

TORG

ETERNITY



THE GOD BOX

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THE GOD BOX

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KATHY'S JOURNAL (EXTRACT)

What an exciting week! Dad took us to the Grand Canyon on what he said would be a routine expedition, but there was some kind of massive earthquake and the Colorado River went crazy! The river was so fast we couldn't get to shore and we plunged down a giant waterfall into what dad says is part of the Living Land.

We made camp and looked around for a while, but it's clear we're not above ground anymore. We're in lost in what dad calls the "Land Below."

(2 Days Later)

We met some new friends here, a real prince! His name is Chakan of the Leopard Tribe. At first he and Wes looked like they were going to fight, but then I got in the middle and made them stop. Daddy was very proud of me, and now Chakan is our friend. :)

I wrote down some of the Leopard Tribe's words in phonetics—dad says I might get published in his scientific journals! Then I'll be a scientist too!

(3 Days Later)

Prince Chakan came back today. Dad used my dictionary and talked to him for a long time! Chakan took us to his village and we met lots of the Leopard people! They told us about a race of evil snake men, some weird guys who live in the big volcano—they call it Tanta kellar—and some tribe they're at war with called the Darooni.

(8 Days Later)

Prince Chakan came today and told dad there was a way out of the Land Below—they call it Merretika. The prince told dad about a temple somewhere that had a door in it that might take us home.

(9 Days Later)

Dad and Chakan are going to the temple to look for a way home. Wes and I are going to stay here until dad checks it out, then we'll all go home. I love it here, but I sure do want an In-n-Out burger!

14 Days Later

I thought dad was back but it was someone or someTHING else! I saw yellow eyes looking at me from the bushes. Wes threw a rock at it and it ran away, but I heard it again tonight!



INTRODUCTION

Six months into the war, Baruk Kaah's invasion has gone well. He's conquered vast areas of land and people and the Possibility Energy is flowing into Rec Pakken. But the initial push is always strong as the invading reality washes over the surprised defenders. Then they learn to fight back and the invader must redouble his efforts. With such a valuable prize, the Tyrant King knew Core Earth would be his greatest struggle yet.

What the Saar didn't count on was dissension from within. Perhaps the constant interaction with other cultures and higher Social Axioms has begun to affect the edeinos. Or perhaps in his savage zeal to conquer he has finally angered his goddess, Lanala. Whatever the reason, rebellion within his own people is growing.

Kaah's land thrives at the will of Lanala, the Life Bringer. The people worship and follow the very real presence of the goddess. While death and destruction are part of the circle of life, many believe Kaah has taken it too far. Pointless death and destruction do not serve a religion that celebrates life.

Kaah tears the throat out of any who dissent too loudly, but now it seems the goddess herself may be sending a sign to her followers that Kaah has lost his way.

The Law of Wonders is a relatively new phenomenon to the edeinos. It brings back fragments and echoes of past civilizations destroyed by the Tyrant King and his bloodthirsty armies. But why would the goddess allow such a thing? Does Lanala mourn these lost people? Has Kaah's destruction gone too far, unbalancing the natural forces of entropy and creation? That's what some of her faithful believe.

Many of Kaah's trusted warlords and optants believe it is the goddess who has lost her way, kowtowing to metal-worshiping humans and other races who choose technology over the natural world she has provided. Others are simply power-mad, and increasingly find the Life Bringer a thorn in their sides—a thorn they could do little about.

Until now.

THE TYRANT QUEEN

The leader of the Goldsun Clan, Kallikosh, follows Kaah because it is expedient. He is one of those who feels the pull of higher axioms. Increasing the Social Axiom, for example, would help him better delegate control to his many sub-chiefs. Technologically, he can't deny the power of the worlds Kaah has forced him to conquer.

The Goldsun's high priestess, Malacryx, has a far more feral attitude and savage heart. Malacryx feels no compunction to advance her people. In fact, she sees it as a violation of her race's core principles. Malacryx not only worships Baruk Kaah's relentless savagery, she has developed a primal love for the Tyrant King!

The ambitious Malacryx sees Kallikosh as a weak ruler who has barely managed to capture two zones for their king in the six months since the invasion. Kallikosh attempts to reason with his sub-chiefs rather than showing them his might. He debates rather than ripping throats. He sorts through the humans' hated technology as it rusts away in his treasure piles. And though he has enslaved the transformed humans to rebuild the place called "Chichen Itza," he pampers and protects them from his war host when he could simply conquer more territories and replace those who fall.

Frustrated with Kallikosh's slow progress, Malacryx frequently wandered the surrounding lands looking for resistance to squash. On one of these journeys, she and her warband discovered a group of humans hiding an old stone ruin covered in strange glyphs. After most of the humans were torn to shreds, one of the survivors begged for his life, admitting that the stone spoke of a way to imprison a god! They had hoped to use it against the edeinos by empowering a specially prepared receptacle of blessed obsidian called the "God Box." The Mayans had created it long ago to imprison the "heart" of a god. With it, they had hoped to control Kukulcan, the feathered serpent of war, and repel the strange invaders (the Conquistadors) who plagued their lands. They were defeated by these conquerors before they could complete the ritual, but the God Box survived.

The savage Malacryx had no mercy for the defeated that day. Later, however, she began to ponder the notion of imprisoning a god. Or goddess.

Malacryx sent her human thralls across the border of the Living Land to Core Earth to bribe locals with treasures from the Mayan ruins. They returned with news that the God Box had indeed survived antiquity. The sacred treasure and many other items were on loan to a place called the Smithsonian Museum of Natural History for its "First Americans" exhibit when the invasion occurred.

Malacryx began to scheme. If she could find the God Box and imprison Lanala, she could force the goddess to make the lizard folk obey Baruk Kaah's rules. There could be no greater dowry—the Tyrant King would surely make her his queen! She would rip out Kallikosh's soft throat and rule the Goldsuns for her Saar!





THE DIMTHREAD TREES

The Gaunt Man has gifted his High Lord allies with a series of trees scattered across their cosms. The dark hollows of the trees are permanent dimthreads maintained by each cosm's Darkness Device, requiring far less energy than creating pinpoint dimthreads from scratch. This allows each High Lord's most trusted lieutenants to travel rapidly throughout each cosm. The interdimensional paths allow their agents and minions to make lightning strikes against their enemies, and even retreat if needed back through the network.

THERE'S ALWAYS A PRICE

Of course, the Gaunt Man has other reasons for granting such a powerful gift to his allies. The trees, he claims, are native to Orrorsh and must therefore create a small hardpoint for his realm. They also rely on living beings for their energy—humans or other sapient creatures bound within fibrous pods at the base of each tree.

The unfortunate victims are kept in a vegetative state and subjected to constant nightmares that squeeze out every drop of Possibility Energy. Most captives survive no more than a week before the pod cracks open and ejects their withered remains.

These devices are difficult to distinguish from Nightmare Trees, and are often mistaken for them. Likewise accepting the useful Dimthread Trees has made it more difficult for High Lords to detect virulent Nightmare Trees within their realms.

A NETWORK OF TERROR

The Dimthread Trees are not a direct line to anywhere the traveler wants to go. Instead, they create a "hardwired" network of connected nodes that *usually* lead to the same place, but not always. The tree in the Yucatán might lead directly to the Washington, DC environs one day, but connect to the tree atop Willis Tower the next.

If the Darkness Device connected to a network is paying attention (which is rare) and cares to spend its own energy, it can change the travelers' destination. This can be used to shunt allies closer to their destination, or misdirect enemies who stumble into the network (the farther the distance, the more expensive it is in Possibility Energy).

As High Priestess of the Gold Suns, Malacryx knows of the Dimthread Trees. She and her warband used a tree at Chichen Itza to travel to Kaah's current location near Washington, DC, in the United States. There she plans on taking the God Box from the Smithsonian, and bringing it

back to the Yucatán to capture Lanala. Then she'll present it to Baruk Kaah and, with luck, become his queen!

ADVENTURE SYNOPSIS

The God Box takes the Storm Knights from the ruins of the shattered east to the fabled Land Below, and from the flooded streets of downtown Chicago to the jungles of the Yucatán. Along the way they battle countless edeinos, dinosaurs, and far stranger foes.

This epic adventure through the Living Land contains plenty of opportunities for savage combat and roleplaying, and forces the heroes to make a number of difficult decisions. At the climax of this tale, the Storm Knights must confront the true villain of our tale: an ambitious optant who hopes to enslave Lanala and become Baruk Kaah's bride!

ACT ONE: FORT WASHINGTON

The God Box begins when Quinn Sebastian of the Delphi Council asks the heroes to look for refugees around Fort Washington. A short plane crash later finds them in the heart of the eastern Living Land. From there they make their way to Fort Washington and meet Major Chandler, the officer in charge of the struggling hardpoint.

An expedition into the wilds of Maryland to rescue a survivor settlement follows. The rescuers must persuade the holdouts to return with them to the fort, and protect them against bands of edeinos and rampaging dinosaurs along the way.

Soon after their return, Baruk Kaah's forces stage a massive attack. The Storm Knights fend off one of Kaah's warbands, but elsewhere in the camp, others escape with a number of captives and a Mayan artifact.

Major Chandler asks the heroes to pursue and rescue the hostages. The officer has no idea what the edeinos want with the captives or the stolen artifact, but with such a show of force it must be important.

The Storm Knights track the thieves through a dismal swamp to a mysterious tree with a massive hollow in its center. Circling the tree are a number of seed pods. In each one are *humans* captured and

placed there by the edeinos! The Dimthread Tree uses their life force to power the portal in its hollow. One of the people rescued from the pods revives. She speaks a bit of the lizard-folk's language and tells her rescuers a fantastic tale.

The girl claims a powerful edeinos optant and her warband emerged from the tree and met with Baruk Kaah. The optant's name was Malacryx, and she told Baruk Kaah of a great miracle that could solve his problems with "rogue believers." To perform the miracle, Malacryx needed an artifact from the nearby human's fort. The priestess and the Saar agreed to a plan and stalked off to make the attack. They were to meet back at the Dimthread Tree after the battle.

Malacryx does so, with a stone box and numerous captives in tow, but Kaah does not appear. The arrival of the Storm Knights seems to worry the priestess—she and her warband reluctantly flee through the Dimthread Tree.

ACT TWO: THE LAND BELOW

The brave adventurers enter the mysterious tree and emerge in the fabled "Land Below." Malacryx and her band must pass through the mysterious realm to return to her people elsewhere.

The edeinos' tracks quickly vanish into a jungle but lead the pursuers to a chance encounter with Prince Chakan of the Leopard Tribe. The prince says that his friend, a human explorer, has been taken by the fierce Darooni and will be sacrificed if they don't rescue him. The explorer also knows the way out of the Land Below, which is likely where Malacryx and her band are headed.

The team ventures down the Tall River, encountering strange beasts and inhabitants, and finally arrives at the home of the Darooni in the fantastic Misty Gorge.

A fierce battle and a surprising betrayal ensues, but with luck the Storm Knights rescue Spencer, the explorer, and fight their way up out of the gorge.

ACT THREE: CHALLENGE OF THE LEOPARD WARRIORS

Spencer tells the group that his son and daughter were captured by Serpentors, serpent-men who act as slavers for the Land Below's most powerful empire, the Pyrian Fire Tamers. They use slaves in

the constant taming of Tanta kellar, the massive volcano that gives the people their name. If the Storm Knights help him rescue his family, Spencer promises to show them where Malacryx exited.

Spencer and the player characters travel through boiling swamps to the land of Pyrian Fire Tamers. There they must find a way to follow the slavers into the empire and discover the location of Spencer's kidnapped children.

With help from other captives, the Storm Knights discover the slaves have been taken to the temple at the summit of the volcano to assist in a ritual that will quell the mountain's fury. Difficult decisions, stealth, and deception are all part of the action as the party struggles to rescue the hostages without dooming the Pyrians. The volcano is indeed alive, however, and spawns molten avatars to stop those who might interfere with its rage!

Once this fiery situation is resolved and the Pyrians are aided or defeated, Spencer proves true to his word. He and his family escort the Storm Knights to a hidden temple deep in the mountains—and the portal Malacryx used to exit the Land Below.

**"A STRANGER'S JUST A FRIEND
WHO HASN'T BETRAYED YOU
YET."**

-THOMAS BROWNSTONE

ACT FOUR: THE TOWER OF DEATH

The next stop along the dimthread network takes the party to the flooded ruins of Chicago. Only hours behind Malacryx, the party discovers one of her warband, wounded by human scavengers and left behind to enjoy the last of the world's sensations. The warrior fills in the final gaps, telling the Storm Knights that Malacryx plans to use the God Box to trap and enslave Lanala to eliminate the confused jakatts who oppose Baruk Kaah's invasion of earth.

The overconfident warrior also points the way forward, telling the humans that her mistress seeks the Dimthread Tree at the top of the "Tower of Death." Realizing she means the former Sears Tower, the rescuers create a raft and begin making their way through the flooded streets.

Along the way, the group spots a strange cult offering captives to some unseen creature they call "the Ruler." Likely, they rescue the victims and defeat the strange cult, and get a glimpse of the massive, tentacled thing that lurks beneath the dark waters of Chicago.

Pressing on, the Storm Knights gain entry to the former Sears Tower only to find its lower reaches are the lair of the Ruler! A frantic escape from the horror and its spawn leads into the middle of the tower, where the party discovers another terrifying secret.

The "Tower of Death" is a literal name, for one of Thrakmoss's most powerful lieutenants is using the portal to reach through the Infiniverse and draw forth dead things to serve his master. A furious fight ensues, but with clever tactics and a little luck, Thrakmoss's servant is defeated and the party can once more use the dimthread network.

ACT FIVE: THE WEDDING OF BARUK KAAH

The explorers emerge in the Yucatán, domain of the Goldsun Clan of edeinos. The trail leads them through a number of ruined villages and an encounter with vile bandits taking advantage of the locals' plight.

After a fierce firefight with the banditos, the grateful locals offer to join the Storm Knights' army and help with the assault on Chichen Itza. This force eventually proves crucial as the heroes enter the city to see Malacryx has already begun the ritual to enslave Lanala.

The finale is a titanic scene, with most of the party and the brave locals fending off swarms of edeinos led by Baruk Kaah himself. One unfortunate hero must also engage Malacryx in a deadly reality storm to sever her connection to the God Box!

CAMPAIGN TIMING

The God Box is meant to be set around eight months into the Possibility Wars. The Living Land has extended down into Central America. The Storm Knights are still relatively fresh, and should still be Alpha Clearance when they are assigned to sweep for survivors around Washington.

There isn't much opportunity for direct Delphi Council involvement in this mission once things get started. In the Land Below there's no means of communication, although it's possible supplies or agents got lost and found themselves there just like the heroes! It's more possible to get back in touch in Chicago or Mexico. Any operative contacted encourages the Storm Knights to remain in pursuit of Malacryx, and isn't confident about supplies or reinforcements arriving in time to help. The council tries, just nothing gets through in time unless the group really needs a break or new character.

Due to the priority the council won't divert the Storm Knights to other missions, even if they are in contact. The GM might still work in extra adventures along the way if desired.

LONGER ACTS

The acts in the God Box tend to be longer than a single session, and may even take several sessions to complete. This pacing is common for these longer cosm adventures. Award XP and refresh Possibilities and Cosm Cards at the end of an act as normal, not each game session.

The numbers on the Destiny Cards are useful for recording hands between sessions if it's impractical to just keep the character's cards, Possibilities, and character sheet together.

THE STAKES

If Malacryx succeeds in binding Lanala and becoming Baruk Kaah's tyrant queen the embers of rebellion among the edeinos tribes are effectively extinguished. Any clans that had begun to cooperate with the Delphi Council break ties and renew their loyalty to the Saar, leaving him free to concentrate on expanding his territory.

The strange Wonders found in the Living Land don't disappear, indicating that either it isn't Lanala's power that creates them or that even contained there are aspects of the goddess' power that still flow freely.

Stopping Malacryx has a huge effect on the edeinos political landscape. Baruk Kaah is no longer considered Lanala's champion, which leads to massive unrest among the different edeinos clans. The Redjaws remain loyal, but the rest splinter to pursue their own agendas or form tentative alliances with Core Earth to fight against further abomination of Lanala's will.

Torg Eternity's main story line assumes the Storm Knights are successful. If that's not how things end, Malacryx remains a potent threat, and over time gains many of the Special Abilities of an Avatar of Lanala—see *The Living Land* source book.

ACT ONE: FORT WASHINGTON

This act highlights the struggle to rescue survivors from the Living Land, both those who have transformed and those who have not, and features lots of action, roleplaying, and savage combat.

OVERVIEW

Scene One: The Delphi Council asks the Storm Knights to fly into the Living Land and help round up refugees trapped around the Washington hardpoint. The heroes crash-land and must fight their way to Fort Washington.

Scene Two: The officer in charge of the Fort, Major Chandler, sends the group to a nearby survivor settlement. The group must convince the refugees to accompany them back to the Core Earth hardpoint and decide what to do with those who have already transformed.

After the heroes return, the edeinos launch a major assault and make off with numerous captives and an unknown artifact from the Smithsonian—the God Box.

Scene Three: The Storm Knights pursue the retreating edeinos and discover they've left the area via a dimensional portal called a "Dimthread Tree."

SCENE ONE: A LOST WORLD

Standard Scene. Core Earth Dominant Zone.

It's a little over half a year after the invasion. The Storm Knights are summoned to the *USS Theodore Roosevelt* off the coast of New York. There they are introduced to each other and meet one of the Delphi Council's most experienced leaders, Quinn Sebastian.

After introductions and requisition, they're asked to fly to Washington, DC and help bring in survivors from the area around the Core Earth hardpoint of "Fort Washington." Of course the trip doesn't go as planned and the heroes are quickly introduced to the savage reality of the Living Land!

THE USS THEODORE ROOSEVELT

The heroes arrive from wherever they were last, landing on the *USS Theodore Roosevelt*, a modern aircraft carrier anchored in the Atlantic seven miles

off the coast of New York (a Core Earth Dominant Zone). Each of them waits on deck while the sailors go about their business, then are summoned to a conference room inside the ship where a senior member of the Delphi Council awaits.

Read or paraphrase the following when you're ready to begin your characters' first trip into the storm.

You've been flown to an aircraft carrier off the coast of New York in the United States. You're too far out to see the city, but you do see a vast flotilla of ships—destroyers, carriers, and more supply ships than you can count.

The wind is high but your plane lands smoothly enough. The pilot waves you out and you're met by two United States sailors. "This way, sir/madam." They escort you into the bowels of the ship, down twisting metal stairways and into a commissary where hot food awaits. There are a number of other strange individuals here—a woman in a cape and hat that looks straight out of the old pulp serials, a moody looking Asian man with a sword and submachine gun, and even what you'd swear is an elf. There are probably 20 individuals here all together. You can feel the energy in the room. These are heroes, those special individuals who walk into the storm and fight whatever the High Lords throw at them.

These are Storm Knights.

The heroes have a few minutes to eat, freshen up from their flight, or speak briefly with the other Storm Knights if they like. Don't get bogged down by these other characters, though; they're here to show the players that this is a massive operation but aren't otherwise relevant to the story.

After about an hour, a sailor enters the room and motions at you and several others. She calls you by name and asks that you follow her.

The woman leads you through a twisting maze of metal hallways and stairs and finally into a modern conference room lined with video monitors and a large map on the wall clearly showing the state of the invasion.

A man in his mid-fifties to early sixties with gray hair and dark sunglasses is clearly in charge. Several naval officers point to various places on the map, look at your group, and stick a red pin firmly in the North American region—right in the spot marked Washington, DC.

"Welcome to the USS Theodore Roosevelt, Storm Knights. I'm Quinn Sebastian, one of the senior members of the Delphi Council. I think most of you have already helped us out before, in some portion of the world or other, so you know we're an international force dedicated to fighting the invaders. The High Lords.

"That battle will come in time, but for now we've got a lot of people to rescue.

That's where you come in. I want you to fly into Washington, DC and help bring survivors in from the surrounding settlements.

The monuments around the mall form what you call a 'hardpoint' for our reality, which means our tech still works. We're holding on to the area both because I can't stand to see another acre turned over to the lizards, and because there are countless priceless artifacts in the Smithsonian museums we want to protect.

"Baruk Kaah and his army have made several assaults against the perimeter, but I've yet to see a dinosaur that can take a direct hit from a tank round."

Quinn pauses for effect then continues.

"I need you to ride one of our supply planes into DC. Get the medicine, ammo, and other necessities to Colonel Chavez. He'll tell you what to do next. Any questions?"





The heroes can attempt to requisition any special equipment they want in the usual manner. Quinn's assets are limited to what might be aboard the aircraft carrier, however.

The leader of the Delphi Council also gives the team a 3-D printed plastic tablet with his coded authorization etched into it. "Trust me—you don't want paper," he smiles. (Paper decays in the Living Land very quickly.)

Once the team says they're ready, they're put in the back of a C-130 cargo plane and on their way to the Living Land.

The plane's engines roar to life and it wheels into place in preparation for take-off. Then you feel your stomach drop as it suddenly whips forward and hurls you out over the ocean!

The heavy plane suddenly jerks back up and careens sideways into the sky. Then it rolls over, turns toward what you presume is New York City, and levels out. Your stomach begins to settle.

A few minutes later, the coastline comes into

view. Slowly, you realize it's Manhattan. Great skyscrapers lie in ruined piles. Others remain standing, dotted with broken windows and covered in massive vines far too lush and long to have grown here in just a few months. You see massive creatures moving slowly through the shadows below. Actual dinosaurs walk the streets of New York.

Slowly, the city passes from view. It's like driving past a graveyard.

Pause for a moment. Show them the image above if you like. Let the destruction of the world they know sink in.

You finally sit back in your seat as the C-130 levels out. Reclaiming this world won't be easy. But that's why you're here. That's why all of you are here.

You look around at these strangers you'll be traveling with. This might be a good time to introduce yourself.

Let the Storm Knights introduce themselves to each other now. The players should do this in character so everyone can start getting a feel

for how to roleplay their new hero. They should also describe what their characters look like, any obvious weapons or gear they're carrying, and anything else that might stand out to casual notice.

Once everyone has had a moment to introduce their character, read the following—the action is about to begin!

An hour or so later the plane banks. In the far distance you see the top of the Washington Monument, lit by a full moon in the darkness.

You're about to point it out to your new companions when the plane is suddenly rocked as if hit by a meteor! You gasp in surprise as the beak of a large predator rips open a hole in the side of the transport. The C-130 drops suddenly. The creature screams and talons rake long lines in the wall. Now you hear whipping branches lashing against the metal sides and a thousand neck-cracking collisions. Then all goes black!

The plane has been attacked by a raging lakten, a creature something like a pterodactyl. It knocks the C-130 into a massive tree where it comes to an abrupt stop and lodges fast. All of the heroes black out for a few moments but since they were strapped in, their injuries are minor (no game effect).

TERROR IN THE TREETOPS

As the team comes to, they realize they're not only in the shell of a crashed plane lodged high in a tree hundreds of feet above the ground—they're also upside down! And that's not all...the stunned lakten is still stuck in the side of the transport as well!

The Storm Knights come to consciousness just as the monster wakes. It groans feebly at first, then calls out in growing rage. One of its talons is stuck in the metal wreckage. The side has been pulled apart so the rest of the creature—its other talon and ferocious beak—have easy access to the characters hanging upside down in their seatbelts!

Start combat rounds immediately. The lakten can attack anyone in the plane and is berserk, giving it two attacks each round in this peculiar situation. If defeated, the confused creature drops to lower branches unconscious and eventually recovers. If a clever Storm Knight thinks to cut or blast open the side of the plane (Toughness 10) to free the creature,

the lakten rips its claw free and flies haphazardly into the night.

The heroes are upside down and strapped into their seat belts, so their attacks are at -2 due to disorientation and the awkward position. Getting free otherwise requires a *Dexterity* roll as an action (which may be a Multi-Action at the standard penalty). Should anyone suffer a Mishap, she tumbles out of the plane, through a hole, and into the canopy below! She's out of the fight for the next round if she wants to climb back and help her companions, or she can scramble on down toward terra firma below.

- **Lakten (1):** See page 84. The crazed thing gets two attacks each round while trapped in the wrecked C-130 and panicked. Its *Dexterity* and related skills suffer a -4 modifier while it's stuck in the tree with its limbs partially pinned and unable to maneuver in the open air.

TERRA FIRMA

After the fight, the group can carefully free themselves from their entanglement and plan what to do next. The pilot and copilot didn't make it, unfortunately, and the radio and instrumentation are wrecked. The cargo is scattered all over the Living Land, but enough remains that the Storm Knights can gather MREs or other sealed foods—about the only thing that last the night in the Living Land.

The survivors can see the Washington Monument from their vantage point so it's obvious which way they should go. The first trick, of course, is climbing down this impossibly tall tree.

Let the party make plans, cut vines, or otherwise figure out how to make their descent and call for a few *Dexterity* rolls. Failure results in bumps and bruises as they tumble down a few branches or scrape themselves slipping down the rough bark. Mishaps mean more serious injuries or bites from insects the size of their hands: These cause a point of Shock that can't be recovered for 24 hours. No one falls to their doom, though—that's not how heroes die in the Living Land!

Eventually, most likely an hour or so later, the exhausted Storm Knights finally reach the ground.



ON TO DC

The team's next challenge is navigating the Living Land. The Washington Monument appeared to be less than five miles away. That would be an easy jaunt before the invasion, but it's a long, difficult, and challenging trek in the new jungle.

The group can wait for morning or head off right away. This is an intense survival situation so Shock doesn't recover unless the characters scrounge up some food (a *survival* test) and rest for a bit before setting out. It's their choice when to take off—let them plan and be strategic in their thinking—but given the thick overhead canopy and mist there isn't a great difference here between night and day.

Once the trip begins, ask the players which character takes the lead. Does he have a machete or other blade to cut away the tangling vines? Does he have a light source? There are no real paths—the group just has to push through the thick flora as best they can. Emphasize the heat, the flora, the huge insects, and even the Core Earth displaced creatures like raccoons and squirrels coming to grips with a complete change in their former environment.

MAKING TIME

The lead character now makes a *survival* test at -2 if he doesn't have a machete or similar device to cut through the thick vegetation. Failure means the group encounters a threat of some kind, such as a herd of dinosaurs or edeinos patrol.

The way toward Washington, DC leads through what was once the suburbs of Maryland. The houses are abandoned though there are signs of recent life—and battle. Close examination finds more than a few tracks leading in all directions—humans, edeinos, and all kinds of large creatures. Cars, trucks, and motorcycles are plentiful, but most don't work even when handled by a Storm Knight—their fittings have rusted, their electronics have shorted, or their hoses rotted. Some are likely home to local animals as well, so Storm Knights must be careful when searching!

Finally, the travelers get within a few miles of the monument. Once close enough, they can see it over the surrounding jungle. Immense spotlights shine on it from below, a sure sign of a Core Earth hardpoint. Tracer fire occasionally stitches across the sky to accentuate the point, and keep curious laktens and other flying horrors at bay!

The rubble and debris finally funnel the group into what at first seems to be a clearing. The going is a little easier and there are even remnants of old trails between the thick growth. Then one of the Storm Knights trips over a stone marker and sees many more around him. They're in the Glenwood Cemetery!

THE GOSPOG FIELD

Terrifying groans echo all around the travelers. Legions of gospog planted in the soft ground shudder and groan in their shallow graves. These are not the original inhabitants of the cemetery, but recently buried corpses infested with the rot and ruin of the High Lords!

The gospog are everywhere and there are far more than the Storm Knights can defeat. To make things worse, the land to the north has flooded from nearby McMillan Reservoir and created a shallow swamp filled with pools of sinking mud!

Pushing through the gospog field requires Dramatic Skill Resolution. Roll for the group, using *survival* to pick the best and shortest path through the writhing bodies. The lead character makes the roll with all others contributing. If the group doesn't escape the gospog field by the fifth round, they're swarmed and must fight off a massive eruption of the undead things.

- **Possible Setback:** The guide hits a dead end of overgrown bushes and tangled fence.

- **Complication:** The groaning dead take notice and begin grabbing at the Storm Knights as they pass!

- **Critical Problem/Failure:** Something happens that alerts the nearby gospog en masse. Perhaps one of the characters squeals as he's grabbed by a bony hand or someone's alarm goes off unexpectedly on their cell phone! If the roll is failed, the swarm attack occurs as if the entire task was unsuccessful (see below).

GOSPOG ATTACK

Failing the Dramatic Skill Resolution means a massive swarm of gospog suddenly recognizes the intrusion and rises to attack!

- **Gospog (3 per Storm Knight):** The horrid things attack in a groaning wave. See page 84.

SAFE AT LAST

Muddy, bloody, beaten, and tired, the heroes finally make it to a series of barricades around the Washington mall. They've made it.

The Storm Knights are welcomed by Major Jeff Chandler, a young African-American man with piercing green eyes. He hasn't been trained for everything that's now under his command, but he's handling it better than even he expected.

"Welcome to Fort Washington, folks. I'm glad you made it in—the lizards have us surrounded and things are getting a bit desperate."

If the newcomers ask about Colonel Chavez, Chandler frowns and says he was killed by an edeinos raiding party two days ago. The Captain then asks what the strangers are doing here, and assuming they hand him Quinn Sebastian's tablet and tell him about the downed supply plane, Major Chandler nods and continues.

"I'm sorry about the plane, and the pilots. They were good men. But let's focus on the mission. Sebastian asked you to help us round up survivors from the surrounding towns. I'm not sure there are many left, but we're happy for the help. Rest up and we'll get to it in the morning."

Chandler has his soldiers escort the group to the Smithsonian National Museum of Natural History where they're given cots in a makeshift refugee center. Finally, the guests are given purified water and food (dinosaur meat, canned goods, or dwindling MRE rations—the newcomers' choice!).

If any of the heroes are injured, they get treatment from a civilian doctor who volunteered to stay behind, Dr. Sheila Maxwell. She's usually accompanied by Billy "Hot Shots" Stanley, who administers medicine and (usually) painless shots for her.

Sheila, Billy, and Major Chandler have a few roles to play in this chapter and some of those that follow, so try to work them into a few conversations with the player characters as you can. See their game statistics on page 80.

FORT WASHINGTON

Core Earth Dominant Zone

Fort Washington is a bit of a misnomer as it isn't a fort at all. It's a series of isolated fortifications (sandbags, heavy weapon pits, makeshift barricades, and a few functioning armored assets) placed around and between the most important buildings in the National Mall. This includes the Washington Monument, the Lincoln Memorial, the White House, and the Capitol Building.

Troops are also stationed in, around, and on top of several of the larger Smithsonian museums as well, including the National Museums of Natural History and American History, the National Gallery of Art, the Smithsonian Castle, and the National Air and Space Museum. As long as these structures stand, they flood the area with Possibility Energy and function as hardpoints. This makes the National Mall a Core Earth Dominant Zone.

Three-man guardposts are scattered roughly every 30 yards between most buildings as well, protection against less-concentrated raids or random dinosaurs that occasionally wander from the surrounding jungle. Each guardpost is equipped either with a heavy machine gun, mini-gun, fully automatic grenade launcher, or AT4 anti-tank weapons (saved for the really large dinosaurs!).

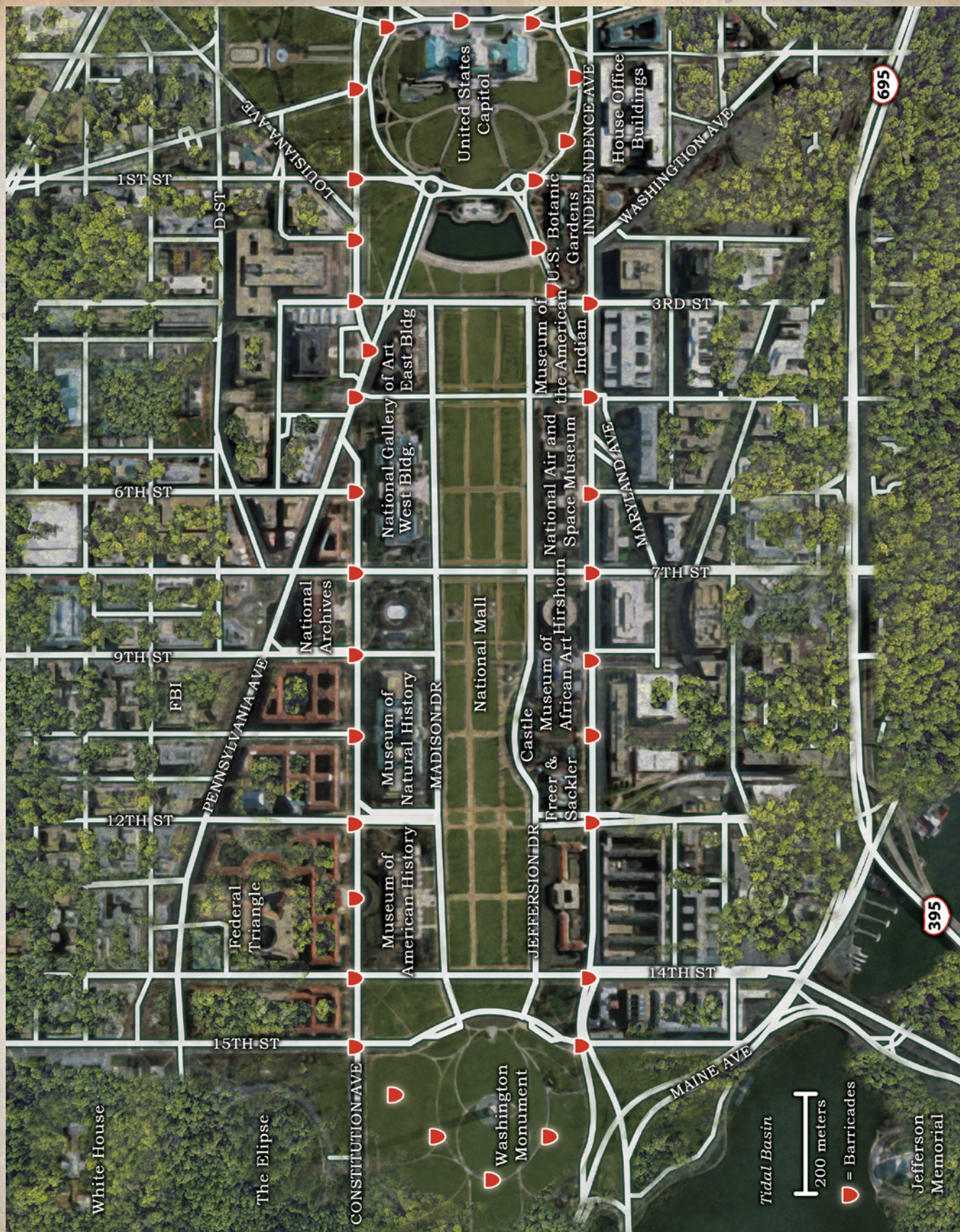
Colonel Chavez was in charge up to two days ago when he was killed by a strange frenzy of lakten, perhaps directed by Baruk Kaah or one of his optants. Major Chandler has taken command until a more senior officer arrives (at least a colonel for a force this size).

Chandler and the men and women standing by him are always on the lookout for local survivors. A few wander in daily since the invasion. Edeinos and other beings from the invading realms who attempt to gain entry (peacefully) are taken to a secure area and interrogated. Those who arouse suspicion are kept under guard. Those who meet the interrogation officer's approval are "guests" kept in various isolated buildings around the mall.

The defenders include all three battalions of the 3rd US Army Infantry Regiment, a few Special Forces units who serve mostly as scouts, a couple of stranded Marine companies, and an assortment of armored vehicles. All together, about 2,500 combat-ready troops remain in place, serving alongside 3,000 civilian contractors, trapped citizens, refugees, and a few adventurers (mostly hunters who bring in food and intelligence in exchange for free reign in and out of the camp).

Outside the Core Earth Dominant Zone, the natural swamp that existed before the city's construction has returned, mixed with thick, overgrown jungle buzzing with giant insects. The soldiers attempt to burn and clear the flora between their positions and the jungle to give themselves a "beaten zone" to Baruk Kaah's frequent attack vectors, but the Living Land reclaims such areas quickly so it is a constant struggle.





SCENE TWO: SEARCH & RECOVERY

Standard Scene. Living Land Dominant Zone.

Life under siege is filled with anxiety and apprehension. The other inhabitants in the refugee centers where the Storm Knights sleep rise early and get to their tasks with little fuss. A light breakfast is delivered to each building around 7 a.m., consisting mostly of drinks (coffee, reconstituted juice, or purified water), dried meats, and some fruits or nuts from the Living Land the scientists have deemed safe to eat.

Billy “Hot Shots” Stanley is one of the first to greet the newcomers as they awake. He looks everyone over, takes their temperature if they seem fatigued, and attempts to make sure no one is carrying some bizarre or infectious disease from the Living Land or other strange realms that have come to Earth.

Billy is friendly but cautious toward the strangers. Once he finishes the checkup, he tells the heroes that Major Chandler has asked to see them once they’re ready for an assignment.

