



BARSOOM® FROM THE AIR



THE AIRSHIP QUAYS



THE FORBIDDEN LAND



THE GHOST OF THROXUS

THE CARRION CAVES

THE GHOST OF THROXUS

Everywhere Barsoom's landscape is a relic of the past. The northern hemisphere is no exception. Throxus, the mightiest of Barsoom's five oceans, covered the planet from Horz to the equator and reached perhaps as far as the Artolian Hills. Its phantom still haunts Barsoom. Green Martians hunt amongst wind-honed reefs of prehistoric coral. Wild banths stalk their prey across undulating lowlands shaped by wave and water. Herds of thoats and zitidars roam uplands that were formerly sloping shores. And in the eerie canyons of parched submarine trenches, white apes hunt their prey. It is not a place to venture alone.

BARSOOM FROM THE AIR

A barren landscape stretches as far as the eye can see. In the distance, mountains grow tall and stark. Wind and time have sculpted their slopes and faces into phantasmagoric shapes thrown into sharp relief by sunlight and deep shadow. At their base, a tumble of foothills leads out to a plain scarred by arroyos that have been dry for millennia. Here and there, pits and circular basins pock the face of the desert. As the sun shifts, outcrops of quartz spark like muzzle flashes. There is no water here. Only the crawling, ever-present yellow moss suggests life is possible.

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THE AIRSHIP QUAYS

The docks teem with activity. Just inside the city wall, the military quays rise to a height of fifteen hundred feet. These are the berths of the naval airships that ply Barsoomian's sky and safeguard the nation's interests aboard. Beyond and beneath these, towards the city's heart, are the freight and passenger wharfs. Here, the merchant squadrons of influential trading families load and disgorge their riches while the packet ships carry travellers and mail to their varied destinations. Where the filigree lattices of the naval quays are orderly and precise, the robust mercantile jetties and landing stages are a swirl of colorful commotion.

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THE CARRION CAVES

The cave mouth yawns, exhaling an unpleasant sigh ripe with putrefaction. A dribble of foetid matter runs from its stone lip, carrying rags of skin and tattered cloth. Inside, the stench is overwhelming. Dead bodies fill the cave. They lie jumbled and half-frozen, their flesh blackened or blued with decay and sloughing from the bones. Many are swollen to grotesque proportions, their faces horribly distended, their lips peeled back in one awful grimace after another. Some have ruptured, spilling entrails and ichor. Most appalling of all, many are half-eaten, their clothing and harnesses chewed away by whatever carrion-eaters dwell deeper in the caves.

THE FORBIDDEN LAND

The sheer brilliance of the glacier is dazzling. Its vast expanse of ice extends to the distant mountains, glittering like powdered diamond. In various places jagged rocks thrust up from the frigid plain, their black outlines severe against the whiteness of the snow. Chill blue shadows, almost invisible from the ice-barrier, hint at where crevasses gape, ready to swallow the unwary. Cold nips the skin, freezing out all sense of smell as a bitter gust raises ice-devils from the snowfield. Nothing else moves in this dead landscape. Then, at the edge of vision, strange centaur-like creatures move into view.

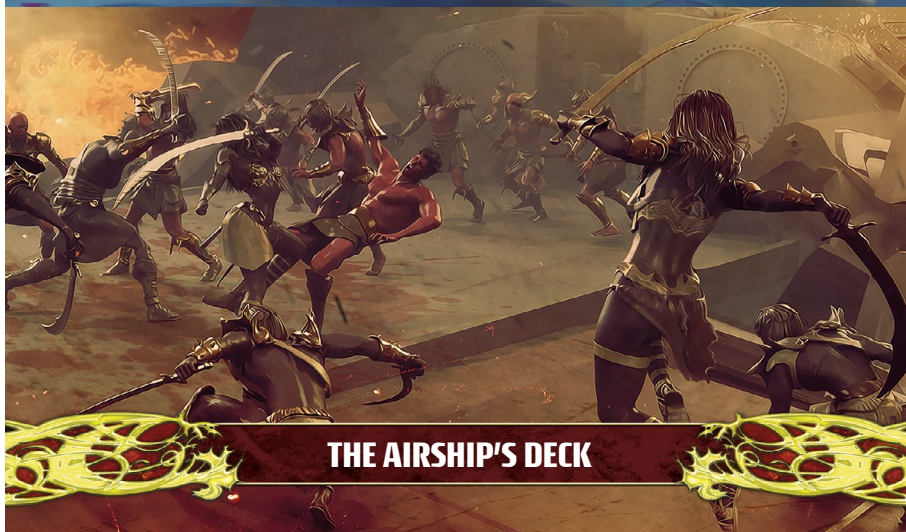
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THE PIT OF TJANATH



