the command of sorcerous bindings.

Perhaps offended by the beauty or nobility of the moment, an eristrufa is sometimes called to Creation without summoning when a lone dolphin swims beneath a rainbow in a sunny sky.

Motivation: To destroy or drive into insanity those who travel upon the sea or live on its edges.

Attributes: Strength 0/8, Dexterity 4, Stamina 6; Charisma 1, Manipulation 4, Appearance 0; Perception 2, Intelligence 2, Wits 4

Virtues: Compassion 1, Conviction 3, Temperance 1, Valor 4

Abilities: Awareness 3, Dodge 4, Integrity 2, Linguistics (Native: Old Realm) 0, Martial Arts 3 (Tentacle Slash +1, Tentacle Grab +2), Performance 1 (Creepy Noises +2), Presence 3 (Physical Intimidation +2), Resistance 2, Sail 1 (Tracking Ships +2), Stealth 1 (Mist Touch Attacks +3)

Backgrounds: Allies 1 (other eristrufa)

Spirit Charms:

Confusion—For six motes of Essence and one Willpower, an eristrufa can cause confusion in a victim. Roll the demon's (Manipulation + Conviction) with a difficulty of the target's Essence. Success indicates that the target is mildly confused, and likely to make mistakes such as choosing the wrong direction at a fork in the path. With at least two extra successes, the target is quite confused and might believe such things as traveling after dark without a lantern is a reasonable thing to do. Four or more extra successes results in a completely addled target, who may do very dangerous things such as scaling a mast in the dark or sleeping in the crow's nest during a storm. Fair Folk are immune to this Charm. Eristrufa typically target ship captains or navigators with this Charm.

Cunning Thief—The eristrufa must touch a target (which may require a successful Dexterity + Martial Arts roll). If this succeeds, the eristrufa may make a reflexive (Wits + Temperance) roll, costing one mote for every two dice, or fraction thereof. For every success the demon achieves, the target loses two motes of Essence. The demon may not steal more motes than twice its Essence.

Dreambane—For 15 motes and one Willpower, the demon can shape the dreams of a sleeping target. The player of the demon rolls (Manipulation + Conviction) with successes controlling the degree of power held by the dream. The target rolls Wits to prevent incidences of dream damage from becoming real damage, with each success preventing one health level. If the target suffers physical damage, she may roll (Willpower + Integrity) to wake up. Damage from this Charm cannot reduce a target below Incapacitated.

Essence Bite—An eristrufa can spend three motes of Essence, and for a scene, any being that touches or is touched by the demon takes 1L damage from chilling cold, ignoring armor and soaked only by Stamina.

Excellencies—Eristrufa have First and Second Excellencies for the following Abilities: Dodge, Martial Arts and Presence.

Ghostly Presence—This Charm works as the demon's Will-o-Wisp but can create distinct patterns, with a duration up to one scene. The demon may hold conversations while unmanifested, and successes grant control over the light, sound and smell of the scene (which may not exceed a 10-foot radius in any direction).

Harrow the Mind—An eristrufa may create illusions in the mind of a single target, which distract and confuse its victim. The demon must spend 10 motes of Essence and one Willpower to activate this Ability for a scene. The eristrufa's player then makes a (Manipulation + Performance) roll against the target's Mental Defense Value, adding a number of automatic successes equal to the target's Temperance. Only one success is necessary, but additional successes add to the difficulty of any applicable roll made to break free of the illusion. Barring other methods, a victim can break free by spending one Willpower per success the eristrufa gained.

Landscape Travel—Eristrufa may pay five motes of Essence in mist form to move at normal sailingspeed (see **Exalted**, p. 264) regardless of the wind direction, or to attach to a single waterborne ship and keep up with it.

Materialize—An eristrufa can materialize for 50 motes.

Measure the Wind—Eristrufa have uncanny senses and, for one mote, use this reflexive Charm to measure the strength of their enemies.

Principle of Motion—An eristrufa typically has seven extra actions stockpiled.

Shapechange—For one mote of Essence, an eristrufa can shift from its mist form to its physical shape consisting of a hideous mass of razor-edged tentacles. Some legends claim that the eristrufa have a third form, which appears as a beautiful Fair Folk lord or lady, or something that looks like one. Even the bindings of sorcery have been unable to force the eristrufa to reveal the truth of this matter, though.

Sustenance—The demon must touch a sleeping mortal to activate this Charm and feed on her dreams. For three motes, the demon may roll (Wits + Temperance), with each success devouring one mote of Essence.

Will-o-Wisp—For five motes of Essence, the demon causes brief, somewhat muddled manifestations of sound, smell and light, such as a ball of illumination

or indistinct hints of conversation. Roll the demon's (Manipulation + Valor). The more successes, the more noticeable these manifestations are (louder, brighter), though the manifestations may not exceed one action in duration. This Charm may not be used in precise ways—no writing words, making pictures in light or speaking distinct phrases.

Join Battle: 7

Attacks:

Tentacle Grab: Speed 6, Accuracy 13, Damage 8L (piercing), Defense -, Rate 1

Special: The damage from a clinch made by the tentacle grab increases by 1L every action the clinch is maintained.

Tentacle Slash: Speed 5, Accuracy 9, Damage 10L, Defense 10, Rate 3

Mist Touch: Speed 5, Accuracy 7, Damage (Charm only), Defense -, Rate 3

Special: The mist touch cannot be parried, but can be dodged.

Soak: 6L/9B (Scaly slippery skin 3L/3B)

Health Levels: -0/-0/-1/-1/-1/-2/-2/-2/-2/-4// -4/Incap

Dodge DV: 6 **Willpower:** 7

Essence: 3 **Essence Pool:** 65

Cost to Materialize: 50


Other Notes: In mist form, an eristrufa has no Strength, but can "touch" any target surrounded by its mist (counts as touch for the purposes of Essence Bite, Cunning Thief and Sustenance). In mist form, the demon may only be harmed by fire attacks (damage 1L), unless powered by an Exalt using such Charms as Blazing Solar Bolt or Elemental Bolt Attack (Fire), which do normal damage.

OCEAN FATHER

*Lord of the West,
Daimyo of the Seas*

The Ocean Father, also known as the Daimyo of the Seas and the Lord of the West, is a powerful god in the Bureau of Nature's Hierarchy of Type. Despite his celestial position, with responsibility for all the seas of Creation and the accompanying quarters in Yu-Shan, the Ocean Father spends much of his time in the Great Western Ocean.





In ages past, he was almost always found in Heaven—even arguing on behalf of Valor in the Sonorous Discussion of Virtue at the annual Carnival of Meeting—but now he focuses on preserving and strengthening the remnants of his once-neglected dominion. What time the turbulent Western spirit courts and the depredations of the Wyld do not consume, the Lord of the West spends forming various human relationships Celestial Censors might deem inappropriate. He is worshipped throughout the Coral Archipelago and a surprising number of God-Blooded from the Neck claim his blood.

The Ocean Father is a mercurial creature, quick to anger and to forgive, given to unbridled lust and sullen brooding. If there is anything the Ocean Father fears, it is the jade dagger named Black Depths Foretold (see **Books of Sorcery, Vol. 3—Oadenol's Codex**, p. 36), which the stars have long declared is fated to slay the Lord of the West. Before the Usurpation, reclusive Solars carried the blade to the East, where the dagger was lost. The Daimyo of the Seas fondly remembers the days when the Solar Deliberative expanded the Western Ocean far beyond its current bounds, but he is torn in regards to their return. The Ocean Father might parley with any Solar Exalts whose purposes seem to include the restoration of the West, but he is always careful to confirm they do not bear his bane.

The Ocean Father appears as a tall, handsome, middle-aged man with mid-length black hair and curls, tipped in white, that tumble about his head like 100 waves in motion. Dark skin with a blue-green sheen stretches over his taut swimmer's muscles, his teeth are burnished coral and his eyes glow like the setting sun. At home in the open sea, the Ocean Father's only ornaments are a large gleaming white shell codpiece and a bejeweled black jade cephalopod whose undulating form hangs across one shoulder and his powerful chest. He bears a pearl as large as a human head in one hand, and within the pearl's depths, he scribes upon his dominions in the sea.

Sanctum: For eight centuries, the Ocean Father's primary manse in Creation has been hidden beneath the waves 800 miles to the south of the Coral Archipelago's capital Azure. The gods of the ocean courts pay their respects within the manse's carved halls of basalt and precious shells, and a pearl gateway within leads to his sanctum, but there is still a sense that the Lord of the West has not permanently settled into his "new" quarters. The Daimyo of the Seas visits his Yu-Shan estate and offices when occasion demands it, and he often waxes nostalgic for the opulent manse he lost to the Wyld during the Great Contagion.

Motivation: To preserve his precious seas from dissolution by the Wyld, shadowlands or divine politics, and to continuously enhance their size, prestige and quality.

Attributes: Strength 8, Dexterity 8, Stamina 8; Charisma 8, Manipulation 8, Appearance 8; Perception 8, Intelligence 8, Wits 8

Virtues: Compassion 4, Conviction 4, Temperance 2, Valor 5

Abilities: Archery 1, Athletics 5 (Swim +3), Awareness 6 (Underwater +3), Bureaucracy 6 (Ocean Courts +3), Craft (Air) 2, Craft (Fire) 2, Craft (Magitech) 4 (Repairing Aegis Talisman +3), Craft (Water) 5, Dodge 6 (Underwater +3), Integrity 6 (Against Sea Creatures +3), Investigation 5 (Relating to the Sea +3), Larceny 5, Linguistics (Native: Old Realm; Others: Seatongue, Flametongue, Skytongue, Pelagial) 4, Lore 6 (Oceanic Knowledge +3), Martial Arts 6 (Terrestrial Hero Style +2, Art of Forceful Declaration +1), Medicine 1, Melee 8 (Aegis Talisman +3), Occult 6, Performance 5, Presence 6, Resistance 6, Ride 1 (Sea Creatures +3), Sail 5, Stealth 5, Socialize 5 (Ocean Courts +3), Survival 5 (Underwater +3), Thrown 1, War 5

Backgrounds: Allies 3, Artifact 5, Backing 4, Celestial Manse 3, Contacts 4, Cult 5, Followers 4, Influence 5, Manse 5, Resources 5, Sanctum 4

Spirit Charms: The Ocean Father has all appropriately themed spirit Charms for which he qualifies. Some important ones are specified below.

Black Depths Foretold—Though there is terror in knowing the cause of your death, there is also great freedom in it. Unless someone manages to convince the Maidens (or perhaps a sizeable majority of the pattern spiders) to change his fate, no being currently affected by destiny or fate can slay the Ocean Father without using the artifact weapon named Black Depths Foretold. Instead, any other attack that would kill the Ocean Father merely reduces him to Incapacitated. Unfortunately for the Ocean Father, every attack made with the fated dagger causes the wielder to instinctively realize that she can reflexively spend four motes of Essence and one Willpower point to make every die in the attack's dice pool a success. Such an attack roll operates as though the wielder possessed the relevant Essence Auspicious Excellency even if she does not. This "Charm" is a blessing (and curse) unique to the Ocean Father and cannot be learned by any other being. Beings outside of Fate are immune to this effect, but cannot benefit from it either.

Celestial Circle Sorcery—The Ocean Father has learned many spells of the Celestial Circle.

Daimyo's Prerogative—While in Heaven, the Ocean Father may summon any single one of his subordinates in the Bureau of Nature to his side immediately. He does so only in times of danger or other emergency. He must spend a point of Willpower and a number of motes equal to the (Essence + Willpower) of the subordinate he is summoning.

Donning Spiritual Armor—Through the expenditure of five motes, the Ocean Father may add his (Temperance + Essence) to his bashing and lethal soaks. By spending one point of Willpower, he may also add his Essence to his aggravated soak.

Elemental Expression—The Ocean Father can double or halve the effects of any natural phenomena related to the sea (such as fog, storms, waves, etc.) for one mote of Essence. Alternately, he may cause such an effect to inflict damage (or increase the damage of an already damaging effect) on material beings within it, with each mote spent (maximum of his permanent Essence) dealing one health level of lethal or bashing damage, soaked normally.

Elemental Rejuvenation—For every three ticks spent doing nothing else, provided he is in contact with seawater, the Ocean Father may heal one health level of damage or regain one mote of Essence.

Essence Plethora (x4)—The Ocean Father has 40 extra motes of Essence in his Essence pool.

Excellencies—The Ocean Father has First, Second and Third Excellencies for the following Abilities: Bureaucracy, Investigation, Larceny, Martial Arts, Melee, Presence, Sail and Survival.

Hurry Home—For 10 motes and a Willpower point, the Ocean Father can immediately transport himself to any underwater or surface location in the Western seas. In Yu-Shan, he can use this Charm to instantly return to his Celestial Manse.

Martial Arts—The Ocean Father has mastered the martial Essence of water, including all of the supernatural Martial Arts Charms from the Terrestrial Hero Style (see **Manual of Exalted Power: Dragon-Blooded**, pp. 191-193). Additionally, the Ocean Father is a practitioner of the Valor style of the Four Arguments of Virtue, knowing all of the Charms of the Art of Forceful Declaration (see the PDF ebook **Scroll of the Monk: The Imperfect Lotus**). Detractors claim that his mastery of Valor is based upon the assurances of Fate rather than any inherent virtue.

Materialize—The Ocean Father can materialize for 90 motes.

Measure the Wind—The Ocean Father always surveys the power of those who are near him, and for one mote this Charm helps him do so.

Principle of Motion—The Ocean Father typically keeps 10 extra actions reserved.

Reserve of Will (x4)—The Ocean Father has four extra Willpower points at his disposal.

Shapechange—As a protean god of the sea, the Ocean Father can change his appearance to that of any non-unique marine creature.

Terrestrial Circle Sorcery—The Ocean Father has learned many spells of the Terrestrial Circle.

Join Battle: 14 (17 underwater)

Attacks:

Punch: Speed 5, Accuracy 15 (Terrestrial Hero Style +2, Art of Forceful Declaration +1), Damage 8B, Defense 16 (Terrestrial Hero Style +2, Art of Forceful Declaration +1), Rate 3

Kick: Speed 5, Accuracy 14 (Terrestrial Hero Style +2, Art of Forceful Declaration +1), Damage 11B, Defense 12 (Terrestrial Hero Style +2, Art of Forceful Declaration +1), Rate 2

Clinch: Speed 6, Accuracy 14 (Terrestrial Hero Style +2, Art of Forceful Declaration +1), Damage 8B (piercing), Defense -, Rate 1

Aegis Talisman Lash: Speed 4, Accuracy 15, Damage 5L (up to 15L), Defense 15, Rate 3, Range 4

Aegis Talisman Blade: Speed 4, Accuracy 23, Damage 8L (up to 18L), Defense 20, Rate 3, Range 4

Special: The Ocean Father wields a unique black jade "Quicksilver" Aegis Talisman. See **Books of Sorcery, Vol. 2—Wonders of the Lost Age**, p. 111 for Aegis Talisman rules. The Aegis Talisman Lash's attacks are treated as a separate entity with their own dice pools. The Ocean Father can use the Aegis Talisman to add up to 5 extra Dodge Defense Value or Parry Defense Value to any weapon (natural or otherwise). Additionally, the Ocean Father may supplement his unarmed attacks with Terrestrial Hero Style Charms.

Soak: 12L/16B to 18L/22B (Tough skin, 8L/8B, Hardness: 4L/4B; armor bonus up to +6L/+6B from Aegis Talisman)

Health Levels: -0/-1x8/-2x8/-4/Incap

Dodge DV: 11 (13 underwater; bonus up to 5 DV from Aegis Talisman) **Willpower:** 10 (14 temporary points)

Essence: 8 **Essence Pool:** 170

Cost to Materialize: 90

Other Notes: The Ocean Father possesses the Pearl of the Occulted Seas, which allows him to duplicate any thaumaturgical ritual for a single mote of Essence (without Willpower or Resources expenditure), provided the effects are somehow related to the sea.