MALL WALKING

This part of Washington, DC is called the National Mall. It’s a rectangular area of monuments and museums capped at one end by the Capitol Building and at the other by the Lincoln Memorial, with the Washington Monument in between. Given the resources available, the Delphi Council decided to abandon the western half in favor of the eastern end, which contains the priceless Smithsonian museums (and numerous Eternity Shards!).

See the Fort Washington sidebar and map on page 16 for the places the Storm Knights can visit if they like. Most of the exhibits in the museums are behind bands of security tape but are otherwise unprotected. There’s no electricity to spare for the alarms but several armed guards patrol all the areas of value and teams of archivists have moved most of the more manageable displays to secure vaults below. Some of the most valuable items were transported out of the Living Land soon after the invasion. Most made it out of the jungle, but a few rare pieces were lost in airplane crashes or caravan ambushes.

ESCORT DUTY

When the heroes are ready to report to Major Chandler, per Quinn Sebastian’s original request, the officer is happy to send the group out on their first mission. He can be found moving about the mall, going from guardpost to barricade diligently checking on the defenses and the people he’s responsible for.

“There you are. Good morning. I hope you slept well. I know those cots aren’t king-size beds at the Hilton, but you get used to them after a while. Mostly.”

Chandler exchanges any other pleasantries then continues:

“Our first job is to hold this hardpoint. The second is to protect as many people as we can. Refugees from the surrounding towns and cities wander in most every day. As you know, that’s no easy task, especially as Kaah and his lizards close the circle around us.

“There are also some entire communities out there, trapped and growing desperate. My soldiers can’t get to them without forgetting how to shoot guns or something, but you can.

“We need you to go to one of these sites and bring everyone into Fort Washington. Fair warning, some will want to stay out there with their family or friends who have transformed. You’ll have to decide what to do—we don’t forcibly move anyone. But we also try to help those who want to come in here and wait for transport out.

“One more thing. Remember that if you bring someone in here who’s transformed, it goes bad for them sooner or later...usually sooner. So don’t, unless you feel they’ve got enough...Possibility Energy...or whatever...to keep from dying.”

Once the party gives their assent, Chandler continues.

“There’s a town called Temple Hills, and an apartment complex just outside it called Henson Creek Manor. It’s just down the Potomac a few miles and then inland a short ways. We’ve got a boat for you that can hold the refugees, so get there, evaluate the situation, and escort whoever decides to go with you back here. Got it?”



RIVER RIDE

The heroes are given a 112-foot sightseeing boat, the *Cherry Blossom*, and basic instructions on how to operate it. The boat can carry up to 100 people—more than enough to accommodate the refugees.

Operating the vessel uses the *water vehicles* skill. It isn't particularly difficult, so default use should be enough to get up and down the river and dock without serious incident.

When the rescuers are ready to set out, read the following aloud:

The wind blows hot as you set out on the murky Potomac. You feel the change in reality almost immediately. Then you see it. Massive fish that never lived on Earth swim lazily beneath the green water. Giant dragonflies buzz overhead and butterflies with electric blue and green wings flutter curiously nearby.

A number of ships and boats rest half-submerged along your route, wreckage of the invasion. Some look to have been attacked by some creature or other, but most were just abandoned and drifted to a slow demise as their hulls rotted away.

On either bank are the dilapidated shells of what were once million-plus-dollar homes. You occasionally spot furtive figures rushing away as you approach, though whether they are humans gone native or edeinos is impossible to tell. Occasionally a terrible beast shows itself and roars from the river bank as well. These creatures resemble the dinosaurs you know from books and movies, but even as you catch a slinking tail or flash of teeth, you know they are not truly of this world.

Something large splashes a hundred feet to your right! It resembles an alligator or crocodile with gray, knotty skin! It must have caught some massive prey, for blood blooms and spouts as you hurry onward.

A half-hour later you see the landmark Major Chandler told you to look for—the Interstate 495 bridge. The center has collapsed, whether from the weight of some great beast or the rapid decay of the Living Land is unknown, but there's a small cove on your side you can dock in.

Let the group see the map on page 17 showing the route east to Henson Creek Manor. They can proceed however they wish to the apartment complex. Though this is the Living Land, the major highway—littered with cars and other wreckage—should prevent the group from getting lost.

ARE WE THERE YET?

Few treks through the Living Land go without incident. Let the lead navigator make a *survival* test with the following results:

- **Failure:** The group gets lost and encounters a terrible beast or edeinos hunting party (GM's choice). A Mishap means this occurs as the group negotiates some difficult obstacle, such as pushing through a crumbling, overturned office building or crossing a flooded creek.
- **Standard:** The group hears dinosaurs or edeinos hunting parties in the distance but manages to avoid encountering them (unless they want to, of course).
- **Good:** The Storm Knights navigate directly to the apartment complex without incident.
- **Outstanding:** Somewhere along a major road, one of the Storm Knights spies a corpse holding an airtight plastic tube. Inside is a rolled painting from the Smithsonian, "The Tragedy" by Pablo Picasso. The unfortunate soldier was one of many attempting to get relics out of the Living Land in the early days of the invasion. If the painting is recovered and delivered to Major Chandler, each member of the party receives a Possibility.

HENSON CREEK MANOR

The Henson Creek Manor complex consists of seven buildings (one was demolished soon after the invasion) surrounded by a wall of cars and felled timber. The barrier is patrolled by the inhabitants, who dress in normal civilian clothes rather than any sort of uniform. When the heroes arrive, they're challenged by a young blond-haired woman wearing a Washington Nationals baseball jersey and cap. This is Scarlett Edmunds. She's armed and wary, but friendly. Once she sees the newcomers aren't a threat, Scarlett walks them in and asks them to follow her to her leader.

THE SOCIAL AXIOM

Read the following as the Storm Knights are taken to Henson Creek's leader:

You follow Scarlett through the apartment complex. It was obviously very nice once, but the damp, wet rot of the Living Land is quickly taking its toll.

"We live on the second floors. Store our supplies on the first. We spend more time repairing the buildings than we do fighting edeinos," Scarlett smiles.

She walks you past two large buildings on the left before turning right to what used to be a clubhouse. From there she heads toward an L-shaped pool, now green and mossy and clearly full of fish. You can see some of the fish on smoking racks around the eastern edge. The villagers must be stocking the pool for food.

An Indian woman in slacks and a white shirt—somehow spotless—stands with her hands on her hips talking to a group of about 30 men and women. Some of the people have obviously transformed to the Living Land's savage reality.

"You can't stay here, Henry," the woman says in slightly accented English. "We've talked about this. The edeinos will kill you."

A man shouts back. "We are all one with Lanala!" Several voices bark agreement.

"That's Meghna," Scarlett whispers and points at the woman.

The speaker turns, surprised, then smiles at you, "Hello. I'm Meghna. We were told someone would be here soon. Are you our escorts?"

Meghna Narayan is a 43-year-old policy analyst for the US Department of Education. She's calm and reassuring when she speaks, no matter how emotional others may get.

Meghna welcomes the group, asks them who they are, then frowns and explains her current problem.

"Thank you for risking your lives to come for us. Most everyone is ready to go but a few of those who have transformed have decided to stay. Our hunters have noticed a great number of edeinos and large dinosaurs in the area. If these people stay, Baruk Kaah's forces will surely kill them, whether they worship Lanala or not."

DEBATE CLUBS

Thirty-three individuals remain in Henson Creek Manor. There were more, but many of those who transformed have left to "be with Lanala." Two transformed humans and nine of their family members are reluctant to leave. Twenty-two are ready to go.

If the heroes want to convince the transformed residents to come with them, someone needs to roleplay the plea then make a *persuasion* roll.

- **Failure:** The holdouts decide to stay and take their chances. A roll of 1 means the two transformed humans turn violent for "splitting their tribe." They grab clubs and rush to attack the strangers. If the transformed are harmed, five of the other residents who were ready to leave decide to stay instead.

- **Standard:** The transformed stay along with five of the nine family members.

- **Good:** All of the residents agree to come except for the two transformed,

- **Outstanding:** The Storm Knight convinces everyone to tag along.

Once the situation is resolved, it takes the remaining civilians about an hour to pack up their goods and get ready to go.

Remind the team that taking the transformed inside the Fort Washington hardpoint is dangerous unless the group manages to play a *Glory* card somewhere along the way.

- **Civilians:** See below.

HENSON CREEK MANOR CIVILIANS

Attributes: Charisma 7, Dexterity 7, Mind 7, Spirit 7, Strength 7

Skills: Find 8, fire combat 8, first aid 8, melee weapons 8, stealth 9, unarmed combat 8

Move: 7; **Toughness:** 7; **Shock:** 7; **Wounds:** —

Equipment: The residents have a mix of pistols or shotguns, two scavenged M-16s, and clubs.

Perks: —

Possibilities: Rare

A BIGGER BOAT

When the group gets back to the bridge where their boat awaits, their worst fears are realized. The Deep Mist has settled in but numerous shadowy figures with long tails can be seen exploring its surface—edeinos!

The lizard men found the boat and are checking the roadway for signs of more humans.

The mist makes it impossible for the Storm Knights to tell how many edeinos are in the war party, but those watching spot at least a half-dozen as well as a couple of accompanying raptors the edeinos use as hunting companions.

The lizard men are lithe and agile, jumping from piles of debris dramatically, then tasting the air and bolting to some other spot to follow it up.

Fortunately, the heroes are out of sight of the hunters when they approach so they have a few

moments to quietly make a plan. Waiting them out won't work, however. The patrol eventually detects one of the humans (or perhaps one of the primitives shouts out for their "jakatt brothers!").

The Deep Mist is extremely thick right now, limiting visibility to 15 meters for the next hour or so.

- **Edeinos Scouts (12):** See page 83. The edeinos aren't suicidal. If half their number or more are incapacitated they retreat, using the raptors to cover their escape, then calling for them once the scouts are out of harm's way.

- **Velociraptors (5):** See page 85.

EVERYTHING HERE WANTS TO EAT YOU

Once the last of the edeinos is defeated, the party can rush the refugees aboard the *Cherry Blossom*. After a few minutes getting everyone situated, the *Cherry Blossom* coughs and sputters—then starts. The pilot turns the boat around and heads back up the Potomac. But the danger isn't past yet...

The edeinos war party has gone for reinforcements. They emerge from the Deep Mist along the riverbank and hiss at the escaping humans. There are well over 50 edeinos now, as well as a dozen raptors and several triceratops. The lizard folk stalk the *Cherry Blossom* as it putters upstream, occasionally hurling hrockt-shoot spears (to no effect) or bellowing out a challenge to the escaping humans. Play this for tension for a bit, then have some of the larger triceratops begin wading into the river to test its depth. Read the following as they attempt to get at the *Cherry Blossom*:

Two of the big triceratops-like creatures step into the water, a trio of edeinos standing atop each of their great bulks as they trundle toward you.

The creatures splash forward, swimming now. The edeinos hurl spears and an optant on the far shore begins to cast some sort of miracle...



...when SUDDENLY one of the triceratops is pulled underwater! The river froths with blood! The edeinos riders begin swimming toward shore in panic...and one of them is pulled under as well!

The triceratops bursts forth from the water right near the Cherry Blossom! The ship rises into the air and lands with bone-jarring force. Someone among the refugees screams "SCARLETT!!!"

A massive creature has slammed into the *Cherry Blossom* and knocked Scarlett into the river! She breaks water quickly, eyes wide with panic as she attempts to swim in the thrashing waters of the dying triceratops and its mysterious attacker.

If no one moves to help Scarlett, Meghna throws her a lifeline, but the rope becomes tangled about the girl, then snaps from the rot of the Living Land.

Scarlett is about five meters from the *Cherry Blossom* and can't get back on her own; the heroes must find a way to haul her in.

Keep the identity of the creature unclear in the murky water and play up the horror of the situation. That can be much more frightening than telling them they're being attacked by the Living Land version of a massive pannoniasaurus—a type of fresh water mosasaur!

The fight with the triceratops lasts two more rounds, at which point the carcass of the unfortunate creature sinks to the gray muck below. The pannoniasaurus then attacks any living thing it can detect in the dark water. There is a lot of blood and debris here, so the pannoniasaurus must make a *find* check versus its prey's *stealth* before it can make an attack (the *find* test is a free action).

• **Pannoniasaurus:** See page 84.

"I KNOW THEY'RE NOT ACTUALLY DINOSAURS, BUT HOW ABOUT WE FIGHT IT NOW AND CLASSIFY IT LATER, PROFESSOR?"

-VIOLA VILLIERS TO AIDEN MCALLISTER

SCENE THREE: THE DIMTHREAD TREE

Dramatic Scene. Core Earth Pure Zone.

The Storm Knights return to Fort Washington with the refugees, where they're given a hero's welcome—not to mention a hearty round of smiles and handshakes. Then Major Chandler and his troops escort everyone to a series of tables and tents in the mall and offers them food and water.

Dr. Sheila Maxwell and Billy "Hot Shots" Stanley arrive soon after. Billy warns,

"There's all kinda parasites in the Living Land. I can give you a shot if you like."

Dr. Maxwell warns against giving the shots to non-Core Earthers. She deadpans,

"We're not sure those from these different...worlds... have the exact same physiology. Use at your own risk. You wouldn't want to grow a second head."

Meghna takes a moment to personally thank her rescuers, and specifically calls out any additional effort or heroic deeds that happened along the way.

Once he's satisfied that all is in order, Major Chandler approaches the team. Modify the text below based on the time of day and any special occurrences the major might want to call out.

"That's a hell of a job, folks. It's hard to get refugees to leave their homes, and even harder to get them to safety. They're my responsibility now, though. So head to your quarters and get some rest. I'll see you at dinner. Some of the scouts bagged some fresh meat today—something exotic."

The Storm Knights have the rest of the day to relax, rest, clean their equipment, or explore Fort Washington. Around 7 p.m., as promised, mess is served in the east wing of the Smithsonian National Museum of Natural History, in one of the old cafes.

A massive chunk of meat sits on a table surrounded by potatoes, corn, and other vegetables. If asked, the cook winks and says vegetables grow *really* well in the Living Land. The meat is a the thigh of a dinosaur. Chef Kurt Bethel doesn't know what kind—it didn't have an Earth analog. *"But it was big and brown and feathered, so y'know, basically chicken."*

The bread, however, is a disaster. Bethel burned the rolls and they're hard as rocks. At one point Major Chandler jokes that if they don't get resupply they might use the rolls against the edeinos.

Otherwise, Bethel is talented and has pulled out all the stops for the rescuers, the tired soldiers, and the new refugees. Use the scene to show the human side of the troops and to invest the players in their safety—it will be threatened soon.

TALL TALES

The dinner is festive and delicious, with soldiers and Storm Knights relaxing for a bit and blowing off steam. Dr. Maxwell and Hot Shots are present, as are the residents from Henson Manor.

Meghna tells the story of Henson Manor and how they resisted the lizards' attacks. Major Chandler joins in with tales of the first days of Fort Washington.

"I was a second lieutenant when I got here. My company commander wouldn't say why we were heading to Washington. We all saw the footage out of New York but I don't think anyone really believed it. It was just like watching a movie or something, you know? Just special effects.

"There was fighting everywhere. We fell back time after time, until we set up around the mall here. Tens of thousands of civilians came in and we transported them out on trains, buses, cars, planes, helicopters—whatever we could find that still worked. Most were sent south and west since the invasion came from the northeast. We piled up artifacts from the museums and government buildings too, but people came first and there was just so much of it.

"Then the lizards came again. We wasted 'em at first. Spears and scaly skin don't do much against machine guns and tanks. By then we knew better than to pursue them if they broke off. Ten feet in the jungle and our soldiers' weapons started jamming. Some of the troops just stopped in their tracks and stared. We know now they'd transformed. We call 'em Tarzans. Cave men isn't really accurate, you know? They're not stupid—they're just as clever or smart as they were before. They just don't get modern concepts like I don't know how to pluck and cook that giant chicken we just ate."

Chef Bethel and most of the room laughs, a break from the usual tension of the Possibility Wars.

"Thing I miss most? Starbucks. And Netflix."

Chandler then asks each of the party to tell him something about themselves—an anecdote from their past or something about their world for those from other cosms. Encourage each of the players to tell the story in character, and award a Possibility to anyone who makes the attempt.

TOO GOOD TO BE TRUE

After the last character tells her tale, the party hears the sounds of machine guns to the west, then the heavy sounds of tank guns. Major Chandler gets a call on his radio and immediately takes charge.

"Sorry, folks. Dinner's over. Battle stations, everyone! You folks—get Meghna and her people to the castle. We'll handle the assault. Dr. Maxwell, Billy—get set up for casualties."

Chandler and the soldiers head off to their various positions as a full-scale attack occurs on Fort Washington.

The mess hall is in the east wing of the National Museum of Natural History on the north and east side of the mall. The "castle" is directly to the south across the way.

The refugees and player characters are moving across the mall to the castle when a warband of infiltrating edeinos with the Chameleon Perk attack. Their job is to cause havoc inside the humans' compound while Kaah's more powerful hordes attack from the north, east, and west. It's the extent of the Tyrant Lizard's tactics given the low Social Axiom of the Living Land, but it's effective.

BATTLE IN THE GARDENS

The edeinos warband catches the player characters as they pass through the Haupt Gardens in front of the Smithsonian Castle. Since the raiders are motionless and well-hidden given their Chameleon Perk, they attack with surprise in the first round. Three of the edeinos hang from vines draped down the front of the castle and throw hrockt-shoot spears. Three more spring from each side of the cherry blossom trees. Their leader, an optant, appears behind the group on the right as one faces the castle.

The Game Master should turn over the top card of the Drama Deck. If the villains don't go first, discard and keep drawing until they do, then proceed normally. Remember that since the villains have surprise, the heroes cannot play Destiny cards into their pools the first round.

Meghna and her people band together in the middle of the garden once the ambush occurs. They're ready to fight, but unarmed, so the Storm Knights are their only real protection.

The raiders are relatively rare and have been told not to throw their lives away needlessly, so they retreat when half or more are defeated.

- **Edeinos Scouts (10):** These edeinos all have the Chameleon Perk (see *Torg Eternity*). They are led by a *reality*-rated scout with 3 Possibilities. See page 83 for statistics.

BREAD CRUMBS

Once the edeinos infiltrators are defeated, Major Chandler appears out of the darkness obviously looking for the Storm Knights. He catches his breath and says the following:

"You're never gonna believe this. We think Baruk Kaah himself led this assault. Might've been a bad move for the Tyrant Lizard though...one of the marines hit him with a rocket launcher! Knocked him clean off his dinosaur. I know these...High Lords...have...powers...or something...and he's probably not dead...but he's definitely gonna feel that one!"

"We're looking for him and gonna hit that gecko with everything we've got, but something weird happened during the fight and I need your help. A group of edeinos burst through the wall at the Natural History museum. I don't know how, but somehow they were looking for something specific and they got it."

"One of their priests and her warband took some old Mayan artifact out of the First Nations exhibit and high-tailed it into the jungle to the north. I don't know what they took, where they're going, or what they want with it, but it can't be good. They grabbed some people too—maybe for hostages or something?"

"I'd send my soldiers after them but they'll just go Tarzan as soon as they hit trouble. So looks like it's up to you. Get our people back, and if you can, figure



out what they took and get it back. If the lizards went to this much trouble it can't be good for us. OK?"

Clear tracks and drops of blood from wounded warriors lead north from the ruined wall of the National Museum of Natural History. No *tracking* roll is required to follow the warband's path, but if one is made, a Good Success or higher reveals the group consists of about 20 edeinos.

As the team leaves, Scarlett (the girl from Henson Creek Manor) comes running up and tells them some more bad news.

"You're going out after them, right? You know they took Dr. Maxwell? And Billy? Dragged them right out of the med tent and out into the jungle!"

Scarlett has a bit of a crush on Billy so she's in a near panic. The girl is armed with her hunting rifle from Henson Creek and is dead set on accompanying the Storm Knights on their rescue mission.

It's hard to prevent the stubborn teen from tagging along, requiring an Outstanding Success on an opposed *persuasion* test. Even if she's outright prohibited from joining the group she sneaks along behind them and might show up later in the scene. Use her as a rescuer or a damsel in distress as makes sense in the story to come.

THE SWAMP

The raiders' path leads about two miles through the city of Washington to the McMillan Reservoir to the north. Before the invasion, the reservoir served the Children's Medical Center, Howard University, and local suburbs. Since the Living Land took over, the pumps and filters stopped working, the drains clogged, and massive vegetation grew rapidly. The water pooled with rain and the area's natural water table and spread quickly, filling the nearby fields and flooding the suburbs and nearby Glenwood Cemetery with fetid swamp water.

The tracks head directly into the swamp, and paths through the surface scum make it clear the warband continued directly through it. There's little choice but to plunge in and follow.

STINKING DOOM

The water is waist-deep and the muck at the bottom is only a few inches thick. The party moves slowly through the reeking slime but makes solid progress. Unfortunately, there's more than sucking mud here—the reservoir has become home to slithering leech-like creatures.

Read the following as the party sloshes through the slimy water:

The swamp was previously a reservoir. The good news is the transformation to a swamp has made it relatively shallow. Cypress-like aquatic trees have sprouted up around the banks and patches of thick, stinking algae cover the surface. You can clearly see a fresh trail through the slime—the raiders must be mere minutes ahead of you.

In the gloom beyond the reservoir you see the top floors of a tall building—a hospital by its markings. A massive tree with some kind of glowing pods has grown into the side of it, breaking out windows and walls.

You slosh forward, eager to get out of this reeking hell and reach what looks like a parking lot between the swamp and the hospital. You're halfway there.

Have the players state their marching order. They can go single-file, side-by-side, or whatever they want. Then choose one of the characters in the middle of the group. That explorer's boot or shoe

gets hopelessly stuck in the mud. She pulls with all her might to free it—and attracts a swarm of blood-sucking swamp leeches!

The leeches aren't particularly tough, but the real problem is that there are edeinos warbands camped around the edges of the swamp. The natural sounds of the surrounding jungle and hordes of grunting dinosaur war beasts are fairly loud, so the first slip—a single gunshot, loud scream, or other abrupt noise—attracts six curious edeinos. The overconfident lizard-folk foolishly attack rather than running for additional help. Only if a single scout is left does an edeinos run for reinforcements, which arrive in about two minutes. The team should have enough time to get to the parking lot of the children's hospital in the next scene if they hurry.

• **Leech Swarm:** See below.

• **Edeinos Warriors (6):** Use statistics for the edeinos warriors found on page 83.

LEECH SWARM

The swarm is a massive pod of slimy, eight-inch-long creatures. They wiggle inside boots, armor, and clothing to bite directly at their victim's flesh.

Attributes: Charisma 2, Dexterity 5, Mind 2, Spirit 6, Strength 6

Skills: Find 4, stealth 9

Move: 1; **Tough:** 6; **Shock:** 12; **Wounds:** 3

Perks: --

Possibilities: Never

Special Abilities:

• **Leech:** The parasites ignore armor unless it's completely sealed as they wriggle in and around it. Their attacks automatically hit and cause two Shock to everyone caught in the swarm each round.

• **Swarm:** The statistics above are for a swarm of thousands. Eliminating one, or even dozens has no real effect on the swarm as a whole. Unarmed and crushing weapons deal base damage normally. Area attacks deal damage normally. Blades, bullets, or weapons that can't hit dozens of creatures at once deal no damage at all.

• **Swim:** Move 8 in water only.

McMILLAN RESERVOIR

200 meters

Tree



THE DIMTHREAD TREE

Beyond the swamp looms the vine-choked Children's National Medical Center. A massive tree has grown into its southern facing, busting out the brick walls and thrusting its branches through the crumbling shell. Read the following as the heroes exit the swamp:

You step heavily from the thick muck of the swamp onto concrete. Across a cracked street is a six-story, L-shaped building. In the interior corner of the "L" is a massive tree that has burst through the glass walls on either side.

Thousands of bioluminescent insects buzz lazily about the tree, leaving glowing green trails in their wake. With their light, you make out a large black hollow in the tree's base large enough for a human to walk into.

But the strangest thing is at the base of the tree where you see a dozen or so pods. Each one is dark brown, wet, and roughly human-sized. Pulsing vines lead from the pods into the base of the tree, seemingly conveying some kind of luminescent fluid or energy into it.

THE PODS

The tree is a Dimthread Tree (see page 29), and the pods contain a dozen human captives scattered in a circle around the base. They're alive but semi-conscious.

The warband's footprints are obvious in the wet soil, and fresh blood from those wounded in the assault confirms they emerged from the swamp, walked up to the tree, and walked into the dark hollow at its center. Anyone who makes a successful *find* test also sees a syringe stuck into the tree...likely put there by Billy Stanley as a sign to possible rescuers.

Give the characters a moment to investigate on their own. As they do so, one of the pods starts shaking, and a thin voice sounds from within!

"Help...me...!"

Opening a pod takes a single round with a sharp knife or similar tool. Inside are a number of non-transformed humans. Most are barely conscious, but one—Mikalah Goldhammer—is young and evidently more resilient to the pod's anesthetic than the rest.

"Oh, wow. That...was...awful. The lizards caught me and stuck me in that...giant bean. I think it was drawing off my life force or something...yet somehow keeping me alive too. It made me really sleepy, but I've always been resistant to anesthetic.

"Wait, wait. I remember some stuff. It was important. Something about...god...box...Mala...Milla...Malacryx. OH! Now I remember. I knew I had to remember and tell somebody. K. Listen up. I'm still all wonky and might forget it all.

"So...couple nights ago, this lady edeinor comes through the portal with her warband. They looked really beat up. Like they'd just come through hell. I've been studying their language for a YouTube series I'm making so I understood 'em. She told the warriors that her name was Malacryx and that she was looking for the big guy...Baruk Kaah himself.

"I dunno how the lizards work their e-vites but the next night, he came! The big lizard himself!

"This...priestess...optant...her name is Malacryx, by the way...she said she had something powerful for him. Something that would stop the rebels. Or maybe doubters. Like I said, I was woozy and I barely speak their language.

"Kaah seemed to believe her though. Honestly, seemed like the two had a little wakka-wakka going on.

"Malacryx said she needed something from the human fort...a 'God Box?' They made some kinda plan...this part's a little trippy 'cause planning seems kinda hard for the lizards. I guess something happened though, 'cause tonight she comes running back here with a bunch of hostages and some kinda black box. She didn't wait for Kaah but ran straight into the hollow of that tree. It's a portal of some kind, I think. I dunno where it goes, but I think they call it a 'Dimthread Tree.' I can't really translate it exactly."

OPENING THE PORTAL

Mikalah is a Storm Knight. She's weary but able to lead the other beleaguered captives back to the fort. Scarlett can take people back if Mikalah is recruited—use the Realm Runner archetype for her if necessary. The heroes have no time to lose—they need to walk through the Dimthread Tree's portal to rescue Billy, Dr. Maxwell, and any other hostages, and figure out what Malacryx is up to with this "God Box."

DIMTHREAD TREES

The ever-gracious Gaunt Man gifted these devices to his fellow High Lords. They are somewhat expensive to create and maintain, but offer the Possibility Raiders' lieutenants a network of "dimensional highways" to serve their masters without having to petition the Darkness Device directly. They've proved a major boon to Baruk Kaah in particular, given the massive size of the Living Land on Earth and the large sections of Core Earth his people cannot easily cross.

The dimthread portals are not "dynamic," however. They open to a single place and cannot be moved, so they are truly a "path" more than "teleportation devices."

Dimthread trees are tenuously connected to each High Lord's stelae network, and are powered by the Possibility Energy of living beings kept barely conscious in seed pods around the base. Each tree supports a number of portals, so only the "nexus" has an actual tree. The others are created wherever the High Lord chooses when the tree takes root. They can be moved by the Darkness Device afterward, but this is expensive and requires conscious effort on its part.

Dimthread trees are very similar to Nightmare Trees, and have the same Orrorsh hardpoint properties those do. They combine unknown science, the reality of the Gaunt Man's occult magic (hence the pods and their unfortunate victims), and the Darkness Device's inherent powers. To make them work, the Gaunt Man tells his fellow High Lords, his gifts also act as very special stelae that connect directly to his own stelae network. His Darkness Device, Heketon, magnanimously expends the additional power on behalf of all his "partners."

The victims of the trees—those encased in the life-draining pods—experience horrifyingly vivid nightmares while entombed within. Of course there's far more to both these and the Nightmare Trees (which aren't connected to the stelae network) than *any* of that. The Gaunt Man is nothing if not a schemer, after all...



ACT TWO: THE LAND BELOW

The Storm Knights pursue Malacryx and the God Box through the deadly and mysterious Land Below. Along the way they save a prince, overthrow a “god,” and may even bring peace to two warring peoples.

OVERVIEW

Scene One: The Storm Knights appear in a cave high above the Land Below. They scale down the imposing cliff face and discover evidence of a previous expedition. Tracks lead them away from the camp and into the jungle, where they rescue Prince Chakan from deadly spiders.

Scene Two: Prince Chakan of the Leopard Warriors tells the newcomers he doesn’t know where Malacryx might have exited the Land Below, but his friend Spencer might. Unfortunately, Spencer was captured by the Darooni Wasp Riders and will be sacrificed if they don’t rescue him quickly!

Scene Three: The heroes follow Chakan into the Misty Gorge and confront the Darooni.

Scene Four: Chakan betrays the group, leaving them to rescue Spencer and escape from the Darooni’s angry goddess!

SCENE ONE: A ROUTINE EXPEDITION

Standard Scene. Living Land Dominant Zone.

The Storm Knights emerge from the Dimthread Tree on a cave ledge. The interior of the cave shines with light from the entrance, and is cool compared to the Washington, DC swamp the heroes just left.

The cave extends about 20 yards, twisting gently twice before opening onto a scene unlike anything the explorers have seen before. Read the following as the team moves toward the light:

You’re at the entrance to a shallow cave high up on a cliff. You’re hundreds of feet above a sprawling land of jungles, stony mountains, rivers, and a distant, fuming volcano.

About 100 meters to your right is a massive waterfall, pouring from another hole in the cliff. It dwarfs anything on Earth, and is so loud you have to shout to make yourself heard. The fall feeds into a titanic lake surrounded by tall mountains before



spilling into three powerful rivers. Two lead to your left into a dense, rolling jungle. Another leads right into ash-gray mountains as far as you can see.

You seem to be inside the Earth, a veritable Pellucidar for those who have read Edgar Rice Burroughs's classic tales. Some have speculated Baruk Kaah's Living Land extends beneath the surface, to an unknown world composed of realms his legions have conquered before. This then must be the rumored "Land Below."

There are two ways down from the ledge, some 300 meters above the lake shore: fly, or descend what looks like crudely cut stairs. If the Storm Knights can fly, they spy a camp at the lake below and should land to check it out. If they walk, the camp is at the bottom of their descent.

The stairs are long and difficult, and since this is the savage reality of the Living Land, they do not pass without incident!

CREEPING DOOM

Characters using the steps hit a thick patch of juicy, blood-red vines about 100 meters from the cave entrance. They completely cover the path and seem to quiver slightly when anyone gets close.

The lead character should now make a *find* test. A Standard success clearly sees an edeinos wrapped up in the vines. The branches end in sharp spikes that have punctured the warrior's scaly skin and seem to be devouring his quickly shriveling form. A Good Success or better further notes shiny jewelry covering parts of his body—he was likely a member of Malacryx's Goldsun Clan.

The warrior is dead, but a small haul of gold jewelry—some of it clearly of Mayan origin to anyone who makes a successful *scholar* test. A Good or Outstanding Success notes also that it is likely very old, and was recently polished and given new clasps, leather bindings, etc.

The plant is a sentient bush the leopard warriors call a stinger, after the thousands of thorny, blood-sucking barbs that tip its stems. Hacking the bush to bits is certainly a viable option, but once it's attacked it not only swarms to life, but uses the husk of the dead warrior as a clumsy puppet as well! Fighting with the carnivorous plant on the narrow ledge (about a meter wide here) is also perilous. Anyone who rolls a Mishap or a Setback tumbles to a lower set of stairs 10 meters down (damage 10 +1BD).

• **Stinger Bush (1):** See page 97.

MERRETIKA

- Pyrian Outpost
- Entrance

★ The Abominari Temple

★ Ohibi Village

Leopard Lake

LANDS OF THE KEEFEE

Misty Gorge

LANDS OF THE LEOPARD MEN

HELEPHEZ

Lake of the Hunter

River of the Beast
Mountains of the Beast

Lake of the Giver

Smoke Canyon

River With No Bottom

LANDS OF THE PYRIANS

Tanta Kalar

20 kilometers

THE LAIR

At the end of the descent, near the base of the cliff and about five meters from the ground, is another shallow cave. This one seems to be lived in by humans from Core Earth, as obvious signs of habitation are strewn about—orange life vests, three sleeping bags, a few camping-style pots and pans, a well-used fire circle, and the shredded remains of three empty red backpacks. A yellow, mostly deflated raft has been used as a bed. Clearly, Core Earth humans have lived here for at least a few weeks.

Anyone who pokes around in the belongings finds a journal on the raft. Give anyone who looks through it the handout on page 3, **Kathy's Journal**. The book reveals the identity of the cave's inhabitants, briefs the team on some of the local denizens of the Land Below, and tells the Storm Knights there's a way back to the Living Land.

Stuck inside Kathy's journal are also a number of scrap pages filled with phonetic pronunciations of common words in what she calls the tongue of the "Leopard Warriors." Anyone referencing the pages can speak in basic, broken sentences to the Leopard Warriors encountered later in this adventure. (Characters who memorize the dictionary and engage in at least a few conversations with the Leopard Warriors can put an Experience Point into *language (Leopard Warriors)* as well.)

A ladder lies broken on the ground below (easily repaired), and a crude rope-and-pulley system has been rigged up to the cave mouth. At the end is a meter-square basket that can be raised or lowered, presumably to help carry water, food, or wood up and down the five-meter cliff face. It can hold the weight of a full-grown adult and then some.

A successful *tracking* roll on the ground below detects numerous prints heading to and from the cliff base, the lake shore, and a narrow trail that disappears into the nearby jungle. A Good Success notes Core Earth-style shoe prints, a dozen or more edeinos prints, what looks like the kind of trail large snakes might leave, and a broken syringe—surely another "bread crumb" left by Billy Stanley. An Outstanding Success notes that the edeinos prints are the most recent and that there are three distinct sets of shoe prints.

INTO A LOST LAND

Kathy, her brother Wesley, and their father Spencer Marshall were exploring the Living Land when their tiny raft plunged through a waterfall into the Land Below.

The three made camp in the cave near the base of the waterfall, and soon after befriended Prince Chakan of the Leopard Tribe. Spencer learned their language and Kathy translated the words in her journal phonetically.

With the help of the Prince, Spencer discovered a possible route home, a portal located in the "Ohibi temple" far on the other side of the Land Below. (The deadly stinger vines kept him from reaching the cave the player characters entered through.) The two were ambushed on their way back, however, and Spencer was taken by the terrible Darooni wasp riders. Prince Chakan was left for dead and dragged into a spider's hole...where he can be saved by the player characters in Scene Two.

Kathy and Wesley set off to look for their overdue father and were discovered by serpentors, who tracked them back to their cave and captured them for sell to the Pyrian Fire Tamers.

Malacryx and her warband witnessed the serpentor raid from the stairs above the Marshalls' cave, but avoided the conflict and pressed quietly on to the Yucatán portal. The edeinos are sidetracked along the way, however, and so only reach the Ohibi temple a few hours before the Storm Knights at the end of the next act.

TRACKS AND TRAILS

The trail leads toward the center of the Land Below, along left-most the river they recall leading to a fog-shrouded gorge (the Misty Gorge).

The overgrown jungle and steep terrain make overland routes impassable unless the heroes can fly. If they can, or are particularly set on climbing the rough hills that border the trail, it's not a problem. Just move the location of the next encounter to some other trail along their path.

The tracks continue on for about 10 kilometers before the trail is suddenly lined by thick webs. Clearly there are giant spiders here, though none are currently visible. After describing the scene, have everyone make a *find* roll. Anyone who succeeds hears faint cries from somewhere nearby. Following the sounds leads to a two-meter-diameter hole in the earth, covered in thick webs. There are signs of a fight all around the area—broken spears, splashes of red and yellow blood, and even bits of hairy black spider!

The voice in the spider hole clearly says, “kroff.” If someone thinks to look the word up in Kathy's



journal, “kroff” is a Leopard Man word for “help.” If the Storm Knights aren't completely quiet, the desperate voice grows louder and more frantic.

THE SPIDER HOLE

The hole leads straight down into darkness. It's roughly two meters in diameter, but protruding rocks jutting from various places in the wall make it a tight squeeze. This means the explorers must enter one at a time!

The first hero down the spider hole finds a male individual cocooned in thick webbing. There's no room to cut him out here and he's too delirious to help, but when he sees the strangers he says, “Marshall?” over and over.

The man is Prince Chakan of the Leopard Warriors. Pulling him from the hole requires some rope (or webbing!) and a *Strength* total of 14. Once the group starts pulling, however, they're attacked from above—and below!

One giant spider lurks beneath Prince Chakan. It sticks its head through the gap below his feet and bites at whoever descended to rescue him. At the same time, two other giant spiders spin down through the high trees above and attack the rest of the party. If the other players didn't say they were watching for an ambush, the Game Master should determine if she thinks they're surprised by the silent arachnids.

