

BLACK BOX BOOKS: FOMORIANS AND FAITH PLAYER'S GUIDE

People of all sorts come to Athconnit, the Island Out of Time. They walk into a ring of mushrooms at home, and they walk out of the ring in Athconnit.

They come from different times, places, and universes, in no particular order. One man may come from Earth in 1984, and a woman may appear years later from Earth in 1892... but from an Earth where Christianity did not take root in Europe. And there are many who are not *homo sapiens*, from elves to dwarves to gnolls, to civilized swarms of insects and the occasional hyperintelligent shade of blue. They even come from other nexus-places, cities with names like Sigil, Cynosure, and Bugtown.

The only things that do not come through the fairy rings are fairies. The only escape is to murder a Fomorian.

Athconnit: Some History

The Formorians had an enemy. Terms like "fairies," "sidhe," and "the Tuatha Dé Danann" are thrown around, or less commonly "Grey aliens," "Bigfoot," and "the lost tribe of Israel."

Athconnit was invaded, and the Formorians were losing.

All the Formorian kings agreed to a desperate and grand ritual to make the island safe from the invaders. The ritual dumped their home, Athconnit, into a pocket dimension. Formorians cannot leave. Their enemy cannot enter. Many things that *resemble* the enemy cannot enter.

But to power that effect, the ritual draws on uncounted different universes and timelines, through wormholes near mushroom-marked fairy rings. The Formorians had an entirely different invasion on their hands.

Since the ritual was linked to the life-force of the Formorian race, killing a Formorian is required to return to one's point of origin. Some say angels whisk the murderers away immediately and others mention an elaborate ritual that includes devouring a Formorian's heart.

Athconnit Today

Athconnit is a torus. If you sail due east, you find yourself on the other side of the map, coming from due west and reaching the opposite coast of the island.

The sun rises in the east and sets in the west, orbiting the weird little planetoid. Peasants from Earth appreciate the regularity and mildness of the seasons in Athconnit,

though since the sun seems to orbit the tilt-free torus in perfect circle, the *existence* of seasons also drive Earthly scientists bonkers.

A compass is useless, either spinning or pointing directly at the ground. But at night, the stars form a vague arrow shape, pointing North.

The Fomorians control very little of the island nowadays. Two city-states dominate, the Christian city of Nyse and the Muslim city of Irem. Centuries ago, they openly warred, but now it's a cold war, vicious but fought in the shadows.

Humans from all sorts of universes and timelines dominate. Some with exotic skin colors, such as blue and green, but still human nonetheless. Emperor Prester John XI of Nyse, Patriarch of the Christian faith, has a less exotic skin color, as deep black as his hair is white. On the other side of the island, no one has seen Caliph Shaddad of Irem for years but his wives and servants.

Nonhumans usually dominated their own place of origin, sharing with maybe one other race. Most never saw humans until they reached Athconnit. But the Elves were followed by their Gnoll enemies, the Dwarves were chasing Kobolds, and Halflings knew of Goblins from days of old.

Faith is important in Athconnit. Yes, tolerance for other Abrahamic faiths is legally supported by the Emperor and the Caliph as part of the cold war. But in the hinterlands, one could burn for revering the wrong holy book, and "pagan" beliefs are a death sentence nearly everywhere. Each side thinks the miracles some of their clerics can do here are a sign of God's favor, and all sides agree anything that has the potential to understand language has a soul to convert, human or not.

Athconnit: Classes and Races

Anyone with a strong faith, monotheistic or pagan, can become a Cleric, though it isn't clear why some few are granted spellcasting abilities and many are not.

Fighters are the same as always, regardless of universe.

Magic-Users are also unchanged, though sorcery is technically illegal in most jurisdictions. However, because of the usefulness of such magic, penalties have eroded over time, down to a fine in most cases.

Humans, as mentioned, come from all times, places, and realities, and in colors and body types beyond the Earthly.