When the Pearl of the Occulted Seas is used for Scrying, any subject currently resting upon or within the ocean is a valid target without any other arcane link requirement and regardless of range. He often creates wards against those bearing the Black Depths Foretold, but such things inevitably expire and are easily destroyed by countermagic.



PLENTIMON OF THE
DICE, CELESTIAL
MINISTER OF
GAMBLING

Plentimon is the god of gambling and gamblers. His dominion over a universal concept would guarantee him a powerful position in the Bureau of Heaven, but he has steadfastly remained in the Bureau of Hu-

manity's Department of Universal Human Affairs and forsaken the Celestial City of Yu-Shan to live among humanity. There is nothing Plentimon enjoys more than watching people risk everything on games of chance, except perhaps the artistic appreciation he has for the skill and guts that the best players bring to the table.

Plentimon spends the majority of his time in the most prosperous gambling house in Coral, as he owns the Diving Sea Snake Casino in Mantaville and controls a majority share of Vason's Luck in Azure. He wagered and lost two-fifths ownership of the latter establishment to the clever gambler whose name the establishment now shares. For three seasons of every year, Plentimon personally manages the Diving Sea Snake, but the months surrounding winter are spent traveling to the gambling houses of Creation.

Sometimes Plentimon goes in mundane disguise and gains vast wealth by bankrupting various gambling establishments. Other times, he chooses to travel openly in his divine splendor, dressed in jeweled and gilded finery befitting a king. In his natural form, he appears to be made of millions of tiny glowing flecks of silver and gold floating in a jet-black human-shaped void. He always plays honestly, for incredibly high stakes, though his extraordinary skill at such games hardly renders such contests fair.

The Diving Sea Snake offers all of the typical games of cards and dice, but some visitors prefer more

interesting challenges. Games held in the god's casino include such deadly contests as life drinking, where the participants each select one glass of wine from a tray of goblets that includes one filled with lethal poison, to dangerous bets with Fair Folk bargaining the benefits of their power against people's souls. For games with prices he can afford, Plentimon is willing to extend credit to those who seem likely to be able to pay them off, but failure to repay is an affront to his personal honor. Those cannot pay their debts to the god are sometimes given the chance to play again, with lengthy servitude matched against relieving the debt. More often, however, those who refuse to pay suffer horrific and unlikely deaths, and Plentimon's servants swiftly confiscate the players' possessions.

Many gods of the Bureau of Heaven consider Plentimon a rogue deity, though they have done little to rein in his activities. Gods within the Bureau of Humanity generally support the Minister of Gambling, particularly those gods who agree with his open interaction with mortals. Plentimon is thus well accepted by the rulers of Whitewall and Great Forks, but sometimes harassed by divinities such as Bronze Faction-dominated Censors of the Blessed Isle and those southern gods who remain loyal to Swan Dragon, the fallen Paragon Censor of the South.

Sanctum: A hidden back room door in the Diving Sea Snake Casino leads to the private sanctum of Plentimon. Here the form of the structure's Essence is as ever-shifting as the luck of the die, sometimes revealing simple threadbare quarters and sometimes appearing as a sumptuous apartment with furnishings worthy of the Empress. Great riches are more common here than abject poverty, given the skill of the sanctum's owner, but apparently the God of Gambling desires raw reminders of the dangers of losing.

Motivation: To experience the thrill of watching beings risk their fortunes on games with an element of chance.

Attributes: Strength 4, Dexterity 6, Stamina 5; Charisma 6, Manipulation 6, Appearance 5; Perception 6, Intelligence 6, Wits 6

Virtues: Compassion 3, Conviction 5, Temperance 4, Valor 3

Abilities: Athletics 2, Awareness 5 (Catching Cheaters at Gambling +3), Bureaucracy 4 (Casinos +3), Dodge 5, Integrity 3, Investigation 2 (Cheating +3), Larceny 5, Linguistics (Native: Old Realm; Others: Guild Cant, High Realm, Riverspeak, Seatongue) 4, Lore 4 (Games +3), Martial Arts 4 (Withering Touch +2), Occult 4, Performance 7, Presence 7, Resistance 2, Sail 1, Stealth 2,

Socialize 5 (Bluffing +2), Survival 2, Thrown 2 (Game Pieces +3)

Backgrounds: Artifact 5, Contacts 3, Cult 5, Followers 4 (Casino Workers), Influence 3, Resources 5, Sanctum 3

Spirit Charms: Plentimon has many spirit Charms. Some important ones are specified below.

Bad Luck—Plentimon may curse a target with the attention of the gods of bad luck. For one mote, the effects of this instant duration Charm last for one week, although the interval may be extended an additional week for every extra mote spent. The Charm causes every “1” that the victim rolls on any dice roll for a specified Ability to subtract one success from her total successes. This can eliminate automatic successes gained from such effects as Second Excellencies and the like.

Essence Plethora—Plentimon has 10 extra motes of Essence in his Essence pool.

Excellencies—Plentimon has First and Third Excellencies for the following Abilities: Awareness, Bureaucracy, Larceny, Performance, Presence and Socialize. Second Excellencies and perfect effects offend him.

Good Luck—Plentimon can bless a target with the attention of the gods of good luck. For each mote he spends, the target gains one extra die on actions using a specified Ability, with a limit of three dice. This effect explicitly does not count as a dice-adder for the purposes of other Charms. This effect lasts for one week, although Plentimon can extend the interval for an additional mote per week. This Charm is of instant duration, so Plentimon does not have to commit the Essence.

Hurry Home—For 10 motes and a Willpower point, Plentimon can immediately transport himself to anywhere in the Diving Sea Snake Casino, or to the front door of any well-known gambling house. In Yu-Shan, he can use this Charm to immediately transport himself to his divine office, although his long-abandoned secretary would likely be very surprised.

Interdiction of Certainty—Plentimon is a natural advocate of chance, and the thrill of the risk it inherently creates. Therefore, anyone nearby who invokes a perfect Charm effect (such as Accuracy Without Distance or Heavenly Guardian Defense) must spend one extra mote of Essence. Similarly, anyone nearby who invokes Second Excellency, or any other Charm that grants one or more automatic successes, must pay one extra mote of Essence. Charms that guarantee failure also require one extra mote of Essence. This additional charge is applied for every use of such Charms in Plentimon’s presence, and if the Charm’s user is unable to pay the surfeit, then the Charm unexpectedly does not activate

and the motes are wasted. This Charm is of permanent duration and also affects Plentimon whenever he employs relevant Charms.

Materialize—Plentimon can materialize for 75 motes. The god of dice almost never abandons his material form except when faced with great danger.

Measure the Wind—Plentimon surveys the power of those who are near him, to ascertain their potential ability to cheat, and for one mote this Charm helps him do so.

Principle of Motion—Plentimon typically reserves up to eight extra actions.

Sense Domain—Plentimon may spend five motes and one temporary Willpower to discern the status of his sphere of influence. The Storyteller rolls (Perception + Awareness), adding a number of automatic successes equal to his Compassion. Unless this Charm’s effects are contested by sorcery or another Charm, Plentimon detects all games involving a degree of chance within three and a half miles and is alerted to any potential threats to himself or those games (cheating represents a threat to a game).

Shapechange—Plentimon can appear as an innocuous mortal, when he wishes, although he may not assume the form of a specific person.

Thrown Game—For one mote of Essence, Plentimon can reflexively enchant a game piece (such as a die, Gateway piece, card, counter or jade coin) so that he can hurl it with the force and accuracy of a sling stone. At the end of the action, the item reverts to its normal state, although occasionally one becomes a *lucky rock* item (see **Books of Sorcery, vol. III: Oadenol’s Codex**).

Join Battle: 11

Attacks:

Withering Touch: Speed 5, Accuracy 13, Damage 16L (up to 25L), Defense 14, Rate 3

Special: Plentimon’s base damage for Withering Touch is (15 plus the result of one 10-sided die)L, with this bonus added before soak is applied. He may also parry without a stunt.

Thrown Game Piece: Speed 5, Accuracy 10, Damage 6L, Defense -, Range 100, Rate 1

Soak: 14L/17B (Spirit finery, 12L/12B, Hardness: 5L/5B)

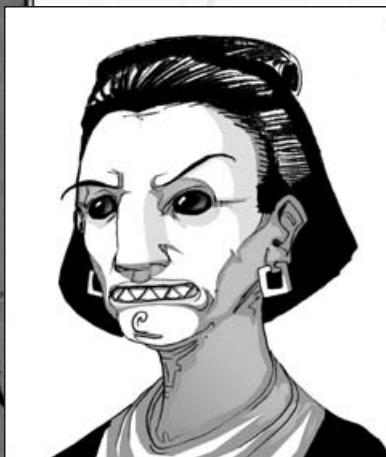
Health Levels: -0x15/-1x5/-2x5/-4/Incap

Dodge DV: 9 **Willpower:** 8

Essence: 7 **Essence Pool:** 120

Cost to Materialize: 75

Other Notes: Plentimon has access to two ancient artifacts that allow people to willingly gamble nearly anything, from years of their lifespan to permanent dots of an Attribute (see p. 54). A handful of mortals have even become God-Blooded by winning divine Essence.



SIAKAL

The Western God of Battle, Slaughter and Sharks

Siakal is the god of war, mass death and bloodshed in the oceans of the West. Often she appears as a colossal shark more than 20 yards long, although she can also assume the form of a frightening slate-gray

woman with lidless eyes, a mouth full of jagged teeth, a serrated sword of enchanted orca bone and a buff jacket of sharkskin. In any shape, Siakal revels in slaughter and destruction, though she especially favors sea battles because the losers sink beneath the waves and feed her bloodthirsty children.

As a regional god of war, Siakal is far more political than her voracious appetite might suggest. She is responsible for the proper administration of the dominion of war in the West, and must answer to two masters: E-Naluna, the Queen of Warfare in the Bureau of Heaven, and Hu Dia Liang, the Shogun of the Crimson Banner in the Bureau of Destiny. Typically, Siakal advances her agenda through intimidation and the support of particularly bloody military campaigns. As beings of great valor, her fellow gods of war are rarely unsettled by threats of violence. Nonetheless, these divinities cannot discount the terrible ferocity of her servants and worshippers when contemplating the battlefields of Creation. Siakal cares little for bravery and honor, as she is primarily interested in carnage. If she cannot achieve her desires in the court of Yu-Shan, then her followers will ruthlessly advance her desires on the seas and shores of their neighbors.

Western nations such as Wavecrest ban the worship of Siakal. Nonetheless, many soldiers cast a bit of animal blood into the sea before battle, and periodically an underground warrior cult proves so savage that the local ruler feels compelled to ruthlessly suppress it. Although many nations ban the veneration of Siakal, she is widely honored in the Coral Archipelago, among pirates and coastal raiders and by the dreaded Lintha. In the Neck, only warriors who put to sea regularly give homage to Siakal, although some members of the Squalus tribe honor the goddess and her children as ancestors. Devout adherents, including many Lintha captains, wear specially carved shark-tooth amulets and raise pennants bearing her image when going into

battle. Those familiar with the shark flag know they can expect no quarter from those who fly it.

Siakal accepts but one form of sacrifice. Living victims must be bloodied and thrown to the sharks. The goddess prefers the taste of Exalted flesh above all others. Guild fleets regularly propitiate the goddess before venturing into areas infested with her followers.

Sanctum: Siakal dwells in Yu-Shan, where her sanctum is an immense pool of black basalt filled with seawater tainted with intoxicating trails of blood. Her favored servants are the gods known as the children of Siakal, and a multitude share her Celestial abode. As one of the five regional gods of warfare, Siakal also holds offices in the Bureau of Heaven's Division of Warfare and the Bureau of Destiny's Crimson Panoply of Victory. Sometimes she ventures into the mortal world to search for prey or watch over a particularly bloody battle, but she maintains no sanctums there.

Motivation: To foster battle that features bloody slaughter.

Attributes: Strength 15, Dexterity 5, Stamina 10; Charisma 3, Manipulation 2, Appearance 1; Perception 4, Intelligence 3, Wits 4

Virtues: Compassion 1, Conviction 2, Temperance 1, Valor 5

Abilities: Archery 1, Athletics 4 (Swimming +3), Awareness 4 (Smell +3), Bureaucracy 1, Dodge 5, Integrity 5, Investigation 3, Linguistics (Native: Old Realm; Others: Guild Cant, Seatongue) 2, Lore 1, Martial Arts 7 (Bite +3), Melee 7, Occult 2, Performance 3, Presence 5, Resistance 5 (Underwater +2), Sail 1 (Sea Battles +1), Stealth 5 (Underwater +1), Socialize 1, Survival 4 (Tracking +2, Underwater +1), Thrown 4, War 7

Backgrounds: Allies 5 (Children of Siakal), Celestial Manse 3, Cult 4, Followers 5 (Various Warriors and Pirates), Influence 3, Resources 3, Sanctum 4

Spirit Charms: Siakal has many spirit Charms. Some important ones are specified below.

Affinity Element Control—For six motes of Essence, Siakal can manipulate water around her, causing it to reshape itself, convert to mist or solidify into ice. She can affect the equivalent of seven barrels of water with each use of this power and the effects last for one scene.

Bane Weapon—For five motes of Essence, Siakal can cause one single physical attack with her bite (only) to deal aggravated damage.

Essence Bite—Siakal can spend three motes of Essence, and for a scene, any being that touches or is touched by the goddess takes 1L damage, ignoring armor and soaked only by Stamina.

Excellencies—Siakal has First, Second and Third Excellencies for the following Abilities: Awareness, Dodge, Integrity, Martial Arts, Melee, Presence and War.

General's Prerogative—While in Heaven, the Siakal may summon any single one of her subordinates to her side immediately. Siakal does so only in times of danger or other emergency. She must spend a point of Willpower and a number of motes equal to the (Essence + Willpower) of the subordinate she is summoning.

Hurry Home—For 10 motes and a Willpower point, Siakal can immediately transport herself to the site of any battle in the West. In Yu-Shan, she can use this Charm to instantly return to her sanctum or her divine offices.

Landscape Travel—Siakal may pay five motes of Essence to double her movement rate while swimming.

Materialize—Siakal can materialize for 70 motes.

Paralyze—For six motes, the bite of Siakal temporarily stuns her foe. Instead of taking normal damage, the target's player must make a (Stamina + Resistance) roll with a difficulty equal to the war god's Valor. Failure leaves the victim at -2 dice to all non-reflexive rolls until the tick when Siakal next acts. This power has no affect on beings with an Essence higher than Siakal's.

Principle of Motion—Siakal typically has seven extra actions ready.

Scent of Blood—For one mote, Siakal can sense the closest fresh blood, regardless of distance. Each additional mote spent allows her to sense the next closest source. The goddess sometimes uses this to track down exceptional prey that escapes her initial attack.

Shapechange—Often Siakal appears as a colossal siaka, but when she wants to speak or use hands she takes the form of a frightening gray-skinned woman with a mouthful of fangs and a wicked sword.

Uncanny Prowess—By expending two motes, Siakal may add her Valor to any Dexterity-based roll made in combat.

Join Battle: 8 (if Smell applies: 11)

Attacks:

Fanged Warrior Goddess

Punch: Speed 5, Accuracy 13, Damage 15B, Defense 14, Rate 3

Kick: Speed 5, Accuracy 12, Damage 18B, Defense 10, Rate 2

Clinch: Speed 6, Accuracy 22, Damage 15B, Defense -, Rate 1

Bite: Speed 5, Accuracy 15, Damage 20L, Defense 12, Rate 1

Orca-Bone Sword (Shark's Tooth): Speed 5, Accuracy 14, Damage 27L/4, Defense 12, Rate 2

Special: Shark's Tooth is a six-foot sword made from orca bone set with the teeth of dead spirit sharks. The player of anyone injured by Shark's Tooth must succeed at a (Stamina + Resistance) roll with a difficulty equal to the number of health levels of damage done by the blow after damage is rolled. If the roll fails, the victim suffers +1 difficulty to all Dexterity-based rolls for the remainder of the scene. This penalty stacks if a victim is injured more than once.