• **Ambush Spiders (3):** One spider lurks below, two more wait in the trees above. See page 88.

PRINCE CHAKAN

Once freed (or at least allowed to speak), Chakan grunts the word “Spencer” and points toward the trail leading to north. If someone uses Kathy's phonetic dictionary, she can understand a bit more from Prince Chakan:

“Chakan and Spencer find way out. Come back for Kathy but attacked by Darooni. Darooni take Spencer. Must rescue! No time! Bad...bad!”

Prince Chakan knows that Spencer is to be used for the Darooni Hatching Ceremony, a terrible fate, but communicating that is currently beyond what Kathy's dictionary can provide. He also can't express the word “wasp” yet—a surprise the heroes discover in the next scene!

If anyone thinks to make a *tracking* roll, the edeinos' tracks are no longer visible. Should the party prove intent on finding the trail again, they prove unsuccessful no matter how hard they look. All the while, Prince Chakan insists they help him save Spencer. If he comes to understand who they're looking for, he communicates that the edeinos aren't native to Merretika so they must know a way out. Since the Storm Knights have lost the edeinos' trail, they'll need their own way out. He'll take them to the temple Spencer found, but only after they help with his rescue.

Phonetically, the heroes understand him to say something like this:

"Lizard men no live Merretika. Must know way out. Spencer know way out! We save Spencer, he show you way."

Chakan is also very worried about his friends Kathy and Wes. If the group tells him that snake tracks were seen near the camp, he seems at once worried and relieved.

"Serpentors. Slavers. Wes and Kathy will be alive. Save them next. No time for Spencer."

Chakan is adamant—they have little time to save Spencer while Kathy and Wes should be safe. Slaves are put to work, after all, not killed. If the party asks him where they would have taken them, he points to the distant volcano: *"Tanta kellar. Fire mountain. We save Spencer, then Kathy and Wes."*

A SHORT WALK ON THE TALL RIVER

Prince Chakan leads the group along the Tall River for several kilometers. The sun—*Helephez*, he calls it—never sets, but after about eight hours of walking the prince suggests they stop and sleep for a while. This gives everyone a chance to rest up, prepare equipment, and refresh.

The newcomers can also ask the exhausted prince about the incredible world of Merretika. Chakan answers as best he can, but desperately needs rest so his answers are generally short and leave a little mystery to those aspects of the Land Below the Game Master doesn't yet want revealed. If asked about the Darooni, however, he perks up a bit and says the following:

"Darooni hunt Leopard Warriors. Darooni hunt everyone. We war long time. Many die. Must end. Chakan have plan, but must rescue friend first."

The prince seems distant when he speaks of the Darooni. He's hiding something—a plan to end the long and bloody war—but he doesn't reveal it until the next scene!

SCENE TWO: RIVER WALK

Standard Scene. Living Land Dominant Zone.

After a short rest, Prince Chakan leads the party for several more kilometers along the Tall River and points to a tributary leading up into a stand of dense trees. Then he points farther uphill, and heads a few dozen yards in that direction.

Those who follow see the Leopard Prince pull numerous giant leaves aside to uncover two large, heavy canoes. "Long war," Chakan frowns.

Each canoe can hold five people, so there should be more than enough room for the player characters, the prince, and any animals or followers the team might have with them.

The group manhandles the canoes down the slope and puts them in the river. Chakan serves as the pilot of one boat—the Storm Knights must choose a captain for the other. Everyone else rows using oars already carved and placed in the canoes for an attack on the Darooni. The canoes use the *water vehicles* skill, but default use should serve the group well enough unless they attempt difficult maneuvers.

The Darooni village is still over 30 kilometers away, but the current is with them so they should reach the Misty Gorge in just under eight hours. This is the Land Below though, so no trip of any importance ever goes without a little chaos. This time the trouble comes in the form of...

THE OUTPOST

An hour down the river, the travelers see a number of Leopard Warriors sitting on the riverbank. They bow to Prince Chakan as he puts his canoe in among them. The warriors are heavily injured but obviously brave and stoic as their leader walks

among them. Their leader speaks in frantic tones as the rest look over the strangers Chakan travels with. After a few minutes' time, Chakan explains.

"These warriors protect gatherers on river looking for important medicines. Darooni find them and attack. Many dead and wounded on both sides. This war must end."

Chakan is visibly shaken by the state of his warriors.

SILENT WATCHERS

The canoes continue down the dark river for another 10 kilometers. Read the following as the Storm Knights enter a particularly strange section of the river.

Your canoes move steadily down the river. You feel tired, as if it must be getting late, but the strange sun Prince Chakan calls Helephiez never sets. In fact, it is at once both beautiful and disturbing.

The jungle here is dark and mysterious. You see black serpents slither quietly along the riverbank, and crocodile-like eyes emerge from the green water. A pack of pig-like things with hands instead of paws follows your group for a while, and you could almost swear they whisper "Chakan" as they fade into the flora.

It grows silent for a while, the repetitive lapping of the oars in the water almost putting you to sleep. As you fight your fatigue, you note the river narrows. The twisted boughs of massive trees stretch overhead, forming a kind of tangled ceiling.

Your heart suddenly races as you realize some of the

shadows on the tree branches are creatures! They're some kind of avian humanoids, peering down at you with bright yellow eyes, completely motionless!

The unknown creatures remain silent and don't interact with the characters in any way. They are, in fact, larendi, bird-like creatures from another world trapped here by the Law of Wonders. They hide beneath the canopy to avoid the deadly Darooni further upstream.

If the Larendi are attacked or assaulted in any way, including intimidation attacks, warning shots, etc., they drop from the branches and glide silently upriver, never to be seen again. If they are left unmolested, however, the heroes may see them again at the Darooni Wasp Temple in the next scene.

- **Larendi (3):** See page 90.

THAT WHICH LURKS ABOVE

The group continues farther down river and encounters many more deadly denizens of this mysterious land.

You drift for another hour down the river, perhaps five kilometers or so. It widens into a series of short rapids, shallow fords, and sandy beaches

before narrowing again. Another hour passes and it narrows once more, spilling into fast-flowing channels that threaten to dash your canoes to splinters. But even with rough handling they seem surprisingly sturdy.

Eventually you pass out of the rapids and once more into slower waters. The canopy closes in again, with long, twisting boughs hanging overhead as when you saw the bird creatures. They are not present this



time, but the branches are wrapped in what you first take for snakes, but then realize are thick, corded vines of some sort.

The creatures are living plants that ambush prey passing below, typically large reptiles, fish, or even leopards that come to drink from the river. The Leopard Warriors call the terrors “green lurkers.” Prince Chakan knows what they are, but unless alerted, he is still dazed from his ordeal with the spiders and misses them.

- **Green Lurkers (5):** See page 89. The creatures hide on the branches overhead and attempt to hang and devour anything that passes beneath.

SCENE THREE: SHOWDOWN AT MISTY GORGE

Standard Scene. Living Land Dominant Zone.

The trip to the Misty Gorge is child’s play compared to actually descending into its mist-shrouded depths. The Tall River dumps into the southern end of the massive canyon, but Prince Chakan puts the canoes out half a kilometer from the fall and heads to the rim on foot.

You hear the distant, growing roar of a waterfall. You drift another half-hour before you spy what must be a titanic fall into empty air beyond.

Prince Chakan motions to the port side of the canoe and points to the shore. You land before the current drags you to the falls and beach the boats on a rocky shore. The Leopard Warrior walks toward the waterfall and the edge of a great, breathtaking chasm. It’s roughly the shape of a boot, with you on the bottom of the arch. What’s below is unknown, for a thick mist begins about 50 meters down and hides everything below.

The walls are wet, gray shale. Even an expert climber would have difficulty descending these sheer cliffs.

Let the group make their own plan as to how to get down. The jungle is full of strong vines, so making a long “rope” isn’t hard if they don’t have other means. If they don’t think of it Chakan does,

and within an hour or so, they have enough vines to climb a few hundred meters at a time. The gorge is almost a kilometer deep, however, so the descent takes several hours under the best of circumstances.

FLY BY

The mist starts 50 meters down. Visibility here is less than that. As the group hits the 100 meter mark, they hear a strange sound.

The roar of the waterfall drowns out most every other sound, but 100 meters or so below the rim you hear a distant buzzing sound. It grows in intensity, seemingly heading straight for you. Prince Chakan visibly steels himself, obviously wary. The sound—sounds, in fact—grow close and pass directly overhead. The mist swirls and you can almost make out vehicle-size shapes flying swiftly by—then they’re gone. The buzzing passes up the falls and over the rim before disappearing.

If anyone asks the prince what made the sounds, he says only, “Darooni. Must hurry,” and redoubles his efforts to descend into the chasm. These are, of course, Darooni wasp-rider scouts.

THE VIEW FROM BELOW

After an arduous climb, the group exits the mist, 60 meters from the canyon floor. Read the following as they do.

Finally, you break through the thick mist 60 meters from the floor of the canyon below. You’re above a massive lake formed by the waterfall. The Tall River continues on toward the top of the deep, boot-shaped gorge, winding into what looks like distant farmland and numerous brown huts.

On either side of the farms is thick jungle, right up to the canyon walls. Left of the lake as you look along the river and perhaps two kilometers through the jungle is an obvious stone temple and crowds of people. Prince Chakan nods to the temple and says a single word—“Spencer.”

Chakan is obviously unnerved as he urges the party quickly out of the open and into the jungle. Those who pay attention see him constantly looking to the air, and is obviously relieved when he reaches the concealment of the jungle canopy. “Darooni,” he once again exhales nervously.

THE DAROONI TEMPLE

Prince Chakan seems increasingly anxious as the rescuers proceed through the jungle to the temple. He avoids all trails, which are obviously well-worn, and sticks to the foliage a few dozen meters off the path. Drumbeats quicken in the distance and Chakan begins to run, whispering "Spencer!" if anyone asks him what's going on. Finally they reach the edge of the forest about 200 meters from the temple and hear the chanting of hundreds of voices!

You follow Chakan through the jungle. He's moving as fast as he can now, breaking through limbs and crashing noisily through the vegetation with little regard for stealth.

Finally he breaks out into a clearing. Before you is the temple you saw before, large stone steps between two towering columns. At the top of the steps is a priestess in a long leather robe and a strange bug-like mask. Before her is a semiconscious human, obviously Spencer Marshall from his modern clothing.

To either side of the priestess are warriors with long spears, standing beside their mounts—giant wasps the size of rhinos!

Far above it all, on the cliff wall behind the temple, is what you at first take for a statue, but then it moves. It's the head of an even larger wasp the size of a double-decker bus! This is clearly the queen. It watches the ceremony below anxiously, as if waiting for its cue. Slowly, it dawns on you that this isn't a sacrifice—it's a hatching ceremony! Spencer is to serve as a host for new wasps!

Let that sink in for a moment, then continue quickly.

Between you and the temple are many more natives, mostly simple folk who look like farmers of some sort—but there are thousands of them.

It feels like all eyes turn toward you at once...

Before anything else happens, a score of the wasp riders take off from the temple and rush directly toward the heroes. The Storm Knights can see the riders are all female, and perhaps surprisingly, ride beneath the wasps rather than atop them.

Prince Chakan, though unarmed, stands his ground. As the wasp riders close to attack range,

he steps forward and yells something in their language. They seem confused, and while he waits for their response he turns to his companions and says:

"I have challenged their champions. If I win, I will ask for Spencer and we can leave. We must all fight, but cannot kill. If we kill, we lose."

Chakan points at the strangers' guns, motioning for them to drop them in a pile. Once they do, he nods acceptance to the wasp riders and turns once more to the Storm Knights:

"I must take the leader, Mila, alone. You fight the others."

THE INEVITABLE ARENA BATTLE

The wasp riders escort the challengers to the front of the temple, where they're surrounded by the Darooni villagers on three sides and the priestess and the temple steps on the other.

As the wasp riders smile anxiously for the combat to begin, Chakan whispers one last warning to his new friends:

"If I fall, make your way to the cliff wall behind the temple. You will find help there."

The wasp riders use their spears as clubs, inflicting nonlethal damage. They're dressed in fine leather armor and seem stronger and healthier than the villagers. Their leader, Mila, exudes power and confidence with every step. She has long golden hair, cinnamon skin, and brilliant green eyes. A long scar runs from her throat to her breastplate. Prince Chakan squares up with her, and the two exchange a curious glance (anyone who makes a Good Success or better on a *find* test notices it).

The fight begins, with all combatants expected to use nonlethal damage or attacks. Defeating a participant or a Player's Call on an interaction means they are out of the fight.

The heroes may exchange foes or help each other as they wish, but if anyone attempts any sort of physical attack on Mila, Prince Chakan intervenes and wards his "friend" off with a stern warning. *"This one and I must fight alone!"*

Describe the fight between the two as fierce, but anyone who asks sees they are merely sparring.

MISTY GORGE

—
2 kilometers



Perhaps they are just warming up, but they have clearly fought each other before. Don't roll for their attacks, but simply describe them battling and watching their companions as they circle each other and exchange short flurries of blows.

Assuming the heroes defeat the rest of the foes, Mila and Chakan circle each other one last time. Then read the following:

Mila makes an overhead strike at Chakan. He blocks it easily with a spear then angles the tip into the blonde's jaw. She falls to her knees from this single blow. And smiles up at the prince.

•**Darooni Wasp Riders (Mila + 1 per Storm Knight):** See page 81.

SCENE FOUR: BETRAYAL!

Dramatic Scene. Living Land Dominant Zone.

The dumbfounded crowd is silent as Mila rouses her defeated warriors. Read or paraphrase what happens next.

Chakan and Mila ascend the staircase, standing halfway between the crowd and the fuming priestess above. Chakan then takes Mila's hand, says something to the priestess, then turns to the crowd and yells something else. A few of the villagers cheer but are quickly silenced by the furious majority.

Chakan then looks down at you and whispers in surprisingly good English: "I have claimed my prize...the hand of Mila, champion of the honored wasp riders. There will now be peace among our people. I am sorry I lied to you."

The priestess screams at Mila while Chakan ascends the steps to Spencer. He motions for you to join him. Spencer looks up at you in a stupor. He's obviously been drugged. "Chakan?" he stammers. "The queen...she's gonna...in my...oh, man...bad juju..."

Chakan whispers once more.

"I cannot command the priestess until the wedding. You must take Spencer while I distract them. Head for the cliff...there..." Chakan nods toward the cliff wall about 100 yards behind the temple. "Look for my people. They will protect you. Go! Now!"

Chakan then heads toward the priestess and Mila and moves so as to block their view of Spencer. The heroes must make their move now!

THE CHASE

Spencer examines his guts once he's helped to his feet, making sure he wasn't already "impregnated" in his stupor! He seems relieved as he and the Storm Knights stumble then run down the back of the temple stairs to the cliff wall Chakan pointed them at.

About halfway there, the group hears the priestess scream, followed by the collective howls of the bloodthirsty crowd! Dozens of villagers begin to give chase, spilling over and around the temple in their haste to capture those who would dare steal their goddess's sacrifice!

Things go from bad to worse as a terrible and excited buzzing sound comes from the queen on the cliff high above. She is ready to lay eggs and will not be denied! The massive creature begins to struggle free, cracking the jagged cave she lives in and sending a shower of heavy rocks tumbling below her.

The rocks uncover a boon, however, as two hidden Leopard Warriors step out of the foliage and urge the heroes to join them. They point toward two large wicker baskets attached to vines leading high above. Each basket can hold five riders for the trip up to the rim of the gorge, and as soon as everyone is in, the two Leopard Warrior scouts pull twice on the vines. The baskets begin to rise quickly, obviously pulled by other warriors high above.

The escape isn't over yet, though. When the baskets are about 50 meters off the ground, read the following:

The wasp riders you fought earlier appear in the sky, shaking their spears in fury as they race directly toward you.

The nearly kilometer-long ride takes 10 rounds. The wasp riders split to attack each basket. Fortunately, their rage prevents them from the obvious tactic of attacking the vines that pull the baskets upward.



- **Wasp Riders (6):** Mila's scouts aren't holding back now. They and their wasps attack the infidels with lethal force.

HAIL TO THE QUEEN

At the start of the third round, the queen wasp breaks free and joins the fight:

The massive queen wasp suddenly explodes from the cave she was trapped in, showering a mountain of gray slate before her. She flies outward, circling around to attack!

The queen attacks whichever basket holds Spencer (she has his scent). She grapples the edge of the basket with her massive legs and brings it to a full stop, letting go only with a Player's Call on an interaction attack or if she suffers a Wound. She re-engages on her next initiative and must be driven off again.

The wasp queen causes a moral quandary. She is the progenitor of the wasps and the living god of the Darooni. Killing her might curtail their murderous hunts for a time, but it might also break the peace between the Leopard Warriors and the Darooni. If the goddess is dead, the priestess won't likely feel honor-bound to honor Prince Chakan's marriage to Mila.

If the queen is killed, one of the other insects morphs into a queen and fulfills the role within a month's time. A Standard Success on a *science* or *scholar* test makes that clear to anyone who wants to know.

- **Wasp Queen:** This massive insect is about to burst with eggs! She must lay them soon or she might rupture and die. Tagged with Spencer's pheromones, he is her sole focus and won't give up under any circumstances. See page 82.

ACT THREE: CHALLENGE OF THE LEOPARD WARRIOR

Spencer promises to get the Storm Knights back on Malacryx's trail, but to do so they need a "spark" from the Pyrian Fire Tamers—who are also responsible for kidnapping and enslaving Spencer's children!

The group treks across the Land Below through the Keefee Swamps, the lands of the Pyrian Fire Tamers and their temple to Tanta Kellar, and finally to the ancient Ohibi Temple.

OVERVIEW

Scene One: The Storm Knights make their way to the Leopard Warriors where they're met by an apologetic prince. He and his new bride give the heroes a ride to the Pyrian outskirts.

Scene Two: The rescuers must figure out how to infiltrate the Pyrian empire and make their way to Spencer's enslaved children. There they discover priests attempting to harness and tame the angry volcano that constantly threatens their city.

Scene Three: The angry spirit of the volcano erupts, creating fiery avatars of rage that must be defeated before the outsiders can escape. The act ends as the Pyrians' slaves seize the opportunity to revolt and overthrow their desperate masters!

SCENE ONE: QUID PRO QUO

Standard Scene. Living Land Dominant Zone.

Spencer, a curious and intrepid explorer, asks the Storm Knights who they are and why they're here as he leads them away from the Misty Gorge and into the relative safety of the jungle. If the wasp queen survives, she buzzes angrily overhead for a short while but gives up once her prey reaches the impenetrable woodline.

Once the danger has passed, Spencer asks his rescuers who they are, where they came from, and what they're doing here. He hasn't seen Malacryx or any other edeinos in the Land Below recently, but he does know of a portal out at the "Ohibi Temple." That requires a power source called "sparks" that are only forged in the land of the Pyrian Fire Tamers, however.

During the conversation, the player characters might tell him that his children were kidnapped by something that left serpent tracks, or he might say he'll take them to his cave and find out that way. Once the subject is mentioned, use or modify the dialogue below to kick off the next part of the adventure.

"Serpent tracks. Serpentors. Serpent people. That's good. Well, not...good...but...better than Darooni or...most anything else down here. Serpentors are slavers. They're selling slaves to the Pyrian Fire Tamers, the most powerful and advanced civilization in the Land Below. The Pryians are building some kind of machine to harness Tanta kellar, the volcano. They need slaves for that. Lots and lots of slaves. If the Leopard Warriors and Darooni would stop fighting long enough they could unite and...well...now they can, I guess....since Prince Chakan seems to have taken Mila's hand...hmmm.

"Anyway, the Pyrians will keep Wes and Kathy alive. For a while at least. It just so happens the way out of here needs something from the Pyrians as well. They call it a "spark," a crystal full of some kind of energy. Like a very powerful battery. The device that gets you out of the Land Below uses them for power, so we'll need a half-dozen or so anyway.

"So how about this? You help me rescue my son and daughter. We'll get your crystals in the process then head to the device that gets you back to the surface—probably the same place your edeinos went. Yes?"

Spencer is happy to answer any further questions the party might ask. He doesn't know everything about the Land Below, but he is a curious scientist with a sharp mind, and has absorbed much since he entered this world over a month ago.

VICTORY TOUR

Spencer leads the Storm Knights along the trails of the jungle to the land of the Leopard Warriors. He stops at several camps and relates the epic tale of Prince Chakan to all those he meets. The Leopard Warriors know Spencer and consider him a friend. They welcome him and his companions and provide food, water, and (primitive) healing as best they can.

The Game Master can play out one or more of these encounters if desired, or jump right into

the next important event, described below. Read or paraphrase the following once you're ready to move on from the land of the Leopard Warriors.

Spencer leads you away from the gorge and through the lands of the Leopard Warriors. They seem to live in various small tribes of 50 to 60 individuals. They are primitive compared to the land above, but clever and warm in their own way. Many have wounds suffered in the constant war with the Darooni—missing limbs, deep puncture wounds, and even lingering paralysis from numerous wasp stings. You begin to understand just how important Prince Chakan's plan was to his people.

A few days later, as you visit what Spencer says is the last village along your way to the volcano, you hear a buzzing sound from the sky! The Leopard Warriors grab their weapons and gather in groups, ready to fight.

A dozen wasp riders suddenly crash through the trees. Several look familiar, and still bear the wounds you gave them!

The Leopard Warriors rush to attack—when Prince Chakan steps down off one of the wasps and orders them to halt! His partner and new bride, Mila, steps from another wasp beside him.

"Hold, my warriors!" Chakan commands. "The war with the Darooni is over!"

Chakan speaks to his people, telling them that his marriage to the champion Mila has brought peace—at least for now. All hostilities are to cease, and the Darooni are to be treated as friends. This doesn't sit well with many of the warriors, and it should be obvious from their reactions that it will be a long time before the two people are ever truly allies. But it is a first step.

Prince Chakan then approaches Spencer and the Storm Knights and apologizes for misleading them at the Darooni Choosing Ceremony. He would do it again if needed, though, he frowns, for it was absolutely necessary to save countless lives.

Spencer shrugs, unsure of exactly what happened before he was rescued, and embraces his friend. *"Well we're all here now!"* he says cheerily, then frowns. *"Except Wes and Kathy. The Pyrians have them, Chakan. These brave folks are going with me to save them, and we've got to get started right away."*

Chakan nods. *"Then let us assist."* After a dramatic pause, Mila steps forward and speaks in solid English, *"Have you ever ridden a giant wasp?"*

THE RIDE OF A LIFETIME

Spencer directs Prince Chakan toward the edge of the jungle, then turns right toward the distant volcano, Tanta kellar.

Each of you is harnessed by leather straps to a wasp rider, some of them the very warriors who attempted to kill you a few days earlier. Prince Chakan's bold move has made a massive change between the two people, though. Perhaps the Land Below will prove an ally in the fight against Baruk Kaah.

The wasp suddenly leaps into the air, flying high over the sprawling green jungle below. On a whim, Mila signals to her warriors and they detour—straight up toward Helephez, the "sun" that hovers above all Merretika. Though you are still over a hundred kilometers away you feel no heat, just a growing and overwhelming sense of elation. At first the feeling fills you with joy so great some of you begin to cry. Then it becomes overwhelming. You can almost feel your soul burning in the radiance of the spiritual entity that is Helephez. The wasp riders finally stop their ascent, tears streaming down their faces. They stall, flip upside down, and spread their arms in exultation, momentarily weightless.

Then the wasp releases you and your accompanying warrior! You feel your stomach turn as you begin to fall...

...and are caught in the wasp's embrace. It follows the momentum and plunges rapidly back toward Merretika.

Your rider speaks in your ear. "That is how we wasp riders touch the face of Helephez. We call this 'the dreadful joy.'"

The wasps continue on, over the jungle, across the Keefee Savanna, and on to a great swamp at the edge of the Pyrian foothills. Spencer waves Mila and Chakan down and the exhausted wasps eagerly lower their human cargo.

"We'll have to go on foot from here. We need giant turtle shells. That will make us too heavy for the wasps, I imagine."

Mila nods. Chakan adds, *"We must return anyway. Not all of our people have accepted our truce. Good luck, my friends. We will return if we can."*

The wasp riders rest their mounts for a bit then buzz back toward the land of the Leopard Warriors.

THE BOILING SWAMP

The heroes are on the rim side of the swamp. Massive cypress-like trees cover the steaming waters. Should anyone touch the surface, they find it spa-like near the shore (about 37 degrees Celsius, or 100 Fahrenheit). Twenty yards away from shore, however, the temperature doubles, and becomes even hotter the deeper one goes.

Scattered about the surface are what at first look like round yellow rocks. Spencer steps carefully into the hot muck and turns one over. *"Turtle shells. Be careful you don't grab a live one! They bite!"*

Spencer directs the group to find enough turtle shells for each character who wants one. *"The Pyrians aren't called 'fire tamers' for nothing,"* he reminds them. *"We can use these shells as shields against their flame weapons should we get in a fight."*

Ask each player if they're helping in the search and have them make *find* rolls:

- **Mishap:** The character finds a live turtle! It takes a bite! The creatures have *unarmed combat* 10 and their bite causes damage 12.
- **Failure:** The searcher can't find an intact shell.
- **Standard Success:** The hero finds a shell that provides +5 armor against fire.
- **Good Success:** The shell provides +10 protection against fire.
- **Outstanding Success:** The shell provides +15 protection against fire.

Once the rolls are complete, about 20 minutes after they began, the adventurers see a series of bubbles heading toward them. If they point it out or warn Spencer, he runs toward the shore as fast as he can, yelling, *"Armet crom! Run!"*

A moment later a trio of orange, alligator-like creatures crash up out of the swamp, snorting smoke and flame and nipping at whichever character made the lowest *find* total (and was therefore farthest from the shore).

The armet crom is a different species of the arhret crom, the giant lizards that live along the Leopard River.

• **Armet Crom (3):** The beasts are hungry and eager to taste new prey. See page 88.

ARTS & CRAFTS

Once the armet crom has been defeated or driven off, Spencer shows the heroes how to fashion the turtle shells into shields. The shells act as medium shields, cause Fatigue +1 (they're very heavy), and add armor versus fire as listed above.

A clever player might also think to make armor out of the armet crom's hide. It doesn't quite work as true armor—there's no time to tan and treat the hide—but if worn it still provides +2 Toughness against fire. This stacks with the turtle shell shield.

SCENE TWO: INTO THE FIRE

Standard Scene. Living Land Dominant Zone.

Once they acquire the turtle shells, the Storm Knights can follow one of the many different trails to Tanta kellar. Spencer explains the situation as they begin their trek, putting any further decisions in the player characters' hands.

The volcano is about 60 kilometers away, so it will take at least two days to reach it.

"Okay...time for a lesson. I used to be a professor, so pardon the lecture.

"The Pyrian Fire Tamers. Think ancient Rome. They're draconian and efficient. They worship the volcano, which is called Tanta kellar. But they call the god itself 'Karruk,' at least when things are good. If it's erupting or causing problems, it becomes 'Darok.' When that happens, they chuck captives into it until it becomes Karruk again. Karruk good — Darok bad. Got it?

"The volcano is everything. Their slaves constantly build walls to channel and protect against the lava flows, and build new buildings for the city and homes for the upper castes.

"The sparks you need to open the Ohibi portal are created through some kind of spiritual process. They're used by certain high-ranking guards, usually found at the temple on the top of the volcano. That's where we'll have to go.

"Now, out here in the boonies are the farms. The volcanic soil is rich so the crops grow fast. The merchants haul the goods from out here into the inner cities. The Pyrian military used to gather



slaves themselves, but recently started using the Serpentors—the ones who took Kathy and Wes.

“Seems to me we have three ways to get to the volcano. We can take advantage of the produce caravans, slip in with the slavers somehow, or try our hand at sneaking past everyone.

“I don’t recommend the latter, but you’re the heroes. I’ll follow your lead. At least until I figure out where my kids are—then that’s my only priority.”

Let the players discuss their plans. The trip to Tanta kellar is over 60 kilometers, so they have two days of hard travel ahead even by the most direct route. The three options Spencer outlined are discussed below, and of course the Storm Knights can come up with their own methods as well. The GM may need to improvise if the group has access to long-term magical disguises, flight, or other means of bypassing the Pyrian sentinels.

OPTION ONE—THE MERCHANT CARAVANS

Pyrian farmers grow rich crops in the foothills and along the banks of the River With No Bottom. They deliver their goods to markets along the Pyrian roads, where they are collected by merchant caravans. The farmers aren’t paid for their work, they’re simply expected to surrender everything above the needs set for them by Lord Hadian Fel Ar. Those who don’t meet the strict quotas set for them wind up as slaves or sacrifices.

The caravan merchants are a haughty class who lord their status over the farmers and scurry quickly past the watchful eyes of the stern military. They travel the Pyrian roads, riding back and forth from the farms to Tanta kellar in an endless loop. Two merchants typically ride in a wooden wagon with stone wheels pulled by two ankas, large birds with piercing beaks and ornery dispositions.

Unfortunately for modern-day Storm Knights, the old canard from countless movies where they bushwhack a wagon and disguise themselves as the wagoneers won’t work. Why? Because at least up close, Pyrian Fire Tamers are clearly different than humans. Hats, cloaks, and hoods won’t work either. Merretika’s sun is spiritual—it doesn’t cause tanning or burning—so it’s extremely rare for a native to wear something over their head or face.

Using the caravans then, means hiding among the goods. This can be achieved by bribing or intimidating a caravan driver, or perhaps playing a *Connections* card (in this case, likely for Spencer to recognize a friendly caravaner who will sneak or bluff them past the guardposts).

OPTION TWO—THE SLAVERS

The serpentors are vile slavers who appeared after the invasion of Earth, likely due to the Law of Wonders. They are a lost species with no homeland of their own, but have found work enslaving laborers for the voracious Pyrian Fire Tamers.

The fierce snake-folk prey on Darooni, Leopard Tribe, Keefee (see page 90), and even the rare edeinos or human who turns up in the Land Below. It is not out of place to have various species in their long slave-chains. The trick, as with the caravans, is finding a rare group of serpentors who will go along with the plan. More likely, the Storm Knights will *actually* have to be captured if they want to be taken through the empire to the works where Wes and Kathy are likely held.

A typical raiding party consists of 10 serpentors and two trained rassitars (see page 91).

Once captured, the party can formulate an escape “on the fly.” It’s risky, but does get them to the worksite in relative safety—if not comfort.

• **Serpentors (12):** The serpent men tend to travel in hunting parties of about a dozen. See page 91.

OPTION THREE—STEALTH

The Storm Knights might simply attempt to sneak their way to Tanta kellar. This is relatively easy for the first 20 kilometers, difficult for the middle 20, and almost impossible for the final stretch.

If this is their decision, have everyone make a *stealth* test for each part of the journey. The first roll is normal, the second is at –2, and the third is at –4. If a single character fails, roll or choose the most interesting result from the Encounter Table below.

d20 Encounter

1 **Caleacon:** The heroes are stalked or ambushed by the creature the Pyrians fear most—a caleacon! The hungry thing attacks without provocation and won’t stop until it’s feasted—or dead.

2–3 Strike Team: A group of Pyrian soldiers has been dispatched to hunt down the strange intruders and ambush them. They want to capture them for work at Tanta kellar, but failing that, attempt to slay them before they threaten Lord Ar. There are twice as many thralls as there are Storm Knights, led by a Gray Talon and accompanied by a Fire Tamer and five trained ankas.

4–5 Reinforced Patrol: A patrol crosses the group's path and engages. There are as many thralls as there are Storm Knights, led by a Gray Talon and accompanied by a Fire Tamer and two trained ankas.

6–10 Pyrian Patrol: A patrol spies the heroes from afar and gives chase. Allow everyone in the group another chance at *stealth* or other actions as appropriate. Should they fail, they must engage a number of thralls equal to the number of Storm Knights.

11–14 Villagers: Pyrian villagers spy the Storm Knights from afar. They point at the strangers and attempt to follow or track them so that they might earn favor with the soldiers. If the group cannot persuade the villagers otherwise, they must make another attempt at *stealth*, rolling again on this table should anyone fail.

15–19 Serpentor Slavers: The group crosses paths with a group of slavers either heading toward Tanta kellar with a fresh supply of prisoners or returning to the wilds of Merretika (roll a die or decide). There are 10 serpentors and two pet rassitars.

20 Escaped Slaves: Fortune favors the Storm Knights today. Two Keefee and a Leopard Woman, emaciated and recently escaped from Tanta kellar, tell the group of a secret way to the city. Future *stealth* tests to get to the city (if any remain) ignore two points of penalties.

TANTA KELLAR

Standard Scene. Living Land Dominant Zone.

The volcanic city of the Fire Tamers is a wonder to behold. The core of the settlement is a circle of increasingly impressive homes and buildings winding its way up the steep slopes of a conical volcano.

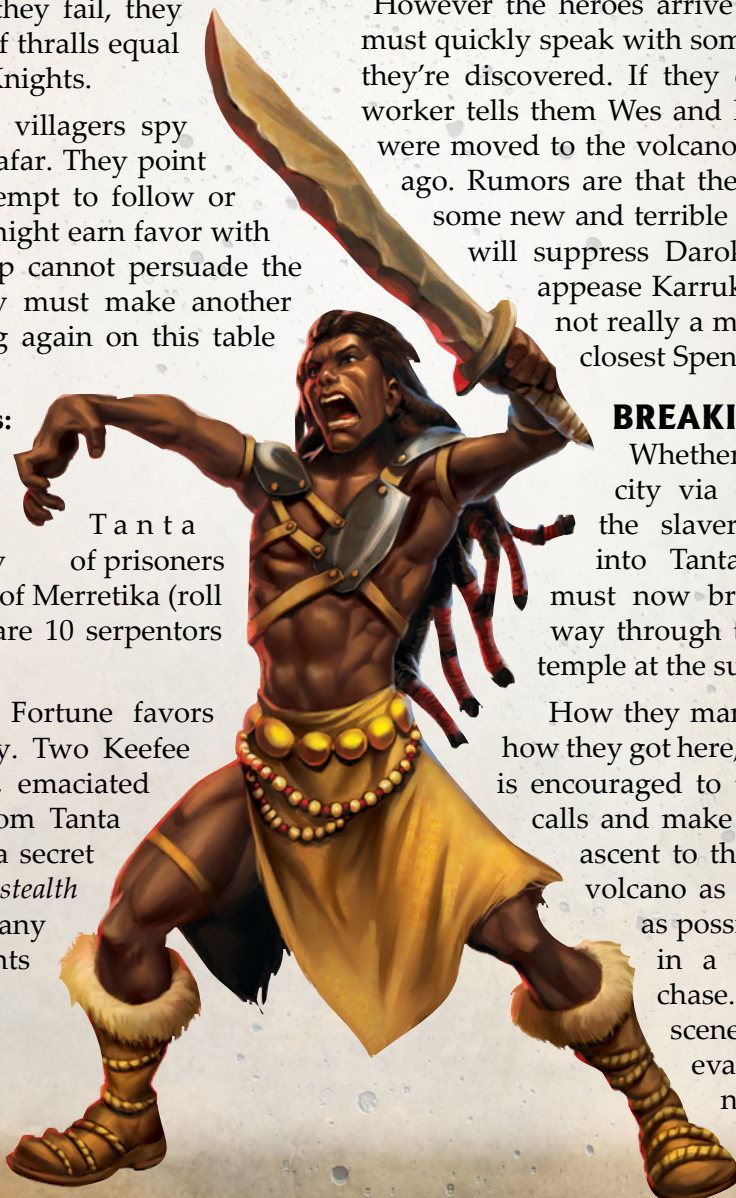
Sluices of molten lava run down the streets through carefully crafted canals, where beleaguered slaves constantly scrape it into walls that encircle the lower reaches. Numerous newer buildings spread outward from the bottom of the volcano as well, some also crafted with molten rock pushed or sluiced at great peril by a never-ending population of slaves.

However the heroes arrive at Tanta kellar, they must quickly speak with some of the slaves before they're discovered. If they do so, a despondent worker tells them Wes and Kathy were here, but were moved to the volcano's summit some days ago. Rumors are that the Pyrians are creating some new and terrible "machine" they hope will suppress Darok (the evil god) and appease Karruk (the good god). (It's not really a machine, but this is the closest Spencer can translate.)

BREAKING FREE

Whether they entered the city via caravans, came with the slavers, or simply snuck into Tanta kellar, the heroes must now break free and find a way through the city streets to the temple at the summit.

How they manage that depends on how they got here, but the Game Master is encouraged to throw in a few close calls and make their infiltration and ascent to the upper levels of the volcano as tense and dangerous as possible without resulting in a full-scale combat or chase. This should be a scenes of cat-and-mouse evasion and stealth for now—the action will start soon enough!



TANTA KELLAR AND THE FIRE TAMERS

The volcano of Tanta kellar is home to the Pyrian people and their only religious site. The buildings are built in several levels along the steep sides of the mountain. The spectacular Temple of Fire practically floats above the active volcano's central shaft. The Law of Wonders makes the advanced architecture possible, despite the low Tech Axiom of the Living Land.