Dwarves, Elves, and Halflings are about as one would

expect, with some small differences. Dwarves are militantly materialistic. Elves are too close to fairies to be comfortable in Athconnit, subject to minor but constant pain, making them cruel. Most Halflings come from Grovehaven, a village not on the map, hidden by magic.

Finally, in a land of oddities, the most odd of the more "common" races in Athconnit are Chorals.

The Choral

Imagine roaches with glittering, neon carapaces every color of the rainbow and sophisticated pheromone glands, their abdomens glowing like fireflies. Each insect serves as a cluster of neurons connected by pheromone signals and blinking lights rather than synapses. The resulting intelligence, while diffuse and inefficient, is as smart as an average human so long as the insects remain in a three foot radius. Internally, each swarm behaves like a nest of ants, each roach-like insect genetically identical, with a single queen. By buzzing, Choral swarms produce a disturbing approximation of human speech, but when one sings, it sounds like a melodious child chorus.

***Character Advancement:* Chorals can only be Fighters,**

and are limited to a maximum of 3rd level.

Weapon and Armor Restrictions: Chorals cannot use any weapons or armor, though they can carry the normal amount of weight, using many little bodies to do so.

Crawling: Chorals have no clear front or back, no discernible anatomy, and can see in all directions. They can move through cracks or holes large enough for a cockroach. They can also manipulate objects such as levers or even tools, but very slowly.

Creepy: Chorals are immune to all weapon damage, though see below. They cannot be tripped, grappled, or pushed and they cannot grapple or push others. They're immune to any spell or effect that targets a specific number of creatures (including a single creature) with the exception of mind-affecting effects. A Choral takes double damage from spells or effects that affect an area, such as flaming oil and spells like *Fireball*.

Swarming: A Choral attacks by engulfing an enemy with its tiny bodies, doing 1d6 points of damage on a hit. Enemy AC should be at least one point worse than usual if there are exposed soft bits, like eyes, to bite. A Choral can occupy the same location as a creature of any size

(covering the creature) and can move through space occupied by enemies and vice versa without impediment. An enemy near or in the swarm can use an attack to squish bugs, automatically doing one point of damage per attack.

Saving Throw: Chorals get no saving throw bonuses.

Languages: Chorals speak the same tongues as humans, and have their own light-based method of communication.

Athconnit: The Map

(A) Nyse: Economic, social, and religious center of Christendom in Athconnit

(B) Hameau du Chœur Coloré (Hamlet of the Colorful Chorus): Hameau's people disappeared right before humans first encountered Chorals. The Chorals proved themselves blameless, converting to Christianity and taking over the town, but the disappearance is unsolved.

(C) Ys: This city was pulled under the waves for orgies that would have made Sodom blush. It is now ruled by ghouls, naga, and fish and lizards that walk like men.

(D) Dwartheim: The Dwarves live under these hills, trading weapons for gold. Their nameless King has declared that *legally* no Dwarf has a soul.

(E) Dogsard: Also called by any curse word you care to

conjure, this anarchic city is the primary home for gnolls, goblins, kobolds, and domesticated owlbears.

(F) Balor's Teeth: These mountains hide the last of the Formorians. Many enter, few leave, even fewer leave sane.

(G) The Foot: An abandoned keep surrounded by a ghost town, sacked by the Formorians a generation ago.

(H) City of Eyes: A decaying, empty, formerly high-tech city where peeling paint and rusted cracks seem to form faces. The faces don't move or talk, but more appear daily.

(I) The Candymarsh: Dangerous, poisonous, and smelling of rotten chocolate bars. Populated by twisted mutants whose flesh taste of cherries and popcorn.

(J) Gerena: A neutral trade town, with the largest Jewish population on the island.

(K) Irem: A city of pillars, silver tracings in geometric patterns, and well-bred felines. Economic, social, and religious center of Islam in Athconnit.

(L) The Curse: A forest with a sapphire tower in the center, home to the elves. Any who enter without the permission of its Queen wither, die, and become walking corpses wreathed in cold blue flame.

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