

VIMARY



A Tribe & Sourcebook



Dream Pod 9

A Tribe 8 Sourcebook

VIMARY

"The Seven Tribes teach that Vimary is the only place that counts; that it is the core of a world defined by the Pattern's law. On nights like this I wonder if they aren't right after all."

— Altara Var, "Visions, A Tribute to the Pattern"

The Vimary Sourcebook is the core supplement for the entire Tribe 8 game line. In this source, it details the full range of the game's core setting, and provides excellent ideas and resources for events and events. The Vimary Sourcebook includes:

- an innovative telling of the history of the Seven Tribes since their Liberation from the Caves;
- a detailed return to Vimary itself, with full coverage of tribal lands, Hax, the mysterious Lost Nestor and the dreaded HII Kay, home of the Zhar;
- over a dozen inventive new locations, including the Zhar community of Akaron, the Kennon stronghold of Clymmer, and the hidden underworld of Vimary;
- a look at all the major players and factions, including the Seven Tribes, Fallers, Spirit hands, Zhar, and Kennon.

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Dream Pod 9

ISBN: 1-896776-41-8



9 781896 776415

Printed in Canada



Children of Prophecy



Interlude

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Special Thanks

From Josh: to the Trinity (Phil and Lucien), to
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Georgia), to Brazil (Jeff), to the Bat (Wayne), to
Dheirmund (Glenn), to the Warrior Poets
(Lenn, Maciej, Ace and Nat), to my Family
(Mom, Dad, Dom, Nan) and especially to Nancy
for always being there. Thank you all!

From Lucien: thanks to the DP9 guys for
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From the PoD: thanks to Stéphane Brochu, Jason
Prince and Jim Cotsios for feedback on the
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continued enthusiasm, and to Normand
Bilodeau for moral and technical support.

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Produced and Published by



Dream Pod 9

5000 d'Iberville, Suite 332

Montreal, QC

Canada

H2H 2S6

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Dream Pod 9 can be reached through the Internet. Look for our page on the World Wide

Web at www.dp9.com. Also check out the rec.games.frp.misc newsgroup for support and information about Tribe 8.

Stock # DP9-803

Legal Deposit: October 1998

Bibliothèque Nationale du Québec

National Library of Canada

ISBN 1-896776-41-8

First Printing

Printed in Canada

Chapter 1:

In this place was I born.

Here was I raised

In Goddess' love and Fatima's scorn.

From here was I banished

For crimes not my own.

Here will I return.

To Vimary, my home.

— The Fallen's Refrain.



Visions, a Testament for the Present

It is night. The chill spring air flows through my room as I write these words. It was winter when last I wrote my *Testament to the Fallen*, and change is in the air. With spring came new banishments and now, as I look below into the bustling streets of Hom, I see a tribe in the making. We are young and full of energy, and a new destiny stretches out before us. These are the first steps in the journey that will take us from the past to the future.

We have grown much in the last few seasons, anarchy and violence giving way to unity and vision. But there is still much to do. Not all of us see our future in the same light, and this is our greatest weakness. We are still reveling in our freedom too much to care about politics or the present. So we all strike out along different paths, hoping that the one we are on is right. Visionaries like Veruka and Kymber try to bring us together, but few listen and some even plot against them. Others, like that thug Baal or sly Hal, seem driven to corral and lead us, to bend us to their wishes. I fear that only a great and grave challenge will bring us together and force us to understand that we all have a role to play (and this is only a faint hope).

In truth, I fear we are more dangerous to ourselves than we think. The fervor of the Doomsayers only augments my own worries. They claim that a great change is on its way, a sign and portent of still greater things to come. Even the Herites appear unnerved, but are saying little themselves. Joshua's warning of "Blood and Sacrifice!" always seems to be ringing in my ears.

And yet, as I sit here pondering the dark future, I cannot help looking across the river to Vimary, the signpost of the past. From here I can see the lights of Bazaar, busy as well on this spring night. It seems that no matter how far in the coming seasons the Eighth Tribe goes, Vimary will always haunt us — a memory that will always be painful. We all grew up there: we ran through Sanctuary as kids, played with Agnes, worshipped Joan and Her Warriors. We feared Baba Yaga and hid from Tera Sheba's gaze — but that was the past. Our families still live there, never casting a glance to the small island we call Hom. Wherever our destinies take us, Vimary will never let us forget her.

The Seven Tribes teach that Vimary is the only place that counts; that it is the core of a world defined by the Fatimas' love. On nights like this I wonder if they aren't right after all.



The Tribes

Vimary sourcebook

The Vimary Sourcebook is the first sourcebook for the Tribe 8 roleplaying game. Within, you'll find all the information needed to set and run a Tribe 8 cycle on the island of Vimary. It not only expands on the material found in the Tribe 8 Rulebook, but also adds a new dimension to the birthplace of the tribes.

The Vimary Sourcebook's organization follows that of the Rulebook. The first four Chapters present Vimary through the eyes of its inhabitants. Chapter Two: Living History details the history of the tribes as they ventured fourth from the camps and reclaimed Vimary. Chapter Three: Vimary Revisited, provides information on the various locations of Vimary, including the tribal lands, Duskfall Forest and the H'l Kar (the Z'bri lands). The final chapter in the World Section is Chapter Four: Faces in the Mirror, which gives Weavers a cast of characters to populate their cycles, including the foul Z'bri. Chapter Five: Beyond Myth offers Weavers additional facts about the tribes, the Fallen and hints on running and staging cycles in Vimary.

The sounds of Horn filter into my room, Junks is bustling and I can hear Deus' voice in the next room talking to the recently banished Evangel Black. As I write I am sure Tera Sheba and Her judges are plotting against us. Her judgments have become more stern — and Her punishments even more severe. Of all the tribes, and mark these words, it is the Shebans who we'll have to confront if we are ever to change things. I hear rumors of an alliance between the Judges and the Evans, headed by the foul Cylx Seth'on — surely this cannot bode well for us. Mek has heard that the Templars of Joan are about to call a crusade against the Beasts. It has been summers since the last one, and I am sure there are some Joanites who would rather fight us than the Z'bri.

Despite the threat of Tera Sheba and Her lackey Joan, the Three Fates worry me the most. Their silence and apparent lack of interest must only hide their true purpose. Baba Yaga and Her death priests cast an evil eye towards us, and I am sure more than a few Fallen have succumbed to their magic. Magdalen, of all Three Fates, seems to favor us the most. Yet, I am sure this attention is only because we serve some role in Her machinations. Magdalite Concubines and Diplomats are traveling to all the tribes, but seem most interested in the goings on of the Warrior Joan. I think Magdalen wants to usurp Tera Sheba's control of the tribes. Finally, Eva is growing impatient with us. More and more Evans are being banished. Eva blames us when she forgets the very forgiving and loving essence that is Her. A vengeful mother is always a dangerous foe, especially one who feels rejected by Her children.

Agnes, that sweet Child, is our one key to the tribes. To Her older sisters, Agnes claims she has no interest in us, but in truth She enjoys spending time with the Fallen. Yet, I sense a change in my former tribe, they grow restless, tired of being ignored by the others. I fear blood with flow as they prove their worth and maturity to the other tribes.

And the Trickster Dahlia? Strangely, She's been rather quiet. Her caravans have ventured far and wide in search for something, but not even the Dahlians themselves seem to know what is it they looked for. Dahlia's secrecy is always a bad sign, for both the tribes and the Fallen. Is She merely playing a game or does She have a darker motive in mind? I suppose that only time will tell, but I doubt anything will come easily to us.

The Z'bri

No testament of the present would be complete without mention of the Beasts. Mek, who knows such things best, says that they are growing restless, but the tribes are ignoring the warning signs. Serf encampments are popping up all over the north of Vimary, including Duskfall, and the Keepers' tunnels echo with strange noises and screams that even has them worried. Of all the shadows cast upon our future, it is the Z'bri that most clearly demand both sacrifice and blood. If we are to be the Eighth Tribe, then we must no longer hide from the Beasts, even if the tribes stand idly by. Much is to change in the coming seasons.

And so I end my Testament of the Present. Hom has grown quiet; most have returned home and settled in for a night's sleep. I can hear Deus closing the outer door and heading to the bedroom. In the distance Vimary and Bazaar rest, solemn and still — a peaceful sight were it not for the dangers lurking in its shadows, both tribal and inhuman. Vimary is where it all begins, for the future starts here...

— Altara Ven, member of the Eighth Tribe



Chapter 2:

Living Memory: A History of Vimary

Tanya Ever'on, go and travel to the Seven Tribes that are the chosen of the One Goddess, who is, was and will be evermore. There, in their hallowed halls, speak to the elders and collect seven tales from My Sisters. My child, the future grows dark. Our love for you and your Tribes is shadowed and a time of reckoning is at hand. Go forth and witness the past, so that the future may remember what the present is forgetting.

— Tera Sheba the Wise, calling for the Chronicle of the Tribes



Prologue

A Chronicle of the Tribes as set forth by Tanya Ever'on daughter and Lorekeeper of Tera Sheba:

Tera Sheba's words echoed throughout the Chamber of Judgment as She spoke to me, sending me out to begin my Chronicle. What a wondrous day it was, feeling the power and purpose of the Wise-Mother upon me. The whole chamber sat silent, and from my vantage point I could glimpse a smile from High Judge Thaim'on. Not even the dour and cynical Cylix Seth'on and his cronies could dampen my joy.

From Her dais, Tera Sheba stood in all Her glory, Her three facets — truth, wisdom and judgment — gazing into me, seeing at once my past, my present and future. Why then, I thought, did one as all-knowing as Tera Sheba need a record? The answer she whispered was simple:

"For only through the eyes of one that will never know eternity can the weight of the past be felt. Your existence is fleeting and imperfect, and only through your flawed perspective can your brothers and sisters understand what is and what was. This Chronicle is not for My sake, but yours. Now go, your task awaits."

And so, with the love of Tera Sheba, I begin the Chronicle of the Tribes.



In These Times...

Legends

It occurs to me that no Record of the Tribes would be complete without the tales and myths that bind us as a people. My accounts are detailed and precise, but can be dry. For this reason I include these legends, letting the tribes speak for themselves. While visiting Mortuary, a young Mordred spoke of the Falling Plagues.

"High above, in the dark cowl of Baba Yaga that covers all, the eyes of the Goddess look down. Every so often, one falls to Earth and with it, hardship comes. These travails are called the Falling Plagues.

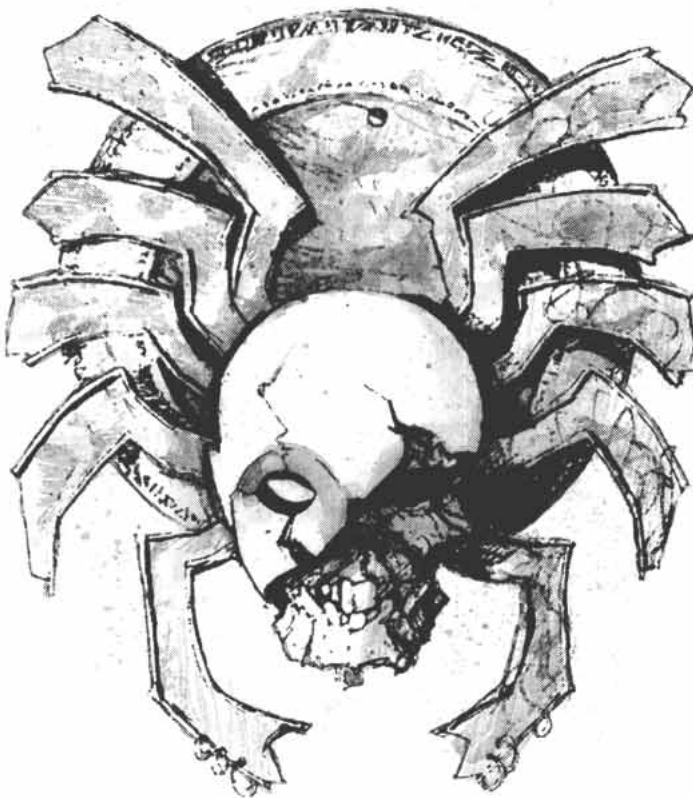
"The first fell soon after the Liberation, ushering a bleak winter, and with it the black disease came.

Many died of hunger, cold and sickness. Even the Fatimas grew sad at this, but they sacrificed their chosen and warmth came to us. The second fell many summers later and struck Mary, and then Agnes came and with her the yellow fevers. The third and latest one, never fell. It floated high above for seasons and then vanished. It was at this time that the first Fallen were banished, called so after the Falling Plague that heralded their arrival. It is said that when the third plague returns, it will crash down, destroying all."

What better place to start than in the present, to set a contrast by which to judge the past. In these times the tribes are prosperous and this holy land, Vimary, is kind to us. Around the tribal lands and Bazaar we trade and live: the Yagans preside over the passing of loved ones; the Magdalites love and pleasure us; the Evans mother us; and the Dahlians entertain us. For two generations now — well over fifty summers — peace has reigned because the Seven Victories stand by us.

The Evans have a saying, however: "The One Mother loves, but Her love is tempered with thorns." Indeed, we have known moments of despair since Liberation, and hardships are still common. Winter, a ghost of death, blankets the land in frost and snow for too many moons. The ruins of the World Before haunt us and the Z'bri prey upon us like rats on a corpse. The records show that upon the defeat of Z'bri Overlord Tibor and the death of Joshua, the Z'bri were broken and driven insane. From abominable masters they become pathetic monsters. Now they roam the lands, weeping at what they lost, both a reminder of the horrors of the Camps and the power of the Fatimas who keep them at bay.

But the greatest blight is that of the unfaithful — the Fallen. Grown lax and selfish, the Fallen turn away from the Fatimas and forget the sacrifice of the Seven Sisters. At times I wonder what makes them question their Mothers and tribes. True, I have been witness to hash judgments, to cruel actions, but the Fatimas know what we can never know. Their actions are pure and guided by the hands of the One True Goddess. The so-called Eighth Tribe is blind to the truth. It is for them that this record exists — to show them the glory that is the Seven Tribes.



The Alpha and Omega: Baba Yaga and the Beginning

"My Child, travel west and follow the flight of the feathered-shadows to the home of the Crone, my sister. Welcome Baba Yaga into your heart and listen to what She has to say, for death is not an end, but a genesis; to understand the beginning, the end must be known. Now go, My Child, and witness."

And so I traveled to the fabled temple of Baba Yaga, the Mortuary. There, as if expecting me, Faust — one so old that death would seem like youth — spoke to me in preparation for my audience with the Crone. He spoke of cycles and divination, of currents of fate written by the very hands of the One Goddess and transcribed by Pellis Artisans, the skin scribes of Baba Yaga. During the day we roamed the fields of gravestones speaking of dying and birth and he explained that life and death are not opposites, but the same — a journey clothed in different robes.

At night, after hours of reading and studying in dimly lit crypts, Faust taught me about the River of Dream. "To understand our place," he said, "we must open ourselves to the River that flows through all. Although each tribe sees it in a different light the River is what binds us as a people." He even said that the Fatimas are eddies and currents of the River that have taken shape to lead and save us.

In a sacred ritual Faust opened my inner eye to the River and I saw the threads that tie all of creation together. Around me, Mortuary changed; it seemed filled not with death, but with life and potential. In the distance, a funeral pyre burnt, its ashes flowing past me, into the current of the River and out of sight. I felt the pulse of the invisible, the possibility of the One Goddess: a presence that hovered beyond my sight. I asked Faust why I could not see the One Goddess. "For She rests in our minds," he answered, "and Her essence, as we can understand it, is the very River of Dream. Do not try to see Her, but feel Her — that is the key."

With this, Faust took my arm and let the River take us to a wild and feral place. Reaching forth he pulled us through a membrane and all went blood red. My body writhed in agony, filling me with nausea; my skin felt hot, on fire, and my breasts ached with pleasure and desire. All I wanted to do was consume and devour. Then, without warning, we were back, my body coated in sweat and blood. Covering me, Faust explained that that was the Seed, the twin-lover of the One Goddess, and the darkness that rests in all. "Remember, the One Goddess loves and protects; the Seed destroys and enslaves."

That night, troubled dreams, visions and sensations tormented me. My period came early, and I could not understand how the lover of the One Goddess could be so cruel and savage when She is serene and wise. Why would the Seed destroy what the One Goddess created, and why would She let him do so?



The Living Past

"... to understand the beginning the end must be known..."

Tera Sheba's words gave me the strength to confront the eldest of the Seven Sisters. Withered and skull-like, Baba Yaga stood before me like a doorway to profound mysteries and truths — a gateway between life and death. Her voice was not stern or stoic like Tera Sheba's, or sensuous as Magdalen's, but cold and eerily familiar — as She spoke I wrote, the past etched by my hands.

"Child of My Sister, daughter of death and mother of life, you have come to hear the past, to see with your own eyes the pain that gave birth to us. With the balance of foresight that is Tera Sheba follow me to a time of misery and torture... to the Camps.

"Understand that the relics you see, the husks of the World Before are ruins of a faithless time; an era when children forgot the true power of the One Goddess, and in their folly opened the way for the Beasts to surge forward. Every action carries with it a reaction — sickness is not random, but ordained. Fate is strong, and when the Wheel is unbalanced monsters issue forth. So, the faithless ushered in the Z'bri; their penance was death and destruction for the Wheel of the Mother Fate never forgets.

"For their crimes, the faithless were punished eight-fold — with death, with rape, with hunger, with torture, with betrayal, with castigation, with deception and with anger. And so the Camps were born and there our history begins.

"The Camps were a dark period, the faithless were herded into one of the Seven Camps: Y'beth-ah or Age of the Flesh where my children hail from; Mir'ronai or Symmetry of the Flesh, Eva's birthplace; V'hexu, known to Magdalites as the Rose of the Flesh; Te'plem which you recognize as the Court of Flesh; the Dahlian R'thera or Veil of Flesh; Kel'ion, the bloody Arena that saw the birth of the Warrior Joan. That is six, the seventh is a hallowed place for it was where our Beloved Sister Mary emerged and where she gave Her life. Even now, summers after Her passing, it pains me to mention Her Camp, for Mary will never be again, Her spirit lost in Agnes. The eighth was Trah'zon, the Fallibility of the Flesh where our brother was born.

"In these blight-places evils lashed our future Children, but all things occur for a reason. Each camp had a distinctive effect upon those who suffered in it. The Shebans know justice because of the unjust nature of their Z'bri masters, the Evans care for life and child because the beast devoured these very things. But still these were bleak times, death was constant as was torture..."

As the Crone, Sister of Fate and Death, spoke, images of the camps fled past my eyes, as if I dreamt while awake. Through the eyes of a woman, I saw a young child abused and eaten by a deformed monstrosity. The creature was immense, it labored on hundreds of feet and limbs. The smell of death overpowered me. I looked down only to realize that I was one of hundreds impaled by the hands and feet above a metallic grate. Old, young, man, woman, child, screamed as their flesh melted from their bones — aged in seconds by the Z'bri magic only to be "reborn" from the decaying mass that fell to the ground. There, small creatures what looked like children played in the distrusting mess of flesh, urine and vomit.

Then the monstrosity turned to me, its face featureless but its skin bubbling with excitement. As it moved closer its scent wracked me with fear. It touched me with hands, but not lover's hands, instead cruel and savage ones. It caressed my naked body with its tongue, it whispered a name that sounded like Ch'kroth.

Lost in horrific visions, it was Baba Yaga's voice that brought me back. Slowly the stench of the camps faded and Mortuary came into view. There, Baba Yaga held me in her arms, caressing my hair with one of her bony hands. Her skull-face was vacant, but her whispered voice reassuring...

"Child what you saw was the Camps and that beast claimed millions. Never utter its name, for the winds remember and evil will come. The woman who's eyes you saw through was later to survive. Taken down from her perch, she vanished into the deepest of corners of Y'Beth-ah and dreamt of an end to pain. Her name was Helena and it was she who first dreamt of me, of a death not torturous, but kind and just. She began writing and assembling relics; this skull of mine was one of her gifts. Soon others heard her dreams and believed, and the pain of the Camps lessened for they knew peace and salvation was coming.

"And she was right, for under the light of the moon I was born.

"I did not always look thus, my Child, but what better way to understand death and fate than to cloak oneself in bones and garbage. There in Y'Beth-ah I prepared my Children for the arrival of my other Sisters. I sent dreams to the other camps speaking of the coming salvation and the faithful listened. All about the land we now call Vimary the light of the One Goddess shone through Eight, and with them the future was born..."

Prophecies

The ink was still fresh upon the parchment, but the crypt had grown cold and dark, Baba Yaga's presence a lingering smell of rot and age. So my stay at Mortuary ended, but I was left with a sense of uneasiness, as if the very walls were trying to divine what I wrote... as if the future was being forged with every word I put to parchment.

"And you are right." A woman's voice startled me, echoing from some shadow. She stepped closer, not making a single sound, her face cloaked by a shawl, but the markings on her arms betrayed her as a Fallen.

"You, child, need not listen to me, but I know you will, for you are honest and in you the search for truth is strong.

"If you are to be faithful in your duty as Chronicler of the Tribes, then you must be aware of the ills that affect them. You must confront them, if only to prove these worries wrong. If you believe in the Seven Sisters, then you should be willing to look deep into their hearts, having faith that all will be answered. Or are you hesitant, afraid of uncovering secrets you should not? Look with open eyes and a free heart, for only then will the truth be known. Do otherwise and you bury it and tarnish your faith. For faith is not blind devotion, but having one's doubts answered.

"So I depart; if we meet in the future, that is up to the Fatimas to arrange. For now, I leave you with this:

MARK THESE SIGNS, FOR FAITH WILL SHED LIGHT ON THEM:

- "SEE THE MOTHER-LESS CHILD,
AND ASK WHAT COULD THE FORGIVER NOT FORGIVE?
- "THE SILENCE OF ONE IS THE PAIN OF ANOTHER,
FOR THE BLADE OF GUILT BITES DEEPER THAN STEEL.
- "MARK THE BEAST THAT FEARS THE LIGHT
NOT FOR ITS FLAME, BUT FOR THE SHADOWS IT CASTS
- "AND SEE, THE DISPOSED, DRIVEN AWAY, BECOME
EASY TARGETS FOR THE BURNING PYRE,



Those Born After Agnes

I continue my Chronicle in the presence of some Agnites traveling down towards Sanctuary and Eva's home. I left Mortuary on cool morning, Faust bidding me farewell, but somehow I get the feeling I will never see him again. I believe his time is near. Following the Canal southwards I met an Agnite band; its music and bright colors a contrast to the silent home of the Yagans. There an older Agnite named Puck told me about his tribe and the Young Agnes...

A Tale to Pass the Time

"You see, the other tribes live in the past; that's all they talk about; that's all they care about. The Camps this, the Fatimas that, the Z'bri there; they forget about the now. Don't get me wrong lawgiver, I've heard the tales and some scare me. I love Agnes, and while Joan is strict and Baba Yaga scary I know that without the Fatimas there would be no joy or fun. But us Agnites don't measure things by what happened, but rather by what could happen. I know it's occasionally nice to play pretend and fight the Z'bri, but where's the fun in reliving the Camps? The one thing that is dear to us is the birth of Our Child, Agnes.

"See, I'm sure that the other Fatimas resent Agnes because of Mary the Forgiver. They don't take the Little Child seriously because She did not experience the Camps, but without Her and Her Youth, the tribes and Vimary would be all lost in the past...

"Mary the Forgiver, not even Agnes knows much about the Fatima that gave birth to Her, which I'm sure must sadden Our Child. What I know, if you care for the opinion of a 'kid,' is that soon after the Liberation Mary grew saddened and withdrew from Her Sisters. Some say it's because of the death of Joshua, others that She couldn't forgive the grief She felt after the Liberation. Which one is the truth, flip a coin, either way you can guess how Tera Sheba must have reacted. For a time Mary and Her tribe lived apart, and this is where the myths of the Guides comes in. According to some, one night they came and spoke to Mary. For nine passings of the moon they talked and no one saw Mary. Then, as quickly the Guides arrived they vanished, but Mary was sick.

"I don't believe the stuff about the Guides, maybe Mary was just too sad. Anyways... Sick, depressed, I don't know? Tera Sheba said that the One Goddess had spoken to Mary during this time and said that Her time had come. To bring peace and forgiveness into the world, Mary had to leave it. Saddened She asked why, and the answer came: 'For your child will bring joy and wonder to a world filled with horror, your sisters are Warriors and Sages, you are neither. From you a second chance will come.'

"Then one morning, Mary was no more. Her cold and inanimate body sent Her tribe into throes of despair. Many followed Her, others vanished. But from the remains of her a shape moved, and Agnes was born. Where once the Fatimas had been teachers, Agnes became a student, She learnt the ways of the tribes and Her Sisters welcomed Her, even though they saw Mary's eyes in the Little Child. That's that story of Agnes."

That night the Agnites put on a play, using their Gifts to bring trash to life playing the part of Agnes and Mary, and for once I understood the capriciousness of the Orphan; the pain she must feel for being born and never knowing her Mother.

First Encounter

The following day, as we crossed one of the many bridges that span the Canal, a commotion ahead delayed us. A large crowd had gathered, mainly Evan farmers and Yagan herders, but the presence of Joanites from the Watch indicated something big was happening. Curious, I edged my way forward, my Sheban robes parting the crowd before me.

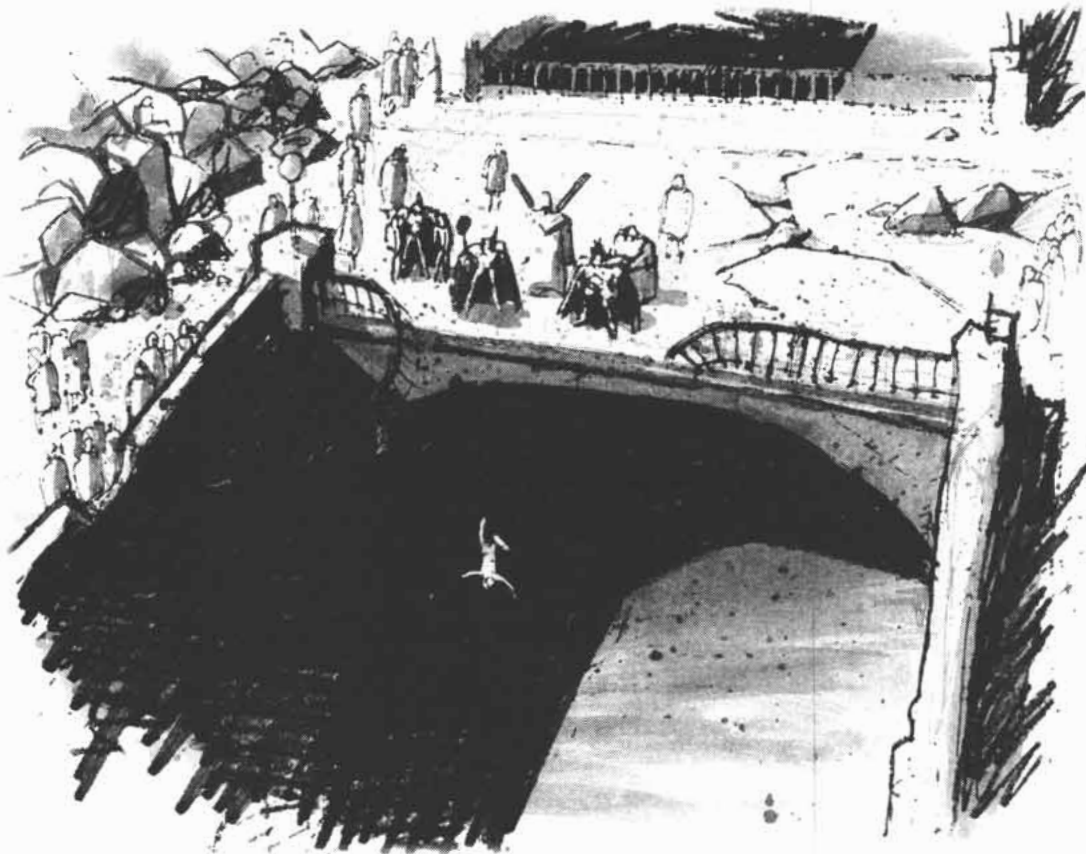
In front of the crowd I could see High Judge Seth'on and a burly Evan who I have since found out was the Shaman Storm Cry. The Evan was speaking about the evils of the Fallen, of how they tarnished the land, and how the One Goddess would punish us again if their heresies continued. The Watch struggled to keep the crowd under control and three prisoners were brought to Storm Cry and Cylix. Shackled and covered in bloodied rags, their faces bared the marks of beatings so severe even some of the Yagans winced. The prisoners were marched up to the rail on the bridge, as Cylix stepped forward, looking at me, and pronounced:

"For too long the Fallen have been tolerated! For crimes above that of banishment, of stealing and cavorting with Squats, the sole punishment is death. In the name of Tera Sheba, the All Knowing, a new brand of judgment is upon the land..."

With this, the first Fallen was pushed over and into the raging waters of the Canal. I could not believe my eyes. Death was reserved only for violent offenders, or Serfs, but never for Fallen guilty of minor crimes. A sickening feeling grasped my stomach, compounded by the roar of the crowd ringing in my ear.

I only heard the splash as the second Fallen meet his fate while I crawled away from the crowd, looking for a place to collect my thoughts. Yes, the Fallen are growing more numerous, but what does Tera Sheba wish to accomplish with these drastic measures? What of this Record? Is it all for naught?

These were my last thoughts as Puck dragged me away...





Mother of Memory: Eva and the Building of the Tribes

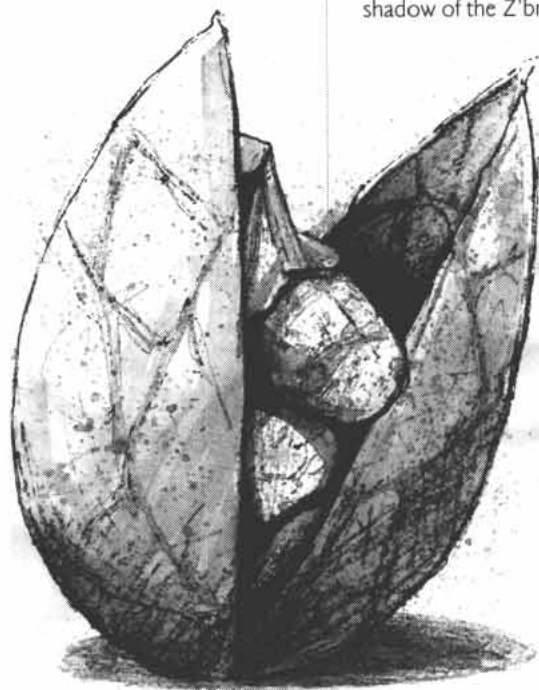
"My Child, having seen the past through the eyes of my Sister, travel south to where green groves and fruit trees bring us food. There, among those who understand the pulse of life, speak to Eva the Mother and Her Shamans, and record how the present was hewn from the past. Now go, My Child, and witness."

Shaken by the events of the last two days, I stayed with the Agnites for one more night. A solemn atmosphere took over the band, and no play was held that evening. By the following day, the gentle slopes and green fields of Sanctuary eased my heart, dulling the memories of the Camps and the executions.

A visit with the Evans is always a refreshing change of pace. Away from the dusty streets of Bazaar, the open fields and canals of Sanctuary fill one with peace and harmony. It seemed the whole tribe was there to welcome me: mothers, daughters and sons greeted me with a great feast, even Eva was present. From Her petals, foods, meats and honey-drinks flowed and Her tribe ate from their Fatima, Giver of Life. The Shamans spoke of the time right after the camps when the newly formed tribes ventured into the wilds of Vimary.

The First Steps

According to the Legend of Beginnings — the Evan holy scriptures — it was Eva who showed the tribes the lands that they were to call home. Like a mother would, Eva nurtured, teaching the survivors how to hunt and grow food, how to care for children and how to survive the glory of child birth and the long winters. In those days, the tribes were small and lived together learning from Eva. The Hunting Paths came into existence came into being, and everywhere wild creatures returned from beneath the shadow of the Z'bri.



It was then, while the tribes were young that Bazaar came into being. As the tribes moved apart, there arose a need for a central gathering place, and so with sweat and hard labor the shell of the World Before was draped with cloth from the tribes. Ruins were made habitable and shrines constructed. Everyone helped build the tribes' new home, and while most kept their homes in their tribal lands, Bazaar became a place of life and not ghosts. The construction's end coincided with the first Harvest after the Liberation and the first Feast of Salvation was held in Bazaar, a festival we still celebrate today.

While the day moved from light to night, the feast which the Evans held in my honor took on a new life. In darkness illuminated by bonfires, Shaman Walks-with-Clouds spoke of Eva's birth:

Of Flowers so Perfect

"For a time nothing grew in the Camps except decay and death. A sickness gripped the land and like leaves in the autumn we died and fell as the Z'bri culled us.

"And then, one day, a stranger came, a vagabond, chained and tortured by the Z'bri. In a small patch of earth he planted a simple seed. Those who watched called him a fool and laughed. But day after day the Stranger would care for the seedling, giving it what little water he had, covering it during the frigid winter. For you see, the Stranger believed that the barren soil could bear life again.

"One day, when the snows had left, the Stranger stood by his small plot. But there was nothing, no sapling, no bud. The crowd around him called him names, and seeing his failure they descended on him for they did not believe. With stones and clubs they spilt the Stranger's blood and it flowed into the earth.

"Then, as the Stranger died, the earth cracked and a single bud appeared. Slowly it opened, and as it opened all over the island trees and plants long silenced bloomed. Forests, thick and ancient grew from between ruins and concrete. And everywhere the songs of birds resounded across the island.

"Back in the Camp, Eva blossomed and everyone believed in Her for life had returned to Vimary."





The Harvest Massacre

As told by Xavier Yavith, Storyteller
of the Guild of Masks

"You think the Fallen are a new phenomena; true there's been more of them in the last few seasons, but

I remember a time, some dozen summers past when a small community near Griffentowne was banished. I hear say they might have even been Joshuans, you know, orphans of the Ravager, returning from beyond Vimary. They claimed

that Joshua was betrayed, you know the so called "prophecy of Joshua" bit, and they supposedly started attacking Griffentowne.

Tera Sheba sent Joan and Her Warriors to deal with the Fallen, but when the Joan arrived She did nothing. In the end it was Tera Sheba who ordered the Warrior to attack. Surprisingly not a single Fallen took up arms; instead, they let the warriors cut them down, leaving not a single one alive. I hear that was about the last time Joan spoke in public. Want another brew my sweet....?"

Love of the Fatimas: Magdalen the Lover

"My Child, travel to the wild and fragrant West Hill. Amidst palatial ruins and rose gardens find the bed of my Sister Magdalen the Lover. With Her feel the love that is just and right and understand the touch of one so pure. For the past is not immutable and constant, but fleeting the elusive like a lover's touch."

What could I possibly learn at Xstasis, I asked myself as I traveled the winding path to the palace of the Lover. It is no secret, we Shebans have little in common with the sensuous and emotional Magdalites, but like with all the tribes, they too have been witness to the past.

Upon my arrival, Dhara Ibenkin greeted me — the beautiful yet cold Chamberlain of Xstasis. She spent my first days with me, and took me about Magdalen's home. Never have I been dazzled by so many riches, everywhere I looked was a feast in the making. Music echoed in every room, and soft sweet smelling smoke filled my lungs. Many a time I had to fight the urge to give in, a fact Dhara found amusing:

"Why do you resist? Just let the sensations come to you. Fear not, though powerful and primitive our bodies are holy and sacred. To deny them is to deny the glory of the One Goddess and to forsake Magdalen the lover. You are a Lorekeeper, you should understand the folly of denying one of the Fatimas. Or is it, like so many of your tribe, that you have forgotten the balance of the Fatimas? You Shebans no longer guide, but lord your station over the rest of us, but do not think the One Goddess is not watching.

"Like Tera Sheba is stern, and Eva motherly, Magdalen is delicate and passionate. It was She who first taught us how to touch and feel after the camps. Many, including yourselves, call us hedonists and degenerates, but you must not forget that our bodies are part of the gifts the Seven Sisters gave to us. Come, you've heard the tale of the Seven Gifts. No? Listen, then:

The Seven Gifts

"Before the Fatimas, we were incomplete, broken and shallow. We knew nothing of freedom, and though the hardships our ancestors witnessed were horrible, it was the absence of love that proved devastating. We were empty vessels waiting to be filled by the light of the Fatimas. When Baba Yaga came, with Her came knowledge and wisdom. We learned how to think, how to read the stars and understand the cycle of life and death. We came to be. With Eva, the land grew green and fat. Tera Sheba gave us vision and insight, so that we might judge the world outside by the truth inside. Then came the Trickster, Dahlia, and with Her we learned how to laugh. Mary, silent and mournful, taught us the pain of grief and the joy of forgiveness. Joan and Joshua gave us strength and will. But even so we were incomplete, haggard from the talons of the Z'bri.

"From that darkness our bodies came, and Magdalen showed us that it all begins from within. To understand one's potential, to truly feel the love of the Seven Sisters, our bodies must first be worshipped and adored. Once we open ourselves, only then can the true love of the Fatimas enter our souls."

The Darkness of Truth: Tera Sheba

Like awakening from a dream, I found myself alone and cold. My head clouded by Magdalite potions — I did not know where I was, nor how I got there. Vimary was dark, ruins from the past standing like skeletons, and all about me the sounds of darkness echoed. The face of the Fallen floated in my mind like a ghost. The smell of rot and decay was strong in the air. Flashes from my journey into the Seed filled me with dread and, without thinking, I ran. I fled through streets and buildings, my naked feet bruised and cut as I ran and ran. From somewhere out of sight came a hideous cry that sent me into a fit. I knew, deep in my heart, that a Beast was coming.

And it did. It stepped out into the opening where I was. All I could see was its head and row upon row of chattering teeth, but I knew the shadows hid its true evil. I thought all lost, but then a curious thing happened. A breeze entered the clearing and with it the familiar scent of incense. The beast sensed this too, and stopped, gazed at me and receded into the darkness as Tera Sheba stepped out, Her lantern showering me with light. She turned to me and then to the Beast and said nothing. Strangely, the Beast seemed to nod and sank into the shadows, the Wise-Mother not needing to raise Her ax in the end.

"You need not worry my Child, for I have come. Now let us return and speak of the beasts and the present." With this, Tera Sheba lit the way back to Solitude and Vimary returned to its familiar shape by the glory of the Fatimas. Yet, I felt, that somewhere in the shadows the Beast still lurked...



The Birth of Judgment

"My Child your journey is half over, from the past you venture into the present, and there I welcome you to My Home. My Temple is truth eternal, and your devotion the flame that illuminates the world from the darkness of ignorance.

"Fear not that beast, for it knows the power and faith of my Sisters. Understand, then, that the Z'bri were once the harbingers of the One Goddess, a gift from the Seed sent to punish the faithless. But the Z'bri were not content with simply inflicting righteous judgment on the faithless. No, drunk with the power they wielded beyond the Fold, they broke away from the One Goddess wanting what the faithless spured — their flesh. The Beasts lashed out and the One Goddess turned Her back on Creation and judgment died as evil ruled. From this, the Camps were born, and chaos reigned.

"But the One Goddess had not forgotten her Children, and sent us and these words:

'To illuminate the darkness is your task, to give those that see the light a final chance at redemption. For this I send the Fates — mother, lover and sage of all — the Fist and the Shield, the Wild One, the Kind One and above all the Judge: To guide and punish, to make those who have forgotten remember no matter the cost, to keep the Corrupted Ones at bay, to punish those who forsake Me, for ignorance and heresy are darker Evils than that of the Z'bri. Doubt not the Judge for She speaks for Me.'

"These were the very words of the One Goddess, bestowed to Me while my other Sisters fought and destroyed the Z'bri.

The Forming of the Watch

As told by Marshal Bartholomew

"I am not arguing that Joanites are worthless, but face it, the Z'bri are a shade of their former horror. No need to man towers or train for crusades. With time, the Z'bri will die off and all will return to normal.

If not for Verra Thaim'on and us Shebans, the Joanites would be lost in the past. It was the formation of the Watch, under our watchful eye, that gave the Joanites a new mission among the tribes. It began simply enough, small cadres that protected

Judges from Squats or angry plaintiffs, but with time the Watch grew. People wanted to feel safe as they traveled Vimary, and Verra and the High Judges knew they needed

muscle to enforce the law. For a long time the Grand Council stalled, but then the Fallen started appearing. Tera Sheba Herself instructed the Council to approve the Watch and grant them its powers, and since then, they have been a visible reminder of the Wise-Mother's power in Bazaar.

"Each Cadre is manned by six Watchers, lead by the most senior of them. These Cadres are dispatched to patrol certain sectors of Bazaar under the direction of a Warden. Most Wardens are Joanites, good leaders but quick to pass judgment. At the very top each sector is overseen by a Marshal.

There are three of us, one for central Bazaar, one for the east all the way past Playground, and one in the west."

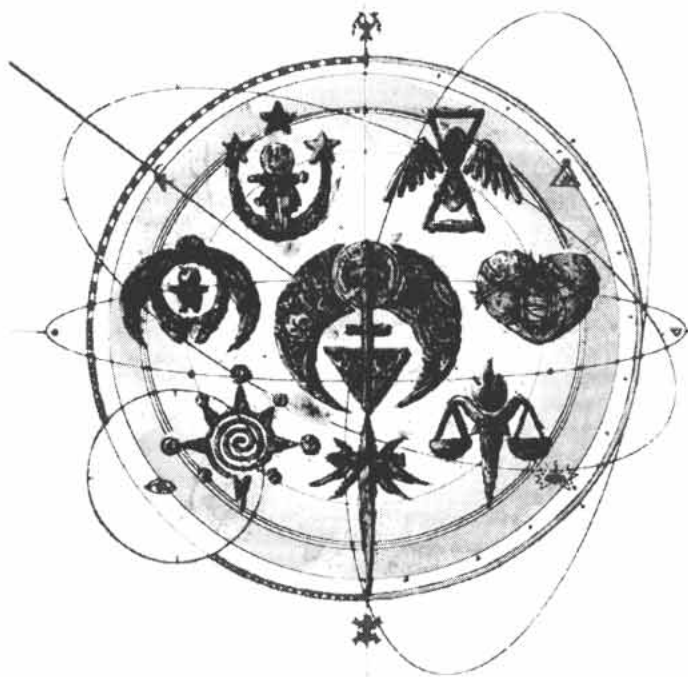
The Grand Council

"I took these words to my Children, and with them, the first Lorekeepers, of whom you are a descendant, founded the Archives. By the light of my lantern, they documented the Ending of the End, and the birth of the future. While bloody Revolts raged around us, I prepared my followers to guide the survivors — if they were to be any, for Redemption never comes easy — to reclaim the gifts of the One Goddess. My future Judges served as messengers and ambassadors to the other tribes, bringing together the Children of my Sisters for the first time. It was one such envoy who discovered the Keepers, and saw in them the taint of the World-Before. Some, the most trusted of my Children, learned the tongue of the Z'bri.

"My Children's accomplishments are not in the past, but in the present. It was I, in the Summers following the Liberation who placed in motion the foundations for the future — the laws and traditions by which the tribes gather and rule. It was I and My Judges who established the Grand Council, for without order and reason there is nothing in the end.

"According to my Decree, on crescent moon, the eldest and most respected members of the tribes would gather and discuss current issues and problems. There, under the silent guidance of My Sisters and I, the tribes learnt how to govern themselves. It is not our duty to mother you, only to guide and ensure your purity and faith. The two may seem, to you, to be one and the same but they are not. We are not masters, but Virtues to strive for, an ideal to show you the glory of the Righteous way of the One Goddess. At times we must step in and proclaim or denounce, but it is our divine duty and wisdom that propels us. Some of our mandates may be unpopular, but these are a small sacrifice compared to the darkness of the camps.

"This is the glory of me, the Wise-Mother, but not all remember the specter of the Z'bri.



The Z'bri

"True, the Liberation scattered the Z'bri, broke their inhuman hold on you, but their evil exists as long as there are those who do not believe in us. Their presence lurks in the hearts of those who turn away from Our Glory. The Fallen are outcasts, not for being heretics or blasphemers, but because their dark heresies awaken the Z'bri's hunger once more. You can see the effect of this throughout the land. More and more Z'bri hunt us, more of My Children, and those of My Sisters, die by the Beasts' claws. But it is the faithless Fallen who summon the Takers from the darkness of their own hearts.

"Indeed, in times past the beasts did attack us, but they were harbingers of difficult times. Remember the winged L'oath that terrorized Bazaar shortly before Mary's death, cutting down with its claws Her tribe, until there were a few left. Or the serpentine D'vron that prowled the waters of Solitude and that the Fisher King defeated. What has kept the beasts at bay is your love for us, take that love away and the beasts will return. This is something I will not tolerate, even if the Fallen were once our Children!

"Now go and witness. My Child, you now understand the truth about the Fallen and that a reckoning will soon be at hand."

Nightmares

Tera Sheba's words echoed in my dreams, and Her truth weighted heavily on my heart. I dreamt of that meeting with the Fallen witch in Mortuary, and wondered if this was all a trick of hers. I dreamt I stood on that bridge, being pushed over into the raging waters — not by Cylix but by Tera Sheba herself. The Fallen are lost souls, misguided and foolish, but in all my love for the Seven Sisters I could not see them as responsible for the Z'bri's return. As I write, my faith is shaken. Tera Sheba has never been wrong, Her judgment sound and pure, and yet the faces of the Fallen do not hide some dark evil. They are children born to peace and freedom, and all they see is the tribes as they are now and the past as a tale told by the old. To judge them so seems cold, and yet She must be right, but yet, I cannot forget the look on that Fallen's face as Cylix pushed him into the Canal.

Enough. My task of Chronicling the past has been a long one, and still much is left to document. It must be my exhaustion speaking. Tomorrow I'll set for the Archives and speak to the Custodian. I hope that by looking at the documents of the Liberation, and the glory of the Seven Sisters, that this darkness may pass over me. I'll look for answers in hopes of saving my faith.

Forgive me, Wise-Mother.





The First Rust Storm

As told by Sarah Verkin, Yagan

"You think the Rust Wastes have always been so, but they have not. For many summers the skeletons of steel rose in the east, attracting the curious. There, the first Keepers were found. Strange people, they taught the tribes how to use their machines. But the Fatimas did not like this, they reminded their followers of the evils of the World Before, and soon even the One Goddess showed Her displeasure with the machine-people. As if an invisible scourge arrived, the steel of the past withered and turned to rust. Soon, every surface was coated with the reddish-brown plague and the earth began to reclaim these blasted lands. Silent chimneys, hundreds of feet tall, fell, as did the many steel skeletons, and dust covered all and the Rust Wastes were born."

Masks: Dahlia the Trickster

"Then, after, travel to the One that is Many, the dancer of the Shadows and hear what She has to say. Now go and witness."

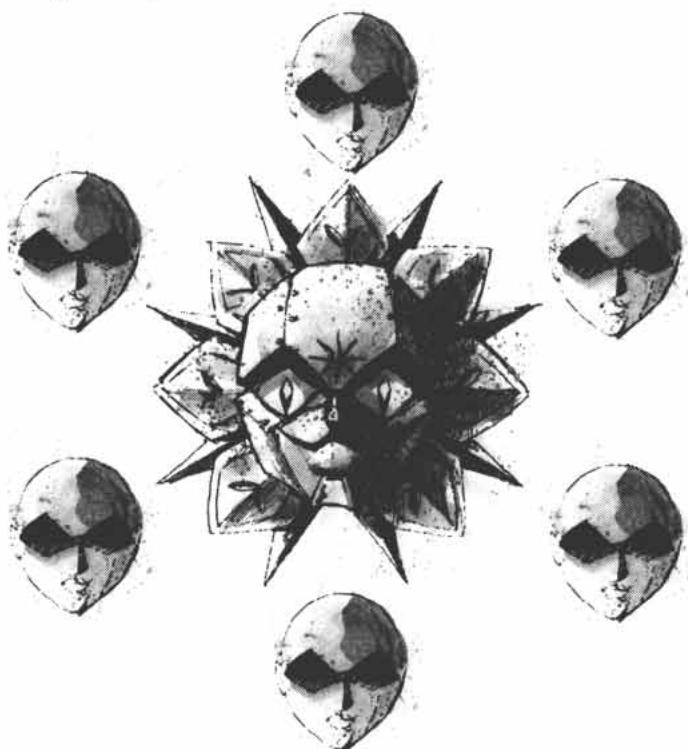
"So, you come to me," Dahlia spoke, rousing me from my dreams. All about me faces of the people I've known floated by, taunting me, "hoping to hear about the past, about how things happened or why?"

"Ahh, my little child, some things have no answers. You Shebans are so busy looking for clues or evidence that life flies by you. Look at you, in your prime, yet your eyes are old and dim. What a shame! I mean look at all this, why? You've traveled from tribe to tribe asking 'Why?' Child some answers are better left unknown — things just happen — no fate, or reason, they just do."

"Other things, however, happen for a reason. People lie, even I do and so do My Sisters. 'Why?' There you go again asking that question. Because we can, that is why. You look to us as perfect when we are not. What we are, are tools of the One Goddess. I hear all my Sister praise Her, but I know sadness and insanity when I see them. Look all around you, even the Evans are blind to this, the land is dying. You are dying, We are dying. But the truth hurts so we hide it."

"You're a sweet girl, I'd wish you were one of mine, then I would let you wander asking all the question you want. Alas, not even I can protect you. You and the tribes look to us, when it's to yourselves that you should look, and then maybe, just maybe, you could see the truth for what it is."

"Now, sleep and forget. The Sun will rise tomorrow and all will be fine. Or will it...?"



The Weight of Responsibility: Joan the Warrior

"My Child, to the Warrior-Mother go. There feel Her power and strength for it was Joan that guided us to Victory. Now go and Witness, and understand that without vigilance, all is for naught."

Tera Sheba's words haunt me, taunt me and yet, I do not trust them. So, I make my way to Joan in hopes that She, honest and honorable as a Warrior can dispel my despair in the Seven Fatimas and set the past right.

Seven Days, Seven Victories

I stand in a great hall, below me the Children of Joan fight and train, above them seven windows of colored glass, fused by careful hands, document the Liberation. The first shows the defeat of R'Zor lord of the Arena. Its body broken and bloodied surrounded by the first of Joan's mighty tribe. The second, third and forth illustrate the Great Crusade as Joan leads Her Warriors to the other camps; first to the Age of the Flesh camp where Baba Yaga greets the Warrior; then to Eva's Symmetry of the Flesh camp and finally to Magdalen's Rose of the Flesh. There the three Fates knight Joan as defender of the tribes.

The Fifth shows Joan standing before the army of the tribes. Among them the glorious Uhanna, the famed hunter and favorite of Joan. You can see the special place She has for her as she carries the Fatima's shield into battle for Her. Glorious Joan looks to the horizon, to the Ziggurat and the war is taken to the Z'bri. The Sixth, sees Joan and Tera Sheba. Where before Joan stood tall and powerful, now she kneels to the Mother of Tradition and Law and asks for Her Blessing before storming the Z'bri stronghold. Behind Joan, Her finest warriors kneel as well: the archer Fera; the towering pillar of Kilborne, a man known to uproot trees through brute force alone; the slender Guylaine, expert sword master and the first Weaponshaper. Only Uhanna stands, half cloaked in shadows.

The Seventh and final window is both the beginning and the end. The End of the Z'bri, as Joan leads the survivors away from the burning Ziggurat, and the Beginning of the tribes. While the Seven Fatimas and their tribes look forward, Joan looks back, to a broken helmet on the ground — the only depiction of Joshua the Ravager in the entire monument to the Liberation.





Denial

I burn with questions, but Joan will not grant me an audience. The Warrior-Mother has not spoken to anyone in seasons, carrying out Her duty in solemn silence, but I must know. Why is there no mention of Her brother? What happened that night when the Z'bri lost the war?

Her Templars refuse to speak to me, and only the aging Nostra Guy'on is willing to allay my fears. Funny, I thought of all Joanites as young and powerful, but Guy'on tells me of the Old Guard — the heroes of yore who now guide the tribe. Nostra spoke of the last days of the Liberation as a glorious fight between Tibor and Joshua. That as Joan and Her tribe attacked the outer parts of the Ziggurat, Joshua and a handful of warriors found a path inside and surprised the Z'bri Lord. Steel and faith fought flesh and evil and for hours a titanic struggle raged throughout the halls of the Z'bri palace. In the heat of the battle, Joan left to find Her brother, but arrived only to see Tibor gut the Fatima. Joan's rage knew no bounds, she descended on Tibor, distracting it enough for Joshua to strike a final blow before the One Goddess called Him back. But is this the truth?

I ask about the last days of Joshua, but I only get vague supplications to the Lost Fatima.

I begin to see the pain Joan feels to this day for the loss of Her Brother. A pain that must be aggravated by the manner in which the tribes have forgotten Joshua the Ravager. I now realize that Tera Sheba has never referred to Him by name, and it is only the Fallen who have, in the last seasons, spoken of Joshua. Why the shame? the secrecy? What truths are being hidden by the Seven Sisters?

I now end the Chronicle of the Tribes, for it begs too many questions. Did Tera Sheba intend this to happen, did She foresee my doubts and is testing me? I have witnessed the past, only to find questions that have no answers, maybe the time has come to witness the present, to speak with those that claim to see the truth. I must find out if the Fallen's claims are true, if not to set the past right, then to give the future a chance. Only the words of the Fallen Witch echo now.

I wanted to ask Tera Sheba so many questions. What of Mary? What did happen to the gentlest of the Fatimas? Did the Wise-Mother condone Cylix's actions or was he operating without Her blessing? If it is true, that the Fatimas are heralds of the One Goddess, then why would they condemn so many to death and banishment? They say the Fallen are responsible for the Beasts' return, but why did Joan not destroy all the Z'bri after Her brother's death? There are no answers to these questions among the tribes. They will brand me a heretic, but the answer to these questions only the Fallen know, for they have seen the tribes with eyes uncluttered by fear and faith. To them I now turn and hope for guidance.

Epilogue: The Future

It's been three days since I left Vimary. I know that while I write this Tera Sheba and the Watch are looking for me. My sentence will be short and my punishment swift. For now, though, I am still one of the Lorekeepers. Tera Sheba's vengeance cannot take that away from me until I am banished. The words that follow are my last, and they come after speaking to one of the Fallen, Veruka the Wraith:

"And so you return, to where it all began. You spoke to Faust my husband and I can still feel his words in your head. How I miss him, but there is always a price to pay for freedom, as you will find out. You searched for the truth, but Tera Sheba hoped that your love for Her and Her sisters would drown their lies, that it would make you blind and report only what She willed. But in you, as in all those whom you once called Fallen, lies a spark that helped you see with clear eyes — to question what many accepted as the truth. In the process you discovered what real faith is all about.

"You know the Z'bri are a threat, you have proof, yet the tribes and the Fatimas ignore them. Why? Then there is the question of the truth behind Joshua's death and Mary's sacrifice. Did Joshua lay down his life for His Sisters, or was He betrayed? The answers to these questions are out there, hidden in half-truths and memories, and it is our role to reclaim them. The search is long, you've only just embarked but the journey will one day end and your destiny be complete. Now, however the first tentative steps lay before you.