The city is organized by the caste system, with Lord Ar and his advisors having the largest and most splendid homes at the top of the volcano. Farther down the slope are the homes of the Fire Priests and the common soldiers. The homes of the craftsmen and scholars start about midway up the volcano and continue nearly to the bottom, with common laborers living at the base of the volcano and on the plains of black volcanic glass nearby. Slaves are quartered with their owners, usually in a squalid second section of the house.

The roofs of the Pyrian buildings are shingled with bronze plates that reflect heat and the golden red glow of Tanta kellar. As travelers approach the city it seems blindingly bright, but once inside the city proper all that light is radiating up and out, leaving the interior slightly more pleasant than the harsh surrounding plains.

The Pyrian streets are steeply angled as they wind around the sheer slopes. From the roads, stairs or ladders lead to individual homes or shops. Two tremendous staircases carved from natural rock scale opposite sides of the volcano and meet near the main palace. A lift runs up one side of the volcano, powered by a team of slaves working a pulley system. It's usually used only to raise and lower cargo and military or religious officers.

A massive rock wall encircles the city and nearby volcanic plains, 100 meters out from the base of the volcano. Sluices are carved throughout the sides to form channels for lava to flow to ground level and through passages cut into the wall—or left to harden and build up the wall itself. The solid wall of volcanic rock is eight meters tall and three meters thick (Toughness 20) in most places. There is only one gate into the city, and it is guarded by a dozen thralls, a Gray Talon and a fire priest at all times. The wall isn't to fend off invaders, but rather it is intended to keep out the caleacons and other dangerous beasts that wander the volcanic plains.

THE FIRE TEMPLE

The Fire Temple is anchored to the outer rim of the volcano by eight massive bronze chains. The main structure hovers over 300 meters above the molten interior. The temple sits on a thin platform made from solidified ash, which is reasonably strong and very light. The platform is round and 20 meters in diameter. Eight chains secure it to the volcano's rim. Four crude metal bridges run from the rim to the temple, all blistering hot.

The round temple is eight meters in diameter, one story, and has no roof. The temple is made of seamless black rock, but it is painted with bright colors depicting the two phases of their god (which appears as a humanoid column of fire) and his actions toward the Pyrians. Sculptures of gargoyle-like creatures are positioned on the platform directly over the chains. Whenever the volcano becomes very active the Pyrians sacrifice a slave in this building to appease their god by hurling someone down a shaft that runs through the center of the temple.

The temple is subjected to heat and toxic levels of gases dealing 5 heat damage each round if the volcano is in Karruk (inactive) phase or 10 damage each round if the volcano is in Darok (active) phase. Armor doesn't help against the damage from heat and toxic gas unless it protects from fire and the character has some form of breathing apparatus. Pyrians are protected by Karruk's Blessing, which increases their Toughness enough that most don't suffer Shock during the Karruk phase but only the most ardent can remain in the temple during the Darok phase without being overcome.

Here's some advice on how to handle the situation before moving on to the climax of the scene:

- If Pyrian citizens are alerted to the Storm Knights' presence, they see them as escaped slaves. They flee and alert the thralls, who arrive a few minutes later—plenty of time for the player characters to make their escape.
- If the group is spotted by thralls, the prideful Pyrians won't attempt to run for help for at least three rounds, likely giving the Storm Knights time to defeat them in a quick fight or at least cut them off from summoning reinforcements. A typical patrol in Tanta kellar consists of five thralls.
- If the Storm Knights are particularly slow or careless in making their way through the streets, hit them with a tougher encounter—a squad of 10 thralls led by a Gray Talon. Perhaps the fight moves into an empty building or other isolated area so that it doesn't erupt into a full-scale skirmish.

THE TEMPLE

The summit of Tanta kellar is busy and chaotic, allowing the heroes to mix somewhat freely with the many slaves there. The few Pyrian overseers in charge are focused on the more difficult task of constructing the "machine" so the group can infiltrate with ease—at least until any alarms are raised.

When the Storm Knights quietly ask the unfortunates if they've seen Wes and Kathy, an older Keefee reveals the following:

"Yes, I have seen slaves such as you describe. White skin, one with golden hair and one with brown. they have been assigned to the carvers. They work at the temple itself, carving the image of the evil god, Darok into columns."

"The Fire Priests say that when the columns are repaired, Darok will sleep for a thousand years and bring peace to the Pyrians."

"I know not of such things. My people live on the plains, far from this heat and ash. I will not see them again, I suspect."

The Keefee, Olandi, is small and weathered from her work, with tangled white hair blackened by soot and ash. Her blue eyes still sparkle, however, and if given a chance to help or escape, she takes it.

The temple is another 100 yards or so up the slope of the volcano, through a chaotic crowd of mingling workers, Pyrian overseers, merchants bringing supplies or food, serpentors delivering slaves, priests blessing the various works, and even a few curious citizens simply watching the revolutionary building promised by Lord Ar.

The atmosphere is oppressive, desperate, and hopeful, and every now and then, Tanta kellar rumbles and belches fire and smoke. The locals freeze in their tracks—terror in their eyes as they wait to see if this is the eruption that will destroy the city, perhaps all of Merretika itself! Then the rumble subsides, the overseers and merchants sigh in relief, and the unfortunate slaves get back to work.

APPROACHING THE FIRE TEMPLE

Getting to the rim of the volcano isn't difficult given the lines of traffic moving up and downhill and the lack of any real threat to the Pyrians' rule in ages. Those who make the trip dodge in and out of crowds, around buildings, and into groups of slaves before they finally see Wes and Kathy and the Pyrian construction. Read or paraphrase the following as they crest the lip.

The temple is a disk suspended above the top of the volcano by eight massive iron chains. Four metal bridges are interspersed between the chains, each guarded by a single warrior—what they call a thrall.

Through the haze, you see five obsidian columns surrounding a hole at the center of the disk. The columns are obviously new and rough-hewn. Numerous slaves chisel or polish images onto the columns. Though it's difficult to see through the smoke and heat, you clearly spy two humans among the Keefee, Leopard folk, and Darooni. One is a young girl with golden hair in two braided pigtails and a shirt checkered like a picnic tablecloth. The other is a young, brown-haired male in a stained blue, long-sleeved shirt. Spencer's eyes brighten when he sees his children. He quickly wipes away the tears and nods, "That's them."

A MORAL DILEMMA

If Olandi the Keefee is with the group (and if not Spencer talks to another nearby slave), she explains that suppressing the evil god Darok will make life much easier on the Pyrians as it will greatly reduce the number of slaves required to manage the lava flows. Of course, stemming the flows and carving the pillars requires *more* slaves in the short term.

Olandi is no friend to her captors, but is reluctant to take part in any plan that might slow progress on the temple because it affects all of Merretika.

Let the players discuss this dilemma for a while and make a plan. Whatever they decide to do, Wes and Kathy remain at the center of the disk, polishing and refining images in the columns for the next four hours. Then they're escorted off the blazing disk into a special camp for those considered talented or bright enough for this complex work. There they're fed, given water, and allowed to rest for four hours before they're tasked with a new eight-hour shift.

The player characters won't likely be able to hide among the slaves and Pyrians for four hours this close to the top, however, so they should devise a plan to quickly rescue Spencer's children and escape.

Sparks: As they discuss their plan, Spencer points out that he has no idea where they manufacture sparks, but a number of the Fire Priests are armed with staves powered by them. He thinks collecting a half-dozen ought to provide more than enough power to open the portal at the Ohibi Temple.

PYRIAN FORCES

There are in fact a dozen Fire Priests at the temple overseeing work on the columns and various other affairs. One of them is clearly in charge, directing the slaves as they tediously polish or slowly chip away at the obsidian columns.

A dozen artificers, mostly blacksmiths, are here repairing the disk, the chains, and the bridges.

Two dozen slaves mill about, hauling away obsidian shards from the columns or bringing water or fresh tools for carving.

Finally, there are a dozen thralls in the vicinity keeping watch over the slaves. Clearly, most of the slaves are far too fatigued to cause any real trouble.

It's possible the Storm Knights come up with a plan that allows them to spirit Wes and Kathy away with little fuss. Certain spells, powers, abilities, or cyberware might be used to distract the various Pyrian forces or otherwise get Wes and Kathy off the disk. If things get messy, however, they must battle on the disk itself, a dangerous proposition given the fiery death waiting hundreds of feet below.

In any event, Storm Knights are about to learn a terrible secret—Darok and Karruk aren't just superstitions cooked up by a primitive society. They are very, very real!

SCENE THREE: DAROK STRIKES!

Dramatic Scene. Living Land Dominant Zone.

Just as the group is slipping away—or at the start of the second round if things got violent—the dark aspect of the volcano decides to destroy the columns designed to suppress it!

As the heroes watch, four spouts of gushing lava shoot into the air and land in tall heaps on the central disk. Moments later they take humanoid form, with snarling faces matching those carved on the black columns. One of the avatars begins smashing the columns while the rest attack the slaves and Fire Priests.

Even if the Storm Knights are slipping safely away with Wes and Kathy, they'll hopefully want to help the unfortunate slaves—and perhaps even the Fire Priests who are attempting to suppress Darok (despite the abhorrent practice of using slaves to do so).

The avatar destroys a column on its action every other turn. The other three assist after they've cleared the disk of slaves and Fire Priests (they see little difference between the two). If someone actually injures one of them, the three quickly turn their attention to the obvious threat.

• **Avatars of Darok (4):** These terrors are intent on destroying the columns and punishing whatever mortals stand in their way. Once they do, they leap off the disk and back into the depths of the volcano. See page 93.



• **Great Priest Amethia Cor Tal:** Amethia is young, ambitious, and evil. Baruk Kaah's Darkness Device, Rec Pakken, has its unholy gaze upon her as a possible successor should Kaah fail. See page 94.

• **Pyrian Fire Priests (12):** The priests are here to worship and pray, maintaining the miracles that keep the metal bridges cool and watching the carving of the ancient totems. See page 94.

• **Thralls (12):** The soldiers stay off the holy disk, guarding the bridges. They enter the temple proper only when the priests or columns are threatened. They are led by a single Gray Talon. See page 93.

• **Artificers (12):** The blacksmiths and merchants flee the moment the avatars materialize. See page 95.

• **Slaves (24):** A dozen work on the disk while others are caught on the bridges or rim. Use the profile for the Ohibi Warriros, but they are unarmed. See page 90.

THE GREAT SLAVE UPRISING

As the last avatar is defeated, the heroes peer through the smoke and see the slaves in full rebellion against the Pyrians. Amazingly, Prince Chakan, Mila, and the wasp riders drop down through the sky with a hearty war cry to join in!

It's time for a quick narration so that the heroes can move on to the next important scene in *their* story...the Great Pyrian Slave Uprising is a tale for other heroes.

The slaves rush the remaining thralls and Fire Priests with whatever tools they can find. Though they greatly outnumber the Pyrians, their poor health makes the fight a desperate affair—until a dozen large shapes dive down out of the smoke-filled sky! It's Prince Chakan, Mila, and the wasp riders!

Panicked thralls and Fire Priests scatter everywhere. The slaves pursue, chasing them down into the city.

Spencer, Kathy, and Wes appear from out of the smoke, bright smiles on all their faces. Spencer points to the battle raging below and yells over the tumult:

"The Leopard Folks and Darooni are attacking the Pyrians together! They're fighting in the streets and freeing slaves as we speak. This is a big day here in the Land Below!"

"But we can take it from here. You need to find out what that edeinos was up to and set things right on the surface world."

"The wasp rider scouts will take you to the Ohibi Temple. Use the sparks in the device you find and jump through. It should take you wherever the edeinos went."



*"Best of luck, and thanks for helping save my kids!
I owe you more than you can ever know."*

TRAY TABLES IN THE UPRIGHT AND LOCKED POSITION

The wasp rider scouts pick up each of the Storm Knights and rush them up and away from Tanta kellar. As they ascend, the adventurers see battles raging in the streets below. It seems the Darooni and Leopard Folk have things in hand. The Pyrians seem to be holing up in strongpoints while large groups of slaves are liberated and join the rebellion.

THE OHIBI TEMPLE

An hour later, the wasp rider scouts drop the Storm Knights at the entrance to a squat temple far north of Tanta kellar. The caverns wind a short way into the earth before coming to a strange pedestal filled with white (burnt out) crystals. When the crystals are replaced, a pulsating portal appears in the opposite wall. It remains for but a minute before beginning to wane.

It's time for a leap of faith—and the start of a new act!

ACT FOUR: THE TOWER OF DEATH

The adventurers step through the portal in the Land Below and arrive in the ruins of flooded Chicago! They must make their way through the drowned city, escape a creature called “the Ruler,” and battle one of Thrakmoss’s deadly lieutenants atop the towering Willis Skyscraper (formerly the Sears Tower).

OVERVIEW

Scene One: A chain of wrecks from the Ohibi portal lead to the near shore, but this is also the home of strange fish-folk who hunt any who trespass in their domain.

Once at the ruined city, the party discovers evidence of Malacryx’s passing. A wounded and delirious member of the edeinos’ war party reveals her local destination, the “Great Tower in the Kingdom of Death.” With a bloody hand, the dying edeinos points to the distant Willis Tower looming over the horizon.

Soon thereafter, they encounter human cultists who worship an aquatic horror they call the Ruler. The Storm Knights halt their terrible sacrifice and catch a glimpse of the thing before moving on to the Willis Tower.

Scene Two: The group flees from the Ruler and its squirming brood, which lair in the flooded halls of the massive tower.

Scene Three: Higher up, heroes discover another shocking secret—Thrakmoss’s minions have opened a portal to another reality and are slaying and harvesting ustanah corpses to create a new army for their cruel master.

Scene Four: Finally, the beleaguered explorers battle a powerful gotak to stop it from raising Thrakmoss’s undead army. Victorious, they open the portal to the Yucatán and pursue Malacryx to the final act of this adventure.

**“YOU THINK THE ELEVATORS
MIGHT STILL WORK?”**

**-AIDEN MCALLISTER,
ON SEEING THE MASSIVE
WILLIS TOWER**

SCENE ONE: SHIPWRECKED

Standard Scene. Living Land Dominant Zone.

Lake Michigan has undergone massive upheavals since the invasion. Violent reality storms caused a terrible tidal wave that wrecked a huge number of ships and flooded eastern Chicago.

The wrecks along the southern shore formed a long bridge of twisted metal and rotting wood. The portal from the Land Below opens on one of the larger wrecks, an upended ore hauler called the *Manitou* jutting up from the lake bed.

Of course such a strange structure attracts similarly strange inhabitants, drawn into our world via the Law of Wonders. Read the following as the explorers emerge on the vertical deck of the *Manitou*.

You step through the pulsating portal and emerge on a platform overlooking a great lake. In fact, it looks like a Great Lake—capital G, capital L.

At first you think you're on a building, but after a quick look you're obviously on the ruined wall of large ship—perhaps an ore hauler or oil tanker. You're standing on the back wall of the pilot's cabin,

looking out the side windows onto a massive blue-green lake. There's a good chance it's Lake Michigan because you're standing on a large chart—mounted on the wall you're standing on—that says "Lake Michigan Shipping Lanes."

Perhaps more interesting are the very clear edeinosaurs claw marks torn in the paper, and a syringe stuck in one of the corkboards! Billy's breadcrumbs continue to form a trail for you.

The door is on the "roof" given the orientation of the cabin, but the windows on both sides of the pilot house have been smashed, allowing easy egress.

The sun is just beginning to set, so its rays intermittently blind and daze the group as they climb out of the pilot house. Scrambling down is a little tricky but not dangerous.

At the bottom of the descent is another vessel, the *Mickey Jones*, jammed into and tangled with the *Manitou*. The groaning of metal on metal, continually pushed and pulled by wind and waves, makes for an eerie and jarring cacophony.

Several faint spatters of blood coat the deck a short way from where the heroes land, and nearby is a sickening sight—a mostly-skeletal edeinosaurs tail lies in a pool of blood on the deck! A successful



evidence analysis test notes the tail is likely only a few days old given the rate at which things decay in the Living Land. If the group doesn't grasp the significance, make them aware that if the tail belongs to one of Malacryx's band (and it does), she isn't too far ahead of them. Perhaps she had her own adventures in the Land Below.

Two further wrecks along the path to Chicago is the wreck of the *Howard Phillip*, beached on the lake bottom and flooded so that most heroes crossing it are up to their knees in water.

As they press forward, let them make *find* tests. Those who succeed hear faint scraping on the underside of the deck beneath their feet. A Good Success or better detects occasional flurries of rushing water as well—as if someone or something were swimming beneath the hull.

This continues until the group is near the pilot house—then all hell breaks loose.

The former cargo ship is home to a group of fish-folk from one of the many worlds that fell to Baruk Kaah. But these are not stoic survivors lost to time and space, they are savage, carnivorous mutants who have developed a taste for human flesh!

When the group gets between the pilot house and the nearest crane, the hatch below them collapses into the watery hold below.

At the same time, a number of fish-folk with barbed harpoon guns fire from the shattered windows of the third floor, while another group armed with hooks and gaffs rushes from the lowest level to attack!

Have every character make a Challenging (–2) *Dexterity* test. Those who fail fall through the false floor into the vast depths of the hold! Those who make a Standard Success fall

in but manage to catch themselves on the rim. A Good Success means the character leaps back away from the pilot house and keeps her footing, and an Outstanding Success allows her to end up on whichever side of the trap she chooses.

• **Fish Folk (20):** Ten fish-folk lurk in the hold, climbing out to attack in melee if the prey within is subdued or killed, or no one actually falls into their insidious trap. Seven of the creatures wait on the first floor of the pilot house and rush out to attack once the trap is sprung. The final three stand in the third floor and use their harpoon levers from there. See page 86.

AFTERMATH

The fish-folk retreat once three-quarters of their number are defeated. They are feral and cruel and look forward to devouring the Storm Knights with their jagged, piranha-like teeth.

On the plus side, if any of the three harpoon levers can be recovered, they may prove useful in the adventure to come.

Harpoon Lever: Tech 7, Damage Str +3, Range 5/10/15, Price 70 (9). **Notes:** AP 2, Reload.

Anyone who suffers a Wound from a harpoon is impaled by the barbed head or painfully entangled by the strong wire that connects the pulley to the spiked head. (The difference is purely narrative.) Either case causes the victim to be Very Stymied until the Wound is treated and healed, or it's ripped out (which causes an automatic Wound that cannot be soaked due to the barbs). The cord may also be cut, Toughness 11, which reduces the Very Stymied condition to simply Stymied.

A harpoon can also be used to scale vertical surfaces up to its range. The wire can generally hold up to 90 kilograms of weight (about 200 pounds).



THE HANDMAIDEN'S TAIL

The bridge of shipwrecks extends almost a mile to the McCormick Convention Center, a three-story building on what was once the southeastern shoreline of Chicago. Other tall buildings loom in the distance, particularly the massive Willis Tower (formerly the Sears Tower, which is what most still call it).

The white roof of the convention center is riddled with holes from frequent reality storms. Busted and rusting HVAC units, piles of leaves, and other detritus lie strewn about this crumbling island. But what quickly catches the party's eye is the limp body of a tailless edeinos propped up against a rusting air conditioning unit. Closer inspection reveals the edeinos wears bits of jewelry, a sure sign she's a member of the Goldsun Clan and likely one of Malacryx's warband.

She's also still alive, though barely.

The warrior has been lying here for about three days. The unfortunate lizard, Skeela, is mortally wounded from the bloody loss of her tail and a deep harpoon wound in her lower abdomen, courtesy of the same fish-folk the party encountered along the bridge of ships.

Skeela's spirit is undiminished, however. She revels in singing her leader's praises to the "pathetic humans" who stumble across her. Fortunately, the handmaiden speaks English—she learned it from her human slaves in the Yucatán.

"I know you...you pursue us. But you are too late. My Mistress, Malacryx the Throat Ripper, has taken the God Box to the black tower. Follow...and see the fall of your soulless land."

If they leave Skeela to her own devices, she dies a few hours later, satisfied after taunting the humans. If the edeinos is healed and persuaded to speak (or interrogated), however, she reveals all she knows.

"We learned of the box at the great temple. Your people call it Chichen Itza. But the box was long gone. Our human thralls used your...enter net...to find it in Kaah's land. We traveled many days, through doorways of air before we reached the Saar, Baruk Kaah. We took the box from your house of stone and were to meet Kaah at the great tree but

he did not come before you pathetic humans arrived.

"We wanted to slay you there, but the mistress said our mission was too important. So we fled through the tree into the Land Below. The return was... difficult. There were many deaths.

"The doorway led us here, where we battled the fish-things."

The edeinos looks down at her wounds in disgust.

"Lanala was not with me that day."

When asked where Malacryx has gone, Skeela answers without hesitation—she doesn't think the humans pose any threat to her mistress.

"She makes for the next doorway." The edeinos points toward Willis Tower. "There, at the top of the black tower. I tell you this freely, for I wish you to follow and see what my mistress will accomplish before she devours your flesh."

When Skeela is asked about the human hostages:

"Needless baggage. Malacryx thought we might need them to bargain with you, but they were nothing but dead weight. All but two of them perished in the Land Below anyway."

Further clarification reveals that the heroes' friends, Billy Stanley and Dr. Maxwell, are the two survivors.

If asked about the God Box itself:

"Such things are beyond this simple one. I am a warrior, not an optant. But with it, my mistress will become queen of the edeinos!"

The handmaiden doesn't know anything else about the box, but the story of the device is available in the next act for those who want to delve into its grim history.

Skeela also doesn't understand exactly how the God Box works, how they'll capture Lanala, or what Malacryx plans to do with the goddess if she's captured.

Skeela knows the name of the city, Chichen Itza, but doesn't really understand where it is in relation to anything else. She followed Malacryx through endless jungles, fought anything that was in her way, and did what she was told.

Interestingly, Skeela is not conflicted about entrapping Lanala. Malacryx has made it very

clear the goddess has grown weak and allowed the “pitiful humans” to survive when they should have been crushed months ago.

Healing Skeela: Generally, Skeela prefers to remain here, enjoying the sensations of this alien world up until her last moment. She’s firmly allied to Malacryx and won’t turn even if healed or helped, *generally*. Extreme acts of kindness accompanied by a high *persuasion* total, or a Destiny card such as *Romance* can alter the situation at the Game Master’s discretion. If Skeela is somehow befriended, she becomes a grudging and difficult ally.

- **Skeela:** The proud warrior perishes in a few hours if left alone (as is her wish). Use Malacryx’s Warriors statistics on page 84.

NO UBER HERE

The Storm Knights must now figure out how to get to Willis Tower. There aren’t any boats visible, just clogged waterways of useless floating debris. There is a nearby food truck, however, floating on its side and buoyed by air trapped inside. The truck, formerly Keene’s Frozen Food Service, smells of rotting produce but is airtight enough to remain floating.

A short jump into the water and cold swim allows the group to reach the truck, and a *find* test nets a couple of makeshift poles that can propel it along at an awkward raft.

Thirty minutes later, the Storm Knights have gone about a mile through the thick detritus when a weird current rushes through, spinning the truck in place and leaving a trail of black slime in a circle around it.

Should anyone taste the water—a *really bad* idea—it tastes of lake water, sewage, and evil. The unfortunate taster must make a Hard (DN 14) *Strength* test or suffer two Shock that can’t be regained for 48 hours. (The trail is left by the Ruler, though they won’t know that until the next encounter.)

Nothing else happens for now though, and two hours later finds the party halfway to the tower. That’s when the party hears occasional screams, heavy metal music, and gunfire from a tall apartment building along what used to be State Street.

THE CULT OF THE DEEP

It was a fierce reality storm, combined with the Law of Wonders, that drew hundreds of fish-folk into our world. It also brought one of their dark gods, a terrible creature from some fallen swamp world conquered by Baruk Kaah. The fish-folk worship it, but their knowledge is almost entirely based on pure instinct and raw terror rather than any culture, tradition, or actual contact with the thing.

A group of human survivors trapped in Chicago have followed suit and “improved” upon the fish-folk’s knee-bending—they’ve decided to offer it sacrifices. This “cult” survives by scavenging, raiding buildings on a fleet of small boats and jet skis to navigate the flooded canyons of eastern Chicago. They dive into the ruins to tap into fuel sources or trade other goods they find with scavenger bands from further west.

The Ruler, as they call the gargantuan thing that slithers through the flooded streets, is just as happy to devour the cultists as Thrakmoss’s warriors or those few humans who escaped transformation. The cultists believe they can sway the “god’s” opinion, however, with sacrifices and unhealthy doses of death metal music.

CULT OF THE RULER

As the party poles along to the Willis Tower, they hear the cultists attempting to call the Ruler. They have a trio of sacrifices hanging from a hodgepodge collection of electrical cords, ties, and actual rope, dangling off the roof of a tall building for their god to devour. The area is a Core Earth hardpoint, albeit an unusual one.

The cultists chant, yell at the victims, play Dokken from a battery-powered boombox, and occasionally fire assault rifles into the water in an attempt to draw the monster to their offering.

The killers’ attention is on the eastern lake-side of the building, opposite the shortest path to the Willis Tower, so they likely don’t see the Storm Knights coming from the west. This lets the heroes sneak up on the “blind” side of the building. From there they can enter the apartments below or climb up the balconies to the roof. Scaling the building is easy, and a fall simply drops the Storm Knight into

the water where she must start again. (The GM can play up the fall for tension, but the Ruler doesn't attack...not yet, anyway.)

If the group sneaks inside the building they find a series of filthy rooms, empty of occupants and clearly looted by the cultists.

A stealthy party can get the drop on the two dozen mostly drunken cultists celebrating the calling of the Ruler on the rooftop via the internal stairway or simply slipping up over the roof itself.

The leader is a young man dressed all in black named Cheddar, but his followers call him "Cheddar." The intoxicated killers are quick to attack once they realize what's going on, high on the anticipation of the Ruler. Several scream, "KILL THEM!", "FOOD FOR THE RULER!" or "LET'S GET 'EM, CHED!", then "spray and pray" with their various firearms.

As soon as the tide turns however—when half are defeated or one of the player characters gets a really high (and messy!) damage total on one of the cultists—they start jumping into the water to escape.

As soon as the first cultist dives in, however, the scene goes from almost darkly humorous to truly terrifying. Read the following when that occurs:

A portly woman in a Dr. Who tunic-top and stretchy pants screams, drops her empty shotgun, and jumps off the side of the building to escape. To your surprise, she rises back up quickly, wrapped in a slimy black tentacle that ends in a lamprey-like mouth! She screams again, then the mouthy tentacle loops down over her head and begins devouring her like some mutated serpent.

The rest of the panicked cultists run toward you, toothy tentacles popping up over the edge of the building and snaking after them. One by one the cultists are swallowed whole or wrapped in the hideous, slime-covered tendrils.

The Ruler attacks those who called it first, and its ire is currently reserved for the deluded murderers who did so. As soon as the locals are devoured (one round after the Ruler appears!), it slips back into the depths, ignoring the Storm Knights.

- **Armed Cultists (24):** Cheddar and his deranged followers are poor shots but make up for it with showers of lead. See page 86.

- **The Ruler:** This horror from another cosm is very intelligent in its own, alien way. It retreats once all the cultists are devoured. See page 86 for its statistics.



SCENE TWO: THE DARK TOWER

Standard Scene. Living Land Dominant Zone.

If the Storm Knights look around after the Ruler retreats, they find numerous jet skis, power boats, rowboats, and even a small fishing boat tethered to the north and east sides of the building. It's a short ride to Willis Tower from here, but the heroes can certainly get there in style now if they choose!

When they arrive, they see that very little of the Willis Tower interior is recognizable from its Core Earth days. It's flooded, rotting, and filled with floating debris from the surrounding city.

To make matters worse, the Gaunt Man's Dimthread Tree sits firmly atop the tower and has slowly corrupted everything beneath. In effect, the tower is a Living Land Dominant Zone which gives way to a Mixed Orrorsh and Living Land Zone within 500 meters of the tree itself.



RETURN OF THE RULER

The party can moor their chosen watercraft in the flooded lobby. The elevators don't work and the original stairs are blocked here, but a crude "staircase" of debris has been stacked by someone to reach an upper floor. The stack is rickety and unstable, but the adventurers would have little trouble scaling it—if the Ruler hadn't chosen that exact moment to return!

Incensed at the intrusion in its lair, the Ruler releases its many spawn wiggling in the depths of the lobby. The demigod itself doesn't attack; it wants to test its brood and weed out the weak.

There are literally hundreds of spawn, far too many for the Storm Knights to defeat. Unless the players come up with some other plan, the characters need to make a fighting retreat up the makeshift staircase, then kick over enough of the debris to prevent the spawn from pursuing.

This is a Dramatic Task. The spawn follow close behind, biting and leeching blood from the party as they attempt to escape.

- **Steps A, B, and C:** Ascend a third of the staircase. This is an Average (10) *Dexterity* check for each character. The spawn attack the heroes as they go. All characters must complete this step before anyone can attempt Step D. Each round a character remains on Steps A through C, she suffers a point of Shock from the spawn horde. Heroes in completely sealed armor (with no Wounds) are immune.

- **Step D:** Kick over enough of the debris at the top to block the staircase from the remaining spawn. This requires a Hard (14) *Strength* test.

DILEMMAS

- **Possible Setback:** A section of the stack crumbles, potentially forcing a hero to retrace her steps.

- **Complication:** The stack begins to crumble, becoming less steady.

- **Critical Problem:** The hero falls into the water and must start over!

- **Spawn of the Ruler (Hundreds):** There are hundreds of these slimy creatures, all looking to win out over their savage siblings. See page 86 for their statistics.



SCENE THREE: SCENES OF SLAUGHTER

Standard Scene. Living Land Dominant Zone.

Having escaped the Ruler's brood, the heroes find a series of staircases—some are original to Willis Tower while others have been improvised as various parts of the structure collapsed. The group winds their way through ruined offices, restaurants, exercise rooms, hallways, and lobbies before finally coming to the 36th floor.

A ruined cubicle farm fills most of the area. Thrakmoss's warriors have cleared a path through the furniture, and it's here that Malacryx and the handmaidens encountered one of their warbands. One of her warriors lies dead among the ruined cubicles, run through with a bone spear that broke off in its chest. Two of Thrakmoss's warriors also lie nearby, tangled in the cords and glass of broken computer screens. They've been slashed with claws and punctured by hrockt shoots.

A Good Success or better on a *find* total also reveals Dr. Sheila Maxwell's trademark stethoscope. Billy Stanley has run out of syringes to leave as "breadcrumbs," so this was their last resort.

This may be the first time the group has seen Thrakmoss's edeinos, evident by their bone armor. Clearly, these lizard-folk are something very different than the Red Jaws or Goldsuns encountered thus far.

HALLS OF THE DEAD

The path continues upward to the 68th floor. An open area has been filled with the husks of large, dead, black insects. Those who know something of the Living Land's history (edeinos or those who have studied their culture) can make a *scholar* test to know the identity of the beings. Anyone with the Living Land as their home cosm (such as transformed humans) can also make a *Spirit* test.

A successful *scholar* test notes that these are the "ustanah," a mostly peaceful race of insectoids that died out long ago. A Good or Outstanding result

also recalls that they were native to Takta Ker and wiped out by the edeinos.

Success on the *Spirit* test simply notes that there is a deep sadness here, as if the energy of the slain creatures somehow lingers on their corpses.

The black carpaces are difficult to see in the darkness of the room, but if light is brought to bear the Storm Knights clearly see evidence of

their systematic murder. There are hundreds on this floor, and the grisly scene continues for the next *twenty*. Clearly there are *thousands* of ustanah husks stored here. But why?

Pushing onward, the ustanah stacks on the 88th floor begin to thin—and the corpses are fresher should anyone care to check. This is where Thrakmoss's hunters are stacking their newest victims—and encounter the Storm Knights as they pass through their domain!

The warband consists of Thrakmoss's sacred number—13. There are 12 hunters led by a gotak priest.

If the party moves with relative quiet, they get surprise on the hunters, who are somewhat tired and careless after carrying ustanah husks down the stairs from the portal above. They drop the corpses noisily on the piles then sit down to rest while the gotak appraises his stores and attempts to reconcile such large numbers in his mind.

When the inevitable fight occurs, the warriors rush to attack while the gotak raises a batch of undead ustanah!

- **Stalek Gotak:** The priest starts the fight by raising corpses via the *raise dead things* miracle described in the sidebar, then uses his powers to augment his hunters. See page 95.

- **Whitespear Hunters (12):** These warriors prefer hunting from the shadows. Once the undead ustanah are raised, they retreat to the maze of corpses and use *trick* or *maneuver* to make the heroes Vulnerable or Stymied while the ustanah swarm to the attack. See page 96.

- **Undead Ustanah (13):** The undead insectoids follow the gotak's orders without hesitation. See their statistics on page 96.

NEW MIRACLE: RAISE DEAD THINGS

Thrakmoss's great secret is that he has not only learned to raise dead things, but has taught his gotaks how to do so as well.

Axiom Level: 16

Skill: *Faith* 14

Casting Time: 1 action

DN: Standard (DN 10)

Range: 10 meters

Duration: Permanent

Raise dead things is a very special and powerful miracle granted by the Living Land's version of Death itself to Thrakmoss and a few select gotaks. It requires a material component, a bone shard empowered by Thrakmoss himself. Slivik wears his shard around his neck.

Worshippers of other religions, including Keta Kalles, may not invoke this miracle, even if they possess the shard.

Once cast, it raises a single undead being of roughly human size or smaller with a Standard Success, three with a Good Success, and five with an Outstanding result. They last until killed, and have the same physical stats as they did in life. *Charisma*, *Mind*, and *Spirit* are all reduced to 3, however. They have no true free will, but simply follow their masters' spoken instructions as best they can. (There is no mental link between the caster and the summoned beings.)

SCENE FOUR: THE BIG FINALE

Dramatic Scene. Living Land/Orrorsh Mixed Zone

Thrakmoss's appointed defender of the tower is Slivik, an old and crafty gotak hungry for the immortality he believes his master will offer should he become High Lord. Slivik is very powerful, and

has been given command over an avatar of his dread god.

The gotak's guard was down when Malacryx passed this way. His "Tower Guard" attempted to stop her and killed the last of her handmaidens, but Malacryx herself slipped past and through the Dimthread Tree.

Knowing the price of failure, Slivik prayed for a miracle from Death and received a dark blessing—one he hopes will stop the group of intruders he hears battling their way up the tower even now.

THE AVATAR OF DEATH

The Dimthread Tree sits atop the topmost roof of Willis Tower. Piled before it are mounds of bones six feet high. Even a cursory glance shows they come from humans, animals, edeinos, and even dinosaurs. Three of Malacryx's freshly slain handmaidens also lie atop one of the piles, along with two of Slivik's warriors.

The remaining Tower Guard stand at the doorway from the stairs below. When that door opens, they encircle the opening and attempt to keep the intruders confined so that only one Storm Knight may attack at once. This works as long as there are at least three guards. After that, the Storm Knights can push their way out and fight normally.

When the latter occurs, Slivik, watching carefully from behind one of the mounds, triggers his most potent miracle—raising an Avatar of Stalek from one of the piles of bones! The towering monstrosity joins the surviving Tower Guard in blocking the Dimthread Tree. The party's use of the portal doesn't actually bring harm to Thrakmoss or his cause, but it's a miracle they barely understand and

aren't willing to let their enemies take advantage of.

- **Slivik:** The wily gotak casts miracles from a distance, avoiding direct conflict if possible. Use the statistics for the Stalek Gotak (page 95), but increase his *Spirit* to 14 and his *faith* to 17.

- **Stalek Tower Guard (10):** Two of the warriors fell to Malacryx and her final handmaidens. The 10 who remain fight to the death. Use Stalek Tower Guard statistics found on page 96.

- **Avatar of Stalek:** The fiend stands over five meters tall, with three heads and a wicked scythe of bone that can sweep through multiple attackers at once. Its statistics are on page 95.

FINAL STRIKE

Atop Willis Tower are two massive antennas, 12 feet in diameter. The easternmost antenna remains in good condition, but the one to the west has corroded greatly from the ravages of the nearby Living Land and frequent reality storms. Sufficient damage could cause it to topple directly onto the Nightmare Tree. The heroes could trigger the damage from a well-timed explosion or magical ability, then leap through the portal seconds before the massive tower comes crashing down and destroys it!



ACT FIVE: THE WEDDING OF BARUK KAAH

The Dimthread Tree atop Willis Tower senses the epic confrontation and alerts Baruk Kaah's Darkness Device. Rec Pakken intervenes and shunts the player characters far south of the established portal in the shattered Yucatán.

Staging from there, the heroes must free a village from ruthless bandits and make their way to Malacryx at the Mayan ruins of Chichen Itza.

OVERVIEW

Scene One: The Dimthread Tree atop Willis Tower senses the epic confrontation and alerts Baruk Kaah's Darkness Device. Rec Pakken intervenes and shunts the player characters far south of the established portal in the shattered Yucatán.

Soon after arrival, the heroes must free a village from ruthless bandits and recover a powerful talisman.

Scene Two: The Storm Knights trek through the Living Land, encountering various creatures and denizens of the wild and untamed reaches.