Colossal Siaka

Bite: Speed 4, Accuracy 15, Damage 20L, Defense 12, Rate 3

Soak: 35L/40B (Sharkskin or sharkskin buff jacket, 30L/30B, Hardness: 15L/15B)

Health Levels: -0x22/-1x6/-2x6/-4/Incap

Willpower: 7

Essence: 7 **Essence Pool:** 105

Cost to Materialize: 70

Other Notes: None

THE FIVE CELESTIAL ADMIRALS

Humanity is not the first species to ride the waves on finely crafted vessels, but humans have certainly become the greatest proponents of the art of sailing. Other races have passed from the face of Creation or learned to dwell beneath the water. Nonetheless, as surely as water is necessary for life, the waterways of the world are the lifeblood of trade, travel and military exploits. Five regional gods watch over the sailing vessels of Creation, and find themselves torn between the politics of the Division of Waterborne Artifacts in the Bureau of Heaven, the Department of Universal Human Affairs in the Bureau of Humanity and the Division of Journeys in the Bureau of Destiny. Often they engage in personal conflicts with gods from the Bureaus of Nature or Seasons, or the Terrestrial Courts, but such quarrels stem from direct interactions rather than bureaucratic policy.

RUDHIRA THE STORM RIDER

The greatest of the five ship gods is the red-haired Western goddess Rudhira the Storm Rider. The Admiral of the West sails from her Seacalm manse to brave the greatest tempests and watch over those who travel upon the Western Seas. She is reputedly an occasional lover of the Ocean Father, as well as an incomparable sailor. The storm mothers both loathe and fear her for this.

The beautiful goddess with hair the color of a crimson sunset sails an ancient ship cleverly crafted of driftwood bound in black jade, bearing a bejeweled wavecleaver into battle. Rudhira is jealous of other

female sailors, and generally refuses to protect them against malign ocean forces. However, sailing women with naturally red hair are holy to her, and gain her favor. Wise sailors put images of her on their mastheads as talismans against the storm mothers.

Rudhira is ambitious, and hopes to one day seize control over the Bureau of Destiny's Golden Barque, reducing its captain Ruvia to the simple god of roads she believes he should be. The Admiral of the West is also quick to report any storms that are out of place, trying to check the power of the courts of wind and water by subjecting them to the scrutiny of the Western Censor Fakharu. Unfortunately for her, the Censor of the West is no longer vigilant in his duties and is apt to accept bribes to overlook divine indiscretions.

NASELLUS

Nasellus, the ship god of the Blessed Isle wears a crisp black uniform with white jade medals and is in league with House Peleps and the Realm Navy. The Admiral of the Center sails a warship called *Swift Middy Brilliance*, for which an entire class of magitech vessels is named; however, the ship remains dematerialized at all times in deference to the Immaculate Order. Nasellus is notoriously lusty and given to drink, and some wags suggest that he has even wooed the Sea Witch when in his cups. In recent years, the upstart V'neef have begun plying him with their finest wines in hopes of gaining his favor.

BARIS

The ship god of the East does not favor actual ships, as he stays mostly on the rivers, piloting his great bamboo skiff with a long sturdy pole of whalebone. Baris is a friend to fishermen and Guild merchants alike, though his favorite port (and his sanctum) lies in the docks of Great Forks. The Lord of Barges is tall and slender with skin the muddy yellow-brown of river water. Lookshy honors him as the Admiral of the East, but his temple there takes liberties with his appearance as they blend his dress with the standard uniform of the Lookshy Navy. The Linowans portray Baris sailing one of their long canoes, and armed with a long spear. The shape and vessel of the Admiral of the East vary as greatly as the many rivers on which he sails.

BIRANA

The ship god of the South is an indolent god, who sleeps lazily afloat much of the time, and awakens to speed across the sands in a vessel of fire. In recent years, the Admiral of the South has become somewhat enam-

ored of a handsome dunerunner known as Sand, and his Solar Exaltation has only made him more beautiful in her eyes. Frequently, Birana assumes the form of a slothful sailor aboard various Southern ships, but whenever her current ship of duty is set aflame, she assumes control of it and sets forth with red jade armaments to engage in fierce naval battles against the fire-ships of the Fair Folk of the Southern Desert.

PRUINA

The Northern ship god sails a vessel with moonsilver outriggers, which change from secondary supports that guard against frozen bergs floating upon the water to razor-sharp blades that glide across the ice. She was once a secretary to Vanileth, the god of artificial flight, but managed a promotion out of his court. Now the Admiral of the North is carefully considering a bold move—perhaps she can get the airships of the Haslanti added to her dominion. A number of powerful gods in the Bureau of Heaven openly oppose her efforts, though, as violations of the inherent logic of abstract matters. Meanwhile, the white-haired goddess is a favorite of the Haslanti captains who sail the seas and icefields of the North.

HEROES OF THE WEST

Although many refer to some of these notables as villains instead, the heroes of the West are no less extraordinary for the fact. One nation's hero is another's murderer.

CAPTAIN BURUKU

First Captain of Wavecrest, God-Blooded Son of Hamoji

Captain Buruku is not the admiral of the Wavecrest Archipelago's navy, but he might as well be. He is a powerful God-Blooded and the most renowned captain of the isles. Standing six feet eight inches tall and massively built, with beautiful bronze skin and purple hair, Buruku's divine blood is obvious to all. His charisma and godlike beauty are similarly overbearing; women blush at the sight of him, while men quiver in fear and respect.



The Wavecrest Navy does not have an admiral, but the island nation's ruler, the Feathered One, would almost certainly choose Captain Buruku for such a position should war break out with the Coral Archipelago. Many naval officers throughout the West think that such a war is inevitable.

Buruku has no wife, but many male lovers. Although women vie for his attentions constantly, he has no sexual interest in women. This is a grave disappointment to the priesthood of Hamoji.

Motivation: To become a powerful god of the sea and the oceanic patron of the Wavecrest Archipelago.

Attributes: Strength 5, Dexterity 4, Stamina 4; Charisma 4, Manipulation 3, Appearance 5; Perception 3, Intelligence 3, Wits 3

Virtues: Compassion 2, Conviction 4, Temperance 2, Valor 3

Abilities: Archery 1, Athletics 2 (Sea Legs +1), Awareness 3 (Long Distances +1), Bureaucracy 3 (Naval +2), Craft (Wood) 3, Dodge 2, Integrity 3 (Ignoring Women +3), Investigation 2, Larceny 1, Linguistics (Native: Seatongue; Others: Old Realm) 1, Lore 3, Martial Arts 3, Medicine 1, Melee 4 (Swords +2), Occult 3, Performance 3, Presence 5, Resistance 3 (Fire +3), Sail 5, Stealth 1, Socialize 3 (Wavecrest Culture +1), Survival 2 (At Sea +1), Thrown 1, War 4 (Sea Battles +2)

Backgrounds: Allies 3, Artifact 1 (steelsilk sails), Backing 5, Contacts 3, Followers 3, Influence 3, Inheritance 3 (God-Blood), Mentor 1, Resources 4

Powers/Charms: Captain Buruku is the God-Blooded child of Hamoji. Thus far, Buruku has expressed only a limited degree of his power and had little contact with his father.

Attune to Spirit World—For one Willpower or three motes of Essence, Buruku can sense immaterial spirits and entrances to sanctums within range of his senses for one scene.

Dragon's Suspire—For five motes of Essence and one temporary Willpower, Buruku may bellow forth a gout of volcanic fire 10 feet long and five feet wide, doing 4L damage plus extra successes.

Elemental Expression—With a successful Willpower roll, Buruku can expend his Essence to affect or control natural elemental phenomena. A mote of Essence spent either doubles or halves the effects of any natural phenomena, including wind, fog, rain, thunder, undertows, flames and earthquakes. These effects may be used to inflict damage on material beings at the cost of one mote of Essence per health level of lethal or bashing damage,

soaked by the target normally. Buruku cannot spend more than [Essence] motes of Essence in this manner. The control over sea elements, as well as the shaking earth and fire of his father, suggests that Buruku has some sea-god blood in his ancestry.

Essence Pool—Buruku has an Essence pool of 30 motes. He can access nine motes of Essence normally, but the remaining 21 motes require him to spend one Willpower point to gain access for the remainder of the scene.

Principle of Motion—Buruku typically has up to eight extra actions stockpiled.

Join Battle: 6 (7 if Awareness specialty applies)

Attacks:

Punch: Speed 5, Accuracy 8, Damage 5B, Defense 9, Rate 3

Kick: Speed 5, Accuracy 7, Damage 8B, Defense 5, Rate 2

Clinch: Speed 6, Accuracy 8, Damage 5B, Defense -, Rate 1

Perfect Slashing Sword (Tsunami's Crest): Speed 4, Accuracy 13, Damage 9L, Defense 11, Rate 3

Dragon's Suspire: Speed 6, Accuracy 6, Damage 4L, Range 10, Rate 1

Soak: 9L/13B (Perfect lamellar, *Scales of the Deep*, 7L/9B, 0 mobility and 0 fatigue)

Health Levels: -0/-1/-1/-2/-2/-4/Incap

Dodge DV: 5 **Willpower:** 8

Essence: 3 **Essence Pool:** 30

Committed Essence: Buruku typically has Essence committed to the Principle of Motion Charm.


Other Notes: Captain Buruku commands a seaworthy ship known as the *Stormchild*, which boasts valuable steelsilk sails.

LEVIATHAN
Admiral
of the Western
Fleet, Steward
of Luthe

Born
four and a
half centuries
before the

Usurpation, on an isle in the Western Ocean, Leviathan was drawn to service in the Deliberative's navy from an early age. Even as a child, Leviathan was larger than his peers, yet lithe and handsome. As a warrior in the Realm's fleet, he was a prodigy unmatched by few outside of the Exalted. At age 21, already a young officer, Leviathan's scout trimaran was attacked by an angry storm mother and scuttled. Fighting to save his sinking





crew and drive off the wrathful goddess, Leviathan was Exalted by the light of the full moon. The cowed spirit fled his redoubled defense, and Leviathan was brought before Kendik Arkadi, the aged Grand Admiral of the Deliberative's navy. Recognizing Leviathan as the new incarnation of Arkadi's deceased Lunar mate, the powerful old Solar took the young Steward under his wing.

Gifted with the spirit shape of a fearsome killer whale, Leviathan's love of the sea seemingly met with the approval of Luna and the Solar Deliberative. Within a century, the young Lunar had risen to the rank of commodore, and was known for his friendly rivalry with Water-aspected Dragon-Blooded. Despite his strong bond to Arkadi, Leviathan fell in love with the Solar administrator of Luthe, Queen Amyana. Favored by two Solars, the Full Moon became the highest-ranked Lunar within the Realm's navy. When the Usurpation began, Admiral Leviathan was torn between defending his Solar "mate" and defending his lover Queen. Ultimately, he failed both of them, though he ravaged the Dragon-Blooded of the Western Fleet, unleashed a deadly self-destruct protocol that destroyed numerous vessels and assumed the environs of sunken Luthe as his personal territory. Finally, he laid his weapon Islebreaker upon the throne of Luthe so that none save the new incarnation of Kendik Arkadi's Essence might lift it.

In his true human form, Leviathan is a large, handsome man with dark bronze skin and black hair that glisten when wet. Lightly colored patches form the same pattern found on his spirit shape. His moonsilver tattooed totemic true form is that of a gigantic orca. The largest orcas found in Creation are a monstrous 32 feet long, but the Steward of Luthe possesses Knacks that cause his spirit shape to rival the size of a behemoth. For nearly eight centuries, Leviathan has remained in his Emperor Ox Expansion Knack-enhanced orca form, an immense killer whale 96 feet in length. He is one of the most dangerous predators in the ocean.

Motivation: To turn Luthe into the center of a Western culture that dominates the seas of Creation.

Caste: Full Moon

Anima Banner: A strong silver light grows brighter until it finally reveals a great hulking orca that shimmers like the moon.

Spirit Shape: Leviathan's spirit shape is that of a gargantuan orca (killer whale).

Tell: Whatever form he takes, Leviathan's skin is dark with lighter colored markings along the side of his head, chin, neck, chest and underbelly.

Attributes: *Strength 5, *Dexterity 5, *Stamina 7; *Charisma 5, Manipulation 3, Appearance 4; Perception 4, Intelligence 5 (Sail +3), Wits 4

* Caste or Favored Attribute

Spirit Shape (Orca) Attributes: Strength 12 (19 with Emperor Ox Expansion outside mass combat), Dexterity 4 (may use his natural 5 because of Internal Form Mastery), Stamina 8, Appearance 1, one additional -0 Health level

Virtues: Compassion 2, Conviction 3, Temperance 2, Valor 4

Virtue Flaw: Curse of the Lone Wolf

Abilities: Archery 2, Athletics 4 (Swimming +3), Awareness 4, Bureaucracy 3, Craft (Air) 2, Craft (Fire) 2, Craft (Magitech) 5, Craft (Wood) 3, Dodge 3, Integrity 3, Investigation 2, Linguistics (Native: Old Realm; Others: Pelagial, Seatongue, First Age military codes) 3, Lore 5, Martial Arts 6 (orca form +3), Medicine 1, Melee 5 (tridents +1), Occult 5, Performance 3, Presence 5, Resistance 5, Ride 1, *Sail 6, Stealth 3, Socialize 3, *Survival 5, Thrown 5, War 5 (Naval Conflicts +3)

* Favored Ability

Backgrounds: Allies 2 (Swims in Shadows, Dweller in the Deep), Artifact 5, Backing 5 (Seneschals of the Sun Kings), Cult 3, Followers 4 (Whalemen and Pelagotheropes), Heart's Blood 5, Manse 5 (Luthe's Demesne), Reputation 5 (Famous First Age Admiral), Solar Bond 3

Knacks: Deadly Beastman Transformation (Armored Hide, Enhanced Sense: Hearing, Fangs, Inexhaustible, Night Vision, Tail, Water Adaptation), Emperor Ox Expansion, Internal Form Mastery, Life of the Hummingbird, Lightning-Change Style, Mountainous Spirit Expression, Prey's Skin Disguise, Quicksilver Second Face, Selenographic Transmission Technique, Towering Beast Form

Charms: Agitation of the Swarm Technique, Armor-Forming Technique, Boundary-Marking Meditation, Breath-Drinking Executioner Attack, Bruise-Relief Method, Burrowing Devil Strike, Dog-Tongue Method, Durable Battle Mind, External Hide Perfection, Eyes of the Cat, Ferocious Biting Tooth, Fertile Breath Inversion, First Appearance Excellency, First Charisma Excellency, First Dexterity Excellency, First Intelligence Excellency, First Stamina Excellency, First Strength Excellency, First Wits Excellency, Flawless Intelligence Focus (Sail), Flowing Body Evasion (Valor Flaw), Form-Fixing Method, Frenzied Bear Fortification, Furious Hound Pursuit, Glance-Oration Technique, God-Cutting Essence, Golden Tiger Stance, Halting the Scarlet Flow, Hide-



Toughening Essence, Impressions of Strength (Mighty Ram Practice, Ogre's Loving Caress, Rock-to-Pebbles Attitude, Undeniable Might), Instinct-Driven Beast Movement, Instinct Memory Insertion, Instinctive Dexterity Unity, Instinctive Stamina Unity, Instinctive Strength Unity, Keen Hearing and Touch, Lightning Flash Might Methodology, Lightning Stroke Attack, Lodestone Reckoning Manner, Luna's Fortitude, Lunar Hero Style (Armor-Rending Claw Fist, Den Mother Method, Foot Trapping Encounter, Crouching Tiger Stance, Lunar Hero Form, Rabid Beast Attitude, Running Through the Herd, Terrible Wolverine Onslaught, Thousand Claw Infliction), Maintaining the Pack, Many-Armed Monkey Style, Meerkat Alertness Practice, Might-Bolstering Blow, Moonlight Curtain Drawn, North Mastery Technique, Ox-Body Technique (x7, -2 health levels option), Relentless Lunar Fury, Sense-Borrowing Method, Shell-Crushing Atemi, Silver Lunar Resolution, Steadfast Yeddim Meditation, Tearing Claw Atemi, Terrestrial Circle Sorcery, Third Charisma Excellency, Third Dexterity Excellency, Third Perception Excellency, Third Stamina Excellency, Third Strength Excellency, Unstoppable Juggernaut Incarnation, Unstoppable Lunar Wound, Wary Swallow Method, Wasp Sting Blur, Watchful Spider Stance, West Mastery Technique, Wind-Dancing Method

Spells: Calling the Wind's Kiss, Death of Obsidian Butterflies, Demon of the First Circle, Emerald Circle Banishment, Emerald Countermagic, Lightning Whip Smites the Water, Summon Elemental, Written Upon the Water

Combos:

Dancing Salmon Escape (Flowing Body Evasion, Wary Swallow Method, Wind-Dancing Method)
Deadly Torpedo Attack (First Strength Excellency, First Dexterity Excellency, Impressions of Strength, Lightning Stroke Attack, Tearing Claw Atemi, Unstoppable Lunar Wound)
Swift Kraken Mode (Crouching Tiger Stance, First Dexterity Excellency, First Strength Excellency, Foot-Trapping Encounter, Many-Armed Monkey Style, Running Through the Herd, Third Dexterity Excellency, Third Strength Excellency)

Note: Leviathan can activate many Charms in conjunction with Deadly Beastman Transformation or Relentless Lunar Fury *without* a Combo.