"The Fatimas, I know, have a role to play and are avatars of the One Goddess. Yet, I also know that they have lost their way. Some call us heretics, rebels or criminals, but we have seen the path we must take. The Fatimas time is over, the camps are history as your account shows and the future lies unclaimed. The time has come, Young Chronicler, for us 'Children' to take the reigns of our own fate. The Fatimas were not our salvation; that is yet to come. No, the Fatimas were there to give us hope and freedom, and now that we have both it is time to venture forward.

"In time you'll understand, and when you do there will be a whole future for you to Chronicle. The past, well, that's all behind, look to the horizon for answers...

"For without a future, there can be no past and it might just be that our hopes lie not in looking to what has been, but to what will be..."



Chapter 3:

Book XV, Chapter I

We Seven provided a home for our tribes, a holy land where they could thrive under our care. Our tribes were the new inheritors of the Earth and they needed a new garden in which to grow, one that would give them hope for the future, but still remind them of the errors of generations past. We made this home theirs and they worshipped us in it.

Such was born Vimary, the isle of the tribes.

— Baba Yaga, The Ashen Tale



Foreign Echoes

From the memoirs of Ann Ansi, Dahlian spy:

I am an enemy of the beasts and a spy who uses their vices against them. So quick are they to accept human frailty, that never once do they think I am a prisoner of my own volition. Tonight my errand was doubly hard, for as spy, I had to watch good people die because I needed information. So I hung against the wall alongside my fellow captives, awaiting death's entrance.

Miscreant, a Z'bri sky-lord living in an isolated tower high above Bazaar, scurried into the room on five pairs of legs. Adorned in nothing but naked flesh pulled taut over fat, he giggled gleefully and clicked his long fingernails together like a plotting spider. His ten legs, some different colors, shifted and moved around, balancing the large mass above them. The legs belonged to people trapped within Miscreant's large frame who breathed and ate through pipe bones erupting from the Z'bri's back. All these poor Serfs could see was a soup of internal viscera. How he commanded them, I didn't know, and I didn't want to learn.

In the room, along with Miscreant, were eleven prisoners, including myself. We were shackled to muscle-covered walls by braided veins. In our current predicament, our former affiliations meant nothing. Agnite, Yagan, Keeper, Squat or Fallen, we were equal now through circumstance. In the past week, each of the others had had their bones snapped through torque pressure, their limbs pulled away like taffy and their bodies defiled through the multiple genitalia lining Miscreant's underside. I was spared this only because of my recent arrival. The prisoners retained their resolve through it all, however, and endured the beast's attention like good soldiers. Again I felt guilty, for I might have been able to save them, but I needed what they knew, as did Miscreant.

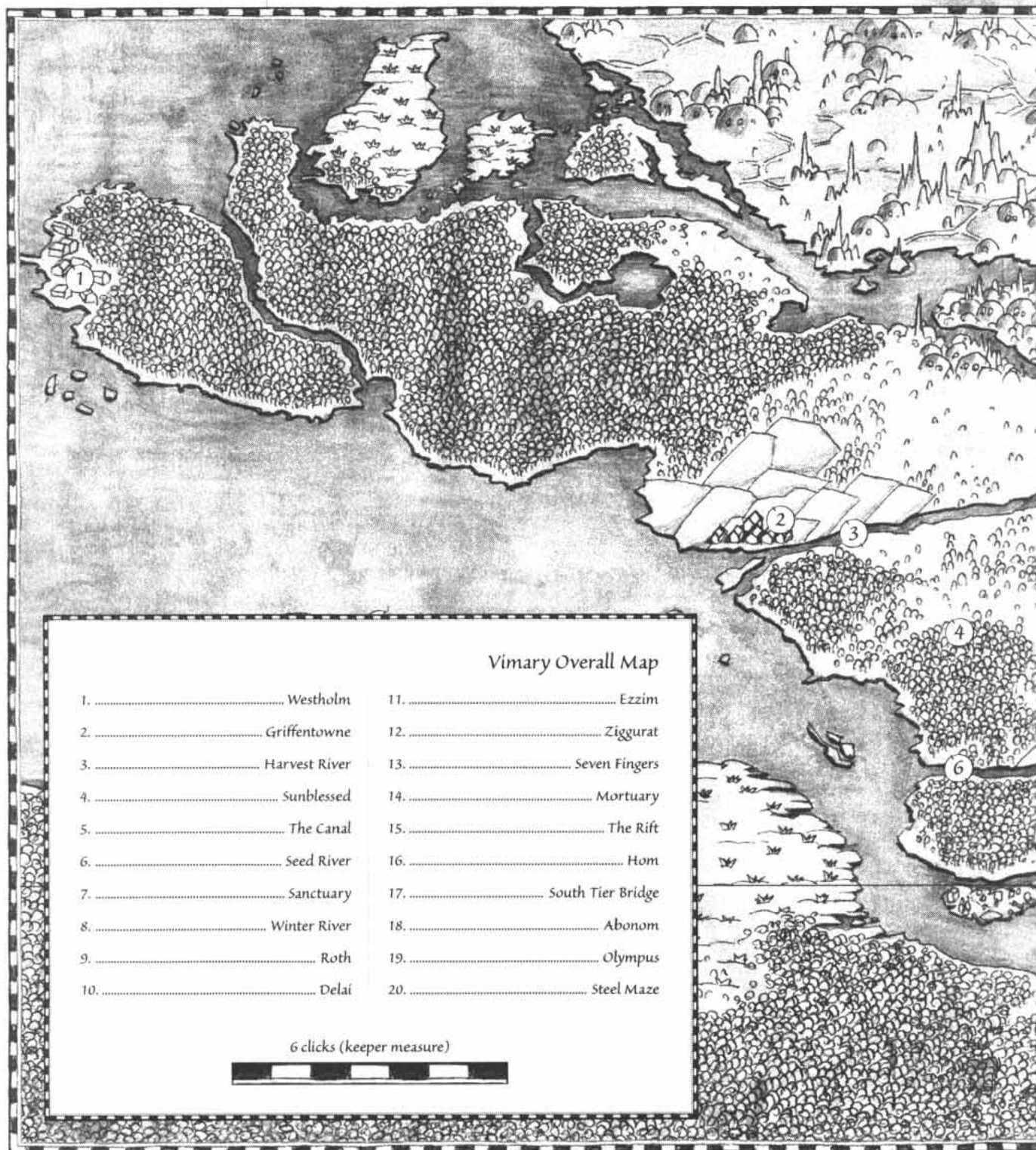
Strongest of the prisoners was Miral, a Joanite warrior of dark stock. Her eyes, the color of wild grass, sparkled like gems despite her bruised and swollen face. "Chuckle all you want beast," she hissed, "your tortures will bring you no satisfaction this day."

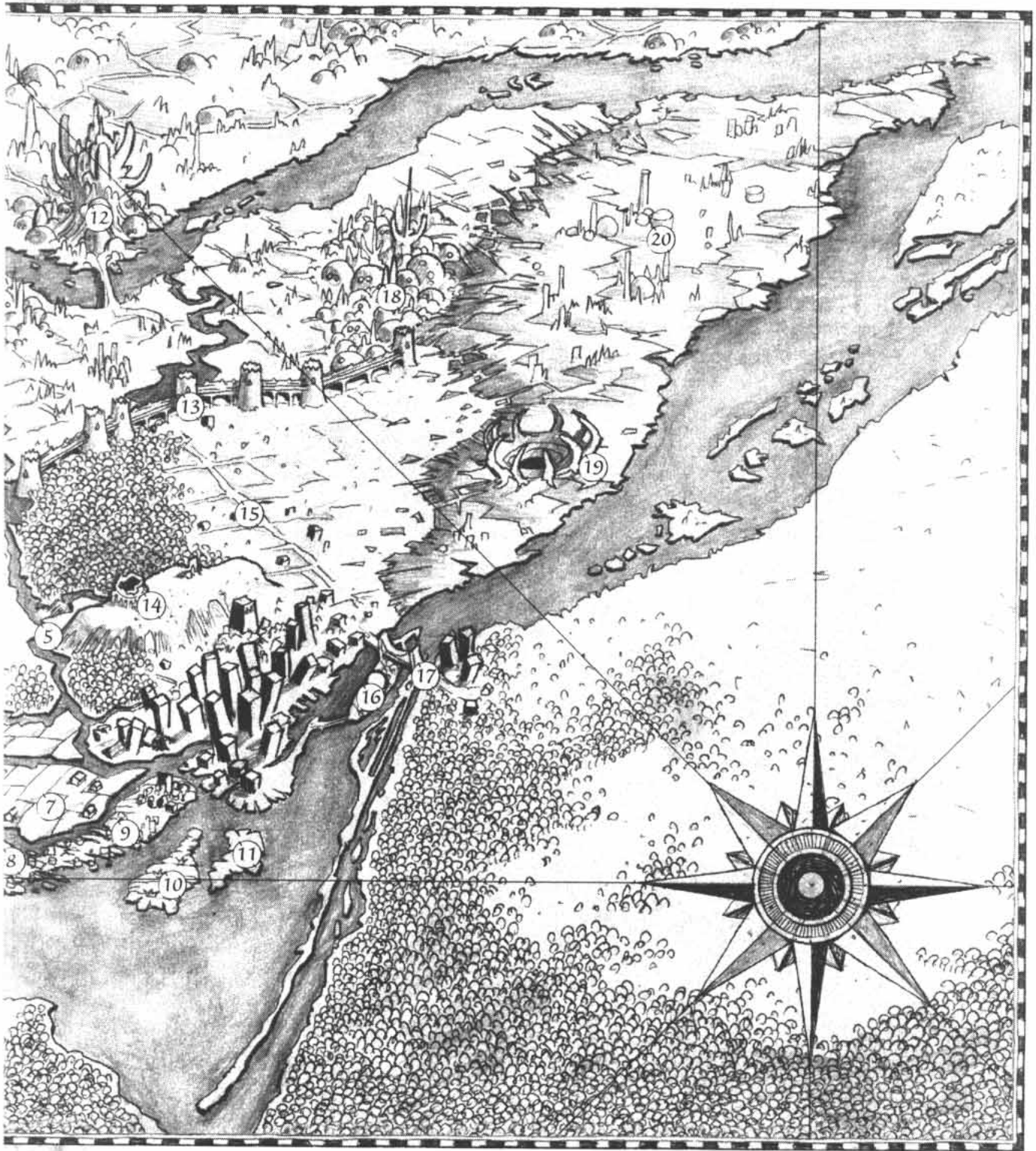
Miscreant spun around like a top, laughing in dog-like barks and threatening to stumble over his own legs. "Torture?" he cried in a shrill voice, "I brought you pleasure m'dear. I don't need torture to loosen your eager tongues." Giggling, Miscreant wiped his eyes, though in truth I suspected he could no more shed tears than a human could cry droplets of fat. He drew closer to Miral. "I need no torture to gain your secrets, lass. The voice may be mine, but the words that betray your precious Fatima will come from your thoughts, your knowledge." Miscreant then opened his arms with a flourish. The folds of skin on his thick neck parted like a blossoming flower greeting the morning sun. Miral squirmed, but her bonds held her with a steel grip. She grunted in terror.

Slowly, the Z'bri's long tongue, stringy voice box and vocal chords slithered out of his new orifice. Miscreant extended his arm towards Miral's face as the saliva-wet organs slithered down his chest and around his outstretched arm like a snail. His fingers suddenly splayed wide; Miral's mouth snapped open, the jaw dislocated under the beast's power. Miscreant's animated parts leapt into the Joanite's mouth and slid down her throat. He closed his hand, clamping Miral's jaw shut, cutting off her scream. A moment later, she opened her mouth about to speak, but instead, out came Miscreant's chuckle. Miral's eyes widened as she tried to say something, but, none of her own words manifested. She could no longer control what she said. "Your words," the alien organs inside her whispered, "my voice."

Miscreant sighed and waited for his own organs to regenerate. "Tell me," he finally said, "everything you know about your portion of the island: secrets, interesting locations, good inns. Everything. And, oh yes," he added with a splitting smile, "tell me in your own words."

We watched in horror as Miral unwillingly betrayed her tribe and nation. We watched in horror because we understood we would be next. All the secrets of Vimary exposed because of us, exposed for all Z'bri to exploit. Guilt gutted me, for I did not pray for Miral's soul, but to be last. That way the others would already be dead and I would not have to share my shame with them... the shame of knowing I could have saved them, and did not.





3. Vimary Revisited

Tribal Lands

From the forced confessions of Miral Jacobi'on, Blade of Joan:

From the flooded memories of the Stone Shores to the towers of the Seven Fingers, the tribes claim the lands between for many reasons. There is safety in numbers, and the tribes of seven are one when it comes to solidarity. We are brothers and sisters joined through the grace of the savior Fatimas, and only united do we stand strong. Therefore, proximity to one another serves our mutual defense. In truth, though, our location reflects a longing to remain close to our past. The skeletal towers of Bazaar and the adjoining ruins show us that we once lived without Z'bri shadows to chill our souls. They are also reminders that the sins of the World Before brought the Z'bri blight. We try to remember this dual legacy by dwelling within Vimary's monuments, thus honoring and cursing our ancestors. With time, however, we have made Bazaar and the tribal lands uniquely ours; only ghosts live in the past and we are not dead.

Each area reflects the nature of the residing Fatima. Where our ancestors once conquered the world by drowning it beneath lakes of "sea-ment" and stabbing it with steel pillars, we now use Synthesis to change our environment. We never committed the atrocities our ancestors must have been capable of to build such cold monuments. Instead, we bring life to the killing fields of the past, slowly covering the legacy of the time before the End.



Bazaar

From the forced confessions of Fallhawk, Evan Shaman

Every home needs a place of gathering, where children share their parents' day and the parents, in turn, watch their children play. Each tribe has its homeland, and that is as it should be. There must also be a place where all can meet under a common sky and share stories, exploits and goods. Such is Bazaar, a gift of the Mother Eva so that all Her children come together as families should.

Few outside Eva's children know this, but She chose the location of Bazaar for more than one reason. Yes, the site was practical. Unlike the rest of Vimary, many buildings remained standing within the city's ancient core. When winter bites down hard upon the land, they're natural places of refuge from the sharp cold. The other reason, however, was that the buildings scattered throughout Bazaar remind us of the lessons of the past. Certainly, Eva would prefer we remain closer to the trees and grass, where life is abundant, but then we would quickly forget the stories of the past. By living amongst the skeletons of Vimary, we remember her sins and the dark journey that brought the Z'bri to us. It is the Mother's quiet lesson.

Nestled within the ruins of ancient Vimary, Bazaar is a collage of tarp-covered avenues and merchant stalls choking every street. It is a difficult place to explain, because it is a maze of interior passages, exterior streets and suspended bridges. The thick traffic and rune-decorated walls reflect the individual touch of each tribe. Yagan Witches sell trinkets to comfort the ancestral dead; Evan farmers sell their freshest crops from wagons; Shebans walk the streets, judging everyone with piercing stares. Every street is a new story unfolding, but if the exterior seems chaotic, then the Emporiums are worse. Hidden away within the miles of winding, twisting passages, Magdalite concubines ply their trade within the hollowed alcoves, Agnite children run rampant and often underfoot, and the Dahlians use the torch-scattered shadows to enhance their illusions.

Dahlia's Secret

From the memoirs of Ann Ansi, Dahlian spy:

Fewer than few know, but Dahlia loves the Bazaar. It is Her personal caravan and run by a Little Trickster named Anaky. It is the trick of tricks, a caravan that moves and moves, but goes nowhere. It is a reflection of the island of Vimary, a bubble of reality that lives within itself, never going beyond its confines. Dahlia has made it her own personal project filled with actors from Anaky's cell, the Hidden Caravan. They take different roles in a Bazaar-wide performance. One day they're the thieves robbing you blind, the next they're the merchants selling you forbidden artifacts. Dahlia occasionally uses Her illusions to turn Bazaar into a festival of senses, the grandest trick, sleight-of-hand on a tribal scale. People don't know this, but their faces may change in a crowd. Notice how you sometimes lose friends in the span of an eye-blink; that's because they're somebody else, but don't know it. Obviously this does not occur on a daily basis, but Dahlia creeps up on you when you aren't watching and suddenly involves you in a game.

See pp. 88-89 for more information on Anaky and the Hidden caravan.



The Upper World

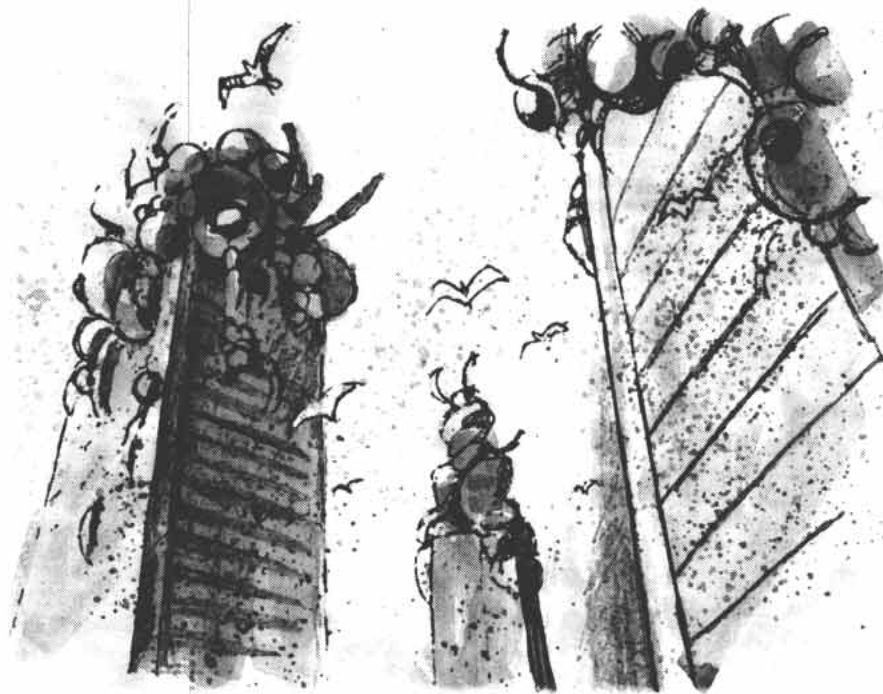
From the forced confessions of Fallhawk, Evan Shaman

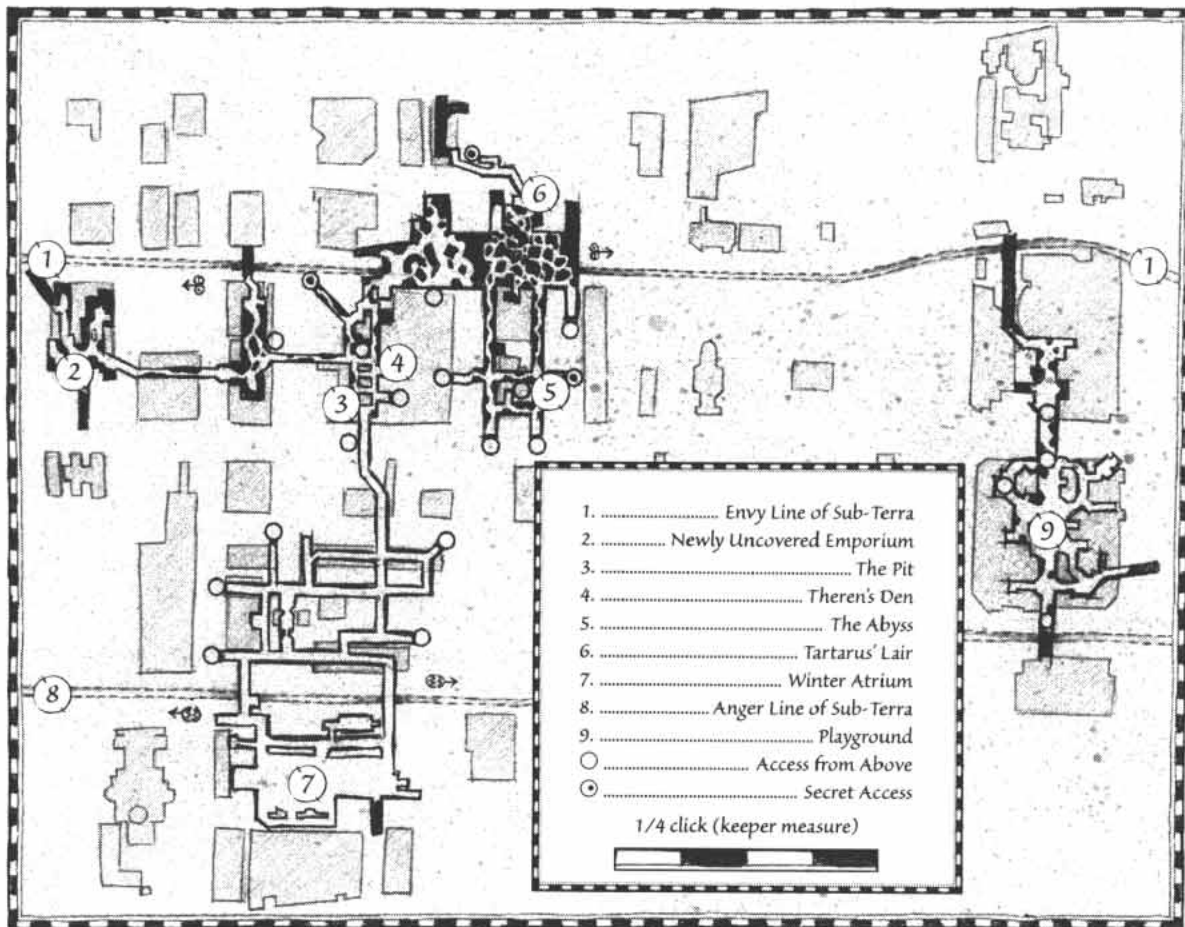
Bazaar can be quite overwhelming. Unlike other settlements throughout Vimary, which spread out and along the ground like grass, Bazaar exists skyward and below as well. True, many buildings are metal skeletons often twisted by age and the weight of past winters, but there are entire structures with intact exterior walls. Such buildings have three levels and serve as homes to many.

The levels on or below ground are extensions of Bazaar. Those with large interior atriums that span an entire street have become sheltered walkways for traffic crossing through the building. During winter, giant tarps cover the open wall entrances to keep the interiors warm with fire. The four to five levels above the street are home to those who live outside tribal lands. They scour out the interior chambers, turning them into small homes, taverns and even inns. Despite winter's chill, however, building dwellers prefer to live closer to the gutted exterior walls, where they can see the outside world or enjoy a breeze of fresh air. Those living closer to the building's interior core are normally Yagans, Magdalites or the rare Dahlian — essentially those who prefer shadow over light.

The second level is also marked by dozens of make-shift bridges connecting the various buildings. Rope and wood bridges, ramps of rubble, and crossbeams all serve as avenues of travel between structures. In one particular area, a group of Agnites have created a wall of "autos" to create a bridge between two of the larger building settlements. I've seen the structure and it's impressive. They overlapped autos and reinforced the structure in such a way as to create small arches for street-traffic to pass through. I've heard the Keepers have done the same in the Rust Wastes, though I also hear their walls serve a different purpose.

The final level of the building, normally those that are higher than five stories, are the Skyrealms. Although true of only a handful of structures, the tribes rightfully see these buildings as cursed. They are homes to outcast Z'bri, also known as Sky-Lords. Renegade or not, they still indulge their foul tastes on our flesh, and have turned the top-most floors of these buildings into sanctuaries of depravity. Before coming here, I had heard of things such as boxes that transport people up and down levels through shafts of pulsating muscles, and pools filled with liquefied victims. I have seen far worse than the stories implied. I have seen blood that crawls up walls and sheets of bones stretched so fine that it was like gauze.





Emporiums

The Emporiums are a series of spaces built or connected to the underground. They run for clicks beneath ancient Vimary, and despite what anyone says, they remain an unclaimed mystery. For every used alcove, there remain ten others, hidden in undiscovered branches; for every explored passageway, the Keepers hide another dozen for themselves. Still, the Emporiums are large enough to house Bazaar during the winters.

Time has collapsed portions of the Emporiums, hiding many mysteries from prying eyes. Of the structures we know of, however, there are three central areas in the Emporiums. By surface, they are a short walk from one another. Within the winding passages of the underground, the journey is longer.

The first structure is the Winter Atrium, a huge, indoor arena filled with giant tunnels that lead to the wilderness outside the Bazaar. The Keepers claim this place housed enormous autos that could carry hundreds of people on roads of metal bars. I find the notion too incredible to believe, but I must admit the Winter Atrium does seem to be a place of waiting. Still, the ceiling is high and the corridor-atrium long enough to house hundreds of merchant stalls. Leather tarps cover the few holes in the roof, and giant fires warm the air, shrouding the high ceiling with clouds of smoke and blackening the walls. Because of the tunnels, farmers from Griffentowne can bring their wares to Bazaar during most weather conditions. For this reason alone, the Winter Atrium is the best place to buy food, whether grains or freshly slaughtered cattle.



Tartarus, The Infernal Engineer

A Melanis count, Tartarus escaped when the Z'Bri Baron rose to power. Unlike his fellow exiles, he shunned the Skyrealms and took to Vimary's subterranean hovels. He has remained in the Abyss for nearly a generation now. The unfortunate few who find his home become victim of his pet Skuller.

Tartarus has always been fascinated by machines and trades with certain Keepers. Despite Tartarus' talent, however, he still cannot fashion a purely mechanical device. His machines are always organic in nature. Screaming boxes, a camera of human eyes and other such artifacts litter his home. His workshop is a ghoulish discovery for the unwary.

Highlights: Curious, odd, prodding

Attributes: CRE +2, KNO +2, PER +1, WIL +2, STA 30, ULD 3, AD 3

Skills: Dodge 2/+1, Hagglng 1/0, Human Perception 1/0, Investigation 3/+1, Lore (The Abyss) 3/+2, Notice 1/+1, Sneak 2/+1, Survival 2/+2, Techlore (Mechanics) 2/+2, Tinker 2/+2, Trade 1/+2, Sundering (Animation) 4

The second largest area in the Emporium is the Pit. This tower extends above and below ground, linking it with the Winter Atrium through small tunnels. The area between the two is heavily trafficked. The Pit extends three floors above the street and two below. Within, the levels are like giant ledges overlooking the empty core of the building. At the lip of these ledges, one can see all the way up through the broken glass ceiling, or all the way down, where oily waters flood the basement level. Merchants of all kinds crowd the ledges with their wares. A constant din of screaming sellers and haggling buyers fills the interior with the echoes of life. Winter amplifies this affect to a grating degree. Of particular note is the infamous Theren's Den, located at the top level of the Pit. Shielded by the curtains of creeper-vines growing through the broken ceiling, Theren's Den is brothel, inn and tavern all in one. Equipped with four smaller levels of its own, each is an experience of the senses. The first level of Theren's caters to all tribes and holds a small tavern. The level above it is the inn proper, with a separate chamber for the Keeper Khronos. He uses an ancient device that shows a mosaic of moving pictures, leaving his audience to ponder the past. Personally I think he is in league with the Dahlians, and shows nothing but illusions of a world that never existed. The top floor of Theren's is a brothel that employs Magdalites. I have heard it is a maze of tiny rooms separated by nothing but flimsy curtains.

To the east of the Pit lies a number of tunnels and tiny Emporiums that are rarely used. Age has collapsed these sections, leaving the Agnites to lord over the ones left intact. These are the domains of Playground. The only exception is the third largest area within the Emporiums, The Abyss. This market is in ruins. The building atop it collapsed, destroying a large section of the underground as well. What remains is a network of cramped tunnels and caverns either dug out from the refuse or spared the cave-in. Appropriately enough, the Fallen use this market, trading with Squats from the Discarded Lands, Keepers from the Rust Wastes and with those who cannot find what they need in Bazaar. It is a dark place, well suited for the illegal happenings that transpire here. The Watch have been ineffectual in driving the vermin out from the maze-like Abyss. One could live here for many summers and still get lost in its many corridors and passages. Few shops remain in one place for long, and the clientele knows better then to walk around unarmed. I have even heard a rumor that a Z'bri makes its home here. I would not be surprised. The Abyss is the place of choice for clandestine rendezvous and dark errands.

I have also heard recently, that new Emporiums have been uncovered further west, but because the Agnites discovered them, they are trying to lay claim to them as well.

Council Ruins

From the forced confessions of Miral Jacobi'on, Blade of Joan:

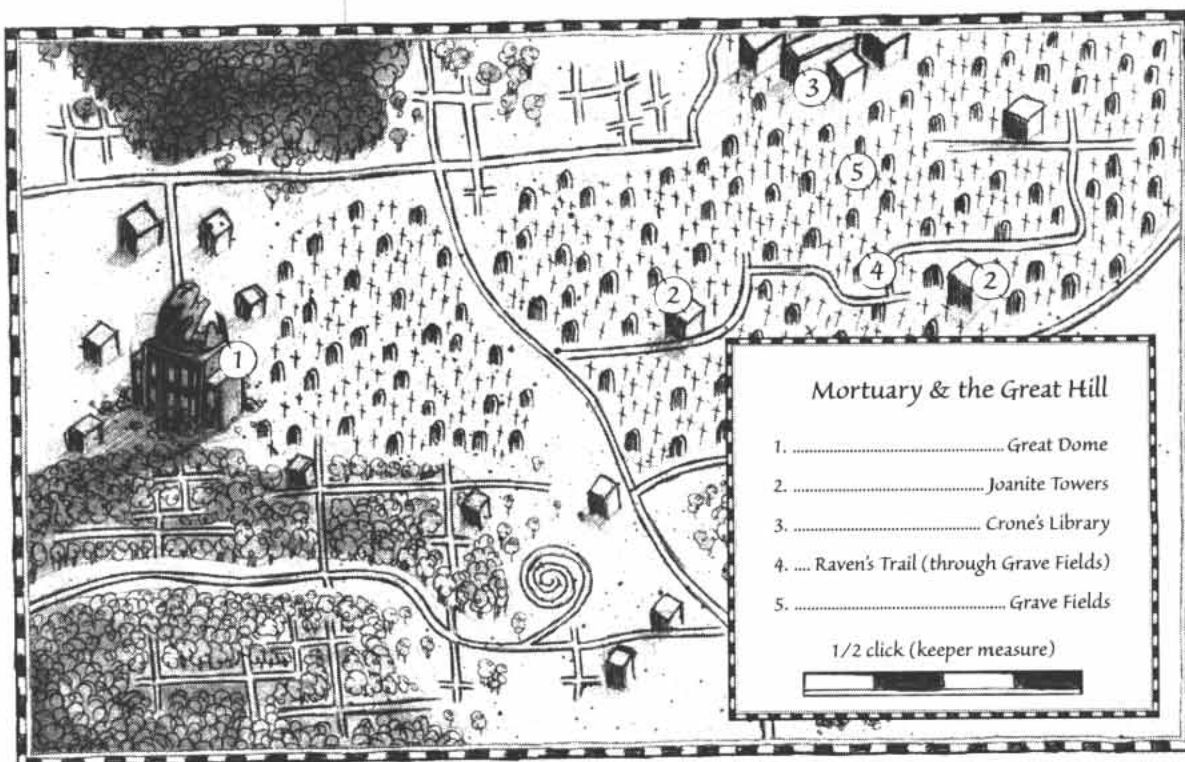
The Council Ruins, home to the Grand Council of the Seven Tribes, sit on the southern slopes of the Great Hill on territory claimed by Joan. Protected by my tribe-mates, the Grand Council and the other tribal councils meet within these walls, whispering and arguing quietly over the agendas and current concerns of their respective tribes. The Ruins consist of a wide variety of low buildings and several large towers. Each bears the scars of time, but also the markings of the tribes. Effigies of the Fatimas, holy glyphs and tribal banners mark the Ruins as ours. The Ruins are a symbol of our nation as a whole.

Nevertheless, like many places throughout Vimary, no matter what we do to claim the Ruins, they still refuse to surrender their memories. Whether these are tricks of my mind or something shared by those who walk its halls, I have never felt wanted there. It feels like a reminder that we are not its builders, therefore not its owners, therefore not welcome. Despite its dignity, some wonder whether we should not simply give this place over to the Yagans and have them dedicate it as a memorial. I think it would be better this way.

The Grand Council meets in the Tower of the Tribes, a high circular edifice that hugs the side of the Great Hill. Once divided into many floors, the interior is now largely hollow, forming a massive amphitheater where the tribal luminaries meet and the Fatimas have been known to tread. Lower down the Hill lie the buildings used by attendants and those tribal councils that choose to meet here. Among these lower buildings stands the Red Goal, the cracked prison where those to be banished await judgment by the Grand Council. It is on the open field before this edifice that Fallen are cast out. Many avert their eyes from this spot when passing through the Ruins. I know I do.

We Blades of Joan claim that the Council Ruins are fully secure from attack, but I have to admit that they are not. Indeed, we've uncovered a complex network of tunnels under the entire area, some of which connect to the Underlands beneath Bazaar. We guard all known accesses, but we have uncovered evidence of Keepers and Yagans entering the area without our knowledge. When we reclaimed the Ruins, many of the ancient relics there were destroyed or moved to Solitude for safekeeping. There are still many vaults containing old texts and ancient machines about, however, and these attract Keepers like flies to a corpse.





The Great Hill

From the forced confessions of Delisa Kerithkin, Yagan Mordred

What can I tell a Z'bri of death? It inflicts it, yet does not understand it. Yes, I see your impatience, but your tongue cannot hold back the truth forever, and I am far stronger in will than the others you've tortured before me. Still, no amount of knowledge will save you from Baba Yaga. She will kill you for the secrets you've stolen from Her.

I look upon the Great Hill and, for a moment, feel closer to my ancestors from the World Before. I wonder if they saw the hill the same way I do, a forest-covered mountain that surpasses all buildings in height save for when Mortuary stood tall, before the dome shattered like glass. The feeling of kinship is fleeting, for I know that my ancestors were too busy slaughtering one another to care. Even then, though, the Great Hill was a mountain rising from the center of Vimary like a fist. A gnarled, thick forest now enshrouds it, from base to crest, hiding the dozens of paths and ruins from Bazaar.

You enter a new world beneath this canopy. Eva has seen to it that the thick crown of trees discourages sunlight from touching the moss-covered ground. We Yagans are appreciative of the Great Hill's cool twilight, though we still prefer the greater darkness of the underground. Walking the ancient paths, or even diverging from them is often a thrilling experience. Although Eva has done much to cover the World Before, you can still see a wall hidden beneath the strangling roots of an oak, or find the rare stair half-submerged in the ground. Unfortunately, venturing from the paths is a dangerous endeavor, for the canopy hides more than just the past. Z'bri monstrosities trapped behind the Joanite towers hunt for food. Since trees clutter every step of the Great Hill, it is difficult to see beyond a few paces. It is an easy place lay an ambush, and an even easier way to meet death.

Mortuary

We live in the Mortuary, the house of the dead, on the north slope of the Great Hill. In truth, Mortuary is far more than one structure; it is all the funeral towers in our dominion, and the cemeteries on the mountain crest. The whole region is filled with our hidden passages, made from ancient crypts and tunnels. Even the gnarled woods serve us, hiding secret chambers and ritual circles. Mortuary is a world unto itself, but there are several places that stand out in my mind and that of any good Yagan.

The Great Dome is often thought by outsiders to be the whole of Mortuary. It was once a glorious building that surpassed the mountain in height. Time ate at its walls, as it does with all things, and collapsed the dome upon itself. Still erect are two towers and a pillar-lined facade that rests atop the roof of a single-level building. A pair of curved stairs flank either side of this structure.

Hundreds of birds, giant ravens and crows really, roost along the dome's cradle, windows and ledges. Atop the rubble, within the dome's base is Baba Yaga's Burial Pile. It remains open to the sky, a mound of personal belongings, bones and other remains of the dead that we find and give to the Fatima. This is where Baba Yaga dwells. When she is tranquil, she communes with the spirit carriers, the ravens and crows. The Yagans often come here and listen to her spider web whispers as they gently echo off the cradle's walls. If you are fortunate, you can grasp at a word or sentence as it drifts past you. When Baba Yaga manifests, however, her body forms from the Burial Pile as a whirlwind of bones, artifacts and bird caws. When she appears, all Yagans come to commune with their Fatima and to listen to Her words.

The Grave Fields spread eastward from the Dome, the land covered in ancient tombs and dark growth. These are our most holy lands, holier still than the Hunting Grounds further north. Here we see the Crone at work: trees bring life from the dead bodies in their graves, yet the tombstones remain for us to ponder the lives that have passed. Life from Death and Wisdom from Death — Baba Yaga is great indeed. To walk the paths among these fields is to invite visions of the past and glimpses of the future. The Raven Trail is the most sacred of paths, and the most dangerous. Old wood and granite gravestones form tight walls along its sides, but the sigils on the tombs change from visit to visit and new openings appear along the path. The sigils often provide warnings about the future, while the openings lead either to hidden crypts, deep tunnels or into the River of Dream itself. But dark creatures lurk here as well, product of our own fears and misdeeds. Every Yagan must walk the Raven Trail once in her life, and some refuse to ever do so again. The Old Ones walk it as a matter of course.

The whole of Mortuary hides a variety of crypts and mausoleums that we use as shrines and living spaces. Some house only a single family, others are complex structures serving other purposes. We keep the rolls of flesh-parchments here as well, away from the hungry ravens. The Pellis Artisans maintains most skins in their guild-home, the Crone's Library. A large crypt, with many sub-level, the Library lies at the end of the Raven Trail, but is thought to be inaccessible to those who do not meet the Artisans' approval. Other skins hang in the Dome and in the Council Ruins.



Adrian the Penitent

Once, in happier times, Adrian Uhan'on, served Joan alongside his older sister Shera (see *Tribe 8 Rulebook*, p. 56). Unfortunately, Adrian never possessed his sister's courage, and fled from combat when his patrol set upon a Chained Z'bri on the Great Hill. Only he survived, and only because of cowardice. To double his shame, Adrian lied about the event, confiding only in his sister. Shera, however, reported his failure and had him exiled. Adrian has never accepted his fate, and now lives in the wilderness of the Great Hill, seeking redemption by hunting monsters with his broken sword. He is a wild man now; his clothes are disheveled, filth knots and coats his hair, and his eyes are wide with madness.

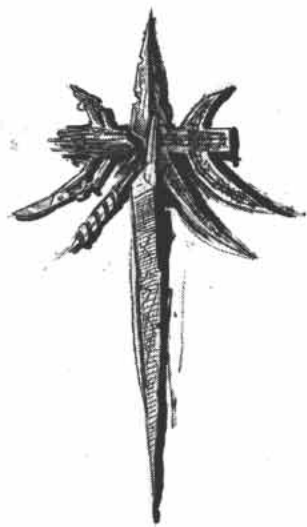
Highlights: Driven, insane, penitent

Eminence: Devotion

Attributes: AGI +1, APP -2, FIT +1, INF -2, PER +2, PSY -2, STA 25, UUD 4, AD 5

Skills: Athletics 1/ +1, Camouflage 2/ 0, Combat Sense 3/ +2, Dodge 2/ +1, Hand to Hand 1/ +1, Lore (The Great Hill) 3/ 0, Melee 2/ +1, Survival 2/ 0.

The Towers and Joans Watchtower



From the forced confessions of Miral Jacobi'on, Blade of Joan:

We are not just squatters living in the skeletons of the past. The Towers of the Great Hill overlook the Council Ruins and Bazaar, and maintain a vigil against Z'bri incursions into the heart of tribal lands. In the beginning, when we still shook in our boots at the sight of the Ziggurat, we remained behind the mountain, hiding from its presence. The Towers were our first line of defense against the Z'bri and their Serfs. As the Fatimas blessed us with courage, however, we moved further north, finally claiming the Seven Fingers and maintaining outposts on the border of Serf settlements. The Towers, though no longer our central line of defense, are still important for Joan herself. They are a visible reminder to Bazaar and southern Tribal Lands that we are present and vigilant.

The Towers are our creation and not the remnants of other buildings. Using scavenged bricks, mortar and steel from the structures around the Council Ruins, we fashioned a series of fourteen towers along the crest of the hill like a spine. Three levels high and large enough to accommodate a homestead family, they house our most venerated warriors. This is a reward for a life time of faithful service. Admittedly I have doubts as to their effectiveness. What use is a line-of-defense without the walls to enforce it? Anything sneaking around need only walk through the thick forest between two towers to avoid detection. In truth, the Towers are merely signal outposts for the real fortifications at Seven Fingers. Using giant mirrored glass scavenged from ruins, the towers can signal each other, the Seven Fingers or Bazaar in times of emergency. As part of their duties, the Weaponshapers are the only ones taught the art of fashioning glass for signals. Known as Glass-Smiths, they wander Vimary, scavenging appropriate materials. Their duties allow them access to any portion of tribal lands, with full authority to take or confiscate what they need. This has caused some friction with Xstasis, which relies on mirrors for decorations.

The area's main structure is Joan's own Watchtower. This prime building rests against the flank of the mountain and has the perfect vantage point. It looks down the slope of the Great Hill, overlooking the Council Ruins, past a wide avenue between two Emporium buildings, and straight into the heart of the Bazaar. A large domed building built in resilient stone and large blocks of rock, it may have been the heart of the city's military at one point. Today it is hollow and covered with weapons and suits of armor. Only the best Templars may enter, and even then it is dangerous. Joan is said to manifest from the artifacts lining the walls, ambushing Templars and testing their skills. Other times, we can see Joan standing upon the dome, looking out across the city like an eagle, our silent sentinel.

Resting at the Watchtower's base is a wide open plain of short grass where Joanite warriors practice their martial skills constantly. Surrounding the field is a ring of carefully chosen rocks broken up by shrines to our honored dead. Before training, we walk the ring, paying homage to each shrine as we pass. It is a constant reminder that we must remain vigilant.

Xstasis

From the forced confessions of Carrolynne Dahukin, Magdalite Concubine:

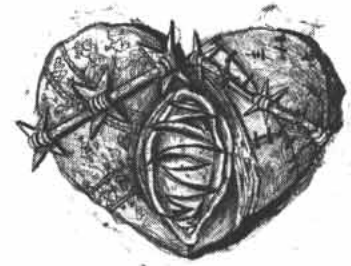
We are the most civilized of the tribes, and the opposite of Evans. That is not to say my delicious cousins are animals, at least not in conversation, but they do enjoy tearing down the past. We, however, like what our ancestors accomplished. What we have seen of their buildings and structures tells us that they enjoyed stimulating their senses. They were very tactile. The cool glass and steels of some surfaces, the chiseled stone and masonry of others. Their architecture was a symphony of senses: smooth, rough, warm, cold, painful, sublime, but above all, pleasurable. The lands of Xstasis are a reflection of this. We saved those building we could, and replaced the destroyed ones. In their place are rose gardens and paths of different textures. We often walk barefooted along these paths, for after all, the feet are a very sensual part of the body.

The maze of hedges within the sloped domains of Xstasis encourages us to explore, for one never knows what delights await the body at the next turn. It also teaches us the merits of secrecy. Within the maze are dozens of alcoves where lovers steal away to couple. We learn to spy upon these pairs, and to listen to their soft whispers. The trick is remaining hidden, and I can promise that for every person who indulges her passion in the maze, there are a dozen others watching. We may also join the couple in their moment of rapture if we so wish, but the trick is to show control. The Magdalite who cannot control her urges is as weak as her customer.

We have nothing to hide or be ashamed of. The paths and hedges throughout Xstasis are lined with fetish statues and fertility symbols of Madgalen herself. Carved from smooth soapstone or grainy rock, each demands to be touched and caressed. Other edifices are made of serrated metal and barbed wire. They too are to be touched, for pain is often only intense pleasure.

There are many homes and estates scattered throughout Xstasis. We prefer open homes, with wide spacious rooms and corridors. If this means knocking down certain walls to achieve the effect we need, then so be it. Our doors, or at least those belonging to the Concubines, are open for others to walk in and join the orgies. The different colored roses adorning the tops of the doors have different meanings. Red roses mean you prefer the company of the opposite sex while white means you enjoy the same sex. Yellow roses are the mark of those who mix pleasure and pain equally, and black roses are for those with tastes to shock the most hardened Sheban. Essentially anything is game. Other homes are off-limits, for they belong to members of the Diplomat Guild who entertain their guests privately. We know well enough to leave these places alone.

At the center of the hedge maze is the castle of Xstasis itself. One of the few buildings to survive intact, it is a beautiful structure of large stone bricks, coned towers peaked by weathervanes and rows of windows left open to the summer breeze. The interior has many rooms, corridors, passages and chambers filled with rows of fresh smelling roses. A light smoke of ecstatic drugs fills the air with sharp odors meant to awaken the sensual nature in us all. Here, the most devout and promising of Magdalites live and love; here the initiates train, learning the gifts of Concubine and Diplomat; here, the lines between intense pleasure and sublime pain blur into ecstasy. The few outsiders who visit are often shocked by the open display of love or the wanton hedonism. It is our home, however, and the way of our Fatima.



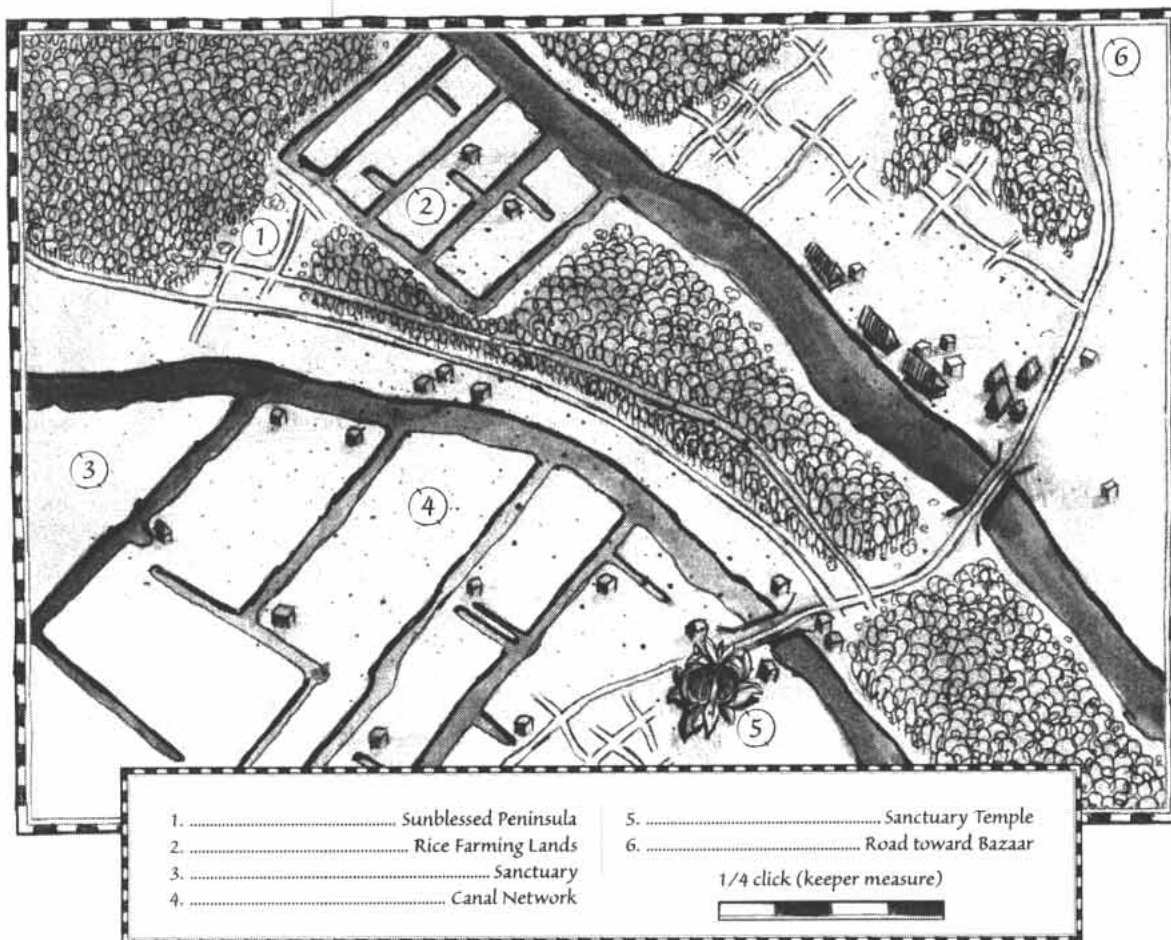
3. Vimary Revisited

Lai & Sanctuary

From the forced confessions of Fallhawk, Evan Shaman

Lai is cut from five major islands and dominates the western flanks of the Bazaar and the Great Hill. The Evans possess the largest portion of tribal lands as is fitting since we grow the crops to feed the tribes. The rapid waters of the Canal separate us from the Bazaar, while three rivers running east to west divide the lands further. We've named the rivers according to the cycles of harvest: Winter, Seed and Harvest. The Keepers claim Vimary was whole before the waters rose and destroyed civilization. Lai was once part of the Bazaar, a continuous stretch of buildings that spanned the length of the island. Following the divine salvation of the Fatimas and our liberation, we returned to the lands to find apocalyptic destruction. Lai was a flooded landscape, her canals overflowing like a drunkard's goblet, and ruins lay everywhere the eye wandered. It was a forest of dead, fallen stone, a mirror image of the Blasted Lands east of Bazaar.

Eva reclaimed the ruined lands with a vengeance. Her breasts spilt forth holy milk, and her beating wings fanned the droplets across the land like seeds. And where the seeds fell, waves of trees erupted from the soil, drinking the flood waters back and cracking the roads into powder with their roots. Then the trees died, enriching the fertile soil and burying the remaining ruins. What remained were expansive crop plains as wide and as fertile as Eva's hips, and fields of unlimited orchards always ready with succulent fruit. In a place where death once reigned, there is now only abundant life. And when Eva finally landed, there grew a single flower, a delicate blossom that was there when we arrived. As the Fatima approached it, it grew, becoming a flower of a thousand petals. The petals enveloped Eva and she returned to the soil for rest. Thus it has been for the last two generations; the flower opens every morning, revealing Eva's form for us to worship. When the flower blooms, so to do the fields of Lai flourish with new life.





All five islands of Lai are for harvest. We only use the two southern-most islands, Ezzim and Delai, during summers, however, for in winter they are too isolated along the Great River and easy targets for Squats from the Outlands. Following them, to the north, is the swamp-island of Roth, the least fertile of our homes. There are still ruins here, half buried within fields of topsoil. Crops do flourish because of Eva's touch, but I will admit it is unsettling growing crops in streets where people once walked. On Roth, at night, I have also heard the drone of Keeper machines as they drift through the swamp, searching for salvageable antiquities. My mother once said that thieves never return to an empty house, and I suspect that the Keepers found something to elicit their attention

Next is the island of Sanctuary, which is bordered by Winter River to the south and Seed River to the north. Sanctuary is the most fertile of the islands, with full fields of crops growing year round, and orchards so thick with fruit you can barely see the tree's branches. Only Eva's Shamans are allowed to tend these lands, for only they truly understand the Mother's touch. A multitude of Holy Groves flourish across Sanctuary, growing food so abundant that Shamans must harvest them weekly. How She grows crops during winter is beyond me. I have heard, however, of sacred trees in the hearts of these groves that collect warmth during summer, and yield bright yellow fruits in winter. The Shamans place these fruits upon each tree, and the fruits, in turn, exude the warmth of the summer sun like hot bread bleeding away its heat. The Mother's gifts are wondrous and many.

The final island, Sunblessed, is by far the largest and wildest of Lai. In truth we can only claim the southern portion of it, the rest is covered by forest or dense swamps. Oh, we tell outsiders that these are nothing but rich lands, but we know deep down that's untrue. The ground is too heavy with water to absorb it properly, turning areas closest to the river's edge into a swamp. Already we have seen a rise in poisonous snakes when once there were none, and seen new species of plants growing in the waters. Still, it is Eva's plan, and we do our best to live within the lands She has created for us. Flanking Sunblessed to the south is Seed River, while Harvest river to the north cuts us off from our sister community of Griffentowne. The hardest farming conditions fall upon the Evans of Sunblessed, who continually work to get their crops growing in the unyielding environment. Still, rice flourishes well in shallower portions of the swamps, and we are able to grow abundant crops of this grain along the Seed River.

Scattered throughout the islands of Lai are farms and small communities of Evans. We build using trees, skins and mud. Our homes are simple huts, tents and community lodges, where we gather to share in one another's company. Eva has forbidden the use of scavenged mortar and rock, claiming these are merely crutches of the past. She, as Mother, supplies for all our wants. We grow whatever supplies we need to build, eat and stay warm. Unfortunately, the winter months are hard ones, and the cold storms have claimed many.

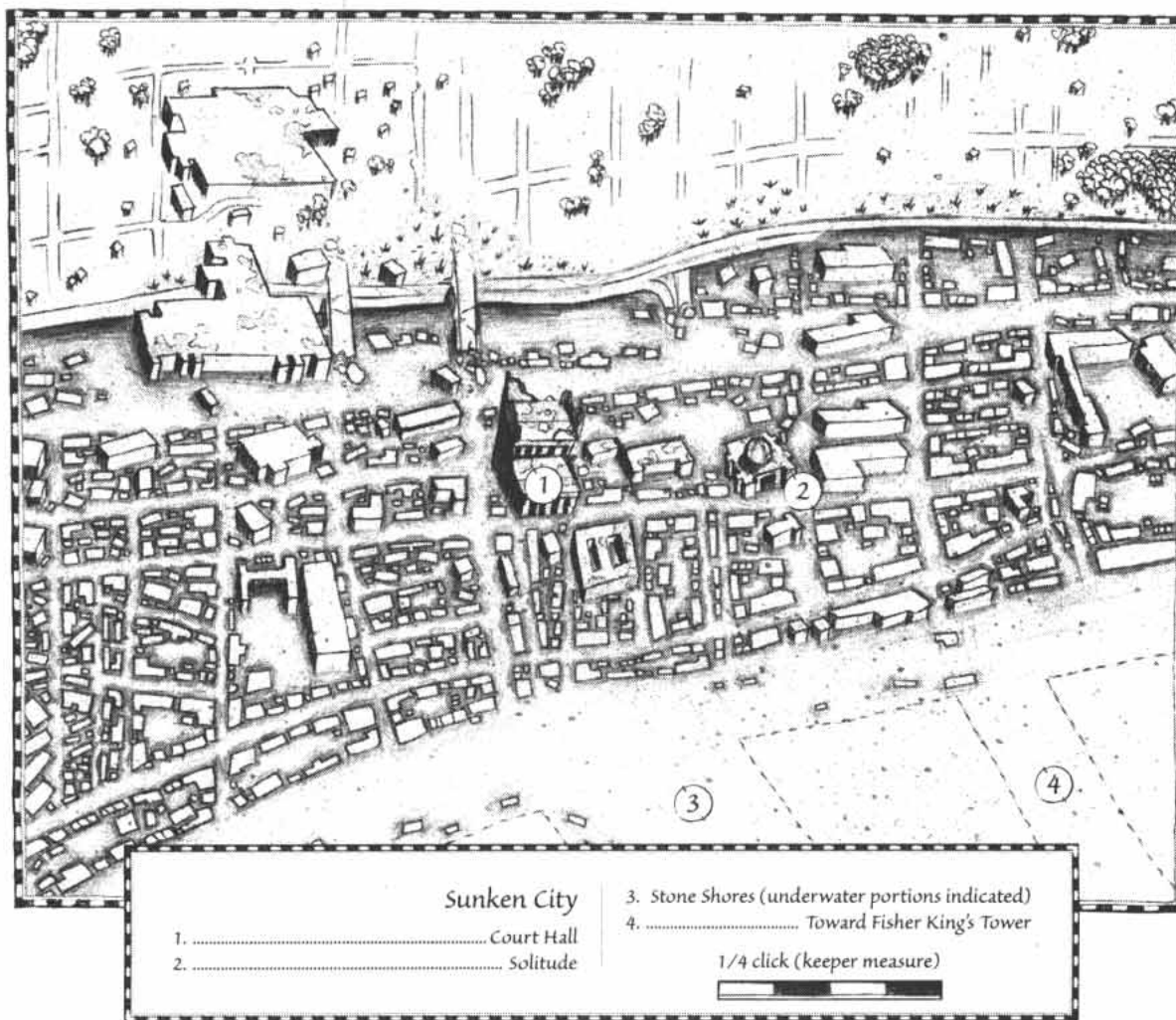
3. Vimary Revisited

Sunken City

From the forced confessions of Kendrick Davi'on, Terasheban Lorekeeper:

Nowhere on Vimary will you find a place of such sadness as the Sunken City. Built close to the shores when the river was not as high as now, nature has since reclaimed this area, trapping the past beneath the surface. Sailing through the Sunken City, I often imagine I'm flying over rooftops and through streets, looking into the windows of top floors. When I was younger and far more courageous, I often dove into the waters, touching the bronze heads of alien statues or the curved posts that lined the streets at regular intervals. A few times I swam through open doors or half-flooded windows. Butterflies rolled around in the pit of my stomach as I felt my way through the darkness. I never knew what new sensation would grace my fingertips, whether it was the hard wood of furniture or the soft touch of rotted window fabric.