LAND OF BLOOD AND ICE



THE AIRSHIP'S DECK



ARENA OF DEATH!

AAANTHOR'S AVENUE OF QUAYS

ARENA OF DEATH

Like an enormous crater, the arena appears punched into the earth. Its tiers of seats gather at the rim like ejected matter, climbing in ranks to shadow the killing floor. Parts of the stadium have collapsed. Its sand is strewn with blocks of toppled masonry and darkly stained. Crude repairs have shored up walls with reclaimed stone, ribs of airships, and sorapus timber torn from who knows where. Lining the arena and preventing any escape are wooden trellises reinforced with stakes and metal talons. They jangle on corroded chains. Above them, savage throat-skin banners stir in a fitful breeze.

THE PIT OF TJANATH

The echoing roar of the river fills the colossal cave and reverberates down a passage plunging deeper into the earth. All around, the rock sweats coldly. A dank, musty odour rarely sensed on Barsoom fills the air. It would be impossible to find an escape if not for the countless radium particles glittering in the cavern walls. Their wan light shines on a shore that edges the river in a jumble of rocky masses and sliding shale. Pale vegetation crouches over the path, filling the air with strange scents. Up ahead, a huge white lizard moves with the sound of steel on stone.

LAND OF BLOOD AND ICE

Blood spatters the snow, crimson on white. The beast's howl thunders in the narrow, frozen defile, cracking the ice with its fury. Its hot, stinking breath billows, clouding vision and turning the stomach. Rock shudders and a fine grit fills the trembling air. Above, the setting sun transforms the sky into a raw, open wound. The creature stamps, shaking the earth. Claws tear at the ground as it turns its terrible face and snarls. There is blood everywhere: on the snow, on torn flesh, on the beast's fangs, and in the sky. This is a land of blood and ice.

THE AIRSHIP'S DECK

The airship heels to port, striking the enemy vessel a grinding blow. Wood splinters. Metal shrieks. Locked together like lovers, the two ships become one curve of sweeping deck. The air is acrid with smoke from burning keel. Fire blooms, blasting a cabin to pieces. Sorapus debris clatter down and the air is suddenly sharp with splinters. Flames leap from ship to ship, crackling into the upper works. A dull concussion somewhere below causes the deck to tilt eccentrically. Carborundum aluminum struts wail in protest. The buoyancy tanks have ruptured! Inexorably, the airships began a slow, spiral tumble to their doom.

AAANTHOR'S AVENUE OF QUAYS

From the empty plaza, a broad thoroughfare leads directly to the ancient quays. It is lined with monoliths. Many remain vertical; others have fallen across the boulevard or crashed backwards, smashing through the palaces behind. Time has done little to dull the beauty of the stone and, upright or prone, the monoliths shine richly; vermilion and sapphire, amber and aquamarine. It is difficult to imagine the city populated with thousands of Barsoomians all going about their daily business: trading, conversing, laughing. Now nothing disturbs the melancholy silence of this vast, redundant seaport but the soft susurrant of its iridescent dust.