Scene Three: The heroes, and perhaps the villagers they rescued in Scene One, approach Chichen Itza and watch as Malacryx and High Lord Baruk Kaah attempt to use the God Box to capture the goddess of the edeinos! The resulting conflict conjures a reality storm unlike any the group has ever seen—and perhaps the wrath of Lanala herself!

SCENE ONE: THE MAGNIFICENT STORM KNIGHTS

Standard Scene. Core Earth Dominant Zone.

The Storm Knights leap through the Dimthread Tree atop Willis Tower, expecting to find themselves hot on Malacryx's trail or perhaps already in her camp. But instead, everything fades to black.

Malacryx's desperate entry through the portal of the Nightmare Tree atop Willis Tower and the fight with Slivik put Rec Pakken on alert. Though it is expensive to interfere with their passage, Rec Pakken sensed the potential—the "possibility"—of the Storm Knights' quest as they followed Malacryx through the tree.

Always wary of such interlopers, the Darkness Device spent the requisite energy and shunted the travelers along the stelae boundary, many miles south of their destination.

WEDDING PREP

Malacryx has used her head start (and the additional time given her by Rec Pakken's interference) to organize her wedding to Baruk Kaah and begin the ritual that will trap Lanala in the God Box.

Less fortunate for her, however, the Storm Knights have inadvertently stumbled into several boons that might ultimately help them defeat the ambitious edeinos, free Lanala, and even set loose the goddess's rage!

Read the following as the heroes tumble through the void:

You leap through the dark hollow of the Dimthread Tree, perhaps expecting to see Malacryx and the temples of Chichen Itza. You steel your resolve, knowing this is likely a suicide mission as you face off against the powerful priestess and what could be thousands of edeinos.

But instead, there is nothing but blackness. Cold, bone-chilling darkness. You sense the touch of something old and evil. Somehow you know you are in the presence of a Darkness Device!

Then, as if it is taunting you via waking dreams, you see a regal, onyx-skinned edeinos, Malacryx, standing atop a great temple in the Mayan ruins of Chichen Itza. Thousands of warriors are gathered around her, cheering and screaming in some kind of frenzy.

The God Box sits on an altar between her and—Baruk Kaah! This is more than an offering to the Saar of the Edeinos. It's a dowry! This is a wedding!

The God Box cries out to any who will listen. Inside is the goddess of the edeinos herself, Lanala! The box hasn't just captured her—it controls her! With the Goddess of Life as a puppet, the edeinos' growing dissent to Kaah's rule will end and the Tyrant King will destroy the Americas.

You hear—or perhaps sense—a slow, deep, and terrible laugh that rattles you to the innermost depths of your soul.

Give the heroes a moment to digest what they just heard. They should now understand the full extent of Malacryx's plan and the danger it poses to the world.

THE YUCATÁN

The vision passes. You hear quiet voices. Then birds. Slowly, pinpricks of light appear in the blackness. You force your eyes open despite the growing light. You see blue and green. The voices become louder, but you can't understand them.

You sit up. Your vision clears. You're at the edge of a blue lagoon. Somewhere warm. You look at your watch. It's the morning after you entered the tree.

You look around. You're surrounded by men, women, and children dressed in modern clothes. They seem to be caring for you, and piling your equipment by your side. You recognize their language—Spanish.

As the Storm Knights gather their wits, they see themselves and any gear they were carrying on the western shore of a deep blue lagoon. It's a windy but sunny day, and about 20 villagers from the local town have gathered around them. The heroes are wet, so it's fairly obvious the villagers pulled them from the lagoon, likely saving their lives.

One of the villagers, a confident young girl named Lupe, says hello, first in Spanish then in English.

"Hola, amigos. Mi nombre es Lupe. Hablas Español? No? Do you speak English? Bueno. Good. English it is, then. You fell from the sky. Into Lake Bacalar."

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Let the Storm Knights ask Lupe whatever questions they like. She doesn't know much about where they came from or how they appeared over the cenote, but during the course of the conversation she should reveal all the information below.

How did we get here?

"I don't know. My cousin Fernando was fishing when he saw a storm cloud form over the lake. A moment later, you fell from the sky. Fernando called for help and we dragged you to the shore. The water was shallow so I think we recovered all of your weapons."

Where are we?

"You're in the village of Bacalar. In the Yucatán. Just a few hundred meters north is the line where everything changes and the storms come.

That's where the lizard people live, though most are farther north in Chichen Itza. You know it? The old Mayan ruins?"

How do we get to Chichen Itza?

"You can't. Fresa's gang controls all the roads in or out of here."

Who is Fresa?

"Fresa is a bandit and a killer. He blockades the roads and makes us feed his gang, but we hardly have anything left."

Tell us more about Fresa's gang.

"Fresa took most of the vehicles around here and put weapons on them. He says he's protecting us from the lizards but he's just another bandit. His men watch the roads and keep anyone from coming or going without Fresa's say-so."

How many men does Fresa have?

"Maybe 20 or so."

Where are the soldiers or policía?

"Many were killed when they went to fight the lizards. Some quit and joined Fresa. No one comes here now so Fresa is El Jefe. The boss."

Where is Fresa's gang?

"He has taken over the old police station north of town. Along the road. And he has a barricade 10 miles south at Xul-Ha. If you want to go to Chichen Itza, you have to go through Fresa."

BATTLING BANDITOS

There are no cars in Bacalar; Fresa's gang has taken them all. That means the Storm Knights can hoof it 10 miles south to the southern barricade, or head north toward Chichen Itza and the far closer gang based at the police station.

They can stage a direct assault, feign an assault while some of their number flank from the jungle, or even negotiate—if they can show a clear position of strength. Fresa just wants to get by for as long as it takes to scour the land of artifacts, then hightail it out of the danger zone so close to the border. If the heroes interact with him, it should be obvious that's his great fear—a sudden transformation that might cause him to lose control of his men or reduce him to a "caveman" after he's amassed so many treasures.

THE SOUTHERN BARRICADE

The southern barricade is at the south end of town, where road 307 leads south. The barricade is a series of concrete barriers, behind which are usually three small trucks with machine guns on the back (see page 69).

The barricade is manned by a dozen former Gulf Cartel criminals and thugs, and led by a heavily tattooed woman called Maserati (like the car).

- **Maserati:** This middle-aged woman is in phenomenal shape, covered in tattoos from head to toe, and would give the Gaunt Man a run for his money in the cruelty department. Her statistics are on page 69.

- **Banditos (12):** Most of the bandits are former members of the Gulf Cartel, or soldiers who deserted during the attack on the lizardmen to the north and were taken in by Fresa. They aren't particularly skilled, but are ruthless and prone to murder. See page 69.

BACALAR AND ENVIRONS

2 kilometers

Bacalar

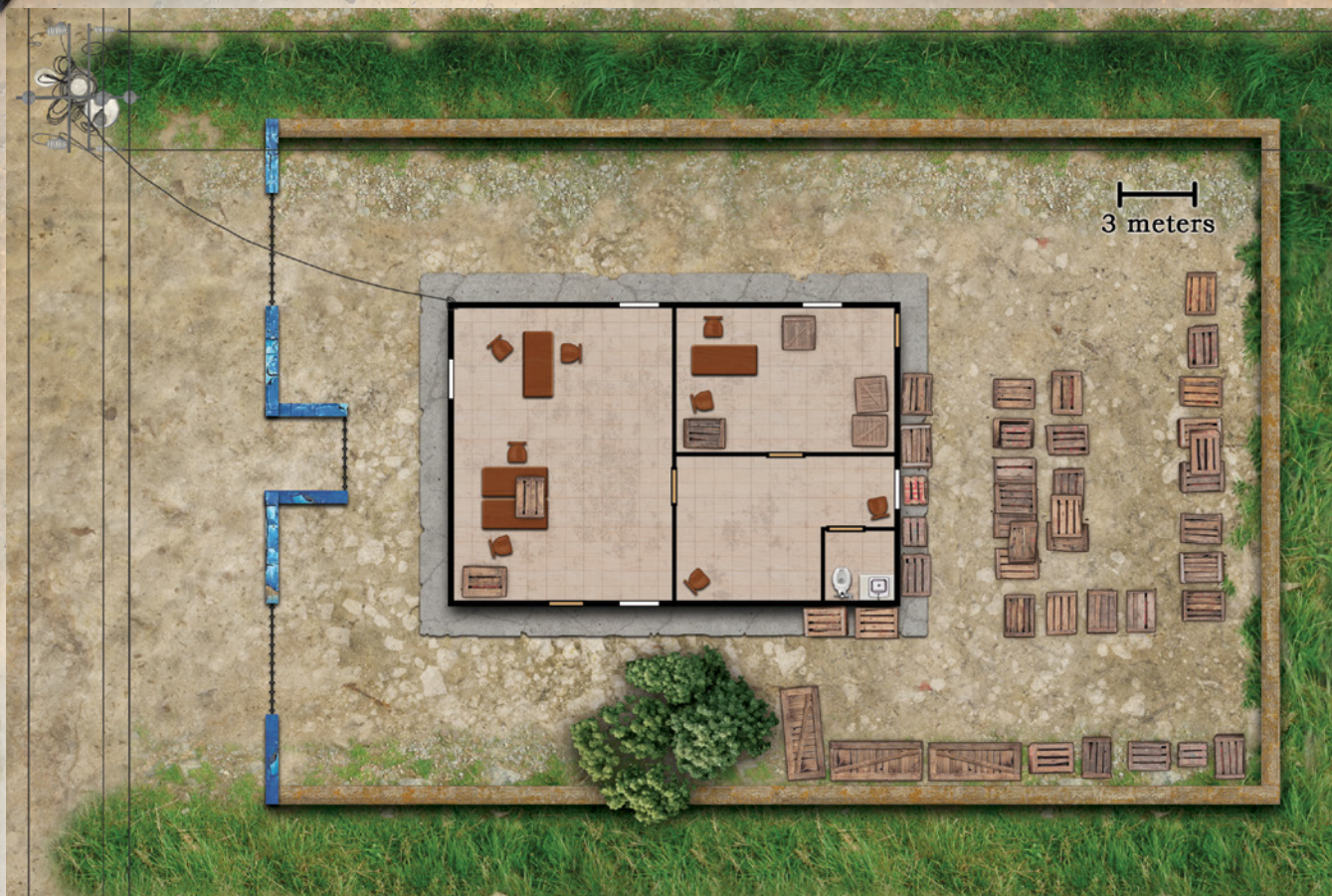
Lake Bacalar

Laguna Mariscal

Xul-Ha

307





THE POLICE STATION

Fresa himself is at the Bacalar Police Station to the north of town along the road to Chichen Itza. The station is tiny, but behind it is an extensive fenced and barricaded area that's far more important to the thief. Fresa has found something more lucrative than robbing the poor people of Bacalar and the surrounding villages. The raging reality storms have uncovered dozens of old Mayan and Toltec ruins and artifacts! Fresa is gathering as much of the loot as he can and plans on selling it after the Possibility Wars are over.

In the meantime, to keep rivals away, he maintains the story of extorting simple villages while building up his arms for the inevitable edeinos attack from the north—something the former cartel boss fears greatly.

- **Fresa:** The cartel colonel is usually found in the rear courtyard, cataloging his treasures. Once alerted, he takes up a position between the barricade of cars and the police station

itself. This gives him an escape path into the jungle if things go bad. See page 69.

- **La Hacha:** Fresa's right-hand man is a hulking brute named La Hacha, "The Axe." The gruesome killer has made a name for himself with the fire-axe he carries. See page 69.

- **Banditos (20):** See page 69.

IT CALLS

However the heroes deal with Fresa, they should see the large collection of statues, pots, and other artifacts in the rear courtyard where the police used to store their vehicles.

Any historian or archaeologist should be ecstatic to see these priceless treasures, but *all* Storm Knights sense something even greater in the haul.

At the center of the treasures is the incredible statue of a Mayan warrior chiseled from stone. Veins of red and blue streak through the stone of the statue, clearly marking it as a *massive* Eternity Shard. A *scholar* or relevant profession skill test

FRESA'S GANG

FRESA

Attributes: Charisma 9, Dexterity 9, Mind 9, Spirit 7, Strength 8

Skills: Dodge 12, find 12, fire combat 12, intimidation 11, land vehicles 11, maneuver 10, melee weapons 10, reality 8, scholar 10, stealth 10, taunt 11, trick 11

Move: 9; **Tough:** 11 (3); **Shock:** 7; **Wounds:** 3

Equipment: Stab vest (+3), AK-47 (Damage 14, Range 40/80/160, Long Burst), machete (Damage *Strength* +2/10).

Perks: Indomitable, Rally

Possibilities: 3

Special Abilities:

- **Gloater:** When *taunt* or *intimidation* are Approved Actions, the villain may affect the entire party without a Multi-Target penalty. Affected heroes lose a random card from their hand.

- **Minions:** The villain may transfer any hit to a lackey within a few meters if he succeeds at a *reality* test.

LA HACHA

Attributes: Charisma 6, Dexterity 10, Mind 6, Spirit 9, Strength 10

Skills: Dodge 10, find 8, fire combat 12, intimidation 14, maneuver 11, melee weapons 14, stealth 11, survival 8, tracking 8, taunt 7

Move: 9; **Tough:** 10; **Shock:** 9; **Wounds:** 2

Equipment: Atchisson-12 (Damage 14, Range 10/20/30, Shotgun, Short Burst), fire axe (Damage *Strength* +2/12).

Perks: Hard to Kill, Relentless, Trademark Weapon (Fire Axe), Whirlwind

Possibilities: 0

Special Abilities: —

MASERATI

Attributes: Charisma 5, Dexterity 11, Mind 7, Spirit 10, Strength 11

Skills: Dodge 15, faith 13, intimidation 13, maneuver 14, stealth 12, science 8, scholar 8, unarmed combat 14, trick 10

Move: 11; **Tough:** 11; **Shock:** 12; **Wounds:** 2

Equipment: Two Uzis (Damage 13, Range 10/25/40, Short Burst), unarmed (Damage *Strength* +2/13).

Perks: Brawler, Endurance, Hard to Kill, Vengeful

Possibilities: 0

Special Abilities: —

BANDITOS

Attributes: Charisma 6, Dexterity 8, Mind 6, Spirit 8, Strength 8

Skills: Beast riding 9, dodge 9, faith 0, fire combat 10, intimidation 9, melee weapons 9, missile weapons 9, stealth 9, unarmed combat 9

Move: 8; **Tough:** 8; **Shock:** 8; **Wounds:** —

Equipment: AK-47 (Damage 14, Range 40/80/160, Long Burst), machete (Damage *Strength* +2/10).

Perks: —

Possibilities: Never

Special Abilities: —

VEHICLES

DODGE RAM

Speed: 135 kph (12); **Tough:** 15; **Wounds:** 2

- **Armament:** Mounted M60 (uses *heavy weapons* while mounted), Damage 15, Long Burst, Range 100/500/1000, Ammo 100. Bulky if removed from mount (if move and fire take a penalty equal to difference if *Strength* is below 12.)

- **Fast:** Speed grants a +2 bonus to complete steps in a Chase or a -2 penalty to be hit.

- **Large:** Attacks against the truck gain a +2 bonus due to its size.

- **Maneuverability:** -2 penalty to *land vehicles* for defenses or chases.

- **Passengers:** 6.

NISSAN SENTRA

Speed: 160 kph (13); **Tough:** 14; **Wounds:** 2

- **Fast:** Speed grants a +2 bonus to complete steps in a Chase or a -2 penalty to be hit.

- **Large:** Attacks against the cruiser gain a +2 bonus due to its size.

- **Maneuverability:** -1 penalty to *land vehicles* for defenses or chases.

- **Passengers:** 4.



THE KUKULCAN STATUE

Cosm: Core Earth

Possibilities: 3

Tapping Difficulty: 10

Purpose: To protect the people of the Yucatán from foreign invaders.

Powers: If used in a Core Earth Pure or Dominant Zone, it can simply be tapped for Possibilities. If used in an area where an alien cosm is present, however, it creates a Core Earth Mixed Zone in a five-km radius. The effect lasts until nightfall if triggered in daylight, or daybreak if triggered in darkness. Once activated, it may not be triggered again for another full year.

Restrictions: The statue's Possibilities may be tapped by any Storm Knight who hears its call. Its special power is recognized by the character who hears the statue's call the loudest, but may only be invoked by someone of the local bloodline (GM's call). If none of the Storm Knights present qualify, Eduardo definitely qualifies.

Description: The statue depicts a stylized aspect of Kukulcan the Conqueror. The Aztecs called him Quetzcoatl, but the Mayans used the name both for the plumed serpent and a historical figure who once ruled over Chichen Itza. The statue weighs over 250 kilograms, generally requiring six or more individuals to lift. If the statue is to be moved, it must be in a truck.



notes it as a Toltec design, a mysterious pre-Mayan civilization that once lived in the Yucatán.

Have all the player characters make *reality* rolls. Whoever rolls highest senses that the statue depicts the legendary king and warrior Kukulcan. More importantly, the totem flashes visions of the edeinos' desecration of Chichen Itza, one of Kukulcan's sacred cities. The statue cries out for war, sending waves of aggression into all the Storm Knights, but especially the one who connected with it strongest. (See page 70 for details.)

HOSTAGES

Searching the police station turns up a half-dozen small trucks outfitted with machine guns in and around the fenced-in areas. The group also finds a working drone with one hour of battery power left. (The police used it to look out beyond the roads and into the thick jungle where the cartels often hid their operations.)

More surprising is that the former police officers are still inside, held hostage by Fresa as a safety precaution should the government suddenly take interest in his operations or if he needs leverage against the locals.

There are seven men and women in the small cells of the station. They've been captive for several weeks but were relatively well cared for by some of the gang members who were former soldiers. Some of these thugs might even join the cause once clear of Fresa's reign.

The police officers are eager to help, once released. They can remain behind to mop up any of Fresa's bandits who escaped or protect the town, but one of them—a former lieutenant named Eduardo—has just had his Moment of Crisis and become a Storm Knight. He knows what the Kukulcan statue can do, and if he hears about the party's plans to attack Chichen Itza, he volunteers to lead an attack on the edeinos' army while the Storm Knights deal with Malacryx.

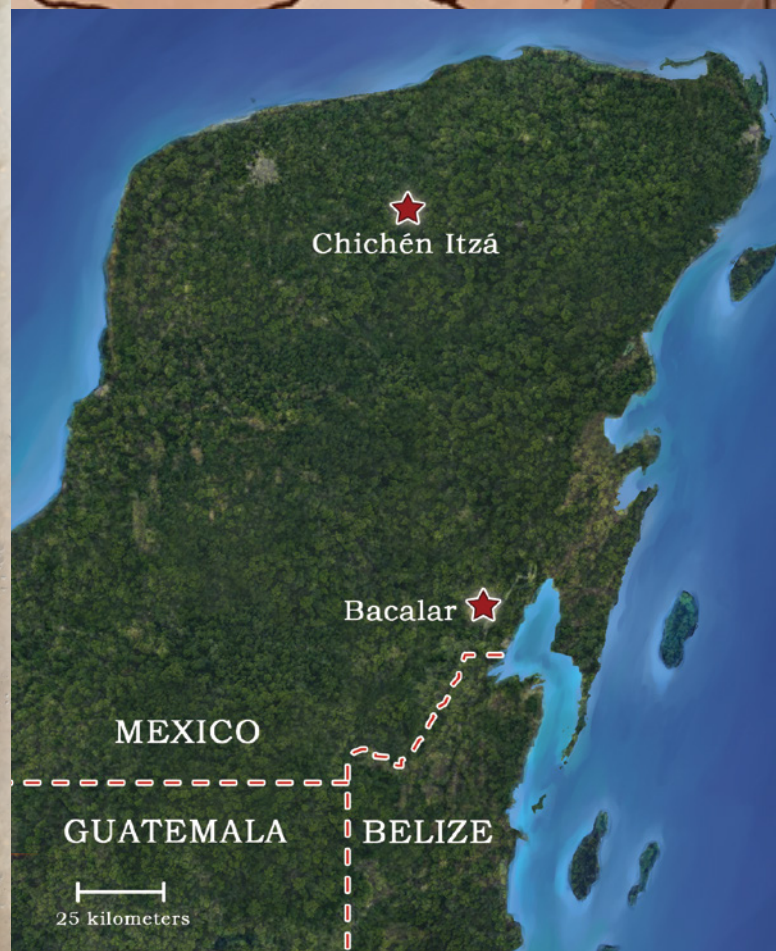
The rescued police officers, enthusiastic villagers, and most importantly the vehicles, machine guns, and Kukulcan statue that can make them work in Chichen Itza, give the Storm Knights the ability to launch a quick strike into the edeinos' midst.

THE ROAD TO CHICHEN ITZA

The party now has vehicles, weapons, and even a powerful Eternity Shard that will let those items function long enough to stage an attack on the edeinos at Chichen Itza.

They know they're at least a day or so behind Malacryx so they'd best get moving right away. This is where things get very open-ended and the players need to make some decisions. Here's what they know:

- Malacryx must gather the edeinos of the Goldsun Clan at Chichen Itza and engage in some sort of ceremony with the God Box.
- A few hundred yards north of the village is the border to the Living Land. There are no storms at the moment, but the line between Core Earth and the Living Land is clear, even in the jungle terrain of the Yucatán. Any Ords who cross that line transform, unless the party activates the Kukulcan totem.
- Lupe and Eduardo say Chichen Itza is about five hours north, when there were roads. Now it may take up to twice as long. Fortunately, most of the police vehicles have four-wheel drive and are reasonably well-suited to the terrain. A supply of chainsaws should allow travelers to cut through occasional roadblocks. These are easily available in and around Bacalar.
- The party has at least six vehicles from Fresa's hideout capable of making the journey. All have been outfitted with machine guns. With the Kukulcan totem, one group could stage a diversionary attack against the edeinos horde while a smaller group, the player characters, take on Malacryx and attempt to take or destroy the God Box.
- Seven former police officers are willing to join in the fight, as are Lupe and a dozen of the villagers.



SCENE TWO: IT'S STILL THE LIVING LAND

Standard Scene. Living Land Pure Zone.

No trek through the Living Land goes as expected, no matter what kind of hurry one is in or the precautions she takes. In this case, however, the heroes have a rare chance to really cut loose—assuming they've activated the Kukulcan totem.

Read the following as the Storm Knights travel the road just south of the town of Tihosuco.

The roads here are actually in pretty good shape. You're making good time, and a check of the map shows you're about to hit the village of Tihosuco.

The jungle at the outskirts of town hasn't completely overtaken everything yet, and off to your left is an old soccer field with a short wall. Dozens of what you guess are primitive humans have just busted through the wall and run across the road directly in front of you! Many panic as they try to dodge your convoy...and edeinos herders on massive triceratops are already in hot pursuit!

Any player character driving one of the vehicles must make an immediate *land vehicles* check with the following results (assume nonplayer characters each get a Standard Success for dramatic purposes).

- **Failure:** The truck runs into a pursuing triceratops! Everyone within takes 12 damage +2BD.
- **Standard or Good:** The driver swerves off the road and manages to avoid hitting any of the escaping humans or dinosaurs. Everyone in the vehicle suffers Fatigue.
- **Outstanding:** The driver avoids the fleeing humans and dinosaurs and manages to take out two of the edeinos overseers. Reduce the number in the encounter by two.

GOLDSUN OVERSEERS

The Goldsun edeinos have been herding primitive humans from the local wilds into the soccer field for sorting. Malacryx has told the clan they need slaves for the coming expansion of Kallikosh's empire and they've dutifully complied.

If the party blasts on through the human stampede, the edeinos continue rounding up the escapees. In

the more likely event the Storm Knights stop to intervene, they must battle the slavers—but may wind up with additional soldiers for their attack.

- **Goldsun Overseers (12):** The Goldsun tribe is somewhat distant and aloof. They don't mind dying—it's still the ultimate sensation—but retire if more than half of their own are slain. See page 83 for statistics.
- **Triceratops (5):** The five tank-like behemoths each have a rider and a hrockt-shoot thrower. They're enraged by the vehicles and attempt to attack those with their charge ability and massive horns. See page 85.
- **Primitive Humans (20+):** The humans are in full flight mode when the convoy arrives, but some turn and fight when cornered. If the heroes engage, assume the unarmed thralls take out an overseer every other turn on their action.

REFUGEES

Assuming the heroes save the fleeing captives quickly, there should still be around 20+ survivors remaining. Most gather round the Storm Knights, looking to their new leaders and marveling over their clothes, cars, and weapons. They have distant memories of such things but can't quite seem to remember how to use them.

The refugees leave the party with a challenge—or an opportunity. Here are some of the most likely ways the players may choose to handle them:

- **Let them go their own way.** The thralls stay in the area and are likely captured again, but they are 20 among thousands and the heroes can't watch over them forever.
- **Send someone to escort the group back to Bacolar.** The problem here is that they've already transformed. Sending them outside the Living Land zone they're currently in may be fatal should they transform again.
- **Bring them along.** One woman, who calls herself Deena, takes charge early on. The blonde-haired, caucasian woman seems both out of place and a natural fit here in the jungle. She begins arming her fellow survivors with the edeinos' hrockt shoots and tending to any slight wounds. If someone talks to her, Deena

has information on Chichen Itza and might be useful as an additional force against the Goldsuns.

"I am Deena. I was once, ooh-enn worker. Before the edeinos, before Baruk Kaah. I helped people. Still do, but now I know better things. I make medicine from the jungle and learn to fight.

"Goldsun take many prisoners at Chichen Itza. They are uncovering old ruins. May-en. Mayan. I... can't remember...history very well.

"They use us to dig and carry stones. Some...some... read...thing...signs. Symbols. I don't...remember.

"You are going there? To Chicken Pizza? Heh. Old joke...I still remember pizza.

"You cannot go there. The warriors have gathered. There are many. They cover the entire site. Tousands. Tousans? Tucson? Thousands?"

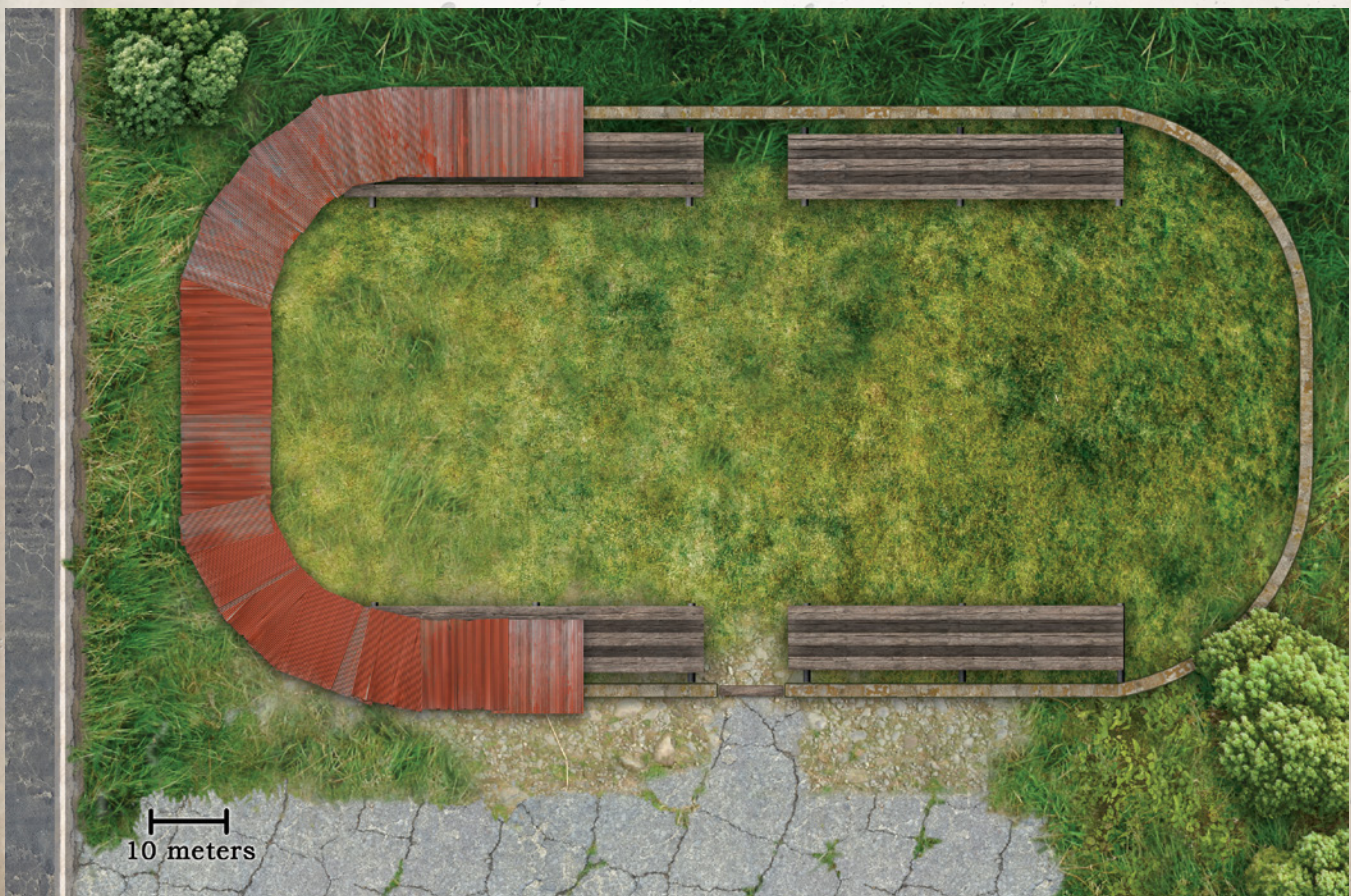
Deena struggles with her memory when asked questions that flirt the boundaries of the Social Axiom. At first it is somewhat disturbing, but then she quickly snaps out of it and smiles, seemingly

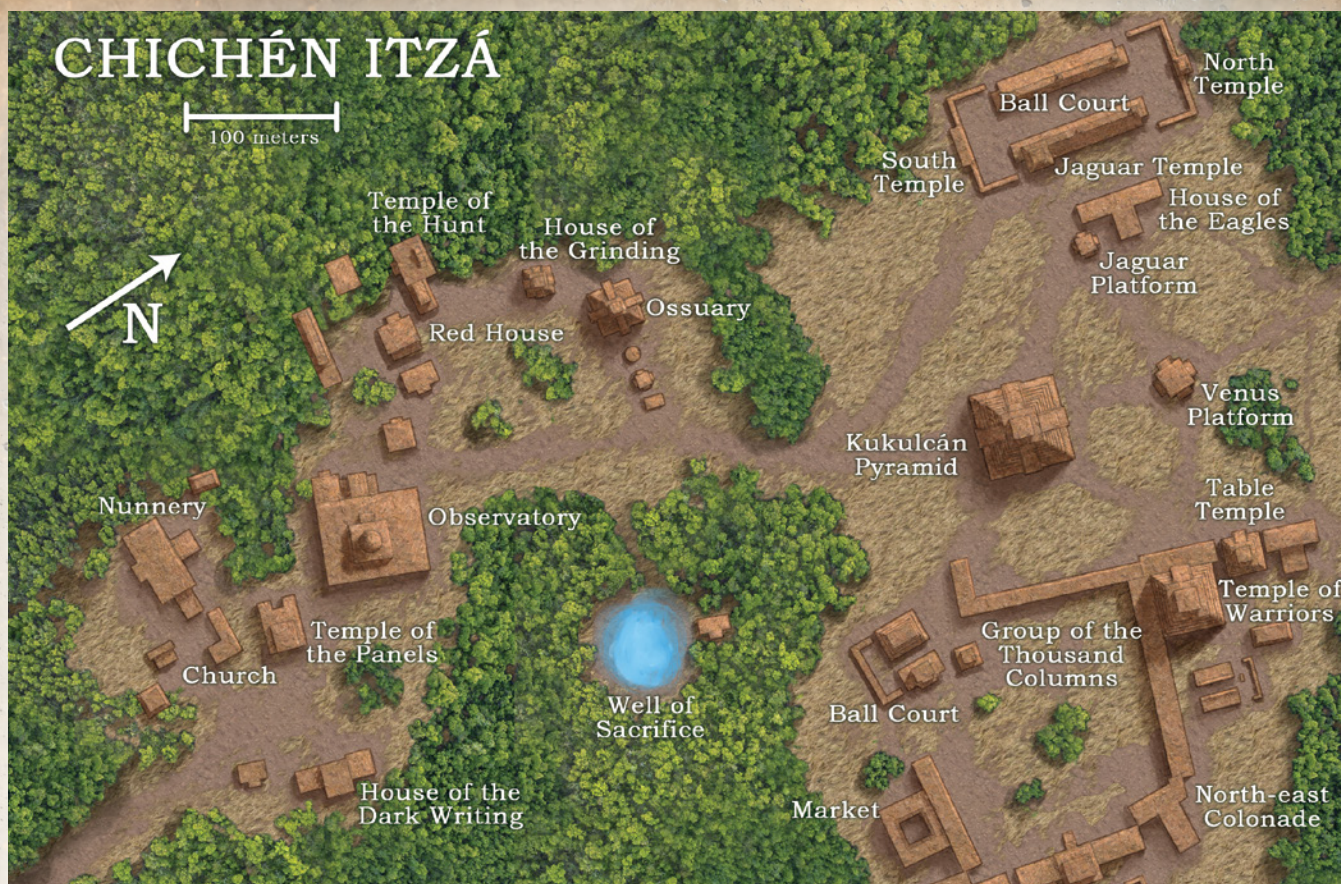
enjoying the simpler world she's found a natural role in.

Thanks to the Law of Savagery, the surviving refugees are strong and healthy. If someone thinks of it, they could easily slip into the edeinos' camp as just another work crew and help with the distraction.

Deena can't draw a map of Chichen Itza, but one of the other refugees, Jorge, can. He worked as a guide there for a decade and the memory is still imprinted firmly in his mind despite his transformation.

Assuming the Kukulcan totem is active, the refugees don't cause a contradiction while riding in the vehicles. That means the Storm Knights can convince them to mount up (a simple *persuasion* test on Deena) and get back on the road. If the thralls *can't* be convinced to ride on the vehicles, they're too far away from Chichen Itza to run and catch up in time (almost 100 kilometers via the more direct route through Chikindzonot Municipality).





SCENE THREE: A STORM LIKE NO OTHER

Dramatic Scene. Living Land Pure Zone.

The party arrives on the outskirts of Chichen Itza and must find a way to stop Malacryx from taking control of the God Box.

The Storm Knights should do some surveillance before staging their attack. Charging blindly into the massed edeinos troops is absolute and certain death—there are tens of thousands of the lizard-folk gathered here, along with thousands of trained dinosaurs and other beasts! The Game Master must make *sure* a frontal assault doesn't happen or it means certain death for even the most powerful groups. Impulsive characters should be reminded that they're welcome to wade into the masses, but only after a plan is in place that doesn't jeopardize the ultimate goal of stopping Malacryx.

There are several ways the team might get a view of Chichen Itza. They found a drone at the police station. They can also climb stealthily to the top of Temple de la Mesas (which is relatively unoccupied), or they might use a power or have a character with the ability to fly.

The text below is written from the point of view of the drone. If the group has a different method, simply amend it to fit your particular scenario.

As you might expect, Malacryx stands atop the central ziggurat in the middle of Chichen Itza. According to your map, it's the Temple of Kukulcan.

Billy "Hot Shots" Stanley and Dr. Sheila Maxell sit bound at her feet. You can see the life force slowly draining from them as Malacryx conducts her ritual.

The future queen is surrounded by tens of thousands of Goldsun edeinos. They dance, sing, jump spasmodically, and even fight with one another. The mood among the lizards is electric—and in fact, so is the air. Though the skies are absolutely clear, you occasionally see sparks erupt in mid-air above the temple. Something big is about to happen.

Malacryx's onyx skin gleams with gold—she's literally covered in it. She sways above the God Box. Red and blue energy flows from her into the ancient Mayan artifact.

As you watch, a flash of lightning and a ball of smoke or pure storm energy explodes beside Malacryx. When it clears, the biggest edeinos you've ever seen stands beside her. He must be nine feet tall, and wields a staff of pure black. He ROARS at the crowd...and they scream back in adulation.

You can't believe your eyes, but this must be Baruk Kaah!

It all makes sense now. Malacryx said she would be queen. She's going to control Lanala and offer that to the Saar as her own dowery! She will become queen!

This is the Wedding of Baruk Kaah!

A GENTLE NUDGE

The climax to *The God Box* campaign is written with the assumption that the heroes send Eduardo, Lupe, and the rest to attack with the vehicles while they assault Malacryx and attempt to take or destroy the God Box.

If they come up with another plan, however, let them! Two things are critical, though.

One, much to the heroes' surprise, Baruk Kaah is at the temple, too! They should definitely not fight him directly. Taking on a High Lord in direct combat is a *really* bad idea. If the vehicle attack doesn't happen, they'll need some other kind of diversion to draw the High Lord away long enough for them to fight Malacryx.

Two, they should get close enough to the God Box to sense Lanala's direct plea, setting in motion the Dramatic Task Resolution outlined on page page 77.

ENTHRALLMENT

Malacryx is pouring Possibilities from the gathered edeinos into the God Box. The assembled Storm Knights don't know how much longer they might have to prevent it, but they need to act fast. It's time to put their plan in motion, whatever it is.