I remember my last foray into these lost buildings. An earth tremor had cleared away the debris from a door, allowing me entry. Within I found a large room and the skeletons belonging to a family of six. They died together, all with craters in their skull. I realized they had committed suicide, and wondered what horrors they must have seen or feared to have killed themselves. I never returned into the waters after that. The only time I now appreciate the beauty of the Sunken City is during the winter months. The water freezes, returning the streets to us, even if they are made of ice. The ice, however, crushes more buildings each time. Every spring, a new one falls, and takes its mysterious magic with it. Even the pristine white snow makes the Sunken City seem all the more sad. There is a barrenness to its presence that kills even echoes.



Although the Sunken City seems part of Vimary, its architecture and avenues predate those structures scattered throughout Bazaar. It may have been a community all its own, separate from its surroundings. The buildings here measure no more than three or four level high, and they seem more elaborate in their facade, almost alive. The streets are also thinner here, giving a sense of intimacy. The Sunken City speaks more of history than the picture books we've confiscated from Keepers. It is more than that, however, for this place is history incarnate, a living entity that you can touch and feel. You know it existed.

I think my tribe prefers the Sunken City because its presence demands the same quiet respect that all Terasheban expect. You cannot help but hold your tongue while sailing the flooded streets. We also claimed this region because it is different from the rest of Vimary. Our function among the tribes necessitates our impartiality and living within Bazaar precludes that. We dwell on the rooftops of undamaged warehouses and the floors of buildings not touched by flood. Although we remain scattered throughout the Sunken City, there are two structures that are central to our lives. The first is Solitude, our place of private gathering, while the second is the Court Hall, the place where we judge others.

Solitude

Solitude best exemplifies the grand architecture of the Sunken City. Lined with columns, balconies and turrets, it emerges from the water proud and unwilling to fall. The main feature of the exterior is a giant central tower some eight levels high and adorned with decorative columns and high-arched windows. At its crest, the tri-face standard of Tera Sheba flies for all to see, while hundreds of lit lanterns hang from the ledges, driving away the darkness of ignorance. From the tower, the remainder of the building spreads out and back, with slightly smaller towers dominating the corners. Age has also taken its toll; several walls are missing, a nest of thick vines grows along the exterior facade, and the many winters have cracked the columns.

Within Solitude lie the council chambers used by the High Judges to debate current issues. Also there are hundreds of rooms to house Sheban initiates, and classrooms to school them in the laws of the Fatima. Huge braziers light each room, driving away the cold, but also reminding us that justice should be like purifying fire: all-consuming and unrelenting. Tera Sheba claims the central tower as Hers, though you can certainly feel Her presence everywhere. Her eyes are behind the rows of masks that line the corridors; her ears are listening in the sign above every door that demands "Are you Worthy?" Her stern voice echoes in every tapestry that recites a basic tenet of law.

Although nobody admits it, High Judge and Advocate alike always steal furtive, worried glances up the length of dark stairs leading to the Fatima's domain. It may be lined with candles and lamps of every sort, there are still a hundred dancing shadows that look like the waiting Fatima.

Court Hall

Just a few hundred paces west of Solitude, stands the monolith of Court Hall. A great black building, rising over a dozen levels high, it bears great standards of Tera Sheba. Much of the inside of the building collapsed long ago, exposing the icy waters that flood its basements. We pass our judgments in this court, in a series of dark chambers overlooking the great pit. Judges, High Judges and Adjudants walk the halls from one session to another, all in hushed voice. Louder noises are quickly swallowed by the heavy walls of the Hall. Punishment for the guilty is varied, but we often place criminals in the water pit. Some of them remain half-submerged for days, depending on the severity of their crime. During winter this serves as a method of execution; bodies become trapped in freezing water and the exposed portions are left to decompose. This frozen tableau is morbid, but we receive plenty of Yagans during these months who appreciate our work. We let them study the bodies and walk on the frozen surfaces, though in truth we do not understand their fascination with death.

3. Vinary Revisited



The Fisher King

Few served Tera Sheba as loyally as the Fisher King. Originally named Hamrark Slade'on, he was present when Tera Sheba and the other Fatimas liberated the Camps. Since then, he has stood by Her side, repaying the debt of freedom. Hamrark, like several Shebans of the time, believed in enforcing as well as upholding the law. He stood with the Joanites, fighting whatever Z'bri spawn threatened the fledgling tribes, and became the Fatima's favorite. His greatest victory came against the great serpent D'vron, but he was grievously wounded in the climactic battle. Rendered an impotent cripple, unable to sire the clan he felt was his right, Hamrark became a recluse and adopted the name Fisher King. Some whisper that Tera Sheba could not bear to see Her favorite so wounded and became bitter and cold as a result, ordering Judges out of combat. The Fisher King and the Fatima have not spoken since. His only regular companions are the ghosts of the past.

Highlights: Saddened, opinionated, wise

Eminences: Truth and Wisdom

Attributes: AGI -2, INF +2, KNO +2, PER +2, PSY -2, WIL +1

Skills: Boating 1/+2, Combat Sense 2/+2, Human Perception 2/0, Interrogation 2/0, Intimidate 3/0, Law 4/+2, Lore (Tera Sheba) 3/+2, Melee 3/-2, Read/Write 2/+2, Teaching 1/0, Synthesis (Tradition) 3

Stone Shores

The ancient piers that once berthed large ships now remain empty beneath the waters. Known as the Stone Shores, they are the fishing domains of the Stilt-Walkers. Oh, the tribes will claim we have no source of food, but we can still reap the sea. The waters beneath the piers are rich with fish that come here to spawn. The Stilt-Walkers are Shebans who have no stomach to enforce law, and instead serve the tribe by fishing. They use reinforced stilts to wade along the submerged docks, and often lay nets between the piers. Admittedly it is not the best source of food, but it supplements what we receive from the Evans.

At the furthest reach of one pier is an ancient, solitary tower, known as the Sentinel. The last three levels of its crown emerges from the water, leaving the remaining half submerged. Home to the Fisher King, one of our eldest High Judges, it can be reached either by boat or by the Stilt-Walkers. Winter forms a bridge of ice to the Sentinel as well, but few people risk traversing the thin ice. Sentinel was a gift from Tera Sheba to the Fisher King, who was nearly crippled fighting the Z'bri. They say in his prime, the Fisher King could stand shoulder to shoulder with the Joanites, besting one Beast foe after another.

To get into the tower, one must climb the outside nets since the submerged ground entrance is blocked off by debris. Although cramped, the tower is comfortable for one person without visitors. Fishing nets draped along the wall line its winding staircase. From them hang trophies and relics from the Fisher King's loyal service to Tera Sheba. The flooded portion of the interior is a brackish dark pool that extends three stories down. I have seen something swimming below the surface, but when I asked the Fisher King, he merely smiled and hobbled back up the stairs.

The Underlands

From the ramblings of Matthew, Agnite Child:

We're the best explorers, y'know. Nobody beats us, hands down. Have you ever been to the Underlands? No, not the Emporiums, that's different, that's *safe*. No, the Underlands are all the places where you have to crawl through rubble to find or hold your breath and swim for really long before reaching. The Emporiums are nothing compared to the Underlands. The Keepers I talked to... yeah I have. I'm even friends with some of them. They visit us and play with us. They even bring Agnes new toys. I hear they discovered a huge warehouse of toys once and....What? Oh yeah, the Underlands. Anyway, the Underlands are all these places underground. The Keepers said that they were separate once. Emporiums were separate from the flooded tunnels with tracks, and the flooded tunnels were different from the stinky tunnels. With the End, though, walls fell and suddenly all the underground was one huge place. I even heard that the Underlands go right up the Z'bri's butts in H'l Kar and all the way out to Griffentowne.

Playground.

Where do we play? Wherever we please, thank you very much. The Playground Emporium is ours. It's a wonderful place filled with toys, hidey-holes and secret passages to play Fatimas & Z'bris, but I'm always the Z'bri. Oh, it's got many, many levels, and stairs, and fallen floors that we use like slides. Hmm, what else...yeah I know, it's also got a flooded basement where we swim and lots of toys. Everybody's happy in Playground. Well I guess the Breeders or Barrens aren't, but they don't matter. Agnes said so.

Dahlia and Agnes are friends, so Dahlia uses her illusions to make Playground look bigger than it actually is. We get lost all the time, but it's all right. Agnes says it makes us stronger. In Playground there are toys from all over Vimary, from Evan dolls to weird-looking toy monsters that came from before the End. Some sorta look like the Z'bri. I wonder if the people from the World Before knew what was coming and made toys to warn their kids about the monsters. Oh yeah, we also have these weird things that we found in the forests. They're bars that you can hang on, and slides to slide down, a big wheel that turns around — and the Keepers, they fixed that one for us — and ropes you can swing on.

Agnes sends us out to explore the Underlands and find new things for her. She's likes bright things, and shiny stuff too, oh and toys too. Playground is full of stuff. We have this one pile of stuffed bears and these weird soft balls, and its on one floor. So we go up and jump off the balcony on the pile...it's so great. Streamers and banners hang from all the balconies, like the parades they have in Bazaar. Huh? The new Emporiums? Yeah, the ones west of the Pit. We only found them a few weeks ago. We knew they were there from before, but we just couldn't reach em. Anyway, we finally cleared a small passageway and found a pocket from the World Before. Emporiums with all sorts of new toys. We traded stuff with the Keepers who were real excited about some junk. The coolest place we found looks like a temple. It's kinda flooded, but it's got huge columns with animals heads and plants sculpted on it, weird pictures painted on the walls and rows of seats in really large chambers. I'm sure it's a temple. The new Emporium's not very big, but we found more side passages an stuff. You can't reach this place from the surface because of the collapsing building on top it, so nobody else can reach it. It's all ours.

The very best pace in all of Playgrounds is the highest place. You have to climb high along bars, tracks and vines to get there, but then there's this level that looks out over all of the Emporium. It's great and it's here that Agnes stays when She isn't out with us. This is her personal place and if She likes you She'll invite you to come and play. It's a great place full of the best toys, the sweetest fruits and the best games. There's all kinds of hidden passages here that pop up across the roof over Playground and even lead to other places. Only Children are allowed up here, although some say there's one old guy up here called Jon'abram. He's a toy maker who loves Agnes so much he makes the best stuff for Her and for us. He's so lucky. Now, not everybody can go up to see Agnes, y'understand. She has to want you there. Usually one of her favorites will come and get you and help you climb the vines and stuff. That's what happened to me, my first time. I was sleeping when Altara came to wake me.. oh, wait, I didn't say that. Forget it. I've forgotten it. I've forgotten her. Agnes said so.



Jonathan Abrams, Keeper

Jonathan was a prodigy. Few Keepers displayed his intuitive talent for Technosmithing, and under the sponsorship of Felix Iago, he was to be their most promising mechanic. Unfortunately, Agnes had different ideas for the young man. Having seen the gallant Jonathan during Keeper trade expeditions to Playgrounds, she developed a crush on him. She had him kidnapped, and now keeps him prisoner. Forever capricious, however, Agnes eventually got over her crush, and now has Jonathan using his Keeper gifts to animate her toys. Jonathan works in Agnes' personal chambers, always searching for a means to escape.

Highlights: Homesick, inventive, observant, prodigy

Attributes: APP +1, CRE +3, KNO +1, PER +1, PSY -2, STA 20, UD 4, AD 3

Skills: Dodge 2/0, Drive 1/0, Firearms 1/0, Hand-to-Hand 1/0, Lore (Keeper) 3/+1, Lore (Olympus) 2/+1, Notice 2/+1, Read/Write (Keepspeak) 2/+1, Techlore (Electronics, Mechanics) 3/+1, Tinker 4/+3, Technosmithing (Jury Rig) 4

The Canal

From the forced confessions of Brian Sullmore, Keeper:

The ignorance of my tribal cousins is frustrating in the extreme. They cannot understand what sort of mental capacity it took to achieve the wonders that beggar our imagination. They look to places such as the Canal and mistakenly believe it is exactly as it appears, a waterway. I know in my heart it was a road, a giant thoroughfare where autos ran with speeds faster than our best horses. Only after the floods did these avenues become canals, slicing Vimary into several smaller islands.

The main canal starts at the south of Vimary, just east of the Bazaar. It goes straight up through the land like a knife, finally diverging at Seven Fingers in the north. Along the way, the waters overflowed their concrete embankments, creating minor tributaries to the east and west. The largest of these tributaries follows the length of an adjoining blacktop to the west, what the tribes call the Seed River, neatly cutting Sanctuary off from the rest of Lai. At Seven Fingers, the main canal ends and branches off, following the east-west route of another blacktop now called Harvest River. The one running to the east eventually meets Seven Fingers and snakes off to the north, where it splits Vimary in twain. The one to the west briefly follows the blacktop before diverging south-west and joining the Great River just south of Griffentowne.

The main Canal that runs north-south is a wide, artificial road some ten meters deep and twenty-five meters wide. Concrete walls and floors line its length, though I'm sure their pockmarked and cratered condition are the result of age. Many bridges crossing the Canal's width have fallen, though the Spearbrook and Jagged Talon bridges are still intact, linking Bazaar to Lai. Manning the bridges on either side are Joanite outposts. Although their function is to protect tribal lands from Squats and Z'bri, they also prevent us from crossing. Initially this did not present a problem since we simply traveled on the Canal. Eventually the Joanites smartened up and cast thick nets over the side of the bridges like a dredge. This, to say the least, greatly hampers travel.



Alliances

Conversation between Hsh'don, Sangis Z'bri, and Muttooth, Squat band leader.

Hsh'don: So we are in agreement?

Muttooth: I don't trust your ilk.
Your words are poison.

Hsh'don: Only to the tribes, my friend. The Z'bri have no qualms with you. It's the Fatimas we hate.

Muttooth: And if we help? How do we know you won't turn against us?

Hsh'don: Because it's bad form to betray your allies. These aren't the days of Tibor. We have no need to enslave you if we can have the tribes.

Muttooth: But you promised us slaves.

Hsh'don: Yes, one slave for every three captured...

Muttooth: And territory!

Hsh'don: (sigh) ...and territory. All Vimary is yours if you help us.

Muttooth: (pause) Agreed. We raid Duskfall and support your forces when asked.

Hsh'don: And we share the bounty with you.



Duskfall

From the forced confessions of Terrance Loren'on, Westholm Joanite:

Dominating the western portion of the island, Duskfall is the largest, thickest forest on Vimary. Like Lai, ancient homes and buildings once dotted these lands, but they vanished when winter, flood, Z'bri and trees conspired to bring everything down. Now the only time you'll recognize the ruins from the forest is when you come across ground that's harder than earth, or find the remnants of a broken wall between two trees. Rarely, very rarely, you might even find a partial ruin of a building hidden by a growth of creeper vines, or stairs leading into a concrete pit filled with swamp water. Duskfall's thick enough, though, that you'll probably miss these rare treasures, even if you're within an arm's reach of them.

Duskfall earns its name from the state of perpetual darkness beneath its canopy. A roof of branches and leaves refuses to allow light to pass, and the forest is so dense that roots grow over and under one another like the product of a mad seamstress. Sometimes trees are so close, they spiral around one another, creating a living tapestry of branches, roots and trunks. Beautiful, but ominous. I could spend years exploring its mystery, but Duskfall is not safe. Squats and Z'bri stalk the forest, picking off unprotected caravans, stragglers or anyone stupid enough to travel alone. It is our duty to protect the paths between Westholm, Griffentowne and Bazaar. It is not a simple task, but it must be done.

The Z'bri and the barbarians that stalk the forest are the most pressing danger because, I fear, they are preparing an organized attack, but there are other dangers. Duskfall is truly wild, and the animals and beast that lurk there can be as terrifying as any Z'bri war party. Huge packs of wolves move about unseen and may pick off the unwary. The Wolf is Joan's ally, however, and we know these beasts hunt out of need and according to their own warrior's code. But for every noble hunter, there are hundreds of vile predators. Swarms of rats and insects can devour travelers before they can even scream, to say nothing of the beasts touched by the Z'bri. Skulker packs hunt wolf and human alike, while the scray swarms put all other plagues to shame. Chained horrors and other twisted monstrosities roam alone or in groups, ravaging everything they encounter. I once faced down a beast large like three horses and bearing the tusks of a boar; its breath smelled of rotted meat and its eyes were the color of fresh bile. It killed two warriors before I brought it down.



Griffentowne

Although part of Eva's Tribe, Griffentowne is fast growing into its own right. Situated on the eastern edge of Duskfall and across the Harvest River from Lai, it is Vimary's largest farming community. Once the area was a network of enormous blacktops, warehouses, buildings and flying machines called D'jets. Keepers say these constructs once ferried travelers across the world. When the End came, however, the large building and warehouses were scoured out by fires. Like Lai, Eva has done much to reclaim the land from the ruins, but there is a persistent quality to the ancient structures of Griffentowne that keeps them alive. Trees cannot crush the rubble entirely, so they grow over piles of stone and metal in an odd struggle for dominance. Some buildings remain standing, though creeper vines grow over their interior and exterior, creating odd hills in the terrain.

The farmers of Griffentowne took possession of the salvageable D'jets, and made use of them. Unlike most farms that shut down during the winter months, Griffentowne turned the husks of these enormous vehicles into granaries, and converted an intact building into a winter greenery. Naturally this put them at odds with other Evans who believe this practice is wrong, but nobody else has proven capable of growing crops as bountiful in winter. Griffentowne is a key supplier of food in these crucial months. Even the Sacred Groves of Sanctuary alone cannot meet the needs of the hungry, and must rely on Griffentowne's ingenuity. For the time being, Eva supports Griffentowne, though She continually tries to convince Benjamin Aria'on, the leader of the community, to change his ways. Unfortunately, the situation is becoming tougher. Eva has Benjamin under home arrest, but She dares not proceed further lest She alienates the independent-minded Evans of Griffentowne. Already too many of Her children have Fallen, and I know this concerns Her.

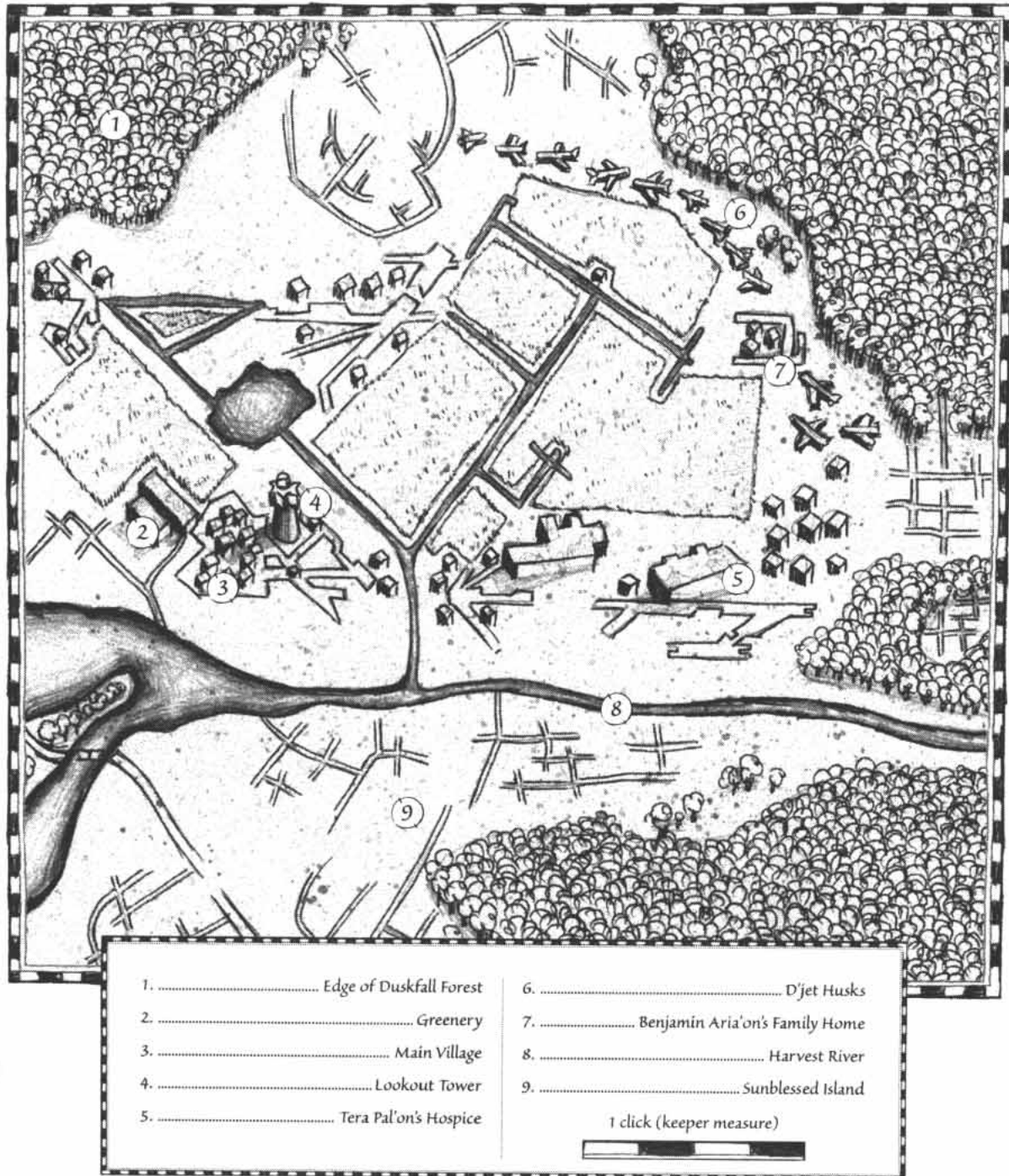
Griffentowne itself is an unassuming farming community located on the edge of farmland. The terrain is odd because of the underlying blacktop that occasionally peeks out from under the crops. Single-level buildings huddle around these fields like a fishing community hugging the shores of a lake. The homes, which number several dozen, are made of whatever materials were at hand, from animal skins to log houses, from debris shacks to a house built from the ribs of a Bird.

Although there are large outdoor fields to tend, Griffentowne's greatest accomplishment is the Greenery. At first you might overlook this structure despite its size. A miniature forest grows around it, covering it like camouflage. The greenery is so thick that trees even grow upon its collapsed roof, dangling gangly roots all the way to the ground, and hiding the structure from all angles. This large building is over three levels high, even though the interior is empty with plenty of ceiling space. It was obviously larger at one point, but the roof collapsed upon the floors below, diminishing its stature. The entire structure is difficult to describe because it doesn't follow any conventions I've seen from past buildings. The levels are wide open, with plenty of support columns. Because of the tangle of vegetation on the roof, however, a forest of roots and creeper vines hang down into the building itself. These vines are so thick that I've seen children scamper up them without the greenery snapping. The windows are as tall as the building, and run its length on at least one side. The glass is long broken. Instead, trees and vines cover everything, creating a natural facade.

3. Vimary Revisited

A thick layer of soil covers most of the Greenery's interior, allowing farmers to grow crops throughout the year. With Duskfall nearby, there is a ready supply of trees to fuel the fire-drums scattered throughout the building. By far, however, the most impressive thing I've seen is their water system. The trees growing on the Greenery's rooftop are special creations of Eva herself. Throughout the year, these trees collect and store whatever rain falls upon them for winter. Whenever the Evans need to water the crops within the Greenery, the roots and creeper vines carry the water down from the trees, drenching the interior with showers.

See *Tribe 8 Rulebook*, p.53, for more on Benjamin Aria'on.



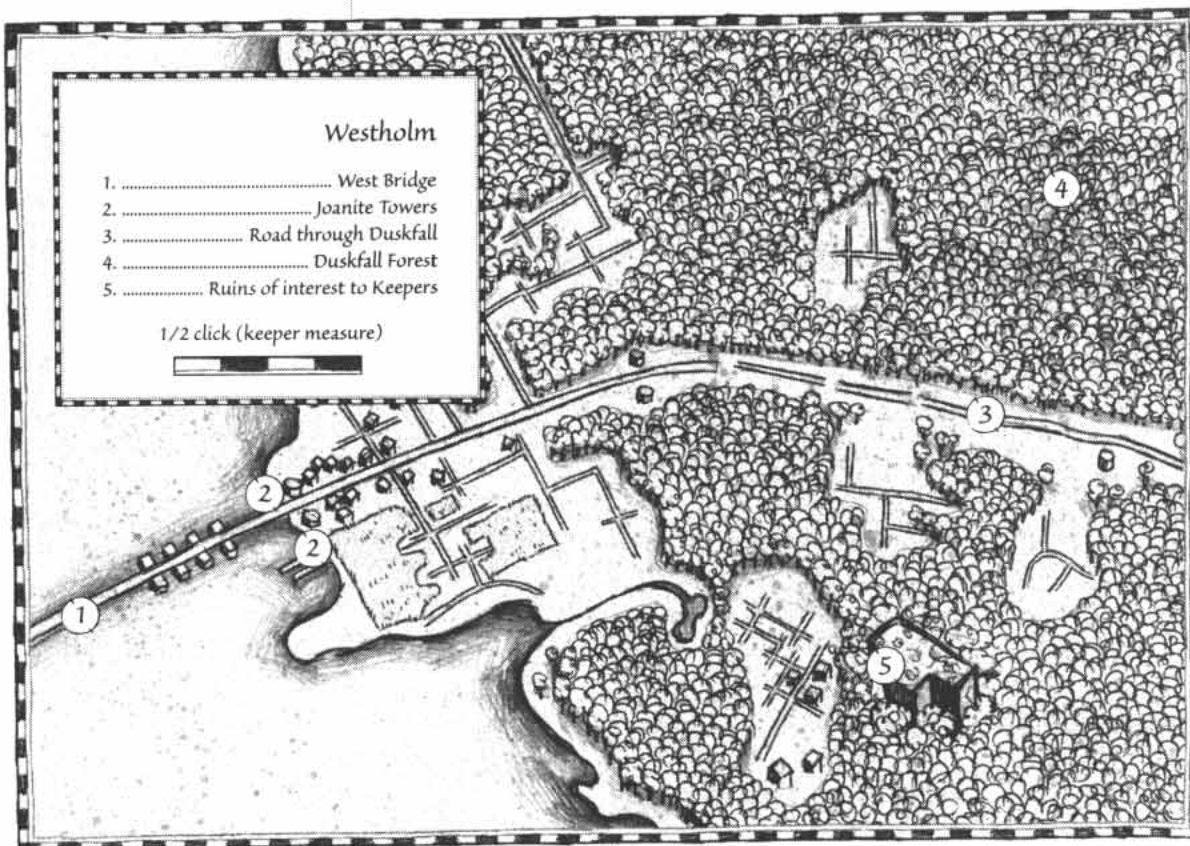
3. Vimary Revisited

Westholm

I've been stationed in Westholm for several summers now, often traveling between it and Griffentowne as caravan escort. While this westernmost community is much smaller than Griffentowne, I must admit that they share a tighter bond with one another than anywhere else I've ever been. Even we Joanites, who guard the Western Bridge, find ourselves drawn into the lives of this Evan and Dahlian community. Our original mandate was to protect the bridge against Outland Squats, but the more time passes, the more I find myself caring for and protecting the people of Westholm. I can't think of any other place to call home.

Westholm itself is a small village of about a dozen houses bordering a large field. Simple in design, there is nothing about it to indicate the influences of the past. All the material used in its construction are from the surrounding woods; there are only a few ruins in the vicinity of the Western Bridge to scavenge from. The Evans grow the food, the Dahlians provide entertainment and we Joanites protect. In truth, though, the Dahlians use their Eminence over illusions to protect us as well. The trees seem to shift position and the paths don't lead often where they should. Initially, I believed the Dahlians were playing tricks on us, but then following a failed raid by local Squats, I realized the truth.

Over the last few months, despite Squat raids, Westholm has been growing. We're attracting people who've become disenchanted with tribal lands and Bazaar. I think many come here because it is the closest thing to leaving Vimary without actually doing so. Of our lot, the Dahlians and a few Magdalites are the hardest struck with wanderlust. I see many sitting upon the western shores just outside the village, watching the forests of the Outlands with wistful longing. Oh don't get me wrong. Some have left for the wilderness despite our advice to the contrary. The unfortunate few who have never been seen again. One Dahlian Caravan left and returned, reporting the presence of feuding Squat Warlords. They said some Squats were willing to trade for safe passage, while others were so barbaric as to attack anything moving. I think this news has deterred a few travelers from leaving Westholm for the time being.

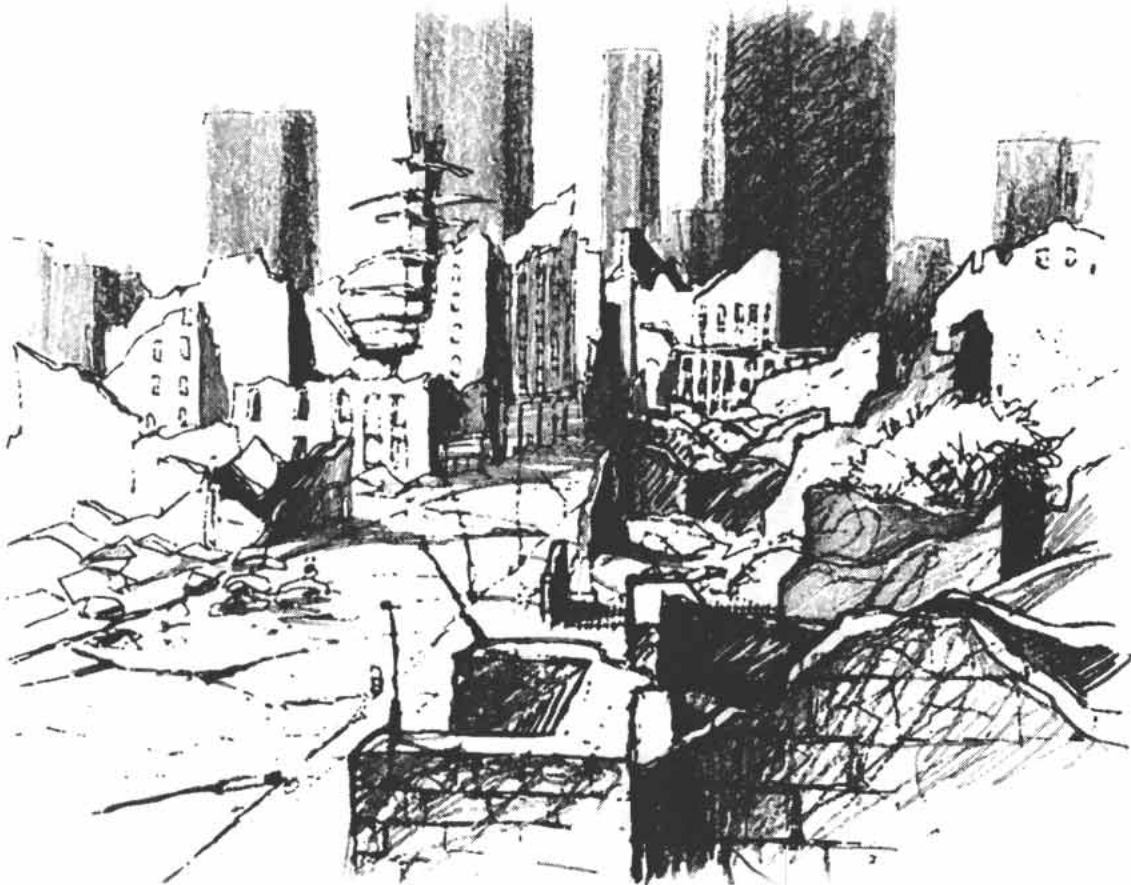


The Discarded Lands

From the forced confessions of Redleaf, Squat:

Don't believe the tribes; their words are dripping with poisoned honey. Sure it tastes sweet, but once you realize how sweet it is, you're already dead. I live in the Discarded Lands, a stretch of neutral ground between the Rust Wastes, Bazaar and Seven Fingers. I'm a Squat, an ignorant barbarian who's going to rape your livestock and eat your women by mistake. Like I said, lies. Not all Squats are ready to split your belly. My band is peaceful. We would prefer to trade and live alongside the tribes, but they're frightened of us because we don't need the Fatimas. So they lie and label us as one entity, one monster to kill and hate.

The Discarded Lands are exactly that, a stretch of earth discarded from four sides. To the east, the Rust Wastes spill dunes of poison at our feet; to the west, patches of trees from the Great Hill fight the ruins for supremacy, while the north and south belong to the tribes who try and enforce their laws on us. Discarded by all, it's fitting this place is neutral territory. Fractured blacktops dancing around a million ruins, lines of trees migrating away from the Great Hill, and a red haze from the nearby Rust Wastes all crowd into the Discarded Lands. There is more, however. Blackened mortar and patches of soot throughout the area speak of a great fire that touched everything, while snapped beams and collapsed roads betray the weight of many winters. We try to rebuild what homes we can and live under secure roofs, but Sheban and Joanite thugs living in nearby enclaves tear and burn whatever we create. Tell me, who's the savage here? The person who follows his heart, or the fool who follows another's fear? So we move like nomads, hiding behind the thousands of half-walls or in open basements from Z'bri monstrosities and Fatimal zealots. Still, we may not have the recognition with seek, but our territory is quickly becoming neutral ground for meeting between tribes, Fallen and Keepers. Our knowledge of the Discarded Lands is unmatched, and our services as guides are fast becoming known.





The Rift

The Rift is our only true refuge, but we use even it sparingly. The Rift is a disparate series of blacktops that collapsed into the underlying tunnels. The tunnel itself extends from the south, near the Bazaar, up and past the Seven Fingers, into Serf Lands. The collapsed portions, however, only affect a small part of the line, perhaps less than a league in total. Although the tunnel is partially flooded, there are eleven points where the passage widens and platforms appear alongside the shallow river. We would use these platforms as homes, but Keeper noise-boats and Joanite patrol barges move through the tunnels regularly. While the Keepers may not mind our presence, the Joanites certainly will. We travel the Rift by night, using side tunnels and rubble strewn streets during the day. The Keepers help us at times, usually when we have things to trade, and we all dodge the tribals.

The Keepers are okay in general, but I watch my back around them too. Most are like human vultures, looking over the metal corpses of the World Before and generally oblivious to us lowlies. There are some who are more dangerous, however. They are so fascinated by their machines they don't care about flesh and blood anymore. They see us as hunting game, using our bands to test monstrous weapons. A bandmate of mine once went missing near the Rust Wastes. We went after him, but were too late. We found him cut to ribbons, metal prods sticking into his body like unholy bones. Another worthless Squat dead, right?

I will tell you this, however, even people like me are getting sick of being hunted by Joanites and your twisted horrors. There are Squats who will put the truth to the tribal superstitions of bloodthirsty barbarians. Have you hear of Warlord Boarhead? He lives in the Outlands but has mounted several expeditions into tribal lands. I have seen his warbands in the Discarded Lands, stalking prey and gathering recruits among us nomads. Some say he is preparing an attack on Talon Nexus, the Yagan community at the tip of the Rift. Even you should heed my warning — Boarhead is dangerous.

See p. 115 for more information on Luther Boarhead.

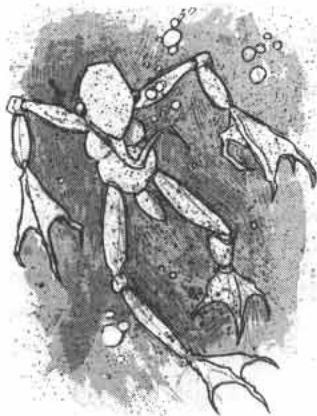


We Are Spawn

Creation of Flemis, spies for the Z'bri, we once serve and serve our lords well. They give us gills, so we swim Great River, recover artifacts hidden in water. They give us water sight, so we spy on Outland settlements. They give us fins and tail, so we race currents, beat them easily. They give us life and we once serve and serve well. Does not matter; nothing does to Z'bri. So we hide. Take refuge in pipes of water beneath island. We gather, our numbers grow more than fingers on hands and toes. We live now, here. It is home. We want to share with Landlegs, warn them of all Z'bri desire, but Landlegs fear us. We are monsters. We are kill.

We are Spawn, children of Z'bri and Landlegs. We speak in silent voices, smells and colors. We do not understand Landlegs and they do not understand us. Slowly that change. Two small Landlegs live with us. They speak, we listen. They teach, we learn. Soon, we talk with Landlegs, tell them Z'bri dreams. Then we are accepted.

Talon Nexus



The Spawn

The Spawn are a minor race of amphibian Z'bri experiments. Highly observant and intelligent, the Spawn developed self-expression by watching the tribes and Fallen interact, and broke the chains of their own slavery. They now hide in the Underlands. They are peaceful, but possess the means to defend themselves. Their major hurdle, however, is their limited language skills. Because they appear to be humanoid Z'bri who have been Chained to frogs, they rightly fear the tribes will attack them on sight. Despite their claws, the Spawn can turn nearly invisible in water and prefer escape over fighting. They can also survive out of water.

Attributes: AGI +2, BLD -1, FIT +1, KNO -2, PER +1, WIL +2, STA 25, LID 4, AD 3

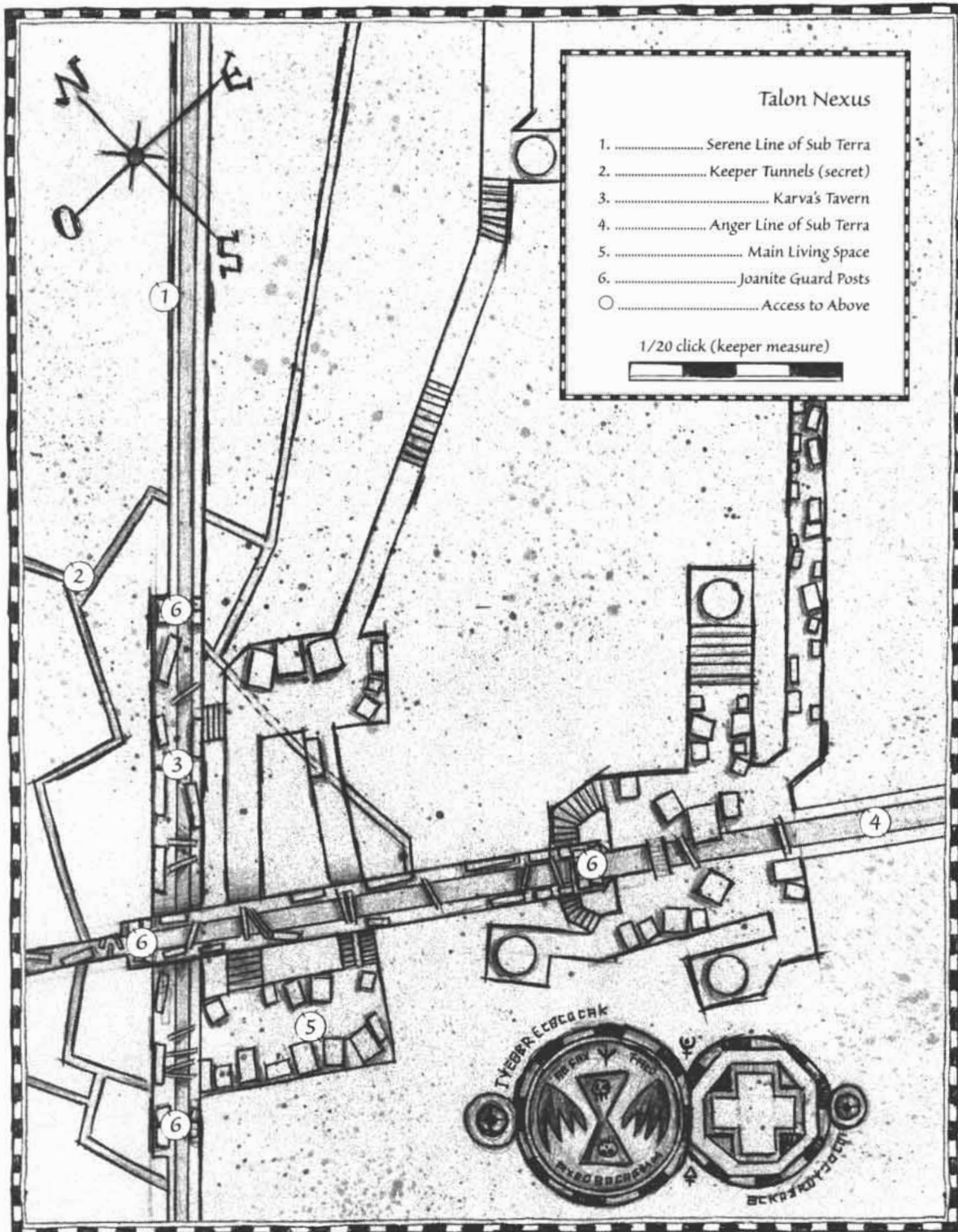
Skills: Combat Sense 1/+1, Dodge 2/+2, Hand-to-Hand 1/+2, Notice 3/+1, Sneak 3/+2, Swimming 4/0

Special Abilities: Claws (x6 damage), Invisible in water (+4 to Sneak, auto success when not moving)

The largest community in the Discarded Lands actually lies in the Rift, and is located on the greatest of these tunnel platforms. Situated south of Seven Fingers, the Yagan outpost of Talon Nexus connects with another tunnel running east-west, and has four large platforms on two different levels. The Yagans do not mind our presence and have yet to report us to the Joanites at the nearby Seven Fingers. Why the Yagans are here, I know not, but some suspect they use the tunnel to venture into Serf Lands, raiding the massive cemetery pits of the Z'bri. Columns dot the interior of Talon, which also happens to be one of the few places where the roof has yet to collapse. Torches line the walls, keeping the darkness at bay with admittedly limited success. Karva's Tavern dominates one entire platform, and though the drinks are as watered as the tunnel's river, it is still frequented by outsiders looking for a quiet place to hold clandestine meetings. Tribals, Squats, Keepers and Fallen all come here, and as long as nobody disturbs the peace, the Yagans ignore us. I have heard some tribals compare Talon to Westholm, a place away from Sheban eyes where hatreds can give way to cooperation. I will admit that we Squats can and do trade and even spend a few days at Talon, but to say we are welcome is something of an exaggeration. The Yagans do not threaten us, but their scorn is hard to hide. We are soulless barbarians to them, but at least they do not patronize us.

The east-west tunnel remains a mystery. It eventually sinks into the water on either side. Even our best swimmers have been unable to find a pocket of air. I wish I knew what was down there. Some of my people have seen things, Z'bri-like things, swimming the passages. Two children have already vanished after they ventured too close to the waters. They were gone the instant their mother turned her back. I have heard that some of the Keepers are preparing to mount an expedition down the tunnel using arcane talismans called "skoo-baz." I hope, for their sake, that they go armed. Whatever took those children has an appetite for flesh that must be sated. Myself, whenever I'm in Talon I watch the waters of the tunnel with a careful eye and a hand near my ax. If they come for me, those creatures will have to earn their meal.





Circle of the Chosen

This is the civilization the tribes offer? *This* is their supposed victory over the Z'bri? The Circle of the Chosen is nothing more than a killing field, a sacrificial pit created by the Fatimas to placate the Z'bri. It is a blighted, cursed place just beyond the Seven Fingers. My grandmother once claimed that a forest destroyed returns with a vengeance. If this is true, then the Circle of the Chosen must have suffered a hundred deaths. The trees are thick and gnarled, and the thorny underbrush heavy. With exception to a few paths, traveling this small forest always claims an equal ounce of your blood and sweat.

Although the forest is not alive, it still possesses a sinister facade. Perhaps it is the ghosts of all the people the Fatimas sacrificed to the Z'bri. Oh, the tribes will say these people died willingly to help keep the peace, but I've seen these supposed volunteers. Tied to ground poles within a small clearing, they're left for some monster to gorge on their entrails. Half of them cry, begging for their lives, pleading for mercy. Volunteers, indeed.

The pathetic part of it all is that the monsters don't claim many of these victims; we do. Once the tribes tie their victim down, mumble some prayer to assuage their guilt and leave, we step in and rescue the hapless fool. True enough, you will encounter some zealots who insist on dying for the glory of their Fatima, in which case we leave them alone. More often than not, however, the volunteer is grateful for the rescue, and either joins us, or leaves for Hom to join the Fallen. I have only seen three people who were stupid enough to return to their Fatimas and faith. I believe they died, literally, on principle. Unfortunately, it was someone else's principles that killed them.



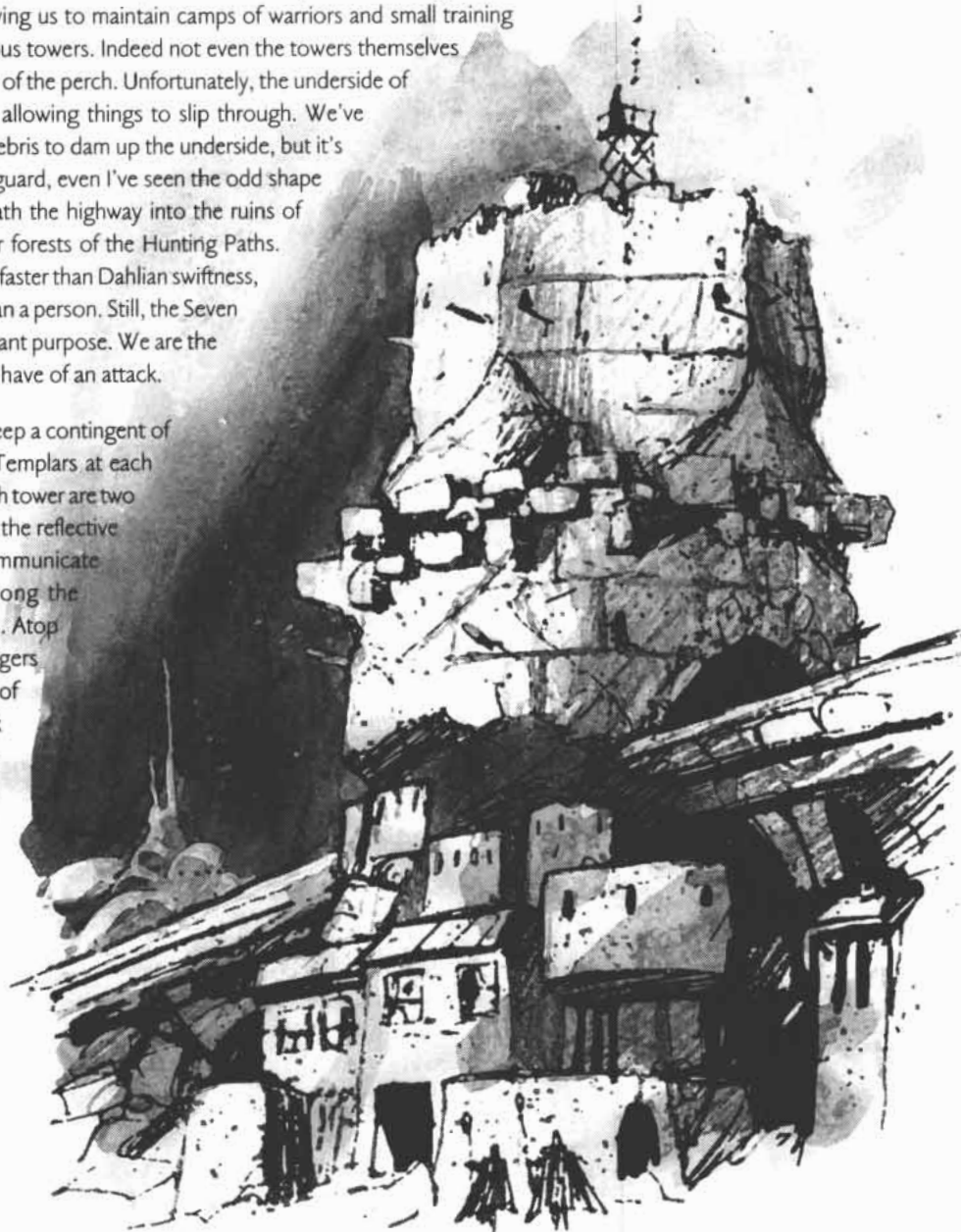
The Seven Fingers

From the forced confessions of Miral Jacobi'on, Blade of Joan:

The Seven Fingers is our first line of defense against the Z'bri of H'l Kar. Oh, Magdalite Diplomats will say our best defense is peace, but who truly believes that? The Seven Fingers was once a stretch of blacktop spanning Vimary tip to tip, but time consumed it as it does with all things. Now, all that remains is an unbroken section of blacktop several leagues long and elevated on thick columns of rock. Atop these flat perches, mostly where large streets run beneath, we have added seven towers to better watch the northern frontier. I can tell you the sight is not pretty. Well beyond the squalor of the Serf Lands at our feet, the Ziggurat rises on the opposite shore of the Great River, breaking the horizon like a boil. We only need see it to remain vigilant and ready.

The Seven Fingers is more than an outpost. The blacktop is wide enough to place ten carts side by side, allowing us to maintain camps of warriors and small training fields between the various towers. Indeed not even the towers themselves take up the entire width of the perch. Unfortunately, the underside of the blacktop is empty, allowing things to slip through. We've used autos and other debris to dam up the underside, but it's not enough. While on guard, even I've seen the odd shape darting out from beneath the highway into the ruins of the Discarded Lands or forests of the Hunting Paths. Whatever it was moved faster than Dahlian swiftness, and was much larger than a person. Still, the Seven Fingers serve an important purpose. We are the first warning the Tribes have of an attack.

In times of peace, we keep a contingent of thirty Blades and two Templars at each Tower. Also serving each tower are two Glass-Smiths who tend the reflective signal mirrors and communicate with their brethren along the towers of the Great Hill. Atop each of the Seven Fingers rests a large container of oil. If ever an attack comes, it would take one second to light the oil, thus warning the Towers of the Great Hill and the tribal lands of the danger.

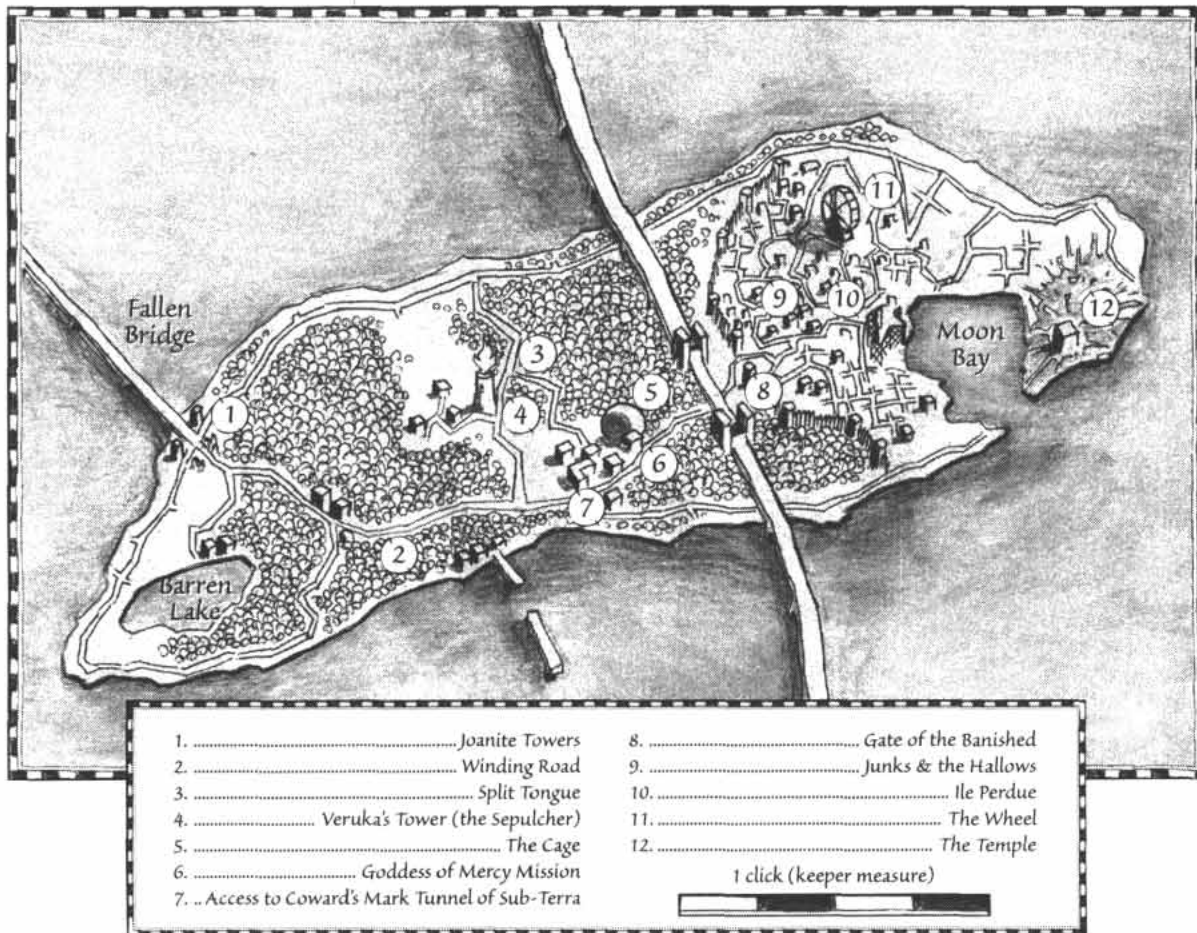


Hom

From the forced confessions of Marris Diago, Fallen Evan:

When there is nowhere to turn, there is Hom. When your anger has no voice, there is Hom. When the Fatimas betray you, there is Hom. That, at least is what we tell others, but Hom is not the perfect sanctuary we pretend it to be. Of course, we'll welcome everyone with open arms. We need people to strengthen our position. My problem with the entire matter is we're too open. We welcome when we shouldn't. We accept all those whom the Fatimas have rejected, but while I dislike the Fatimas, have you ever thought to ask why some Fallen got kicked off tribal lands? Maybe there was something wrong with them to begin with. But, no, we don't question. We simply accept people for who they are, taking in murderers, rapists and thieves. The Seven Deaths are probably laughing up a storm right now, because they keep throwing out their refuse, and we keep taking it like it's treasure.