THE CITY OF MORBUS



THE RUINS OF THARK



THE RAVINES OF MARS



SAVAGE BARSOOM®

WAR IN THE AIR

THE CITY OF MORBUS

The city is an anomaly. Surrounded by the filthy morass of the Toonolian Marshes, with their sluggish, viscous waterways, mud flats, and evil-smelling reedbeds, it appears pristine. Its white walls, with their square-cut crenellations and steel gates, protect a small metropolis of unadorned symmetrical buildings laid out with scientific precision. There is little to indicate their purpose. Several have chimneys, a sight rare on Barsoom, which adds to the mystery of their function. Around the city, and contrasting with its immaculate appearance, is a pestilence of temporary dwellings, hastily erected and squalid. What circumstances gave rise to such a contrast is intriguing.

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THE RUINS OF THARK

Jutting from the red sands, the ruins of a magnificent, antique city stand white against Barsoom's cobalt sky. The fine angles of its towers and porticos, its buttresses and entablatures, have been softened by time. Much of it is ruined, its fluted pillars laid out among the tumbled stonework, or broken into massive fragments of dressed stone. Elsewhere, its palaces and public buildings defy the centuries, proud in the face of decay. Shadowy doorways lead to dark interiors and enclosed courts or open into sunlit squares scattered with debris. The city holds its breath, tense with an air of expectancy.

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THE RAVINES OF MARS

The ravine cuts a ragged gash through the plateau. Keen red rocks protrude like spears, snagging cloaks and harnesses, slicing flesh. Progress is a painfully slow slog through variegated patches of harsh sunlight and deep shadow. Bestial growls rumble along the defile, or issue from crevices leading off into a labyrinth of clefts and fissures. The land is so fragmented here that it is difficult to determine the source of the sounds. White apes are known to roam these rifts, the nooks and overhangs an approximation of the ruins they prefer. A bellow rolls out. Up ahead? Behind? Somewhere above?

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SAVAGE BARSOOM

This is no place to fight a battle. The ground shelves unevenly, descending in a stairway of precarious ledges and slopes. Treacherous with scree, they threaten to turn a warrior's ankle or betray a riposte and cost a life. Warfare on Barsoom is never simply a case of one fighting man against another; it requires an awareness of the planet itself, its immeasurable age and eroded geology, the vagaries of its terrain, its capricious air currents, and the sudden dangers of its teetering ruins. To fight on Barsoom is to combat the world itself, armored with knowledge and armed with experience.

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WAR IN THE AIR

The sapphire sky is a battlefield. Mighty navies ranked in airships discharge their radium cannonades. The air screams with projectiles. Moments pass, and it is stunned by the dull applause of their concussion. Hulls buckle. A geyser of flame sends men screaming. Some fall and writhe, beating at the blaze enfolding them. Others tumble from the deck, whirling like seeds to the ground below. Acrid smoke burns the lungs. Vision blurs. Between the vermillion sands of Mars and the ultramarine sky above, there is a line of fire in which men and ships go whirling to destruction.