Make sure to impress upon the group that fighting Baruk Kaah isn't an option. They're nowhere near powerful enough at this stage to take on a High Lord. If that doesn't convince them, tell them that the spear he's carrying is likely a Darkness Device! They *must* draw Baruk Kaah away from the temple long enough to attack Malacryx and coopt control of the God Box and the trapped Lanala.

THE NORTHERN FEINT

If the heroes don't set things in motion, Eduardo and Lupe are eager to do so. They offer to loop around from the northwestern road and attack from the old parking lot. That should draw most of the Goldsuns away and give the Storm Knights at least a few minutes to hit Malacryx from the north or east.

If Deena is present, she rallies the thralls around the Jaguar Temple and draws off any stragglers. The rocks and walls should let them hold off the edeinos for 10 minutes or so, then they retreat through the jungle toward the sacred cenote to the north.

Of course the players are welcome to come up with their own plan, but it should unfold in roughly the same way—with Malacryx, her handmaidens, and a handful of Goldsun warriors atop the temple of Kukulkan.

LANALA'S WHISPER

When the Storm Knights approach the temple to confront Malacryx, whoever has the highest *reality* skill (or Possibilities if there's a tie) stops dead in their tracks. Read the following to that player, but let the other players hear it as well—all the Storm Knights have a vague sense of what's happening.

You feel your adrenaline pumping as you prepare for this final conflict with Malacryx. You ready your weapon, charge the temple, and bound up a dozen steps—then it seems time suddenly stands still.

You feel the warm breeze on your face. You hear the

call of quetzl birds in the jungle. You taste the lakes of blood that have been spilled here for thousands of years—and more to come. You revel in...sensations.

Your companions move in slow motion as you realize you've been touched by Lanala. This is what it must feel like to live in her world, to be a jakkat.

Then the goddess speaks to you. No, it is more of a sensation than speech. You sense Malacryx channeling Possibilities into the God Box...where Lanala has already been trapped through some dark sacrifice.

But Malacryx has not completed the ritual. If you can wrest control of the box, Lanala can break free. And she will show her followers the error of their ways with a fury this land has never seen!

The chosen Storm Knight is now engaged in an invoked reality storm with Malacryx. This is a Dramatic Task in which only that character can participate. The rest of the team must battle Malacryx's bodyguards, who sense what is happening and move immediately to attack.

A CONTEST OF REALITY

See *Torg Eternity* for a refresher on invoked reality storms. This is a use of Dramatic Skill Resolution between the chosen Storm Knight and Malacryx. No other characters may intervene. The fierce storm between the two rages over an area roughly 20 yards in diameter.

Steps A–D are all an opposed contest of *reality* against Malacryx's 18.

On the third round of the contest, another pressing concern emerges—Baruk Kaah and *thousands* of warriors return! The High Lord sees what's happening and bounds maniacally toward the temple! Play this up for tension—Kaah shouldn't actually arrive in time to join the battle. If the hero can't finish Step D in the next round or two, though, Lupe comes out of nowhere with a tour bus and plows through Kaah and his horde. It doesn't kill the Saar, of course, but it delays him another two rounds and doesn't end well for Lupe.



DILEMMAS

- **Possible Setback:** A withering assault of Malacryx's will threatens to set her opponent back. She might issue a threat as well, allowing the players to verbally interact with the vengeful warrior before the situation is resolved.
- **Complication:** A hroëkt-shoot spear flies out of nowhere, injuring the character (1 Wound, 2 Shock) if he fails his *reality* test this turn.
- **Critical Problem:** Malacryx bellows in rage: "I WILL BE QUEEN! DIE HUMAN!" If the character can't succeed at his *reality* roll this turn, he fails the contest!

THE OPPOSITION

Malacryx is engaged with a single Storm Knight. The rest must contend with her handmaidens and group of temple guards left behind despite any other distraction the heroes may have caused.

- **Malacryx:** The ambitious warrior is engaged in the reality storm and cannot affect or be affected by others. Her statistics are on page 84. She has an additional pool of 10 Possibilities drawn from the crowd around her, Billy, and Dr. Maxwell.
- **Malacryx's Handmaidens (10):** These elite warriors fight to the death. See page 83.
- **Temple Guard (10):** These warriors are peers of Malacryx's Handmaidens and fight to the death in the presence of Baruk Kaah and their fellows. See page 85.

"I CAN TAKE HER. I KNOW I CAN. JUST KEEP THE REST OF THOSE EDEINOS BUSY!"

-AIDEN MCALLISTER

THE FURY OF LANALA

Once the final step of the Dramatic Task is complete, Malacryx screeches at her opponent then explodes into a billion specks of black and gold nothingness. A heartbeat later, the reality storm explodes outward, becoming a full-blown hurricane that rages over the entire region! A maelstrom of debris fills the air, trees are ripped from the earth, edeinos and jungle creatures fly in all directions. Baruk Kaah and his legions are hurled into the maelstrom!

Though the player characters are also buffeted by the storm, they somehow escape the worst of its wrath, at least at first. It should be very clear that they need to clear out as fast as possible. As they do, describe how they must duck massive palm trees spinning through the air, or slide under tumbling blocks of ancient Mayan stone ripped loose from the surrounding foundations. They must leap cracks in the earth, dive over sudden fissures of molten lava, and bound around the snapping jaws of predators pulled from the jungle into the vortex of death.

Eventually, the Storm Knights see Lanala's rage:

The hurricane swirls over Chichen Itza. The funnel is filled with spinning trees, flailing edeinos, and shattering stone. In the middle of it all is a dark shape, vaguely lizard-like. It towers over the jungle, standing with its arms above its head as if in rage. Then you hear an ear-splitting scream and the storm explodes in one last furious burst of force!

You're knocked flat. Your ears ring and your nose bleeds. There's a fierce wind but the storm is gone. The hot Mexican sun returns and seems to focus directly on your skin. You begin to sweat. You feel the reality of the Living Land slowly reasserting itself. It seems even the Kukulcan totem is failing against Lanala's rage. You'd better get Lupe and the rest back to Bacalar before the totem fails and they transform. And you'd best get out of here before the Goldsuns—and Baruk Kaah—regroup.

AFTERMATH

Lanala's storm has done irreparable harm to the archaeological site, but tremendous good for Core Earth otherwise. Kallikosh and the Goldsuns cannot expand for many months. Eduardo and Lupe, if they survived, lead the resistance against the Goldsuns and provide the Delphi Council with valuable intelligence.

Most importantly, thousands of edeinos throughout the Living Land cosm feel Lanala's sorrow. They now know for certain Baruk Kaah has lost the way. He is not a champion of life or the goddess; he is a deceiver, no better than Thrakmoss.

They will battle against their brothers and sisters for years to come, but the greater harm has been

averted. Had Kaah and Malacryx controlled Lanala via the God Box, the tribes would have united under the goddess's terrible pleas. The slaughter of humans would increase and Kaah would have been that much closer to becoming Torg.

Perhaps most significantly for the Storm Knights, Lanala has seen each of them and deemed them worthy. Edeinos, even enemies, are likely to treat them with a certain amount of reverence if the story is spread, and everyone present now qualifies for the Chosen of Lanala Perk!

The threat has not ended, however. The vengeful Saar screams somewhere in the distance, his blood hot for the Storm Knights who defeated him.



MALACRYX

CHARACTERS & CREATURES

NONPLAYER CHARACTERS

DR. SHEILA MAXWELL

Dr. Sheila Maxwell used to be a heavy smoker. She still has the raspy voice and cynicism that came with courting death for so long despite her deep medical knowledge. She's 57 years old with white-streaked, black hair, heavy glasses perpetually perched on the bridge of her nose, and a biting sense of dark humor.

Quote: "Whaddya want? I'm busy."

Attributes: Charisma 6, Dexterity 7, Mind 9, Spirit 10, Strength 7

Skills: Dodge 8, evidence analysis 10, find 10, first aid 10, intimidation 11, land vehicles 8, medicine 12, melee weapons 8, scholar 10, science 10, taunt 8, trick 10

Move: 7; **Tough:** 7; **Shock:** 10; **Wounds:** 1

Equipment: Lighter, stethoscope

Perks: Strong Willed

Possibilities: None

Special Abilities: —

BILLY "HOT SHOTS" STANLEY

Billy is a strange mix of frenetic energy and quiet strength. He's quick with a syringe and prides himself on his patients always waiting for the pain of a shot they never even feel. He's in his mid-40s, of stocky build, red-haired and balding. Hot Shots has a constant slight smile and is very good at his job.

Quote: "Let me give you a quick booster shot. You never know what you could catch out there."

Attributes: Charisma 6, Dexterity 9, Mind 8, Spirit 7, Strength 8

Skills: Dodge 10, evidence analysis 9, find 9, first aid 11, land vehicles 10, maneuver 10, medicine 9, melee weapons 11, science 9, trick 9

Move: 9; **Tough:** 8; **Shock:** 7; **Wounds:** 1

Equipment: Two injection jetguns (Damage 0, uses *melee weapons*, injects medicine or chemical if target has no Armor), various syringes

Perks: Trademark Weapon (Injection Jetgun)

Possibilities: Never

Special Abilities: —

MAJOR JEFF CHANDLER

Jeff comes from Tidewater, Virginia. He attended one of the military schools there and Fort Washington is his first real posting. He's proved an amazing commander given his inexperience, taking care of his people's morale and physical needs and staging a strong defense against Baruk Kaah's Redjaws.

Quote: "The only way we get through this is by coming together as a team."

Attributes: Charisma 8, Dexterity 8, Mind 8, Spirit 8, Strength 8

Skills: Dodge 10, find 9, fire combat 10, first aid 9, heavy weapons 9, intimidation 9, land vehicles 9, maneuver 9, melee weapons 9, persuasion 11, scholar 9, trick 10, unarmed combat 9

Move: 8; **Tough:** 12 (4); **Shock:** 9; **Wounds:** 1

Equipment: Ballistic vest (+4), Glock 9mm (Damage 13, Range 10/25/40)

Perks: Double Tap, Helper

Possibilities: None

Special Abilities: —

DAROONI

DAROONI VILLAGER

The common Darooni are kept ignorant and obedient by the priests of the temple. They produce vegetables along the river of the Misty Gorge and rely primarily on fishing for meat.

Attributes: Charisma 6, Dexterity 7, Mind 6, Spirit 6, Strength 7

Skills: Beast riding 8, dodge 8, faith 8, find 7, maneuver 8, melee weapons 9, stealth 8, survival 7, unarmed combat 8, water vehicles 8

Move: 7; **Tough:** 7; **Shock:** 7; **Wounds:** —

Equipment: Improvised club or farming tools (Strength +2/9, become Vulnerable on a miss)

Perks: —

Possibilities: Never

Special Abilities: —

DAROONI PRIESTESS

Emissaries of Olakaya, the priestesses of the Darooni oversee the initiations of Wasp Riders and the gifts of food and hosts delivered to the hive. When threatened they call out to the wasp hive, and their allies answer.

Attributes: Charisma 9, Dexterity 8, Mind 8, Spirit 11, Strength 7

Skills: Beast riding 11, dodge 9, faith 15, find 10, intimidation 14, medicine 10, melee weapons 9, missile weapons 9, reality 12, survival 9, taunt 10, trick 11, unarmed combat 9

Move: 8; **Tough:** 7; **Shock:** 11; **Wounds:** 1

Equipment: Barbed staff (Damage Strength +2/9, Giant Wasp Venom)

Perks: Beast Rider, Miracles (*Call animals, communicate with animals, conjure poison, strike, ward enemy*), Vehemence

Possibilities: Common (3)

Special Abilities:

- **Giant Wasp Venom:** 2 shock per round to an affected target (see **Poison** in *Torg Eternity*).

- **Minions:** The villain may transfer any hit to a lackey within a few meters if she succeeds at a reality test.

DAROONI WASP RIDER

Painted in the same colors as their insect steeds, the Darooni ride slung under the wasp's thorax. Each rider forms a tight, individual bond with her wasp.

Attributes: Charisma 7, Dexterity 10, Mind 8, Spirit 8, Strength 8

Skills: Beast riding 13, dodge 11, faith 9, first aid 9, intimidation 11, maneuver 12, melee weapons 12, missile weapons 13, stealth 11, survival 9, tracking 10, unarmed combat 11

Move: 10; **Tough:** 8; **Shock:** 8; **Wounds:** 1

Equipment: Javelins (Strength +2/10, Giant Wasp Venom)

Perks: Beast Rider, Relentless

Possibilities: Rare (2)

Special Abilities:

- **Beast Bond:** The rider may divert 1 Wound per attack to affect her wasp instead.

- **Giant Wasp Venom:** 2 shock per round to an affected target (see **Poison** in *Torg Eternity*).

DAROONI WASP SCOUT

Scouts tend to be younger than the elite wasp riders, and may be male or female. The giant wasps they ride tend to be male, meaning they have no stinger attack of their own.

Attributes: Charisma 7, Dexterity 8, Mind 8, Spirit 7, Strength 8

Skills: Beast riding 10, dodge 9, find 10, faith 8, first aid 9, intimidation 8, maneuver 11, melee weapons 9, missile weapons 10, stealth 11, survival 9, tracking 10, unarmed combat 9

Move: 8; **Tough:** 8; **Shock:** 7; **Wounds:** 1

Equipment: Javelins (*Strength* +2, Giant Wasp Venom, x6)

Perks: —

Possibilities: Never

Special Abilities:

- **Giant Wasp Venom:** 2 shock per round to an affected target (see **Poison** in *Torg Eternity*).

DAROONI GIANT WASP

Giant wasps are mostly black, but have a blood red abdomen. The wasp riders use harnesses that hang below the wasps, and it's middle legs touch the rider to hold her in place and "feel" subtle commands. Only female wasps have stingers, which inject a paralytic venom.

Attributes: Charisma 4, Dexterity 10, Mind 4, Spirit 6, Strength 11

Skills: Dodge 13, intimidation (16), find 9, maneuver 12, stealth 11, taunt (14), unarmed combat 12

Move: 5; **Tough:** 13 (2); **Shock:** 8; **Wounds:** 2

Equipment: —

Perks: —

Possibilities: Never

Special Abilities:

- **Armor:** Exoskeleton +2.
- **Flight:** Flies through the air at Movement 10.
- **Giant Wasp Venom:** 2 Shock per round to an affected target (see **Poison** in *Torg Eternity*).
- **Large:** Fully grown giant wasps are up to five meters long, and have wingspans of 10 meters.
- **Stinger:** Damage *Strength* +3 (14), AP 2, injects Giant Wasp Venom if damage exceeds Toughness.

DAROONI WASP QUEEN

The Darooni wasp queen is seen only during the Hatching Ceremony, but is a wonder to behold when visible. She's the size of a double-decker bus and somehow can appear angry despite any true lack of facial expressions.

Her body is golden brown with bright yellow and dark black streaks across her abdomen. The queen is not the goddess Olakaya worshipped by the Darooni, but is considered her sacred avatar.

Attributes: Charisma 4, Dexterity 10, Mind 4, Spirit 15, Strength 16

Skills: Dodge 13, intimidation 18, find 9, maneuver 12, survival 8, taunt (14), unarmed combat 14

Move: 5; **Tough:** 18 (2); **Shock:** 15; **Wounds:** 4

Equipment: —

Perks: —

Possibilities: Never

Special Abilities:

- **Armor:** Exoskeleton +2.
- **Dread:** While the queen is present, any Standard Scene counts as a Dramatic Scene instead.
- **Fear:** When first encountering the Queen Wasp each hero must test *Spirit* or become Very Stymied.
- **Flight:** Flies through the air at Movement 10.
- **Giant Wasp Venom:** 2 shock per round to an affected target (see **Poison** in *Torg Eternity*).
- **Sacred:** The Wasp Queen doesn't have Possibilities, but she may spend 1 Shock for the same purposes, including Soaking damage. In place of reality the creature's roll to Soak is based on the highest faith of any Darooni present.
- **Very Large:** The queen wasp is a massive beast over 10 meters from her head to the tip of her stinger.
- **Stinger:** Damage *Strength* +3 (19), AP 2, injects Giant Wasp Venom if damage exceeds Toughness.

EDEINOS AND DINOSAURS

EDEINOS HUNTING PARTY

Edeinos are trained in combat from the day they are born. They grow up with a spear in their hands and are ferocious in their pursuit and capture of prey, which they rip apart with their savage teeth.

Attributes: Charisma 5, Dexterity 9, Mind 6, Spirit 8, Strength 10

Skills: Beast riding 10, dodge 10, faith 9, find 8, intimidation 10, maneuver 10, melee weapons 11, missile weapons 10, stealth 10, survival 8, tracking 8, unarmed combat 11

Move: 9; **Tough:** 10; **Shock:** 10; **Wounds:** —

Equipment: Hrockt-shoot spear (*Strength* +2/12)

Perks: Whirlwind

Possibilities: Rare (2)

Special Abilities:

- **Bite/Claws:** Damage *Strength* +2 (12).

EDEINOS SCOUTS

These scouts are handpicked thanks to their color-shifting scales. In the Deep Mist or thick jungles they are practically invisible. Scouts depend on their camouflage for survival, and only attack from ambush.

Attributes: Charisma 6, Dexterity 9, Mind 6, Spirit 8, Strength 10

Skills: Beast riding 11, dodge 10, faith 10, find 9, intimidation 10, maneuver 10, melee weapons 10, missile weapons 10, stealth 12, survival 8, tracking 10, trick 9, unarmed combat 10

Move: 9; **Tough:** 10; **Shock:** 8; **Wounds:** —

Equipment: Hrockt-shoot spear (*Strength* +2/12)

Perks: Chameleon Skin, Skin Shifter

Possibilities: Rare (2)

Special Abilities:

- **Bite/Claws:** Damage *Strength* +2 (12).

EDEINOS HANDMAIDENS

Malacryx's handmaidens are all females chosen for their ferocity and loyalty. She tasks them vigorously and constantly. Those who slaughter and obey without hesitation remain by her side. Those who don't become prey for the rest.

Malacryx travels with a dozen handmaidens, replacing losses as needed. As members of the Goldsun tribe, the handmaidens tend to wear jewelry, usually gold or silver as befits their specific skin tone.

If desired the GM may substitute different Perks to differentiate each handmaiden. The most appropriate Perks include: Blessed Weapon (see *The Living Land Sourcebook*), Death Claws (*Torg Eternity*), Razor Scales (see *The Living Land Sourcebook*), Relentless (*Torg Eternity*), Smasher (see *The Living Land Sourcebook*), and Star Eyes (*Torg Eternity*).

Attributes: Charisma 8, Dexterity 11, Mind 7, Spirit 11, Strength 12

Skills: Beast riding 12, dodge 12, faith 12, intimidation 12, maneuver 12, melee weapons 14, missile weapons 14, stealth 12, survival 8, tracking 8, trick 11, unarmed combat 13

Move: 11; **Tough:** 14 (2); **Shock:** 11; **Wounds:** 2

Equipment: Hrockt-shoot spear (*Damage Strength* +2/14), tortoise-shell shield (+2 Defense)

Perks: Bodyguard, Hardy, Scarred, Stone Skin, Whip Tail

Possibilities:

Common (2)

Special Abilities:

- **Armor:** Scaly skin +2.
- **Bite/Claws:** Damage *Strength* +2 (14).



GOSPOG OF THE FIRST PLANTING

Gospog of the First Planting are human corpses entwined with rotting vegetation and putrid flesh. They are common to all realms, a gracious gift of death from the Gaunt Man to his fellow reality raiders.

Attributes: Charisma 5, Dexterity 7, Mind 7, Spirit 7, Strength 8

Skills: Dodge 8, find 8, maneuver 8, melee weapons 8, stealth 8, unarmed combat 10

Move: 7; **Tough:** 8; **Shock:** —; **Wounds:** —

Equipment: —

Perks: —

Possibilities: Never

Special Abilities:

- **Claws:** Damage *Strength* +2 (10)
- **Fear:** Gospog are horrific amalgamations of a corpse and rotten plant matter. Test *willpower* or *Spirit* or become Very Stymied.
- **Mindless:** Gospog are immune to *intimidation* and *taunt* interactions.
- **Relentless:** Gospog ignore Shock.
- **Undead:** Gospog are immune to poison and other effects that require breathing, eating, or other “living” processes.

LAKTEN

Lakten are similar to earth’s pteranodons, with two-meter-long wings, short stubby bodies, and a beak full of razor-sharp teeth.

Attributes: Charisma 5, Dexterity 11, Mind 4, Spirit 7, Strength 12

Skills: Dodge 13, intimidation 9, find 9, maneuver 12, unarmed combat 12

Move: 11; **Tough:** 13 (1); **Shock:** 9; **Wounds:** 2

Equipment: —

Perks: —

Possibilities: Never

Special Abilities:

- **Armor:** Scaly skin +1.
- **Bite/Claws:** Damage *Strength* +2 (14).
- **Flight:** Flies at Move 13.
- **Large:** Most adult specimens have a wingspan over five meters. Attacks against them gain a +2 bonus.

PANNONIASAURUS

Like many creatures from Takta Ker, the pannoniasaurus-like predator finds itself in an alien ecosystem searching for new prey items.

The monster didn’t actually kill the crew of the boat—that was a war party of Baruk Kaah’s edeinos. They began investigating the boat but the blood in the water attracted the pannoniasaurus. They distracted it with the bodies of their foes and fled into the nearby jungle.

Now the pannoniasaurus has a taste for flesh.

Attributes: Charisma 8, Dexterity 7, Mind 4, Spirit 10, Strength 19

Skills: Find 12, intimidation (15), maneuver 10, stealth 10, unarmed combat 11

Move: 4; **Tough:** 21; **Shock:** 16; **Wounds:** 3

Equipment: —

Perks: —

Possibilities: Never

Special Abilities:

- **Claw/Bite:** Damage *Strength* +2 (21)
- **Size (Very Large):** +4 to attack rolls. The pannoniasaurus is six feet thick at its middle and over 30 feet long.
- **Swim:** Move 9 in the water.

MALACRYX

If Malacryx were the subject of a documentary, human scholars might call her ambitious. They might believe she is driven by a lust for power to rule over all the edeinos.

But they’d be wrong. Malacryx would have been happy to *serve* an ambitious ruler. She was Kallikosh’s faithful servant (and lover) for several invasions before Earth. But something is different here. The strong, virile “king” she knew before has softened. In her opinion, anyway. She knows someone more ruthless, more willing to serve what *she* sees as the true spirit of Lanala—her savage side—must rule. If Kallikosh is not that being and no other presents him or herself, then Malacryx will do so. And she will pledge herself to the great Saar of the edeinos to cease the senseless prattling of those who disagree.

Malacryx believes the weakness that has infected Kallikosh and some of her folk is beginning to taint

Lanala as well. If their worship is not strong, she reasons, Lanala weakens and their temerity grows.

For that reason, Malacryx doesn't see capturing Lanala as betrayal—she sees it as a necessary ritual to restore her goddess and her people to the throat-ripping warriors who have conquered countless realms before this place called Earth.

Attributes: Charisma 10, Dexterity 12, Mind 11, Spirit 14, Strength 13

Skills: Beast riding 14, dodge 17, faith 22, intimidation 17, maneuver 14, melee weapons 17, missile weapons 15, persuasion 13, reality 18, stealth 15, survival 12, taunt 11, tracking 13, trick 14, unarmed combat 15

Move: 12; **Tough:** 16 (3); **Shock:** 14; **Wounds:** 3

Equipment: Blessed hrockt-shoot spear (*Strength* +3), blessed hrockt-root armor (+3).

Perks: Bolster, Conviction, Ferocious, Optant (*regenerate, shape plants, strike, touch of time, ward enemy*), Relentless, Vehemence, Vengeful

Possibilities: 10

Special Abilities:

- **Armor:** Scaly skin +2.
- **Claw/Bite:** Damage *Strength* +2 (15).
- **Dread:** While Malacryx is present, any Standard Scene counts as a Dramatic Scene instead.
- **Insidious:** Discard a Destiny card from each target's pool when Malacryx successfully performs an Approved Action.

TEMPLE GUARD

Elite, battle-scarred edeinos hand-picked from the Goldsun Clan to bolster Mamacryx's Handmaidens and keep watch over the temple.

Attributes: Charisma 8, Dexterity 11, Mind 7, Spirit 11, Strength 12

Skills: Beast riding 12, dodge 12, faith 12, intimidation 12, maneuver 12, melee weapons 14, missile weapons 14, stealth 12, survival 8, tracking 8, trick 11, unarmed combat 13

Move: 11; **Tough:** 14 (2); **Shock:** 11; **Wounds:** 1

Equipment: Hrockt-shoot spear (Damage *Strength* +2/14), Tortoise shell shield (+2 Defense).

Perks: Scarred, Stone Skin

Possibilities: Common (2)

Special Abilities:

- **Bite/Claws:** Damage *Strength* +2 (14).

TRICERATOPS

Similar to what it was once thought triceratops of ancient Earth must look like, these Living Land creatures have a bony, plated head and three sharp horns. Triceratops are favored mounts for many edeinos tribes. They often decorate their beasts in the same paint and tattoos that warriors wear.

Attributes: Charisma 4, Dexterity 6, Mind 4, Spirit 8, Strength 16

Skills: Dodge 11, find 8, intimidation 10, maneuver 7, stealth 7, unarmed combat 10

Move: 8; **Tough:** 19 (3); **Shock:** 12; **Wounds:** 3

Equipment: —

Perks: —

Possibilities: Never

Special Abilities:

- **Armor:** Bony crest and thick hide +3.
- **Charge:** +2 damage to an attack after the creature moves more than a walk.
- **Horns:** Damage *Strength* +2 (18).
- **Very Large:** Triceratops are up to nine meters long and 5,000 kg in weight. Attacks against them gain a +4 bonus.

VELOCIRAPTOR

Velociraptors are small for dinosaurs found in the Living Land, only the size of a human! Velociraptors are carnivorous, bipedal creatures that hunt in packs and possess wickedly sharp spur-like claws on their feet. A velociraptor pack does not hesitate to attack any prey they come across. Various clans "adopt" lone velociraptors and treat them like hunting dogs, but most edeinos consider them a creature to be feared and loathed rather than cherished.

Attributes: Charisma 5, Dexterity 10, Mind 5, Spirit 8, Strength 9

Skills: Dodge 11, find 8, intimidation 9, maneuver 11, stealth 11, taunt (10), trick 8, unarmed combat 11

Move: 12; **Tough:** 10 (1); **Shock:** 8; **Wounds:** —

Equipment: —

Perks: —

Possibilities: Never

Special Abilities:

- **Armor:** Scaly hide +1.
- **Bite/Claws:** *Strength* +2 (11).

CRYPTIDS AND HUMANS

ARMED CULTISTS

These crazed humans haven't transformed, but have lost themselves to the Law of Savagery. They use guns, but aren't very proficient with them, and lean on volume of fire to make up for their shortcomings as marksmen.

Attributes: Charisma 7, Dexterity 6, Mind 7, Spirit 7, Strength 7

Skills: Dodge 8, find 8, fire combat 7, intimidation 9, maneuver 7, melee weapons 7, survival 8, taunt 8, unarmed combat 7

Move: 6; **Tough:** 7; **Shock:** 7; **Wounds:** —

Equipment: .308 Rifle (Damage 14, Range 80/160/320), individual weapons may vary.

Perks: —

Possibilities: Rare (2)

Special Abilities: —

FISH-FOLK

These savage creatures are from a world previously conquered by Baruk Kaah. A few hundred of them have been brought to Earth by the Law of Wonders and the displacement has only made them more feral.

The fish-folk worship a massive tentacled creature called "the Ruler" (see below).

Attributes: Charisma 6, Dexterity 7, Mind 6, Spirit 7, Strength 8

Skills: Dodge 8, find 8, intimidation 8, maneuver 8, melee weapons 9, survival 8, trick 8, unarmed combat 9

Move: 7; **Tough:** 9 (1); **Shock:** 7; **Wounds:** —

Equipment: Harpoon/trident (Damage *Strength* +2/10, become Vulnerable on a miss)

Perks: Relentless

Possibilities: Rare (2)

Special Abilities:

- **A armor:** Scaly skin +1.
- **Bite/Claws:** Damage *Strength* +1 (9).
- **Night Vision:** Fish-folk ignore up to 4 points of Darkness penalties from bad lighting conditions or murky water.
- **Swim:** Move 7 underwater. Fish-folk can breathe in air or water, and aren't at risk of drowning.

PRIMITIVE HUMANS

Much of the population in zones occupied by the Living Land have transformed to match their primitive new reality. Some have embraced the Law of Savagery, banding together to hunt and pillage. Others are confused by the lower Social Axiom and drawn toward strong leaders.

Attributes: Charisma 6, Dexterity 7, Mind 7, Spirit 7, Strength 8

Skills: Dodge 8, find 8, intimidation 8, maneuver 8, melee weapons 9, survival 8, unarmed combat 8

Move: 7; **Tough:** 8; **Shock:** 7; **Wounds:** —

Equipment: Improvised club (Damage *Strength* +2/10, become Vulnerable on a miss)

Perks: —

Possibilities: Never

Special Abilities: —

THE RULER

Those immersed in pop culture might draw some comparisons between the Ruler and H.P. Lovecraft's Cthulhu Mythos. The comparison would be apt.

The Ruler is not a god, but it is ancient and old and vastly intelligent. Its kind lives in the vast seas and swamps of its homeworld, where it cared little for the vastly inferior sentient species that worshiped them, such as the fish-folk (see page 86).

The Rulers—no other name has yet surfaced—proved a challenge for Kaah's land-based forces, but the Tyrant King is resourceful and with Lanala's miracles managed to use their world's volcanoes to boil the seas and drive the creatures from their usual lairs. Kaah and his most powerful lieutenants fought the long-unchallenged horrors in a drying sea and slaughtered them in an orgy of black blood and rubbery gore.

Only a few escaped the High Lord, including the cunning creature brought to Earth by the Law of Wonders. Some edeinos speculate Lanala is behind these incursions, giving credence to the idea that the Great Saar does not truly act in her name.

As far as anyone on Earth knows, a Ruler is nothing but an amorphous mass of toothy tentacles, each ending in a terrible lamprey-like maw. Whatever

body, brain, or head coordinates the tentacles has not been seen by anyone on Earth...at least no one still living.

Attributes: Charisma 12, Dexterity 14, Mind 14, Spirit 18, Strength 22

Skills: Dodge 18, faith 19, intimidation 21, maneuver 17, reality 20, stealth 15, taunt (17), trick 17, unarmed combat 17, willpower 21

Move: 4; **Tough:** 26 (4); **Shock:** 22; **Wounds:** 5

Equipment: —

Perks: Indomitable

Possibilities: 18

Special Abilities:

- **Armor:** Rubbery skin +4.
- **Fear (-4):** When a character first glimpses the Ruler she must make a *Spirit* or *willpower* test at -2 or be Very Stymied.
- **Dread:** The scene automatically becomes Dramatic when a Ruler appears.
- **Psychic Shock:** If a Possible Setback appears on the Drama line of the current Drama Deck, the Ruler attacks normally and issues a powerful psychic scream. Every sentient creature within 50 meters must make a *Mind* test. Those who fail are comatose for the remainder of the scene. A Standard Success means the character suffers two Bonus Dice of Shock. A Good Success reduces this to one Bonus Die, and an Outstanding Success means the hero takes 2 Shock.
- **Recovery:** The Ruler may spend 1 Possibility to regain 1BD Shock as a free action at any time.
- **Size:** Very Large. Attacks against the Ruler's main body gain a +4 bonus.
- **Swim:** Move 14 underwater.
- **Tentacles (12):** Each of the thing's tentacles acts independently, has a reach of 20 meters, and causes *Strength* +3 (25) damage on a hit. Each tentacle has its own gaping mouth and hunger to satisfy. Tentacles may be targeted separately at no bonus or penalty, and are Toughness 15 (Half its Strength +4 for Armor). One Wound disables a tentacle, but inflicts no Wounds on the creature itself and any extra Wounds are lost. Any Shock done is passed on to the central creature. Attacks to tentacles may not be Soaked. If all tentacles are disabled the Ruler flees.

THE LEOPARD TRIBES

LEOPARD

The Leopard Tribe hunts these large cats for pelts but occasionally befriends one or adopts one as a kitten and raises it to hunt alongside the clan.

Attributes: Charisma 7, Dexterity 10, Mind 5, Spirit 8, Strength 10

Skills: Dodge 14, find 8, intimidation 10, maneuver 12, stealth 14, survival 8, unarmed combat 13

Move: 14; **Tough:** 11 (1); **Shock:** 8; **Wounds:** 1

Equipment: —

Perks: —

Possibilities: Never

Special Abilities:

- **Ambush:** If a leopard attacks a Flat-Footed foe it gains +1BD to its damage.
- **Armor:** Furry hide +1.
- **Bite/Claws:** *Strength* +2 (14).

LEOPARD WARRIORS

The warriors of the Leopard Tribe are fierce humans trained to hunt and survive in the dangerous wilds of the Land Below. They dress in leopard pelts and are sometimes accompanied by leopard "pets" while on a hunt.

Attributes: Charisma 7, Dexterity 9, Mind 8, Spirit 7, Strength 9

Skills: Dodge 12, find 10, intimidation 9, maneuver 10, melee weapons 11, missile weapons 11, survival 9, unarmed combat 10

Move: 9; **Tough:** 10 (1); **Shock:** 9; **Wounds:** —

Equipment: Claws (Damage *Strength* +2/10), leopard hide (Armor +1, Torso)

Perks: Endurance, Hardy

Possibilities: Never

Special Abilities: —

LEOPARD NOBLE (PRINCE CHAKAN)

Nobles of the Leopard Tribe are expected to perform the same roles as anyone else, and many share the skills of a hunter or warrior. Prince Chakan performs such duties adequately, but he has a cunning, strategic mind and an easy charm that inspires avid loyalty in his friends. And the prince has many, many friends.

Attributes: Charisma 10, Dexterity 8, Mind 8, Spirit 7, Strength 8

Skills: Dodge 11, find 10, intimidation 10, maneuver 9, melee weapons 11, missile weapons 11, persuasion 13, survival 9, unarmed combat 10

Move: 8; **Tough:** 9 (1); **Shock:** 7; **Wounds:** 2

Equipment: Claws/spear (Damage *Strength* +2/10), leopard hide (Armor +1, Torso)

Perks: Chest Beating, Helper, Primitive Allure

Possibilities: Rare (2)

Special Abilities: —

INHABITANTS OF MERRETIKA

AMBUSH SPIDER

These arachnids paralyze their prey, wrap them up in a cocoon, then drag them into their hidey-holes to soften and devour. Their bodies are about a meter long and half as thick. Each of their legs is a meter and a half long. Sharp, spiny fangs protrude from their elongated heads, allowing them to spring forth from ambush then retreat while their foe falls prey to their poison.

These spiders are web-spinners, but cannot project them in a combat capacity.

Attributes: Charisma 3, Dexterity 11, Mind 4, Spirit 6, Strength 8

Skills: Dodge 12, intimidation 6, maneuver 12, stealth 14, taunt (11), unarmed combat 13

Move: 11; **Tough:** 8; **Shock:** 6; **Wounds:** 1

Equipment: —

Perks: —

Possibilities: None

Special Abilities:

- **Ambush:** Gain +1BD against a Flat-Footed foe.

- **Ambush Spider Venom:** If a spider bite's damage exceeds the target's Toughness he makes an immediate *Strength* test. Failure means he's paralyzed for an hour. A Standard Success means he's Very Stymied for as long as the venom is in effect (see **Poison** in *Torg Eternity*). A victim is only Stymied for the duration with a Good Success, and an Outstanding Success wards off all effects of the venom.

- **Bite:** *Strength* +1 (9) damage.

- **Surprise Attack:** On the first round each Storm Knight may roll a *find* test against the ambush spider's *stealth* (14). If the test fails they are surprised and may not act first or play a card into their Action Pool on the first turn, and they are Flat-Footed (Very Vulnerable) for the round.

ARHET CROM

Arhet crows are fierce crocodiles native to the jungles of Merretika. They are about four meters long, with a gray hide. They spend most of their time in the rivers, waiting for prey to approach the shores. The creature's vice-like jaws are feared throughout the Land Below.

Attributes: Charisma 2, Dexterity 8, Mind 2, Spirit 3, Strength 8

Skills: Find 10, intimidation 10, maneuver 9, stealth 10, taunt (8), test (8), trick (8), unarmed combat 12

Movement: 8; **Toughness:** 10 (2); **Wounds:** 2

Equipment: —

Perks: —

Possibilities: None

Special Abilities:

- **Ambush:** Scaly hide +2.

- **Bite:** *Strength* +4 (12). If the creature gets a Good result or better, it does Bonus Damage as usual, but also grapples and restrains its prey.

- **Tail Strike:** As a Multi-Action, the lizard can slap a target with its tail. Treat this as a *maneuver*, but if the arhet crom gets a Player's Call the prey is knocked into the hottest part of the swamp where it suffers 24 damage each round it remains there.