Look at the way we're living; barely one step above the Squats. I may not have liked the Fatimas, but at least the Magdalites and Evans did something to improve their environment. Have you seen the way we live? Hom is barely hospitable. When I was first exiled and came to Hom seeking sanctuary, I remember thinking I had made a tragic mistake coming here. What could I do, though? I had nowhere else to go. Walking down the Fallen Bridge, the Joanites watched me in disgust, but let me pass. They knew what I was in for. Ignorantly, I strode up to the two towers standing between me and my new home. The towers were edifices of stone surrounded by wooden skeletons, harsh and silent like judges. There must have been ten guards at least, all eyeing me with spite. There the Joanites went through my scant possessions, throwing my clothes over the side of the bridge when they realized I had nothing interesting to offer them as bribes. Poor and frightened, I crossed the last barrier and entered Hom.



The Winding Path

Upon arriving, the foul stench of misery besieged me. A few shacks and huts littered the area around the Fallen Bridge, smelling of human waste and poverty. Several people milled around, watching me like I was bait. The Jackers' recruiters ignored me, men petitioned me for sex, and Doomsayers preached about the coming something or other. I broke past the throng and found myself staring down three roads that branched off in different directions. Known collectively as the Winding Road (beaten paths were more like it), one road broke to the west and circled the Barren Lake, eventually meeting back with the second of the three paths. It appeared peaceful enough, but I later learned that the only people living on that side of the island gathered in one set of ruins on the lake shore. It was the Herites' stronghold, and they rarely tolerated unexpected company. Solitary travelers to that part of the island sometimes vanished near the thick forests growing along the shores of the lake. The Barren Lake was nothing to see either. It was a foul putrid hole used by many to bathe and clean their clothes. Nobody drank from it. Everyone knew better than that.

The second avenue dove straight into a dark forest. Cramped between the tree-line and path, however, were small buildings and homes. Congested with people, I quickly abandoned the idea of moving down what I later learned to be Hom's main road. Although the forest thins further along the path, opening up into entire neighborhoods of homes, inns and stalls, I've never enjoyed navigating the tight turns of the Winding Road. Unfortunately, I don't have much of a choice; the third avenue that diverged from the Fallen Bridge was no safer than the first.

I chose the third path because it hugged the shore of the Great River. Along its length, I moved past hovels and beach shanties filled with Fallen who were poorer than I. Still I continued on, avoiding their pleading eyes, till I came upon a crossroads. This new path cut back into the forest, and I may not have taken it had there not been a kindly woman there. She was old, bordering on ancient, but seemingly full of vitality. She told me the path I was following was a dangerous one, for though it led to the main settlement on the other side of Hom, it was not uncommon for brigands to prowl its streets. With that she glanced back at the two men I hadn't noticed following me. From that point on I learned to travel the main avenue of the Winding Road.

As a rule of thumb, any road that hugs the shoreline leads to the darker sections of Hom, where anyone can be a victim for the dagger. The destitute crowd these streets, trying to sell anything for scraps of food or clothing. I've seen mothers barter away their bodies, or worse yet, their children just for one night's meal. I have also seen Z'bri Serfs skulking around, offering the poor furs or medicines in exchange for one evening of pleasure with their Sky-Lord masters. Many accept the offer, knowing they may never return, but at least they saved their families. During winter, these beach shanties become cemeteries. Many die from the cold, or suffer wracking illnesses that plague them for the rest of their lives. This is the Hom the Fallen rarely mention.

The Split Tongue

The path where the old woman sat was known as the Split Tongue because it branched in two further south. This by itself was unremarkable, but what I did find of interest were the sights along the way. Flanked by a forest and ruins, the Western Tongue Path eventually moved past a small clearing. Within was a community of tents and huts, all belonging to the several dozen Doomsayers encamped at Veruka's tower, the Sepulcher. It was a solid monument of large stones that defied age valiantly. Although trees hid the base from view, the crown broke past the canopy of branches and lit the sky with the brightest flame I have yet to see. The Doomsayers prayed and meditated in this sacred hollow, waiting for Veruka to offer them words of wisdom.

The Eastern Tongue Path was just as interesting. Although surrounded by less trees, a clutter of ruins lay scattered across the area. Behind it all was one structure that dwarfed the Sepulcher in size. It was a skeletal dome made of metal piping, and I knew it to be the Cage. When the Jackers were not practicing beneath it, the Eighth Tribe used it for rants and trials. Still, you could find many people, including myself, who climbed to the very top of the Cage and watched the world. Only from there could you appreciate the size of Hom, her backwater communities or the two large forests growing on her soil.

The Forests of Hom

Two forests grow on Hom, one to the west of the Sepulcher, and another to the east, but the two are close enough together that we count them as one. The forest is mostly empty, with a majority of the buildings built along the Winding Road or near the shores of the Great River. While Duskfall is far thicker than Hom's measly groves, Hom's forest shouldn't be under estimated either. Few people choose to live within the hilly terrain of this area because of old Yagan tales.

Hom was a place of exile for the tribes and for the Z'bri before the Eighth Tribe claimed it as theirs. But whatever got banished didn't simply vanish. Hom's forest is rumored to be the hiding place of whatever survived the exile. The Fallen say nonsense, nothing lives beneath the canopy of trees. If that's true, then why do the Fallen of the Winding path close their shutters at night and stay inside if possible? And what, pray tell was that howling I heard several nights back? The wind? The wind doesn't snarl, and it doesn't kill Doomsayers camped outside Veruka's Sepulcher. Kymber and the others can deny what they wish, but I saw the entrails hanging on tree limbs, and I know something has Ninva worried. You can see it in his eyes. The Jackers may patrol the area regularly, but they're missing something. Don't tell them that, though. They're proficient with their blades, and they aren't afraid to use them.

The Goddess of Mercy Mission

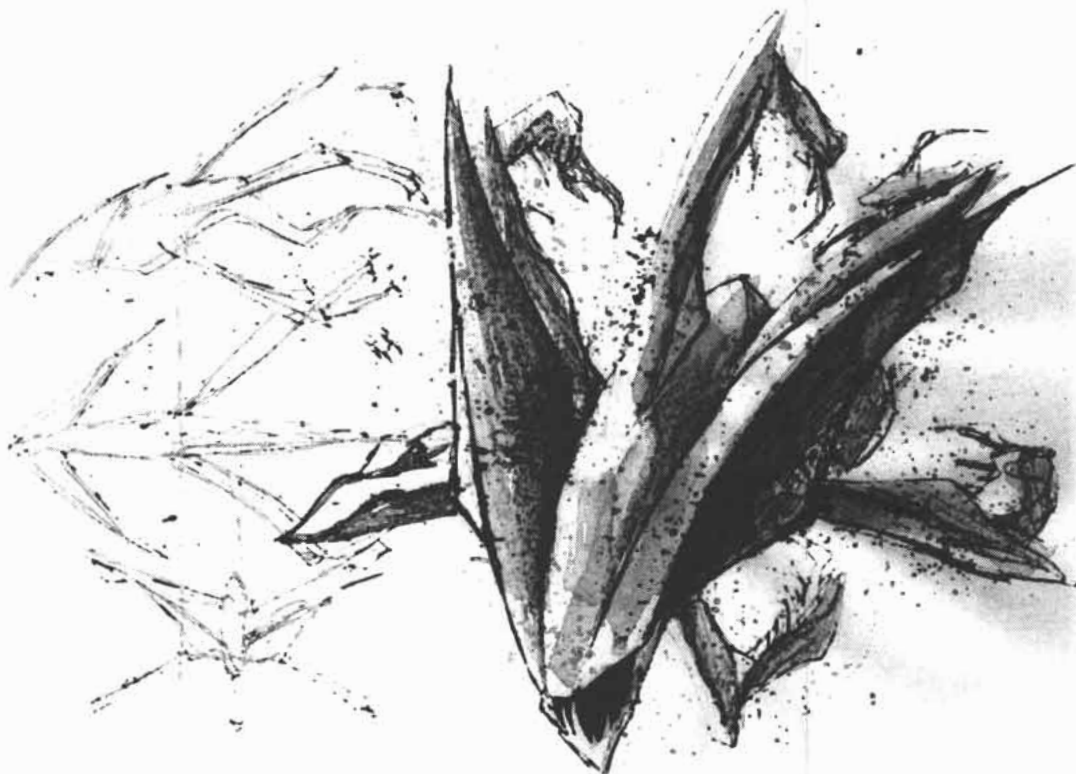
Kymber can't deny the Fatimas are sending use their rejected, especially with the rise of insane Fallen. You see them walking around the island, muttering to themselves, or staring at the sky, drooling like infants. I admire Kymber for her compassion, however, even if misguided. She and a few other Fallen have taken possession of an ancient building just south of the Cage, and are using it to care for the mentally ill. They call it the Goddess of Mercy Mission, but I call it a mistake. These people should never have been allowed in Hom; now they waste our resources. I know a few others dislike the dozen or so idiots interned at the Mercy Goddess, but Kymber is too well-respected to openly criticize.

Hom Proper

Y'see, there's the island of Hom, then there's the settlement of Hom on the eastern tip of the island. It can be confusing, but then nobody said it ever made sense. The community of Hom itself is a collection of ancient stone paths, homes, ruins and shoddy buildings. I can fathom what this place might have been before the Eighth Tribe arrived, but the ruins are unsettling. Like the Cage, some are skeletons of metal. They're odd, twisted pieces of wreckage that look that they were designed to be contorted. A friend once showed me relic glass that was warped, and I have seen at least three intricately carved wooden horses impaled on iron rods, one of which adorned the entrance of a tavern. Then there's the Wheel, our lookout tower. A Keeper once told me it turned on its own. Maybe it's because of this place, or maybe because we no longer have the Fatimas to guide us, but there is a wild, festive atmosphere in Hom. Nobody ever sleeps.

Now everyone knows about Ile Perdue, Junks and the Gallows, but personally, I've never been to those places. I'm not much into loud music or getting flogged. Instead I spend my time with the fishermen of Moon Bay, which is adjacent to the Temple. Older Fallen who really can't be bothered with the various cells come to Moon Bay to fish. It's a meager, simple existence, but at least I can understand it. When the fishermen aren't catching their meals, they're playing games or gossiping. Some enterprising individuals have even set up their carts for business along Moon Bay, trading fish they caught or fruit grown in small gardens. The number of carts is always increasing, along with the variety of wares and services for trade. It's nothing like the Emporiums, but it's the only place you get a sense of community on Hom. Then you look to the Temple and see Den-Hades ranting or hear the Doomsayer singing, and you suddenly remember where you are.

The Temple doesn't intrigue me either, but beyond it, the eastern tip of Hom has something far more interesting. The island sinks into the water, but if you look carefully, you'll see that part of Hom is flooded. On a calm day, you can see the ruins, maybe even a section of road, just a few meters under the surface. The floods that claimed the Sunken City did that too, only the current of the Great River eroded everything, leaving nothing standing to break the waterline.



The Ne'zark

The Ne'zark are recent and terrifying arrivals to Hom, but they are not Z'bri in origin. They are spirits from the River of Dream given form through the nightmares of the insane at the Mission. Unbeknownst to Kymber and the other Fallen Evans, their unsuccessful attempts to use Synthesis to heal their patients are having an odd but deleterious effect on them. Already close to the River of Dream because of their dementia, the insane are becoming conduits for the manifestation of the Ne'zark. This has allowed several creatures to permanently cross over.

The Ne'zark now hide within the forests of Hom and are responsible for recent attacks in the area. How they arrive or why is unknown, but once one crosses over, it manifests within a kilometer of the dreamer. After that, the patient shares a link with the Ne'zark and dreams of it all the time. By the same token, the Ne'zark will never attack the dreamer who summoned it.

The Ne'zark are hexapedal, with a thin, elongated muzzle and a row of razorsharp teeth. Their ears are bat-like, but they possess no eyes, and instead use echolocation to see. Their flesh is almost translucent, revealing bone, muscles and some internal organs. They reach sizes comparable to a baby horse, and move with surprising quickness, swimming through the very air as of weightless. The Ne'zark are also nocturnal hunters. During the day, they lair within a half-collapsed basement hidden in the forest, but at night, they stalk the local wolves or any other available prey. Because they hunt in packs, there will be a rise in attacks as more arrive from the River of Dreams.

Attributes

AGI +2, BLD +1, FIT +1, INS +2, PER +1, WIL 0, STR +1, HEA +1, STA 35, ULD 5*

*+ natural weapons

Skills

Combat Sense 2/-1, Dodge 2/+2, Hand-to-Hand 3/+2, Notice (tracking) 2/+1, Sneak 2/+2

Special Abilities

Claws (x6 damage), Bite (x8 damage), Echolocation (PER unaffected by lighting conditions), Aerial swim (40 m/round).



The Rust Wastes

From the forced confessions of Brian Sullmore, Keeper:

Welcome to the last bastion of the World Before. We may not fully understand many of the gifts our ancestors left behind, but at least we don't cling to ignorance like a babe to its mother's tit. The Rust Wastes dominate the eastern portions of Vinary and remain the Keepers' domain. Like the deserts of legend that covered everything in a cloak of sand, the Wastes suffer beneath clouds of rust particles. It's the curse of an industrialized world, I suppose. Ancient metal complexes withered into a fine dust over generations due in part to high humidity. Somehow, though, that doesn't seem enough. It doesn't account for the haze of rust in the air, the dunes of poisoned silt perched up along buildings or the way some metals are so brittle they disintegrate under my touch. There are other factors at play, things we cannot see, things that turned the Rust Wastes into what it is. Those reasons remain a mystery for now.

Unlike the Discarded Lands, many industrial sections of eastern Vinary survived the End. Despite fires and decades of winters, these buildings of steel stood resolute, unwilling to fall to neglect. Certainly this is not true of all the Rust Wastes. The region alternates between devastated buildings where people once lived or bought supplies, to entire blocks of stalwart complexes standing silently, wounded by time, but not ready to die. Common to it all is the bitter-tasting air and the red haze that scours the sight of the unprotected. This constant storm of rust killed all vegetation decades ago, turning the Rust Wastes into the most barren place on Vinary.



Baba Yaga's Secret

Confessions from Phemary, Fallen Yagan:

I've angered Baba Yaga with my defection, but I still hide some of her secrets behind these lips. The Keepers would pay dearly for this particular fact, and if Baba Yaga found out I said anything about it, then so would I. Still, if just for the sheer pleasure of seeing their faces, I'd love to tell the Keepers that the Yagans are responsible for the Rust Wastes. As a Mordred, I know this to be true.

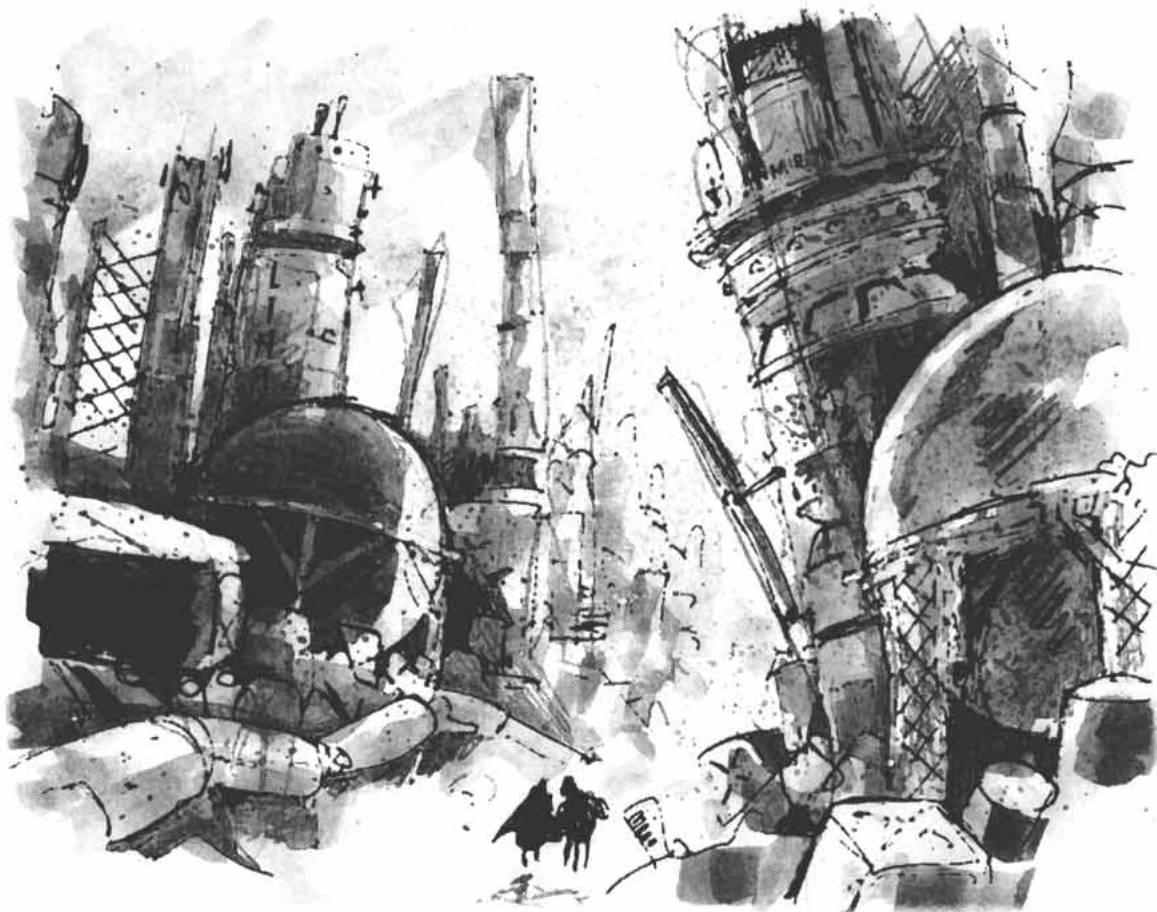
Following the camps, the eastern portion of Vinary had survived the End the best. Huge metallic structures hid functioning artifacts, the tools to rebuild damaged items and the means to understand the past. The Fatimas feared this place, for a new civilization could grow from here and reclaim the legacy of our ancestors, a new civilization that did not need their help. So the Fatimas gathered and debated on ways to deal with the area. Joan, in typical warrior fashion, argued for complete destruction; Eva wanted to reclaim it as she was doing with Lai; Agnes wanted to explore the area; the rest were unsure. Finally, the Crone decided that as keeper of mysteries, it was her responsibility to deal with this threat. She unleashed death's touch upon the buildings, accelerating their decay and turning them into dunes of metal flakes. Eva cried when the rust poisoned the beautiful forest around Olympus, but then everyone knew there was a price to pay for this level of destruction. Unfortunately, the disintegration is taking longer than anticipated, and the Keepers are uncovering items the Fatimas preferred they didn't. Baba Yaga has accelerated decay's influence even more.

The Steel Maze

From the forced confessions of Brian Sullmore, Keeper:

The Rust Wastes has its fill of derelict buildings. These immense skeletons of metal and machinery form a series of alleys, corridors and passages called the Steel Maze. Although they are hardly hospitable, to us they are the most welcome sight on the island. With high ceilings, beams and pillars of exposed steel, and hard cement floors, they are seemingly immortal. They are not. Tragically, the Steel Maze is disintegrating. An unseen plague turns the metal brittle enough to poke holes through with just a finger. Within a few winters, there may be nothing left of the Maze but a desert of rust. The tribes cheer this day, not realizing that they may share our fate. The rust has poisoned all greenery in the Wastes, so my question to the Fatimas is what happens if an ill-wind blows a dune or two into Lai or Griffentowne? What of your precious forests then?

The Steel Maze is as much a maze to ourselves as outsiders, and we're never disappointed with our exploratory ventures. Normally we find something to add to our collection, but sometimes, we uncover a cache of artifacts that somebody carefully hid. These finds are cause for celebration, and caution. The Keepers are not a united front. Although several renegade cells operate within the Rust Wastes and compete with us for technology, the Machine Monks have proven to be the most troublesome by far. They watch us, we watch them, and when anyone finds artifacts, it becomes a race to secure the new find. Often times these races devolve into combat, wasting the resources we both so diligently worked to acquire. With the deterioration of the Rust Wastes, we fear our treasures will become increasingly rare, or lost entirely. The disintegration has added more drawback to exploration. Several survey teams have barely escaped collapsing floors or even buildings. The Steel Maze is turning into a death trap, and there's little we can do to stop it.

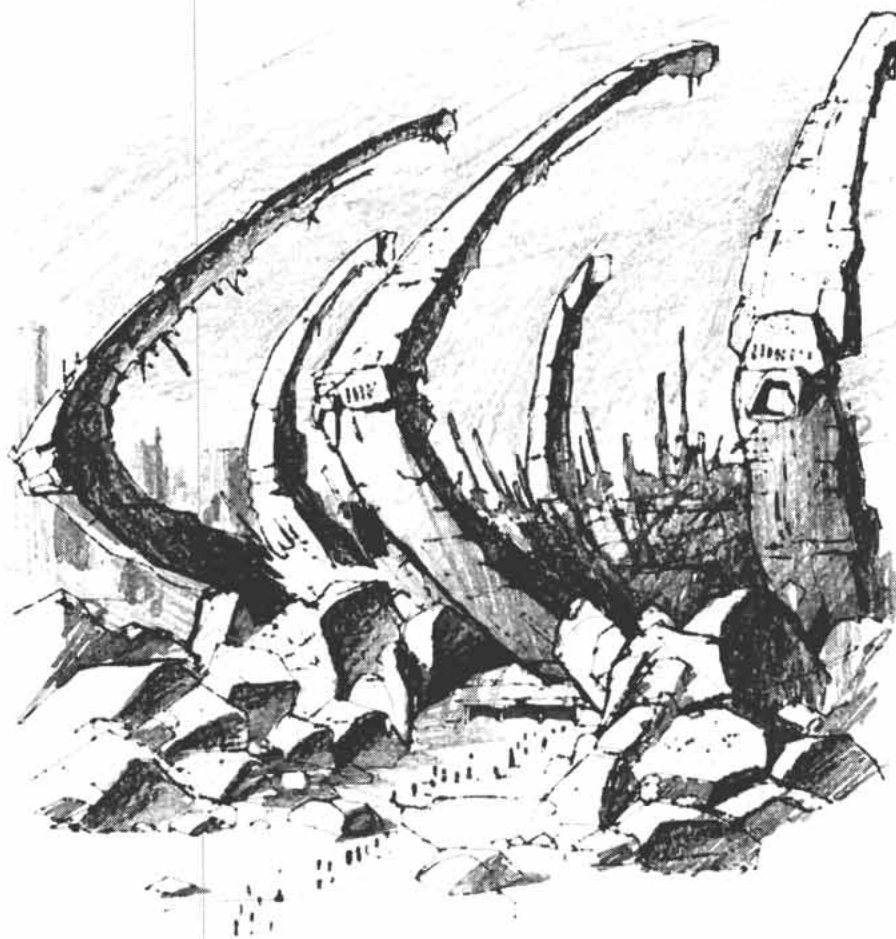


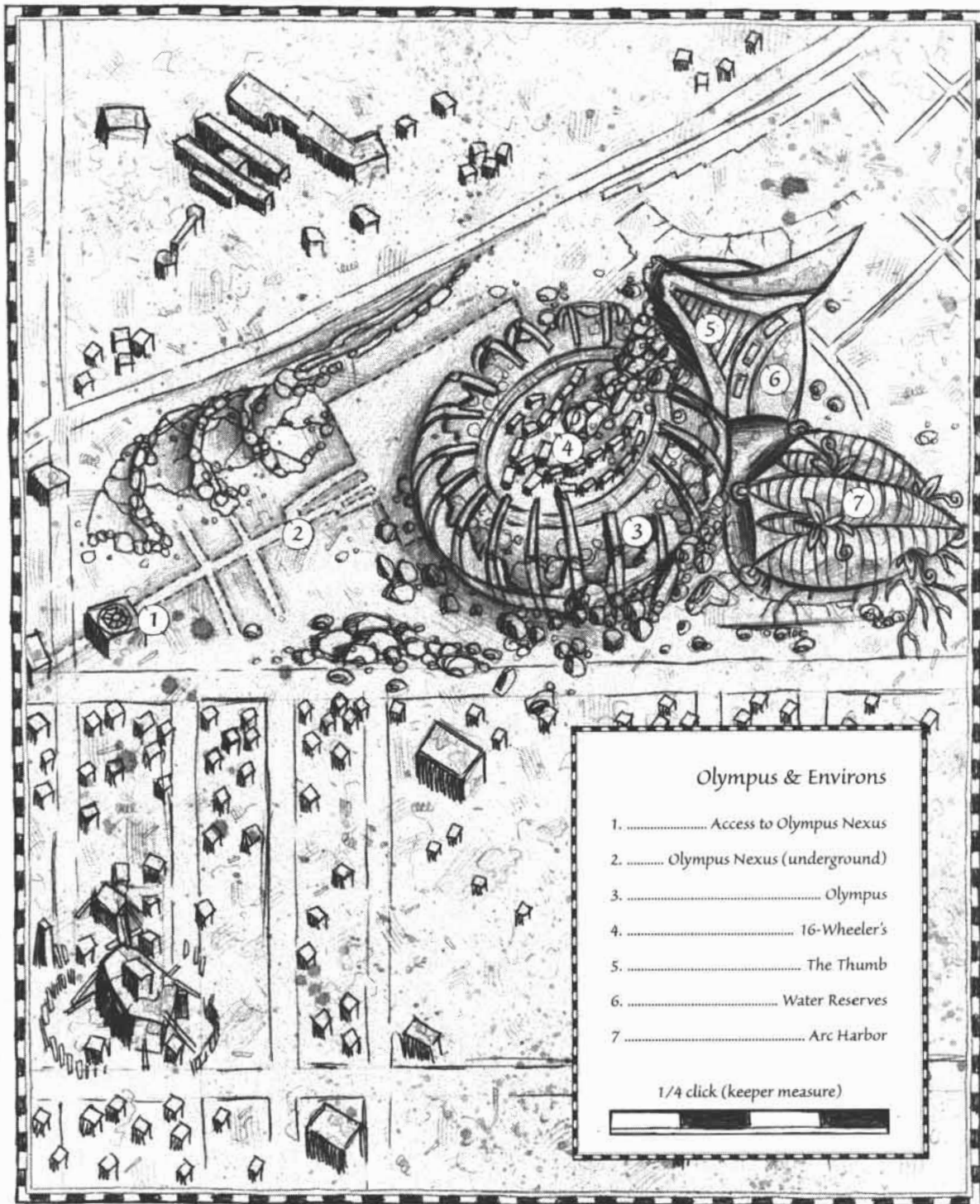


Olympus

Fortunately, the decay of the Steel Maze has not yet reached Olympus, our stronghold. Although it is impressive now, it was stunning in its prime. Pictures from the One Hundred Books show Olympus as a monument rather than just a simple structure. It must have been the center of life in Vimary before the End. It seems only fitting that it was. Olympus was a huge domed amphitheater that could easily seat the entire current population of Vimary. It was bordered by a slanted tower rising above the height of the Great Hill, and an oval building built to look like an insect shell. These structures survive to this day, but they are a far cry away from their younger years.

Today, ruins and a dead plain that once contained a thriving forest border the flanks of Olympus. The upper half of the slanted tower, known as the Thumb, collapsed and crashed into Olympus' dome. The dome, in turn, fell in upon itself. This filled the interior with detritus, leaving a ring of thirty-eight support ribs to jut out over the rubble like fractured skeletal fingers. Not everything is in ruin, though, and we've rebuilt what we could. Portions of Olympus are still habitable including an immense series of untouched chambers. We've also taken dozens of huge containers called 18-Wheelers, placed them in cleared sections of the arena, and connected them like a network of tunnels. Because Olympus is open to the elements, we use these tunnels to work and move around without our filter masks.





3. Vimary Revisited



We discovered generators capable of powering salvaged lights and equipment. We've also converted Olympus' docks into garages for our vehicles, with winches, parts and tools scavenged from the Steel Maze. Admittedly, even by our standards, the garages, tunnels and work chambers are a mess thick power cables and improvised machinery. Still, the system works. We have electricity, and we can draw water from reservoirs that are hidden deep underground. Boiling the water is necessary, but it's better than going to canals with buckets. I know Squats covet Olympus because of what we've accomplished, but they've already learnt that raiding our stronghold is a bad idea. Our defenses and early warning system are more than a match for them. People tend to discount artifacts because they either assume they no longer work, or they have no clue as to an artifact's real function. We use this to our advantage in defending our home.

Like anywhere else on Vimary, there are thousands of auto wrecks scattered about the area. We've discovered that certain vehicles have unusual additions, like the ability to emit a variety of annoying sounds. Although their purpose is lost to us, we've managed to turn these devices into perimeter alarms. There are several dozen cars scattered throughout the streets around Olympus. When somebody walks by one, they activate the alarm and turn on the auto's surviving lights like a beacon. This enables our lookouts in the ruins of the Thumb to locate the intruders. In Olympus, we also found a storage room with dozens of hand-boxes called Walktalks. These boxes transmit our voices to other boxes, allowing sentry outposts, patrols and different sections of Olympus to remain in contact.

It took a while to discover this little secret, but many doors in the Thumb, as well in the intact portions of Olympus were mechanical in nature. These metal-frame doors opened when somebody approached them. Although we considered this a useless luxury, we did find a defensive use for them. If we're under attack, we activate the doors, but leave them open. The minute somebody reaches them, they slam shut, *impaling intruders on spikes, or gutting them with sharpened edges* (depending if it is a sliding or pivoting mechanism). Once the door closes, it opens again, waiting for the next fool to approach. Other doors are simply hooked up to a power supply, delivering a charge of electricity to the victim. Needless to say, we've discouraged many a raider with this trap alone.

Although not our final defense, we've found metal knobs shaped like flowers set into the ceiling of Olympus and the Thumb. These devices, called sprinks, once sprayed jets of water to quench fires, but we've found an ironic use for them. We've filled the pipes of several sprinks with oil. In case of attack, we shut down power in Olympus. Most attackers will normally light torches to find their way around, which then activates the oil-laden sprinks. You can envision the rest.

The Thumb

In its prime, the Thumb was a slanted tower that leaned over Olympus. The top half of the tower collapsed, however, nearly destroying Olympus with a rain of debris. What remains now is the tower's lower half. Although not as tall as before, the Thumb still lords over the surrounding ruins and juts out on the horizon like a broken bone.

Surprisingly, the Thumb is not a solid structure throughout, nor does it seem to have been a standard building. We've found the remnants of a complicated winch system near its top, above a series of levels. From ancient pictures, the system, marvel of marvels, retracted Olympus' roof. Were the structure intact, it may have been easier to understand its function, possibly reuse it. Unfortunately that is not feasible, but it doesn't make the Thumb any less remarkable.

The Thumb's base is vaguely triangular, with a long back that travels out and away from the tower like a tail. On either side of its width (the third side faces Olympus), two wings fan out like hoods. The hoods are part of the Thumb's base, and include six pits of varying size. We know water filled these pits and that our ancestors swam in them. We do not have that luxury. All but one reservoir store our water supply whenever we can get the water pumps working. The last one, a small, shallow pit, we use to bathe the children.

Just above these wings are thirteen levels of chambers and rooms of different sizes. We know these once served as places of commerce, but they are our homes now. High above the ground and easily defended, these stories are the heart of the Ancient's community. Because of the power drain, we only activate the generators in the morning and at night to cook food. For the remainder of the day, the power system is shut down except for Walktalk boxes set in the walls. Above these floors, the tower abruptly ends in ruins where we have a lookout nest. This sentry point has a commanding view of the entire area, and is often our earliest warning system.



Keeper Traps

The Keepers use a variety of ingenious methods to protect their homes. Even with a knowledge of technology, the traps are still deadly because the Keepers use artifacts in new ways. These deadly snares are not limited to Olympus either, for the Keepers have trapped many ruins where they hope to eventually return.

Blade-mounted Sliding Door:

Action test against Dodge;
Challenging Threshold (5);
Damage = MoF x 15.

Spike covered Closing Door:

Action test against Dodge;
Challenging Threshold (5);
Damage = MoF x 12.

Electrical Door:

Electric Intensity 7

Oil-Laden Sprinks:

Fire Intensity 7/5/3;
Action test against Dodge;
Challenging Threshold (5);
1/3/5 meters radius.



The Arc Harbor

The carapace-like Arc Harbor completes the wonders of Olympus. Compared to Olympus proper and the Thumb, it is relatively undamaged, and a beautiful building in any period. Windows, some intact and others covered by debris, line the ribbed roof that curves like a shell. The exterior, while pitted and broken in some places, is nothing compared to the wonders within. The interior, though a jumble of passages and open spaces, has no interior support columns. When the Keepers first found the Arc Harbor, we were amazed by what we had uncovered. The interior held a forest so thick, we could barely move through it. It had grown over everything, cracking the ground as it expanded, covering the walls and floor with moss, roots, creeper vines and hanging branches. Many trees we recognized, while other breeds remained a complete mystery. Judging from salvaged pictures and the rare Walktalks that held bits of information from a strange-speaking voice, we gathered that the Arc Harbor was a greenhouse of sorts with plants and animals from around the world. We surmised that when the End came and power failed, many plants and animals died from the winters, leaving species we encountered. Unfortunately, the Walktalks did not explain who protected the interior. This remains a mystery to this day.

When the rust storms began, they ravaged the forest north of Olympus. Unwilling to watch the Arc Harbor perish as well, we covered the broken windows and protected it from the storms. Unfortunately, the northern forest held huge hives of insects, some of whom found their way into the building. The insects proliferated in this environment, growing in number. Eventually, some species exhibited hostile tendencies, and attacked anything living. After several children nearly died from toxic reactions to insect bites, we tried killing them with smoke bombs. Though a few perished, the majority seemingly vanished. We did not realize that the larger trees had broken through the ground, looking for water, and that the insects followed these cracks in the foundation, down into the Vimary's ancient sewer system. From there they spread, creating nests throughout the sewers.

Although I'm not an expert on the matter, I believe the insect population rises and ebbs. At low numbers, they feed off whatever they find (which, in the sewers, is plenty), but at points of high population, they turn and devour one another. Unfortunately, at these times, the insects well up through the cracks, back into the Arc Harbor, looking for food. In our first encounter, two brothers fell to toxic stings. When we returned, the insects had picked their bones clean. Since then, we've installed airlocks at the sewer outlets in Olympus. We now avoid entering the Arc Harbor except during winter, when the insects are quiet.

«D»Eva's Secret

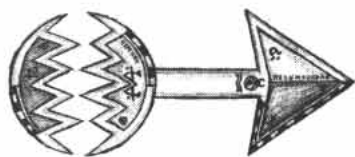
Confession from Rosary, Fallen Evan Shaman:

The decision to poison the eastern forests of Vimary with Baba Yaga's rust plague was too much for Eva to bear. Already, She felt the great forest north of Olympus dying, and knew the wonderful and rare trees and plants within the Arc Harbor would follow. So She bid myself and number of Her Shamans to enter the great forest, and to rescue what we could. Working secretly with a Keeper who sympathized with our plight, we avoided their traps and went to work. It is something I'll never forget. The forest north of Olympus had many rare blooms which we transported uneventfully to the Arc Harbor. But then we came to the home of the insects. Although the forest was filled with them, we found ancient hives to make the Flemis whisper in awe. The hive was the remnant of an ancient building, and the insects covered it like a living coat. We tried transporting them to the Arc Harbor, only to have them sting us repeatedly. Unwilling to leave these children of Eva behind, we used corpses to lure the insects to us, then allowed them to feast on the bodies. As they did, we swiftly transported the corpses to the Arc Harbor and dumped them within. We didn't know what we had done.

Before leaving Eva's service, I heard rumors that the Flemis had Chained one of their own to a swarm of insects many summers ago. Unfortunately, the Chained Flemis escaped into Vimary. Looking back upon the unusual insects we saw, and their taste for flesh, I believe we helped this exile find shelter in the Arc Harbor. From what I've heard, it now nests in the Underlands, occasionally surfacing when its diet of flesh is not sated on rats. If this is true, then I pray to the Goddess for forgiveness. The deaths of many will be on my hands.

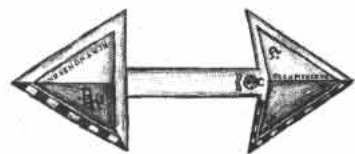


Sub Terra

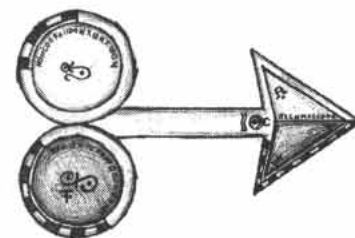


From the forced confessions of Brian Sullmore, Keeper:

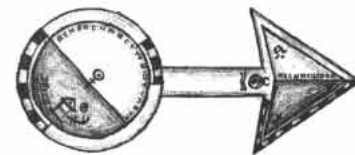
The last of our domains is Sub Terra, the system of tunnels running beneath Vimary. To the idiot tribes, everything beneath the ground is Underlands. There is no distinction between the transport tubes, the sewer lines and the Emporiums. What we call Sub Terra, however, are the transport tunnels.



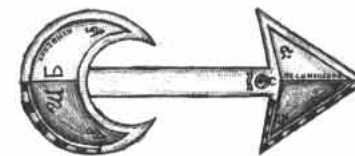
From the maps we've salvaged, it's obvious Sub Terra is not a grand mystery like everyone believes. There are five tracks in total, with six nexus stations where two lines meet. The largest tunnel is shaped like a U. We call this line Anger because the maps show it in the color red. It begins in the north, moves south for at least nine kilometers, curves east for another five kilometers before turning back up north again. Anger tunnel has four of the six nexus-stations along its route.



The eastern arm of Anger tunnel is the Rift. The tribes claim it, but that's a laugh. It's our tunnel and they've had little success in stopping us from using it. Whenever they erect barricades, we jump into the flooded sewer systems through maintenance shafts or enlarged sewer openings, and bypass their blockades. They haven't figured out yet that the debris lying around hides our secret entrances. For the time being, however, we've reached a peaceful understanding that allows both groups unhindered access through the passage. The problem with this portion of Anger tunnel is that its north-most points lie beyond the Seven Fingers, and can be used by Z'bri to bypass the tribes' defenses. Although it pains us to do so, we've advised the Yagans at the Talon Nexus to collapse the northern stations. They have not done so yet, and we may have to take matters into our own hands.



The base of Anger tunnel lies closest to the Stone Shores, and is partially flooded. We can travel them using boats, but none of our rail-vehicles can move through the water, yet. The western arm of Anger tunnel is likewise flooded because of its proximity to the Canal. Five stations along this line are inundated, up to Snowfall Nexus, after which the tunnel is completely collapsed.



The second tunnel is Serene, which runs east to west for at least eight kilometers. It intersects Anger tunnel twice, at Talon and Snowfall Nexus. The Yagans live in Talon Nexus, but that's as far as their control extends. The tunnel between the two nexus points, essentially between Anger's two arms, is heavily flooded, barring travel. Even we can't get in. The surrounding sewers are also jammed with debris, almost like an artificial dam, and that worries us. We've been hearing rumors of something swimming the waters of Serene, but if we can't get in, we can't find the truth. Other than that, we control the line east of Talon, and this gives us uncontested supremacy of eastern Vimary.

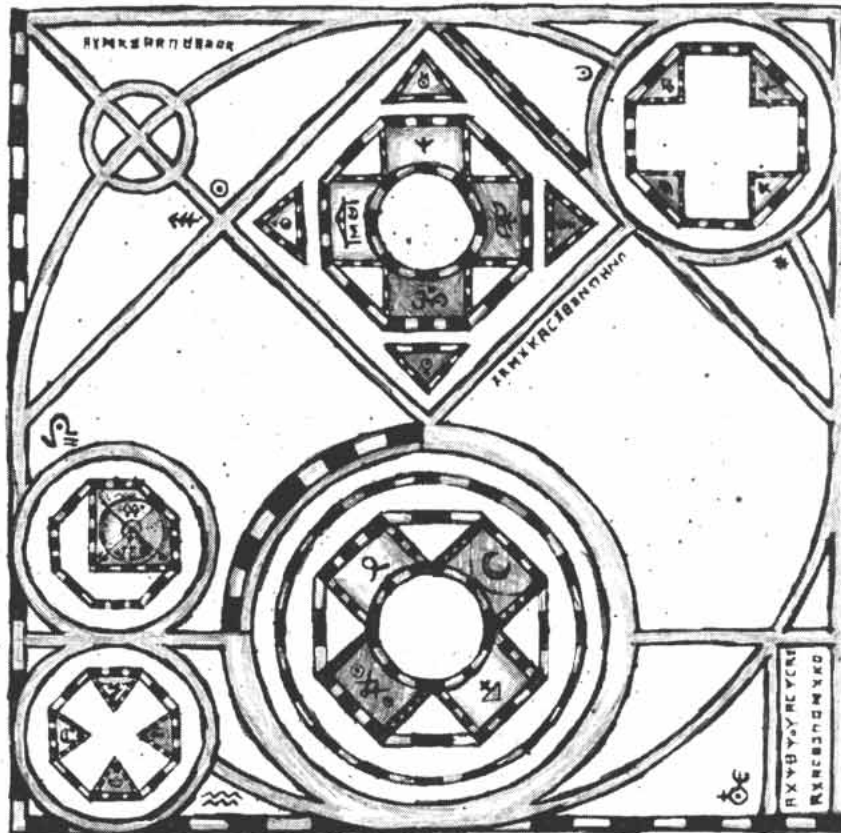
3. Vinary Revisited

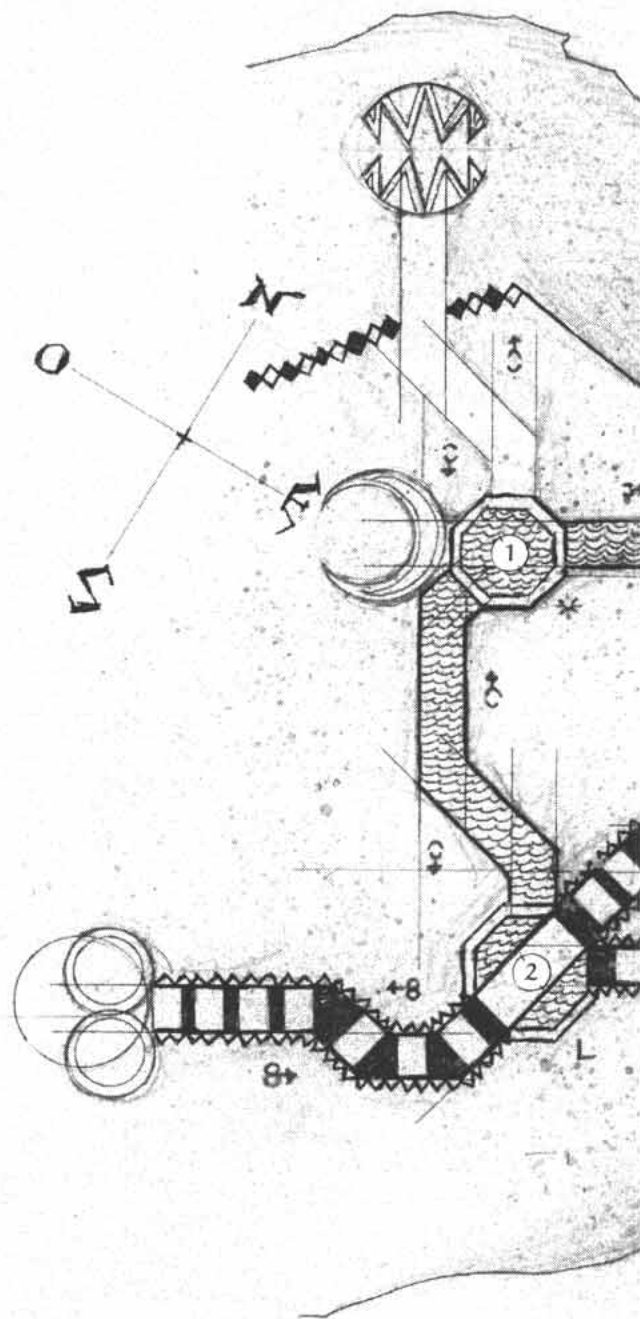
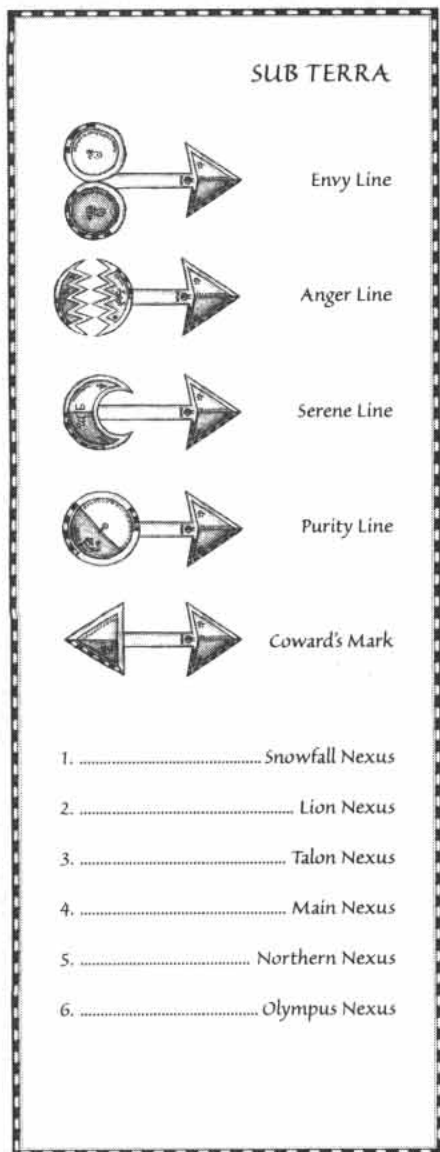
The third tunnel is Envy, the longest stretch of track going in one direction. It must be at least fifteen kilometers long, though we have no way of actually measuring the distances. The ancient maps have proven inaccurate when precision is needed. Like Serene, it too runs east to west, intersecting the Anger tunnel twice at the Main Nexus station and at Lion Nexus. Main Nexus is ours, as is the line to the east. This gives us access to the Olympus Nexus and Vault Station (where, incidentally, we have our water docks and garages). Unfortunately, the two stations west of Main Nexus are caved-in, sealing the Emporiums from us. We can use the sewer systems to bypass this obstruction, and even use the Emporiums' flooded basements as shortcuts, but this impedes travel time. After the cave-in, however, the tribes control the three stations in the west before another cave-in blocks them off from Lion Nexus.

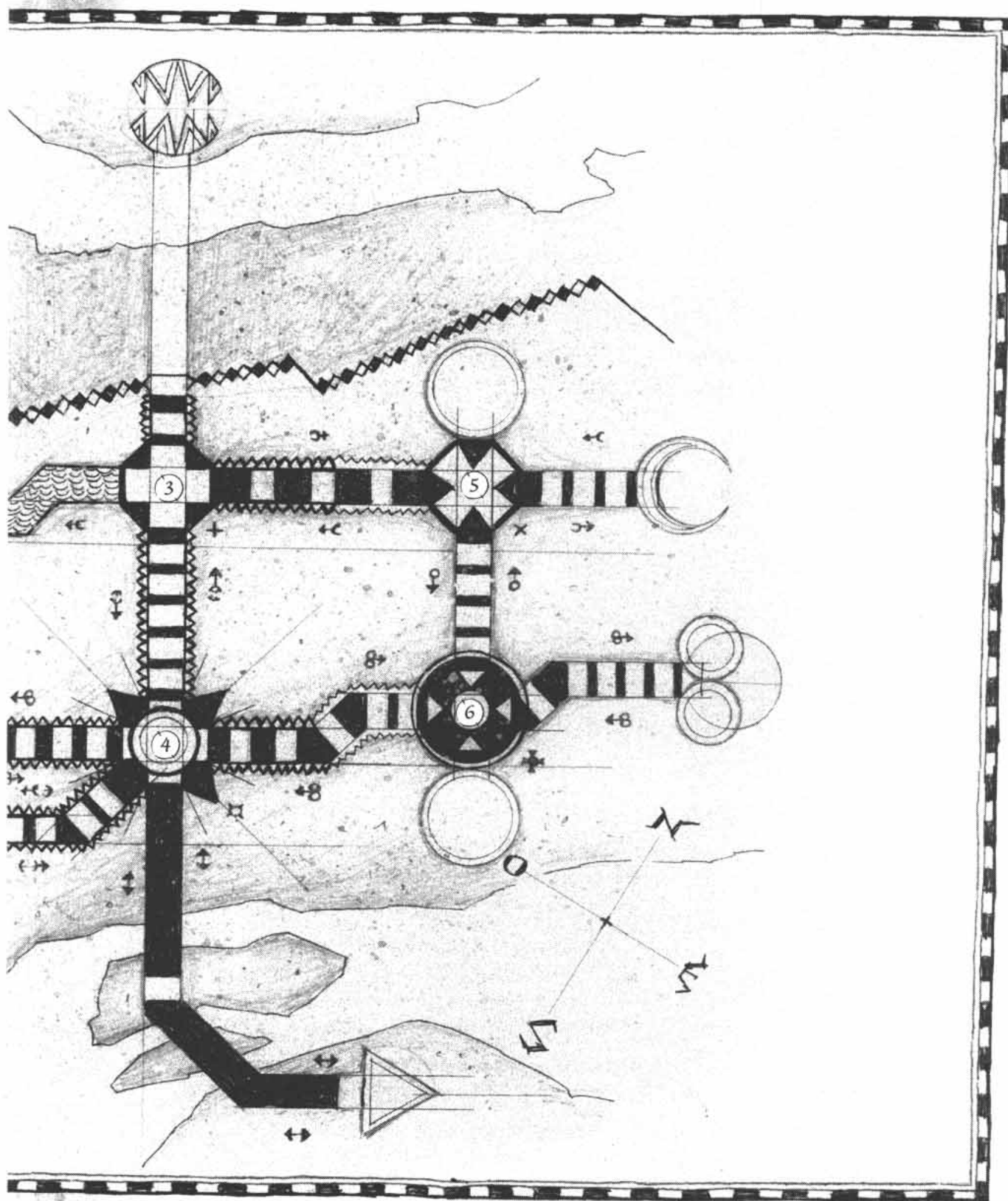
Following Lion Nexus, Envy tunnel goes beneath the Canal, into Lai. This area is nearly impossible to travel. The flood waters fill half the tunnel, while the roots of the forest dangle from the ceiling like petrified hair. It is an ominous environment where strange things swim beneath the dirt-caked waters, and odd breathing echoes off the walls when our engines are silent.

The fourth line is called Purity, and it runs north to south, intersecting Serene at Northern Nexus, and Envy at Olympus Nexus. It is also the shortest tunnel in Sub Terra. This passage is dry and ours completely. It links Olympus to Envy is thus one of our most important transport links. Because the stations are so well hidden and isolated, they serve as shelters and storage for emergency provision should we ever need to evacuate Olympus. Although the few guards stationed here may not be able to handle a full assault, such an attack is certain to trigger the many booby-traps we've hidden. Electrified tracks and debris-hidden explosives are just some of our little surprises.

The last line is called the Coward's Mark. It begins at the Main Nexus station, goes beneath the Great River, under Horn, up to the opposite shores of the Outlands. Neither Fallen nor Squat know there is an exit in their territory, and that is our advantage. Miracle of miracles, the Horn tunnel is not flooded. Built to resist the river above, it remains intact, allowing us to travel across this expanse in under fifteen minutes with our rail-vehicle. Because the buildings that once housed the tunnel's exits collapsed, we use the sewer system to reach the surface.









The Table's Turned

From the memoirs of Ann Ansi, Dahlian spy:

I watched horrified as Miscreant giggled uncontrollably and skittered towards me. I had gotten my wish. I was the last person left alive, nobody else to see my shame. The other prisoners had already died, tortured and fondled in the same disgusting moment of death. Miscreant, however, was going to take his time interrogating me. Fear washed through me like the taste of bile, but that only lasted a moment.

Miscreant faltered and looked confused. I gazed into his eyes, which seemed to swim in fat, and realized he couldn't remember my name, or how he captured me. Dahlia's Synthesis was moving through me, unraveling the skein of reality around the Beast and me. Like Dahlia had promised, She was with me, protecting me from this creature's touch. I let my will go and rode the wild essence that was Change. Dahlia was in control now, and She wanted information. Miscreant shook his head, apparently regaining control, but I knew that to be untrue. Neither of us were in control.

The Beast came close and tilted my chin with his blood-caked talon. I couldn't stop smiling, the Fatima's power moved through me like a perfect lover, exciting me, heightening my senses.

"Do you enjoy my touch?" Miscreant cooed like a lover. "Do you want me inside you? Inside every orifice, every wound?"

I continued smiling and licked my lips slowly.

"Ahh, yes," Miscreant squealed as he ran his hands over his multiple genitalia, "you want to be my slave. Cater to all my parts, don't you?"

"Well," Dahlia's voice whispered through mine, Her voice caressing Miscreant's ears like a tongue, "I have learned many tricks from Magdalite concubines."

"Ohhh, what sort of tricks?" Miscreant giggled and drew in closer.

"I've learned that slave and master is the ultimate game of illusion."

"Oh really?" the Z'bri whispered, caught up in my/Dahlia's sensuality, "how?"

"I've discovered," I/She continued, "that a good slave is the one who's in control. And that the master is already a slave to the desires of his partner." With that, I/She looked straight into Miscreant's eyes. Our features changed; our bulk increased; our abdomen sprouted five pairs of legs and popped out a row of genitalia. Miscreant stared at himself caught within the bonds. He then realized he was caught in the bonds. He had been there a while, living the illusion of, of... The veins held his legs and arms tight; he felt weak, unable to move. Worse yet, he wanted to feel weak and helpless. It excited him. He wanted to play this game.

I/She was back again, facing him, free and unblemished. I/She touched his cheek and whispered "Now tell me slave, tell me everything about H'I Kar."