Join Battle: 8

Attacks:

Gargantuan Orca Form
Ram (as punch): Speed 5, Accuracy 15, Damage 19B, Defense 16, Rate 3
Bite: Speed 5, Accuracy 14, Damage 19L, Defense 11, Rate 2
Clinch (using mouth): Speed 6, Accuracy 28, Damage 19B, Defense -, Rate 1
Tail Smack (as kick): Speed 5, Accuracy 14, Damage 22B, Defense 12, Rate 2
Deadly Beastman Form
Bite: Speed 5, Accuracy 12, Damage 6L, Defense 9, Rate 1
Punch: Speed 5, Accuracy 13, Damage 6B, Defense 14, Rate 3

ISLEBREAKER (ARTIFACT ●●●●)

Islebreaker is the personal weapon of Admiral Leviathan, crafted for the Lunar by his Solar mentor Kendik Arkadi during the First Age. The moonsilver trident is a potent artifact, capable of crushing artifact ship hulls with the force of a tsunami. Nonetheless, the Admiral's great trident is of little use to most Exalted, as it is enchanted so that it requires others to possess Strength + Athletics of at least 60 to lift or wield; Leviathan and Kendik Arkadi, or any incarnation of their Essences, may wield Islebreaker as normal. When charged with Essence, Islebreaker may deliver particularly devastating blows to objects. During Step 1 of combat, the wielder may spend one mote per extra +1L added to the weapon's base damage dice for a single attack against an object. The wielder may spend up to 60 motes of Essence for extra damage in this manner, but motes are lost even if the blow misses. The extra damage is not subject to Charms or effects that multiply damage, and if such effects are in play the Islebreaker's extra damage is added to the new base damage after they have been calculated. Islebreaker has one hearthstone setting placed where the three prongs meet.

Speed	Acc.	Damage	Defense	Rate	Range	Minimums	Attune	Cost	Tags
5	+2	+8L/+12L	+2	2	40	Str ●●● (special)	6	●●●●●	2, D, R, L, T

Note: These traits do not reflect the moonsilver material bonus for melee or thrown weapons.

NEW KNACK: EMPEROR OX EXPANSION

Prerequisites: Mountainous Spirit Expression, Essence 5, Stamina 5

Lunars with this Knack crush their opposition through their massive spirit shape's sheer might. Spending a point of Willpower when donning the Lunar's spirit shape increases it vastly in size, making it large enough to engage in mass combat as a unit of Magnitude equal to the Lunar's Essence. Represent the Lunar's size outside of mass combat by increasing her Strength and soak by her Essence.

Assuming the Emperor Ox Expansion form takes time. The Speed of the shapeshifting action is measured in long ticks, and even a Lunar with the Lightning-Change Style Knack requires a minute to assume her spirit shape if she's augmenting it with this Knack.

NEW KNACK: SELENOGRAPHIC TRANSMISSION TECHNIQUE

Prerequisites: Essence 3, Intelligence 3

Leviathan developed this shapeshifting refinement Knack to enable him to communicate orders in the dark of night or deep beneath the sea. For one mote of Essence, spent reflexively, the Lunar's body causes her anima to brighten and dim in flickering patterns observable for up to [user's Essence] miles (depending upon visibility). During the First Age, this helped the Lord Admiral coordinate his fleet's naval attacks, and he used it to issue the self-destruct protocol that destroyed much of the fleet during the Usurpation. Luckily for future crews, Shogunate technicians managed to remove the self-destruct mechanisms, once the usurpers discovered their existence. Nonetheless, some remnant vessels of the Old Realm's Western Fleet include still-functioning sensory instruments that detect the signals of this Knack at a range of [user's Essence] miles regardless of visibility, but the purpose of these devices confounds the current captains of these ancient ships. Once the signal pattern is transmitted, the Lunar's anima returns to its current state, increased by one mote if the Knack was powered with Peripheral Essence. If the Steward's anima banner is already flared to the 11+ level, then the range of this Knack is doubled. In the current era, only his whalemen allies and the glowing lights of Luthe's control systems answer Leviathan's messages.

Kick: Speed 5, Accuracy 12, Damage 9B, Defense 10, Rate 2

Clinch: Speed 6, Accuracy 12, Damage 6B, Defense -, Rate 1

Islebreaker Strike: Speed 5, Accuracy 16, Damage 14L/18L, Defense 16, Rate 2

Islebreaker Thrown: Speed 5, Accuracy 14, Damage 14L, Range 60, Rate 2

Soak: 3L/7B (human form); 7L/15B (gargantuan orca form); 8L/12B (Deadly Beastman form)

Health Levels: -0/-1/-1/-2x30/-4/Incap

Dodge DV: 8

Willpower: 9

Essence: 7

Personal Essence: 25 **Peripheral Essence:** 72

Committed Essence: None

Other Notes: Leviathan's moonsilver trident, Islebreaker, rests on an empty throne in Luthe. Whom Leviathan reserves that throne for is a secret he keeps to himself. Combat traits for the weapon are included in the event that he chooses to recover Islebreaker and use it.

These traits are designed for use in a game requiring only the **Exalted** core rulebook, **The Manual of Exalted Power—The Lunars** and this book, on the assumption

that even characters with only core Charms are capable of the world-shaking power appropriate to a Lunar elder of Leviathan's stature. Storytellers running higher-powered games may wish to increase Leviathan's traits using other source material such as **Dreams of the First Age**.

LINTA NG HUT

DUKANTHA

*Infernal Exalt,
Prince of Malfeas*

For nearly 350 years, Dukantha has been the Exalted prince of the Demon-Blooded Lintha Family and unquestioned emissary

of their Yozi progenitor, the Great Mother Kimberly. Born to the unconventional Ng Hut sept, Dukantha was removed from the wealth of the Gajui and the martial dominance of the Haquen. The aristocrat was nevertheless precocious and ambitious, cruel and noble.



At a young age, the traces of Dragon-Blood in his veins led to his Exaltation. The outcaste lord became an intense student of the occult, communing with the isle Oroo as often as he could. During his early years, he argued that the Lintha should seize the Blessed Isle by force and then dominate the world. After being sent to sea by his family, his politics evolved and he advocated using the Lintha's wealth to secure their interests whenever possible, in lieu of sacrificing their blood in fruitless endeavors.

In his 16th year, Dukantha returned to the Cave of Oroo and disappeared beyond the ken of all Lintha. One year later, on the first day of Calibration, Dukantha rose from the earth of the isle. The Family's Yozi mistress transformed his Essence, and he had become one of the Infernal Exalted. Dukantha revealed that he had been with the Great Mother Kimberly, and that she had returned him to Creation to teach her children the proper ways. After various demonstrations of his miraculous power, the Lintha accepted him as the anointed emissary of the Sea That Marched Against the Flame. Dukantha became the central figure of the cult dedicated to the Great Mother, and the Ng Hut became the most prominent of the Greatsepts.

In the three centuries after his Infernal Exaltation, Dukantha has spent virtually all of his time in the Yozi hells, slavishly serving his mistress. He typically returns to Creation only for the five days of Calibration. In his absence, the bureaucracy of the Cult of Dukantha looks to the interests of their prince and the Great Mother. The Infernal outcaste's Bureaucracy and Presence Charms combine with religious zeal to ensure that the Cult is particularly dedicated.

Typically Dukantha is attended by one or two erymanthoi demons, which often remain dematerialized. Should he come to the aid of Bluehaven against a powerful threat, Dukantha will sail *Kimberly's Dawn* from the hellwaters of Kimberly into the sargasso sea that surrounds the isle of Oroo. This demonic vessel is crewed by 144 of the most fearsome blood apes that the Infernal captain could find. Dukantha bears the hearthstone of the Cave of Oroo, the mystic heart of the isle of his people. He goes forth into battle bearing a veritable arsenal of artifact armaments of infernal lead and greening brass. So long as the Lintha serve the purposes of the Sea That Marched Against the Flame, Dukantha will defend them whenever necessary.

Should the Great Mother ask it, Dukantha would sacrifice his entire Family to her whim. He is inexorably her slave. Yet, Dukantha's enemies would be foolish to underestimate the favor that his Yozi mistress gives him.

The Lintha prince bears Kimberly's blood in his veins and her taint upon his Essence. He personally arranged the transport of the 50 Solar Essences that the Neverborn paid to the Yozis, carried in chests of gold and ivory through the Lintha city of the dead into Creation and through the Cave of Oroo into Malfeas. Though they were sealed to living eyes, he was entrusted with the secret devices of Essence-corruption, which the cohorts of Kimberly sent to their brethren in the Underworld and which ultimately created the Abyssals.

Motivation: To serve the Sea That Marched Against the Flame.

Aspect: Water (Infernal Dragon-Blooded)

Anima Banner: Dukantha's corrupted Essence floods forth like the cold, green-black sea of Kimberly


Attributes: Strength 6, Dexterity 6, Stamina 8; Charisma 4, Manipulation 4, Appearance 5; Perception 4, Intelligence 6, Wits 6

Virtues: Compassion 1, Conviction 5, Temperance 4, Valor 5

Abilities: *Archery 5, Athletics 4, Awareness 4, *Bureaucracy 4, Dodge 4, Integrity 5, Linguistics (Native: Seatongue; Others: Old Realm) 1, Lore 5, *Martial Arts 6, *Melee 6 (Daiklave +2), *Occult 6, Presence 5, Resistance 3, Ride 3, *Sail 6, Socialize 4, War 4
* Aspect or Favored Abilities

Backgrounds: Allies 4, Artifact N/A, Breeding 5, Cult 4, Family 5, Followers 5, Henchmen 5, Influence 5 (Lintha), Manse 5 (Gem of Sleep)

Charms: All-Encompassing Earth Sense, Aura of Invulnerability, Auspicious First Meeting Attitude, Bellows-Pumping Stride, Benevolent Master's Blessing, Bestow the Saffron Mantle, Blinding Spark Distraction, Brother-Against-Brother Insinuation, Confluence of Savant Thought, Deck-Striding Technique, Dragon-Graced Arrow, Dragon-Graced Weapon, Dragonfly Finds Mate, Effortlessly Rising Flame, Elemental Bolt Attack, Elemental Burst Technique, Elemental Concentration Trance, Elemental Empowerment Meditation, Eternal Mind Meditation, Falling Star Maneuver, Fine Passage Negotiating Style, First Archery Excellency, First Dodge Excellency, First Integrity Excellency, First Martial Arts Excellency, First Melee Excellency, First Presence Excellency, First Socialize Excellency, First War Excellency, Geese-Flying-South Administration, Ghost-Fire Blade, Glowing Coal Radiance, Hopping Firecracker Evasion, Hurricane-Predicting Glance, Jade Defense, Moth to the Candle, Oath of the Ten-Thousand Dragons (Yozis), Ox-Body Technique (x3), Portentous Comet Deflecting Mode, Ringing Anvil Onslaught, Safety Among Enemies, Sense-Destroying Method,



Sense-Riding Technique, Seven Seas Wind-Luring Chanty, Spirit-Chaining Strike, Spirit-Detecting Mirror Technique, Spirit-Grounding Shout, Spirit-Shredding Attack, Storm-Outrunning Technique, Strength of Stone Technique, Sturdy Bulkhead Concentration, Swallows Defend the Nest, Sweeten-the-Tap Method, Terrestrial Bureaucracy Reinforcement, Terrestrial Hero Style (Become the Hammer, Blade-Deflecting Palm, Currents Sweep to Sea, Disarming Strike Prana, Dragon-Claw Elemental Strike, Drowning Embrace, Flow from the Rocks, Pounding Surf Style, Riptide Method, Terrestrial Hero Form, Trireme Strikes the Rocks), Terrestrial Melee Reinforcement, Third Archery Excellency, Third Athletics Excellency, Third Awareness Excellency, Third Bureaucracy Excellency, Third Dodge Excellency, Third Integrity Excellency, Third Lore Excellency, Third Martial Arts Excellency, Third Melee Excellency, Third Occult Excellency, Third Resistance Excellency, Third Ride Excellency, Third Sail Excellency, Third Socialize Excellency, Third War Excellency, Threshing Floor Technique, Threshold Warding Stance, Unbearable Taunt Technique, Unsleeping Earth Meditation, Warlord's Convocation, Wary Yellow Dog Attitude

Combos:

The prince of the Lintha knows few Combos, as he supplements his easy access to Reflexive Charms with Infernal powers granted by his mistress.

The Tide Goes Forth (Dragon-Graced Arrow, Swallows Defend the Nest)

Vortex of the Mother's Wrath (Dragon-Graced Weapon, Falling Star Maneuver, Ghost-Fire Blade, Ringing Anvil Onslaught)

Supernatural Powers:

In addition to his Terrestrial Charms, Dukantha has access to Infernal powers granted by his mistress Kimberly.

Infernal Aura—For a cost of 10 motes of Essence, Dukantha is sheathed in green fire, appearing huge and terrifying for the rest of the scene. This power operates as the Dawn Caste anima power, except that Infernal Aura always requires 10 motes expenditure (i.e., does not activate automatically at 11+ peripheral motes).

Infernal Resilience—As part of his Infernal Exaltation, Dukantha's body is nearly impossible to destroy. Dukantha may reflexively regenerate health levels at a cost equal to the wound penalty (for example, a -4 health level costs four motes to regenerate), with a minimum cost of 1 mote. He can only activate this power once per action, but may regenerate as many health levels as he can afford. Additionally, Dukantha is immune to poisons and diseases of all sorts.

Infernal Sorcery—Dukantha has learned the art of Infernal sorcery, and is capable of casting spells of the First, Second and Third Circles. Such spells resemble normal sorcery but are tied to the Yozis. Precisely which spells Dukantha knows is up to the Storyteller, though Dukantha has more First Circle than Second Circle spells and little access to the Third Circle. Certainly he knows Song of the Lintha, and Infernal equivalents to Demon of the First and Second Circles, plus Emerald, Sapphire and Adamant Countermagic.

Summon Kimberly's Dawn—For 30 motes of Essence and two temporary Willpower, Dukantha may summon *Kimberly's Dawn* (see p. 147) to his presence, in Creation or the Yozi hells, provided he is close to a body of water sufficient to support the demonic vessel. No contest of wills occurs, but the summoning requires two Shape Celestial Circle Sorcery actions, followed by a Cast Sorcery action. *Kimberly's Dawn* appears immediately when the Cast Sorcery action is performed, provided suitable water is available, and she brings her current crew and passengers.