ARMET CROM

The arhet crom (see above) are bad enough—the Land Below's version of an alligator. The *armet* crom doesn't have its cousin's vice-like bite, but it more than makes up for it by expelling the boiling steam that gathers in its guts to use like a dragon's breath weapon! Armet crom aren't particularly aggressive unless someone trespasses into their lair or hunting grounds. Then they gather in small groups to chase away anything that might threaten their territory.



Ambush spiders attack a band of Leopard Tribe warriors.

Attributes: Charisma 2, Dexterity 8, Mind 2, Spirit 3, Strength 8

Skills: Find 10, intimidation 10, maneuver 9, stealth 10, taunt (8), test (8), trick (8), unarmed combat 12

Movement: 8; **Toughness:** 10 (2); **Wounds:** 2

Equipment: —

Perks: —

Possibilities: None

Special Abilities:

- **Armor:** Scaly hide +2.
- **Bite:** *Strength* +4 (12).
- **Steam Breath:** The ahret crom can sacrifice its attack to breathe a scalding hot cone of steam that affects a Medium Blast radius up to 10 meters away. This causes damage 18 and affects a target's least armored area.
- **Tail Strike:** As a Multi-Action, the lizard can slap a target with its tail. Treat this as a *maneuver*, but if the ahret crom gets a Player's

Call the prey is knocked into the hottest part of the swamp, where it suffers 24 damage each round it remains there.

GREEN LURKER

Lurkers are tentacled masses that prey on some of the most fearsome creatures of the Tall River—large crocodile-like reptiles, predatory fish, and even the large leopards. This makes them the top of the food chain in this particular section of the jungle.

Attributes: Charisma 3, Dexterity 8, Mind 4, Spirit 8, Strength 8 (15)

Skills: Maneuver (9), stealth 11, taunt (11), unarmed combat 11

Movement: 2; **Toughness:** 8 (body), 15 (tendrils); **Wounds:** 1

Equipment: —

Perks: —

Possibilities: None

Special Abilities:

- **Camouflage:** As long as the lurker isn't moving, it blends in almost perfectly with the thick flora of the Land Below. This grants it +5 to *stealth* tests. Even then, potential prey should only be granted a *find* roll if she's specifically looking for it.

- **Spongy Body:** Green lurkers are masses of fibrous green plants with no vital organs. They have two false eyes on their underside, but these are evolutionary distractions. For this reason, they are not subject to Vital Blows.

- **Swim:** Move 5 underwater.

- **Tendrils:** Lurkers have two long, stalk-like arms they use to pluck prey out of the water or foliage below the tree branches they perch on. The prey is literally hung until it suffocates, then dragged up into the lurker's gummy orifice to devour. The attack is a grapple (almost always with surprise), and the *Strength* of the tendrils is 15 (rather than creature's more general *Strength* of 8). Usually the creature's body is submerged and out of reach. A Player's Call *maneuver* or swimming below the surface may expose the body to attack.

KEEFEE CURATOR

Keefee are small, agile humanoids just under a meter tall. They defend their tree homes on the savanna from strangers and beasts alike. Most dress in a combination of cured animal skins and cordage created from the tree they serve.

Attributes: Charisma 8, Dexterity 8, Mind 7, Spirit 6, Strength 5

Skills: Dodge 10, find 8, first aid 8, maneuver 11, melee weapons 9, persuasion 10, survival 8, taunt 9, trick 10

Move: 7; **Tough:** 5; **Shock:** 6; **Wounds:** 1

Equipment: Axe (Damage *Strength* +2/7)

Perks: —

Possibilities: Rare (2)

Special Abilities:

- **Very Small:** Most Keefee are less than a meter tall. Attacks against them suffer a -4 penalty.

LARENDI

The larendi are a humanoid, avian race. They have red, bat-like wings and thin, gray bodies. Their plumage is red, with stripes of white along the chest and wing tips. Their heads are tufted with bright yellow feathers, and they have long, sharp fangs and small, black eyes. Larendi carry little, but they are adaptable and quick to understand the functions of technological devices.

Attributes: Charisma 7, Dexterity 9, Mind 8, Spirit 8, Strength 10

Skills: Dodge 12, intimidation 9, find 9, maneuver 10, persuasion 8, science 9, stealth 12, survival 10, unarmed combat 11

Move: 9; **Tough:** 11 (1); **Shock:** 8; **Wounds:** 1

Equipment: Spear (Damage *Strength* +2/12)

Perks: Indomitable

Possibilities: Rare (2)

Special Abilities:

- **Armor:** Scaly skin +1.

- **Bite/Claws:** Damage *Strength* +1 (11).

- **Flight:** Flies at Move 12.

LESSER MEHRET

The tribe's shaman and leader. The lesser Mehret, or "Mehret-Ahn" in the Ohibi tongue, speaks both for the tribe and the god they worship.

Attributes: Charisma 7, Dexterity 7, Mind 6, Spirit 9, Strength 6

Skills: Dodge 8, faith (Mehret) 12, find 8, intimidation 10, maneuver 8, melee weapons 8, persuasion 10, reality 10, survival 7, unarmed combat 8

Move: 7; **Tough:** 6; **Shock:** 9; **Wounds:** 2

Equipment: Staff (*Strength* +2 damage)

Perks: Miracles (*cure disease, soothe*)

Possibilities: Rare (2)

Special Abilities:

- **Minions:** The lesser Mehret may transfer any hit to others members of his tribe within a few meters if he succeeds at a *reality* test.

OHIBI WARRIOR

The Ohibi are a slight and timid people, but they still have hunters and warriors. Usually these brave souls buy time for the rest of the village to escape into hidden caves.

Attributes: Charisma 6, Dexterity 7, Mind 6, Spirit 6, Strength 7

Skills: Dodge 9, find 6, intimidation 8, maneuver 8, melee weapons 9, survival 7, unarmed combat 8

Move: 7; **Tough:** 7; **Shock:** 6; **Wounds:** —

Equipment: Spear (Strength +2 damage), atlatl (Strength +2 damage, 20/40/60)

Perks: —

Possibilities: Never

Special Abilities: —

SERPENTORS

SERPENTOR RAIDER

Serpentor raiders are the least evolved of the snake men. They appear mostly human, with only slightly mottled skin and two protruding fangs to give away the transformation that's beginning. Their role is to capture people. The most suitable are brought back to the Cobra Priests, while the rest are traded to the Pyrians or others as slaves.

Attributes: Charisma 6, Dexterity 8, Mind 6, Spirit 8, Strength 9

Skills: Dodge 11, faith 10, intimidation 10, maneuver 10, melee weapons 11, missile weapons 9, stealth 11, survival 9, tracking 9, unarmed combat 10

Move: 8; **Tough:** 9; **Shock:** 8; **Wounds:** 1

Equipment: Bolo (Strength +1/10 damage, may grapple), man-catcher (Strength -2/7 damage, restrains on a hit), spear (Strength +2/11 damage).

Perks: —

Possibilities: Never

Special Abilities:

- **Bite:** Strength +1 (11) damage.

SERPENTOR WARRIOR

Serpentors are mutated humanoids that have taken on some of the characteristics of snakes. These are in the early stages, and have mottled skin, yellowish eyes, and pronounced fangs. They grow up with a spear in their hands and are ferocious in their pursuit and capture of prey, which they rip apart with their savage teeth.

Attributes: Charisma 6, Dexterity 8, Mind 6, Spirit 8, Strength 10

Skills: Dodge 11, faith 10, intimidation 10, maneuver 10, melee weapons 11, missile weapons 9, stealth 11, survival 9, tracking 9, unarmed combat 10

Move: 8; **Tough:** 11 (1); **Shock:** 8; **Wounds:** 1

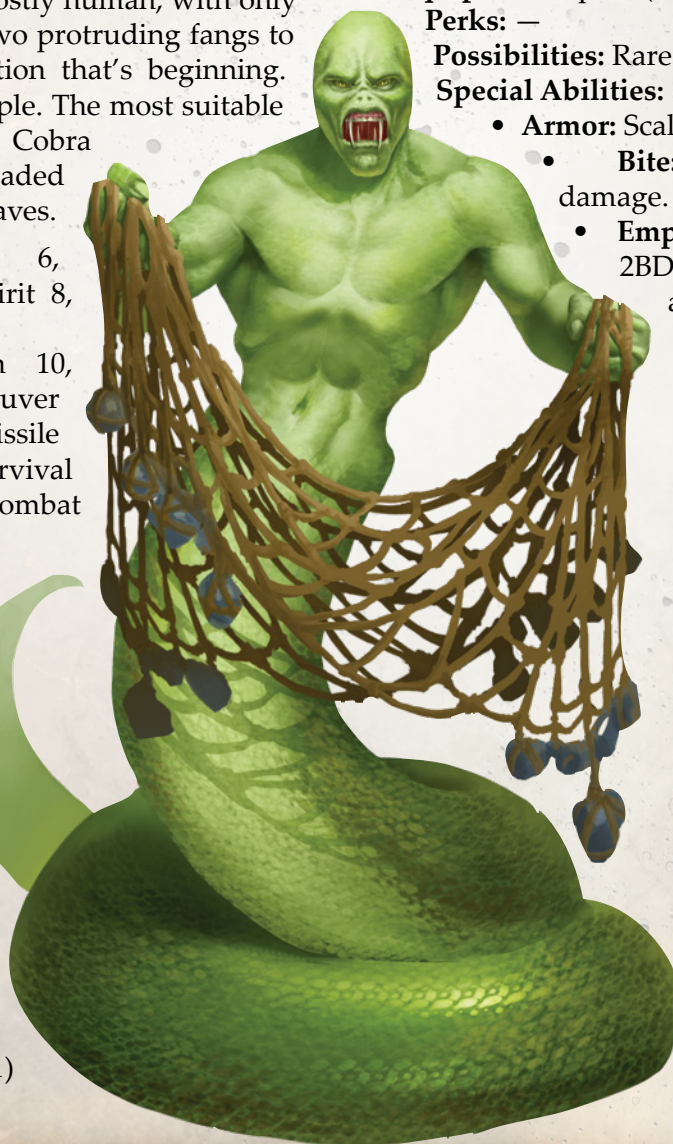
Equipment: Spear (Strength +2/12 damage).

Perks: —

Possibilities: Rare (2)

Special Abilities:

- **Armor:** Scaly skin +1.
- **Bite:** Strength +1 (11) damage.
- **Emperor Cobra Venom:** 2BD damage per round, no armor, to an affected target (see **Poison** in *Torg Eternity*).



SERPENTOR EMBRACED

These serpentors are much further along in their mutation. The Embraced always have forked tongues, serpentine eyes, and significantly more mass than their less evolved brethren. Rare individuals may even have a serpentine lower body rather than legs.

Attributes: Charisma 5, Dexterity 9, Mind 5, Spirit 10, Strength 12

Skills: Dodge 12, faith 10, intimidation 13, maneuver 11, melee weapons 12, missile weapons 10, stealth 10, survival 9, tracking 9, unarmed combat 13

Move: 9; **Tough:** 14 (2); **Shock:** 8; **Wounds:** 2

Equipment: Spear (*Strength* +2, Emperor Cobra Venom), sinew bow (Damage 9, Emperor Cobra Venom, 20/40/60).

Perks: Vengeful

Possibilities: Rare (3)

Special Abilities:

- **Armor:** Scaly skin +2.
- **Bite:** *Strength* +2 (14) damage, Emperor Cobra Venom.
- **Emperor Cobra Venom:** 2BD damage per round, no armor, to an affected target (see *Poison* in *Torg Eternity*).

SERPENTOR COBRA PRIEST

Guides chosen by the emperor cobras to spread the word of the Cobra Cult. As a matter of religious zeal a Cobra Priest only uses the *commune with animals* miracle on serpents.

Attributes: Charisma 8, Dexterity 8, Mind 7, Spirit 11, Strength 10

Skills: Dodge 9, faith 14, find 10, intimidation 14, medicine 9, melee weapons 11, scholar 10, survival 9, taunt 12, trick 9, unarmed combat 10

Move: 8; **Tough:** 11 (1); **Shock:** 11; **Wounds:** 1

Equipment: Spear (*Strength* +2/12 damage, Emperor Cobra Venom).

Perks: Miracles (*commune with animals*, *strike*, *summon poison*, *ward enemy*)

Possibilities: Rare (3)

Special Abilities:

- **Armor:** Scaly skin +1.
- **Bite:** *Strength* +1 (11) damage, Emperor Cobra Venom.

• **Emperor Cobra Venom:** 2BD damage per round, no armor, to an affected target (see *Poison* in *Torg Eternity*).

• **Gloater:** When *intimidation* or *taunt* are approved the priest may use that action against all the Storm Knights without a Multi-Target penalty, and if successful forces a target to discard a random Destiny card.

SERPENTOR EMPEROR COBRA

A monstrosously large serpent, similar to a king cobra in appearance, including the distinctive colored chevron on its hood. This creature's eyes gleam with subtle intelligence. Though emperor cobras don't speak, they seem to understand human speech.

Attributes: Charisma 5, Dexterity 10, Mind 5, Spirit 12, Strength 16

Skills: Dodge 14, intimidation 15, find 10, maneuver 12, stealth 12, taunt (15), tracking 8, trick (15), unarmed combat 15

Move: 10; **Tough:** 19 (3); **Shock:** 16; **Wounds** 4

Equipment: —

Perks: —

Possibilities: Common (5)

Special Abilities:

- **Armor:** Scaly skin +3.
- **Bite:** *Strength* +3 (19) damage, Emperor Cobra Venom.
- **Dread:** While the emperor cobra is present any Standard scene immediately becomes a Dramatic Scene.
- **Emperor Cobra Venom:** 2BD damage per round, no armor, to an affected target (see *Poison* in *Torg Eternity*).
- **Fear:** When first encountering an Emperor Cobra each hero must test *Spirit* or become Very Stymied.
- **Hypnosis:** When *intimidation* is an Approved Action every character that can see the emperor cobra must test *willpower* or *Spirit* against DN 15 (the serpent's intimidation skill). If the test fails the character may not move from the spot, but may still perform actions and take an otherwise regular turn.
- **Very Large:** Emperor cobras are usually 20 meters long or more. Attacks against them gain a +4 bonus.

TANTA KELLAR

AVATAR OF DAROK

When sufficiently angered, the volcano can manifest a number of "avatars," golem-like beings made of molten lava. The avatars are extensions of Darok, so if one knows or senses something, all others do as well.

Attributes: Charisma 8, Dexterity 8, Mind 3, Spirit 15, Strength 14

Skills: Faith 18, find 8, intimidation 16, maneuver 9, taunt (9), trick (9), unarmed combat 10

Move: 8; **Tough:** 14; **Shock:** —; **Wounds:** 2

Equipment: —

Perks: —

Possibilities: Never

Special Abilities:

- **Extreme Heat:** Any character within one meter at the start of the avatar's action automatically suffers Fatigue.
- **Horde:** Apply any bonus from a Combined Action to Damage as well as the attack itself when multiple avatars of Darok attack a single target.
- **Immune:** The avatar ignores any fire- or heat-based damage.
- **Molten Skin:** Physical attacks do half-damage to the avatar. A Mishap with a melee weapon means the weapon is bent, deformed, or too hot to touch (GM's call).
- **Punch:** *Strength* +3 (17). The avatar's fiery fist causes terrible fire damage.
- **Relentless:** Avatars of Darok ignore Shock.

CALEACON

One of the most feared creatures in Merretika, especially among the Pyrians, the caleacon is a huge four-legged lizard that makes its home in the lava pools. Its incredible hide is orange and red, and camouflages well with its natural environment. Caleacon gain most of their energy from the heat around them, but they enjoy the taste of meat and never pass up a chance to have it.

Attributes: Charisma 3, Dexterity 8, Mind 4, Spirit 8, Strength 15

Skills: Dodge 11, find 8, intimidation 10, maneuver 9, missile weapons 10, stealth 10, taunt (13),

unarmed combat 12

Move: 8; **Tough** 20 (5); **Shock:** 10; **Wounds:** 3

Equipment: —

Perks: —

Possibilities: Never

Special Abilities:

- **Armored:** Thick hide +5, additional +6 against fire attacks.
- **Bite:** *Strength* +4 (18) damage.
- **Large:** Caleacon average 4 meters in length. Attacks against them gain a +2 bonus.
- **Spitfire:** Caleacon may spend 1 Shock to spray fire into a Small Blast radius within 10 meters. The attack uses missile weapons and deals 17 fire damage to all affected targets.

PYRIAN THRALL

The Pyrian military is dedicated to combat, not hunting. They are a well-trained and disciplined fighting force, and carry cutting-edge equipment for the Living Land. Low-ranking foot soldiers are known as thralls, but each has the opportunity to advance in rank based on combat performance and merit. All their weapons and armor are Tech Axiom 6 thanks the materials and methods used in their creation.

Attributes: Charisma 6, Dexterity 8, Mind 8, Spirit 8, Strength 8

Skills: Dodge 9, faith 9, find 9, intimidation 9, maneuver 10, melee weapons 10, taunt 8, trick 9, unarmed combat 9

Move: 8; **Tough:** 10 (2); **Shock:** 8; **Wounds:** —

Equipment: Short sword (Damage *Strength* +2/10), medium shield (+2 Defense), studded armor (Armor +2)

Perks: Bodyguard

Possibilities: Rare (1)

Special Abilities:

- **Horde:** Apply any bonus from a Combined Action to Damage as well as the attack itself when multiple thralls attack a single target.
- **Karruk's Blessing:** Armor +5 against fire- or heat-based damage.

PYRIAN GRAY TALON

Gray Talons are officers in the Pyrian military hierarchy. Each is charged with the defense of a fort or area within Tanta kellar, and free to defend that

ground through any means necessary. Like thralls, all their weapons and armor are Tech Axiom 6.

Attributes: Charisma 6, Dexterity 9, Mind 8, Spirit 9, Strength 9

Skills: Dodge 12, faith 10, find 10, intimidation 12, maneuver 12, melee weapons 13, taunt 8, trick 10, unarmed combat 10

Move: 9; **Tough:** 12 (3); **Shock:** 11; **Wounds:** 1

Equipment: Bronze longsword (Damage *Strength* +3/12), medium shield (+2 Defense), bronze plate (Armor +3, Torso and head, Fatigues)

Perks: Endurance, Relentless

Possibilities: Rare (2)

Special Abilities:

- **Karruk's Blessing:** Armor +5 against fire- or heat-based damage.

COMMANDER HADIAN FEL AR

Hadian Fel Ar is the commander of the Pyrian armed forces, and thus the current ruler of the nation. His word is law. Hadian comes from a good family, and rules with ruthless efficiency. He takes no pleasure in the harsh measures he often has to take, but never shirks his perceived duty. Hadian has yet to marry, claiming he has no time for such frivolities.

Attributes: Charisma 9, Dexterity 11, Mind 12, Spirit 10, Strength 11

Skills: Dodge 14, find 15, intimidation 15, maneuver 14, melee weapons 18, persuasion 11, taunt 12, trick 17, unarmed combat 12

Move: 11; **Tough:** 14 (3); **Shock:** 12; **Wounds:** 3

Equipment: Bronze longsword (Damage *Strength* +3/14), medium shield (+2 Defense), bronze plate (Armor +3, Torso and head, Fatigues)

Perks: Endurance, Helper, Relentless, Vengeful

Possibilities: None

Special Abilities:

- **Insidious:** Discard a Destiny card at random from each target's pool when the Fire Tamer successfully performs an Approved Action.
- **Karruk's Blessing:** Armor +5 against fire or heat based damage.

PYRIAN FIRE PRIEST

The priests of Karruk and Darok, the dual aspects of the Pyrian volcano god. Most priests are dedicated either to the peaceful side of the volcano

god ("Karruk") or his angrier, more warlike active persona ("Darok").

Attributes: Charisma 9, Dexterity 8, Mind 9, Spirit 11, Strength 6

Skills: Dodge 9, faith 14, find 10, intimidation 13, melee weapons 9, persuasion 11, taunt 10, trick 10, unarmed combat 9

Move: 8; **Tough:** 6; **Shock:** 11; **Wounds:** 1

Equipment: Dagger (*Strength* +1, Small)

Perks: Miracles (*ash cloud, bounty, ward enemy* or *breathe fire, flame aura, ward enemy*)

Possibilities: Common (2)

Special Abilities:

- **Karruk's Blessing:** Armor +5 against fire- or heat-based damage. While the nearest volcano is active (Darok's aspect) a Fire Priest suffers backlash even from successful miracles that don't have the potential to deal damage. Likewise when the nearest volcano is quiet (Karruk's aspect) invoking a miracle that does direct damage causes backlash even on a success.

GREAT PRIEST AMETHIA COR TAL

Beautiful and ambitious, Amathia wants to remove Hadian Fel Ar from power, and he knows it. What he doesn't know is that she intends to replace him herself, ushering in a new Pyrian age led by the Fire Tamers. She has broad support from working castes, but no leverage against the other leaders within the military caste—yet. She plays a constant cat-and-mouse game with Hadian, searching for some wild card to tip the scales in her favor.

Attributes: Charisma 9, Dexterity 8, Mind 10, Spirit 11, Strength 7

Skills: Dodge 13, faith 18, find 11, intimidation 14, melee weapons 9, persuasion 12, reality 14, scholar 12, taunt 14, trick 12, unarmed combat 9

Move: 8; **Tough:** 7; **Shock:** 11; **Wounds:** 3

Equipment: Dagger (*Strength* +1, Small)

Perks: Miracles (*ash cloud, breathe fire, flame aura, hellfire, ward enemy*), Rally

Possibilities: 3

Special Abilities:

- **Gloater:** When *intimidation* or *taunt* are Approved the priest may use that action against all the Storm Knights without a Multi-

Target penalty, and if successful forces a target to discard a random Destiny card.

• **Karruk's Blessing:** Armor +5 against fire- or heat-based damage. While the nearest volcano is active (Darok's aspect) she suffers backlash even from successful miracles that don't have the potential to deal damage. Likewise when the nearest volcano is quiet (Karruk's aspect) invoking a miracle that does direct damage causes backlash even on a success.

PYRIAN ARTIFICER

The blacksmiths and workers of Pyria are peerless within the Tech Axiom of the Living Land and Land Below. They are capable of crafting weapons, armor, and architecture normally considered outside the technological limits of their axiom. They aren't prone to trading, preferring to keep Pyria's unchallenged edge in equipment.

Attributes: Charisma 6, Dexterity 7, Mind 8, Spirit 7, Strength 7

Skills: Beast riding 8, dodge 8, faith 8, find 9, evidence analysis 9, maneuver 8, melee weapons 10, science 9, survival 9

Move: 7; **Tough:** 7; **Shock:** 7; **Wounds:** —

Equipment: Improvised club (Damage Strength +2/9, become Vulnerable on a miss)

Perks: —

Possibilities: Never

Special Abilities:

• **Karruk's Blessing:** Armor +5 against fire- or heat-based damage.

WORSHIPERS OF STALEK

AVATAR OF STALEK

This construct was originally creature for worship, sculpted from bones to resemble the three-headed skeletal visage of Rec Stalek. It now moves on its own and contains some small portion of Stalek's power and will. It wields a massive scythe of bone to cut down the living like so much chaff.

Attributes: Charisma 5, Dexterity 10, Mind 7, Spirit 13, Strength 15

Skills: Beast riding 12, dodge 12, faith 15, intimidation 12, maneuver 12, melee weapons

14, missile weapons 14, stealth 12, survival 8, tracking 8, trick 11, unarmed combat 13

Move: 10; **Tough:** 15; **Shock:** —; **Wounds:** 2*

Equipment: Giant boneforged scythe (Damage Strength +4/19)

Perks: Miracles (*bone blades, kill, strike*), Whirlwind

Possibilities: None

Special Abilities:

• **Bite/Claws:** Damage Strength +2 (17).

• **Large:** The avatar stands five meters tall. Attacks against it gain a +2 bonus.

• **Relentless:** These creatures ignore Shock.

• **Three Heads:** The avatar's Wounds are associated with one of its heads. Damage dealt anywhere else has little effect as one of the heads stares at the bones until they snap back into place. Only when a neck or head is struck do those bones fall away without returning. One Wound destroys a head, but any extra Wounds done are lost. A head may be targeted as a Called Shot with -2 penalty for size. When all three heads are destroyed the avatar crumbles.

• **Undead:** The Avatar of Stalek is immune to poison and other effects that require breathing, eating, or other "living" processes.

STALEK GOTAK

This gotak works directly for the more powerful Slivek (see page 63). She's a crafty and cunning edeinos, but overconfident and defiant enough to stay in the fight longer than she likely should.

Attributes: Charisma 9, Dexterity 9, Mind 6, Spirit 11, Strength 9

Skills: Beast riding 10, dodge 10, faith 14, intimidation 14, maneuver 10, melee weapons 10, reality 12, stealth 10, survival 10, tracking 11, unarmed combat 10

Move: 9; **Tough:** 12 (3); **Shock:** 11; **Wounds:** 3

Equipment: Boneforged spear (Strength +2/11 damage), boneforged armor (+3), bone shard.

Perks: Miracles (*bone blades, curse, kill, raise dead things*)

Possibilities: 3

Special Abilities:

• **Claw/Bite:** Strength +2 (11) damage.

• **Minions:** The villain may transfer any hit to a lackey within a few meters if she succeeds at a reality test.

STALEK TOWER GUARD

A few of Malacryx's fallen handmaidens and Slivek's best, sacrificed warriors now serve the Gotak in undeath. Each was raised from death with the power of Rec Stalek.

Attributes: Charisma 5, Dexterity 10, Mind 5, Spirit 8, Strength 12

Skills: Dodge 12, intimidation 13, maneuver 12, melee weapons 14, stealth 12, taunt (10), trick (10), unarmed combat 14

Move: 11; **Tough:** 15 (3); **Shock:** —; **Wounds:** 1

Equipment: Boneforged armor (+3) boneforged spear (Damage *Strength* +2/12).

Perks: Vengeful, Whip Tail, Whirlwind

Possibilities: Never

Special Abilities:

- **Bite/Claws:** Damage *Strength* +2 (14).
- **Relentless:** These creatures ignore Shock.
- **Undead:** Tower Guards are immune to poison and other effects that require breathing, eating, or other "living" processes.

USTANAH, UNDEAD

The ustanah were a noble and enlightened race, but these are mere husks animated by Death's hate and malice for the living.

Attributes: Charisma 3, Dexterity 8, Mind 3, Spirit 3, Strength 12

Skills: Dodge 9, intimidation (14), maneuver 9, reality 8, stealth 10, tracking 4, unarmed combat 10

Move: 10; **Tough:** 15 (3); **Shock:** —; **Wounds:** —

Equipment: —

Perks: Miracles (*curse, raise dead things, repel, wither*)

Possibilities: 1

Special Abilities:

- **Armor:** Carapace +3.
- **Hatred:** The Possibility Energy these undead use is a psychic manifestation of their race's collective hatred.
- **Hive Mind:** Even in death the ustanah remain connected. Each brings a Possibility to the pool, and all undead ustanah may spend from the collective pool as desired.
- **Horde:** Thanks to their connection, undead ustanah are extremely dangerous in numbers. Apply any bonus from a Combined Action

to Damage as well as the attack itself when multiple ustanah attack a single target.

• **Pincers:** *Strength* +3 (15) damage.

• **Relentless:** These creatures ignore Shock.

• **Undead:** Undead ustanah are immune to poison and other effects that require breathing, eating, or other "living" processes.

• **Vulnerability:** Telepathy. Any damage power that equals Toughness or greater deals an extra Wound.

WHITESPEAR WARRIOR

These edeinos warriors of the Whitespear Clan are adorned with bone armor and spears that mark them as acolytes of Thrakmoss and the dreaded god of death.

Attributes: Charisma 5, Dexterity 9, Mind 6, Spirit 8, Strength 10

Skills: Dodge 10, faith 9, find 8, intimidation 11, maneuver 10, melee weapons 11, missile weapons 11, stealth 10, survival 8, taunt 8, tracking 8, trick 9, unarmed combat 10

Move: 9; **Tough:** 13 (3); **Shock:** 8; **Wounds:** —

Equipment: Boneforged armor (+3) boneforged spear (Damage *Strength* +2/12)

Perks: Relentless

Possibilities: Rare (2)

Special Abilities:

- **Bite/Claws:** Damage *Strength* +2 (12).

FLORA

ABETHOR BULB

Highly explosive fungus that grows on the ceilings of particularly dark tunnels. Abethor are about 15 centimeters high, including a round bulb approximately the size of a fist. The bulb is a mixture of red and white swirls. When touched to an open flame the bulbs explode, doing 13 damage in a Small Burst radius. Unfortunately, abethor normally grow in closely grouped clusters which all detonate at once, adding +2 BD to the damage and increasing the explosion's effective radius to the entire area and everyone within it.

DROWNER

These dangerous fungi are about 35 centimeters tall when full grown, with a round, flattened dome at the top of a thin stem. They sway as if being blown in the wind. When touched the dome bursts into spores, covering a Small Burst radius. Any character in the cloud may attempt a DN 10 *dodge* test to avoid breathing the spores. *Scholar* or an appropriate *profession* may be used instead, adding to *Dexterity* instead of *Mind*. If the test fails the spores take root and begin growing inside the unfortunate character's lungs. Her maximum Shock drops by one each day, and Shock drops to zero she drowns and dies. Rumor has it the Ohibi have an elixir that kills the spores without harming the victim's lungs.

GLOWER

Glower is a term used to describe any of the many luminescent fungi encountered in the caverns below the Living Land. Most throw off a dim light of varying color that illuminates an entire cavern. A single glower may be plucked to provide light (-2 if it's the only light source) until it fades and dies (usually around six hours).

SATA'CHLAR

This short, reddish fern helps characters resist pain. They grow on the edges of streams and rivers or the bases of waterfalls, and may be found in caverns with natural light or on the surface. A fern may be plucked and the juice sucked from the stem as a simple action that restores 1BD Shock. The juice is only effective from a freshly picked sata'chlar; after six seconds it loses all its potency.

STINGER BUSH

These terrible carnivorous plants have barbed vines that stab into their foes and paralyze them, slowly draining their bodily fluids away as they lay dying. But that's not the stinger's most horrifying trait. The plant's muscular vines tap into its victim's nervous system and animate it!

Battling a stinger is dangerous work; attackers must avoid both the corpse and the dozens of stinging, paralyzing vines!

Attributes: Charisma 3, Dexterity 10, Mind 3, Spirit 8, Strength 12

Skills: Find 6, intimidation 10, maneuver 10, stealth 10, unarmed combat 13

Move: 1; **Tough:** 12; **Shock:** —; **Wounds:** 1 per vine cluster

Equipment: —

Perks: —

Possibilities: None

Special Abilities/Equipment:

- **Animate Corpse:** Stingers use animated corpses for protection, at least as long as the corpse is still relatively fresh (usually about eight hours after death). The corpse can use any weapons it might have and attacks with its own skills at -2. The plant can also make use of any inherent Perks or special powers the victim has access to as well, at the Game Master's discretion.

- **Mindless:** Stinger bushes are immune to *intimidation* and *taunt* interactions, and *telepathy* powers.

- **Relentless:** Stinger bushes ignore Shock.

- **Stinger:** The damage of the vine clusters themselves is *Strength* +1 (12) damage.

- **Stinger Bush Venom:** If a stinger's damage exceeds the target's Toughness he's paralyzed and insensible. Each turn while the venom is in effect (see **Poison** in *Torg Eternity*) an insensible character must test *Strength*. On a failure he can't move, take his normal action, or use simple actions. Free actions are still allowed, and a Flurry allows the character an action, but no movement. If the test succeeds he may use a simple action. A Good Success regains normal actions, but movement is still prohibited. An Outstanding Success allows the victim to move and act normally that turn.

- **Vine Clusters:** A mature plant has four "vine clusters" it can use to either attack a foe or animate a corpse. Each cluster can take a single Wound. Its intelligence is distributed about these clusters, so all four must be destroyed to "kill" the plant.

TALGAR SPORE

Talgar are large white spores filled with a sap that assists in climbing. Happily, they grow most often on sheer surfaces in living caverns, especially those

near waterfalls. A character may rub the spore to coat her hands with sticky sap excretions. The sap remains sticky for an hour, granting a +2 bonus to tests involving climbing or putting an opponent into a grapple. However, the sap exerts a -2 penalty on all but the simplest melee weapons and any attempt to escape a grapple.

TBATHAP

A type of foul-smelling moss, brownish blue in color, found in some living caves. When eaten it grants the character the Star Eyes Perk (whether edeinos or not) for one day. The character's Shock is one less for the duration, and his saliva takes on the same revolting smell and taste of the moss.

CAVERN DWELLERS

ANKOBUR

These lumbering carrion-eaters are covered with protruding spikes that grow out of their bones. These sharp bone spurs ward off other predators and sometimes bring down prey—eventually. Fragments from the spurs lodge in flesh and are highly infectious.

Attributes: Charisma 3, Dexterity 6, Mind 3, Spirit 10, Strength 16

Skills: Dodge 8, intimidation 14, find 7, maneuver 7, taunt (13), tracking 7, unarmed combat 10

Move: 6; **Tough:** 19 (3); **Shock:** 14; **Wounds:** 4

Equipment: —

Perks: —

Possibilities: Never

Special Abilities:

- **Armor:** Scaly skin +3.
- **Bite/Spikes:** Damage Str +1 (17), Boneshards.
- **Boneshards:** If spikes exceed the target's Toughness some bone breaks off and lodges in the target's skin. Until the shards are removed (a standard *medicine* test) the target suffers a -2 penalty on healing and Death & Defeat rolls.
- **Spinose:** Melee weapons and unarmed combat attacks against an ankobur suffer a -4 penalty. On a Mishap the ankobur deals a Standard hit from its spikes.
- **Very Large:** Most adult specimens are 18

meters long or larger. Attacks against them gain a +4 bonus.

BELETEN FIRE SLUG

Beleten, also called "fire slugs," haunt empty lava tubes, consuming fungi that grow there or carrion they happen across. They thrive on harmful volcanic gases and glow brightly thanks to chemical reactions within their skin. They hose predators with a flaming chemical spray when threatened. Pyrians and others highly value the tough and fire-resistant skin of the slugs.

Attributes: Charisma 2, Dexterity 6, Mind 2, Spirit 7, Strength 13

Skills: Dodge 10, find 12, intimidation 12, maneuver 10, missile weapons 11, taunt (14), unarmed combat 12

Move: 6; **Tough:** 15 (2); **Shock:** 10; **Wounds:** 3

Equipment: —

Perks: —

Possibilities: Never

Special Abilities:

- **Armored:** Thick hide +2, additional +8 against fire attacks.
- **Crush:** Damage Str +1 (14).
- **Large:** Beleten slugs average four meters in length. Attacks against them gain a +2 bonus.
- **Slimetrail:** Beleten leave a slippery trail of slime behind them. Anyone suffering a Mishap near a Beleten falls down and becomes Very Vulnerable.
- **Spitfire:** Beleten may spray caustic chemicals that burst into flame in a Small Burst radius within 15 meters. The attack uses missile weapons and deals 15 fire damage to all affected targets.

DARAJEN DEATH JELLY

This gooey liquid predator scours caverns, digesting anything it roams across.

Attributes: Charisma 3, Dexterity 8, Mind 3, Spirit 8, Strength 12

Skills: Find 5, unarmed combat 10

Move: 8; **Tough:** 12; **Shock:** —; **Wounds:** 2

Equipment: —

Perks: —

Possibilities: Never

Special Abilities:

- **Engulf:** Targets in close combat with the jelly at the start of its turn count as engulfed. Engulfed targets are restrained. During his turn an engulfed target may try to move away, but must succeed in a Difficult (DN 12) *Strength* test or remain stuck in place. The jelly tests its *unarmed combat* against each engulfed target's Toughness (without Armor) as a free action during its turn. Success deals 1 Shock, a Good Success deals 2 Shock, and an Outstanding result deals 1 Wound and 2 Shock.
- **Mindless:** Death jellies are immune to *intimidation* and *taunt* interactions, and *telepathy* powers.
- **Relentless:** Darajen ignore Shock.
- **Large:** Death jellies spread across a five-meter radius. Attacks against them gain a +2 bonus.
- **Ooze:** Death jellies are mostly protoplasmic goop. Purely physical attacks such as unarmed strikes, bladed weapons, and gunfire deal half their usual damage. Fire, miracles, magic, and area-effect attacks deal damage normally.

LOCHOGOTA

Lochogota are called "sentinel bugs" by experienced cavers for good reason. If these huge beetles are on the move they're relatively docile. They may be approached and even touched without much reaction, although attacks are met in kind. However, when they are still explorers must be wary. Any sudden movement might awaken the creature and send it into a berserk frenzy.

Attributes: Charisma 3, Dexterity 12, Mind 3, Spirit 8, Strength 14

Skills: Dodge 13, find 14, intimidation 14, maneuver 13, taunt (13), trick (13), unarmed combat 14

Move: 12; **Tough:** 18 (4); **Shock:** 10; **Wounds:** 2

Equipment: —

Perks: Relentless

Possibilities: Never

Special Abilities:

- **Armored:** Chitinous shell +4.
- **Bite:** Damage Str +2 (16).
- **Frenzy:** If awakened from watch (see below) the creature's rapid attacks allow it to ignore

4 points of Multi-Target penalties or gain a +4 bonus to an attack against a single target.