Overwhelmed by his desires and unable to censure his own tongue, Miscreant spoke to his master. He wanted me/Her so badly he would play any game I/She wanted. And we were good at games.

The H'I Kar

Excerpts from the willing confession of Miscreant, Sangis spy and Sky-Lord:

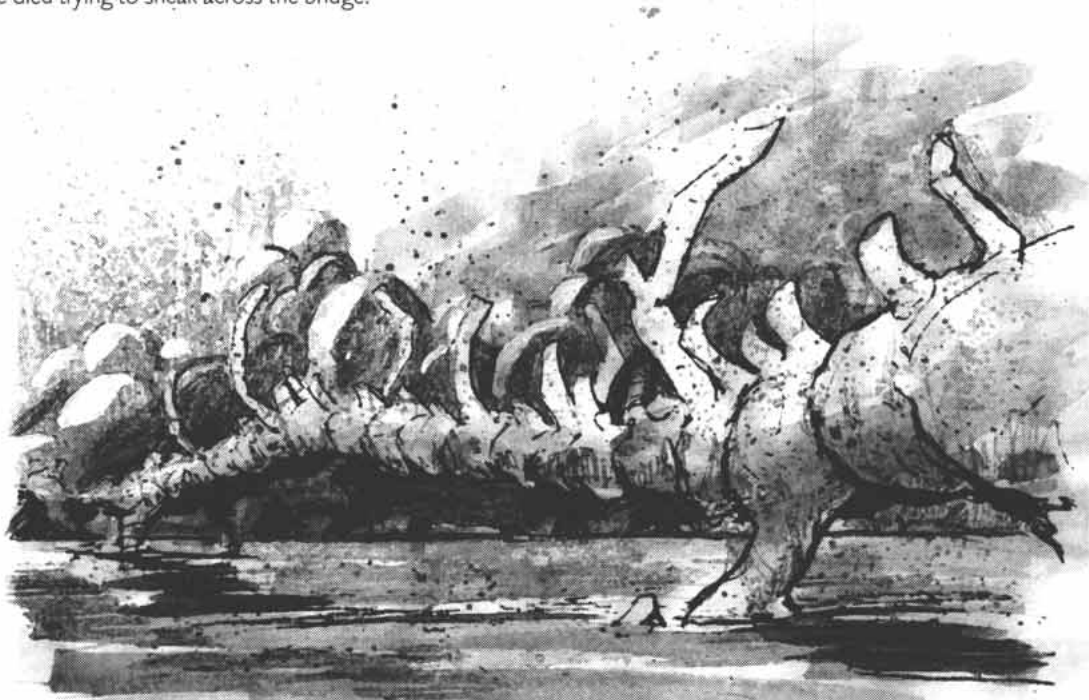
Ohh, our lands are a wonderful place. Wherever you turn, we have immortalized your kind, made you into shrines. We are merely artists using your beauty as our medium. When the Fatimas stole you away, we were devastated by your loss. We want you back. H'I Kar is a monument to our marriage, our decades' old love. Everywhere you turn are temples immortalizing your beauty. You see that building with a frame of bones, or the scarred skins on display there? That is the ultimate expression of our devotion for you. What of the tendons that keep our doors hinged? Or the stripped muscles to tether our steeds? Everything in H'I Kar is alive and animated with your essence.

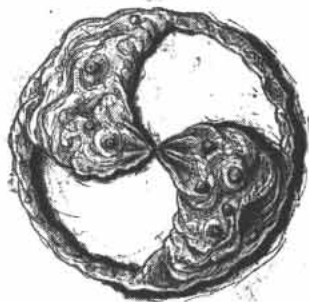
You believe we slaughtered your ancestors, parents and siblings. We didn't. They're still alive. We kept them alive for you because true death is a horrible, sterile place. Haven't you wondered why our fountains of blood are still warm? Why stringed muscles glisten as though freshly torn? Why tendons remain pliant? That's because everybody is still alive. We bestow upon you an immortality you cannot begin to fathom.

The Spine Bridge

To reach H'I Kar, you must travel the Spine Bridge. It took hundreds of your ancestors to form the bone sheath around the dead mass of metal that originally spanned the Great River. See the intricate care we've taken in emulating the human spine in our design. You can distinguish the individual vertebrae even from here, like they were just removed from a body.

Beyond its pleasing shape, the Spine Bridge holds a couple of secrets the tribes have never uncovered. First, like true vertebrae, the inside is hollow, and filled with a thick viscous liquid. When we wish to secretly leave or enter H'I Kar, we ride the pulsing jets that shoot through the spine. At either side, at the hidden organs pumps, there are secret passages that lead into the wilderness or into the Ziggurat. It's a very efficient way to travel. Another secret: we've incorporated a number of Skrakks into the bone work. What are Skrakks? Why, they're our versions of a Scray Swarm, only these creatures are made from broken bone shards. That's why the Jackers try crossing the Great River by boat; enough of them have died trying to sneak across the bridge.





The Ziggurat

I get excited, erect really, just touching the walls of the Ziggurat. I can hear the whispers of the millions who went into creating this awe-inspiring monument. It's alive you know, not in the fractured sense you're thinking of, but in the communal sense. It's one creature, a leviathan made from different parts. The Flemis saw to that. Whatever limb or organ they added to build the Ziggurat became one with it. I can see the confusion in your eyes mistress, but it's true. Its creation belies mortal comprehension. Stairs lead nowhere, some walls are fluid but impenetrable, while others seem solid until they melt at your approach. The Ziggurat is a hundred different conundrums that seem chaotic, but I assure you, have a purpose.

The outside of the Ziggurat is a shield of flesh, resin and bone protecting the soft interior. It's like a human whose skin and skeleton protect its vital organs. Akin to a living body, the exterior skin also keeps the Ziggurat's warmth from escaping when it gets cold. Inside, the Ziggurat is an overwhelming maze of chambers. There are no corridors, only thin membranes that separate everything into neat compartments. Each chamber is a new experience. Let me give you this example: thousands of eyes fill the Room of Judges and cover everything. By removing your own eye and taking one from the wall, you suddenly see yourself from all angles, at the same instant. It's a humbling experience to view yourself in so many different ways. It's also a marvel your kind can communicate with each other. You all perceive everything so differently. Another example is the Birth Canal, a muscle-lined tunnel. The muscles contract and expand around you, breaking bones if you do not move in harmony with its rhythm. Having been through it, I now know what a sexual organ feels like inside your orifice.

You look troubled. Would it help if I told you the Ziggurat had no purpose? That it was simply a monument to sensation? Truthfully, I believe the answer depends on whom you ask. To Sangis like myself, it is our brothel. We copulate with genitalia-lined walls and sup from fat-filled troughs. To the Flemis, it is a temple where they meditate and become one with the Ziggurat. I've seen walls absorb and disgorge the Flemis like human infants. To the Melanis, it's a living study in human physiology. You should visit the Aura Chamber where the Melanis spend their time. Thousands of nervous systems form the wild branches of a human-shaped tree. Bio-electricity crackles around the room like tiny bolts; some only tingle while others burn the flesh. The final lot, the Koleris, treat the Ziggurat like a military exercise. In the Bone Maze, the Ziggurat merges organs, muscles and tissue to form countless foes for the Koleris to kill. Tethered by umbilical chords, the opponents melt out of the walls and fight like demons. When they die, the walls suck them back in through the umbilical chord, and recycles their remains.

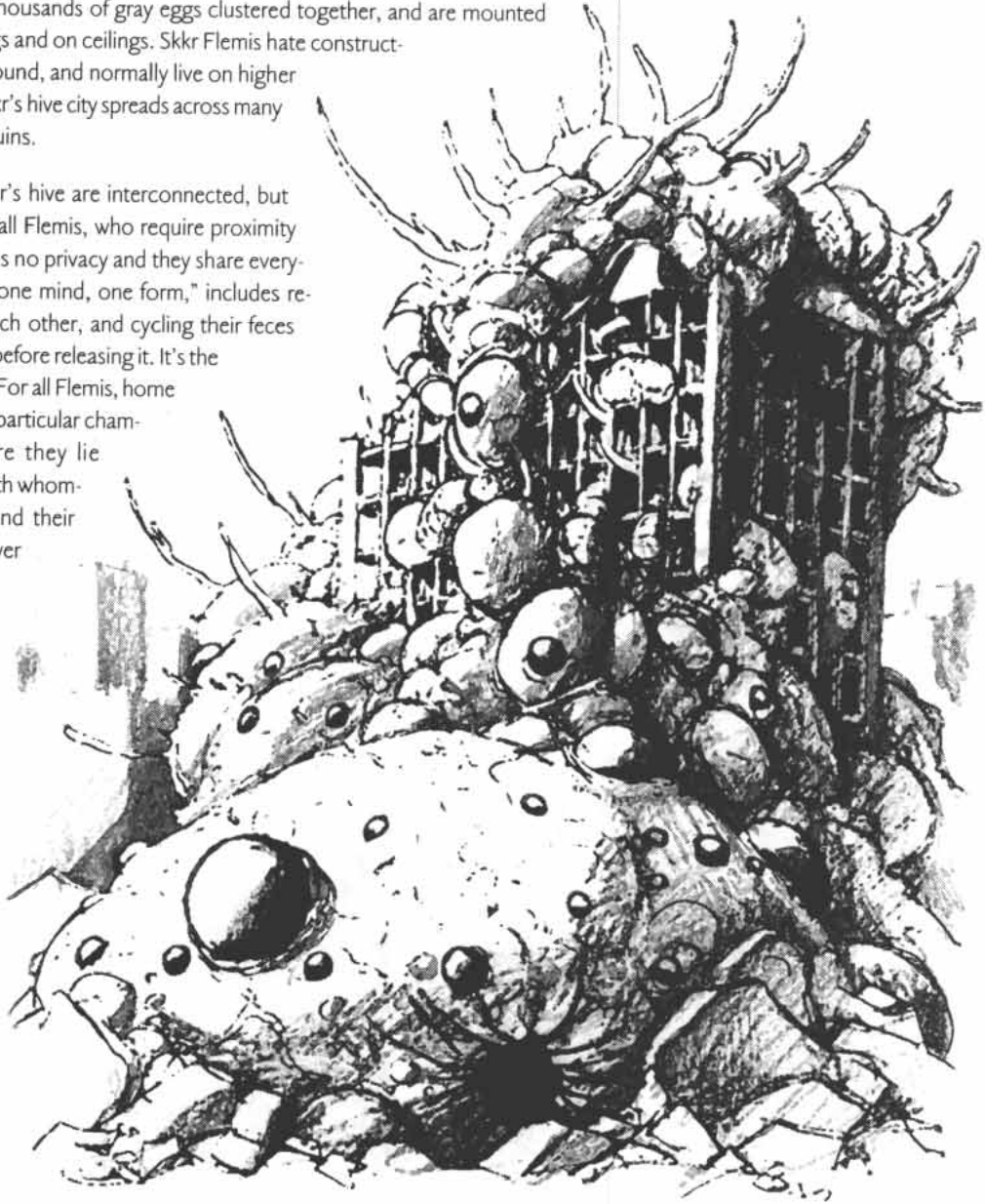
No, that's not everything about the Ziggurat, but there are some things I doubt even you'd understand mistress, such as the Chamber of Thought where hundreds of brains are still connected to their mouths, all screaming; or the Chamber of Renewal where we slough off our old skins; or the Nurseries where infants grow up in vats of bodily fluids. These are but a small facet of what lies within the Ziggurat.

The Skkr Flemis Hives

Even I do not understand the Flemis, mistress, but I will try to do them justice for you. The Flemis are of one mind. Like your insects, they possess a hive-mentality, frowning upon individuality unless the Whole can use it as a public facade. As you understand more about the Flemis, however, you come to realize their social hierarchy is far more complex than it seems. The one mind, for example, has several different leaders, and they are all fighting one another for dominance. The Flemis hive currently in power is led by Prince Skkr and Ambassador Ult'maht. They enjoy the support of the Baron, and have used their position to launch attacks against other Flemis hives, the purpose of which is to destroy the enemy leader and to take his place, thereby amalgamating his hive into theirs.

Prince Skkr's hive is north of the Ziggurat, amidst the ruins of an ancient community. Unlike the Melanis, who prefer everything separated into identifiable groups, the Skkr Flemis mix all bodily components into a paste that they use to build their homes. These hives look like thousands of gray eggs clustered together, and are mounted on the sides of buildings and on ceilings. Skkr Flemis hate constructing anything on the ground, and normally live on higher surfaces like spiders. Skkr's hive city spreads across many kilometers of ancient ruins.

The egg-homes of Skkr's hive are interconnected, but then this is normal for all Flemis, who require proximity to one another. There is no privacy and they share everything. Their ethos of "one mind, one form," includes regurgitating food for each other, and cycling their feces through everyone else before releasing it. It's the same with their homes. For all Flemis, home is the hive and not any particular chamber. They sleep where they lie down, they copulate with whom ever is next to them and their possessions are whatever is at hand. Because of this lack of function, the hives are a confusing place to outsiders, even other Z'Bri.



Abonom and the Rakh Flemis

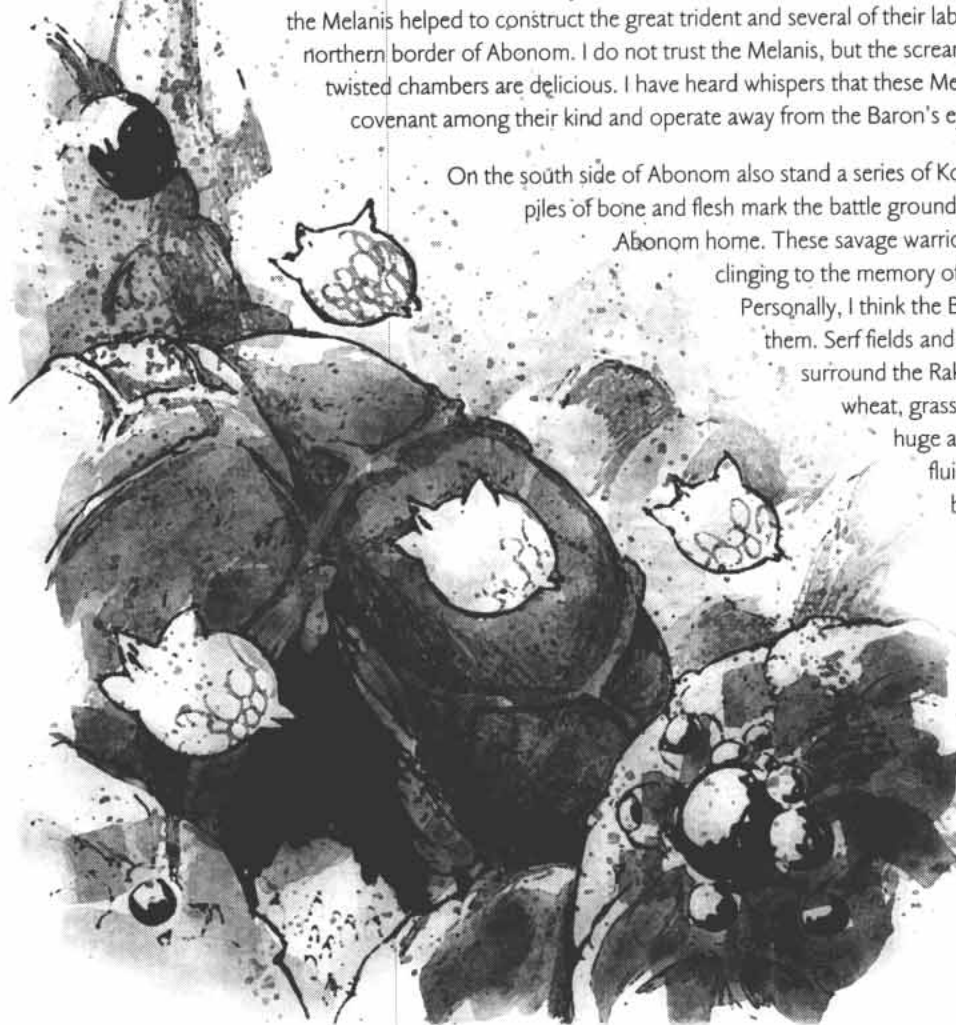
Skrr's chief rivals, the Rakh Flemis, live on Serf Lands, in the large complex bordering the Rust Wastes and the Seven Fingers. Known as Abonom, this community houses Z'bri unhappy with the Baron's rule in H'l Kar. In fact, many Z'bri who fled the Baron's bloody purge escaped to Abonom for refuge. Fearful the Great River would not stop the new Z'bri lord from trying to destroy them, however, Abonom fortified its defenses, drawing many local Serfs to them.

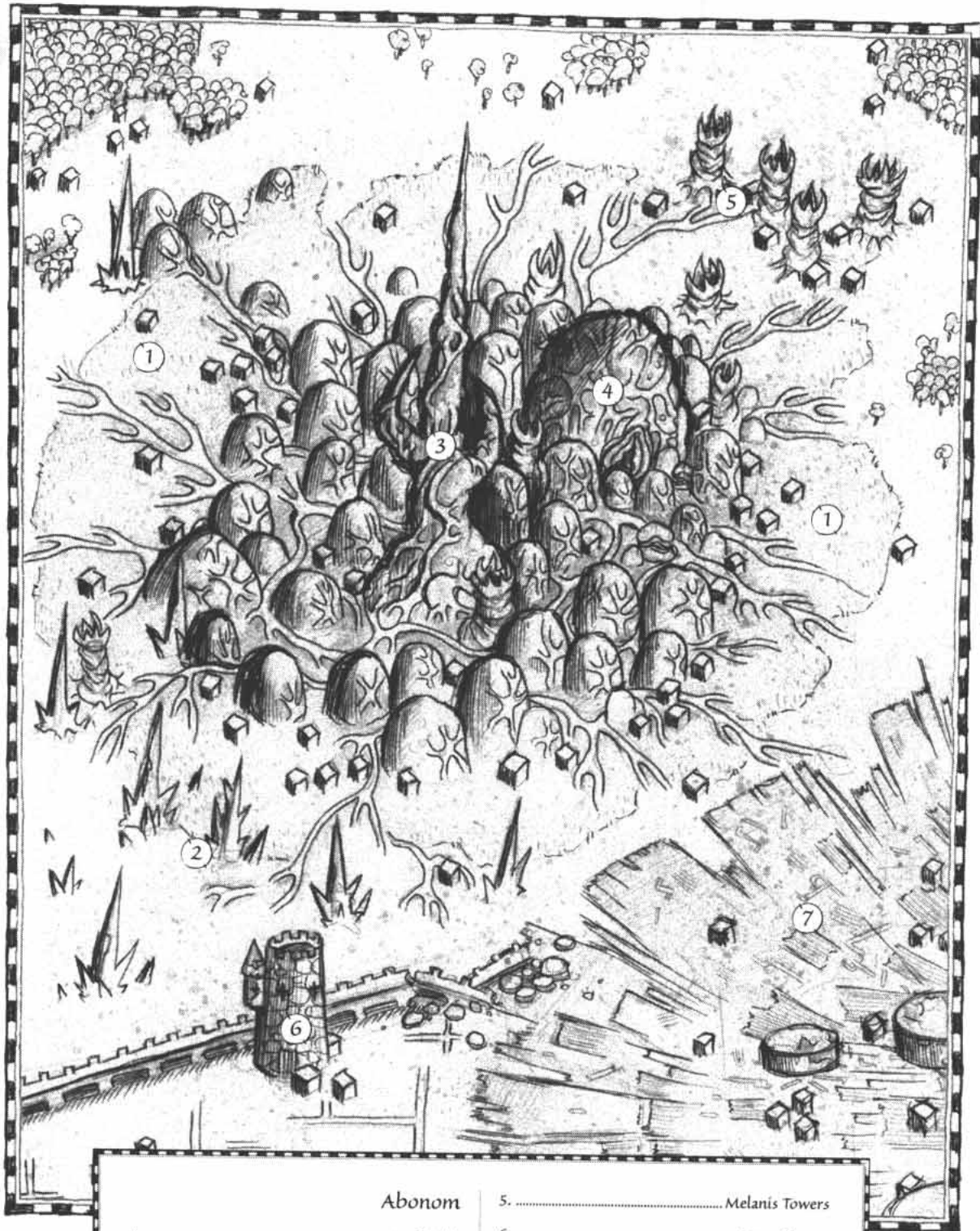
For two generations, the Baron has left Abonom alone, but the populace is still afraid. Many are so frightened that they haven't left Abonom since arriving. Recently, with the help of the Melanis, Abonom has constructed a massive trident shaped tower that rises high into the air. Although nobody is sure of its function, spies have indicated the device may throw the weather into turmoil. We have yet to see it used.

The Rakh Flemis constitute a significant portion of Abonom's population, most of whom support Count H'x, an ambitious Sangis Lord. The Rakh Flemis have resisted Skrr's repeated attempts to absorb their hive due to an interesting evolutionary adaptation. The Rakh have become independent minded. Whenever their leader is threatened, a new one is chosen in a lightning quick consensus among the Abonom hive-mind. Thus, Skrr has been unable to assume power, even after assassinating two Rakh leaders. To further confuse other Flemis, the Rakh have developed individual mannerisms, thus creating dozens of targets as opposed to one. Skrr's agents are no longer sure who is actually leading.

The Rakh Flemis are not the only Z'bri who live in Abonom, though. Certainly not, mistress. As I said, the Melanis helped to construct the great trident and several of their laboratory towers form the northern border of Abonom. I do not trust the Melanis, but the screams that echo from their twisted chambers are delicious. I have heard whispers that these Melanis are allies to some dark covenant among their kind and operate away from the Baron's eyes.

On the south side of Abonom also stand a series of Koleris trophy towers. These piles of bone and flesh mark the battle grounds of the Koleris who call Abonom home. These savage warriors are a little pathetic, still clinging to the memory of their beloved Tibor. Personally, I think the Baron should do away with them. Serf fields and some other Z'bri homes also surround the Rakh hives. These fields of wheat, grass and flesh are irrigated by huge arteries that carry nutrient-rich fluid from the hive itself. I have been to Abonom three separate times, and each time I have seen the field further out. The commune is growing and I wonder just how far the arteries now reach. Some flow underground and I doubt even your precious Seven Fingers can block their advance.





Abonom

- 1. Serf Fields
- 2. Koleris Trophy Towers
- 3. Great Trident
- 4. Skkr Flemis Hive

- 5. Melanis Towers
- 6. Seven Fingers
- 7. Rust Wastes

1 click (keeper measure)



The Koleris Slaughterfields

Don't bother searching your maps for the Koleris compounds, mistress. The Koleris have become too wild for a mere home to tame them. Before the tribes, the Koleris possessed order and discipline. They were the warriors, and even acted upon a code of ethics that often sickened us Sangis. Their compounds and training grounds stretched across the empty fields you now see northwest of the Ziggurat. When Tibor fell, however, so to did their warrior's serenity. Mad with anger, they wanted to sweep across Vimary and drown everything in thirst-quenching blood, but the Baron stopped them. He talked about *alliances* and *truce*, two words that we Z'bri had never even possessed in our language.

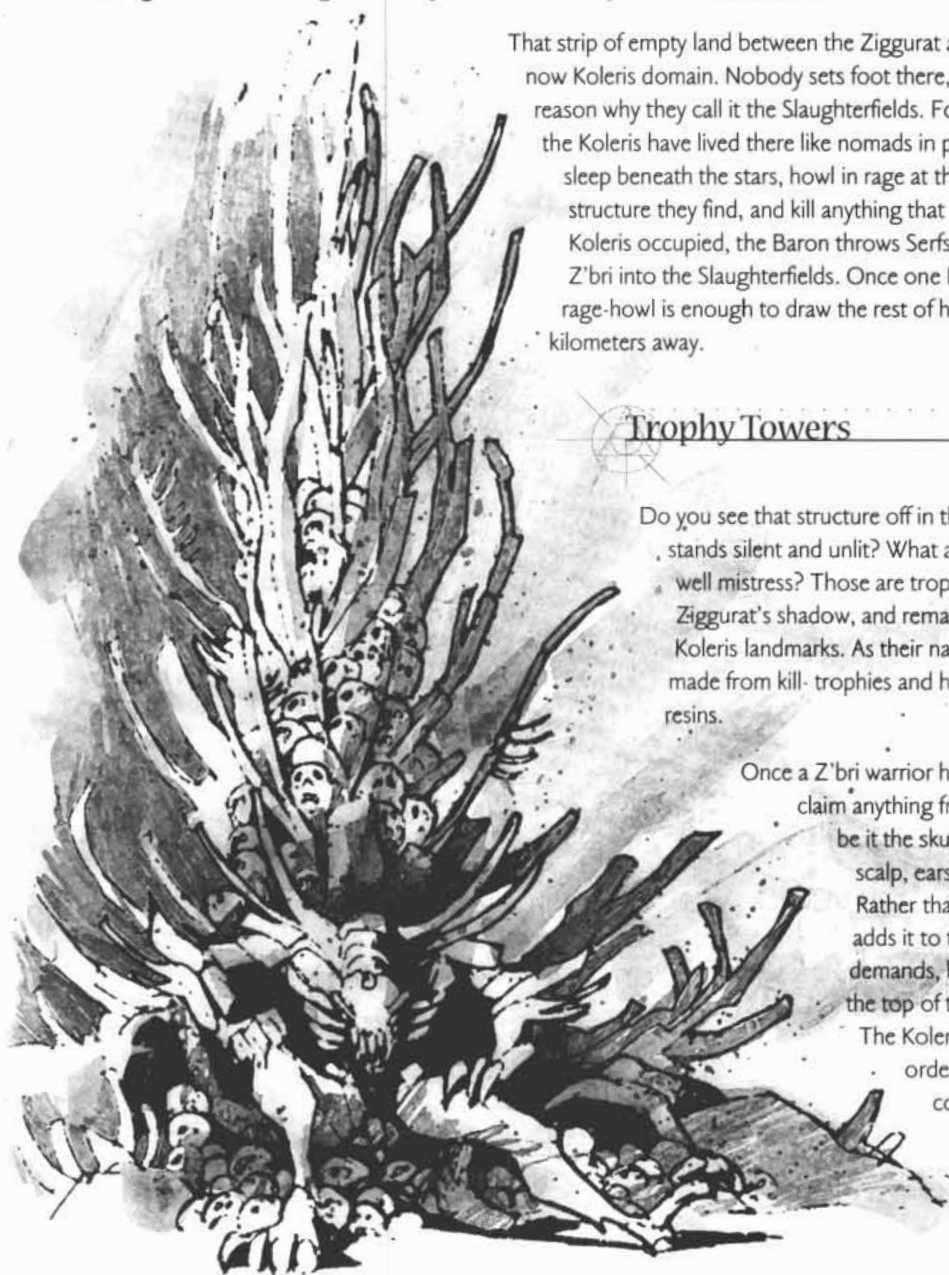
The Koleris, unable to attack the tribes, turned their anger inward and razed their own compounds, slaughtering their Serfs-at-arms and burning everything in a furious blaze. The Koleris raged for days, killing one another and anyone else in their way. The Baron watched quietly, knowing that the warriors would never turn against him. For that night at least, he was right. The Koleris' rage eventually subsided, but they were never the same.

That strip of empty land between the Ziggurat and H'l Kar's western shore is now Koleris domain. Nobody sets foot there, not even the Baron. There's a reason why they call it the Slaughterfields. For two of your generations, the Koleris have lived there like nomads in packs called Hordes. They sleep beneath the stars, howl in rage at the morning, destroy whatever structure they find, and kill anything that enters their lands. To keep the Koleris occupied, the Baron throws Serfs, caught Jackers or Chained Z'bri into the Slaughterfields. Once one Koleris sees the intruder, his rage-howl is enough to draw the rest of his Horde from several kilometers away.

Trophy Towers

Do you see that structure off in the distance, the one that stands silent and unlit? What about there? And over there as well mistress? Those are trophy towers. They rest in the Ziggurat's shadow, and remain one of the few surviving Koleris landmarks. As their name implies, the towers are made from kill-trophies and held together through fat resins.

Once a Z'bri warrior has slain an opponent, he can claim anything from his victim as a memento, be it the skull, a piece of clothing, jewelry, scalp, ears, limbs, genitalia, anything. Rather than keeping the item, the Koleris adds it to the trophy tower. Tradition demands, however, that it be placed at the top of the mismatched monument. The Koleris must scale the tower in order to add his victory to the conquests of the past, but while he climbs, other warriors can try and knock him off by throwing rocks and even spears at him.



The Sangis Palaces

Ahh, there is a sight worthy of being called beautiful. Our palaces and estates are designed around your physical aesthetic. There are no harsh lines in our homes, just as nothing about your supple flesh suggests a sharp angle. Our walls are curved and our towers bloom open. Like the Ziggurat, Sangis palaces are monuments to the human form. Our fences are well-manicured hedges of growing bones and our lawns are fields of hair still attached to their scalps. Abiyar, one of our finest artists, grew his lawn from the fingers of his human sponsors. Genius! Other places have blood brooks and streams branching out like your circulatory system, but this is growing passé. The current popular trend is to have furniture made of teeth and fingernails, like the ancient mother-of-pearl tables I once saw.

Do you see those tall towers across the Great River? Those are our estates. As rightful rulers of the Z'bri, Sangis who are in favor with the Baron may build their homes anywhere in H'l Kar. Of course, the Koleris Slaughterfields are the exception to that rule, and very few of us choose to live further north. As much as we enjoy having dominion over our immediate vicinity, we still desire the company of our own kind. By nature, we Sangis are social creatures, and we like feeling a part of something. That's one of the reasons we live in towers: it allows us to survey life around us. Besides, southern H'l Kar is relatively *safe* when compared to the northern forests where Chained Z'bri hide and Melanis monks pursue their dark agendas.

At the base of each tower are dome clusters. These are the homes of Iv'chet and preferred Serfs. Along with the stables and the surrounding flesh gardens, each dome cluster and tower constitutes a Z'bri estate. As you can see, most estates are around the Ziggurat or along the Great River's shores. Living close to the Ziggurat is a mark of station and favor, but it is also an invitation for backstabbing and assassination. Despite our social inclinations, we still enjoy besting our opponents, most of whom happen to be the neighbor closest to the Ziggurat. Sangis living near this edifice move approximately once every few summers due to political machinations or death, while those along the shore may remain in one place for decades at a time. The closer one lives to the Ziggurat, the more intense the power struggle becomes.



The Melanis Caves

Frankly, I find the Melanis boring, but what they've accomplished with their homes is genius. The Melanis occupy a series of caves in the forested mountains to the north. Using hundreds of Serfs over several decades, the Melanis expanded the caverns to look like internal organs, though I do not know what species they're using as a template. The large chambers represent the heart, lungs, liver, stomach, and other organs, while a network of tunnels and corridors emulate veins and arteries. Certainly ambitious, the Melanis are taking organs relevant to each chamber, grafting them together to cover the walls, and encouraging them to grow. I say "ambitious" because the Melanis have years before they can create a working body. Still, it's a wonder to walk into the thundering din of a dry heart valve — I cannot wait for them to fill it with blood — or to touch the web-like mass of growth that will eventually become lungs.

Unfortunately, I do not know what agenda drives the Melanis. I can only say they're experimenting, but for what purpose, I know not. Although they've prevented me from seeing their other caverns, I have it on good authority they're conducting ongoing experiments on their Serfs. My spy saw countless laboratories, miles of slave pens where humans sat in stacked cages, Serf breeding rooms, and nurseries with hundreds of infants undergoing accelerated growth. He also told me of one person who was spread out across a dozen meters, with his skin splayed open, his entrails pinned to the wall, his muscles stripped and catalogued, and his mouth begging for mercy. He was a living anatomy reference for the Melanis. Lucky fool. Few will ever experience his pleasure.

I've heard rumors from the inane — the Melanis are trying to Chain people to trees — to the troubling — breeding humans to regenerate faster and live longer, which would make them more resilient partners I suppose. One report even claims the Melanis are trying to uncover the seed of inspiration that gave birth to the Fatimas, whom they believe are inherently tied into human nature itself.



Serf Lands

Ahhh, our ever-loyal Serfs. They've done much to survive and, quoting an ancient expression, have "gone the extra mile." Their lands stretch across the north shore of Vimary, and over the Great River into H'l Kar itself. Unlike Bazaar or Olympus, the Serfs live in small communities scattered throughout our domains. They harvest crops of buried dead for our palaces, sate our lusts, and tend to their herds; their livestock is often their own children. They're also excellent breeders. One man can impregnate several women a night, though the only drawback is the extended pregnancy. Still, it doesn't take much to accelerate growth, and we've managed to cut your child-bearing terms in half. That's why each hamlet has an adjoining Sangis palace, Flemis hive or Melanis monastery. The local Z'bri Lord ensures his subjects are happy and procreating, and hastens their gestation. I've even seen some women give birth to three children a year. Remarkable, really.

Now where was I? Ahh yes, the similarities. Serfs are not as articulate as tribals, and they don't care for themselves the way you do. Their homes are crudely erected huts of debris, with filthy mud floors and the barest of essentials. Still, there's something to be said about watching them thrash around during fornication, covered in mud and grunting like pigs. This is not true of all Serfs, mind you. The ones I've just described work in the killing fields that surround Abonom and the Ziggurat, uncovering the patchwork of mass graves that we left behind in our more impetuous days.

Other types of Serfs assist us as lovers, retainers, or even guards. They live in our estates or within communities like Abonom, which I believe holds a Serf ghetto. These humans are articulate, and it shows in their homes. We allow them to collect artifacts conditional on our approval, and we let them supervise their lesser peers. Their homes are an odd mismatch of ancient architecture and our artwork, but that doesn't bother them. They are more Z'bri than human.

The last type of Serf community you'll encounter are the Breeder Farms, which are a series of white egg-like structures dotting the landscape. Within, men and women hang in vein nets, churning out children for the remainder of their brief lives. We've altered women's bodies to carry as many as twenty babes at once, but this is a one-time experience; the women die during or after the week-long birth. The men are far more fortunate. We have milking organs and umbilical cords that keep them ejaculating and constantly drained. They last for a few months before exhaustion kills them.

The Outlands and Beyond

From the memoirs of Ann Ansi, Dahlian spy:

I could have killed him, ended his miserable life and spared countless others, but Dahlia thought otherwise. The Z'bri, the tribes, the Fallen and the Keepers all play games to enforce their private illusions. It's time the illusions ended. It's time they clashed and freed the truth. As for me, I love Dahlia, but I'm tired of being used. My destiny lies beyond Vimary, in the Outlands. I'll escape using the Keepers' tunnel, the one they call the Coward's Mark.

What do I expect in the Outlands? Tribes of savage Squats who won't think twice about killing me, forests on end for years, natural wildlife and, I suspect, Z'bri beasts with enough of an intellect to have escaped their masters. Beyond that, I'm not certain. The world outside is far more dangerous because it's a mystery. Here, on Vimary, I know the players and their games. Out there is the new challenge. That's where I'll go, away and downriver, where another city is reputed to lie. It should be an interesting journey.

Chapter 4:

Out of nothing, like you, the words I speak take form, my very speech shaping reality as I shape you. It is time for change; a new epoch is upon us and I must dance like the fire-bird, setting the old to ashes to birth the new. These thoughts echo in utero, forming the instrument of change from the threads of the present. From these strands, from the shadows and lies, you will take shape and stand to show all the folly of assumption and the truth of the future. But that is still far off. Now, I see with my myriad eyes the tribes and know that nothing, not even Law, Death or the Sword can stop Change.

— Dahlia the Trickster, speaking to Her creation.



The Tribes, or Those Who Are Faithful

I walk now through a silent Bazaar. The day is old, the last rays of sun still far on the horizon. I travel cloaked, mistaken for a old man lumbering from dive to dive, even the few Fallen about give me a wide berth, as if they know I am more than meets the eye. So, this is what the tribes have achieved. Even in the dead of night I can feel the pulse of life and the grip of chaos — the time has come to make my presence felt upon the tribes.

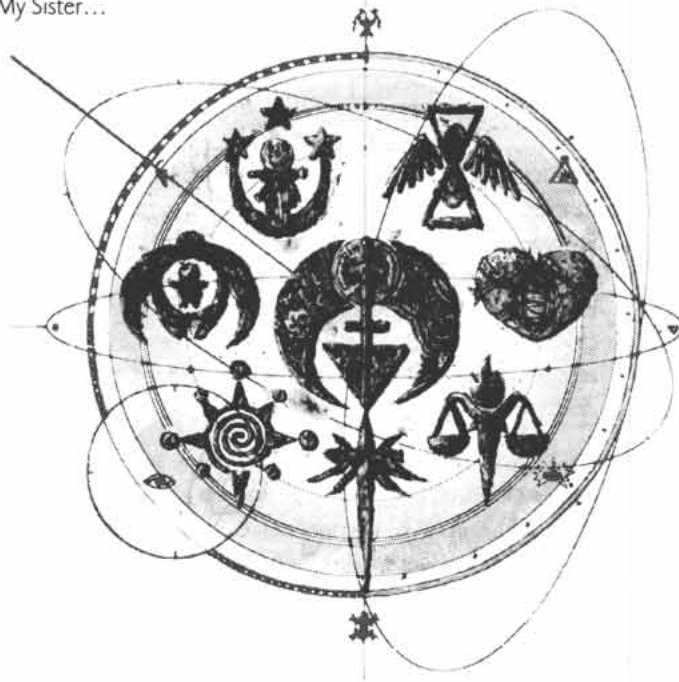
Cloaked in the illusion of stability and prosperity, our tribes grow, each becoming a small microcosm, taking a life of their own. Like the ruins of old beneath Bazaar, the tribes fail to see things as they really are. The Evans struggle to interpret the One Goddess, the Yagans hunt down the very past that shaped them, and the Joanites are shackled by their very virtues. Yes, indeed, the time has come to tear down, to show all the truth that lies beneath false appearances; where there is order and reason, treason and betrayal are never far behind.

We are living in the Age of the Pillars, my sister. Tera Sheba and Her Judges, Joan and Her warriors, together they rule the Nation as if it were their birthright. But it is not. The One Goddess made all Seven of us — no, all *Eight* of us — for a reason, and for the Wise-Mother to think Herself our better is a foolish mistake. She is very skilled at foolish mistakes, as I'm sure you will notice yourself. Even Her firm right hand, stoic and faithful Joan, is becoming a burden more than a tool. Someday, Tera Sheba will know Her place.

The Fates — Baba Yaga, Eva and Magdalen — feel the same as I. They know the Wise-Mother is out of control, but they stand back nevertheless. At least Magdalen is acting, trying to separate Joan from Her jailer, but the idea of the Warrior serving the Mother-Whore is too much for me to bear. That is one change even I would not welcome. Eva seems to have fallen under Tera Sheba's spell. She says many things about care and love, but keeps Her tribe on a short leash. Sanctuary is becoming more of a prison with every Summer. And then there is Baba Yaga. The Dark Crone sits atop the Great Hill and waits. How can She bare the stagnation She embodies? She once told me that all would come to be as had been planned. I wonder whose plan She means.

And what of me? Of Agnes? Of the Dancers? This is not our time, for we are still learning and growing, or so the others say. But I know, and you are proof of this, that we are needed now. The nation is dying of a creeping stagnation. What is needed is Change. And Change is but another name for Dahlia.

Welcome to the tribes My Sister...





Hespirrin, Agnite Favorite and Child Liberator

Hespirrin is a dauntless child filled with the worst qualities of youth. Having never known the guidance of an adult's hand, she is spoiled, greedy and mean. As she grows older, these qualities will change to cruelty, voraciousness and spite (assuming she survives the coming years). Hespirrin gained Agnes' favor by using children as scapegoats. In isolating, ridiculing and ostracizing other Agnites, she insured Agnes was too preoccupied to scrutinize her own activities. Essentially, Hespirrin encourages the worst in Agnes through lies and gossip.

Cruelty attracts cruelty, and Hespirrin remains an Agnite power through a cadre of bullies and ruffians. To make matters worse, Hespirrin's brood have been secretly kidnapping children from other tribes as a means of increasing Agnite strength. Hespirrin kills anyone who threatens to reveal the truth.

Highlights: Spoiled, deceitful, vengeful

Attributes: APP +1, BLD -2, CRE +1, INF +3, WIL +1, STA 15, ULD 1, AD 1

Skills: Acrobatics 2/0, Camouflage 1/+1, Dodge 2/0, Intimidate 2/-2, Leadership 2/+3, Lore (Playground) 2/0, Sneak 2/0, Streetwise 1/+3

Eminences: Capriciousness and Inspiration

Edge: The favor of Agnes and support of her Bullies.

The Agnites

Beware of Agnes and Her children, for never have I seen anyone as capricious or mean-spirited as a frustrated child. Crossing an Agnite is a harsh lesson in the making. Still, I encourage good relations with this tribe because only I remember what others overlook. Eventually, like Eva's seeds, children grow. When that day unfolds, Agnes will take Her place with Her peers and become a powerful contender amongst the Fatimas. She of all, will have grown and evolved with Her powers, learning lessons we will not have realized and understanding enigmas yet unopened. Eva will not learn because She is the mother, Joan is bound by Tera Sheba's shackles, and Tera Sheba, in turn, enslaved Herself willingly to the very laws She protects. Magdalen is no better with Her schemes and desires, while Baba Yaga is so old, any evolution will put Her straight in the ground. I, however, always change like patterns of sand in the wind, and it is this same quality I recognize in the Agnites. As Agnes changes, so will Her tribe. They will remember who slighted them, and remember who were their allies. I plan to be in the latter of the two camps.

For the moment, leave these children be. They will charge eagerly to your defense if they count you as friend, but they are more dangerous now than ever. As Agnes grows, She loses interest in the wonders of Playground and in Her playmates. She senses the change, but instead of fostering it like a flower, She crushes it by embracing Her own worst qualities. She is a child who refuses to relinquish Her favorite toy. The child Fatima is quicker to anger, and Her punishments are far more severe than in Her innocent days. Others see this as the actions of a spoiled brat. I know better. I know them to be the actions of a frightened girl, one who is changing but does not want to. Unfortunately, Agnes alienates Her Favorites, particularly the mischievous Puck who seeks to start a rebellion. Ironically, Puck rebels because he faces the same changes as Agnes Herself, the transition into adulthood. Because the Fatima remains quiet about Her fears, everyone else experiencing them feels alone and remains silent.

See the *Tribe 8 Rulebook*, p. 40, for more on Puck.

Hespirrin, Child Liberator

Watch this one carefully, for she is currently Agnes' Favorite amongst Favorites, and a dangerous opponent. Unlike the many Favorites of recent summers, Hespirrin remains unchallenged in her position. The Sangis would be proud of this creature, for she manipulates Agnes like Z'bri crafting flesh. She has Agnes' ear, and she rarely hesitates in using that to her advantage. Hespirrin encourages Agnes' capricious behavior by channeling the Fatima's ire against other children. Skilled at redirecting blame and responsibility from her own shoulders, she is the one turning Agnes away from poor, delicious Puck.

Hespirrin reached Favorite status through her keen, intuitive understanding of human nature. Oh, she is not disciplined. Were she, then even my talented children would fall to her ambition. What she does now she does through instinct coupled with malice. For the moment, her sphere of influence extends over the Agnites. Eventually, Agnes will blossom and abandon Hespirrin along with all childhood toys. Either that, or I will kill her myself.

In truth, and truth is my best deception, Hesperrin may get herself killed, thus saving me the effort. The child follows the misguided belief that all children, regardless of tribe, belong to Agnes. Whether this ploy exists to increase the tribe's strength, or to create a following loyal to her alone, I can only guess, but I suspect the latter. Hesperrin is ambitious, and her actions mirror this fault. I digress, however. Hesperrin kidnaps the very young and brings them to live in the Playground. She calls it an act of liberation, but no haughty word can disguise the crime of abduction. For the time being, she commits this offense only occasionally. It is certainly not enough to attract the tribes' attention. Be patient, however. Hesperrin will grow ambitious beyond the confines of reason, and will go too far one day. When that happens, the right information will find its way to the Watch. Then you may bid a fond farewell to Hesperrin, for either the Watch will capture her, or Eva will descend upon her with the fury of all mothers protecting their young.



Carmitchel the Invisible

The Z'bri are not the only monsters stalking the tribes. Some come to us from the deepest shadows, while others we create from our own blindness. These monsters are most dangerous when they are our creations, for they eat and drink like us; they talk our words, breathe our air and wear our skin, but they are monsters nonetheless. This one in particular thinks nobody notices him, but I do. Carmitchel is an odd Child who enjoys setting fires and torturing small animals. He is a cowardly creature now, but give him a while and he will become bolder. Only then will he turn his attention to other children and share his pain with them. Agnes does not know about Carmitchel simply because he is not Favorite. So he goes about his dark errands, listening to the tiny voices in his head, daring to speak back to them when he thinks he is alone. Agnes should not be surprised that She is creating little beasts like Carmitchel, however; I am just surprised She has not made more. Cruelty attracts cruelty, but it also breeds it.

Do not bother asking the Agnites about Carmitchel. They barely know he exists, even though he is a member of the Children. Hesperrin notices him long enough to torment him with words, then quickly forgets who he is. She does not see him stab her effigy when he is alone. Carmitchel keeps to his own counsel, rarely talking or speaking with the others; you can find him hiding in the deepest recesses of the Playground in a ruined hovel. You will know where he lives by the mutilated stuffed toys scattered about his lair, and from the odd stench. If you are unlucky enough, you may even find his sacred wooden board. He pins rats to it with metal spikes and cuts them open alive. Despite his malicious spirit, however, do not reveal this child's existence. When we finally confront and fight the Z'bri, we may need monsters to fight the monsters. For the time being, in order to curtail his deadly inclinations, I will supply him with the illusions of victims. He will be a murderer committing imaginary crimes. That should sate his blood lust.



Carmitchel

Carmitchel watches everyone with the same interest a Yagan displays in dead bodies. Occasionally, a look of absolute cruelty and hatred breaks his innocent facade. If the tribes knew what savagery this youngster was capable of committing, they would think he was part Z'bri. Unfortunately, Carmitchel's insanity is all too human. Abused by a Breeder, and defiled by older Children, his life lessons have all been about cruelty. He revels in pain, be it his own or others. When he is not torturing rats, he is cutting his own flesh with his precious knife. It will not take long before Carmitchel needs to hear pain vocalized by a human subject. Carmitchel's abuse has also made him into a conduit to the most twisted parts of the River of Dream. He hears the voices of the tortured and they empower him.

Highlights: Unsettling, spooky, dangerous.

Eminences: None

Attributes: AGI +1, APP -1, BLD -1, CRE +2, PER +2, PSY -2, WIL -2, STA 15, UD 1, AD 2

Skills: Camouflage 1/+2, Combat Sense 1/+2, Dodge 1/+1, Human Perception 2/-2, Lore (Playground) 3/0, Melee 1/+1, Notice 2/+2, Sneak 1/+1

Edge: Social invisibility (WIL test vs. Threshold 5 to remember him).

4. Faces in the Mirror



Anaky, Little Trickster

Anaky is among Dahlia's best Little Tricksters. Her advantage lies in the fact that nobody outside the Hidden Caravan and Dahlia knows she is Dahlian. Anaky keeps her affiliations a secret, and is skilled enough to mimic membership in other tribes. She even maintains roles as a Joanite, Evan and Sheban, often using her disguises to ferret out tribal secrets. It is said she once assumed the role of Dahlia herself (with the Fatima's blessing of course). Dahlia owes her wealth of information to Anaky's skills.

Unfortunately for Anaky, her devotion to Dahlia robs her of any real personality. While interacting with others, she falls into roles, subconsciously mimicking attributes that complement the conversation. Anaky does not know how to be herself, but she is a master of being somebody else.

Highlights: Bright, talented, versatile

Eminences: Illusion and Motion

Attributes: AGI +1, APP +1, CRE +3, INF +1, KNO +2, PER +1, STA 25, ULD 3, AD 5

Skills: Acrobatics 2/+1, Athletics 1/0, Combat Sense 2/+1, Dance 3/+1, Disguise 4/+3, Dodge 2/+1, Human Perception 3/0, Lore (Bazaar) 4/+2, Melee 2/+1, Notice 3/+1, Seduction 2/+1, Sleight of Hand 3/+1, Sneak 2/+1, Streetwise 2/+2, Theatrics 3/+3, Synthesis (Metamorphosis) 4

Edges: Dahlia's favor, The Hidden Caravan

The Dahlians

We are merely tricksters, or so the tribes assume. They call us entertainers and performers, never once believing our services are as vital as the Evans or Shebans. Fools. Do they actual believe that I am Fatima for their pleasure? Do I look like a harlot, gratifying other people without a reason to exist on my own? It angers me, yes, I will admit that. But it does not anger me enough to change the way they think. If they truly understood my purpose, then my efforts would all be for naught. As I explained before, the Agnites are the only ones truly growing, and for that I am forever envious. The Dahlians, through me, however, are the catalyst of change. We are the moving wind: unpredictable, invisible, in motion. I am whim and whimsy, and you are living proof of that. No performance is ever the same. No work of art ever repeated. Life relies on change, it needs it to *grow*. Forget about life and death, that is the beginning and end product of the journey. It is the change in between that gives our lives meaning. We Dahlians are the spirit of change. We alter the stagnant life of Vimary by tipping the scales in whatever direction will affect the most people.

By the limited standards of the other tribes, my children are scattered and bereft of rulers outside of the Little Tricksters and myself. Chaotic creatures they call us, for they can not see the ghostly bonds that tie us together. Pretty performers are we because we entertain them, but entertainment is a distraction from the real tricks. Ask any Dahlian and they will gladly show you how gullible you truly are. Dahlians are tied together through the bond of Caravan. The Caravan is more than just a gathering, it is family. Joining one is a pledge to protect and support all others within the Caravan. Stronger than birth, choice unites these groups for they have taken a family rather than being born into one. And when the time to depart comes, then so be it, for that is the impetus of change. That is why the Caravans move and dance across the face of Vimary. Never stationary, like life; never predictable, like life.



Anaky Little Trickster

There are some of my children who dislike the roles I have given them, such as **Anastasia Aaron**, the great actress of the Liberation Festival. Others, like ephemeral Anaky, revel in my love, accepting my suggestions as dogma and leading her caravan alongside her mad dance. Anaky has the honor of running the Hidden Caravan, a group of blessed Dahlians using Bazaar as their vehicle. Bazaar is a magical, wondrous place because Anaky and her followers assume different roles to bring it to life. They wander the tribal commonplace, playing hundreds of roles in a performance nobody realizes they are watching. Bazaar is but a stage upon Vimary, and they are the thieves who just stole your money purse; they may be the woman flirting with you; they are the false Doomsayers pretending to be preaching; they are two men who just began a brawl; they are the hundreds of faces that made your day all the more interesting.

Anaky understands the importance of her role within the tribe. She is a master performer, more talented, I would say, than Anastasia. Of all Dahlians, she is my favorite, for she pursues her roles with candor and does her duty because she loves me more than life itself. Sadly, outside of her role, she has no true life of her own. She is too busy being other people to explore her identity. Anaky is a million masks to hide an empty face. Revel in the glory of her masks, however, for while she is not one true person, she is countless others personae. I love her for this, for she is never the same. Mother, daughter, infant, actress, she is all this and more.

Whimsy Arranger

My feelings for Whimsy vary daily. Each encounter differs, and our relationship continually changes as such. Perhaps I tolerate her for this reason alone. Sometimes I find myself infuriated with her coolness, while other days I marvel at her ability to interact and coordinate others to do her bidding. While most Dahlians take the roles of performers, artists and fools, Whimsy is an Arranger. Working within Bazaar, she arranges matters for people, uncomfortable matters. She knows the best assassin to commit murder, and she can find smugglers to bring contraband into tribal lands.

Whimsy is an artist at managing other people's talents and knowing the right person for the task at hand. I tolerate her activities because she is a catalyst for setting events in motion. She introduces change, though I know she does so for profit rather than ideology. Unfortunately, she is too enraptured by profit, and that makes her predictable. If you wish to bait her into a trap, wave the proper incentive in her face. She will eagerly follow you like a Keeper seeking knowledge. You can see this in her dealings with the Magdalite Armatha Hevkin. In truth, Whimsy works for Armatha's twin Fella, who is trying to undermine her sister's efforts within the Crucible. Fella, in the guise of Armatha, uses Whimsy to spy on this cabal of tribal elders. Whimsy, in turn, is so enraptured with the potential for profit, she never once questions why Armatha would spy on a group she publicly supports.

Use Whimsy's greed to your advantage, but never destroy her. That is my domain. For the time being I allow Whimsy to survive and profit from her actions because she affects so many people. From corrupt Joanites to Magdalite smugglers, Whimsy employs them all. She is the web and whether Whimsy realizes it or not, I am the spider.



Whimsy, Dahlian Arranger

Whimsy is a key crime figure within Bazaar. While she has not committed any offenses herself, she acts as intermediary for clients and criminals. Whimsy's strength lies in her contacts. She knows many people across Vimary, including tribals, Fallen, Keepers, Squats and even a few Z'bri. Whatever a customer needs, she knows the right people for the job. Her scruples are for sale at any price.

Whimsy, unfortunately, is becoming too famous; too many people know about her. The Watch dogs her steps and more than a few Terasheban are waiting for her arrest. Whimsy's skills as a Dahlian have saved her time and time again from getting caught in compromising situations. Unfortunately, Yasmin Luther'on has taken interest in her, and made it a hobby to pursue the elusive Dahlian. Although she cannot do so currently, Yasmin awaits the day the Watch is given free reign to dispense justice to the deserving. Then, Whimsy will be among the first to suffer.

Highlights: Connected, calm, elusive, enterprising

Eminences: Illusion and Motion

Attributes: APP +2, CRE +1, INF +2, KNO +1, PER +1, STA 25, UD 3, AD 5

Skills: Combat Sense 1/+1, Dodge 2/0, Forgery 2/+1, Hagglng 2/+2, Lore (Bazaar) 3/+1, Melee 2/0, Streetwise 4/+2, Trade 2/0

Edge: Countless connections.

The Evans



Tera Venkin Pal'on

Tera has known suffering all her life. Her mother Palas, Matron of the Pal'on clan, died while giving birth — an omen of ill fortune among the Evans. Finding a home with distant relatives in Griffentowne her character was hardened by the frontier lifestyle of the fledgling community, making her the determined and driven individual she is today. A close advisor and confidant of Benjamin Aria'on, Tera has always been willing to fight for those who cannot do so themselves. Every moon she ventures into Hom, tending to the sick and injured, a secret not even her husband knows about. Tera has befriended Kymber Reva and the two hope to one day reconcile the Fallen and the tribes.

Highlights: Compassionate, idealistic, a martyr

Eminences: Empathy and Life

Attributes: CRE +1, INF +1, PSY +2, WIL +1, STA 25, ULD 3, AD 3

Skills: Animal Care 2/0, Animal Handling 2/+1, Archery 1/0, Boating 1/0, Cooking 2/+1, Dodge 1/0, Haggling 1/+1, Healing 3/0, Herbalism 3/0, Human Perception 2/+2, Lore (healing) 2/0, Notice 2/0, Riding 1/+2, Synthesis (Anima) 3

Edge: Friendship with Kymber Reva and Benjamin Aria'on, who will not let any harm come to her, if possible.