Summon the Sea That Marched Against the Flame—By taking a six-tick Simple Charm type action, and spending 15 motes of Essence and one temporary Willpower, Dukantha may open a doorway in the sea to Malfeas, allowing Kimberly's corruption to infest the waters around him. For a number of miles in all directions equal to Dukantha's permanent Essence, the sea takes on a cold, green-black color. The sea becomes rank and acidic, dealing 1L environmental damage per action to any living creature soaked by the water. Boats with mundane wooden hulls will perish in a number of minutes equal to half the hull's soak. Ships with First Age hulls were generally designed to be proof against such horrors, and their substance extends the damage period to days instead of minutes.

The water comes alive, and tendrils of the sea lash out at Dukantha's enemies, acting as a clinch with 10 accuracy and 10L damage. A number of tentacles equal to Dukantha's permanent Essence appear, but only two tentacles can attack each opponent at once and the tentacles cannot dodge or parry. Each tentacle has 10L soak, is immune to bashing damage and takes 10 levels of damage to destroy. The tainted sea called up by this power lasts for one scene, although the water remains polluted when it ends.

Note that use of this power is a violation of Kimberly's contract of imprisonment. Strike forces from Yu-Shan go on alert when this power is used, and the Realm Defense Grid registers the attack. As a result, Dukantha is usually reluctant to use the power.

Primordial Maelstrom—Dukantha uses this power only in dire circumstances; to activate it, he must have already activated *Summon the Sea That Marched Against the Flame*. He must spend an additional 20 motes of Essence and another temporary Willpower, and must take a six-tick Simple Charm type action, to cause the corrupted water to form a deadly vortex that pulls anything within its area downward. Dukantha must continue to take Simple Charm type actions to keep the power active, but no further Essence is required. Vessels and individuals in the water take environmental damage as for an acid bath (see **Exalted**, p. 131, damage 5L/action, trauma 5). Ship captains must succeed at a reflexive Wits + Sail roll (standard difficulty) each action to keep their vessels from capsizing, while individuals caught in the vortex must succeed at a Stamina + Athletics roll (difficulty 3) every action to stay afloat. On Dukantha's third action, anyone currently caught within the maelstrom (including him) is shunted through the veil of Creation into the Primordial Sea of the Yozi hells. Such unfortunates continue to suffer the effects of the fetid corpus of Kimberly until they can escape her waters, may face repeated demonic attacks (particularly by *eristrufa*) and must find their own way home.

Join Battle: 10

Attacks:

Punch: Speed 5, Accuracy 13, Damage 6B, Defense 14, Rate 3

Kick: Speed 5, Accuracy 12, Damage 9B, Defense 10, Rate 2

Clinch: Speed 6, Accuracy 12, Damage 6B, Defense -, Rate 1

Infernal Grand Daiklave (Glittering Havoc): Speed 5, Accuracy 17, Damage 18L/4, Defense 15, Rate 3

Infernal Long Powerbow (Foreshortened Transfixion): Speed 6, Accuracy 13, Damage 12L, Range 400, Rate 3 (Green fire arrows, 5L additional fire damage rolled separately)

Soak: 21L/25B (Infernal superheavy plate, *Virescent Dawn Glory*, 17L/17B, -2 mobility penalty, 2 fatigue, Hardness 11L/11B)

Health Levels: -0/-1/-1/-1/-1/-1/-2/-2/-2/-2/-2/-4/Incap

Dodge DV: 9 (7 with armor) **Willpower:** 10

Essence: 8

Personal Essence: 23 **Peripheral Essence:** 61

Committed Essence: 22

Other Notes: Lintha Ng Hut Dukantha's Motivation is tied to his Infernal Exaltation. Altering his Motivation should be difficult on an epic scale, if doing so is possible at all.

CAVE OF OROO (WATER MANSE •••••)

The heart of the Cult of Dukantha is a mystic cave that is seen as the womb and mouth of their people's island sister, Lintha Ng Oroo. This strange structure is a powerful manse formed from the body of the isle.

The Cave of Oroo is a ••••• rated Water manse, and the hearthstone is a Gem of Sleep. The manse has the flaws of Habitability • and Maintenance • and offers 12 Creation points of manse powers: Sympathetic Dream Link, Otherworld Gate (to Kimberly in the Yozi hells) and Sentient (Lintha Ng Oroo). See the **Books of Sorcery, Vol. II—Oadenol's Codex** for details of the hearthstone's power and the manse's traits.

KIMBERY'S DAWN


Demon of the Second Circle, Progenitive Soul of the Tide that Knows No Life, Dam of the Eristrufa

When Dukantha was taken into Malfeas, to submit to the will of the Sea That Marched Against the Flame, a powerful demon of Kimberly sought to gain the Yozi's favor. Known as the Dam of the Eristrufa, mother of the razor-tentacled man-o'-war that writhes beneath the waves of Kimberly, this demon pledged to serve the Yozi's new agent in Creation. Kimberly saw the value in this and remade the Dam into an Infernal ship fit for her Exalted servant.

The Dam's great bloated body twisted and hardened into a sturdy hull, her tentacles braided and stiffened into dragon-ribbed sails, her beak melded into a long horn with which to ram her enemies. The Dam sailed the Sea That Marched Against the Flame, now the flagship of the Lintha's unholy aristocrat, the Infernal Exalted Dukantha. *Kimbery's Dawn* follows every command Dukantha gives, without question, yet he typically chooses to leave her free to conduct naval combat maneuvers without detracting from his tactical attention.

Kimbery's Dawn is a Second Circle demon transformed into an infernal travesty of a warship of the First Age. Membranous dragonwing-style sails spread between blade sharp black coral spines of rigging. A massive razor-tipped horn projects forward to form a mighty ram, and four emerald crystal spines jut forth to form malign weapons as powerful as lightning ballistae. The terrifying beast-ship is 220 feet long, with a beam of 132 feet and a draft of 16 feet.

Motivation: To serve Dukantha and thereby gain the favor of Kimberly.



Attributes: Strength 8*, Dexterity 4*, Stamina 6*; Charisma 1, Manipulation 4, Appearance 0; Perception 2, Intelligence 2, Wits 4

* These physical Attributes apply to actions taken such as attacking with the rigging or firing weapons. Otherwise, *Kimberly's Dawn* operates as a ship.

Virtues: Compassion 1, Conviction 4, Temperance 2, Valor 5

Abilities: Archery 5, Awareness 5, Dodge 2, Integrity 5, Linguistics (Native: Old Realm) 0, Lore 3, Martial Arts 5 (Rigging +2), Occult 2, Presence 5 (Physical Intimidation +2), Resistance 5, Sail 3, Stealth 3

Backgrounds: Allies 1 (Dukantha), Mentor 5 (Kimberly)
Spirit Charms:

Confusion—For six motes of Essence and one Willpower, *Kimberly's Dawn* can cause confusion in a victim. Roll the demon's (Manipulation + Conviction) with a difficulty of the target's Essence. Success indicates that the target is mildly confused, and likely to make mistakes such as choosing the wrong direction at a fork in the path. With at least two extra successes, the target is quite confused and might believe such things as traveling after dark without a lantern is a reasonable thing to do. Four or more extra successes results in a completely addled target, who may do very dangerous things such as scaling a cliff face in the dark or sleeping on the deck of an enemy ship. Fair Folk are immune to this Charm. *Kimberly's Dawn* typically targets ship captains or navigators with this Charm.

Cunning Thief—*Kimberly's Dawn* must touch a target (which may require a successful Dexterity + Martial Arts roll). If this succeeds, the demon may make a reflexive (Wits + Temperance) roll, costing one mote for every two dice, or fraction thereof. For every success the demon achieves, the target loses two motes of Essence. The demon may not steal more motes than twice its Essence.

Dreambane—For 15 motes and one Willpower, *Kimberly's Dawn* can shape the dreams of a sleeping target. The player of the demon rolls (Manipulation + Conviction) with successes controlling the degree of power held by the dream. The target rolls Wits to prevent incidences of dream damage from becoming real damage, with each success preventing one health level. If the target suffers physical damage, she may roll (Willpower + Integrity) to wake up. Damage from this Charm cannot reduce a target below Incapacitated.

Essence Bite—*Kimberly's Dawn* can spend three motes of Essence, and for a scene, any being that touches or is touched by the demon takes 1L damage from chilling cold, ignoring armor and soaked only by Stamina.

Essence Plethora—*Kimberly's Dawn* has 10 extra motes of Essence in her Essence pool.

Excellencies—*Kimberly's Dawn* has First and Second Excellencies for the following Abilities: Martial Arts, Presence and Sail.

Ghostly Presence—This Charm works as the demon's Will-o-Wisp but can create distinct patterns, with a duration up to one scene. The demon may hold conversations while unmanifested, and successes grant control over the light, sound and smell of the scene (which may not exceed a 10-foot radius in any direction).

Harrow the Mind—*Kimberly's Dawn* may create illusions in the mind of a single target, which distract and confuse its victim. The demon must spend 10 motes of Essence and one Willpower to activate this Ability for a scene. The demon's player then makes a (Manipulation + Performance) roll against the target's Mental Defense Value, adding a number of automatic successes equal to the target's Temperance. Only one success is necessary, but additional successes add to the difficulty of any applicable roll made to break free of the illusion. Barring other methods, a victim can break free by spending one Willpower per success *Kimberly's Dawn* gained.

Hurry Home—For 10 motes and a Willpower point, *Kimberly's Dawn* can immediately transport herself to any location within the acrid waters of its mistress. Used in the Yozi hells, the demon may immediately pass to any point on the surface of the seas contained within Malfestas. In Creation, the ship may only transport to a region specifically attuned to Kimberly, such as those created by Dukantha's special powers. This Charm does not allow *Kimberly's Dawn* to pass from Creation to the Yozi hells, or the opposite; the Charm merely enables movement within one or the other.

Landscape Travel—*Kimberly's Dawn* may pay five motes of Essence to move across the water at 70 mph, regardless of the wind direction, for one hour.

Malediction—*Kimberly's Dawn* can inflict a curse on one being with an Essence rating less than the demon's. For 15 motes and one temporary Willpower, the target suffers from terrible misfortune. This curse lasts for one week (although it ends early if the target dies), and causes the victim's player to roll one less die for every action the character takes. Whenever *Kimberly's Dawn* uses this power, the demon becomes visible to astrological and Fate-based effects for the duration of the Charm.

Materialize—*Kimberly's Dawn* can materialize for 55 motes. Whenever *Kimberly's Dawn* carries a crew or passengers, it must cause them to materialize or dematerialize along with it for a cost of one mote per target. Targets who are able to do so may materialize or dematerialize

on their own, and if they choose to do so, then they do not count against the demon's Essence. If there are too many targets for *Kimbery's Dawn* to affect, then the vessel may not materialize or dematerialize.

Measure the Wind—*Kimbery's Dawn* has uncanny senses and, for one mote, may use this reflexive Charm to measure the strength of her enemies.

Principle of Motion—*Kimbery's Dawn* typically has seven extra actions stockpiled.

Shapechange—For one mote of Essence, *Kimbery's Dawn* may take the form of a mundane ship or a large sea creature such as a whale. She can no longer assume her eristrufa or mist forms.

Sustenance—The demon must touch a sleeping mortal to activate this Charm and feed on her dreams. For three motes, the demon may roll (Wits + Temperance), with each success devouring one mote of Essence.

Tracking—*Kimbery's Dawn* may track enemies, even across the water. The vessel spends five motes of Essence, and rolls (Perception + Compassion). The difficulty of the check is equal to the Essence of the creature being tracked (or 1 in the case of a quarry without an Essence trait), modified by any supernatural evasive techniques the quarry can bring to bear.

Will-o-Wisp—For five motes of Essence, the demon causes brief, somewhat muddled manifestations of sound, smell and light, such as a ball of illumination or indistinct hints of conversation. Roll the demon's (Manipulation + Valor). The more successes, the more noticeable these manifestations are (louder, brighter), though the manifestations may not exceed one action in duration. This Charm may not be used in precise ways—no writing words, making pictures in light or speaking distinct phrases.

Join Battle: 9

Attacks:

Ram: Speed 6, Accuracy 11, Damage 30L, Defense 11, Rate 1 (defense inapplicable against ranged attacks or enemies smaller than ship-sized)

Rigging Slash: Speed 6, Accuracy 12, Damage 15L/2, Defense 10, Rate 2 (may only attack or parry against enemies on the deck area)

Infernal Cannons (x4): Speed 6, Accuracy 11, Damage 20L (piercing), Rate 1, Range 1,000

Note: Each infernal cannon may only fire 20 shots per day before the cannon must rest. Firing each cannon requires an action, though *Kimbery's Dawn* may use Principle of Motion to fire more than one. A cannon may only fire once per action, and cannot fire more often even as part of a magical flurry. Each shot costs three motes of Essence. Three cannons fire forward,

one fires aft; all have firing arcs of 270 degrees, with 70 degrees of upward elevation and 15 degrees of down. The attack is a searing beam of green light, drawing its nature from the penetrating beams of Ligier.

Speed: 10/20 mph under sail; 34/70mph under Landscape Travel Charm's power

Maneuverability: -5S (under sail); -2S (under power)

Endurance: Under sail, none; under power, limited only by Essence

Crew: 145/0 (or 145/1 if piloted by Dukantha)

Cargo: No space beyond that taken by the listed crew size

Armor: 50B/50L (Hardness: 50B/50L)

Health Levels: Ux50/Mx30/Cx10/Ix10/D

Weapons: See Attacks, above.

Dodge DV: 0

Willpower: 7

Essence: 4

Essence Pool: 85

Cost to Materialize: 55, plus special regarding others

Other Notes: *Kimbery's Dawn* is treated as a creature of darkness for the purposes of Charms or powers that have special effects. It is also treated as an object for Charms that work differently for objects. For armor, health levels and movement purposes, *Kimbery's Dawn* uses vehicle traits (see *Wonders of the Lost Age*, pp. 31-33).

ADMIRAL TIRAK

Commander of the Navy of the Coral Archipelago, Heroic Mortal

Only five foot ten and 145 pounds, Tirak is nonetheless feared by his enemies and applauded by his allies. One withering glance from this sinister-looking, dark-haired and dark-eyed Westerner is enough to silence all but the bravest or most foolish souls. Admiral Tirak possesses fairly basic skills in personal combat, but these are never tested. He surrounds himself with loyal bodyguards and diligent advisors. Those who threaten him without political backing are summarily beaten, often to death. If someone truly angers Tirak, he will hire assassins to kill their family.

Admiral Tirak is a patriot, and wants nothing less than the ascension of his country to empire. Fellow officers may disapprove of his harsh tactics, but they respect his devotion to Coral. He fights naval battles the same way he fights his personal ones, carefully maneuvering Coral vessels manned with foreign recruits



into battle while husbanding the strength of his own countrymen. His policy of ignoring the dark pasts of naval applicants was initially controversial, but he has quietly demonstrated its pragmatic value. Rewarding the hard work and valor of heroic sailors inspires others to follow suit. Tirak promotes talented naval officers who demonstrate exceptional loyalty and patriotism to his own cadre of captains and staff.

Tirak considers himself an intellectual powerhouse who was wrongfully denied the blessings of Dragon-Blood, even going so far as to become proficient in High Realm and Gateway. He disdains gambling and the use of drugs as the activities of the weak-minded. His studies of thaumaturgy have borne fruit, and he is an adept weather-worker. The private activities of the Admiral are disturbing, and could potentially ruin him if they became public knowledge. Tirak likes women, but he is a sadist who gets his sexual thrills from tormenting them. He is also a homophobe, and has discreetly kidnapped and tortured to death a number of homosexuals. In the past few years, his studies have delved into the Art of the Dead. Initially, the admiral chose to study the dead in order to ward against the threat of the Skullstone Archipelago. Spies from Onyx hope to turn Tirak to the service of the Bodhisattva Anointed by Dark Water, and have delivered Tirak necromantic texts while trying to gather evidence or control of his vices. Thus far, the admiral has been successful in ruthlessly suppressing any trace of his secrets.