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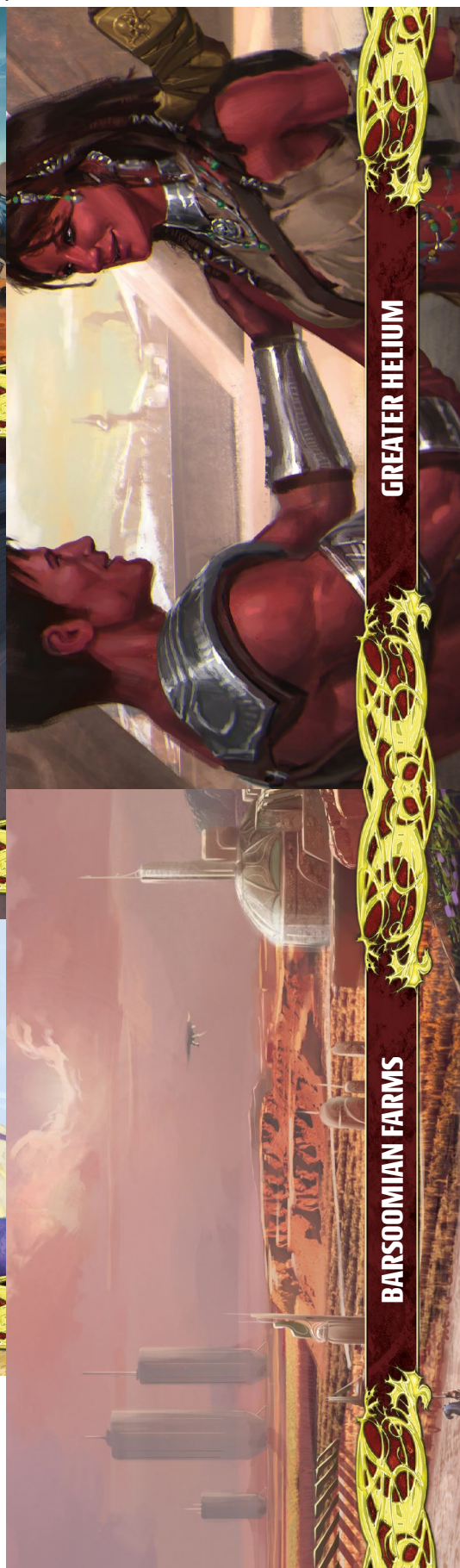
THE MOUNTAINS OF TORQUAS