I do not know who I least trust of My Sisters: the Gentle Mother Eva or Tera Sheba — at least Tera Sheba does not cloak her intentions behind maternal guidance. Sweet, loving Eva, She guides Her children towards harmony, but only sees what She wants to see. She has no patience for deviants or trouble-makers, yet feels responsible for every living thing. So with the hands of a gardener, She nurtures and forms the tribes, giving them food, health and an understanding of their surroundings. Yet, this comes at a price: Eva expects all to heed Her ways and no other. Like all mothers, the distinction between love and smothering is narrow and clouded.

It is the Evan sense of compassion and empathy that is their undoing. Witness the growing conflict between Sanctuary and Griffentowne, which tolerates the Fallen. Moving away from the naturalism of Sanctuary, the Evans of Griffentowne embrace change with open arms. Many marry into my Caravans, and bring our two tribes closer. But this is not the only reason the Evan Shamans and Matrons disapprove of the western community. No, in the last few summers Griffentowne has become a safe haven for the moderate Evans, driven out of Sanctuary by the politics of the conservative Shamans. Even the current Matriarch, the ancient **Bethra Cov'on** (who replaced the visionary **Benjamin Aria'on** after he fell out of grace with Eva and returned to Griffentowne) is finding it hard to reconcile the two factions. Who would have ever thought that the embodiments of compassion and understanding would turn against themselves. If the healers cannot heal, then who will care for Creation?

For their part, the Shamans of Sanctuary, especially **Storm Cry** and **Walks-with-Clouds**, urge a return to the Old Ways and see the liberal policies of Griffentowne, especially towards the Fallen, as a affront to the One Goddess. Eva knows that the Fallen are misguided, but She cannot turn Her back on Her faithful out west; the Matrons and Nurses are growing impatient. With Her hands tied Eva is growing mad and desperate, inviting criticism from Joan and Tera Sheba but, above all, from Magdalen and Baba Yaga — maybe, just maybe, the Three Fates will no longer stand together

See the **Tribe 8 Rulebook**, p. 53, for more information on Benjamin Aria'on.



Tera Venkin Pal'on, Evan Healer

Thankfully, most Evans are pragmatic. While Storm Cry is fanning the flames in Sanctuary, most Evans carry about their daily chores, farming and healing. When compared to quest for survival, petty intrigues are just that. Unfortunately, a few are forgetting this blinded by hubris — providing for the tribes does inflate one's ego. And they call me pretentious!

That child, known as Tera Pal'on, is a healer without equal. If you look carefully you can see the touch of the One Goddess on her. It is sad that many cannot see past her actions to judge her as they should. Young, only recently married and soon to head her own family, Tera is a voice of reason within the Evans. She sees the Fallen as lost, but knows that the tribes turning their backs on them only makes matters worse. Her husband, Thomas "Wind-Chaser" Gravkin, a Shaman among the Evans of Griffentowne, understands her feelings and is shielding her, hoping not to attract the attention of Eva, or worse, Storm Cry.

The two run the hospice in Griffentowne, healing all that come through their doors, be they Squat or Fallen. While their reasoning falls on deaf ears, they believe that to let someone die is a worse sin than healing the Fallen. Look into Tera's eyes, they are old beyond her age, for they have seen so much suffering in summers past. She was there, that fateful day of the Harvest Massacre, when row upon row of Fallen were cut down by the Watch. Only a young Seed at the time, Tera worked into the night, caring for the dying, and was denounced by the Joanites standing over her. But Eva spared the healer's life alienating the Mother from Joan. If Tera can survive the coming storm, the Evans will be in good hands...

Keller "Storm Cry" Trav'on, Shaman of Eva

That man, dressed in furs and adorned with talismans, is one to be feared. One of the few male Shamans, Storm Cry has long advocated action against the Fallen. He sees their wanton ways as an affront to the One Goddess, and abhors their living out of harmony with the Fatimas. Storm Cry's views on Griffentowne are likewise stern and unmoving: cease contact with the Fallen or face the wrath of nature. Apparently age has made him bitter instead of wise!

But always look to see what hides beneath pomp and arrogance, for in the underbelly of lies and deceit the truth usually festers. Not long ago, Keller was a simple man, driven to serve Eva with strong conviction. Then the unimaginable happened — his own son died. Sick of a fever, there was nothing the proud Storm Cry could do, all his sacrifice and faith failed him. Yet, Keller did not blame the Mother, instead himself. He had often helped the Fallen and in his mind the One Goddess punished him for his compassion.

Now, Storm Cry sees only what he wants, and everywhere the Fallen taint and corrupt the fair land. He cannot understand why many let their young question the Fatimas, without knowing that through asking questions faith becomes stronger. He's a crafty fox, one to be weary of, as many a Fallen have suffered from his wrath. Even his long time friend, Jethro "Walks-with-Clouds" Cov'on fears the direction Storm Cry is heading in, and my try and reason with the old Shaman — a futile and foolish move.



Storm Cry

Storm Cry is one of the few Evans respected by the Sheban High Judge Cylix Seth'on (see p.95). Tera Sheba Herself has even blessed him with Truthsaying. Storm Cry personally blames the Fallen for poor crops or bad weather, and more and more Evans are heeding his denouncements of the Eighth Tribe. A powerful orator, Storm Cry has traveled Vimary speaking to the tribes, fanning their paranoia and fears and offering up the Fallen as scapegoats. A man firmly confident in his conviction, Storm Cry is not afraid to use force or violence to deal with his enemies. Even many summers later, his son's death still torments the Shaman — a pain the Z'bri can use to their advantage.

Highlights: Hateful, driven

Eminences: Empathy and Life

Attributes: AGI -1, BLD +1, INF +2, KNO +1, PER +1, WIL +2, STA 35, LD 5, AD 5

Skills: Agriculture 2/+1, Combat Sense 2/+1, Cooking 1/0, Dreaming 3/0, H-to-H 1/-1, Healing 2/+1, Herbalism 3/+1, Lore (weather, Sanctuary) 2/+1, Melee 1/-1, Navigation (land) 2/+1, Read/Write 2/+1, Riding 2/0, Ritual 2/+1, Synthesis (Smothering, Truthsaying) 3

Edge: Using the Eminence of Life, Storm Cry is able to control the weather in limited manner (WIL, Threshold 6).

The Joanites



Valerie Valkin Ben'on

As a Templar, Valerie has made a name for herself as temperate and insightful, a good counter to her lover Shera Uhan'on. Among the younger Joanites, bored with border patrols, the possibility of a crusade is a glorious enterprise. Unfortunately, the older warriors are more apprehensive. Facing opposition from Nostra Guy'on and the Old Guard, Valerie is finding it hard to remain indifferent about the troubles plaguing the Joanites, even to the point of approaching Joan Herself. Yet, Joan's silence is beginning to shake Valerie's faith and strain her relationship with Shera.

Highlights: Loyal, devoted, visionary

Eminences: Devotion and Fury

Attributes: AGI +2, APP +1, BLD +1, FIT +1, PER +2, WIL +1, STA 35, UD 8, AD 7

Skills: Archery 3/+2 Athletics 1/+1, Combat Sense 2/+2, Dodge 2/+2, Hand-to-Hand 3/+2, Healing 1/0, Human Perception 2/0, Intimidate 2/+1, Investigation 2/+2, Law 1/0, Leadership 2/+0, Lore (Templar) 2/0, Melee 2/+2, Navigation (land) 2/0, Notice 1/+2, Riding (chariot) 2/+0, Read/Write 1/0, Ritual 2/0, Sneak 1/+2, Survival 1/+1, Swimming 1/0, Tactics 3/0, Synthesis (Battle, Sacrifice) 3

Edge: Unknown to Valerie, she is Joan's favorite Templar.

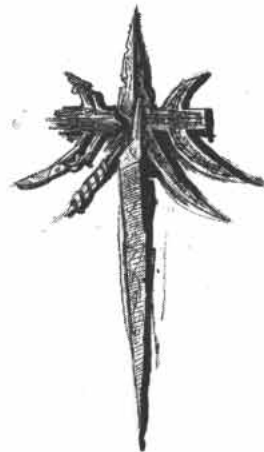
The noble warrior, poor Joan, finds Herself further removed from the life of the tribes with each passing summer. The pressure of being the defender and herald of the tribes is tearing Her apart; Her facade is beginning to show cracks and behind it the truth lies. Loyalty can be such a fickle thing, especially when it leads to submission — there is only so long the lion will remain silent.

Look at Her tribe, united behind a mask of lies. To all outsiders they present a unified whole, warriors one and all, each willing to lay down her life for the glory of Joan. But look carefully, the warriors are hurting. Joan has refused to speak for summers now, She carries on Her duties with such lackluster that I fear Her fire is dying out. Like Her, Her Templars have become nothing more than a ceremonial guard. Impressive in their suits of armor, most Templars have not raised a sword in anger for many summers now. This is changing, however. There is new blood in the Templar **Shera Uhan'on**. Urging for a crusade against the Beasts, Shera is awakening Joan's best from their somnambulance. Shera and her companion **Valerie Ben'on** cull the Templars for weakness, and turn to the Old Guard knowing that the old leaders must step down before the Joanites can regain their lost vigor.

For their part, the heroes of yore, old and plum from lying on their laurels, want nothing except to enjoy their last summers in comfort. This Old Guard, entrenched in the leadership of Joan's guilds — the Weaponshapers and Blades — and headed by **Nostra Guy'on**, suffocate the warriors with petty intrigue and excess.

Funny how, as Tera Sheba has three masks, so do the Joanites. The last of these being the Watch. Led by Commander **Yasmin Luther'on**, the Watchers are becoming more like Shebans with each passing day. Their dark uniforms and flowing sashes, indicating rank, seem more like Tera Sheba's idea than the Warrior's, but who I am to say this. Each summer, more and more young Joanites are drafted into the Watch, their passion and fervor drowned by Sheban law and tradition. Disillusioned and bitter, the Watch recruits, especially those under the command of **Warden Deth'on**, lash out against the Fallen, and each day more blood covers my lovely Bazaar — another reason to stay as far away from the influence of Tera Sheba and the Watch. Remember this!

See the *Tribe 8 Rulebook*, p 56 and p. 98 for more information on Shera Uhan'on and Yasmin Luther'on.



Templar Valerie Valkin Ben'on

Do not tell anyone, but even I marvel at the Templars, carrying on their duty even though they know all is not well with their Fatima. Take Valerie Ben'on, a striking warrior, but not as flamboyant or vocal as her companion and lover Shera Uhan'on. Always in the shadow of Shera, Valerie is content to administer to her sacred duties as one of Joan's personal guards, a supreme honor among the Templars. I can only guess what my forlorn Sister says to Valerie, but rest assured that the noble Templar will tell no one, not even Shera.

When not with Joan, Valerie spends her time with Shera and the two know only action against the Beasts will cure the ills of their tribe. It was not their mandate to police the tribes from themselves, but it seems that few in the hierarchy of the Joanites want to dirty their hands with real combat. The Templars have traveled to Xstasis and other tribal settlements hoping to gain support for a new crusade against the Z'bri.

In the mean time, Shera and Valerie are preparing the Templars for action. Already, their presence around Bazaar can be felt, raising tensions between the Watch and the Joanite Sisterhood — how easily egos get bruised. Most Watchers feel slighted for not being allowed to join the Templars and, in turn, resent the presence of Valerie and Shera on their turf. Yet, Valerie, quiet and insightful, has defused the situation, taking care not to let Shera's passions interfere — after all she knows all Joanites must see eye to eye if there is any hope for the tribe in the future. A smart observation indeed.

What Valerie and her love do not see, is the awe they inspire in the Children of Agnes. Those Favorites almost of age see the prospect of the crusade with youthful excitement and have begun preparing to join the Joanites, not conscious of the true dangers that lay in wait. Once a child's passion is ignited, not even Valerie's wisdom will dampen it, only blood.

Nostra Guy'on, Joanite Elder of the Grand Council

Nostra, wizened and scared, stands for the Old Guard among the Joanites and rules through respect and intimidation, rather than action. His skill at manipulation, however, has turned him into a deadly and crafty man. With a word he could break and ruin any Joanite's career, while a nod and favors can assure one of rapidly advancing through the ranks — leaving behind the drudgery and dangers of Hunting Parties for the more comfortable jobs with one of the two guilds.

Once a decorated warrior, a deep wound should have forced him out of the Blades of Joan. But he stayed, acting as an advisor and eventually was granted the Joanite seat on the Grand Council. By this time, you see, many elder Joanites were unwilling to leave the prestige of their duties — or their power. Instead they helped each other secure their positions, keeping more qualified Joanites trapped in the lower ranks. Nostra, of course, was the first to start this system, and today, he and the Old Guard plan and scheme, issuing orders from the safety of war rooms and Joan's Watchtower. The Old Guard wants nothing of a crusade, and under Nostra's direction, are using their influence to bolster the Watch instead. They hope that by diverting young and able warriors to the Watch, the Templars' crusade will lose steam.



Nostra Guy'on

As the Joanite elder on the Grand Council, Nostra's influence is substantial. Both the Weaponshaper and Blades of Joan guilds look to him for guidance, and the Old Guard stands by him. To him, the time to fight the Beasts is over, a page of history, and if his tribe does not adapt to the times they'll join Joshua as an anachronism. He dislikes the control the Shebans have over the Joanites, but only because he wants the power to himself. To this end, Captain Luther'on of the Watch may be removed and a candidate loyal to him put in her place.

Highlights: Old, fierce, unshakable

Eminences: Devotion and Fury

Attributes: AGI -1, FIT -2, INF +2, PER +2, WIL +2, STA 25, UD 4, AD 4

Skills: Combat Sense 2/+2, Dodge 2/-1, Etiquette 2/+2, Gambling 2/+2, Hand-to-Hand 2/-1, Human Perception 2/0, Interrogation 2/0, Intimidate 3/0, Investigation 1/+2, Leadership 3/+2, Lore (Old Guard) 2/0, Melee 2/-1, Notice 2/+2, Read/Write 2/0, Tactics 2/0, Teaching 2/0

Edge: Contacts and resources of the Old Guard.

Other Joanites of Note

Warden Mikal Deth'on: Responsible for the eastern section of Bazaar, Warden Mikal Deth'on, commands three cadres of Watchers. A bitter man, Deth'on is a bully and uses his position to intimidate the merchants in his domain. While he knows to keep his activities low key, he spares the tribes, but goes after the Squats, Keepers and Fallen with venom. I hear he is High Judge Cylix's personal henchman. How fitting.

Weaponshaper Lucas Valkin: A simple Weaponshaper, Lucas earns his living by trading his weapons for other goods in Bazaar. Father of Valerie Beth'on, Lucas is proud of his daughter and the two meet often. Known for his craftsmanship, Lucas I am sure, has Dahlian blood running through him. His swords know no equal.

Awarnak Kil'on: The eldest surviving child of Kilborne, the strongest of Joan's warriors during the Liberation, this mountain of a man oversees one of the Seven Fingers standing on the fringe of the Hunting Paths. Reputed to be the strongest man on Vimary, he evokes a combination of respect and fear among his garrison. Respect because of the many battles he has fought, fear because of his sudden rages. These comes from the memory of Anton, his twin brother, who was sacrificed in the Circle of the Chosen a generation ago. Awarnak would pay dearly to know what I do, that Anton lives still as a plaything for the Z'bri.

Jen Luther'on, Blade of Joan: This young and skilled warrior is a harbinger of things to come. Loyal to Her Fatima, tribe and clan, she has served in the Watch and carried out Sheban dirty work. But she is no longer a little automaton. She recently befriended some honorable Fallen and sees in them the dynamism her tribe once had. She may well travel to Horn of her own volition before the winter's snows.

See the *Weaver's Screen and Assistant*, p. 37, for more on Jen Luther'on.



The Shebans

And so I come to Tera Sheba, my stern sister. She thinks that upon Her shoulders the weight of the tribes rests and without Her everything would fall apart — as if the One Goddess would allow this to happen. The Wise-Mother knows no compassion or leniency, and instead rules and passes judgment, hoping that by imposing order, dissension and chaos are averted. In truth, the tighter She grips the tribes, the easier they slip through Her fingers. Change and flux are Her greatest fears, and this is why you should by weary of Tera Sheba.

Strange, how a tribe known for wisdom and judgment can be so easily herded. Even when passing the sternest of judgments, motivated by self interest, Her Judges delude themselves believing that it is Tera Sheba's wishes. In Her struggle to keep the tribes safe, she fails to see the excess of Her own.

Torn between their hearts and their sacred duties, the Shebans often sacrifice what is dear to them. Look at **Verra Thaim'on**, a shining star and Tera Sheba's favorite. She, like so many of her tribe, placed her duty over her own loved ones, but the past has away of coming back to haunt one. With her daughter Stella banished, Vera still continues in her tasks. It was she that wormed the Shebans and their laws into the other tribes, and her ties to the lackey **Yasmin Luther'on** that has made the Watch into what it is today. Unknowingly Verra has been the catalyst of much suffering in Vimary, something she will have to atone for.

Of all the Shebans, she holds the most promise: age and heart-break have tempered her contemptuous soul, and slowly she is becoming aware of the ills of her tribe. But her legacy will outlive her, for it possesses its own momentum in High Judge **Cylix Seth'on**. Where Verra lacks the conviction needed, Cylix is willing to take definitive action, and there is nothing worse than a Sheban blinded by his own self-worth.

See the *Tribe 8 Rulebook*, p. 64, for more on Verra Thaim'on.

High Judge Cylix Seth'on

A power within the Shebans, Cylix's clan is among the oldest and most respected. It was Cylix's mother that served as Tera Sheba's first judge, and to this day his clan holds a number of key positions within the tribe. Favors, nepotism and the sheer weight of tradition have ensured that the Seth'ons know no hardships. But, listen, this does not mean Cylix is beyond treachery or self-interest. Few can match his sheer callousness, and he revels in the power he has over others.

Cylix is the de facto leader of the Shebans and widely considered Tera Sheba's right hand man. See the tension, then between the favorite Verra and the older Cylix. I am sure that when Verra was undergoing her training, the two became lovers, a secret now lost behind their cold facades. Not long ago, the two petitioned long and hard to give the Judges jurisdiction over the tribes, not just stepping in to settle disputes when asked. But now, the two have nothing but contempt for each other — one is the voice of redemption, the other of hate. Look how the other High Judges shift alliances, afraid to step on the wrong side of the struggle between the two.



Cylix Seth'on

Cylix is a dangerous man, driven by self-righteousness. His hatred for the Fallen is paramount and, with Tera Sheba's permission, he has assembled a small group of like-minded individuals to deal with the problem. Known as the Crucible, this group is busy trying to find a way of dealing once and for all with the so-called Eighth Tribe. The Crucible is only just beginning its pogrom against the Fallen. Fearful of being branded as fanatics by the tribes, Cylix and his followers are waiting for an opportunity to discredit the Fallen and lash out against them. Already, Ariel Dan'on, once a valued tool, has become too visible and a liability for the High Judge, forcing him to keep his distance from her.

Highlights: Stern, unflinching, unforgiving

Eminences: Tradition and Truth

Attributes: APP -1, INF +2, KNO +1, PER +2, PSY +1, WIL +2, STA 30, UUD 4, AD 3

Skills: Dodge 2/0, Hand-to-Hand 1/0, Human Perception 3/+2, Interrogation (Torture) 3/0, Investigation 3/+1, Law 3/+1, Lore (Sheban) 2/+1, Notice 1/+2, Read/Write (Sheban) 2/+1, Synthesis (Tradition, Truthsaying) 3

Edge: The Crucible (Storm Cry, Warden Deth'on and other High Judges)



Bartholomew Medi'on

Bartholomew has always wanted to be more than a simple Marshal and knows that the only manner in which to distinguish himself from the other Marshals is to ruthlessly enforce the laws of Tera Sheba — even if it means framing the innocent. More to the point, Bartholomew has contacts with the Fallen, and while he sees Cylix as a mad fool, he has his own plans for the Eighth Tribe. Meeting with Hal Ninva (see T8 Rulebook, p. 101), he believes that the two could work out a deal to hand over key Fallen to Bartholomew to stand trial, in return for protecting Hal from the Shebans. Such a trial might earn Bartholomew the title of High Judge.

Highlights: Arrogant, incompetent, plotting

Eminences: Tradition and Truth

Attributes: BLD -1, FIT -1, INF +1, PER +1, PSY -1, STA 15, ULD 3, AD 3

Skills: Archery 2/0, Camouflage 1/0, Combat Sense 1/+1, Dodge 2/0, Gambling 1/+1, Hand-to-Hand 2/0, Intimidate 2/-1, Investigation 2/+1, Lore (Bazaar) 2/0, Lore (Joanite) 1/0, Melee 2/0, Notice 1/+1, Read/Write 1/0, Riding 1/-1, Tactics 1/0, Theatrics (lying) 2/0

Edge: Influence with the Watch and Hal Ninva of the Fallen.

That is him, there, although we must stand far for fear he'll see us. Few Shebans have his ability to see beyond illusions. Tall, and thin, his face is chiseled from rock, and his eyes know no pity, only contempt — they're the eyes of a dead man. I sense he is up to something, he's gathering with a handful of Judges and Advocates, including Joanites executioners like Warden Deth'on, the Diplomat Armatha and the Evan Storm Cry. They travel from settlement to settlement, passing judgment on those to be exiled. But instead of banishment, death and torture awaits them. Is this to be the final solution for the Fallen...

A master of deception, Cylix is careful of plots against him and has promised the Diplomat Armatha a place at his table if she agrees to protect him from his enemies, both within and without the tribes. I fear that with the Diplomat's knowledge, Cylix could be unstoppable.

Bartholomew Medi'on, Marshal of Tera Sheba

One of the many benefiting from the power the Shebans have over the Watch, Bartholomew has found a niche for himself among the Marshals. Advising the Watch, Bartholomew, like other Marshals, enjoys the power he wields — were it not for the Watch, he would be destined to be nothing more than a scribe and bureaucrat among the Shebans. While Commander Luther'on heads the Watch, the three Marshals (and Bartholomew in particular), have the influence needed to counter her.

Small, frail and insecure, the man is a fool in charge of an army, but makes up for this by being a devious rat. Using his station, he lords his power over the Joanites under him, expecting complete and total submission from them. He, however, does not understand the subtle plays between Tera Sheba and Joan. He assumes the Joanites are there to follow his orders and no others. I fear one day, the Joanites will tire of his lording power of them and refuse an order — something that would have dire repercussions. How do you think Bartholomew and the other Shebans would react to news that the Joanites refused to enforce the laws of the tribes?

Once, in the guise of a simple Advocate, I spent time under Bartholomew's tutelage and witnessed his petty and oafish behavior. He treats his students like lackeys, convinced they should be honored to fetch slop for such an august personage as he — pretension makes him utterly blind. The Joanites he watches over he treats like animals, creatures existing only to die at his command. The Watchers grumble but take the treatment, but the Templars are a different story. I still laugh at his efforts to intimidate Valerie Ben'on. She but stared at him as he pontificated and postured, looking deep into his soul and exposing his weakness. He screamed at her, he even laughed at her, but still she stared. Out of words, he tried to stare back. His gaze broke within a heartbeat and sweat dripped from his officious brow. He has left the Templars alone since then. Joanites may not have a sense of humor, but they know how to put the pompous in their place.

I wish it were true that this man was an utter idiot. Unfortunately, he is just cunning enough to be dangerous. He is busy playing the Crucible and the Fallen against each other, striking covert deals with both sides. These may be exposed, but not before innocents have paid the price. Watch this one.

Other Shebans of Note

Tanya Ever'on: You ask a child to look into the heart of the tribes and you expect her to ignore the questions of the past. The poor Chronicler of the Tribes, Tanya is an outlaw now. She foolishly thinks Tera Sheba will be content with banishing her. She does not know the violent end that awaits her if the Shebans find her and her new companions. Perhaps, I should have warned her when I had the chance.

Iris Medi'on: Iris is the head Lorekeeper among the Shebans. Wise and learned, Iris also has the honor of being the Sheban representative to the Grand Council of the tribes. Yet, as all Shebans, she places devotion above personal well being. Iris has begun a purge of all documents she feels are false or heretical about the Seven Sisters and the early history of the tribes, including Tanya's Record of the Tribes.

The Fisher King: Poor Fisher King, once Tera Sheba's favorite — her lover, even — he now sits feeble and crippled in his tower. He was once a mighty warrior-judge, dispensing justice with sword in hand. Now, his dark thoughts are his only true company, and these are dangerous indeed. So skilled is he in the arts of Tradition that the ghosts of old enemies have begun to manifest. The spectral form of the Z'bri D'vron, the serpentine horror that cost him his health, swims the Stone Shores, growing more real every night.

Judge Sakai Dan'on: A skilled and influential Judge, Sakai has become a thorn in Cylix's side. Indeed, Sakai recently had to condemn his clan-mate Ariel Dan'on for her radical tactics against the Fallen. He suspects she was acting on orders from another and has begun an investigation into the matter. I'm quite sure the Crucible will not tolerate this.

See p. 44 for more on the Fisher King, and the *Weavers' Screen & Assistant*, p. 34, for more on Ariel Dan'on.





Armatha Hevkin

Only Magdalen and the Concubine Leah Sevkin know that the crafty Diplomat is in reality two twin sisters: Armatha and Fella. Raised since birth by Magdalen Herself, Armatha and her sister are without equal in their ability to manipulate and guide their guild from the shadows. At present the sisters are working to break the Joanites away from Sheban control. Armatha supports the Templar crusade, while Fella has wormed her way into the Crucible. Fella, often in the shadow of Armatha, might use the Crucible to get rid of her twin and take over their guild herself.

Highlights: Sly, glamorous, deadly

Eminences: Conflict and Sensuality

Attributes: APP +2, CRE +2, INF +2, PER +2, PSY +1, WIL +1, STA 30, LUD 4, AD 3

Skills: Combat Sense 1/+2, Dance 2/0, Disguise 3/+2, Dodge 1/0, Etiquette (Tribes) 2/+2, Forgery 2/+2, Grooming 3/+2, Hand-to-Hand 1/0, Human Perception 3/+1, Interrogation 2/+2, Intimidate 2/0, Investigation 2/+2, Leadership 2/+2, Lore (secrets) 3/0, Notice 2/+2, Read/Write 2/0, Ritual 2/0, Seduction 3/+2, Sleight-of-Hand 2/0, Sneak 2/+0, Theatrics (lying) 2/+2

Edge: The Diplomats, Magdalen, Shera Uhan'on (for Armatha), Cylix (for Fella), the Order of the Bloodied Rose.

The Magdalites

Secluded in a realm of sensations and pleasures, the Magdalites lead lives that seem out of touch with their surroundings — frolicking amidst ruins and death. And the other Fatimas dare call me and my Children dreamers. Although the Magdalites seem harmless and giddy, it is them that you must watch and be weary of. They are nothing but snakes; their love is not free or true, but a tool they weave to coax favors and secrets from their partners. It seems that every Magdalite loves to bend the truth and hide it between her luscious lips. What they are up to, only Magdalen knows, but secrets have a way of finding the light of day — else, don't you think, they would not be secrets?

Strange, how in a house of liars and pretensions, all of Magdalen's children get along. What subtle magic She weaves to have Her tribe so united when even the steadfast Shebans are troubled with doubts. What indeed is My Sister's secret? And yet, look with me at Her, She grows impatient with Baba Yaga's balance — not willing to condemn, just letting things be — especially in the face of Eva's growing trouble. I hear Magdalen tires of Tera Sheba's reign over the tribes, but the other Fates do not seem to back Her opinions. No, indeed, Her tribe's unity is sign of things to come. Read it in the cards, it is all there — unity only hides purpose. But as with everything Magdalite, it only runs skin deep. I feel slighted that I was not invited to the dance, but at least I can enjoy the music, since I am the band.

Armatha Hevkin, Diplomat Guild Master

Seemingly out of nowhere, Armatha arrived, after the old head of the Diplomat Guild vanished on some cold winter night. But then again, the old fool had as his lover Sabyn the Flower, one who communed with the Z'bri — a Magdalite's passion! In the tribes there are few I do not know, and it struck me as odd that I had never seen or heard of this Armatha — surly someone would have at least mentioned her spectacular beauty. There she was, and from the moment she arrived she wasted no time in expanding the influence of her guild.

This one is a sly one. Head of the Diplomat Guild, Armatha's web of spies and lovers spans the tribes and there is little she does not know. I hate to say it, but she's even conned some of my children, another reason why we must stop the Magdalites. For too long they have been cloistered away in their pleasure dens, now they want to step into My Little Tricksters' turf. Petty amateurs is all they are, all we have to do is show them a pretty flower and all of Magdalen's plans fall like a house of cards.

Why Magdalen lets one so immature possess so much knowledge is beyond me. But trust me, the Lover must have Armatha on a short leash, a very short leash. Of late I have seen her lackeys through dreams visiting the Joanites. I sense that Magdalen is trying to coax the Warrior from Her shell. If this were not enough, Armatha has ties to the Order of the Bloodied Rose.

Formed by Magdalen shortly after the Liberation, the Order exists because of the fear that one of Her Children will say too much in the throes of passion. The Order is a secret group of masters in the arts of disguise and Yagan death practices, who keep tabs on the Magdalites and kill those who pose a threat to the tribe as a whole.

Even now as we speak, Armatha and the Templar Shera meet, and if I can read the shadows well, Armatha will back the Joanite crusade. Fortunately, among a tribe of lairs and thieves, not all the guilds will agree. Good, this will leave the Joanites out in the open. But watch her, for Armatha is everywhere. Like a two-headed snake, she baits the Shebans trying to divine their secrets, but she cannot know the fury that will posses them if they discover Armatha's true purpose — no one fools the Judges without feeling the heat of their torches.

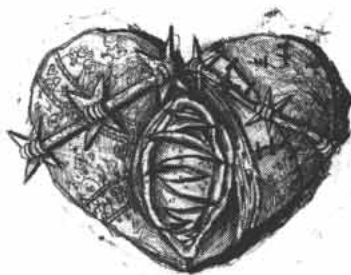
The Other Guilds

Concubines, Diplomats, Ecstatics and Masks, are these not the very suits of the Magdalen tarot? Each I am sure will have a part to play in the game at hand, but knowing their faces is key. Be careful, for the Diplomats are not the only guild you should worry about. The Ecstatics, and their mistress **Angelique Renkin**, are a power in their own right. How dare the other tribes call my Dahlians charlatans? The elixirs these potion-makers concoct are always more than they appear. With the right mix, secrets come easily from woozy patrons. Angelique, a capable herbalist, craves the forbidden like so many Magdalites and her search for the ultimate potions has had her venturing far to the north.

For all their skullduggery, the Magdalites are not without their uses, and even I myself derive pleasure from their Guild of Masks master — **Xavier Yavith**. A talented actor and playwright, he is among the few Magdalites who does not despise my tribe. On the contrary, over the last few summers he has established close ties between his guild and my tribe. Ah, the sweet Xavier, unfortunately has a part to play in a bigger stage than that of the Liberation plays. See, he has taken a fancy to Anastasia Aaron, my tool and daughter. Through him, with Anastasia's aide, I will divine what are Magdalites plans and ensure that the Loving Whore does not interfere with my vision for you.

Finally, the Concubines' Mistress **Leah Sevkin** drives her guild hard. A stern leader, she accepts only the best from her Concubines. She is close to Armatha, but being older and wiser, Leah enjoys the current tranquillity the tribes are experiencing as it is good for business. Unlike the other guilds, Leah, though sensuous and passionate, is practical and the only level head among the whole tribe. I still would not trust her though, for she is still too loyal to the Siren **Dhara Ibenkin**, Chamberlain of Magdalen.

See the **Tribe 8 Rulebook**, p. 61, for more information on Dhara Ibenkin.



Layla Cardikin

Layla was born under a moon the color of blood. Magdalen Herself recognized this omen and handed the child to the Order of the Bloodied Rose. Layla learned all the secrets of subtlety, observation and assassination as a child. She spent several summers in Mortuary, learning the ways of death. When she came of age, Layla returned to Xstasis and joined the Concubines. Under cover of being a simple lover, she served the Bloodied Rose until she was elevated to its leadership six summers ago. She has loyally served her Fatima and her close ally Armatha Hevkin ever since. Layla's heart, thought by all to be cold as ice, may still betray her, however. She longs for Deus, the Fallen poet who once was Magdalen's lover. She may still flee to Hom to be with him, although that would mean eliminating his mate, Altara Ven.

Highlights: Deadly, hidden longing

Eminences: Conflict and Sensuality

Attributes: APP +1, AGI +1, CRE +1, KNO +1, PER +2, STA 25, ULD 5, AD 6

Skills: Camouflage 2/+1, Combat Sense 3/+2, Disguise 3/+1, Dodge 2/+1, Dreaming 1/0, Etiquette 1/0, Grooming 2/+1, H-to-H 2/+1, Herbalism (poisons) 2/+1, Hum. Per. 2/0, Interrogation 2/+1, Investigation 2/+2, Lore (death) 3/+1, Melee 3/+1, Notice 2/+2, R/W (tribal, Magdalite, Yagan) 2/+1, Ritual 1/+1, Seduction 2/+1, Sneak 2/+1, Streetwise 2/0, Theatrics 3/+1, Synthesis (Treason) 2

4. Faces in the Mirror



Grandmère Décembre

Grandmère Décembre is the friend of all Yagans. She is their mentor and adopted mother, assuming the role better than Eva ever could. Her advice always fits the person who seeks her out because she listens so well. Often times she does not even offer counsel, and instead allows the other person to reach a conclusion by vocalizing their fears. This is one of the reasons Baba Yaga speaks with Grandmère Décembre; the Old One will simply listen, without ever once betraying any hint of boredom or indifference. No Yagan deserves more respect than Grandmère Décembre. Oddly enough, despite the tribe's public stance on the Fallen, Grandmère treats her wayward cousins kindly. She knows many Yagans living within Hom, and tries to help them when she can. Never will she mention their fall from Baba Yaga or make them feel like outcasts. Her strongest bond outside the tribe lies with Veruka the Wraith, a one-time student. She sees Veruka as a daughter, and regrets the distance between them.

Highlights: Kind, patient, trustworthy, venerable

Eminences: Fate and Death

Attributes: AGI -2, BLD -2, CRE +3, FIT -2, INF +3, KNO +3, PER -1, PSY +1, STA 15, UD 1, AD 1

Skills: Craft (Pellis Artisan) 4/+3, Dreaming 2/0, Leadership 2/+3, Lore (Yagan) 4/+3, Mythology 3/+3, Read/Write (tribal, Yagan) 3/+3, Ritual 2/+3, Teaching 3/+3, Synthesis (Dream Travel) 3

The Yagans

You would do well to learn from Baba Yaga's brood. They are clever at hiding their agendas, and use masks almost as skillfully as we. Oh they pretend to be impartial, removed and unconcerned by whatever storm surrounds them, but that is far from the truth. The Yagans know full well that inactivity is often as productive as action. With the Fatimas fighting to achieve their goals, Baba Yaga sits back, allowing events to run their course because in the end they suit Her purpose. Only we see it, for Her trickery is but sleight of hand, and nobody out-Dahlans a Dahlian.

Baba Yaga is an enigma I have yet to solve. Unlike the other Fatimas, the Crone sees Herself as a servant of death. She does not believe in Fatimal divinity, because to Her death is the ultimate authority. As such, She believes She has little providence over the actions of others, and allows the Yagans a sort of self rule. This is the reason for their self-imposed isolation, lest they draw the anger of Tera Sheba or suffer the meddling of Eva. Oh, the Yagans worship the sisterhood of Fatimas, but they believe we are nothing in death's eyes. Baba Yaga once told me "look at Joshua. Fatimas can die just as mortals; and they can return, just as mortals." This statement worries me, for it betrays Fallen sympathies on Her part. Regardless, Baba Yaga remains neutral on the entire Fallen situation. She will not advocate their destruction as Tera Sheba wishes, and She will not preach to them the way Eva wishes. Her neutrality deadlocks the Fatimas into an endless, stagnant cycle, and I cannot abide by that.

Unfortunately, I fear the day when She *will* join the conflict. I am not worried about Her tolerance for the Z'bri, for I know She hates them with fire's intensity. My concern is for the growing conflict between the Fatimas. Eventually, Baba Yaga will side with one camp when the other pushes Her too hard. In this role She will become a rare thing for Her tribe indeed: She will be a catalyst for change that I cannot control or foresee. Again, I cannot allow that to happen.

Grandmère Décembre, Old One

There are the Old Ones who guide the tribe in a maternal role, then there is the eldest of the old, Grandmère Décembre. Although the Yagans are ancient at birth, Grandmère is by far the oldest Yagan still alive. Some whisper she was an original Old One and helped construct the Fatima's frame in the days of the camps. They are correct, for Grandmère was at one time Helena, who supplied Baba Yaga with Her skull upon Her emergence. Born to the camps, Grandmère has known far more hardships than many of my brood, and that kind of tenacity deserves respect.

In her day, Grandmère Décembre was a Pellis Artisan of unparalleled skill who cut tiny tears into canvases of flesh. At first the tears appeared random and uninspired. Slowly, however, she would fold the canvas up, overlaying pattern upon pattern until the final fold created a portrait or scene stolen from history. Never before have I beheld such crafted beauty. Remove one fold, and the picture vanished into a jumble of cuts; return it and the picture emerged once more. Alas, age robbed her of her skill, and Grandmère Décembre now teaches the young. None of her students will ever possess her degree of skill, unfortunately. I even fear that when she dies, nobody can ever unravel the folded canvases, for that too required her touch.

Aside from her illustrious past, Grandmère Décembre is also Baba Yaga's confidant. The two spend hours together in Mortuary, discussing the nature of death within the confines of life. I must admit that even I am impressed while speaking to this woman. She possesses a quality that encourages one to open up to her. Because Baba Yaga offers little advice to Her tribe, Grandmère Décembre has taken the role of surrogate mother. Yagans, including other Old Ones, confide in her, often asking for advice or guidance in a particular matter. Grandmère Décembre never judges and never betrays their trust either. I suspect she alone knows all the Yagan's secrets.

Pox

This one is death in human guise, an avatar chosen by Baba Yaga Herself to carry destruction like a scythe. Pox is a Mordred who walks the Rust Wastes alone. His every step atrophies the life of the region, returning everything to the baser elements through decay. Why did Baba Yaga create such a beast, you wonder? I can see your confusion. Your eyes betray the question even though your lips did not utter them. Remember to hide your motives better, or they will haunt you whenever you stare into a mirror. Baba Yaga created Pox to continue her blighting influence across the Rust Wastes. The Fatimas want the region decimated so that it can never be used again. You need not concern yourself with the reasons why. Suffice it to know Baba Yaga began the plague that turned metal into rust, and Pox continues Her work.

Pox journeys across Keeper lands, forever hiding in the night. By day he sleeps, but with dusk, he walks and touches everything he encounters. Although nothing comes of it at first, eventually, what he touched will decay and crumble with the summers. The only time he pauses from this duty is to receive new clothing and rations that are left for him near Talon Nexus. This is a hard duty to endure, knowing that your naked flesh accelerates decay. It is even harder fulfilling this function alone. Still, Baba Yaga chose Pox because of his dedication and loyalty. She tested him beforehand, however, to ensure he could bear the weight of duty.

I admire Pox. Lesser men would have gone mad from the isolation by now, but Pox perseveres. I wonder, however, how loyal he would be if he discovered Baba Yaga hastened the death of his wife, or deliberately assigned his best friend to Talon Nexus near Serf lands where he vanished? I comprehend Her reasons for doing so, you understand. In order for Pox to fulfill his duties, there could be nothing tying him to his previous life. He had to be alone when the journey began, with only Baba Yaga's love to fill the void. Because of this, I will not reveal the truth to poor Pox. I see no reason to change his duty or destroy his faith.



Pox, Yagan Mordred

Pox, born Seth Kajkin, was one of the few men to receive the honor of serving Baba Yaga as a Mordred. His quiet strength and willingness to sacrifice personal happiness for the Fatima always earned him unusual assignments within the tribe. He lived in Talon for several years, raiding mass graves in Serf lands, and he administered death-rites to the afflicted when plague besieged communities. He knows this current task is his last assignment, for he will die in this urban wilderness. The last memory he has of the Fatima was when She blessed him, then administered his death rites for the fateful day She could not be with him. From the day he left Mortuary, Pox knew he had already died. Death was simply not ready to claim him.

Highlights: Dedicated, quiet, withdrawn

Eminences: Fate and Death

Attributes: FIT +1, KNO +1, PER +1, PSY -1, WIL +3, STA 30, ULD 5, AD 3

Skills: Combat Sense 3/+1, Cooking 2/0, Dodge 1/0, Hand to Hand 2/0, Lore (Yagan) 3/+1, Notice 1/+1, Read/Write (tribal) 2/+1, Ritual 3/+1, Sneak 1/0, Survival 3/0

Edge: All things slowly wither at Pox's touch. He carries the Rust Plague (Cont. 3, Onset 5 weeks, Virulence 7. Causes slow dehydration for MoF days, causing a Light Wound every 3 days. Fumbled HEA rolls make the victim a carrier).

The Fallen, or Those Who Are Lost



Evangel Black

Silent and determined, Evangel knows what fate has in store for her.

She knows that Cylix is up to no good and more innocent victims will fall into his clutches if he is not stopped. Her main goal is to expose Cylix for what he is. Evangel is a

reactionary Lightbringer, but prefers to fight with words than with swords. She has been keeping tabs on High Judge Cylix, but knows nothing of the Crucible as of yet. Her clandestine activities have brought her to the attention of Herite Troy Fenys, and a friendship is burgeoning — something that might bring the Lightbringers and Herites closer together.

Highlights: Beautiful, courageous, a loner

Eminences: Devotion, Conviction

Attributes: AGI +1, APP +2, INF +1, PER +2, PSY -1, WIL +1, STA 25, ULD 5, AD 5

Skills: Acrobatics 2/+1, Archery 2/+1, Combat Sense 2/+2, Dodge 1/+1, Gambling 1/+2, Hand-to-Hand 2/+1, Human Perception 2/-1, Intimidation 2/0, Investigation 2/+2, Melee 2/+1, Stealth 2/+1, Streetwise 2/+1, Read/Write 2/0, Theatrics (Oration) 3/0, Synthesis 1

Edge: Connections with Mek, Deus (he has taken a liking to her) and High Judge Thaim'on who sees her as a potential tool against Cylix.

And so we come to the Fallen. They exist beyond the love of we the Fatimas, but somehow they thrive. Are they the children of Our Brother, vile miscreants, or just lost children? Are we not shepherds? So we must corral the wayward sheep. I do not understand Tera Sheba's hate for them; all they need is a final change, to be shown the error of their ways and the love of My Sisters. In Hom you will walk and all around you the four factions will fall in tow, but the Lightbringers will be the most reserved — and with them I begin.

The Lightbringers

The Lightbringers strive to illuminate the world, to throw off the shackles of ignorance, but they forget that when they raise their torch, shadows of pride fall about them. They are strong, but also weak. They feel the call to lead, to light the path, but they forget that there may be more than one road to follow. To know the Lightbringers is to understand the potential of the Fallen and the fear of the Fatimas.

The torchbearer among her faction, **Kymber Reva** is strong and old. An Evan at heart she understands the need for moderation. Kymber is hesitant to take action against the tribes, and even her supporters **Deus** and **Evangel Black** know that Kymber's future is uncertain.

Notice the crowd that has gathered around her, all Jackers and members of the Midnight Blade cell. They are faithful to Kymber, and have come to report of another Fallen arrested and tried by the tribes. Angry, they storm away, she will not sanction their rescue raid planned later that day. She knows her influence is waning, but knows the disaster that will befall the Fallen if they raise arms, especially if they continue to bicker among themselves.

Follow my shadow-dance, to the Cage. There in the shadows, **Hal Ninva** meets and plans with the Midnight Blades. To Hal, the days of blindly following the Fatimas are over, the time has come for the tribes to lead themselves. This is of course is what he tells others, but you can see the desire for power burning in him, there is only one path to follow and it is his.

See him sneak into Vimary to meet an old friend — Marshal Bartholomew. There he informs his comrade of the planned raid, in return the Marshal hands over the prisoner. What is one Fallen when compared to a dozen? Hal returns to Hom, careful to not to reveal his machinations to the Fallen he brought with him. In the Hallows he proclaims success in rescuing the poor bastard while the Midnight Blades meet betrayal. A small price to pay in the end to lead the Fallen. Once a Sheban, always a Sheban is what I say.

See the **Tribe 8 Rulebook**, p. 105 and 101, for more information on Kymber Reva and Hal Ninva.

The Harbingers

Notice that one, the poet **Deus**, he's one that shows great promise to the Fallen. He and his cell, the Harbingers, are trying to bring together all the factions. His love, **Altara Ven** is busy drafting a Fallen manifesto along with the Jacker **Tobias**. Unfortunately, they bow to Kymber and the moderates, alienating them from the more radical elements of the Eighth Tribe. Deus is a strong individual, and one who Magdalen fears. He has taken his banishment as a second chance and is doing everything her can to forget the past. Learn his past, and then you'll have the key to control him. Altara Ven, Deus' lover, is a fragile thing. Intelligent and willful, Altara longs to have Deus to herself. Finally, the ex-Yagan Tobias is their balance and anchor. It is his encouragement and friendship that has reigned in Deus' wondering heart and turned it to more concrete goals.

See the *Tribe 8 Rulebook*, p. 106 and 107, for more on Deus and Altara Ven.

Evangel Black

This Lightbringer is one who we must be vigilant against. Now she is young and broken, filled with fears and doubts, but I see her growing in the future. Evangel's past is one fit for a tragedy. An orphan, and raised Joanite, Evangel was more beautiful than some Magdalites, but she carries an inner rage that knows no bounds. Strong minded, she would have eventually risen to become a Templar, perhaps even eclipsing Shera Uhan'on, but fate intervened. A Sheban Judge, that snake Cylix, took a fancy to her and forced himself on Evangel. She fought back, and in her flight secured her exile.

Only the valiant actions of the Fallen Mek spared her from execution. Surely, Cylix knew what a danger she posed and wanted her dead, but the Watch was no match for the fury of Mek. Wounded, Evangel was brought to Hom. For the fault of another she lost her tribe, family and Fatima. Anger welled within her, yet she did not give in. She refused the Jackers, sticking to herself. Now, as Kymber, Deus and Hal fight over the Fallen, Evangel travels about Vimary swaying the tribes — not with rhetoric or violence but with truth. Watch this agitator!

The Seeds of Eden

Ah, the Seeds of Eden. They possess something the Eighth Tribe lacks, and that is unity. They live apart, believing in forging their own destiny away from Hom. Yet, they have close ties to Veruka the Wraith, and she senses much potential in them. The Seeds are led by **Mordecai the Judge** and **Kara the Hunter**. Mordecai once a Judge, was a victim of the deadly intrigues between Verra Thaim'on and Cylix. Kara is one that will come back to haunt the tribes. Already she seems blessed, escaping death on many occasions. **Sabyn**, a former Magdalite, though, has no place among them, and Mordecai knows this as Sabyn has had relations with a Serf. It is her passion that will destroy them in the end. Lastly, and strangely, are the lovers **Pierrot the Rebel**, an Agnite, and the Keeper **Parys**. Drawing from all four Fallen outlooks and associating with a Keeper, see how the Seeds draw together and make a whole. If more would see this strength, not even an army of men like Cylix would be able to stop the Fallen.



Kara the Hunter

From an early age, Kara trained and played with Shera Uhan'on and Valerie Ben'on, her cousin. The three even had childhood dreams to serve together in the Templars, but this was not to be. While a capable hunter, Kara was rejected by Joan — afraid of something the Fatima saw in the young Joanite. Kara did not let this get to her, instead she honed her skills and joined the Watch. It was the brutal beating of Mordecai that pushed her over the edge. Tired of the dishonorable pettiness of the Watch, she freed the Judge and escaped with him. As a Lightbringer, she feels a close kinship to her old childhood friends, and is contemplating joining the crusade.

Highlights: Powerful, blessed, intense

Eminences: Fury and Unity

Attributes: AGI +1, BLD +1, FIT +2, PER +1, WIL +1, STA 35, UD 7, AD 8

Skills: Archery 2/+1, Athletics 1/+2, Camouflage 1/0, Combat Sense 2/+1, Dodge 2/+1, Dreaming 1/0, Hand-to-Hand 2/+1, Healing 1/0, Intimidate 1/+1, Leadership 2/0, Lore (Hunting Paths) 2/0, Melee 3/+1, Navigation (Land) 2/0, Notice 2/1, Sneak 1/+1, Survival 1/0, Throwing 1/+1, Synthesis (Battle) 2

Edge: Relic of Joan (sword, Acc +1, DM AD +10)

The Jackers



Baal the Wild

Baal is a bomb about to explode and engulf the Fallen. Filled with rage and anger, Baal wants to punish those who banished him. He has already killed an Evan, and will soon want to being those directly responsible to justice — mainly Armatha Hevkin. The Magdalite Diplomat saw the evil that lurked in Baal's heart and at the first opportunity had him banished before he could do any harm. A child of impulse, Baal has been approached by the Z'bri T'phalus (see T8 Rulebook, p. 73). The Sky-Lord has offered to teach the young exile what true power is all about, in exchange for his servitude — a price Baal is quite willing to pay.

Highlights: Wrathful, violent, deadly

Eminences: Conflict and Vengeance

Attributes: AGI +1, CRE -1, FIT +1, KNO -1, PER +2, PSY -2, WIL +1, STA 25, UD 5, AD 5

Skills: Combat Sense 2/+2, Dodge 1/+1, Hagglng 1/0, Hand-to-Hand 2/+1, Intimidate 2/0, Melee 2/+1, Navigation (land) 1/-1, Notice 1/+2, Sneak 2/+1, Streetwise 3/0

Edges: Baal's Furies (his cell) and the Z'bri T'Phalus.

While the Lightbringers are moderators and idealists, the Jackers are more dangerous and reactionary. Anger and betrayal fills their hearts, making them easy to control, but potentially unpredictable. Many Jackers spend their time battling each other, and minor gang fights are common throughout Hom. As long as they remain divided and not a united front, then all will fare well.

Like wild animals, no one controls the Jackers. This makes them wild cards — which is why I like them. Short tempered and violent, they are as likely to fight each other as they are the Z'bri. The only person who has the respect of almost all Jackers is the old Joanite **Mek the Warrior**, though do not judge him by his age. He is strong and diligent, a thinker as well as a fighter. He hides his past, and only his closest companions **Toro** and **Mason** know the truth and they respect their friend's privacy. But look at the runes he carries on him, muted and dull, they still place him high among the Joanites. I even suspect he was one of Her personal bodyguards.

Summers of exile have taught Mek much. While he still leads Z'bri hunts, he is getting tired of the Jackers' infighting. It is only his hate for Hal that prevents him from throwing his support behind the Lightbringers. Unfortunately, younger cells see him as an old man, grown soft in his age. Yet, those who have earned his respect can count on Mek. See how he looks at Evangel, Magdalen would be proud, for love is the easiest way to brake someone in the end. But do not confuse this love for the sexual kind — Mek is Evangel's father. Banished just before her birth, Mek has yet to confront his daughter, afraid of her reaction.

See the *Tribe 8 Rulebook*, p. 95, for more on Mek.



Baal the Wild

Mek is an exception among the Jackers, stoic and calm, not like the younger Baal. Whatever Magdalen found in Baal to banish him at an early age must have been dark indeed. Known for his temper and unstable desire for sex, Baal is a whirling tempest of rage and bitterness, there is a bounty on his head for killing an Evan merchant. See him and his gang, the Furies. No more than 16 summers old, Baal has already spilled more blood than most Joanites. The Furies, while mostly as young as Baal, have also attracted older miscreants and the havoc they cause warms my heart. They have been known to rampage across Bazaar, turning over stalls, setting fires and attacking any who get in the way, including other Fallen. At night the break into tribal homes to steal and desecrate Fatimal shrines just for the sake of it.

Baal knows his actions are costing the Fallen dearly, as the Watch stamps down on them after each of his outings. He is speaking against the tribes and "soft" Fallen who refuse to take up arms. Baal is just covering his bloodlust and even Mek holds no sway over him. In him burns an inferno and if he ever reaches maturity he may see the error of his ways, but I am sure death will come to him first. Be careful with this Baal, anger him once and you have earned a foe for life.



Alexis of Blade

Another Fallen Magdalite who calls the Jackers home is the beautiful Alexis of Blade. Her dark skin and red hair marked her as a prized Concubine of Xstasis, but one with a flair for danger and violence. An expert weaponsmith, Alexis regularly travels with Keepers on expeditions to recover relics of the World Before. Aside from her traditional blade, she is known to carry Keeper weapons. Alexis cares little for the lofty goals of the Lightbringers, craving instead excitement and adventure. Traveling deep into the H'I Kar is one of her favorite pastimes, often going farther than even the bravest Joanite.

When not adventuring, Alexis spends her time in Ile Perdue, a hive I hope you never know. A being of passions, Alexis follows only herself. She has no time for Mek, or Kymber, but does not believe in actively opposing them. Alexis just believes the Fallen should follow their own paths and not those of others. As long as she remains on the sidelines, we have nothing to fear.

The Midnight Blade Jacker Cell

Look there that's what remains of the Midnight Blade cell. Broken and haggard only a few survived the ambush. But Hal did not foresee this little fact — are his allies betraying him as well? Angry and silent, the Midnight Blades are going to sulk in the shadows, knowing that someone double-crossed them. But the obvious they do not see. Their leader **Ian Thresh** looks for the guilty party, but Hal is still feeding him lies. Ian's lover, **Luca** blames the witch Veruka for not warning them, and soon will want to punish the old Yagan. What a sorry bunch they are indeed!

Alexis of Blade

One of the few Fallen who has yet to join a cell, Alexis is well known in Hom. Dynamic and flamboyant, she is always looking for a challenge and will push herself to edge if she has to. Like most Jackers, Alexis cares little for the politics of the Fallen, but if push comes to shove, she'll throw her lot in with the side that promises the most action. After all, what's the point in living one's destiny if there's no challenge. Frequenting Ile Perdue, Alexis has run into the Herite Troy Fenys (T8 Rulebook, p. 96) on a number of occasions. While she keeps her distance from the Herite, Troy's friendship with Evangel is peeking Alexis' curiosity. If the three joined forces, they would cause more than a little trouble for the tribes.

Highlights: Alluring, impulsive, stubborn

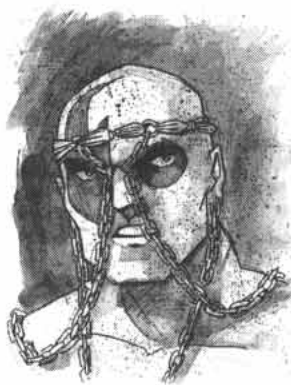
Eminences: Sensuality and Bravery

Attributes: AGI +2, APP +2, FIT +1, INF +1, PER +1, STA 25, UUD 3, AD 6

Skills: Acrobatics 2/+2, Archery 2/+2, Athletics 1/+1, Combat Sense 3/+1, Dodge 2/+2, Firearms 1/+2, Hagglng 1/+1, Intimidate 2/0, Melee (sword) 3/+2, Ride 1/0, Seduction 1/+2, Streetwise 1/+1, Swimming 1/+2, Throwing 1/+2

Edges: Friendship with the Keeper Hagbard (Weaver's Assistant, p. 39). Relic handguns (Dam x14).