Motivation: To turn the Coral Archipelago into a powerful and prosperous empire under his command.

Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3; Charisma 3, Manipulation 5, Appearance 3; Perception 4, Intelligence 4, Wits 3

Virtues: Compassion 1, Conviction 5, Temperance 3, Valor 2

Abilities: Archery 1, Athletics 1 (Swimming +1), Awareness 3 (Spotting Enemy Ships +1), Bureaucracy 4 (Naval Bureaucracy +3), Craft (Water) 1, Craft (Wood) 1, Dodge 3, Integrity 3 (Resist Urge to Gamble or Take Drugs +2), Investigation 3 (Finding People's Weaknesses +2), Larceny 1, Linguistics (Native: Seatongue; Others: Coral Naval Codes, High Realm, Old Realm) 3, Lore 3 (Naval History +1, Gateway +1), Martial Arts 1, Medicine 1 (Torture +1), Melee 1, Occult 3 (Art of the Dead +1, Art of Weather Working +2), Performance 2, Presence 4 (Intimidation +3), Resistance 1, Ride 1, Sail 4, Stealth 2 (Inconspicuously Leaving the Scene +1), Socialize 4 (Sensing Weaknesses +2), Survival 1 (At Sea +1), Thrown 1, War 3 (Naval Combat +1)

Backgrounds: Allies 5, Artifact 2 (cord of winds, freshwater pearl), Backing 5 (Coral Archipelago), Contacts 4 (Coral Archipelago and Onyx), Followers 4, Influence 3, Resources 5

Charms: None

Join Battle: 6 (7 if his Awareness specialty applies)

Attacks:

Punch: Speed 5, Accuracy 5, Damage 2B, Defense 6, Rate 3

Kick: Speed 5, Accuracy 4, Damage 5B, Defense 2, Rate 2

Clinch: Speed 6, Accuracy 4, Damage 2B, Defense -, Rate 1

Exceptional Slashing Sword: Speed 4, Accuracy 6, Damage 6L, Defense 5, Rate 3

Exceptional Thrown Knife: Speed 5, Accuracy 5, Damage 5L*, Range 25, Rate 3

* *Stonefish venom:* Damage 7L/hour, Toxicity 4, Tolerance —, Penalty -4, Resources 3

Soak: 4L/5B (Exceptional chain shirt concealed under clothes, 4L/2B, -0 mobility penalty, 0 fatigue)

Health Levels: -0/-1/-1/-2/-2/-4/Incap

Dodge DV: 3 **Willpower:** 8

Essence: 1

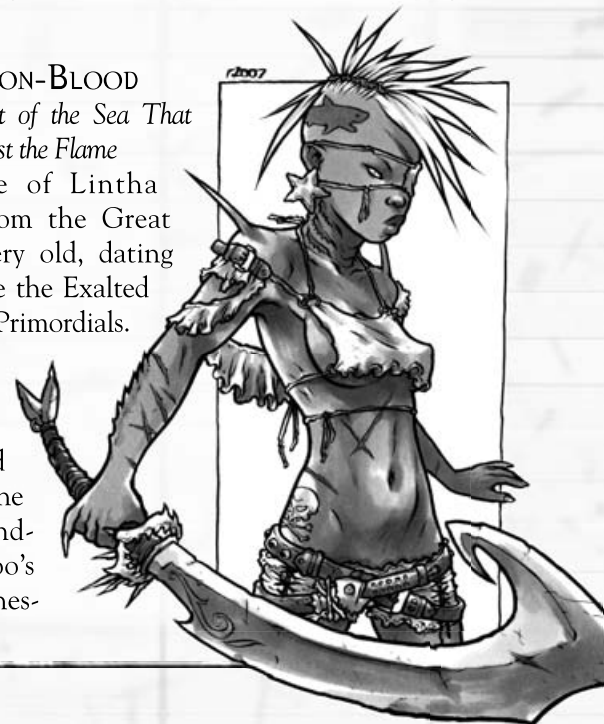
Other Notes: Admiral Tirak is typically protected by five personal bodyguards. Treat them as elite soldiers from *Exalted*, p. 280, though they are not extras. These men are chosen because they are loyal to Tirak and are misogynists or homophobes. Depending upon the circumstances, hundreds of sailors and marines might also join the fray. If pressed in combat, Tirak will hurl three knives coated with rare and deadly stonefish poison, and fight a retreating battle as he maneuvers toward a rallying group of allies.

LINTHA DEMON-BLOOD

Descendant of the Sea That Marched Against the Flame

The line of Lintha descended from the Great Mother is very old, dating back to before the Exalted defeated the Primordials.

Over the ages, unions with outsiders have diluted the blood of the Lintha. Grandmother Ooloo's carefully orches-





trated breeding program has returned some of the strength and power of the Family. Lintha Demon-Blooded are expected to mate before their sterilization and initiation into the Cult of Dukantha. Bred for combat and physical exertion, the Demon-Blooded of the Lintha are typically powerfully built and exceptionally healthy. Their natural attributes are enhanced by a brutal training regimen.

Motivation: Varies. A typical Motivation for a Lintha Demon-Blooded might be, "To build a personal fleet and become a revered elder."

Attributes: Strength 4, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3; Charisma 3, Manipulation 3, Appearance 2; Perception 3, Intelligence 3, Wits 4

Virtues: Compassion 1, Conviction 3, Temperance 2, Valor 3

Abilities: Archery 3, Athletics 2, Awareness 2, Bureaucracy 3, Craft (Wood) 1, Dodge 3, Integrity 2, Larceny 3, Linguistics (Native: Seatongue; Others: Old Realm, Flametongue) 2, Lore 1, Martial Arts 2, Medicine 1, Melee 3, Occult 1, Presence 2, Resistance 3, Sail 4, Stealth 1, Socialize 1, Survival 1, Thrown 3, War 3

Backgrounds: Allies 2 (other Lintha), Backing 2, Contacts 2, Inheritance 1 (Demon-Blood), Mentor 1, Resources 2

Powers/Charms:

Attune to Yozi Hells—For one Willpower or three motes of Essence, the Demon-Blooded can sense demons (whether material or immaterial) and Infernal magic within range of his senses for one scene.

Essence Pool—The Demon-Blooded has an Essence pool of 20 motes. He can access six motes of Essence normally, but the remaining 14 motes require him to spend one Willpower point to gain access for the remainder of the scene.

Excellencies—The Demon-Blooded has First Excellencies for Athletics, Awareness, Melee and Sail. He may add no more than (Attribute + Ability) dice to a roll with these Charms.

Landscape Travel—For five motes, the Demon-Blooded doubles his rate, when swimming or using watershoes, for the duration of the scene.

Wyld Armor—With this Charm, the Demon-Blooded protects himself against the ravages of the Wyld. For three motes, the Demon-Blooded adds (Essence) dice to his resistance against the Wyld for a full day. For every two motes committed to the Charm, the Demon-Blooded can extend this protection to one other person.

Mutations: Almost half the Lintha population now carry the Gills affliction, even though the original Lintha race had no such mutation. Lintha with gills never suffer atrophied lungs.

Join Battle: 6

Attacks:

Punch: Speed 5, Accuracy 6, Damage 4B, Defense 7, Rate 3

Kick: Speed 5, Accuracy 5, Damage 7B, Defense 3, Rate 2

Clinch: Speed 6, Accuracy 5, Damage 4B, Defense -, Rate 1

Exceptional Auhzian: Speed 4, Accuracy 9, Damage 9L, Defense 8, Rate 2, Tags D

Soak: 5L/11B (Reinforced buff jacket, +5L/+8B, -2 mobility, 2 fatigue)

Health Levels: -0/-1/-1/-2/-2/-4/Incap

Dodge DV: 4/2 **Willpower:** 5

Essence: 2 **Essence Pool:** 20

Other Notes: These traits represent a sample Lintha Demon-Blooded; individuals may vary significantly. Demon-Blooded Lintha are typically heroic mortals rather than extras. Additionally, Demon-Blooded Lintha heal, bleed and resist disease as Exalted due to the strength of these Lintha's blood.

MUTANTS AND BEASTMEN


The West is home to many Wyld mutants and beastmen. These individuals are sometimes still human enough that they might Exalt, but few humans would

THE AUHZIAN

pronounced OW-zee-ahn

Reveled as the trademark weapon of the Lintha, the auhzian is a razor-sharp straight-bladed sword with a wide, serrated hook curving back from the tip. This hook is used for disarming and for scrambling up the sides of enemy ships. An auhzian has no soft hilt covering, and the hilt, pommel and hand guard all feature pointed blades that can be used to stab and cut. Successful Lintha often inherit, are rewarded with or commission an exceptional auhzian.

Speed	Acc	Damage	Defense	Rate	Minimums	Cost	Tags
4	+2	+4L	+1	2	S•••,D•••	•••	D



claim them as anything but a breed of monster. The following entries, for Deep Sages, Kaigani Berg Riders, pelagotheropes, sharkmen and Shadow Swimmers, present packages of Wyld mutations common to each breed.

Traits for mortals can be found starting on **Exalted**, p. 278. Apply the packages of mutations presented here to determine the traits of the various types of Western Wyld mutants and beastmen.

WYLD MUTATIONS

Rules for Wyld mutations, and numerous examples of them, can be found in the **Exalted** core rulebook, beginning on p. 288. Additional rules and examples may be found in the **Manual of Exalted Power—Lunars** (p. 206) and **The Compass of Celestial Directions, Vol. II—The Wyld** (p. 144).

This section offers additional Wyld mutations, with an eye toward those that are particularly suitable for denizens of the West.

POXES:

Bio-luminescence: The character can give off a luminescent glow that provides enough light to see with up to 10 yards away while underwater.

Changing Coloration: This pox is an inferior version of Chameleon affliction. The character cannot use her control over her skin tone to conceal herself, but she can change her markings and skin color at will to form decorative patterns. Deep Sages have developed a non-verbal language using skin color, which is their preferred method of communication. A character can learn this language as a normal Linguistics specialty but cannot communicate with this language unless he also has this pox.

Enhanced Senses (fogsense): This pox works as a version of the normal *Enhanced Senses* pox, but it only grants the mutant the ability to ignore all fog for the purposes of visibility conditions, and to apply the normal pox's bonus of two dice to Awareness rolls involving targets concealed by fog. The ability to pierce fog depends on a combination of enhanced sight and hearing, and mutants who regularly use fogsense often assume an unnaturally quiet lifestyle.

Mouth Tentacles: This pox causes the character's mouth to be surrounded by short tentacles ranging in length from six inches to 24 inches. These tentacles are very weak, essentially a less functional (and less easily concealed) version of the *Prehensile Tail* affliction.

Sonar: The character constantly emits high-pitched sounds and visualize his surroundings from the resulting echoes. Mechanically, the character can see underwater

far beyond her normal visual range. The character can also ignore all penalties for blind-fighting as long as she has access to this mutation.

AFFLICTIONS:

Shark Sight: The character can identify living targets at great range by sensing their internal Essences. The range for this sight is 10 yards while out of water or 200 yards while in water. *Shark Sight* also forms the basis of the Shadow Swimmers' unusual Essence-based language. A character can learn this language as a normal Linguistics specialty but only if he also has this mutation.

ABOMINATIONS:

Fish-Body: The character's legs are replaced with the lower half of a large fish, shark or dolphin. Alternately, the character's legs might be replaced with a multitude of tentacles similar to the lower half of a large squid or octopus. In the former case, the character's swimming speed is multiplied by four. In the latter case, swimming speed is only multiplied by two, but the character gains the Tentacles blight for free. In either case, the character gains +2 to all Athletics rolls while underwater, but moves at only half normal movement rate while out of water.

Fog Carrier: The mutant carries a bit of the frozen fog of the Northern Wyld with her wherever she goes. Frigid mist flows from her body in a radius of approximately one yard. Anyone engaging the mutant in hand-to-hand combat suffers the potentially deadly effects of frozen fog. This thin layer of mist is not sufficient to interfere with normal visibility, though the mist may play a role in suitable stunts. See **The Compass of Celestial Directions, Vol. II—The Wyld** for complete rules for frozen fog.

PELAGOTHROPE

Pelagotheropes are unquestionably the most common Wyld-tainted humanoids of the Western Ocean. Strictly speaking, any human with obvious Wyld mutations that enhance her ability to operate in the water and to adapt to a saltwater environment is a pelagotherope. However, many pelagotheropes display other mutations, which typically divide them from one another in their own eyes and those of outsiders. Bloody battles over oceanic territory are at least as common among pelagotheropes as similar conflicts are among land-dwellers.

Pelagotheropes differ greatly in the degree to which they are bound to the sea. Some pelagotheropes have merely been adapted to the Western Ocean, their skin turned blue or green, with webbed hands and feet. These tribes may drink saltwater without harm and hold their

breath for longer periods of time, but they must ultimately live above water. Others have mutated so that they have functioning gills in their necks, cheeks or chests, allowing them to breath water and air alike. These pelagotheropes live beneath the waves, although some tribes must raise their young on the shore because their gills form over time rather than being present at birth. Still other pelagotheropes have gills, but suffer from atrophied or absent lungs, and these mariners are confined to the undersea. Tribes that can breathe air or water equally, and whose young do not require air, are among the most elusive and aggravating raiders of the West. The most aberrant of pelagotheropes are barely human at all.

Pelagotherope breeds are spread across the Western Ocean. Northern breeds often have thick layers of fat and leathery skin, more reminiscent of seals than fish. Southern tribes often have color-changing skin that camouflages them from their enemies. Those pelagotheropes that travel furthest to the West are often assimilated into the Wyld, becoming stories of cold-blooded marine raiders, seductive mermaids or withered fonts of piscine wisdom.

Luthan pelagotheropes are especially mutated compared to their surface cousins, and may have almost any mutation.

Wyld Mutations: All pelagotheropes have the *pox Water Adaptation*. Most also possess the Gills affliction (roll for lung atrophy). Some pelagotheropes have one or more other Wyld mutations, the most common being *Chameleon*, *Enhanced Sense*, *Fangs*, *Fish Scales*, *Night Vision*, *Thick Skin*, *Tail*, *Ugly* and *Wyld Assimilation*.

SHARKMAN

The Great Western Ocean is home to a variety of monstrous humanoid shark creatures. Sharkmen are the most feared and numerous beastmen breed found in the West. They breed rapidly and can easily escape into the water if a conflict goes poorly for them. These beastmen are fully amphibious, and raise their young underwater. As creatures of the Wyld, sharkmen's forms can vary significantly, but most sharkmen belong to fairly stabilized breeds. Sharkmen are savage warriors with nigh-endless hunger, and no regard for other life forms. Those sharkmen who adopt any semblance of Creation's cultures typically worship the bloodthirsty goddess Siakal (see p. 138).

The people of Wavecrest, the Neck, Coral and Skullstone consider sharkman-hunting a deed of valor and a public service. Unfortunately, it is easy to confuse sharkmen with superficially similar creatures that are usually even more dangerous, and doing so can be a fatal

mistake. Fair Folk of the Western Seas spawn a type of hobgoblin warrior known as siaka-men. The children of Siakal (see p. 131), and their divine matron, can assume a humanoid shark form. Most sharkmen tribes fiercely attack siaka-men invaders, with neither side likely to give any quarter. The children of the Western war goddess are often treated as ancestor spirits.

Wyld Mutations: *Poxes:* Elemental Adaptation: Water, Enhanced Smell, Fangs, Shark Hide (as Fish Scales), Large; *Afflictions:* Gills (no lung atrophy), Wyld Assimilation (for Wyld-dwellers only); *Deficiencies:* Atrophy (Intelligence), Ugly; *Debility:* Diet (Raw Meat); *Deformity:* Short Life

Other Notes: Sample traits for a beastman can be found in **Exalted**, pp. 282-283. Simply replace the Wyld mutations with those found here. Sharkmen rarely wear armor, as it restricts their underwater movement. If they use weapons, these are usually javelins, spears or knives.