IN THE SHADOW OF THE AIRSHIP

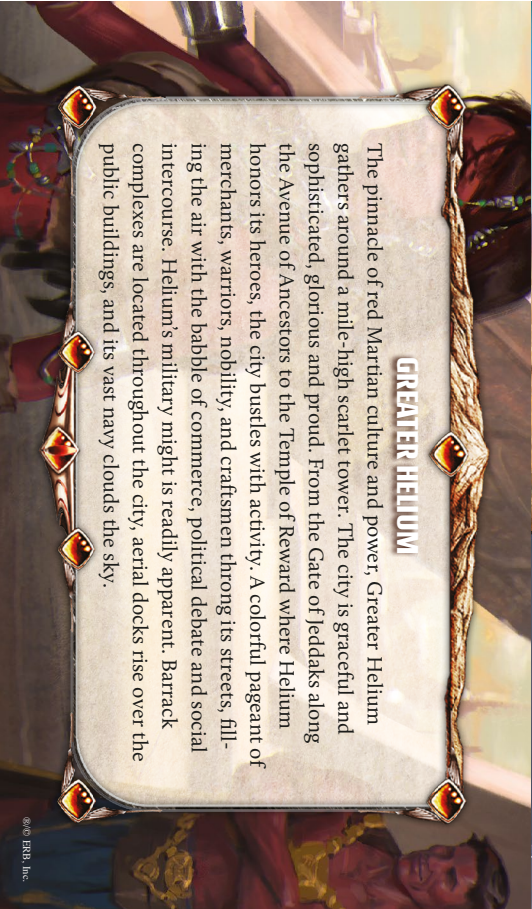


AMONG THE RUINS



GREATER HELIUM

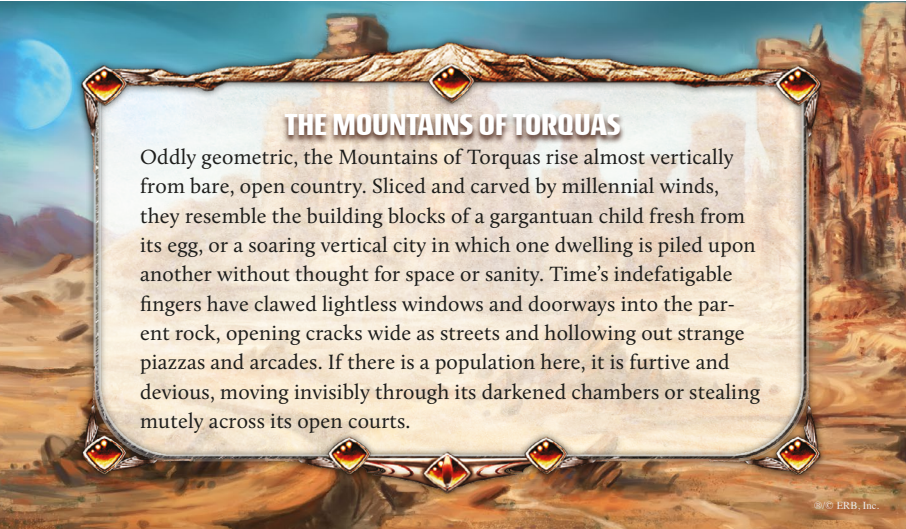
BARSOOMIAN FARMS

The background image for the 'GREATER HELIUM' card shows a close-up of a red Martian structure, likely the 'pinnacle' mentioned in the text. It features intricate details and a warm, orange-red color palette.

GREATER HELIUM

The pinnacle of red Martian culture and power, Greater Helium gathers around a mile-high scarlet tower. The city is graceful and sophisticated, glorious and proud. From the Gate of Jeddaks along the Avenue of Ancestors to the Temple of Reward where Helium honors its heroes, the city bustles with activity. A colorful pageant of merchants, warriors, nobility, and craftsmen throng its streets, filling the air with the babble of commerce, political debate and social intercourse. Helium's military might is readily apparent. Barrack complexes are located throughout the city, aerial docks rise over the public buildings, and its vast navy clouds the sky.

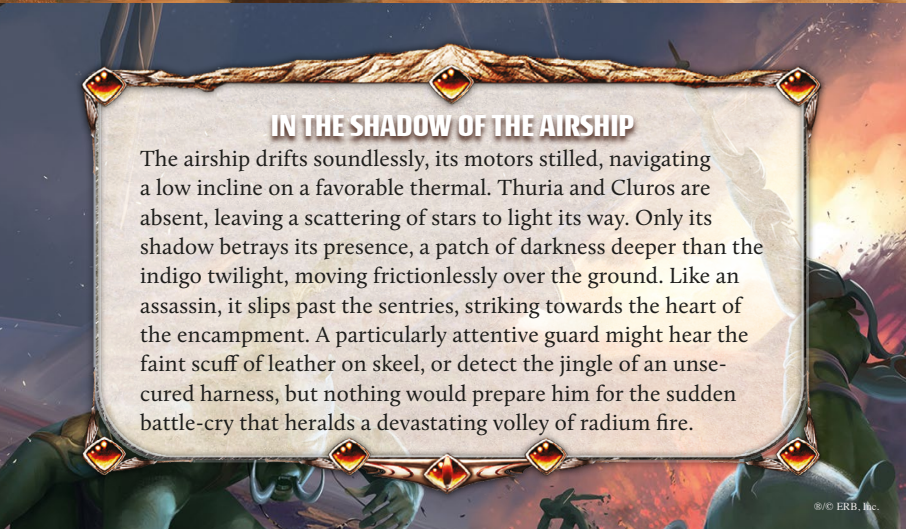
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The background image for 'THE MOUNTAINS OF TORQUAS' depicts a vast, arid landscape under a blue sky with a large, pale moon. In the distance, jagged, geometric rock formations rise vertically from the desert floor.

THE MOUNTAINS OF TORQUAS

Oddly geometric, the Mountains of Torquas rise almost vertically from bare, open country. Sliced and carved by millennial winds, they resemble the building blocks of a gargantuan child fresh from its egg, or a soaring vertical city in which one dwelling is piled upon another without thought for space or sanity. Time's indefatigable fingers have clawed lightless windows and doorways into the parent rock, opening cracks wide as streets and hollowing out strange piazzas and arcades. If there is a population here, it is furtive and devious, moving invisibly through its darkened chambers or stealing mutely across its open courts.