The Doomsayers



Havark

Havark is an uncomfortable man, even around friends. He has no history that he wishes to share, and is sometimes caught off guard by kindness. His tortured years in H'l Kar are finally fading from Havark's memories, but he still wakes up at night screaming. Havark drowns his past in duty, and is among the most vocal Doomsayers. He spends his days in Bazaar, preaching and shouting about the darkness to come. He does so with an intensity that makes people uncomfortable, but his fervor comes from first-hand knowledge of Z'bri cruelty.

Among Doomsayers, Havark remains an outsider by choice. He feels uncomfortable being emotionally open with people and finds Veruka particularly intimidating. Amusingly, he is most comfortable around the stern Den-Hades. Her anger and raw passion are qualities he understands. Both have pasts they would rather forget.

Highlights: Haunted, intense, pacifist

Eminence: Shadows

Attributes: AGI +2, BLD +1, FIT +1, PER +1, PSY -1, STA 30, ULD 5, AD 5

Skills: Animal Handling 2/0, Camouflage 3/0, Combat Sense 2/+1, Dodge 3/+2, Lore (H'l Kar) 4/0, Notice 2/+1, Sneak 3/+2, Streetwise 1/0, Survival 2/0, Theatrics (Prophecy) 2/0

Edge: Contacts with Mek

All Fallen should aspire to be like Doomsayers: harmless and very entertaining. They stand on boxes and gather large crowds with their speeches of doom and woe. Most people listen for the moment of entertainment they offer, then scuttle off, either more concerned by the words than before, or amused by the mad rants. Led by the likes of **Den-Hades** and **Veruka the Wraith**, the Doomsayers were born from Joshua's fading breath. They carry His words in their bosom as a shield against what is to come. Call them a reminder that before hope, there is darkness; before greatness, there is humility.

Many misunderstand Doomsayers, a fact evident in their name. Yes, they rant and wail, beating their chests like mothers over the graves of their young, but many listeners do not hear the message itself. They fixate on words like "dark times" and "years of pain" and instantly believe the Doomsayers herald the end of the world. It is a pity, for the Doomsayers are an eloquent lot who craft their words well. Were people to listen more closely, then they would realize Doomsayers are not fools who simply wail about their condition, then do nothing. The Doomsayers say that there is a time of unity and greatness for all ahead, but before that happens, there must be pain. As Veruka herself once said: "Appreciate the pain and life will appreciate you." These trying times cannot be avoided, but preparing for them makes the fight easier.

I will fault the Doomsayers over one matter. They try too hard. They know people ignore their warnings, which in turn fuels their desire to make others listen. Unfortunately, Veruka and the Guide Den-Hades, both of whom are guilty of this, should realize that medicine tastes better if covered in sugar. People tire of listening to how their world is doomed and that change must be brought about *or else*. People do not like ultimatums. Attacking their beliefs or lifestyle is not the way to secure allies. Still, the Doomsayers push with words and apocryphal voices, heralding a new time of darkness and pointing to daily occurrences as omens.

For the last two generations, the Doomsayers have gathered together in the morning to listen to the rants of Den-Hades. Inspired, or depressed according to your perspective, they then debate and argue the same theories over and over again throughout the day. The dedicated, but less-sagacious members leave for Bazaar, trying to attract new adherents, while smarter Doomsayers study under Veruka. It seems like a simple existence, but the Fallen respect and seek counsel from the learned Doomsayers. They may not share their beliefs, but the Fallen recognize wise people when they see them.

The Fallen should be careful, though, with whom they trust. Most Doomsayers are enlightened and insightful, but there are a few who are just mad. They wander the forests of Hom calling out to ghosts that aren't there and predicting destruction without rhyme or reason. If they were just mad-women moaning at nothing, the Fallen would have little to worry about. But insanity mixed with the Fallen's connection to the River of Dream makes for a dangerous combination. Spirits of all sorts may manifest, some beneficial and others dangerous. The Fallen are still their own worst enemies.

Havark, Fugitive from H'I Kar

You have met Havark before, I can promise you that. He walks the streets of Bazaar, skillfully dodging the Watch and preaching on corners when opportunity allows. He is a celebrity of sorts. Everyone has seen him at least once in their lives, but nobody pays attention to him or knows his name. I do, for there is far more about him than meets the eye. Havark dodges the Watch easily because he has spent several summers hiding from the Z'bri. You cannot tell by looking at him, but Havark was born a Serf. He lived in H'I Kar, suffering unimaginable horrors before finally escaping. Unsure where to go, he remained in Serf Lands, moving and hiding till he became highly proficient at it.

Eventually, Havark mustered the courage to sneak past Z'bri patrols and make his bid for freedom. The Joanites at Seven Fingers rescued him before a Chained pack overtook him. Havark spent the next few summers in tribal lands, appreciating the qualities of freedom and learning how to communicate with normal people. He even befriended several individuals, including Mek, the Joanite who saved him. Over time, though, Mek grew dissatisfied with the tribes and fell from grace. When he crossed over to the Fallen, Havark joined him because his loyalty had always been towards the person who rescued him, not the tribes.

Over the years, Havark and Mek have grown stronger as allies, even though they belong to different groups. Mek, now a renowned Jacker, respects Havark's pacifism. Havark, in turn, may not agree with Mek's violent tendencies, but he supports him as a friend. In fact, Havark has taught Mek all he knows about the Serf lands and H'I Kar, including dangerous areas and safe-houses. Because this information has gone a long way in helping the Jackers avoid Z'bri traps, many respect Havark and will stand up for him. Havark may be a pacifist, but the Jackers are bound by no such formality.





Raven

It takes a special man to be filled with this much hate, but Raven fills the role well. There is no justification for his cruelty or malicious nature, save for the fact that some people are just born that way. Raven was always a warrior of aggressive ambition. To him, any action justified the cause as long as he benefited from it. So when Dahlia approached Raven with the promise of power, he readily accepted since he knew Joan would eventually tire of his antics. As a Herite, Raven has found the perfect expression for his violent soul. He gets to kill and he is still seen as a hero. He finds the irony delicious. Raven formed the Shadow cell from a cadre of violent criminals, men and women he remembered from his Joanite days. Many of them do not believe in the Herite cause either, and instead enjoy the sanctioned violence.

Highlights: Bully, intimidating, violent

Eminences: Fury and Freedom

Attributes: APP -1, BLD +2, CRE -1, FIT +1, STA 35, UD 8, AD 9

Skills: Archery 1/0, Combat Sense 3/0, Dodge 2/0, Dreaming 1/0, Gambling 3/0, Hand-to-Hand 2/0, Intimidate 2/+2, Leadership 1/0, Melee 3/0, Ritual 1/0, Streetwise 2/0, Synthesis 1

Edge: His Shadow cell and the support of Dahlia.

The Herites

Herites! They offer you freedom of choice, then kill you for not making the right one. Watch these vipers carefully, for they despise the Fatimas and anyone associated with them. Unlike the more peaceful-minded Doomsayers and Lightbringers, these Fallen cannot articulate their beliefs properly, so they strike from the shadows like cowards. The Jackers I can afford some respect. After all, they are going after a common enemy in the Z'bri. Herites, however, attack the tribes for daring to believe in something greater than themselves. I despise the Herites for this reason, and would see their flayed bodies blacken under the sun.

Most of all, I wish to be rid of that damnable **Troy Fenys**. Among killers and cutthroats, she is the worst. Her cheeks bear rings taken from the corps of a Little Trickster, and eventually she will pay for that crime. Troy and her cell wear a distinctive rune pattern that signifies their policy of assassination and murder. Others have begun to bear these marks on Hom; already the Joanite fugitive **Erik Uhan'on** has appeared bearing Troy's marks and calling himself Erik the Blade. He may be her cell-mate now, or just another fanatic hungry for tribal blood. Beware those who have these signs; they will be your death, unless you are theirs.

Most Herites follow a man named **Kyrt** who is an effective leader, but who still does not have full control over his flock. Individuals like Troy and **Raven** follow their own agendas, disposing of whomever they please without conferring with the other Herites. Still, what does Kyrt expect from a group that uses freedom as justification for brutality. Open conflict has yet to erupt, however, since Troy, Raven and Kyrt's agendas currently coincide. They all wish to see the tribes fall, whatever the cost. So far, they have committed acts of aggression on a small scale, killing individuals who hold some importance in tribal hierarchy. Afterwards, they scurry off to the Junks to celebrate their acts of cowardice. Kyrt, however, has greater plans for the Herites, plans he believes are still secret. I have my spies, however, and they are effective.

Kyrt is organizing the Herites to launch a series of cowardly attacks against the tribes. Rather than going after individuals, he is targeting buildings. The Winter Emporiums, Xstasis, Mortuary, the Court Halls and the Joanite Towers are certainly targets. For now, though, Kyrt has spies watching these locations, studying their defenses and finding their weak points. Kyrt is also in negotiations with a band of marauding Keepers who maintain nominal ties with their Olympus brethren. The Herites are trading for explosives and weapons. Should the two groups come to an understanding, then Kyrt will certainly have the ammunition he needs to start a slaughter. Unfortunately for him, the slaughter will consume the Fallen after the tribes retaliate.

See the *Tribe 8 Rulebook*, pp. 54-57 and 96, for more on Erik Uhan'on and Troy Fenys.



Raven, Herite Judas

Dark as the moonless night, Raven is dangerous prey. He is cunning with an instinct I have only seen in animals, and he is skilled in the arts of violence. Raven has no qualms displaying his ability to inflict pain. In his hand, the blade dances in streaks of deadly silver and arcs of blood. Of course I would expect nothing less of this Joanite whose skills earned him the title of Templar. His arrogant manner and hot temper, however, cost him the position after he gutted a fellow warrior during an argument. The Joanites would have killed him had they the opportunity, but Raven fled to Hom before the body of his victim was even cold. Once there, he attracted the violent with the lure of more violence, and formed the cell known as Raven's Shadow.

Over the last few summers, Raven has pushed his way through the Herites' hierarchy like a bull through a crowd. His followers are violent and always eager for a fight. When they are not assassinating innocents, the Shadows are in Junks drinking and brawling with their rivals, a Jacker cell known as the Torrents.

You now know the story that everyone else knows, but I am Dahlia, and each of my tales is spun to hide another falsehood. What I have told you is true, to a point. What you do not know is that Raven is my spy. He has always served me, even as Joan's Templar, and will continue to do so. I know this to be true because he killed that warrior at my behest, and joined the Herites at my instruction. Do not look so shocked. Yes, I instructed him to slay a fellow tribal, perhaps even betraying Joan, but I am the catalyst for change. Sometimes change comes of its own accord, but other times you need to set events into motion yourself. Raven is a walking event. He drives the Herites to greater acts of violence, encouraging their worst aspects because the tribes can never be too complacent. They must learn to be wary of the world around them and not just the Z'bri. Answer me this, what will happen after the Z'bri are gone? Will the world be a happier place? Spare me the naiveté. The world needs conflict to grow and improve. Conflict breeds leaders, duress forges nations, and I supply both. Besides, I may hate the Herites, but that does not mean I cannot use them. And when the Herites are no longer useful, then I have my blade in place, and he will be ready to slit the Herites' collective throats.



4. Faces in the Mirror

The Keepers, or Those Who Are Heathens

Ahhh, poor little Keepers. They scurry about like ants trying to preserve the secrets of the past, never realizing that their knowledge also weighs them down. I am not against the technology from the World Before. On the contrary, some of it saves lives, like the heating boxes during winter or the artifact that purifies water. I am against what the Keepers do, however, because they alienate themselves from the tribes. This is a time when we should join together against the Z'bri and Squats. The Keepers are so interested in rebuilding, yet they refuse to do so alongside us. The past died for a reason. Therefore, there are some things that should remain dead. Keepers indeed. They keep to the past and keep themselves distanced from us.

Despite this, I have learned a few secrets about the Keepers, more than they would find comfortable. You can establish a dialogue with them as long as you have something useful. Otherwise they stare at you with the same disinterest as watching a cow in the field. Secondly, if you do find an artifact of the World Before, do not trust their appraisal of the item. They will tell you it's worthless, convince you to throw it away, and leave, then rummage through your garbage like scavengers. The truth comes out only if you threaten to destroy the item. If they are indifferent about the artifact, then it is probably junk. If they stop you, then you have a worthy barter for information.

Despite their insistence to the contrary, the Keepers are a fractured lot living across the ruins of the Rust Wastes. At one time the threat of Z'bri enslavement kept them united within the Underlands of Vimary. Once they emerged from the darkness (essentially because we freed them from the camps when gaining our own liberty), the Keepers scattered into the Wastes. Now several different bands wander Vimary under the name Keepers, but rest assured they compete fiercely for ancient artifacts. If you own such a relic, you can pit one group against the other in a struggle for possession.



The Ancients

When one speaks of Keeper, one is usually thinking of the Ancients. They are the guardians of yesterday's marvels and the historians for tomorrow's children. You can see them wandering through buildings without care or heed to who owns it. In fact, a Keeper named Benjamin once told me that Vimary is a museum and that we are all squatters. Therefore he had the right to go and take what he pleased. I find other Keepers are not so articulate, however, and simply scavenge that which attracts their attention. One fool was brazen enough to walk up to Baba Yaga in order to claim an artifact from Her form. His death was the most excruciating display of agony I have ever seen since the Z'bri Torture Wombs.

Currently, the main force of Keepers hide within Olympus, a treasure-trove of working artifacts that issue mechanical burps and horrible smells. Other groups, however, wander the Rust Wastes in nomadic bands numbering as little as three, and as many as a dozen. These scattered packs venture to Olympus only when they have wares to trade or are seeking refuge from the Blood Storms. My understanding is despite any past grievances amongst the Keepers, they will rarely refuse temporary sanctuary to members of their own tribe. All is not cordial, however. The Keepers fracture more and more with each passing year. New theories on life before the End and the application of technology create philosophical schisms. Some believe the Keepers should remain within Olympus and ignore the rest of the island. Others believe technology should be applied towards leaving Vimary and exploring the outside world.

Acturius

Do not bother mentioning his name to anyone; few outside the Keepers know of young Acturius. This boy-Keeper, however, is fascinated with the tribes and Fallen, and studies them as diligently as his brethren study the past. He hates the Wastes and continually disobeys his superiors by visiting Hom and Bazaar. Acturius wears non-Keeper garb outside the Rust Wastes and knows enough about the tribes to claim membership with the Agnites. Indeed, at the tender age of twelve summers, many overlook him as they would any other Agnite. Acturius has chosen his disguise well, and it is this display of ingenuity that marks him as special.

Acturius knows more about the tribes than most of his elders. He spends much time wandering the paths of Hom or the streets of Bazaar, listening, watching and taking in information like a thirsty cup accepting water. Pay enough attention and you will see him on the edge of crowds pretending to play, but observing with keen interest.

He is still a Keeper at heart, however. He is adept at bringing the past to life, and he loves tiny mechanical trinkets. In fact, it was a tiny toy soldier from before the End that I used to entice Acturius' secrets out of him. He is a lively and chatty boy, but make no mistake, he is a good observer. Lies will not go unnoticed, while speaking the truth is a good way to earn his trust. Although I see no use for the young lad now, I know Acturius represents the new generation of Keepers interested in alliances with the tribes. Who knows, he could even be their next leader, for great people are often born rebels. Unfortunately, as long as Acturius' elders and Tera Sheba are still around, there will be no real truce between the Keepers and the tribes.



Acturius

Gifted with a child's unbridled curiosity and sense of adventure, and coupled with the maturity one would expect in somebody twice his age, Acturius is learning more about the world than the Keepers could ever hope to teach him. In fact, because he is self-taught, he does not share the prejudices of his Keeper elders. He explores and watches, learning through observation. And when he does not understand something, he asks somebody he trusts for answers. Of late, that role has fallen to Deus, the Lightbringer Poet of Hom (the two have formed a unique bond based on trust). Acturius learns more about the Fallen each day through his interactions with Deus, and Deus, in turn, learns of the Keepers and their lore. The Lightbringers know of Acturius and treat him kindly out of respect for Deus. Whenever Acturius travels Hom or Bazaar, a Lightbringer is sure to be close by, ready to extricate the lad from trouble.

Highlights: Curious, enthusiastic, honest, open

Attributes: APP +1, BLD -1, CRE +2, KNO +1, PER +1, PSY +1, STA 20, ULD 2, AD 2

Skills: Camouflage 1/+2, Disguise 1/+2, Dodge 1/0, Human Perception 2/+1, Lore (Fallen) 1/+1, Lore (Keepers) 3/+1, Notice 2/+1, Read/Write (Keepspeak) 2/+1, Sneak 1/0, Techlore (Mechanics) 1/+1, Theatrics 1/+2, Technosmithing (Jury Rig) 1

Edge: Contacts with the Ancients, and Deus.



The Machine Monks

Some are blessed with madness, for it inspires creativity, while others are cursed by it, for it invites destruction. Of all the schismatic groups to form within the Keepers, the Machine Monks are the most dangerous. Unlike their scholarly-minded kin, the Machine Monks are trying to become one with technology. Before the schism, their own brethren suffered in torturous experiments that tried to perfect the union of man-machine. In a rare incident of open conflict, the Keepers drove the Machine Monks out from Olympus and into the Rust Wastes. This is where they hide now, within the rusting complexes where nobody can hear them scream in pain. Not one bears no scars; not one has all her fingers, eyes or limbs. Instead, they wear devices to replace what they have destroyed. Some are useless artifacts that hang limply, while others have working implants. They have all sacrificed their humanity for knowledge and metal.

The Machine Monks are an odd bunch by any standard. They worship the perfect, cold, calculating method of technology. No fear, no sympathy and no doubt, there is only the satisfaction of function. Neither is there individual accomplishment, for they are all part of a greater whole. I believe they even refer to themselves as numbered Cogs, though I am uncertain of the reference. Each member has a function, and the order's success requires each Cog to fulfill her assigned duties.

Normally, the Machine Monks are an annoyance at best. They raid like all other Keepers — though I will admit they are far better organized — and they kidnap Squats when they conduct dangerous experiments. Were they to stop there, then I would have little argument with them. Unfortunately, the Machine Monks pursue dangerous avenues to reach their state of perfection. I have heard that these Keepers secured an alliance with a rogue Z'bri Sangis who now lives among them. He reputedly ensures that their precious machine implants will not kill them. What they offer in return I can only imagine. Another rumor to reach my ears is that the Machine Monks may have developed a new Aspect or formula based on the Keeper's Technosmithing. This new gift is said to animate artifacts, placing them under the control of the Machine Monks. Some are supposedly animating their mechanical implants in this fashion.

The Monks live in a hidden fortress, buried deep within the area the Keepers known as the Steel Maze. Their monastery was once a huge container and the smell of burning tar still lingers about it. The vast chamber is now a maze unto itself, full of the Monks' constructs. All these blinking machines, powered by ancient batteries and the Monk's own Technosmithing, are linked together, forming a "net-ark" to carry their sacred numbers. Endless pulses of energy and strings of digits run from box to box, in a bizarre emulation of a mind. The Monks worry me at times and their dealings with the Z'bri is despicable, but I must also consider them my children in some ways — or my bastards at least. Indeed, in their hidden monastery, using the virtual Motion of numbers and energy, they are creating the Illusion of life. I think the fools they trick are themselves, although their creation is forming eddies in the River of Dream.

Cog Null-1

Cog Null-1 is the designation for the leader of the Machine Monks. The current person in this position is the most violent of his brethren. Thus far, he has lost both legs, both arms, one eye and Goddess knows what else in rites of self-administered surgery. He travels around in a self-propelled chair armed with Keeper weapons and adorned with a clutter of pipes, tubes and wires that impale his various orifices and wounds. How he remains alive, I am uncertain, but I am sure his Z'bri ally has something to do with that. Cog Null-1 is turning the Machine Monks into a more active cell, bringing their experiments to new heights of insanity. Despite the Z'bri's presence, a handful of Monks have died from wound shock and blood loss. Those that disagree or go against Cog Null-1 suffer what the Monks call a "Frontal," a process where a needle is inserted into the eye socket above the eye and used to scrape away the brain and the mind. The process leaves the subject a thrall who can do little more than drool. Some even volunteer for this process, claiming it brings them closer to the state of mechanical perfection that they seek.

Under Cog Null-1's orders, the Machine Monks have been stepping up attacks against other Keepers. Already I have heard of three raids on Olympus, one of which came away with several victims and a handful of artifacts and vehicles. I am certain that Olympus' defenses are now stronger than ever. In the meanwhile, Cog Null-1 continues with his bloody vision. He spies on other cells to exploit moments of weakness, and rumors claim he may even try raiding Hom through the Keeper tunnels. The Keepers, in a rare show of solidarity, have warned Hal Ninva and Kymer Reva of the danger (without compromising the entrance to their tunnel in Hom). It is obvious, however, that the Keepers are trying to distance themselves from the mad cell. Should the Machine Monks raid, then people would make little distinction between Keeper factions.



Cog Null-1

Cog Null-1 has never liked the flesh. Although originally an Ancient named Cory, Cog Null-1 was born with twisted set of arms and legs that limited his potential. Without the physical capacity to be a Keeper, Cory studied the past, eventually learning of an artifact called a prosthesis. He also discovered that after the Machine Monks were exiled from Olympus, they stole many body-related items including surgical equipment and prosthetic limbs. Cory left the Keepers that day in search of the Machine Monks. Over the years, during Cory's rise through the ranks, he has become adept in replacing limbs with prosthetics. Unfortunately he has never discovered any that are completely articulated, and now seeks other means of merging flesh and machine. With each failure, however, he is becoming more violent and radical in his methods. This has resulted in an alliance with a rogue Sangis Z'bri named simply The Peeler.

Highlights: Bloody, fanatical, tyrannical

Attributes: AGI -4, APP -2, BLD -1, CRE +3, INF +1, KNO +3, PSY -2, WIL +3, STA 20, UD 2, AD 2

Skills: Demolition 3/+3, Drive (Wheelchair) 3/-4, Gunnery (Chair weapons) 3/0, Intimidation 2/-1, Leadership 2/+1, Lore (Keepers) 3/+3, Read/Write (Keepspeak) 3/+3, Techlore (Electronics) 2/+3, Techlore (Mechanics) 3/+3, Techlore (Medicine) 3/+3

Edge: Contacts with The Peeler and the Machine Monks



Chief Lum

Lum and his people inhabit the plains and forests north of Griffentowne. A small nomadic clan, numbering only a few dozen, they are normally peaceful and are happy to coexist with the tribes. Lum claims that he has seen Eva in visions and they worship Her as a spirit of the Earth. They see Her, however, as being both a benevolent and evil goddess. During the cold winter She is known as Saim (taker of life) and as Beal (giver of life) during the bountiful summer. Most Evans do not appreciate the Saim aspect, but generally they do not bother the simple Lumans, as they are called. Lum hopes, upon the next equinox, to make a sacrifice to Eva and petition to be allowed to join Her tribe.

Highlights: Resourceful and diplomatic

Attributes: AGI +1, FIT +1, INF +1,
STA 25, UD 5, AD 5

Skills: Animal Care 2/0, Animal
Handling 2/0, Archery 2/+1,
Combat Sense 2/0, Hagglng 2/0,
Lore (Duskfall) 3/0, Melee 2/0,
Navigation (land) 2/0, Sneak 1/+1,
Survival 1/0

Edge: Benjamin of Griffentowne

The Outsiders, or Those Who Are Worthless

A Census of the Outlands, prepared by Advocate Delray Seth'on for Tera Sheba:

As per you request, High Judge Thaim'on, I have recently completed a census of the rabble that exists both in, and outside Vimary. These Squats have grown more numerous with each passing summer and may one day pose a threat. This threat, however, could help galvanize the tribes, because it comes from an enemy that we can easily and swiftly defeat. In my journeys to the Outlands I found a handful of settlements that, while inferior and ever barbaric, I believe could in the future — after having been pacified — be turned into excellent colonies for the tribes.

The Squats lead pathetic lives; some are nothing more than bands of savages ignorant of the threat of the Z'bri. Others, and these are far more dangerous, have developed the semblance of a society, but one dominated by war and conquest. Of their number, Bazaar and the tribal lands, holds some 10 hundred. These are mostly beggars and carrion, thieves and brigands. Outside Vimary, in the Outlands there are rumors of settlements that hold this many and more, but I myself have only witnessed small communities of no more than a few dozen. Among these numbers are a few individuals that stand apart and my turn into potential allies or foes. What sets these apart is their understanding of Dream, even if they do not realize it themselves. Some feel pulled to the Fatimas and create their own cults. Others use half-remembered rituals to drag power from the River of Dream, creating curses and other incantations. They are forever outside the Seven Sisters' grace, but they can be dangerous nevertheless.



Chief Lum

A chieftain of a small nomadic community, Lum craves closer ties between his people and the tribes, especially the Evans. They have even, and I have witnessed this with my very eyes, taken to worshipping Eva. This bodes well and bad. As allies Lum and his people could be a font of information on the Outlands and the other Squat settlements. Unfortunately, as lost souls, Eva could never welcome them, and this rejection may spurn the normally peaceful Lum into murderous action.

Nonetheless, Lum's people usually lend themselves as scouts and guides, especially to Dahlian caravans traveling off the island, and on several occasions have helped in the apprehension of Fallen

While this is well and good, Lum also possesses strong ties with the Keepers, further tainting him and his people. In the end, I believe that Lum will prove useful, but will eventually outlive his potential for us.

Warlord Luther Boarhead

Where we can make use of Chief Lum, Warlord Luther Boarhead is another matter. For the last couple of seasons, he has been raiding the southern Outlands, forcing small Squat settlements to join him or die at his hand. Not a moon goes by without smoke being visible in the Outlands, another sign of his growing victories. I suggest that the Joanites head a small task force to exterminate the warlord before his hoards threaten us — perhaps we might divert the foolish Templar crusade to deal with Boarhead?

Those Squats I have interrogated speak of Boarhead as a terrible man. Dressed in furs and strange leathers, they say he is over seven feet tall and capable of killing a man with his bare fists. They also speak of gruesome practices such as cannibalism and that he does not bury the dead, but instead piles their remains in a macabre monument to himself.

Our latest intelligence estimates that his main area of activity is about two days march from Vimary, but that he might be turning his attention to Vimary. If this is the case, then the tribes might face new hardships at his hands.

There are also troubling reports that Boarhead has access to potent rituals, making him a heretic against the Fatimas. The few reports we have from Dahlian caravans say that a cabal of witchwomen called the Maalin serve the warlord. These sister-lovers practice a barbaric blood-magic, fed by the lives of their master's victims. Some say that the Maalin have consorted with Z'bri, an act of depravity that would suit such heathens. They are a black plague that, in my opinion, will have to be dealt with.



Luther Boarhead

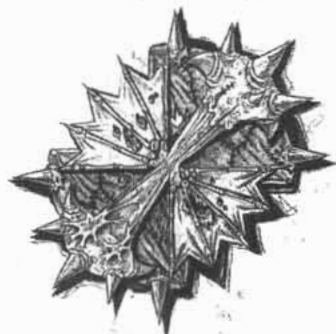
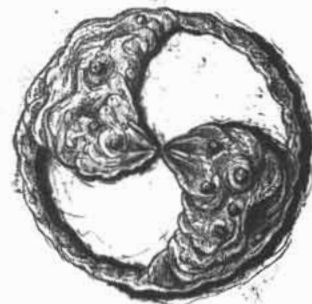
One of the hidden dangers the residents of Hom face is Luther Boarhead. A powerful Squat Warlord, Luther rules over a number of Squat communities and has begun casting his eyes on Hom.

If that were not enough, he conducts midnight raids against the Fallen, taking as many as he can without arising suspicion, or masking the raids as a senseless Squat attack. These unfortunate few are whisked away and used as slaves and sold to other Squats or the Z'bri. Luther has also been in contract with the Z'bri. His lieutenant, Mutttooth, has been meeting with the Z'bri Hshdon, and arranged to exchange captured tribals for slaves and weapons.

Highlights: Powerful, violent, good tactician

Attributes: AGI +1, BLD +3, FIT +1, INF +1, PER +1, PSY -1, WIL +2, STA 45, UD 11, AD 11

Skills: Archery 2/+1, Combat Sense 2/+1, Dodge 2/+1, Hand-to-Hand 3/+1, Intimidate 3/3, Leadership 2/+1, Lore (Outlands) 3/0, Melee 3/+1, Riding 2/-1, Sneak 2/+1, Survival 2/0, Tactics 3/0



The Z'bri, or Those That Are Horrors

My most esteemed companion,

My suspicions of the fleshling Magdalite Diplomat Kora have been correct, and her torture was a nectar well worth savoring. Her young body quivered with my touch and for hours she lingered between lust and death. I doubt even Magdalen could have brought relief for her in the end, I know I certainly did not.

I have enclosed a missive I found among her belongings, a detailed report of certain members of our households. The sly whore was more perceptive than we thought, uncovering secrets that even we were unaware of. I have taken extra precautions to protect your Highness, and you can count on my discretion for your secrecy as you were implicated in a number of conspiracies — a fact that the Baron will frown upon.

—Your Loyal Servant, Eth'ian of Melanis

Hearts of Darkness

From the journals of Diplomat Kora Judikin:

I have been among the Beasts for two full seasons, "welcomed" as an ambassador and messenger between the Fatimas and the Z'bri. I knew that once I started my journey north I would be dead to my former tribe. Only a handful of Magdalites ever accept the final sacrifice, a great duty, as it is our vigilance that keeps the tribes aware of the Z'bri. For this I gladly said goodbye to family and the Lover Magdalen.

I am keeping this journal as a record of all I witness here. A warning: The Z'bri are powerful and diverse, and I fear we have underestimated them all along. I hope the Seven Fatimas will be ready for their onslaught.

The subtle plays of the Z'bri and their houses are astonishing. Unlike our tribes, the Z'bri are led by one being — the Baron. It is to him that all other Z'bri owe fealty, no matter what house they come from. Around his throne the other Z'bri scurry, trying to keep the Baron content. While each house as a Prince, it seems that most are nothing but figureheads, having influence only in their house. Like scavengers, the Z'bri fight with each other over their Serfs. While the more powerful lords and Iv'chets stay above these conflicts, the younger ones seem drawn into viscous contests of intrigue and violence.

While the Baron rules, the four houses do jockey with each other. For now, it seems the Koleris and Flemis are distancing themselves from the Baron and Sangis. I've already seen disputes between Koleris warriors and Sangis Knights over leadership of the Z'bri army. The Sangis, however, seem more than capable of defending themselves, but whenever the dust settles there always seems to be a Melanis slithering away.

The Sangis Household: The Baron's Beasts

The Sangis are the power behind the Z'bri, and a curious breed among the Beasts. I was repulsed and, strangely, aroused when I first saw the ephemeral Sangis. Tall and slender, they move with the very essence of Dream, almost mesmerizing in their hideousness. Unlike the Koleris or the Flemis, the Sangis seem willing to converse with me, taking me on grand tours of the Ziggurat and their palatial home, yet behind each gesture I sense a darker motive. Only my resolve, and the Baron's warnings, keep them at bay; if not I'm sure they'd ravish me in an instant. Curious how arousing it can be to know that my presence can cause a ravenous desire in the Beasts — a lust so strong I see why the Serfs give in to it.

Like snakes, the Sangis rule over the Beasts through subterfuge, intrigue and veiled threats. To a Beast, the Sangis trip over themselves to please the Baron. Many, especially the Dukes and Counts of Sangis, seem content to count their Serfs and host feasts and orgies, avoiding action whenever possible. Yet all is not well.



Count H'x

The longer I visit with the Beasts the more their otherness attracts me to them. I now know why Magdalen never welcomes us Diplomats back, for to commune with the Z'bri is to know corruption. I gave in last night, the Baron's call was exquisite, and yet I feel soiled and dirty. I can hardly walk, my body is filled with cuts and scars, my bones no longer mine — I know I'll find myself adorning one of the Beasts before long...

As I left the Baron's chamber, naked and broken, sticking to the shadows I stumbled across Count H'x. Ashamed I hid from him but he called:

"Pathetic worm, hiding your flesh, wiping clean the sweat and semen that coats you. You, and your kind are indeed worthless, if it were not for the Baron's wishes I'd take you and, well... show you the *true* potential of pain. But never mind, let the Baron have his way, let him play with you and let us worry about the coming times. Ah, yes, for too long we have secluded ourselves, content with our Serfs and petty intrigues. Let the Baron worry about who his favorite is, or what plots the Flemis are up to. Myself, and those like me, we will worry about punishing you and your devils — the so-called Fatimas. And now that you've communed with a Z'bri, you tribes will never listen to your warnings..."

With this Count H'x ran his hands through my hair and let me cry in despair. He's the worst of his kind, hiding behind masks and promises; offering flowers with one hand and concealing a knife in the other. He knew the Baron would take me, and is probably going to use this information to his own twisted advantage. Perhaps he'll tell Sl'Onis, the Baron's favorite, and send him on a furious vendetta against me.

I only hope this journal makes its way back to Xstasis where I am sure Magdalen will believe.

Count H'x

A shadowy player in the Baron's court, Count H'x does not hold much visible power, but wields great influence through his alliance with the Koleris and Melanis. Tired of the excesses and pettiness of his house, H'x is gathering allies and information. Whether he has plans for the Baron's throne or not remains to be seen; so far he is content to be a power behind the scenes — both within the Z'bri and tribes. A patriot at heart, H'x wants to recapture the glory of the Sangis, even if this means getting rid of a few members such as Sl'Onis.

Highlights: Manipulative, vengeful, lecherous

Atmosphere: Sangis

Attributes: APP +2, CRE +1, INF +2, KNO +2, PER +1, PSY +2, WIL +3, STA 35, uD 5, AD 9

Skills: Disguise 2/+1, Dreaming 1/+2, Dodge 2/0, Grooming 2/+2, Hand-to-Hand 2/0, Human Perception 2/+2, Interrogation 2/+1, Leadership 2/+2, Lore (Courtly Secrets) 3/+2, Melee 1/0, Notice 2/+1, Read/Write 2/+2, Seduction 3/+2, Speak (Tribal) 2/+2, Tactics 1/+1, Sundering (Appeasement, Soul Stealing, The One Thought) 3

Edge: Contacts with other Sangis Dukes and Counts, the Melanis and Koleris.



The Baron

With an iron fist and a gilded tongue, the Baron rules the Z'bri.

However, like many of his household of late, the Baron has grown tired of all the bickering between the four houses. He senses that the time is nearing to wage war against the tribes once more, but wants to wait until all his enemies within the Z'bri are dealt with. He views the Fatimas with a mixture of revulsion and awe. He is fascinated by their behavior and when his armies do walk into Vimary, he'll take countless pleasure from torturing the so-called Walking Goddesses.

Highlights: Powerful, commanding, evil, decadent

Atmosphere: Sangis

Attributes: AGI +4, APP +5, BLD +5, CRE +3, FIT +3, INF +4, KNO +3, PER +2, PSY +3, WIL +5, STA 70, UUD 14, AD 12

Skills: Camouflage 2/+3, Combat Sense 2/+2, Dance 2/+4, Dreaming 1/+3, Etiquette (Z'bri) 3/+4, Grooming 3/+5, Hand-to-Hand 2/+4, Intimidate 3/+2, Leadership 3/+4, Lore (ancient Z'bri) 2/+3, Notice 2/+2, Read/Write 2/+3, Ritual 3/+3, Seduction 4/+5, Sneak 2/+4, Speak (Tribal) 2/+3, Sundering (All Aspects) 5

The Baron

Magdalen forgive me, but the Baron's appetite for me is intoxicating. His towering frame, having taken a more masculine appearance since my arrival, is the epitome of the Sangis depravity. Standing over 12 feet, almost taller than Joan herself, the Baron commands respect — no, fear — from those around him. His, or should I say its, body is covered in fine protruding spines that extend into two full wings, accentuating his sensuous frame. A dozen personal attendants always frolic about the Baron as he presides over his court, though I've never seen the same person twice.

As a leader, the Baron is an imposing and exacting creature, but of late has rarely taken interest in events around him. Although the Beasts make an effort to speak in their tongue while in my presence, the Baron seems to be growing bored, dividing much of the decision making between Sl'Onis (his lover and a Sangis Knight) and the Sangis Prince Fa'Cul. Occasionally I have seen the Baron become agitated and impatient, especially when the Koleris attend court. I fear the Koleris are up to something, I get nothing but hateful looks from them. This is something I must look into.

Eth'ian, my guide and protector, a Melanis advisor to the Baron, has told me much of the Baron's history but I sense these are more lies than truths. Before the Liberation the Baron served under the great overlord Tibor, a close friend and at times lover.

"The two," Eth'ian said, "fought side-by-side when the Fatimas came, and the Baron was the sole Z'bri to have witnessed Tibor's death. After, as the tribes grew, the Baron sensed a change was needed. The Z'bri had grown lazy and lax, forgetting much of their knowledge and secret ways. The Baron, along with those who shared his views, culled the Z'bri survivors of the Liberation, getting rid of those too wasteful and ignorant. It was his vision that saved the four houses from the brink of oblivion..."

Sl'Onis and the Knights of the Baron

The Baron makes no attempt to hide his favoritism towards Sl'Onis, his knight and lover. Sl'Onis is typical among the Sangis, more concerned with appearances and sensations than anything else. I have been witness to his depraved acts, and I fear he has grown jealous because of the attention the Baron has paid me. Unlike many other Sangis, Sl'Onis is a capable fighter and feared hunter. I loath to say that I was privy to one of his hunts and still have nightmares to this day. He shows no regret, readily warping and twisting his Serfs into hideous shapes, until the sheer pain of their disfigurements kills them. I fear what Sl'Onis would do to the tribes if the Fatimas did not protect them.

Sl'Onis leads a handful of Sangis warriors who call themselves the Talons, personal bodyguards to the Baron. Brash and impulsive, the Talons have used Sl'Onis' ties to the Baron to get what they want, upsetting many of the older Counts and Dukes of Sangis. **Re'Qum**, a member of the Talons seems to be guiding Sl'Onis, goading it into taking a more active role at court, almost pushing the Sangis into another internal schism.

Prince Fa'Cul

I plan to leave the Sangis soon, hoping that by traveling away I may shed their taint. Before I do, Eth'ian has told me that the Sangis are holding a festival to welcome their new Prince Fa'Cul. She, (strangely, Fa'Cul is among the few Z'bri that posses feminine features, but there is nothing but cold cruelty in her) recently assumed the mantle of Prince in her house. Eth'ian would not tell me what happened to the old prince, but if I am right I suspect he countered the Baron's wishes. This has made me wonder if anyone has ever tried to supplant the Baron. Could the Z'bri be divided internally? There seems to be tension between the Sangis and Koleris, but is this more than a simple rivalry?

As for Prince Fa'Cul, she is sly and capricious. When in the presence of the Baron she is coy and submissive, but once he's gone, she revels in her power and authority. Fa'Cul is also among the most respected skin crafters of the Sangis, her inhuman hand damning hundreds in her works of art. I now know what extremes these Beasts are capable of.





Horde Warrior Sk'ksul

Ambitious both on and off the field of combat, Sk'ksul is a rising power among the Koleris. Many of these Beasts tire of Prince K'ark'oom's weak rule, and look to Sk'ksul to lead them to bloody victory. Count H'x, forever the schemer, is aware of the young warrior's popularity, and is using that to ingratiate himself with the Koleris. Sk'ksul, in turn, is using Count H'x to improve his own standing amongst the Sangis.

Sk'ksul is unusual by Koleris standards because he appears calmer than many of his brood. That is a facade. Sk'ksul is as angry as the others, but he displays control, a trait many Koleris lack. As far as he is concerned, the field of combat is for fighting. Reveling in blood and gore should be saved for the festivities afterwards.

Highlights: Deadly, efficient, patient, ruthless, shrewd

Atmosphere: Koleris

Attributes: AGI +4, BLD +1, FIT +1, INF +2, PER +2, WIL +2, STA 35, LD 8, AD 9

Skills: Acrobatics 2/+4, Athletics 3/+1, Combat Sense 3/+2, Dodge 3/+4, Hand to Hand 3/+4, Melee 4/+4, Notice 2/+2, Tactics 2/0, Sundering (The Shattering, Exsanguination) 2

Edge: Contact with Count H'x

The Koleris Household: The Serpentine Shadow

Were I only to look into the eyes of each Beast, I could tell you whose house they claim membership with. The Sangis stare at you with infinite lust and hunger, the Melanis study you, the Flemis have no eyes to speak of, while the Koleris kill you a hundred different ways with each glance. The Koleris worry me as warriors, but at least their agendas are not veiled the way the Sangis disguise their words. The so-called Serpentine Shadow wish to destroy the tribes, it is that simple. Their hatred is so great that it manifests upon their flesh. Their skin continually pops with spines and scales.

Their Prince K'ark'oom is always a moment away from committing atrocities. In fact, most Koleris are always angry and just on the edge of violence. I once saw K'ark'oom purge the blood from a Serf in the blink of an eye. Dripping in gore, he turned to me and said: "He died because I cannot kill you. Tonight a dozen more will die because I cannot kill you. You can end their suffering now and surrender your life to me, or they can continue dying in your name." Goddess help those poor souls, for I could not do what he asked. I was too afraid. Forgive me.

The Baron barely controls the Koleris. I see them fighting every day, practicing for the coming war, and I hear them howling in rage every night, screaming till exhaustion grants them sleep. They want a war, and the Baron may have to give them one before they revolt. Count H'x fosters close alliances with the Koleris. Although I do not understand the Z'bri tongue, I'm sure H'x promises the Koleris the bloodshed they desire in exchange for their loyalty.

Sk'ksul Koleris Horde Warrior

The Koleris operate in groups of indefinite size called Hordes. I have watched the Koleris train with their Hordes, and have rarely seen anyone move with the battle grace of Sk'ksul. It is odd watching him train, for I would not have expected that degree of finesse from a Koleris. He is smaller than most, but moves quickly, accurately and with deadly precision. He is bloody and ruthless, like all Koleris, but he appears calmer, more in control of his anger. Unfortunately, I mistook that as an opportunity to approach him. Before I could even speak, he cut my arm deep to the bone. I never even saw him draw his blade. "That is the only answer you'll ever need," he hissed, and walked away laughing.

From what I have seen since (from a distance obviously), Sk'ksul speaks to Count H'x on behalf of the Koleris. The two meet regularly, discussing matters behind closed chambers, always emerging with parchments that look suspiciously like maps. Sk'ksul also acts as Count H'x's body guard at public events, remaining close to his side, blade sheathed but ready. This is causing animosity with Prince K'ark'oom who counts H'x as a rival. It's obvious that Sk'ksul is vying for the position of Koleris prince, something H'x may readily give him should he seize power.

The Flemis Household: The Commune

Dear Goddess, what I have learned tonight has sealed my fate. I had another encounter with the Baron last night, and didn't believe I would survive his touch. Stumbling back to my chamber, ribs broken, my orifices violated and bleeding, and my soul wanting more, I encountered a Flemis. I do not know which one, or its name, for it was one Flemis and it was all of them. The Flemis frighten me like no other because I cannot understand them. They are foreign creatures with a mind so alien even other Z'bri are hard-pressed to comprehend their methods. By physical appearances alone, they are vile and repulsive. Where the Sangis possess an ephemeral charm, the Flemis are so obese as to wipe away any hint of gender. I felt nothing but pity for the Serfs who had to please their Flemis masters by digging through folds of fat in order to reach their sexual organs. Encountering one alone, however, frightened me even more, for I was at its mercy. I should have realized mercy had nothing to do with it.

Before I could escape, the Flemis smothered me beneath its mass, filling my mouth with liquefied fat so I would not scream. At first I thought it was simple rape, but then its mind touched upon mine, filling me with images I thought only possible in nightmares. I felt my body slide into its bulk, then the horror began. I cannot tell you how long I remained inside, but I am forever changed by that encounter. I now know more about the Flemis than anyone should be cursed with.

The Flemis are truly of one mind within each hive faction. Their voices come through thought and echo like a chorus. I was once told that the Flemis do not value individuality, but I now see that to be partially untrue. The different hives are unique, even discordant. They fight one another for dominance. Within each hive, however, individuality is allowed as long as the entire hive can partake in that new persona. Essentially, in sharing individuality, they destroy it. The Flemis bodies are drones, vehicles to carry the collective consciousness of each hive. At any given time, any one of them can be **Ambassador Ult'maht**, or **Prince Skkr** (the Baron's contact to the Flemis hive currently in power), or any of hundreds of other personas. The one who took me was them all. I became lost in the sea of their thoughts, a mote of stardust against the heavens. I saw a million images I have yet to understand, and few I wish I never understood at all. Of all the memories that come back to me now, however, one frightens me the most.

The Skkr Flemis have an agenda almost beyond comprehension. They believe it is time for the Z'bri to become one again as they were in spirit before the Closing. Unfortunately, they want Z'bri and humans to become one together in the perfect synthesis of flesh and spirit. This is their solution to ending the war, for we cannot hurt something if it is part of us. We feel the pain we inflict, and we enjoy the pleasure we bring. As such, they infected me with a seed of themselves. Over time, I will share their thoughts and eventually add body mass to the Flemis whole. They chose me because I'm Magdalite, and to them we are the whores of the tribes. Dear Fatima, they have already infected several other Magdalites who ply their trade on tribal lands. They, in turn, transmit the Skkr seed to those they come in contact with. If this epidemic is not stopped, the Flemis will have beaten us without lifting a finger. We will be a part of them, and any wound we inflict upon them will be felt by ourselves. I pray I can give you these words in person, but I have written them down in case I fail to return. I am leaving now while I still can. The trip will be long, and I hope to take temporary refuge in a secluded Melanis convent. May the Goddess light my way to back to you.



Haiyshar, the Chitter Plague

The Flemis are of one mind, and individuality is not permitted. Sometimes, however, individuality does arise, resulting in a personality that the Flemis share as an aspect.

On rare occasions, however, the personality is too discordant for the ordered hive. It spreads chaos and flaws the symmetry. That is when the Flemis destroy the mutation.

Haiyshar was a monster who surpassed even that taboo, and used the Flemis dogma of 'one mind, one form' as justification to cannibalize his own kind. His Skkr brethren chained him to a swarm of insects, hoping to obliterate his consciousness, but it failed. Although Haiyshar's personality survived only as instinct, his need to devour flesh remained. Known as the Chitter Plague, Haiyshar's swarm body moves and acts as one entity. The Chitter Plague now lives in the underground near Arc Harbor (see pp. 68-69).

Swarm Attributes: Aggressiveness 5, Damage/turn 5, Damage Threshold 30, Random Horde Size 6d6, Basic Swarm Size 200

Notes: The Chitter Plague, unlike a true swarm, is actually of one mind. It has the following mental Attributes: INS +1, PER +2, W/I 0.

4. Faces in the Mirror



Deacon Vytor

Revered and respected, the secluded Deacon Vytor is a powerful force among the Melanis and the Z'bri — not only for his insights but for his age. Widely assumed to be the oldest living Z'bri, Vytor remembers much of the Ending times, including secrets that even the Beasts have forgotten. He remembers the war between the Nomads and the Takers, and has curiously followed the Seven Fatimas. To this end, he maintains informants and thralls within the tribes and Keepers, and hopes to unlock the secrets of the Fatimas.

Highlights: Living Legend, patient and insightful

Atmosphere: Melanis

Attributes: AGI -1, BLD -1, CRE +2, INF +1, KNO +4, PER +2, PSY +4, WIL +2, STA 30, UD 2, AD 2

Skills: Craft (machines) 3/+2, Dreaming 2/+4, Etiquette (Melanis) 2/+1, Herbalism 2/+4, Human Perception 2/+2, Lore (Z'bri, The Ending Times) 3/+4, Mythology (cosmological) 2/+4, Notice 2/+2, Read/Write (English) 2/+4, Ritual 3/+4, Speak 2/+4, Teaching 2/+2, Sundering (all aspects) 5

Edge: Contacts with T'Phalus, Count Nemerath, the Melanis Covenant (see Eth'ian, below)

The Melanis Household: Followers of the Dark

I am now a fugitive, the Z'bri hunting me down for what I have found. Both the Koleris and Flemis are up to something, and to silence their secrets, my blood will flow. For the time being I am taking refuge at a distant Melanis monastery, hoping that their isolation and introverted nature will shield my presence long enough to escape back to Bazaar.

Unlike the other Z'bri, the Melanis are sedate and quiet, almost contemplative. However, this reserved front hides the darkest souls of the Beasts. Screams echo through the stone corridors and everywhere machines of flesh and bone carry on their infernal duties, troubling my dreams with horrors and fears. Nothing is sacred to the hooded Melanis.

Vytor, Melanis Deacon and Mystic

Vytor welcomed me with open arms, glad to have the company and a partner with whom to spend the nights discussing the tribes and Fatimas. Alone, except for his Serfs and inhuman creations, Vytor asked me of the goings on at the Ziggurat, allowing me to lie about my predicament. Vytor is ancient, and all manner of relics from the World Before decorate his monastery. He claims to have been one of the original Beasts. Although he would not say much of the past, being more interested in the Fatimas, Vytor did mention that nothing has changed since the ending times:

"Your kind, then and now, are followers. Don't think that we came to rule over you through force and evil. No, your ancestors choose to follow us, choose to submit to our claws and desires. Look at you now, you skin scared with votives to the Whore Magdalen, your life forfeit for conversing with my kind at Her bidding. What's the difference between the past and now... at least we were honest about it."

Vytor keeps strange company, regularly visited by an enigmatic count named **Nemerath**. Few Melanis unnerve like Nemerath, cloaked in the silks of the Melanis, I swear I can hear the cries of the dead when he speaks. Even stranger is numerous relics he has, many of them from the Fatimas themselves. How is it one of the Beasts traffics with items from the Fatimas?

Eth'ian of Melanis, advisor to the Baron

Dreadful news: The snake Eth'ian, the Baron's must trusted and deadly advisor, is on his way here, supposedly to visit with his mentor, Vytor. I sense that he is coming for me. Everywhere I have been, I've sensed Eth'ian's presence. A master of subterfuge and disguise, he seems to have one goal in mind — protecting the Baron and ultimately himself. I am now understand the true power of the Melanis, and what a mistake my coming here has been. They are everywhere, among the Flemis and Sangis, even the Koleris use them as scouts, making them privy to the secrets of Z'bri. As administrators and advisors, their influence is subtle, yet powerful. It is up to them if messages are relayed from Prince to Prince, and by keeping the other houses dependent on them, the Melanis control exactly what the Z'bri know.

Eth'ian knows this well, and I now see his plans. He advises the Baron, but likewise through his cronies in the Koleris and Flemis, fans the fires of tension and dissent. But why? Would not a united Z'bri be more powerful, a threat to the Fatimas and the tribes? Even the Melanis Prince **C'arhis** seems to condone Eth'ian's actions and I fear darker motives at work.

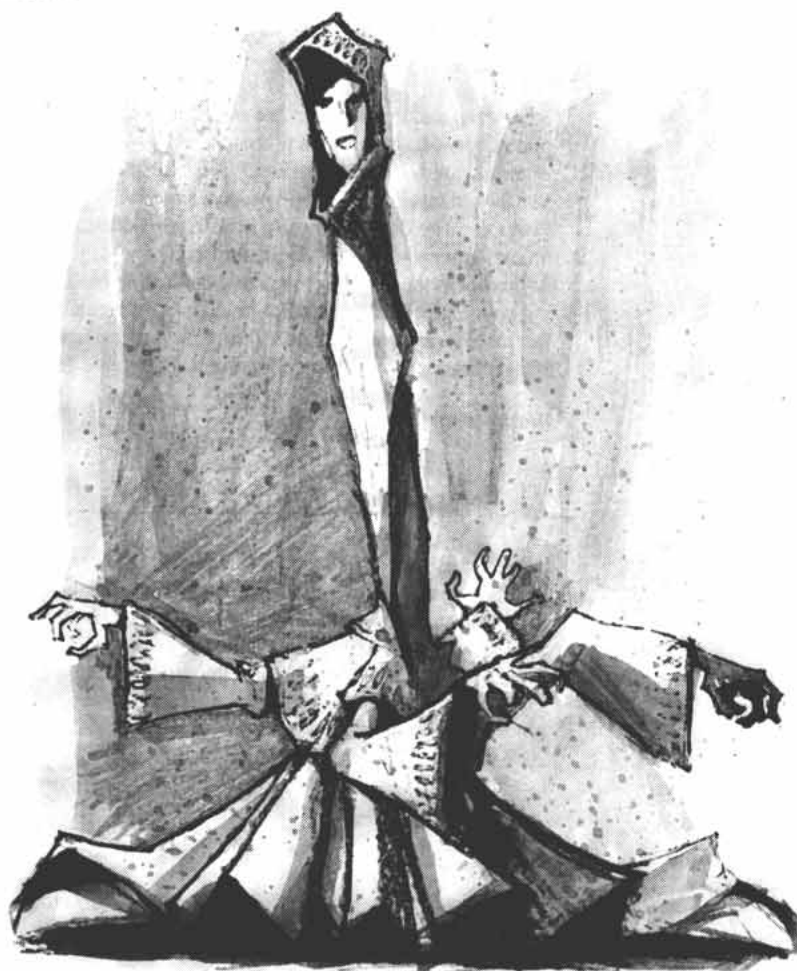
Epilogue

Eth'ian,

I have just received your letter, but to my distress the missive you mentioned was not enclosed, nor did the messenger know of its fate, even after I flayed muscle from bone. Is this one of your little games, vile Melanis? No wonder the only glory that awaits your house is to beg and cower for favors from others. No need to worry, if the missive exists I will track it down, your discretion is indeed welcome. But heed this, I have no patience for you or your house. Tread lightly, for shadows silence even the loudest of screams...

Yours,

Count H'x



4. Faces in the Mirror



Eth'ian of Melanis

As head of the Melanis Covenant (a sect of Z'bri determined to re-open the doorways back to their Spirit homeland), he is willing to do whatever it takes to accomplish his goal. The first step is to undo the Closing, and to do this Eth'ian and the Melanis believe that they must destroy the Fatimas. This time, the Melanis want to open the Fold to allow only themselves to return, leaving the other Z'bri to wither away. To this end, they readily sow the seeds of conflict among the Z'bri hoping that in their infighting the Melanis can gather the information needed on the Fatimas. They'll then unite the Z'bri and launch an attack on the tribes, using the commotion to open the Fold and slip away.