SHADOW SWIMMER

Shadow swimmers are fully described on p. 114. Most use the trait package for regular troops or elite soldiers.

Wyld Mutations: *Poxes:* Claws, Elemental Adaptation (Water), Enhanced Senses (Smell), Enhanced Senses (Underwater Vision), Shark Hide (as Fish Scales), Large; *Afflictions:* Gills (no lung atrophy), Shark Bite (as Tusks), Shark Sight. Shadow Swimmers of exceptional breeding often possess the *Huge* affliction.

DEEP SAGE

Deep Sages are fully described on p. 113. Many use the trait package for savants/elders/thaumaturges.

Wyld Mutations: *Poxes:* Claws, Elemental Adaptation (Water), Changing Coloration, Mouth Tentacles; *Afflictions:* Toxin. Deep Sages of exceptional breeding often possess the *Bio-luminescence* pox. Some also possess the *Tentacles* blight.

KAIGANI BERG RIDER

Unlike most Wyld mutant types, all Kaigani have a singular origin. The pirate warlord Kaigan and his cutthroats terrorized the sea-lanes of the Wavecrest Archipelago for decades before being crushed by Realm Navy forces under Peleps Ursa. The broken pirate fleet fled into the ice floes of the North and disappeared from history. In recent years, a horde of Wyld barbarians has emerged from the North, calling themselves the Kaigani and claiming descent from the fugitive corsairs. Finding regional resistance from the Imperial Fleet scant in the

current age, the scions of the lost pirates have taken to plundering the Northeastern Seas again.

Kaigani sail from the North astride massive icebergs, which seem to move according to the desires of the Wyld-tainted raiders. Banks of the deadly frozen fog of the Northern Wyld surround the Kaigani's icy fleets and cling to the berg riders. Emerging from the pale mist, the Kaigani fight in the nude, and foes are dismayed by the sight of their transparent frozen flesh, the azure blood that flows sluggishly beneath glassy skin and the dim outlines of internal organs in grossly displayed motion. Their weapons are typically axes and spears made of ice hardened by thaumaturgy and stained with frozen blood.

The magic displayed by the berg riders is intriguing and disturbing to their enemies. Kaigani Wyld shamans specialize in the thaumaturgical Art of Weather Working. They know rituals that can direct the path of floating icebergs and banks of frozen fog. In addition, they perform Enchantment rituals that combine with the unnatural cold to allow their people to use weapons carved from ice. Kaigani speak a strange dialect that seems to be a corrupted form of Seatongue, though survivors of attacks report that the raiders are eerily silent during battles.

Wyld Mutations: *Poxes:* Elemental Adaptation (Air), Enhanced Senses (fogvision); *Deficiencies:* Temperature Sensitivity (heat); *Abominations:* Fog Carrier, Stone Body (ice)

Other Notes: Sample traits for a Wyld barbarian or Wyldshaman can be found in *Exalted*, pp. 286-288. Simply add the Kaigani Wyld mutations and some dots of Sail.

MONSTERS AND ANIMALS OF THE WEST

The West is home to many creatures dangerous to human life. Some are creatures of Creation, whose natural characteristics are inherently threatening. Others are products of the Wyld, the Primordials or other powerful figures. This section includes a sampling of such creatures, and additional ones can be found in such sources as the *Exalted* core rulebook and *The Compass of Celestial Directions*, Vol. II—The Wyld.

MONSTERS

OLIPHEM

Watcher of the Sea

Before Creation became what it is now, Oliphem watched over its waters, guiding friendly ships to safety. Standing more than 150 yards tall, this giant of stone and iron walked upon the surface of the Western Sea,

shining warning light from the great lens that Oliphem possessed in place of a face. From this lens, Oliphem could see everything that occurred on the surface of the ocean, and the Watcher of the Sea would signal ships from afar to steer them away from danger. Many sailors used Oliphem's signal light as an important point of navigation.



Oliphem refused to choose sides in any conflict, for the race of beings Oliphem once honored above all others was devoured in the time of the Primordials and existed no more. The ships Oliphem once protected sail the seas no longer, but Oliphem nonetheless protected other vessels out of an endlessly abiding sense of duty. Unfortunately for the Watcher of the Sea, this neutrality was to prove Oliphem's tragic downfall. When the Exalted went to war against the Lintha, Oliphem helped fleets on both sides equally. The Solar prince Desus determined to put an end to this, and plied the Watcher with exquisite offerings and flattering words. Timing his plans with those of the Exalted fleets, Desus struck Oliphem by surprise, shattering its great lens with a single blow from Desus's mighty fist. Caught unawares, scores of Lintha vessels perished and Solar sorcerers struck the isle of Oroo with a catastrophic storm.

Nearly blinded (at least relative to its peerless sight), and in terrible pain, Oliphem could not keep Desus from escaping, and the Solar returned to his people a great hero. The Watcher of the Sea wandered the oceans, alone and bitter. Every day, Oliphem sinks beneath the waves to slumber on the seabed, rising to the surface as night falls.

Oliphem continues to steer vessels away from harm, although the Watcher's abilities to do so are severely curtailed. Nonetheless, it can still see about as well as a man standing atop a lighthouse 150 yards high. The Watcher of the Sea does not save ships out of concern for the people who sail them, but because of Oliphem's conviction in its ancient duty. Whatever Oliphem's motives, numerous stories tell of it helping desperate sailors during terrible storms, driving ships away from submerged reefs or pushing broken vessels to shore before they sink.

The return of the Solars creates an interesting situation for the Watcher of the Sea. It hates Desus with an undying passion, and will surely try to destroy

the newest incarnation of his Essence in a fit of uncontrollable rage should Oliphem ever encounter him. Unbeknownst to Oliphem, the Solars' return could prove to be the Watcher's salvation. A skilled Solar from the Twilight Caste could certainly fix Oliphem's lens, restoring the Watcher to its former glory. Sadly, the race that the Watcher originally served has been extinct since before the dawn of the First Age, so restoring Oliphem's lens cannot heal the Watcher's sense of aimlessness.

Motivation: To protect the ships that sail upon the sea.

Attributes: Strength 20, Dexterity 5, Stamina 15; Charisma 5, Manipulation 4, Appearance 2; Perception 2, Intelligence 7, Wits 5

Virtues: Compassion 2, Conviction 5, Temperance 2, Valor 5

Abilities: Archery 7 (Piercing Gaze +3), Athletics 5 (Balancing on Rough Waters +3), Awareness 2, Dodge 4, Integrity 5 (Sense of Duty +3), Investigation 3 (Finding Ships +3), Lore 5 (Ancient History +3), Martial Arts 5, Occult 2, Presence 5, Resistance 5, Survival 1

Powers:

Indestructible—Oliphem may only be harmed by sorcery or attacks enhanced with Essence. Additionally, Oliphem can parry with its arms and legs, as they are tough enough to deflect most attacks. Oliphem effectively has an unlimited number of Incapacitated health levels, and Oliphem's body heals from even the most crippling damage at the same rate as an Exalted. Only power on the order of the Celestines or the Primordials can actually kill Oliphem. A Solar might be able to do so with a Solar Circle Sorcery spell created solely for the purpose of destroying the Watcher.

Piercing Gaze—For five motes of Essence, Oliphem could release a burning stream of cold, blue-tinted light at a range of 10 miles. This attack mode is currently inoperable, as the Watcher's lens is not indestructible.

Sense Domain—For five motes of Essence and one temporary Willpower, Oliphem could automatically observe everything that occurred on the surface of the Western Ocean. The Watcher of the Sea did not understand everything it saw, and could be deceived. This power lasted for an entire day. This power is currently inoperable due to the broken lens.

Walk on Water—Oliphem can walk on the surface of the water as though it were dry land, or reflexively choose to sink beneath the waves like a stone. The Watcher can also walk on land, but has never been known to do so.

Join Battle: 7

Attacks:

Punch: Speed 5, Accuracy 11, Damage 20B, Defense 12, Rate 3

Kick: Speed 5, Accuracy 10, Damage 23B, Defense 8, Rate 2

Clinch: Speed 6, Accuracy 25, Damage 20B, Defense -, Rate 1

Piercing Gaze: Speed 6, Accuracy 20, Damage 25A, Rate 3, Range 10 miles**

Note: Oliphem cannot currently use its Piercing Gaze attack.

Soak: 27L/30B (Stone and iron construction, 20L/15B, Hardness: 20L/15B)

Health Levels: -0x30/-1x30/-2x30/-4x10/Incap

Dodge DV: 9

Willpower: 10

Essence: 9

Essence Pool: 140

Other Notes: The Piercing Gaze attack is only available if someone fixes Oliphem's lens. Fixing the lens would also raise Oliphem's Perception and Awareness traits to 7, and increase the range of the Watcher's ability to detect events on the surface of the ocean.

PELAGIAL

Pelagials are hideously mutated creatures, too inhuman to be graced with Exaltation, yet they are still humanoid. Their upper torsos appear to be those of a man or woman, with a thick layer of blubber to protect them from the

cold. Their hair is long and thick, like kelp, and their eyes are huge and black, adapted to seeing in the depths of the ocean. Their lower halves have been transformed into those of a manatee or bull seal. They are huge, and ponderous on land, but their tails and webbed hands help them swim swiftly through the watery depths where they live. Pelagial skin is faded to a pale white, rarely touched by the sun.

Pelagials have scavenged the bottom of the sea, and conquered many of its demesnes. Despite having no Exalted, the pelagials' culture produces an amazing number of savants capable of recreating minor artifacts or manses. Literacy is prevalent, and the secrets of past ages await discovery in countless pelagial hoards.

Motivation: Varies. A typical Motivation for a pelagial might be, "To conquer the isles of the West in the name of their Yozi patron."



Attributes: Strength 6, Dexterity 2, Stamina 5; Charisma 3, Manipulation 3, Appearance 1; Perception 4, Intelligence 2, Wits 3

Virtues: Compassion 1, Conviction 2, Temperance 2, Valor 2

Abilities: Athletics (Swim +3), Awareness 3, Bureaucracy, Craft (Earth) 2, Dodge 3, Integrity 2, Investigation 2 (Search +2), Linguistics (Native: Pelagial; Others: Seatongue) 1, Lore 2, Martial Arts 4, Melee 2, Occult 2, Performance 1, Presence 2, Resistance 1 (Against Knockback +3), Socialize 3, Stealth 3, Survival 1, Thrown 2, War 1

Backgrounds: Allies 3, Artifact 2, Manse 1, Resources 4

Charms: None

Wyld Mutations: *Poxes:* Claws, Elemental Adaptations (Air, Water), Fangs, Large, Longevity, Night Vision; *Deficiencies:* Hungry, Ugly; *Afflictions:* Gills, Huge, Prehensile Tail, Thick Skin; *Debilities:* Lame

Join Battle: 6

Attacks:

Bite: Speed 5, Accuracy 6, Damage 6L, Defense -, Rate 1

Claw: Speed 5, Accuracy 6, Damage 6L, Defense 6, Rate 3

Punch: Speed 5, Accuracy 7, Damage 6B, Defense 8, Rate 3

Clinch: Speed 6, Accuracy 6, Damage 6B, Defense -, Rate 1

Coral Spear: Speed 5, Accuracy 5, Damage 10L/13, Defense 6, Rate 2

Soak: 2L/13B (Thick hide and layer of blubber, 2L/8B)

Health Levels: -0/-0/-0/-1/-1//1/-1/-1/-2/-2/-4/Incap

Dodge DV: 2 **Willpower:** 5

Essence: 1

Other Notes: These traits are for an average pelagial. Traits between individual pelagials will vary greatly. See pp. 123-127 for more information on the pelagials, their dying empire and their last city.

SINGER OF THE DEEP

These strange creatures were once men, until they were tainted by the Western Wyld. Now they are fearsome humanoid fish. Magical examination by Realm savants reveals that even singers' souls have been altered beyond humanity. Their skins are scaly, and their backs sport winglike fins that spread when the singers take to the air. Their "song" is caused by air whistling through these fins, as the singers launch themselves up to 100 yards in the air and glide to attack their prey. Hearing this song causes paralyzing sensations of fear and uncertainty in

creatures not immune to such things.

The singers' numbers were previously held in check by Water-aspected Dragon-Blooded, but such patrols have been scarce since the disappearance of the Scarlet Empress, and the numbers of singers have increased considerably in recent years. Wild singers of the deep usually hunt in packs, launching from the sea with a flick of their powerful, finned tails. Diving upon their prey from above, the singers attack with a crushing slap of their tails while swooping past or by dragging the foe beneath the waves. The pelagials once controlled whole legions of tamed singers, but as pelagial society atrophies, the armies grow feral.

Singers cannot stay out of water for long, asphyxiating in air as a human would underwater after about five minutes. A singer who has landed on the ground—or a ship deck—can still fight until the singer suffocates or manages to leap back into the water.

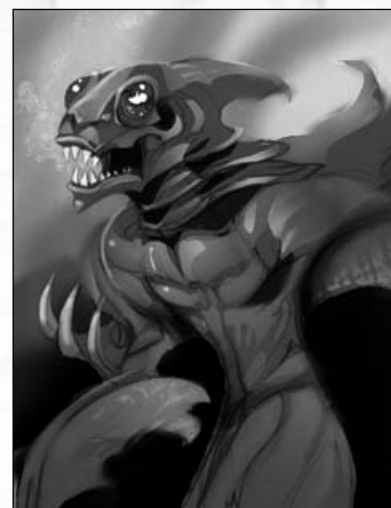
Attributes: Strength 4, Dexterity 4, Stamina 2; Charisma 1, Manipulation 1, Appearance 1; Perception 3, Intelligence 3, Wits 2

Virtues: Compassion 1, Conviction 1, Temperance 1, Valor 2

Abilities: Athletics 4 (Fly +2, Swim +1), Awareness 2, Dodge 5, Integrity 1, Investigation 1, Martial Arts 5, Medicine 3, Presence 1, Resistance 5, Stealth 3, Survival 1

Supernatural Powers:

Fearsome Song—Singers of the deep emit a sound that drives fear into the hearts of all who hear it. Players of characters who hear the howl must make a reflexive Willpower check every action as long as their characters can hear the song. A successful roll indicates that the character resists the song's effects, while a failure applies a -2 dice internal penalty to all actions, and a botch causes the character to cower in fear until his player succeeds in a Willpower check. Either fear effect is an unnatural mental influence, which can be thrown off for one action for a cost of one temporary Willpower. Creatures that have been affected by the Wyld, including singers of the deep, are immune to the ill effects of this power. Instead, they get two extra dice on any Join Battle rolls, and their permanent Willpower and Valor ratings are temporarily increased by one so long as they hear it—the



song makes them feel strong and brave. These bonuses do not stack; multiple songs do not increase the bonus.

Join Battle: 4

Attacks:

Tail: Speed 5, Accuracy 8, Damage 16B/4 (piercing), Defense 6, Rate 1

Talons (lethal clinch): Speed 6, Accuracy 9, Damage 5L, Defense -, Rate 1

Note: A target clinched by a diving singer of the deep is automatically pulled into the water with it.

Soak: 2L/4B (Scaly skin, 2L/2B)

Health Levels: -0/-0/-0/-1/-1/-2/-2/-4/Incap

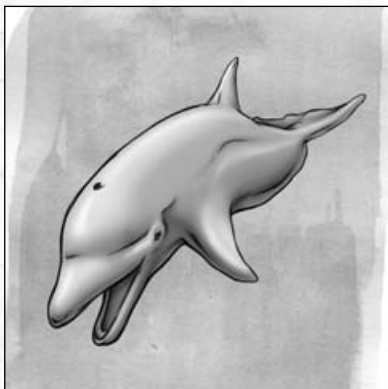
Dodge DV: 4

Willpower: 3

Essence: 1

Other Notes: Singers of the deep might occasionally be extras. A singer on land suffers a -4 mobility penalty, and the singer's song ceases. A successful attack that damages a gliding singer causes it to cease its song, and the singer's player must make a (Dexterity + Athletics) roll at difficulty 3 for the singer to avoid falling from its current height. Singers of the deep are far too Wyld-tainted to Exalt, and despite their high Intelligence score, they're no longer self-aware.