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The background image for 'IN THE SHADOW OF THE AIRSHIP' shows a dark, atmospheric scene. A large, dark shape, presumably the airship, looms in the twilight sky, casting a shadow over the landscape below. The colors are deep blues and purples.

IN THE SHADOW OF THE AIRSHIP

The airship drifts soundlessly, its motors stilled, navigating a low incline on a favorable thermal. Thuria and Cluros are absent, leaving a scattering of stars to light its way. Only its shadow betrays its presence, a patch of darkness deeper than the indigo twilight, moving frictionlessly over the ground. Like an assassin, it slips past the sentries, striking towards the heart of the encampment. A particularly attentive guard might hear the faint scuff of leather on skeel, or detect the jingle of an unsecured harness, but nothing would prepare him for the sudden battle-cry that heralds a devastating volley of radium fire.

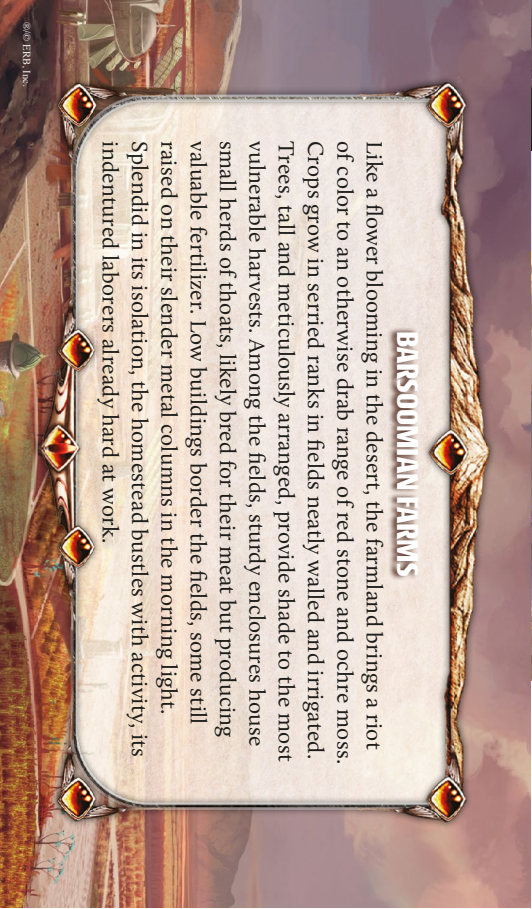
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The background image for 'AMONG THE RUINS' shows a close-up of ancient, weathered stone structures. The ruins are partially obscured by shadows, with some golden light reflecting off the surfaces, suggesting a hidden or forgotten civilization.

AMONG THE RUINS

The workmanship is exquisite. No doubt manufactured in Helium or Ptarth, the monocular field glass brings the citadel into focus. Clearly, the building was once beautiful. Its white walls are still filigreed with gold high up, beyond the grasp of any avaricious green Martian. Why no one has pilfered its precious metal from the safety of a flyer is a mystery until the field glass spies two hulking shapes moving past the arched windows. White apes. They have made this elegant residence their lair. Patience and closer inspection reveal more of the creatures gathered on the building's upper floor. What strange impulse has drawn these beasts together?