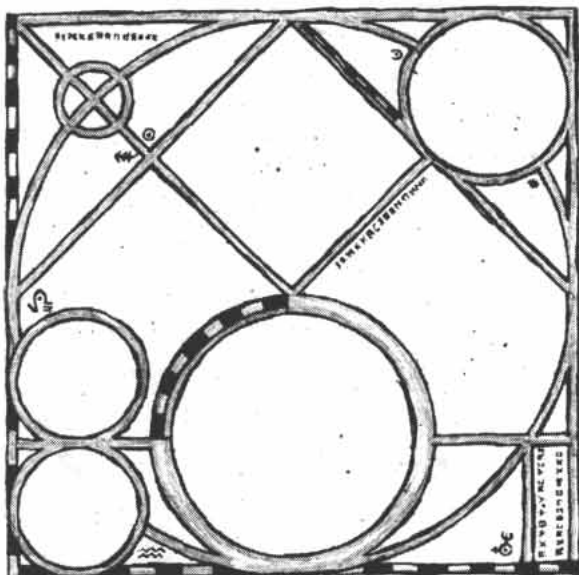
Highlights: Deceitful, Determined and Monstrous

Atmosphere: Melanis

Attributes: CRE +1, INF +3, KNO +2, PER +2, PSY +2, WIL +2, STA 30, UD 3, AD 3

Skills: Combat Sense 1/+2, Disguise 3/+1, Etiquette (all Houses) 3/+3, Interrogation 3/+1, Investigation 2/+2, Lore (Z'bri) 3/+2, Mythology 3/+2, Notice 3/+2, Read/Write 2/0, Ritual 2/+2, Sleight-of-Hand 2/0, Sneak 2/0, Sundering (All Aspects) 3

Edge: Contacts with the Baron, Count H'X, T'Phalus, the Covenant



WEAVING VIMARY

The **Tribe 8 Rulebook** and the **Weaver's Assistant** opened a window into the world of the tribes. Like a visitor you marveled at the Seven Tribes and their Fatimas, at the excess of the Z'bri and the plight of the heroes of the Eighth Tribe. Now, with the **Vimary Sourcebook** it's time to settle down and begin telling stories. Welcome home, we've been waiting for you!

Vimary bustles with activity and everywhere, a quest lies in the making. Does your Player Circle travel into Sub Terra to explore, or venture deep into Duskfall looking for a temple of Joshua? Closer to home, the Fallen are divided — follow Hal or listen to Veruka? The Joanites want a crusade, maybe this could form closer ties between the Warriors and the Fallen, and what of Tera Sheba and the wrathful High Judge Cylix? The possibilities are endless.

Although Vimary is a single island, its storytelling potential is great, and the **Vimary Sourcebook** opens these doors to you. The preceding chapters showed a complete setting; here are some ways to use it in your cycles, but feel free to change things as you see fit. It is up to you, as Weaver, to choose the threads you like and use them to create something unique. Whether this tapestry follows the events in the **Vimary Sourcebook** to the letter or just uses this book to establish a framework in the background doesn't matter; both are ultimately rewarding experiences.

Storytelling and myths are flexible and elastic. No two tellings of one story will be the same, and so it should be for **Tribe 8**. The book you are holding in your hands provides information about Vimary and sets in motion many events hinted at in the Rulebook. This does not mean that you have adhere to what follows to remain "faithful" to the setting. The **Vimary Sourcebook** offers a backdrop, a foundation for your cycles, but it is your Player Characters who should take center stage. Do not mold your gaming circle to Vimary, but instead have the **Vimary Sourcebook** supplement and enhance your own games.

Welcome to the tribe!

A DYNAMIC SETTING

While **Tribe 8** will grow and evolve, and things will change in Vimary, the material found in this book serves as the basis for the future and these changes. There are a number of tools available at your disposal to help mesh your own vision and **Tribe 8's** dynamic setting, the most important being yourself. While **Tribe 8** has an overarching plot line, this should not prevent you from making Vimary your own, after all it is your cycle not ours. Here are a few suggestions:

Time: **Tribe 8** and Vimary do not exist within a linear framework. Like in most mythological tales, time and events are elastic and amorphous. The power of Dream and the Fatimas further enhances this. Events in a cycle do not have to occur one right after the other, some could be flashbacks or flashforwards. Myths often mix the past with the future, and a clever Weaver can make good use of this. For example, if the Player Circle encounters a new antagonist (Fallen, a Sheban Judge, a Z'bri etc.), a quick flashback could flesh out the origins of the NPC, not only explaining the antagonist's role in the cycle, but also adding depth her motivations. Likewise, a flashforward illustrating the plans of the villain could further drive the Players to stop her.

Dreams: To the tribes and the Fallen, dreams are not simply something that happen when they are asleep, nor are the dreamers a passive audience. Glimpses of the future (or the past) can be gained, and events could unfold all within Dreamscapes. Events that occur outside the realm of the Player circle could be related through dreams or by the cell's totemic spirit, if they have one.

Myths: The tribes are avid storytellers, and a Weaver could use these to highlight events or bridge gaps between elements in their cycles and **Tribe 8**. While the Player Circle is off doing its bit, who knows what could be happening elsewhere. Also keep in mind the communication in **Tribe 8** is not instantaneous, events could unfold months before all the tribes are aware of them. Without radios or CNN, news is filtered slowly through the tribes, and each teller adds her own take to it. The Joanites could be fighting vicious border clashes with the Z'bri, but unless the Z'bri attacked Bazaar directly, news of this would take a while to circulate — enough time to get the characters involved.

THEMES

Themes are crucial in tying together the various threads of your Vimary cycle. They serve to provide a symbolic framework for the exploits and trials of the Player Circle. The themes that follow are found running throughout the **Vimary Sourcebook**. Along with each theme is a short listing of possible quests and key characters associated with them. Use these as a rough guide, or as simple quests in a pinch. Ideally they work better if they are used as elements within a larger cycle.

CRADLE OF CIVILIZATION

To the tribes and Fallen, Vimary is their Eden; the river that surrounds it akin to the Tigris and Euphrates from where our civilization originally came. Vimary is a mythical place where the One Goddess touched the land and gave the prisoners of the Z'bri a second chance. While many may forget this, the tribes stand as a signpost of potential and possibility. Actions taken now, whether good or not, will mark and shape the future. The tribes cling to their way of life, unable to see that it is only a beginning, while the Fallen, driven by destiny, want to leave the past behind.

Potential Quests: Earning a place for the Eighth Tribe. Journeying into the Outlands searching for new settlements. Dealing with the Z'bri threat.

Potential NPCs: Veruka the Wraith, High Judge Verra Thaim'on, Felix Iago, Evangel Black, the Z'bri.

Potential Settings: Hom, Bazaar, the Council Ruins, Solitude, the Outlands.

UNITY AND CHAOS

All is not well in Vimary. The unity following Liberation is giving way to infighting as the tribes jockey with each other, and more and more children find themselves exiled into the Eighth Tribe. Nothing lasts forever, and unfortunately this goes for the tribes as well. If they are to survive the coming seasons they are going to have to learn how to cooperate — not just with the other tribes, but among themselves as well. These same ills threaten the Eighth Tribe and the time is coming for them to take the mantle of Joshua and lead the tribes. To do this, they must first deal with their internal divisions — something that is far from easy.

Potential Quests: The tensions between the Joanite Templars and the Old Guard. Magdalen's interest in wrestling Joan away from Tera Sheba. The growing tensions between Sanctuary and Griffentowne. The machinations of Hal Ninva and the bickering between the Jackers and Herites.

Potential NPCs: Deus and the Harbingers, Kymber and Veruka, Storm Cry, Shera Uhan'on, the Flemis, Dahlia and Her pawns.

Potential Settings: The Council Ruins, Xstasis, Hom.

5. Beyond Myth: Weaving Aids

VIOLENCE AND WAR

In many ways the central theme of the **Vimary Sourcebook** is sacrifice. For the Eighth Tribe to achieve their destiny blood will have to be shed, "blood and sacrifice" as the Prophecy of Joshua says. No revolution has ever been successful without brother having to slay brother. Events are reaching a boiling point, and in the confusion and chaos violence is bound to erupt. Everywhere the signs are clear: Storm Cry whips the Evans into a frenzy, the Templar SHERA wants to lead a crusade against the Beasts, Cylix is busy torturing and "converting" Fallen prisoners. Add to this the Z'bri, who stretch their long dormant limbs and flex their muscles. Every victory in Vimary comes at cost, and sometimes the cost is just too high.

Potential Quests: Z'bri hunting parties. Dealing with the Koleris. Joining the Joanite crusade. Helping the tribes protect isolated settlements. Freeing Fallen prisoners. Protecting Hom.

Potential NPCs: Mek and the Jackers, the Z'bri T'Phalus, the Koleris, High Judge Cylix and the shadowy Crucible, Warlord Boarhead.

Potential Settings: The H'l Kar, the Hunting Paths, Duskfall, Hom, the Seven Fingers.

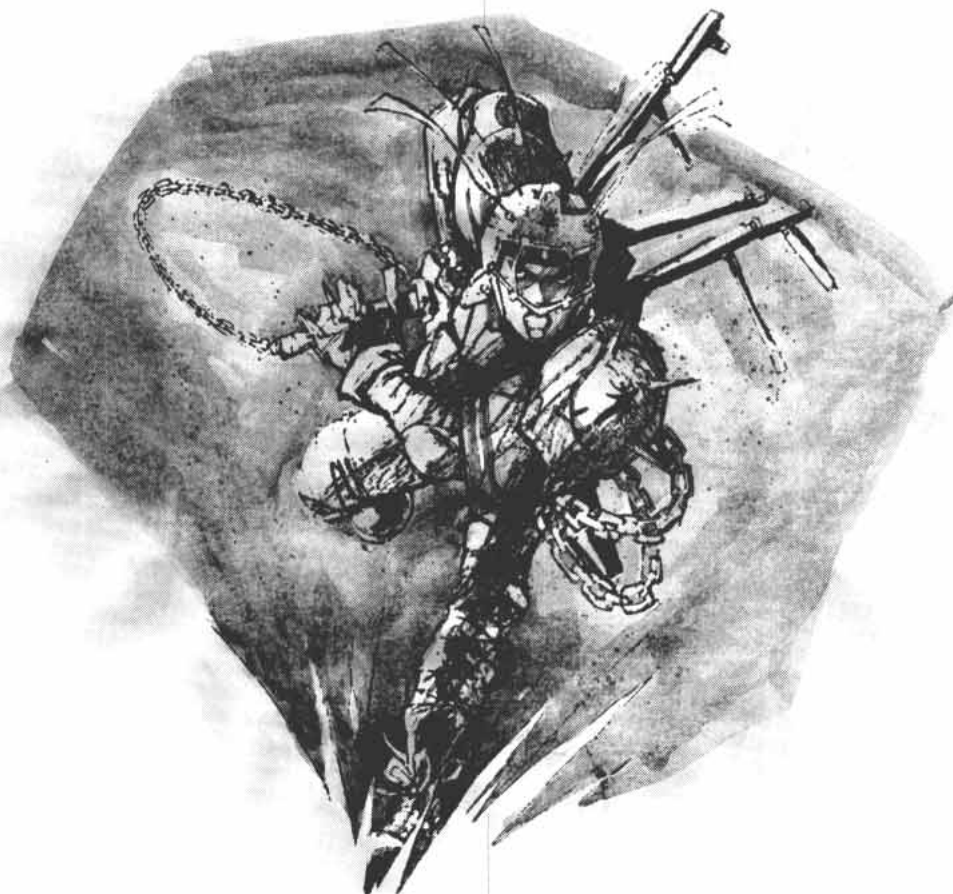
EXPLORATION

For over two generations the tribes have lived in Vimary, slowly coming to know the ruins they call home. But with each passing summer, they grow and soon the first serious explorers will be venturing out. Before then, however, Vimary still possesses a mystery or two and, while it does, there is work for those brave enough to venture into the deep paths of Duskfall, the tunnels of Sub Terra or the graveyard that is the Rust Wastes. The theme of exploration also deals with the inner journey all Fallen undergo. It is in Vimary that the Fallen will face their first trials, in the form of the tribes and the Z'bri. In order to ultimately overcome these, they must understand who they are.

Potential Quests: Mapping out the Rust Wastes. Traveling to Westholm. Discovering the vast tunnel network below Bazaar. Dealing with the pain of being banished. Reuniting with a loved one.

Potential NPCs: Agnite Wanderers, The Keeper Felix Iago, Mek and his daughter Evangel Black, the Seeds of Eden cell.

Potential Settings: Shadowy forests and lost settlements, the Ruins of Bazaar and the Rust Wastes, the Outlands, possibly the Discarded Lands and the Rift.



TRIBAL LIFE IN VIMARY

To understand Vimary, one must also comprehend the daily life of the tribes. This allows you as a Weaver, not only to present a dynamic setting, but also a believable one. The tribes do not exist in a vacuum, and when away from the eyes of the Player Characters, the people of Vimary still toil and live; they get up in the morning can and carry on with their existence — they don't just wait for the PCs to speak to them. A good Weaver will portray tribal society, not as a warehouse for two-dimension NPCs, but as a vibrant and living entity. You do not need to know the names of everyone, or what they're up to every moment, but in presenting small details to the Players (an Evan harvest, a Yagan pilgrimage) of tribal existence you go a long way toward bringing **Tribe 8** to life.

DAILY ROUTINE

The tribes daily routine varies from tribe to tribe, as each has its own area of responsibility and duty. All the tribes farm and hunt to some extent, but the Evans spend more time harvesting and planting than do the Shebans, and likewise the Yagans tend more to the sick and dying than the Magdalites. Because of the archetypal nature of Fatimas, each tribe holds providence in certain areas, resulting in a delicate system of cooperation and partnership.

Preparations for the coming day dominates the early morning hours. Those who produce food are often out in the fields by the crack of dawn, or tending to the animals. Even among tribes that do little or no farming, preparing food or gardening in small family plots dominate the morning hours. Breakfast is an important family meal and usually consists of cereals and fruits in the warmer months, eggs or animal fats during the winter.

Near midday, Bazaar comes alive with activity and remains so until well after dark. Goods from all over the island trickle in all day long, and the smells of roasting meat, livestock, elixirs and potions bring the market place to life. Lunch is an informal meal, and often a time to visit friends or acquaintances. Most of the important business in Bazaar and Vimary is done after lunch, and this is when the Grand Council convenes.

As the sun sets, most tribals return to their homes, though some stay in the taverns and other dives of Bazaar. Most of the tribes cultural activity takes place at night; stories are told, plays are staged, pilgrimages to the Fatimal temples are undertaken, etc. While breakfast is a family meal, dinner belongs to the clan. In the smaller ones, the whole clan gathers at the home of the matriarch to have a meal together and discuss matters of importance. Among the larger clans, such clan gatherings occur only about once a week (or even less frequently), but the matriarch's home is always open to those who want to visit and talk.

THE FALLEN

Exiles and outcasts, the Fallen spend their day as they see fit. While radical and fiercely independent, most try to do something useful during the morning hours — be this repairing Hom, planting food or helping Barber (the owner of Junks) with odds jobs. By mid afternoon, some venture off Hom to Bazaar, or go and explore. Those who stay behind spend this time with their cell-mates, usually preparing for the festivities at night. The night hours is when Hom comes to life. Lightbringers gather and discuss while enjoying a cold brew, Herites plot, Jackers hold mock combats, and the Doomsayers hold mass at the Temple. If there is a Rant, it takes place during the twilight hours, after which a huge party ensues.



5. Beyond Myth: Weaving Aids

TRIBAL RESPONSIBILITIES



AGNITES:

As explorers and entertainers, the Tribe of Children relies the most on the other tribes for survival. While the older Agnites farm, hunt and construct homes, they do so with help from the Evans.



DAHLIANS:

Craftsmen, charlatans and entertainers; to the more traditional and pragmatic tribes (Shebans and Evans) Dahlians are nothing more than troublemakers. The other tribes, however, respect the ways of the Trickster and appreciate the goods they produce, or the news they carry as Vimary's messengers.



EVANS:

The Tribe of Life, Evans are the mothers of tribal society. They produce a majority of the food, and act as teachers, mid-wives and healers. For this reason Evans are respected wherever they go. They are also the most numerous tribe.



JOANITES:

Warriors and defenders, the Joanites patrol the tribal lands, defending them from both internal and external threats. Those Joanites to old too fight trade their swords for plows and chisels, farming alongside the Evans, or work with the Weaponshaper Guild as blacksmiths.



MAGDALITES:

Outsiders admire the Magdalites as artists and lovers, for in the world of the tribes pleasures are few and far between. As spies and diplomats, however, they engender caution and distance. Disdainful of physical labor or getting dirty, the Magdalites are the second largest importers of goods, even going as far as having Evan servants and laborers.



SHEBANS:

Like the Magdalites, only a scant few Shebans do any farming or goods producing (mainly fishing near the Stone Shores). Shebans spend their days settling disputes and routing out deviants and heretics — a bone of contention with the other tribes.



YAGANS:

Yagans concern themselves with burial rites and esoteric matters. Yagans serve as oracles and fortunetellers, often advising tribals when to marry or have children, or when to start planting. The Yagans are also the butchers and tanners of tribal society. While Evans also raise livestock, it is the Yagans who sacrifice the animals for their meat and furs. Due to the unease Yagans cause in others, they are fairly self-sufficient as a tribe.



THE FALLEN:

The Fallen, being outcasts, do not have an area of responsibility. Instead they rely on their own to feed and clothe themselves. Those that have contacts within the tribes use them to procure food and goods, which they either share or keep for themselves.

FALLEN RELATIONS

The relationship between Fallen and tribals is complex, dominated by tension and occasional violence. Most tribals see the Fallen as misguided, but this does not mean they never deal with them. Some merchants in Bazaar openly trade with the Fallen, but do so on their own terms. While the common stereotype is for family and friends to ignore the banished, a few Fallen still have contact with their former tribe. Information, goods, or even a meal can be obtained this way, but the Fallen must be careful, both for their own sake and that of their tribal allies. People like Cylix Seth'on or Marshal Bartholomew are always on the look out for Fallen collaborators.

THE GRAND COUNCIL AND THE SISTERHOODS

Democratic government is unknown to the tribes. Most (even the clan and tribe elders) accept that it is the will of the Fatimas that guides and rules them. Yet, the tribes do not expect the Fatimas to step in and settle every little dispute, and for this reason the tribes have both the Grand Council and the Sisterhoods. The distinction between council member and priest is murky at times and the following guideline can be used to help distinguish the two: In mundane matters (when to plant, settling disputes etc.), it is the council that has precedence, while the Sisterhood ensures that the council's ruling are faithful and adhere to the wishes of the Seven Sisters. The Sisterhood's main role is to serve the Fatima and to safeguard the faith of the tribe.

The Grand Council serves as a link between the tribes, helping to maintain good ties between the children of the Fatimas. Their influence stems from the Fatimas, and one wrong move could result in the councilor's removal. Because of this, the Grand Council functions more as an advisory board than a true governing body, but things may be changing.

Below the Grand Council are the clan and guild elders. While they hold positions of power, they are mainly administrators, adjudicating and keeping in line the various guilds or clans that make up a tribe. The clan elders only have power within their tribe, and while some are known through Vimary, like the Seth'ons or Aria'ons, their power ends the moment they leave their tribal lands.



THE GRAND COUNCIL

Barb Poola (Agnite): The Agnite representative is the youngest member of the Grand Council at only 17 summers. Ignored by more serious councilors such as Nostra Guy'on and Iris Medi'on, Barb is trying to garner more support for her tribe. Backing the Templar crusade may be the ticket the Agnites need.

Bethra Cov'on (Evan): Benjamin Aria'on's replacement, Bethra has made her name as a traditionalist. While she dislikes the Shebans current handling of things, she is unwilling to denounce them. (see p. 90 for more information)

Vasi Koh'on (Dahlian): The Dahlian councilor is a woman few ever forget, flamboyant and cavalier, she only seems interested in making a mockery of the Grand Council. Not a fool, however, Vasi knows when to push and when to back off.

Nostra Guy'on (Joanite): The most vocal and visible member of the Council, Nostra fears any change. Although he dislikes Bethra's "soft ways," he sees in her a good ally against the Templar crusade. (see p. 93 for more information)

Dhara Ibenkin (Magdalite): A wild card in the Council, this Siren is not above blackmail or deceit to ensure the Magdalen's wishes know no obstacles. Currently, along with the Agnite seat, she is trying to push the Grand Council to back the Templar crusade. (see *Tribe 8 Rulebook*, p. 61, for more information).

Iris Medi'on (Sheban): Silent of late, Iris has been too preoccupied to worry about Nostra's plans or the goings on of the Grand Council. Cylix Seth'on is aware of this, and knows a stronger Sheban should head the Grand Council — preferable one under his control. (see p. 97 for more information)

Faust Verkin (Yagan): The Mordred Faust sits at the proverbial center of the Council. Often the tie breaker, Faust is seldom surprised by anything and seems to know more than he lets on. For this reason, Faust is the leader of the Council, the stable pin that holds everything together.

THE SISTERHOODS

Agnes' Favorites: Tired of not being taken seriously, a few Favorites are looking to the other tribes to gather support, mainly from Eva and Tera Sheba. Should they side with the Wise-Mother, the Fallen could lose a close ally. The Favorites are also interested in joining the Joanite crusade, hoping that by shedding their blood, they can earn respect.

The Little Tricksters of Dahlia: Dahlian Caravans are traveling Vimary at the behest of Dahlia and they know their Fatima is up to something. The Little Tricksters are excited about this, knowing that sooner or later Dahlia will let them in on Her little secret.

The Shamans of Eva: Storm Cry dominates the Evan Sisterhood, and is moving them away from their liberal stance of the past. Through the Crucible, he has had certain key Shamans exiled, giving him free reign over the rest.

The Sirens of Magdalen: Magdalen, tired of Tera Sheba's bungling of the Fallen situation, is using her Sirens to gather all the information they can about Her sister. Most sirens hate the hardship and terror the Shebans have caused and know that it may be time to shake things up a little bit in Vimary.

The Templars of Joan: Once united, the Joanites are being torn apart from the inside. The Templars, led by Shera Uhan'on, want to restore the Joanites to their former glory and to do this are willing to battle their own. Of primary concern is the proposed crusade.

The High Judges of Tera Sheba: A confrontation between Cylix and Verra Thaim'on is brewing. Verra is the sole High Judge who actively opposes the Crucible, and is doing her best to thwart Cylix's plans. Cylix, on the other hand, knows that to stop the Fallen drastic measures and sacrifices are called for — one of these may have to be removing Verra.

The Old Ones of Baba Yaga: Troubled by the growing tempest within the River of Dream, the Old Ones are looking for any clues they can find. Some are whispering that the Fallen are at fault, but are surprised that Baba Yaga seems content to let things stand as they are. The growing number of banished Old Ones seems to indicate that something is brewing in Mortuary.

TECHNOLOGY

It would be a gross understatement to say that the tribes were primitive. Rather the technology available to the tribes is an odd mixture of the World Before and gifts from the Fatimas. The tribes use scavenged tools, though rarely, to make their lives easier; carts are born from rusted cars, and furnaces burn with old furniture to forge steel and metal into new shapes and tools. The tribes are hesitant to use relics of the World Before, but this does not stop them from destroying them and making new tools from them.

The tribes, thanks to contact with the Keepers and the Fatimas, have learnt much: they know how to forge metal, make glass, craft instruments, etc. What they have not discovered, the Fatimas and Synthesis have allowed.

JUSTICE

Each tribe possess a code of conduct, passed down from the Fatima to Her Sisterhood. Known as the Codices, these form the core of tribal law. While the details vary, most tribes share certain common principals and while each Sisterhood is theoretically free to judge any of its tribe, it is the Shebans that handle most of the cases. In any case, tribal justice is corporal in nature. Crimes of property (theft, damage, etc.) are punished severely, usually through floggings or incarceration. Crimes of violence usually lead to execution or banishment, depending who the accused and victim are. Crimes of thought, heresies and the like, are met with banishment. A Fallen caught committing another crime after being banished is usually sentenced to death.

THE WATCH

The Watch patrols Bazaar and polices the tribes. Since the origins of the Watch, the Shebans and their Codex have become the core of the tribal legal system. Organized into cadres of six members, each is headed by the senior Joanite, who usually has received instruction on adjudicating laws by the Shebans. In command of a number of cadres policing a sector of Vimary are the Wardens, who report only to the Marshals. While it is customary to bring offenders to the supervising Warden, the Watch cadres can pass judgment on their own. Doing so, however, means that Watchers must justify their actions; if they cannot (or their Warden does not believe them), the cadre meets the same punishment they handed out.

THE ECONOMICS OF BARTER

As a byproduct of the tribes' interdependence, trade is a major activity going on all year round. Most tribes trade in Bazaar; its centralized location means that even remote settlements have a chance of obtaining goods they would never be able to produce on their own. Barter dominates trading in Bazaar.

It is perhaps better to think of this system as communal barter. Not everyone travels to Bazaar every day to trade, as many items can be found in the tribal homelands that operate like cooperative communes. Yet, there is always a need for more specialized items, and the flow of people and goods into Bazaar is constant. Trading for goods (be they tools, seeds, clothes, etc.) is done mostly through barter. For example, Yagans would load up carts with meats and bone artifacts and head to Bazaar knowing they will in all likelihood be able to trade for seeds, clothes or even weapons.

This system is simple for goods, but becomes difficult for services like a Magdalites' touch or Yagan divination. In these cases gifts and favors are accepted and expected. Most innkeepers do not expect their customers to pay for their drinks or food, rather they provide these as a community service; in return for having a place to gather and have a good time, most visitors leave small tokens, either Fatimal trinkets or other items that the owner could use as decorations or even trade. Supplying the establishment is done in two manners. One, the merchants near the dive, who usually benefit from the flow of customers, agree to keep the dive stocked. The second involves

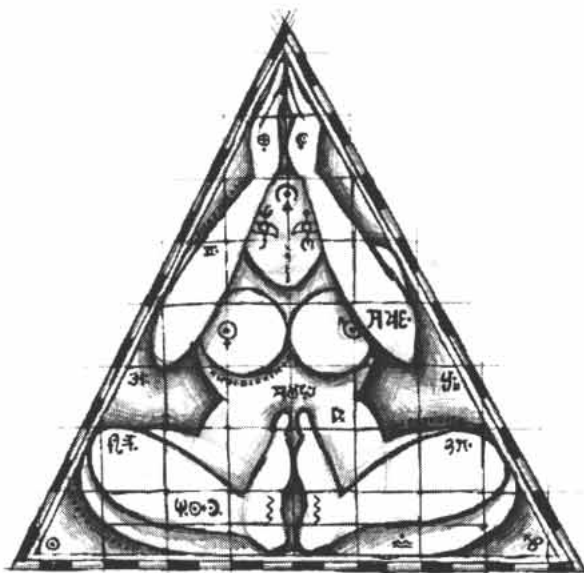
regulars donating food-stuff and brews to the innkeeper. Tribal society is still relatively small that those that abuse of one's hospitality are usually black-listed. Innkeepers and barkeeps in Bazaar also serve as the market's social arrangers, getting various traders or providers together. This makes black-listing a real threat and keeps dives well stocked.

MEDALLIONS

While the tribes do not have anything resembling true currency, the use of medallions in trading has started to grow in popularity. Medallions are religious in nature, given by the Sisterhoods to individuals (as well as clans and families) to show their faith and place among the tribe. Trinkets and knickknacks, medallions are said to have been blessed by the Fatimas, and some are in fact small relics from one of the Seven Sisters. To own a medallion is to have that Fatima watching over you, and most tribals have taken to collecting medallions from other tribes for protection or as omens of good luck. Want to someone to fall in love with you? Sneak a medallion of Magdalen under her pillow. Want strength in fighting? Bless your sword with a Joante medallion.

In a pinch, tribals use medallions to trade, either for other medallions, or for goods and services. Some tribes, like the Evans and Shebans, frown on this as they see it as idolatry, but most others see it as a simple way of conducting trade, without having to lug around bundles of wheat.





THE Z'BRI

For the tribes, the Z'bri represent the ultimate horror, a specter of pain and torture that still lingers to this day. At night, or in the dead of winter, many pray to the Fatimas to keep the Beasts at bay. During the day, however, these worries lessen somewhat. To many tribals, the Z'bri are beaten, the Fatimas and their children glorious in their victory. Most turn a blind eye to reports of settlements being attacked, or of Chained hunting closer and closer to tribal lands. In their hearts, however, they know the truth — that somewhere in the shadows, the Z'bri lurk and wait for a moment to strike.

For two generations, the Z'bri have bided their time. Retreating to the Ziggurat, the Baron and the four Z'bri houses have been content to sit and wait; to occasionally prey on the tribes, but for the most part leave them alone. Things, however, are changing. Many Z'bri, especially the blood-thirsty Koleris, yearn for a chance to ravage the tribes once more and to atone for the death of Tibor. Others, like the Sangis, crave a more subtle approach. A few want nothing more than to destroy the Fatimas, allowing the Seed to rule without meddling from the One Goddess. Things, indeed, are changing.

THE Z'BRI COURT

The Z'bri are creatures of passions and decadence. Their inhuman appetite for violence and fear has resulted in a unique society inhabited by ephemeral creatures in an earthly prison. While the days of the Overlords, powerful Z'bri that ruled the camps, are gone, the Takers still thrive through worship. In the aftermath of Tibor's defeat, Z'bri society adopted a feudal system, a natural outgrowth of their desire for slaves and followers. Those Z'bri who saw the tides turning fled the camps with as many prisoners as possible, granting them a power base when the dust settled. To the Z'bri, flesh and humanity are valued resources, carrying an intangible quality that makes the Beasts' existence bearable. For creatures of spirit so long denied even the simplest of sensations, the physical reality that now surrounds them is almost overwhelming. The Z'bri value the fragility of human beings, both physical and mental, above all else.

Z'BRI FEUDALISM

Unlike traditional feudalism, the key component for the Z'bri is not land, but rather the vassals themselves and the horror they live under. While the Z'bri spread from the Ziggurat into small dukedoms and fiefdoms encompassing their palaces and hamlets, it is the number of Serfs each Lord possesses that determines its rank and station. Serfs provide the Z'bri not only with nourishment and entertainment, but also serve to anchor their ephemeral natures. The pain and despair that are part of Serf's daily life allow the Z'bri to exist without contact to their spirit homeland. So, the Z'bri see their Serfs both as playthings to be used and as commodities to be safeguarded. The more Serfs a Z'bri has, the more power and prestige he has over his fellows.

Because of this, the Z'bri jealousy guard their Serfs, but this does not stop small "Serf wars" from breaking out. These are small-scale conflicts that occur between members of the same household as they attempt to improve their status and rank. It is rare for a Duke or a Count to be involved in these conflicts, as few dare challenge the vast power and resources of these elder Z'bri. This is one reason why many are calling for a renewed assault on the tribes; tired of living under the shadows of the Princes and Dukes, they see an opportunity to advance by culling the tribes.

ORGANIZATION

At the very top of the Z'bri feudal ladder is the Baron, an old Sangis who has ruled the Z'bri since Tibor's death. Driven by dark desires, the Baron has been extremely adept at playing the various Houses against each other, while still maintaining control. Below him are the four Princes, one from each house. The relationship between the Princes and the Baron has always been tumultuous, and intrigue is common. Feuds and rivalries are fundamental aspects of the Z'bri court, though only a few dare challenge Baron directly.

Beyond the Princes, each of the Houses has its own hierarchy of Iv'Chets and Lords, determined by brute strength, deadly intrigue or backstabbing. The higher positions usually go to the oldest Z'bri, as their power is without equal. These middle ranks include Knights, Dukes, Counts and Magistrates. Knights usually belong to one of the Orders of the Phalanx (see below) but each House also mans a small standing army. Dukes are responsible for a number of Serf hamlets that spread over an area. In these dukedoms the Duke hold absolute power. Counts are simply Dukes that belong to the entourage of the current House Prince. Magistrates belong to a nebulous tier of advisors, attendants, scribes and lovers; their only power being their patron's favor.

THE PHALANX

The Phalanx is the Z'bri army. Although manned by all four Houses, it is the Koleris that have the most members and who hold many of the leadership positions. Organized along the lines of orders, each is as unique and individual as its commander. Some orders are nothing more than violent gangs of Z'bri, happy only when rendering flesh from bone. Others are more organized, following traditions and practices that date to before the Closing of the Fold. Most are Koleris Hordes, their savage war bands. Orders not only vary in composition but also size: some can be as small as three members, while others can be huge, having more than 100 members and being divided into many squads. This apparent discrepancy between orders is the Phalanx's greatest strength, as there is always an order skilled for the mission at hand.

SERFS

At the very bottom of the feudal system are the Serfs, at once slaves, worshipers, and natural resources. Abysmal conditions and the inhuman excess of their masters define the sordid existence of the Serfs. Deformities are common, both as a result of the Z'bri's Sundering and the rampant incest that characterizes Serf culture. Each Z'bri House has its own particular need from its serfs: Sangis need lovers and artisans; the Koleris blacksmiths and warriors (cannon-fodder); the Flemis laborers, messengers and meals; and the Melanis need assistants, scribes and subjects for their experiments.

TYPICAL SERF HAMLET

The head of a Serf hamlet is known as the Meth'mey. The Meth'mey is either a Serf that has been granted special status by his Duke, or a minor Iv'chet such as a knight or warrior given the stewardship in recognition for its deeds. A handful of Serfs act as defenders, ensuring the safety of the hamlet, while most tend to the fields or animals needed for sustenance. There is no real family structure, and most mate with whom they please. To pass the time, and ease the pain, Serfs engage in all manner of depraved acts, much to the enjoyment of the Meth'mey and the Z'bri Dukes. Serf hamlets also differ depending what Z'bri House they swear fealty to. Sangis hamlets are dens of cruelty and torture, opposed to the forts of Koleris. Flemis hamlets are all partially underground, borrowing their hives deep into the earth, while the Melanis call their hamlets monasteries. Those Serf hamlets closer to tribal lands have a more normal outward appearance, but all carry the stench of the Z'bri. Diseases are also very prevalent, with frequent outbreaks of plagues (the pain they cause bringing much pleasure to the Z'bri) that at times even spread into tribal homes.

POLITICS

The intrigues and excesses of the Baron and the House Princes are the main staple of the Z'bri court. To outsiders the Z'bri present a united front; all dream of one day reclaiming their "subjects" that the Fatimas took from them and imposing once more their evil across the land. The reasons for doing this, however, vary from Z'bri to Z'bri.

In the meantime, the various Lords and Princes jockey with one another, each hoping that it will be him who restores the Z'bri to their glory. Alliances shift and, like tyrants, the Z'bri are not afraid to use whatever means they can to gain an advantage — either against the tribes or their fellow Z'bri.



THE BARON'S BEASTS (HOUSE SANGIS)

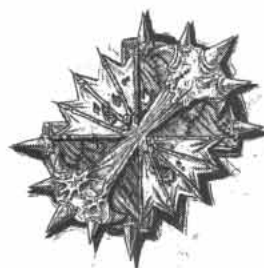
The main power behind the Z'bri, the Baron and his house are the undisputed lords of the Ziggurat. Their keen perceptions and talent at subterfuge and intrigue has assured dominance of the Sangis household over its fellow Z'bri. There is nothing these Z'bri will not do to get what they want. It is no surprise that it was the Baron who betrayed Tibor in the end, distracting him long enough for Joshua to strike his final blow. This is a secret the Baron has carefully kept hidden, killing anyone who might suspect in the slightest.

Unfortunately, decades of power have taken its toll on House Sangis. Most Lords and Iv'Chets have grown lax and decadent (even by Z'bri standards), content to pine away the days torturing their Serfs and creating alien works of art. This has earned the animosity of the Koleris, who crave action. The Melanis, long-time advisors to the Baron, sense this tension but are unsure what to do about it.

Organization: The Sangis are the most formal and Byzantine Z'bri House. Prince Fa'Cul presides over a Senate that meets regularly. The Sangis have a disproportionate number of Dukes, many of whom were granted the title without land or Serfs as favors from the Baron resulting in tension between landed Dukes and the "pretenders" called Counts.

Motivations: Retaining and protecting the Baron's power is the primarily goal of House Sangis. By keeping the expansionist houses in check, the Baron has maintained an uneasy and unofficial détente between Z'bri and the Fatimas, thereby ensuring the status quo. Even so the Baron knows that something must be done soon, or risk a deadly civil war that could shatter the Z'bri.

Count H'x has many plans for the Z'bri. He knows that war with the tribes is coming, and stands much to gain in the process. He respects the Baron, but knows his household needs a good wake-up call or fear losing their status to the Koleris.



THE SERPENTINE SHADOW (HOUSE KOLERIS)

Proud, angry and deadly, House Koleris wants nothing less than to take the war back to the tribes. For years they have seen the tribes grow and become powerful while the Z'bri sulk in shadows. Some have rebelled and lead raids into tribal lands, but most Koleris bide their time, waiting for the Baron to take action. If this fails to happen, they are not beneath usurping control from him. The majority of Koleris serve in the Phalanx, the Z'bri army, knowing that the tribes will one day pay for Tibor's death.

Organization: House Koleris follows a rough militaristic hierarchy. The Prince also being the commander of the Phalanx, which is organized into small Hordes. Each Horde reflects the nature of its leader and soldiers — some are equivalent to knightly orders, others guilds of assassins or armorers that wield devastating machines of war to battle.

Motivation: The Koleris are driven by a desire to see Creation in ruins and coated with blood. They harbor no love for the tribes and want nothing less than to see them all impaled on stakes. This House worships the Seed, and see themselves as its children, culling and harvesting the land of all life.

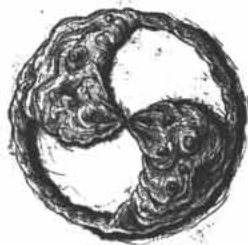


THE FOLLOWERS OF THE DARK (HOUSE MELANIS)

Melanis legends speak that it was one of them that first found a means to travel to the Seed. Driven by a thirst for knowledge, the Melanis are gatherers of secrets and lies. They relish in their status as "outsiders" among the Z'bri, better allowing them to spy on the tribes and their fellows. Creation to them is a massive machine, and to better understand it, they must slowly dissect and probe each element — be it human, Fatima or Z'bri. Only when they understand how Creation pulses, will the doorways back home come open.

Organization: Individual achievement and knowledge is what distinguishes one Melanis from another. Every lunar eclipse they gather and choose who will be Prince until the next eclipse. Insight and reputation serves as the primary criteria, but the Melanis are not without their own infighting. Next to the Prince is a council of Deacons, widely respected as the intelligentsia of the Z'bri.

Motivation: Knowledge is the primary goal of the Melanis. During the camps they conducted all manner of experiments, perfecting machine organisms and the like. Since the camps, it is the mystery of the Fatimas that has intrigued them. To this end the Melanis are willing to work with anyone who will allow them to capture one of the Seven Sisters. A few Herites have heard the siren call of the Melanis. The Melanis' Covenant is a dangerous organization, willing to betray the other houses for a change to re-open the Fold. They have grown tired of the physical and may work with the Fallen, or even some among the tribes, to find a means to undo the Closing.



THE COMMUNE (HOUSE FLEMIS)

Left to the Flemis, all of Creation would be devoured by their appetites. Highly efficient and pragmatic, the Flemis, often mistakenly thought to be apathetic and lethargic, are among the few Z'bri that understand the virtue of patience. As messengers and diplomats (both within H'I Kar and with the tribes) the Flemis are keen manipulators. While the Sangis are brutally cunning, the Flemis prefer a more subtle and protracted approach to courtly politics. Some even whisper that the Flemis have been plotting since the end of the camps, and only now are their manipulations being felt.

Organization: One is all and all is one, and most Flemis seem willing to sacrifice themselves for the good of the House (but not necessarily the good of the Z'bri). Three tiers exist, the Architects (those responsible for most of the architecture of the H'I Kar, the Messengers (harbingers, warriors and the like), and the Breeders (those that herd and butcher their Serfs, known as drones). Within these three tiers exists further definition, those being Workers and Alphas. Workers are responsible for all sorts of menial tasks while Alphas usually administer and lead the workers. Hiding beneath this facade, the Flemis possess a subtle form of individualism; they are not mindless automatons but rather intelligent beings who strive to find the best means in which to serve the Whole.

Motivation: The black sheep of the Z'bri, the Flemis have grown tired of the Baron's excesses and are ready to set plans in motion to ensure the Z'bri will have more Serfs in the coming years. Using their talents and Sundering, they believe that the best way to fight the tribes is not through violence, but with propaganda. If the tribes lose their will to fight, they will be easier to conquer in the end.

GROUPS OF INFLUENCE

Vimari is very much a setting in flux, full of actors trying to move their own agendas forward. There are a few groups, however, that seem to have captured the initiative. The three following groups are rich in story potential and will continue to play key roles in the ongoing Tribe 8 storyline.

THE CRUCIBLE

Key Members: Cylix Seth'on, Storm Cry, Warden Deth'on, Fella Hekkin

Gathering Place: Secret chambers in Court Hall.

Goal: To bring order to the tribes by finding a solution for "the Fallen problem."

Antagonists: Ariel Dan'on (for being kicked out of the Crucible), Evangel Black, Verra Thaim'on.

The brainchild of Cylix Seth'on, the Crucible is only in its infancy but it could soon be fanned into a nightmare for the Fallen. Cylix and company have had enough of the Fallen, and see their growing numbers as a potential catastrophe for the tribes. For now, they try to convert, to prevent others from following the Fallen by showing the penalties of doing so. Floggings and torture have been the staples of this "re-education," but Cylix will be calling for blood before too long. Possessing a keen mind, Cylix knows that the Crucible must first find a means to justify their actions. Sending out spies and double agents, they are looking anywhere for an excuse to stamp out the Fallen and heal the wounds the so-called Eighth Tribe have caused. One of the Crucible's current plans is to close the Fallen Bridge, forcing exiles to travel north rather than join the growing community of Hom.

Relations: The Crucible is firmly behind High Judge Cylix Seth'on. While the Magdalite Fella (posing as Armatha) is a new addition, Cylix has welcomed her with open arms.

5. Beyond Myth: Weaving Aids

The Fatimas: Tera Sheba supports the Crucible, but even She cannot foresee the dark potential of Cylix's ambition. Regardless, Tera Sheba is always ready, and if the Crucible is what it takes to maintain order among the tribes, then so be it. **Eva**, troubled by the schism between Griffentowne and Sanctuary, is siding with Tera Sheba, not wanting Her problems exposed by the Wise-Mother. **Magdalen** antagonistic to Tera Sheba will want to evaluate the potential of the Crucible before deciding to stop it or use it for Her own ends. Of all the Fatimas **Agnes** stands to lose the most as She might aide the Crucible in hopes of gaining favor with the other Fatimas, especially Tera Sheba. **Joan**, as always, remains silent, but should the Crucible use the Watch or Her warriors to carry out its deeds She may step out and confront Tera Sheba. And lastly, **Baba Yaga** remains distant, the only sign of interest is Her order to the Pellis Artisans to start collecting as many Sheban skins as possible.

The Z'bri: The Flemis ambassador Ult'maht might be interested in the chaos caused by the Crucible, as would many Joh'an's, mainly T'phalus and Illiam (see **Weaver's Assistant**, p.35).

The Fallen: Few know of Cylix, for he has just begun his campaign to convert the Fallen. Most pay no heed to the rumors of the wrathful Evan Shaman and the old High Judge, having other things on their minds. Those that are paying attention do not like what they see.

THE TEMPLARS

Key Members: Shera Uhan'on, Valerie Ben'on, the Agnite Barb Poola and other Templars.

Gathering Place: Joan's Watchtower or the Seven Fingers

Goal: To recapture the glory of Joan and destroy the Beasts once and for all.

Antagonists: Nostra Guy'on and Joanite Old Guard, the Koleris

As the sister tribe of the Joshuans, the call for battle is slowly awakening in the Joanites. While most are content with their tribes' current role as protectors and police, the Templars know that glory lies only in the field of battle confronting the Z'bri. Headed by the energetic Templar Shera Uhan'on, the Templars are preparing to launch a crusade against the Beasts. Unlike past instances, it is not Joan who is calling the crusade, and for this reason many among the tribes are apprehensive about backing the Templars. Why, they argue, risk inviting the Z'bri's wrath when even Joan remains silent on the subject? If the petty intrigue and indecisiveness of the Grand Council continues, the Templars may just strike out on their own, risking banishment for glory.

Relations: While most Templars agree with Shera and her lover, some may be hiding their apprehensions and may sell out their sisters in return for safety and security. This is an opportunity Nostra Guy'on is on the look out for.

The Fatimas: It has been Joan's silence that has promoted the call for a crusade, but even She is unsure of what Her role is anymore. If **Tera Sheba's** chains are unbroken, Joan may even sacrifice Her Templars in order not to upset the Stern Mother. Deep down Joan might just answer the call for battle. **The Three Fates**, and **Baba Yaga** in particular, remain hesitant. Eva has no time for the desires of a simple Templar, but knows what bloodshed will follow if the crusaders have their way. **Magdalen**, of all three, is most content to help the Templars, happy to give them information — anything to goad Tera Sheba. **Dahlia** seems to care little for the crusade, while **Agnes** is pleased to see so many of Her tribe preparing to join the warriors in battle.

The Z'bri: A crusade would come as a great surprise to the Z'bri, maybe even being the catalyst needed for the Koleris to strike at the tribes. News, however, is beginning to filter through. Both the Flemis and Melanis know that something is up, but remain silent. The Sangis, confident that the Phalanx and Koleris would stop any tribal attack, could be in for a big surprise if the Koleris stand back and do nothing.

The Fallen: Already a number of Jackers are anxious to join their former tribe in the crusade. Forming what they call regiments, many are beginning to train for war. If the Joanites allow them, the two could be a unstoppable force. Kara the Hunter could play an instrumental role in forging relations between the Joanites and Fallen.

THE COVENANT

Key Members: Deacon Vytor, Eth'ian of Melanis, Count Nemerath.

Gathering Place: Chambers within H'I Kar.

Goal: To return to their Spirit Homeland, leaving the tribes and fellow Z'bri to wither away.

Antagonists: Count H'x, The Fatimas

A cabal of Z'bri mystics, the Covenant has tired of the physical. They know that if they do not find a means to return home soon, the Z'bri will eventually be stamped out. Unlike the Flemis or Koleris, the Melanis know that there is a balance to Creation, one upset by their presence, and that all will be lost if they do not set things right. Apart from these altruistic motives, the Covenant members hope that when they return, their experience and new powers will grant them much influence in their Homelands. To this end, the Melanis have undertaken an enterprise to solve the riddle of the Fatimas, knowing that once they do, they will have the key to the re-open the Fold. In the meantime they are happy to keep the Z'bri bickering among each other long enough for the Covenant to find what they are looking for.

Relations: As a whole, the Covenant members cooperate with each other, all part of a conspiracy to get themselves home. Privately, this union is a pretense. Each member is looking for a means to betray his fellows, so that when the time is right, only a few return, further adding to their power.

The Fatimas: Most Fatimas are unaware of the devious plans of the Melanis. Only selected tribal members have been tainted by the Melanis to help them in their goal. Of all the Fatimas only **Baba Yaga** seems to know of the Covenant and has even dispatched a few Old Ones to keep tabs on the Melanis.

The Fallen: The Herites have heard the call of the Melanis and a few are willing to aide the Beasts if it means the destruction of the Fatimas.

WEAVER'S SECRETS: CHILDREN OF PROPHECY UPDATE

Children of Prophecy is the first volume in the Tribe 8 storyline and began in "Enemy of My Enemy," the quest presented in the **Weaver's Assistant**. While the **Vimary Sourcebook** does not advance the story in any major way, it does delve into many of the players and story threads. To help Weavers anticipate the tumultuous events to come, the following overview identifies the most important elements that will continue to crop up. Always remember, however, that as Weaver, you can transform or discard the storyline as you see fit. The fate of key players can change, the occurrence of critical events can be moved in time or done away with completely. **Children of Prophecy** is intended to be an interesting framework on which to hang your own tales, not an ironclad cycle you must run your Players through.

WHAT HAS COME BEFORE

In "Enemy of My Enemy," the Fallen uncovered the existence of a whole community of Joshuan orphans, people who survived the chaos after the Ravager's death and lived away from the Tribes. They also dealt with a fanatical Terasheban Judge named Ariel Dan'on, who had among other things had dealings with the Sangis Sky-Lord Illiam. Dahlia the Trickster Herself danced through these events, guiding the Fallen toward their battle with Ariel and collecting as much information on Her felled Brother as She could.

KEY PLAYERS IN VIMARY

The **Vimary Sourcebook** picks up these threads and adds depth and richness to them. It also adds story elements of its own, showing many of the people who will help shape the ultimate destiny of the Fallen. Some of the most central include:

Dahlia the Trickster: As seen in *Chapter 3: Vimary Revisited* and *Chapter 4: Faces in the Mirror*, Dahlia has gathered a great deal of intelligence about the lands and inhabitants of Vimary. Never one to sit and wait, She is getting ready to act on what She has learned. Perhaps, in the long run, the Fallen may be better for it, but knowledge always comes at a price. Fallen such as the Herites Kyrt (see p. 108) and Raven (p. 109) will be among those paying this price.

The Templars and their Crusade: Valerie Ben'on and Shera Uhan'on know full well that their tribe is dying from within. The Sheban shackles around their necks are too tight and even the mighty Warrior Fatima has become a shadow of Her former glory. Their gambit to pull tribe and nation out of lethargy is typically Joanite and calls for the cleansing fire of battle to save them. They will continue their quest for the crusade in the seasons to come, slowly building a groundswell of support and eliminating those who oppose them. The Fallen — especially the Jackers — could well become fodder in this eventual war.

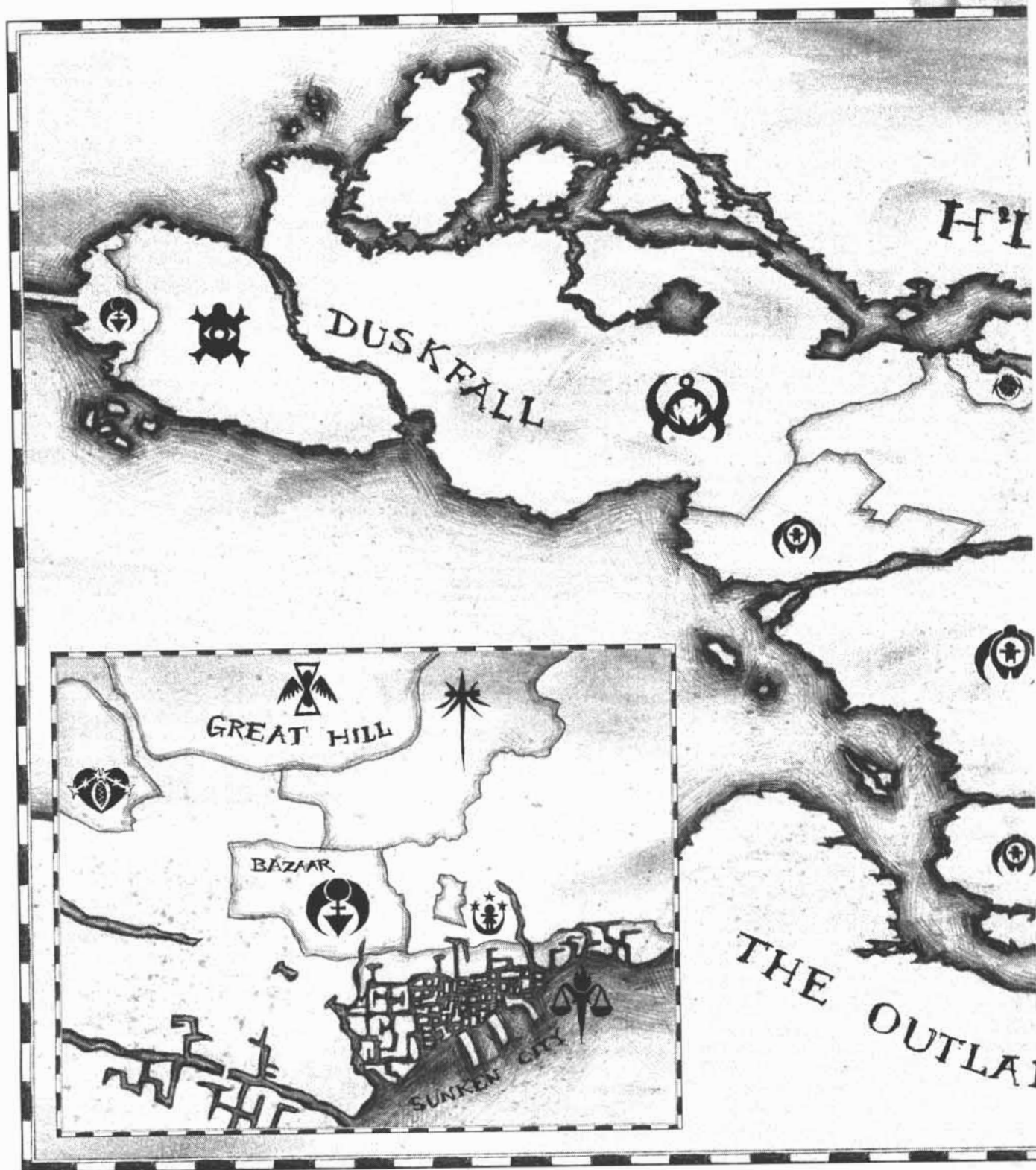
The Koleris and Skkr Flemis: The opposite number of the Joanite crusaders, the Koleris and Skkr Flemis are moving against the tribes already. The status quo that has existed for two generations is on the verge of shattering, it just remains to be seen what role the Fallen will play. Again the Jackers, along with others like Kara the Hunter (see p. 103), are likely to be front and center in the coming battles.

High Judge Cylix and the Crucible: Cylix Seth'on's inquisition against the Fallen is gaining a dangerous momentum among the Seven Tribes. The residents of Hom will have to face this challenge if they are to make a real claim to even being a tribe, much less the Eighth Tribe prophesied by Joshua. Cylix poses a serious challenge, not only because he and his allies — most prominently Storm Cry (p. 91) — wield enough power to grievously harm the Fallen, but because some of their accusations are far from false. Some outcasts are dangerous, even murderous, criminals. The Fallen will have to find a way to deal with the vipers in their midst. The leaders of Hom, including political ones like Kymber Reva (T8 p. 105) and Hal Ninva (T8 p. 101), but also spiritual mentors like Veruka the Wraith (T8 p. 104), are sure to be caught up in this struggle.

Luther Boarhead and the Outlands: Vimary is in many ways the single point of light in a world plunged into darkness, but the Fallen's destiny must ultimately take them beyond its shores. Warlord Luther Boarhead (p. 115) exists primarily to serve Weavers as a powerful and useful antagonist for Player Circles. Nevertheless, he represents the world of dangers that await those who will explore the Outlands. He will be the first barrier to overcome on that journey.

THE NEXT STEP: CHILDREN OF LILITH

The **Tribe 8** storyline continues in **Children of Lilith**, the first major **T8** cycle supplement. This long series of scenarios will cover several seasons of time and see the arrival of a new Fatima: Lilith the Liberator. This child of Joshua comes to lead the Fallen to freedom, but at what price? How will the four outlooks, the rival cells and the many strong individuals all claiming the heritage of the Eighth Tribe react to Her sudden arrival? When some call Her word salvation and others slavery, blood is sure to spill.





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