ANIMALS



Dolphin

These marine mammals are renowned for their playfulness and their friendly interactions with sailors. Stories of dolphins rescuing hapless humans from harm are ubiquitous among seafaring people. Some Western tribes honor the dolphins

and their animal spirit patrons in religious ceremonies. Dynasts, particularly of House Cynis and House Sesus, sometimes capture and train dolphins. Most sailors are simply happy to see a dolphin swimming alongside their ship, considering such events auspicious.

Dolphins range throughout the oceans, although they prefer the warm seas of the South. Most breeds have excellent eyesight, but all of them possess the ability to echolocate, projecting and sensing sound waves to perceive their surroundings. Dolphins are cunning, gregarious and intelligent creatures. If they have any particular failing, it might be that they seem to be as fond of other anthropomorphic creatures (including Fair Folk) as the dolphins are of humans.

Grelidaka, the Thousand Hungry Wings

The skies of the West are best known for their fearsome storms, yet the potential fury of an oncoming tempest is sometimes eclipsed by the ravenous Wyld-tainted birds known as grelidaka. Gathering in terrifying flocks of



black, screeching birds with red eyes and serrated beaks, swarms of these misshapen predators are called the Thousand Hungry Wings by frightened survivors and those who listen to the survivors' tales. A flock of these screaming mutants will fall upon the unwary crew of a ship, descend into an island village, attack other birds or sweep across an island devouring wild boars and other beasts. The frenzied avians range from as small as a sparrow to as large as an albatross, though they average around the size of a goose with a wingspan of six feet.

The Thousand Hungry Wings are nomadic, moving from one island to the next after stripping their previous hunting ground bare. A flock of these birds always seems to work together as a single entity, with the largest and most agile members assuming lead roles solely due to their greater aptitude. Lone grelidaka, separated from their flock, sicken and eventually die. Indeed, this shared existence is so ingrained that the Wyld-tainted birds do not lay eggs as other birds do; instead, after mating, the largest specimens split into two smaller birds. Grelidaka mate only while consuming the flesh of fresh prey, and virtually all of their attacks occur just before an incoming storm. Scholars believe that the birds are driven by tempests as surely as other birds migrate with the change of seasons. Sometimes other forces drive the direction of a flock—Shepolpa, the Goddess of Hungry Waters, has periodically caused grelidaka to plague the Neck. Western shamans claim that whenever the Thousand Hungry Wings consume the dead corpse of one of their own that the feasting bird splits into three birds, so many communities despair of actually fighting the grelidaka and prefer to hide behind battened down windows, as though the birds were a passing storm.

Other Notes: The traits on page 160 represent a single grelidaka, which will generally be treated as an extra. The Thousand Hungry Wings are nearly always encountered in flocks of at least 100 birds, and therefore, typically use the mass combat rules. Because they are

smaller than human targets, up to seven grelidaka can attack a single human target at a time.

Thousand Hungry Wings

Description: A flock of the terrible Wyld-tainted birds attacks *en masse*.

Commanding Officer: The largest grelidaka in the flock

Armor Color: None

Motto: Screech!

General Makeup: 100 to 150 grelidaka. For larger flocks, the Storyteller should increase the flock's Magnitude.

Overall Quality: N/A

Magnitude: 3

Drill: 5

Close Combat Attack: 4 **Close Combat Damage:** 1

Endurance: 9 **Might:** 1 **Armor:** 1

Morale: 5 (perfect)

Formation: Typically, grelidaka birds travel in an unordered formation, but eerily, during attacks they organize into skirmish or relaxed formation without the need for relays. They do not assume close formation, due to the restrictions of flying *en masse*. This means that a Magnitude 3 unit of Thousand Hungry Wings boasts seven attackers, one unit-enhanced attacker for its leader and an additional solo attacker for each of its hero-designated special characters.

Special: When mass combat rules require the Thousand Hungry Wings to use Charisma, use their Essence rating (of 2) in place of Charisma. Under most circumstances, the unit enjoys the benefits of flight (see **Exalted**, p. 154).

Enshroud: In mass combat, the unit will use the Enveloping action whenever possible, thus flanking an opponent and making it difficult for that opponent to Disengage. Their small size allows up to seven attackers to launch attacks, subject to the normal mass combat rules (which provide for seven attackers for a Magnitude 3 unit, see above). Importantly, this means that the target unit suffers a -2 Dodge Defense Value penalty against all attacks, and one attacker will receive an unexpected attack on the enemy unit (see "Multiple Opponents," **Exalted**, p. 155).

Infernal Worm

These massive creatures resemble monstrously huge oily black lampreys as long as a trireme. Hailing from the seas of the Yozi hells, these beasts trail bad omens in their wake as they slither

through the seas of Creation. Typically, infernal worms are bound to the service of the Cult of Dukantha, writhing through the ocean as they draw the hulls of Lintha ships into battle regardless of the winds. Their infernal nature causes discordant ripples in the flow of fate, and astrologists are sometimes forewarned against the coming threat.

Infernal worms are demons of the First Circle and are typically summoned by the Lintha via the appropriate spell. Sometimes when an island in Creation is utterly destroyed, an infernal worm is called to Creation without summoning, so that it might feast upon the dead island's roots. Infernal worms serving the Lintha lurk beneath the island of Oroo, feeding upon her waste and dying body.

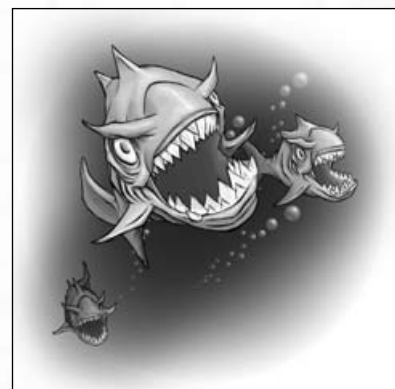
Needlefish

The needlefish is a carnivorous deepwater fish similar to the freshwater piranha, although even more aggressive and dangerous. The typical needlefish is between two and four feet long, with a sinuous, eel-like body and large head with heavy

jaws, similar to a barracuda. The fish's name stems from its teeth, which consist of three rows of sharp, thin needle-like incisors. The needlefish's gums possess tiny striated muscles that undulate while the fish feeds. This causes the needlefish's teeth to actually vibrate at high speeds, allowing the fish to literally saw its way through the toughest materials. Needlefish can scent blood at up to half a mile and go into a feeding frenzy when exposed directly to its taste. Needlefish travel in swarms of 20 to 50 and usually attack in schools.

When a swarm attacks a single target in the water, dodging is virtually impossible (save for perfect defenses), so at least some fish will normally get a successful attack. And yet, a swarm of needlefish is not sufficiently dangerous as to warrant use of the full mass combat rules. To represent this, a character within an attacking swarm of needlefish suffers 4L dice of damage per action. Soak can reduce this to a minimum of 2L dice of damage, but armor will only provide protection if the armor covers the entire body. If the victim is incapable of movement, the damage pool doubles to 8L.

The traits on page 160 describe an individual needlefish.



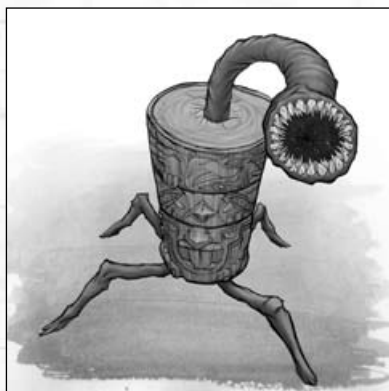


Pelagic Dragon

The mighty pelagic dragon reaches sizes of more than 40 feet long, although much of that length lies in the dragon's serpentine neck and tail. Pelagic dragons normally hunt prey such as swordfish, but are happy to seize and devour sailors from

the decks of their ships. An enraged pelagic dragon is capable of sinking most fishing vessels, and of damaging larger whaling ships.

Pelagic dragons are scaly predators with four massive fins where a land beast's legs might be. The body of a pelagic dragon is relatively short in comparison to their elongated neck and shorter tail. Some Realm wordsmiths have described a pelagic dragon as looking like a snake strung through a tortoise (though pelagic dragons are not shelled). Pelagic dragons are naturally good swimmers, but not the fastest marine creatures in the sea. These beings must surface to breathe air, but can remain below the surface for relatively long periods. Sailors in the West claim encounters with larger pelagic dragons, supposedly up to 100 feet long.



Rock-Roller

These entities are one of the strangest Wyld creations found in the West. The creatures' bodies resemble a totem pole, carved from stone, and each one has a slightly different shape. Some islander legends claim that the rock-rollers

were actual totem poles, carved on a faraway island to win favor from the gods. Unfortunately, according to the story, the gods were angry because these totems were poorly carved. As revenge, they animated the poles and gave them life, moving the totems to wreak havoc on the people who unwittingly defied the gods. Some island shamans claim that every rock-roller has a divine message for someone whose face the rock-roller bears on its body, and shamans encourage young people to locate their personal rock-rollers to learn their messages. Shamans explain the savage attacks of

most rock-rollers as the unfortunate effects of people trying to steal the messages of others.

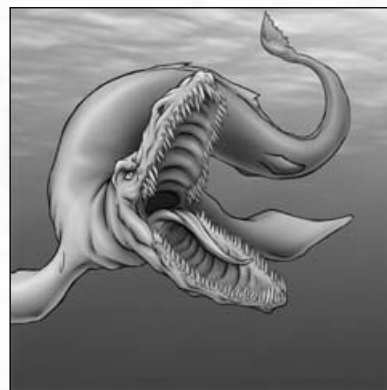
These creatures live on rocky islands, typically solitary except for the brief time when a mated pair has yet to release its young into the wild. At rest, the rock-rollers appear as stone totem poles ranging from three to five feet in height. The stony flesh of the rock-roller ensures that they have few natural enemies. When one of these predatory creatures moves to pursue prey, however, four spidery legs unfold from the rock-roller's sides and a single thick tentacle uncoils from the top of its head, opening to reveal a circular mouth with a double row of sharp teeth. Once a rock-roller seizes its prey, it throws itself to the earth and begins violently rolling around until the prey is dead.

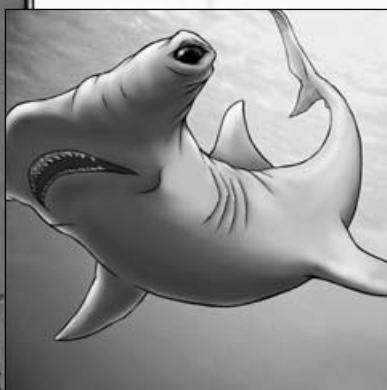
Other Notes: The creature possesses a special roll attack. This attack can only be made if the rock-roller has successfully clinched a victim. If the rock-roller has control over the clinch, then the rock-roller may cause damage as normal for the clinch, and apply this special secondary attack as well. Violently rolling around, with its victim held in its grasp, the rock-roller causes additional damage. Roll a special attack roll using the rock-roller's (Dexterity + Athletics) against the victim's (Stamina + Athletics). If the rock-roller wins this contest, then the victim suffers 6B + successes damage, soaked as normal. The rock-roller may use this special secondary attack on any action during which it controls a clinch.

Sea Dragon

Reaching sizes of nearly 60 feet long, these scaly beasts are fearsome aquatic-eating machines. Savants argue about whether or not sea dragons are related to river dragons, while sailors merely avoid them whenever possible.

Sea dragons have two large front flippers, two smaller rear ones and a long tail with a flat paddle-like extension. Their mouths are blunt-nosed, double-hinged like a massive snake, and filled with sharp teeth. Sea dragons must breathe air, and prefer warm shallow waters to the open sea. They typically eat sharks and pelagic dragons, but will consume other prey when it's convenient.





Shark

Sharks, unlike their larger siaka cousins, are mostly

coastal dwellers, particularly when breeding. Sharks don't usually attack targets as large as men, but blood in the water can easily send sharks into a feeding frenzy.

Name	Str/Dex/Sta	Per/Int/Wits/Will	Health Levels	Attack (Spd/Acc/Dmg/Rate)	Dodge DV/Soak
Dolphin	5/4/5	3/3/3/4	-0/-1/-2x3/ -4x3/Incap	Bite: 5/7/5L/1, Ram: 5/7/8B/1	3/4B/2L
Abilities: Athletics 3 (Swimming +3), Awareness 3 (Underwater +3), Dodge 3, Integrity 2, Investigation 2, Martial Arts 2 (Bite +1, Ram +1), Presence 3, Resistance 3, Stealth 2, Survival 2					
Grelidaka	2/4/4	2/1/2/3	-0/-1/-2/I	Beak: 5/9/2L/3	6/2L/4B
Abilities: Athletics 3, Awareness 3, Dodge 5, Integrity 2, Investigation 1, Martial Arts 4, Presence 3 (Intimidation +3), Resistance 3, Stealth 1, Survival 3, War 3					
Essence: 2					
Infernal Worm	12/5/10	2/1/3/6	-0/-1x4/-2x8/ -4/Incap	Bite: 5/10/12L/1	4/5L/10B
Abilities: Athletics 2 (Swim +3), Awareness 4, Dodge 1, Integrity 2, Investigation 1, Martial Arts 3 (Bite +2), Presence 2 (Intimidate +3), Resistance 3, Stealth 1, Survival 1					
Spirit Charms:					
<i>Materialize</i> —Infernal worms can materialize for 40 motes.					
Essence: 2 Essence Pool: 50					
Needlefish	2/3/3	3/1/3/4	-0/-1/-2/-4/Incap	Bite: 3/8/-/1	3/2L/4B
Abilities: Athletics 3 (Swimming +2), Awareness 2 (Scenting Blood +2), Dodge 3, Integrity 1, Investigation 1, Martial Arts 2 (Bite +1), Presence 1, Resistance 3, Stealth 1, Survival 3					
Pelagic Dragon	10/4/9	2/1/3/4	-0x2/-1x3/-2x2/ -4/Incap	Bite: 5/7/10L/2	3/4L/9B
Abilities: Athletics 3 (Swim +2), Awareness 2, Dodge 2, Integrity 1, Investigation 1, Martial Arts 3, Presence 3 (Intimidation +2), Resistance 2 (Holding Breath +2), Stealth 1, Survival 2					
Rock-Roller	4/3/4	3/1/3/3	-0/-1/-1/-2/-2/ -4/Incap	Tentacle Clinch: 6/12/4L/-	2/5L/9B (Rocky skin 5L/5B, Hardness 5L/5B)
Abilities: Athletics 3 (Tumbling +3), Awareness 2, Dodge 1, Integrity 1, Investigation 1, Martial Arts 5 (Clinch +3), Presence 3, Resistance 2, Stealth 1, Survival 2					
Sea Dragon	15/2/12	2/1/3/3	-0x3/-1x4/-2x3/ -4/Incap	Bite: 5/6/15L/2	2/6L/12B
Abilities: Athletics 3 (Swim +2), Awareness 2, Dodge 2, Integrity 2, Investigation 1, Martial Arts 3 (Bite +1), Presence 3 (Intimidation +1), Resistance 2 (Holding Breath +2), Stealth 1, Survival 2					
Shark	6/3/6	2/1/3/3	-0/-1x2/-2x3/ -4x2/Incap	Bite: 5/6/6L/2	3/3L/6B
Abilities: Athletics 3 (Swim +2), Awareness 3, Dodge 3, Integrity 1, Investigation 1, Martial Arts 2 (Bite +1), Presence 1 (Intimidation+2), Resistance 2, Stealth 2, Survival 3					