- **Large:** These giant beetles are as much as six meters long. Attacks against them gain a +2 bonus.

- **Watch:** A sleeping lochogota is awakened by anything within 30 meters that fails a Hard (DN 14) *stealth* test.

TORBATTEN

The torbatten is well-known thanks to its very loud and distinctive cries, amplified by tubes that run through its massive, bony cranium. The creature actually hunts with the cries, using echolocation, and at close range the sound can stun prey, which the beast finishes off with a vicious bash from that same bony head.

Attributes: Charisma 4, Dexterity 9, Mind 4, Spirit 8, Strength 14

Skills: Dodge 10, find 12, intimidation 12, maneuver 10, missile weapons 11, taunt (14), unarmed combat 12

Move: 9; **Tough:** 14 (2); **Shock:** 10; **Wounds:** 3

Equipment: —

Perks: —

Possibilities: Never

Special Abilities:

- **Armored:** Thick hide +2.
- **Bite/Headbutt:** Damage Str +2 (16), Stagger.
- **Echolocation:** Torbatten ignore all penalties related to Darkness.
- **Large:** Torbatten grow as large as five meters long from snout to tail. Attacks against them gain a +2 bonus.
- **Stunner:** A torbatten may stun prey with sound. It uses missile weapons to hit, and affects a Medium Burst radius within 10 meters for 12 damage. Any living creature hit by this attack becomes Flat Footed.



MERRETIKA

This section contains extra information on the realm of Merretika, allowing new or expanded opportunities for Storm Knights traveling there. Many journeys to the Land Below are an accident, however it's possible for explorers to enter on purpose via the Great Waterfall or smaller, stable tunnels. As a massive, stable "Wonder" it provides endless opportunities to study some of the Living Land's stranger phenomenon—and perhaps offer secrets about the other cosms destroyed by Baruk Kaah.

ENTERING MERRETIKA

Various tunnels open up into the cliff walls of Merretika, offering new arrivals a spectacular view of the area's thick jungles, raging rivers, and distant volcanos. Some unfortunates enter by falling into shafts from above. Such openings are always above one of the three rivers, and nearly impossible to find even by fliers or climbers thanks to Helephez (see below). The Great Waterfall is another way in, ridden by hapless travelers swept away by underground floods.

Popular wisdom holds that travelers may not leave through the same place they entered, and those born here may not leave at all. Neither rumor is strictly true. See the map on page 30 for an overview of Merretika's layout.

HELEPHEZ

Helephez is what the natives call the glowing sphere set into the roof of the Merretikan expanse. It constantly bathes the land in gentle heat and light. Its glow creates an optical illusion of light blue around it, concealing much of the ceiling.

Plants are in a constant state of growth thanks to Helephez and the Law of Life, checked only by rivers, barriers, or natural competition. Helephez never dims nor moves, so it is always day. There is no weather to speak of. Time is difficult to measure since days and seasons aren't even concepts.

Most inhabitants have a deep fear of darkness and dark places. Only the Ohibi willingly enter the caves on the borders of the realm. The other cultures largely believe that the "holes of darkness" are places of death, inhabited by monsters more

terrifying than any creature under Helepehez. The strangers who emerge from such holes have yet to convince them otherwise.

THE GREAT WATERFALL

There are many waterfalls that cascade down the cliff walls that surround Merretika, but one dwarfs the others by an order of magnitude. A huge volume of water plunges kilometers downward into the Lake of the Giver, which in turn feeds the three major river systems in Merretika: the Tall River, the Wild River, and the Abyssal River.

THE HOWLING JUNGLE

The expansive jungle that covers much of central Merretika and extends to the rock walls opposite the Great Waterfall is so named for the sounds of wild struggle that emanate from it. Creatures of all types hunt and are hunted under the dark branches, and the cries of winners and losers echo through the jungle unless the raging waters of rivers or waterfalls drowns it out. The sounds keep most people from ever entering, preferring to stick to the rivers, savanna, or even the barren rocks of Tanta kellar (see below). At least in those places one can see danger coming.

The Howling Jungle is mainly home to the Leopard Tribes and occasional groups of serpentors. The Ohibi technically live in the jungle as well, but stick to the edges and clearings to avoid the worst of the danger.

The thick canopy instills a constant -2 Darkness penalty along the jungle floor. Navigation is difficult without landmarks, but an occasional climb to the treetops to catch sight of the Great Waterfall or the volcanoes makes it manageable.

THE MISTY GORGE

Inside the Howling Jungle of the realm, the land falls away into a great, mist-shrouded gorge. The canyon is almost a kilometer deep and its sides are sheer walls of slick shale and rock marked by infrequent outcroppings, ledges, and tiny caves. The impenetrable mist begins just below the rim of the gorge and continues almost to the bottom.

The Tall River is the source of a huge waterfall in the higher end of the gorge. The river flows through the base of the gorge before dropping through a hole in the floor at the far end. Where the river goes after leaving Merretika is unknown.

Descending into the Misty Gorge is hazardous. The mist obscures the chasm's depths and any safe climbing routes, and also makes the sheer sides of the gorge slippery and treacherous. Climbing the walls in either direction requires a Heroic (DN 18) *Dexterity* test, and failure leads to a fall dealing a base 20 +2BD damage. At the bottom, the explorers must contend with the gorge's dangerous inhabitants, the Darooni Wasp Riders (see below).

TANTA KELLAR

Merretika's largest volcano is called Tanta kellar by its inhabitants, the Pyrian Fire Tamers. The volcano rises high above the nearby volcanic plains, with sides that seep rivers of molten lava. The top is a great hollow pit filled with bubbling magma. Its sides are girdled with the houses of the Pyrians. Above the volcano's smoking top sits the spectacular Temple of Fire, practically floating above the active volcano's crater.

The fire and smoke of Tanta kellar (and the volcanoes around it) can be seen from nearly every portion of the Merretika. The ground between the volcanoes is hot, baked clay or cooled lava flows covered with a fine gravel of sharp crystal. There are occasional springs that vent like steaming geysers, but running water is rare. The only lakes are craters filled with molten lava.

Travels across this land requires a Near Impossible (DN 20) *survival* test. Getting within two meters of molten lava deals Fire damage like being in a bonfire (See **Fire Damage** in *Torg Eternity*), while actually touching or being immersed in lava deals 30 +1BD damage. Lava also usually emits heat toxic fumes dealing 5 or more damage each round, ignoring armor that isn't specifically crafted to shield against heat—and even then it only counts if the character's breathing is somehow protected. Recovering isn't possible in such conditions, so a KO'ed character perishes if left there.

THE GRASS SEA

A large portion of Merretika is a vast, open savanna. The only trees here are sparse, usually 10 kilometers apart. Everything else is tall grass. It's extremely easy to see large creatures or standing humans approaching from a great distance here—but a creature less than a meter tall or a crawling human is nearly impossible to detect even meters away.

The Grass Sea is home to the Keefee, and they protect tree “islands” that jut up between the expanses of grass.

THREATS AND ATTITUDES

The inhabitants of Merretika are clannish and mistrustful of all outsiders, especially the edeinos. The various tribes compete fiercely for territory. The Ohibi and Leopard Tribe make occasional exceptions, inducting special individuals into their tribes or forming alliances of convenience. More information on all these threats is available elsewhere in *The God Box*.

Common Threats:

- **Underground Predators:** One Beleten Fireslug or Darajen Death Jelly.
- **Darooni Wasp Riders:** One Darooni Wasp rider per hero, plus a Giant Wasp for each rider.
- **Leopard Tribe Hunters:** Two Leopard Tribe Hunters (page 87) per hero.
- **Pyrean Slavers:** One Pyrean Thrall (page 93) per hero, plus one *reality*-rated Gray Talon or Fire Tamer.

THE TRIBES OF MERRETIKA

Most of the inhabitants of this wondrous cavern are the vestiges of civilizations destroyed by High Lords. History here is muddled by the low Social Axiom and illiteracy, so most people assume that Baruk Kaah is the High Lord that drove the peoples here underground, but that's not true in every case. Regardless, all the inhabitants of Merretika despise High Lords and those who serve them, so edeinos are particularly unpopular.

DAROONI

- **Location:** Merretika, the Misty Gorge
- **Leader:** Okina Ko
- **Champion:** Kihiti Dok

In the depths of the great Misty Gorge live the fearsome Darooni people. This culture has molded their society and religion around a hive of gigantic wasps to such an extent that the people and wasps are now interdependent. The other tribes in the area hate and fear the Darooni thanks to constant raids targeting men and children.

The only Darooni seen by most Merretikans are the Wasp Riders who fly out to hunt in the surrounding jungle. The Darooni have cultivated the banks of the Tall River, and their homes are built into the walls of the chasm above. Visibility can be very low when mist descends throughout the gorge, but the Darooni hunt mostly using sound and smell. The wasp hive and the Darooni temple are situated in the toe of the gorge's boot shape.

The Darooni tribe exists in a symbiotic relationship with a nest of giant wasps, the only ones found in Merretika. Darooni society is very clearly dominated by females, like the wasps they revere. Only women may become Wasp Priestesses and Wasp Riders. The most important role available to a male is as a “boatman” who oversees trade. Wasp Scouts may be male, the only men entitled to fly with the giant wasps. The lower castes are farmers and “Wasp Consorts,” men taken as property by the Wasp Priestesses.

Darooni are essentially human, molded and evolved by spiritual power to match their insect partners. The tallest Darooni are only one and a half meters tall, and the shortest just over a meter. They favor animal skins and body paint, and only the highest ranking Riders and Priestesses are adorned with jewelry—usually quartz or other polished stone. The Wasp Riders paint themselves with red and black paint before leaving for a hunt or a raid, and those colors are generally reserved for their caste and those who have survived the Choosing Ceremony.

WASP RIDERS

Young Darooni girls are raised with the sole ambition of becoming one of their tribe's fearsome

mounted hunters once they grow into women. They train with javelins and condition their bodies for the Choosing Ceremony, a brutal competition that determines which young candidates gain the honor of claiming any riderless wasps. Those who succeed usually bear deep scars. Those who fail seldom survive.

The riders dip their javelin points in Giant Wasp Venom (see page 81), relying on the neurotoxin to bring down their prey. Once paralyzed, the target may be killed immediately or brought back to the Misty Gorge alive for a fate worse than death. Darooni eat the humans of other tribes without remorse, and don't consider such habits cannibalism. Particularly fine specimens may be chosen as Wasp Consorts, but the most likely future for captives is to be used as hosts for wasp eggs within the nest.

Wasp Riders don't ride atop the wasps as some assume before meeting the Darooni. Instead the rider is cinched below, and wasp clutches the rider to its chest with two of its legs. This leaves the rider's arms free so she can throw her javelin or fight. Essentially, a Wasp Rider wears the creature like a living backpack. When a wasp lands, the rider's legs bear some of the wasp's weight, in place of the legs the wasp uses to hold the rider in place.

ADVENTURE SEEDS

- The latest hatchings of giant wasps don't belong to the queen, and rather than bond with riders they go berserk and attack anyone present. The Darooni have become desperate enough to turn to outsiders for help, perhaps paving the way for an alliance if the true cause can be discovered and dealt with.
- A rider and her giant wasp have fled the Misty Gorge and are seeking asylum with anyone who won't attack them on sight. Unfortunately, elite hunters are on their trail, razing every village they come across looking for the traitor and the special object she took with her.
- Rumors spread about a temple somewhere at the bottom of the Misty Gorge that contains a portal back to Core Earth. The two biggest obstacles to finding it are the pervasive mist that covers the valley floor and the aggressive and territorial Darooni who live there!

HIGH PRIESTESS OKINA KO

Okina Ko is a middle-aged Darooni woman with deep scars across the left half of her face and body. She displays her scars with pride, a legacy of the Choosing Ritual which elevated her to a Priestess. She maintains her rule by right of possession of the Branch of the Wasp, a powerful sacred item handed down from each Head Priestess to her chosen successor.

Okina is cold and authoritative, and often clenches her fists when upset. She is concerned with the rumors about Kihiti Dok, and is now trying to limit Dok's influence in the tribe or actively sabotage her before she loses control of the tribe.

Use the Darooni Wasp Priestess stats on page 81 for Okina Ko.

Quote: "One way or another, you shall be made to serve the hive."

KIHITI DOK

Kihiti Dok is young for a Wasp Rider leader. She vaulted through the ranks thanks to her ability to commune directly with the giant wasps. She wears the scars on her cheeks and forearms well, and has yet to take any consorts—to the disappointment of many males.

Dok has no ambition to lead the Darooni, and isn't entirely comfortable leading the Wasp Riders either. The rumors of her ambition are baseless, but paranoia and jealousy have led to multiple rivalries, always with Dok gaining the upper hand. Dok is bold and brash, and especially effective when she doesn't have time to consider her actions.

Use the Darooni Wasp Rider stats on page 81 for Kihiti. She has 2 Wounds and a 15 *missile weapons* skill.

Quote: "We eat well tonight!"

KEEFEE

- **Location:** Merretika, the Grass Sea
- **Leader:** None; each tree's clan is led by a "Lallap"
- **Champion:** None, but a journeying "Haroo" fills a similar role outside the tree.

Massive fruit-bearing Dalberry trees dot the landscape of the Land Below's savanna. The Keefee tribes live in clusters in and around these trees. Keefee are a relatively peaceful people, living their entire lives gathering fruit from the host tree and seldom venturing far from its shade. They build mounds and burrow homes in the soil around the tree, and sometimes structures in the branches.

The average Keefee stands half a meter tall with a slight build. They wear simple clothes woven from crude fibers or made from segments of animal hide sewn together in plain patterns. The men are usually bearded with long, dark hair, while the women tend to keep their hair shorter. Both sexes use sap from the tree to create elaborate styling for their hair. Both men and women carry axes for pruning Dalberry trees and self-defense.

The trees the Keefee inhabit only grow large when pruned. Usually only one tree grows per 50 square kilometers. No other vegetation grows in the savannas except dense grass and sparse bushes. Keefee burrows are made of subterranean homes interconnected for emergencies. Some tribes have tunnels that go up into the interior of their Dalberry tree and exit from hollows high above.

The tribe gets most of its food from the tree's large berries and their water from taps built into the root system. They defend both viciously from animals and outsiders. To supplement their diet Keefee men and women make forays into the grasses to collect edible roots, bird eggs, insects, and other game.

The Keefee have a simple society, with no leader or chieftain. Even the tribe's religious leaders, the Lallap, have no command over the tribe. When a problem arises among the tribe, they meet at the base of their tree and collectively decide on a course of action.

The eldest and the Lallap have great power in these discussions, but may be swayed if the rest of the tribe feels different. Decisions are always a complete consensus, which can lead to inaction as the same issues are debated over and over until the last member of the tribe agrees or leaves.

A select few Keefee give up their tribe to travel the great savannas. Such a hazardous journey may be precipitated by impatience with the tribe, or

banishment in extremely rare cases, but most often it's just a craving for adventure that can't be fulfilled in the shadow of the tree. These nomads are called Haroo, and become the liaisons between tribes, bringing news of distant events and troubles—and exaggerated tales of heroism.

RELIGION AND PROPHECY

Keefee religion is based around "Raya," the great tree planter, and they believe Helephhez above is Raya herself providing endless light for her chosen people. Raya is the only goddess in the Keefee pantheon, but they recognize the existence of deities from other pantheons, especially Lanala.

The Keefee believe Raya created the sky, the Grass Sea, the Dalberry Tree, and the beasts. The beasts gorged upon the trees and threatened it to destroy them, so Raya banished the beasts to the darkened jungles out of her sight. Then she created the Keefee to tend the Dalberry Trees and keep them safe.

Keefee tribes take their roles as tree guardians very seriously for both religious and survival reasons. Every tribe has a single religious leader, who may be of either sex, known as the Lallap. This person is responsible for the welfare of the tribe's tree, lore, and myths. Each Lallap retains one or two apprentices to learn from her and eventually inherit the role.

One of a Lallap's main tasks is to read the leaves and other signs of the tree for omens. Signs of danger, great change, and opportunity may all be indicated by a sweating branch or a single dropped fruit. Strangers to the tree are turned away violently or warmly embraced depending on what the omens of the tree suggest.

ADVENTURE SEEDS

- The group happens upon a wandering Haroo. The Keefee is quite taken with the Storm Knights and commits to tagging along with them wherever they go, and "helping" in various inconvenient ways.
- In a trip across the Grass Sea the Storm Knights encounter a dead Dalberry that's somehow becoming a Nightmare Tree. The Keefee are convinced the tree is still alive and can be saved, but some have already become uncharacteristically violent. Can the tribe be

persuaded to leave their sacred space before things get even worse?

- The omens of the tree have spoken. A mythical beast is coming for the tree, and only a group of strangers can save the tribe. Haroo and scouts from the tribe are searching the savanna in hopes of finding the prophesied defenders in time.

THE LEOPARD TRIBES

- **Location:** Merretika, the Howling Jungle
- **Leader:** Chief Scuttan of the Jaguar Clan
- **Champion:** Prince Chakan of the Jaguar Clan

Throughout the thick jungles of the realm, often called the Howling Jungle by fearful inhabitants, live the fierce hunters of the Leopard Tribe. Their individual skill at the hunt and their savagery in combat is unparalleled in Merretika, though they lack the organization to challenge more disciplined foes like the Darooni and Pyrians in open warfare.

The Leopard Tribe are territorial and defend their hunting grounds ferociously. Those who unwittingly cross into a clan's domain usually discover their error very quickly and fatally. Acts of bravery, honor, and prowess may stay the hands of attackers long enough for a negotiation of sorts to commence. Truly extraordinary acts that benefit a Leopard Tribe may even be rewarded with induction into the tribe.

Individuals of both sexes within the tribe are incredible physical specimens: tall, muscular, and lithe. Clothing is almost always crafted from the skins of the leopards which give the tribe its name. The leopard's face covers the hunter's head or face. Thick hide is worn around the arms, and gripped claws on the back of a hunter's hands make a potent weapon in close combat.

The Leopard Tribes are organized into small clan units consisting of four to nine families. Each family unit consists of a mother, father, and usually no more than five children. Each clan worships a different totem god — gigantic creatures that stalked their homeworld but haven't been seen in Merretika...yet. The leopard god was foremost among them, but various clans usually take on the



name of lesser gods like the Jaguar or the ape-god Ungrosh.

The strongest member of the clan is the chieftain, who has absolute command over clan affairs. The chieftain is expected to lead hunting and war parties, and must be ready to defend his right to rule at any time. Contests for leadership are fought in barehanded wrestling matches. The children of the current chieftain are known within their clan as "princes" and "princesses." There's an expectation that such royalty eventually either challenges the current chieftain or mates into the family of a new chief, but expectations are just as often defied.

Women usually maintain the tribes' religious rituals, while men are primarily tasked with hunting larger game and warfare. There are no old among the Leopard Tribes: females and males are either killed by the dangerous daily existence, or

AVAILABLE MIRACLES

•Darok and Karruk (Pyrian Fire Tamers):

Ash cloud, Banish, bless*, bounty*, breathe fire, commune with Spirits*, cure disease*, curse*, flame aura, healing*, hellfire*, repel*, soothe*, strike*, ward enemy*, ward flames.*

•The Father of Serpents (Serpentors):

Bless, bloodlust, call animals*, commune with animals*, conjure poison, curse*, kill, regenerate, repel*, soothe*, strike*, ward enemy*, wither*.*

•Greater Mehret (Ohibi):

Banish, bless*, blind, commune with spirits*, cure disease*, cure poison, earthquake, healing*, hunter's ear, preserve, regenerate, shape plant, ward enemy**

•Holuku (Leopard Tribes):

Bless, bloodlust, call animals*, commune with animals*, commune with spirits*, cure poison, curse*, hunter's ear, preserve, repel*, ride beast, soothe*, strike*, uncounted spears, ward enemy*.*

•Raya (Keefee):

Banish, bless*, blind, bounty*, commune with spirits*, cure disease*, cure poison, healing*, regenerate, shape plant, strike*, ward enemy*, wither*.*

•The Wasp Mother (Darooni Wasp Riders):

Banish, bless*, call animals*, commune with animals, commune with spirits, conjure poison, curse*, healing*, hunter's ear, repel*, ride beast, soothe*, strike*, uncounted spears, ward enemy*, wither*.*

***Detailed in Torg Eternity; all others are found in The Living Land sourcebook.**

are cast out of the tribe when they can no longer do the hunting or hard labor to support their clan.

The different clans of the Leopard Tribes constantly war with one another over hunting grounds or out of revenge for some act real or imagined. These wars tend to be drawn out affairs that never truly end. A chieftain leads his men on guerrilla attacks into the neighboring tribe's hunting ground to find solitary hunters to attack.

Occasionally, the fighting produces casualties, but more often, the victors only scar their victims, since the wars are often fought for pride rather than survival.

HUNTERS AND ANIMISM

All adults are hunters. A hunter wears the hide of the great leopard that he killed to become an adult. The women of the clan usually hunt smaller game and tend to their family's needs.

The women are also caretakers of the tribe's religious lore, passing it on from mother to daughter.

The Leopard Tribes have a strong animism religion they call "Holuku." They believe that every living thing has a soul and every nonliving thing is protected by a spirit. Their classifications of living and unliving are based around movement. Streams move, and so they're considered living things with souls. Helephez, though it gives heat and light, is considered an unliving spirit.

The classification between spirit or soul is very important to the Leopard Tribes since it determines their conduct toward the thing. When a hunter kills a living thing he prays for its soul and gains some of the power and essence of that soul.

When the Leopard Tribes use an unliving thing they instead give offerings and thanks to the unliving thing's guardian spirit. Everyone follows the practices for taking a soul's essence, but it is left to the women of the tribe to appease the spirits through small sacrifices and prayer.

ADVENTURE SEEDS

- The chieftain of the Panther Clan is desperate to find a suitable husband for his daughter, Shara, the demanding princess of the clan. He's growing weaker but no one within his tribe will

challenge him for leadership out of fear that they must also marry the princess. He begins picking fights with the heroes hoping to lose his position, and thus his problems, to them.

- A new chieftain has emerged: a massive brute named Damo Kil. He's performed an unprecedented feat by dominating three different clans and merging them together into a single, massive tribe under Ape totem of Ungrosh. He plans to do the same to the other clans. Is this the natural result of the emergence of such a powerful warrior, or is something more sinister afoot?

- The Ambush Spider Clan has "offended" an unliving object in the jungle. It's an alien power source of some kind, and the energy it radiates is making the clan sick. So far sacrifices have not appeased its protective spirit, and they're desperate enough to turn to outsiders for help.

THE PYRIAN FIRE TAMERS

- **Location:** Merretika, Tanta kellar and the volcanic region

- **Leader:** Hadrian Fel Ar (see page 94)

- **Champion:** Amethia Cor Tal (see page 94)

The volcanic terrain opposite the Great Waterfall is dangerous and uninhabitable by most standards, but the advanced people of Pyria have made it their home.

Tanta kellar is both the largest volcano in Merretika and the capital city of the Pyrians. The city itself is built atop the fiery mountain and crowned by the wondrous Temple of Fire. The Fire Temple seems to float above Tanta kellar's fiery pit. Eight chains anchor it to the rim of the volcano, suspending it above the molten interior. At the center of the temple, a hole runs through the platform so that slaves may be thrown into the pit. The platform and temple are not unreasonably hot thanks to Pyrian miracles.

The Pyrians have other small outposts in the region, especially along the Abyssal River and the edges of the Smoke Canyon. The Pyrians endure the volcanoes primarily for religious reasons, and survive through a combination of spiritual aid and extreme discipline.

Pyrians society is harsh and intolerant, much like their environment. Military leaders top the strict caste hierarchy, followed by religious leaders, then workers, and finally slaves at the bottom. Caste is passed within a family from generation to generation, with almost no hope for advancement. Within a caste men and women have equal status.

Pyrians are a slender people. They favor light hair and pale green eyes. Their facial features are finely chiseled, almost elfish. The men tend toward slightly hooked noses and thin lips. Pyrian women usually have thin noses and fuller lips. Thick fiber togas dyed with dark colors adorned with simple bronze clasps are the current fashion for men. Women prefer longer, white or orange togas also clasped with bronze or belted with cords. Both sexes wear sandals and carry knives of bronze or obsidian.

PYRIAN FIRE PRIESTS

Pyrians worship a dual god, who appears as a humanoid column of fire. "Darok" is the god's name when he is awake and angry. The Pyrians sacrifice slaves in the Fire Temple to appease Darok and lull him back to sleep. The slumbering form of the god is "Karruk," a force of warmth and protection. Curses or loud noises which might awaken Karruk are considered blasphemous by Pyrians.

Fire Tamers are the priests and priestesses directing the worship of Karruk and Darok. They are respected and revered by most people, and answerable only to the military caste. Pyrian society is completely dependent on the Fire Tamers, and everyone knows it. To date, the religious caste has never openly disagreed with the Pyria's military leadership, but the entire city trembles at the thought of what could transpire if that ever occurs.

Fire Tamer miracles are tricky thanks to the dual nature of the Pyrian god. While Karruk sleeps the priest becomes Stymied when invoking any miracle that directly deals damage. If Darok is awakened the priest becomes Stymied invoking any miracle that doesn't deal damage.

ADVENTURE SEEDS

- Karruk is awakening into Darok, and the normal sacrifice hasn't appeased him. The desperate priests seek something truly special to soothe their angry god.

- Gossip spreads that Amethia had an illicit affair with one of the Storm Knights, and she wishes to sacrifice them to quash any rumors of favor. Do the heroes try to find another way to prove their innocence, or work with Hadian to destroy the High Priestess before she can destroy them?

- Hadian's family enlists the Storm Knights to play matchmakers, so that he might produce an heir before Pyrian politics destroys their line completely.

THE OHIBI

- **Location:** Merretika, along the walls' edges within the Howling Jungle.

- **Leader:** The "Lesser Mehret" of each independent village (see page 90).

- **Champion:** None

A tribe of near-humans known as the Ohibi live in the jungles of Merretika, where the canopy of trees opens up to occasional savanna-like fields. They are a reclusive group of hunter-gatherers, and the common prey of the Darooni, Pyrian, and Serpentor tribes.

Ohibi villages nestle against the massive rock wall that surrounds Merretika and stretches up to form them domed ceiling overhead. They don't fear of the dark caves that litter the walls any less than other Merretikans (perhaps even more), but desperation forces them to live where others loathe to tread.

The Ohibi are a hunter-gatherer society, although gathering provides them far more sustenance than hunting. The Ohibi have no interest in crossing the Wild River or exploring the tunnels near their homes. They believe that horrible monsters inhabit the caves and rule beyond the river, and that only their god Mehret can protect them from such deadly foes.

Ohibi live in constant fear, and they have much to be afraid of. They are the favored targets of Darooni hunts, prized slaves for the Pyrians, and the nearby Serpentor tribes capture hunters or any who stray too near their territory. Despite this fear, or perhaps because of it, the Ohibi are hospitable, even welcoming to strangers—at least

those who don't attack them! The warm reception is temporary; within a week strangers must either join the tribe permanently or move on for good. They have no qualms about executing those who they feel have been unfaithful to the ways of Mehret, or sacrificing animals to appease Mehret and insure a good hunt.

Each village is led by a shaman figure, said to be the chosen spokesman for the god Mehret. This spokesman is called "Lesser Mehret" or "Mehret-Ahn" in the Ohibi tongue. The Lesser Mehret is capable of miracles, and commonly receives visions of great dangers that face the tribe. This spokesman doesn't fear the darkness, and on rare occasions leads the faithful to the Temple of Mehret, a mysterious structure hidden within the dangerous caves.

The Ohibi have greenish skin with dark hair and eyes. They look much the same as humans, except for the more alien skin tone. Their builds tend to be slight but wiry, with well-defined muscles from the difficult work all must perform to survive.

The men of the tribe normally dress only in loincloths since more clothing is not needed in the semi-tropical environment of Merretika. Ohibi women only wear skirts. Both sexes favor armbands, headbands, and sandals, all made from cured leather or furs.

Ohibi throw large feasts on special occasions, such as religious ceremonies or when strangers agree to some great undertaking to help them. During such celebrations there is abundant food, dancing, and storytelling. Any Storm Knight who describes how they participate in the feast or tells a story to the assembled tribe gains a Possibility.

However, such festivity comes at a cost to the tribe. Supplies are limited at the best of times. An Ohibi tribe can't hold a feast more than once a month, even if they wanted to. Hosting a feast more than once every two months puts the tribe in jeopardy of starvation should any disasters befall them in the meantime.

ADVENTURE SEEDS

- The Lesser Mehret has a vision of the village under attack—not by other tribes but by the old enemy: the edeinos. Why and how have they come, and will the heroes stay to help?

- Somewhere in the dark and dangerous tunnels is the Temple of Mehret. Rumor has it the temple is fantastic in size, and contains a glowing red and blue disk.

- A group of gatherers who went farther afield have been taken by one of the tribe's many enemies. A rescue would ensure the heroes are inducted as honorary Ohibi.

SERPENTORS

- **Location:** Merretika, in the jungles near the Wild River

- **Leader:** The Emperor Cobras (see page 92)

- **Champion:** Tsiss; use a Serpentor Embraced (page 92) with Brawler, Relentless, and *unarmed combat* 16

The Serpentor Tribe are humanoids who worship the massive Emperor Cobras. The other tribes assume they are a species of snake-men, but the truth is far more sinister.

The Serpentors thrive in the dense jungle. Their main territory is along the Wild River. Though most snakes aren't territorial, the emperor cobras at the heart of Serpentor society certainly are. Borders are marked with lumps of undigested matter regurgitated by the area's emperor cobra—usually twisted armor, ruined weapons, and bit of bone and hair that make it clear the mass is the remains of a meal. Worshipers hang these leftovers in nets dangling from trees, a clear warning not to enter the area.

The emperor cobra is at the center of each Serpentor tribe. It lives in a carefully excavated snake pit (sometimes even a stone structure), and the homes of its tribe surround the pit. The tribe itself is composed of humanoids who were once Ohibi, Darooni, Pyrean, or humans who have been wrapped in the shed skin of the emperor cobra and then bathed in its venom until they mutate into the creatures other tribes call Serpentors. Most of these converted are "faithful" who worship the emperor cobra, but some are brainwashed captives who gave themselves to the tribe rather than be devoured.

There's a wide variance in physical appearance based on just how well the mutation has taken

hold of a Serpentor. Some appear near human, with mottled skin, oversized fangs, and yellowish eyes. Those deeper in the embrace may have fused legs, scales, hinged jaws, and even hoods. The latter tend to be larger, up to twice the mass of a normal human. Serpentors have no need or desire for clothing, but some mark their allegiance with a large yellow chevron, much like the shape and coloration that appears on an emperor cobra.

THE EMBRACED

Long ago the first of the Ohibi turned their backs on Mehret in favor of a new, more powerful god, the so-called "Father of Serpents." They listened to his whispers, performed degenerate rites, and began to change into something else. These were the first priests of the Cobra Cult, though the Ohibi themselves have long forgotten the connection.

As the Serpentor cult grew, physical changes among the faithful became more pronounced. The strongest (and hungriest) began to slither rather than walk, and after hundreds of years the strongest of those achieved the ultimate goal: becoming emperor cobras themselves.

Serpentor warriors raid nearby territories, and whenever possible they bring their captives back alive. Those who resist or go mad are devoured one limb at a time, until the torso and head are offered to the emperor cobra in tribute. Faced with such a fate, many choose to play along instead. At first it may be a ruse, but after months of visions caused by venom injections any pretense is wiped away and the embrace becomes real.

The supplicant is wrapped in cast off serpent skin and bathed in venom found in pools in the snake pit. Days later a new Serpentor rises, eager to feed and spread the territory of the tribe.

ADVENTURE SEEDS

- The heroes encounter a Serpent Pool in the jungle. There are no structures around it, and seemingly no Serpentors around. Is it truly abandoned, and if so what forced the emperor cobra out?

- A former ally appears, partially mutated, as a Serpentor in a raiding party. If captured, the wretched creature spins a false tale that the transformation can be reversed if the emperor



Tworek faces an Emperor Cobra in the steaming jungle near the Wild River.

cobra is slain in time.

- An Embraced flees his tribe and seeks refuge with the Ohibi. He claims he saw a vision of the Father of Serpents appearing in Merretika and causing untold devastation. His tribe wants him back at all costs, and only an ancient Ohibi ritual that the Lesser Mehret has never heard of seems to offer a way to halt the coming of the snakes.

WONDERS

The Law of Wonders is in full effect in Merretika, and is likely how some of the species entered the underground dome in the first place. The Howling Jungle is rife with temples and ruins from distant civilizations and times.

Wonders are more stable in Merretika, appearing in the same place or never vanishing at all. The Temple of Mehret worshiped by the Ohibi is one such stable wonder. Despite this consistency,

wonders remain difficult to find or return to thanks to the lack of magnetic North or navigational landmarks within the thick jungles.

Note that this also means Pulp Powers from the Nile Empire do not cause Contradictions here, despite the low Tech Axiom! The slight differences in how the Law seems to operate in the Land Below led some to theorize that Merretika is its true source of the Wonders appearing across the Living Land, not Lanala.

The Archimedes Division is trying to organize expeditions to the Land Below to test the theory, but so far no excursions have been cleared. The Delphi Council recognizes the scientific potential behind such a discovery, but the fact that most people never return from Merretika has made them slow to commit resources.

Perhaps Helephez is the force behind those drawn into Merretika, or perhaps it's just another refugee. Helephez burns any who try to get close enough to study it, or even determine if it's sentient.

PLAYING A MERRITAKAN

It's possible to play a Storm Knight that hails from the Land Below, but there are a few considerations.

Ohibi aren't available as none have yet experienced a Moment of Crisis. It remains unclear if Ohibi even can become *reality*-rated.

Serpentors are also not available as Storm Knights. Once an individual has been embraced by the Father of Serpents he's no longer himself, but a tool for the mysterious—and very evil—god.

Any other character must have a reason to want to leave their tribe and the Land Below. It's best if the character is an outcast who has rejected cannibalism, slavery, or other less savory activities the tribes below often embrace to survive.

Members of the Darooni Tribe, Leopard Tribe, or Pyrians are built just like a human hailing from the Living Land cosm. If a Darooni character was a Wasp Rider, her bonded wasp was killed in the past—likely by edeinos—and now she's on her own.

Characters with faith and the Miracles Perk choose from their tribe's list on page 106.

KEEFEE

Keefee Haloo forced to wander far from their trees require a new racial template. It's extremely rare to find one of these small folk wandering outside the Land Below.

Playing such a small character is a challenge. Strength and Toughness are both hampered by the keefee's tiny size, and there aren't many items available to help make up the difference.

The character is a unique oddity. This isn't a penalty to *persuasion*, but the character does tend to stand out—or get mistaken for a child.

RACIAL ABILITIES

- **Ability Limits:** Charisma 14, Dexterity 14, Mind 13, Spirit 14, Strength 6
- **Size:** Keefee cannot wear armor or clothing designed for humans—it must be tailored

to their tiny form for double the cost or +2 to the item's cost on the Value Chart. Keefee may not use any weapon unless it has the “Small” property.

- **Unique:** Only one keefee Storm Knight is allowed in each game.
- **Very Small:** Attacks against a keefee suffer a –4 Size Penalty.

LARENDI

Larendi are uncommon within the Land Below, and tend to flock together in small groups. A *reality*-rated larendi who doesn't have a small tribe to look after is unheard of—but the Possibility Wars are filled with unique situations.

RACIAL ABILITIES

- **Ability Limits:** Charisma 12, Dexterity 13, Mind 14, Spirit 13, Strength 10
- **Armor:** Larendi possess thick, scaly skin that provides +1 Armor.
- **Bite and Claws:** Larendi have sharp fangs and talons that deal *Strength* +1 damage.
- **Light Load:** These avians can only carry a few objects and remain aloft. If one wears armor or carries an object with a Minimum Strength above his own he loses the ability to use his Wings (see below). A grounded larendi wearing armor must have it tailored to his winged form for double the cost or +2 to the item's cost on the Value Chart.
- **Shy:** Although physically striking, larendi have a difficult time communicating with other humanoids. Each suffers a –2 penalty to *persuasion* tests against non-larendi.
- **Unique:** Only one keefee Storm Knight is allowed in each game.
- **Wings:** A larendi's wings grant him a flying speed equal to his Dexterity +2 meters. He may “run” at three times that speed for the usual –2 penalty. A flying larendi may not recover Shock until he lands, even from Inspiration or miracles.

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THE FATE OF A GODDESS...

The God Box is a massive adventure suitable for several months of gaming. Start off in besieged Washington D.C. and follow a trail of evil across (and under) the realm that threatens the goddess of life and sensation herself: Lanala!

Don't miss the climactic showdown: The Wedding of Baruk Kaah!

The God Box also includes expanded material and foes for the Land Below, handy for any GM's continuing campaigns.



INSIDE YOU'LL FIND:

- A massive Five Act extended adventure that crosses the different regions of the Living Land.
- Determine the fate of the Living Land's goddess: Lanala.
- New foes and an entire new area of the Living Land to explore: The Land Below!



This game requires the Torg Eternity core rules and Drama Deck to play.



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