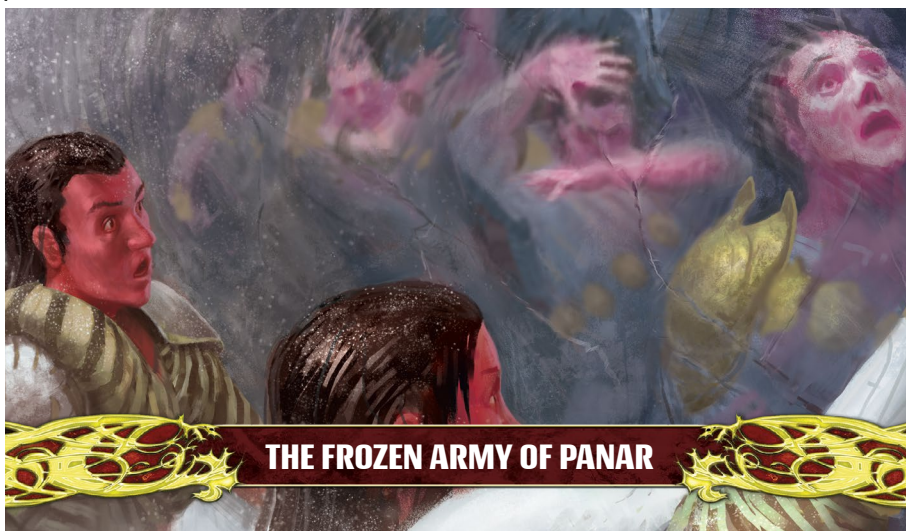
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The background image for 'BARSOOMIAN FARMS' depicts a desert landscape with a variety of colorful crops growing in neat rows. The scene is bright and vibrant, with a mix of reds, oranges, and greens.

BARSOOMIAN FARMS

Like a flower blooming in the desert, the farmland brings a riot of color to an otherwise drab range of red stone and ochre moss. Crops grow in serried ranks in fields neatly walled and irrigated. Trees, tall and meticulously arranged, provide shade to the most vulnerable harvests. Among the fields, sturdy enclosures house small herds of thoats, likely bred for their meat but producing valuable fertilizer. Low buildings border the fields, some still raised on their slender metal columns in the morning light. Splendid in its isolation, the homestead bustles with activity, its indentured laborers already hard at work.

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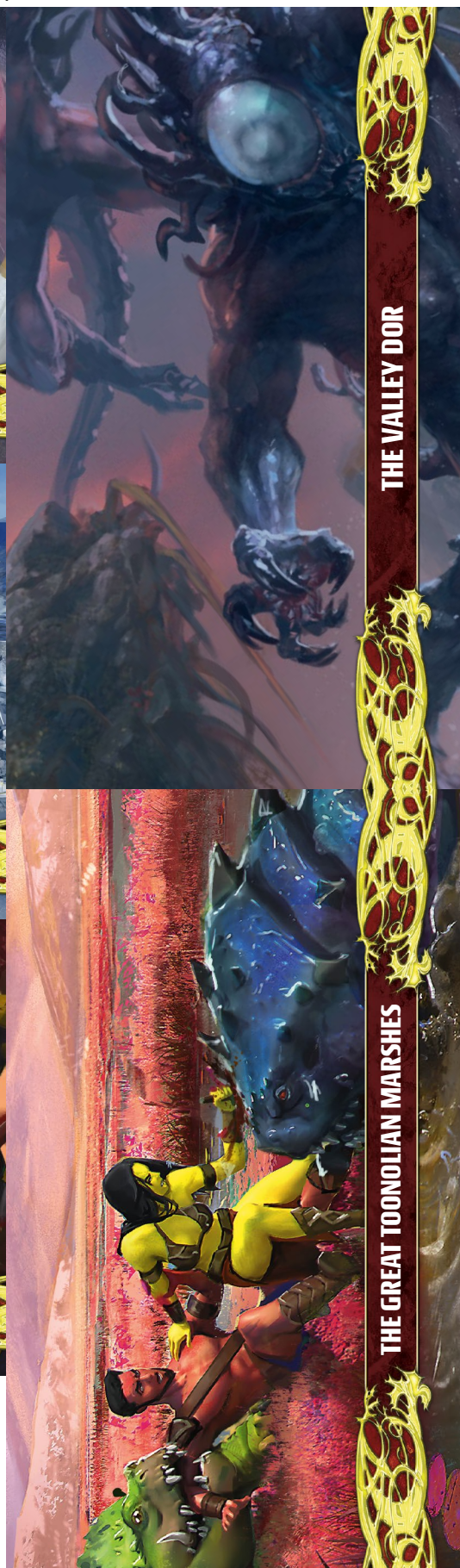
THE FROZEN ARMY OF PANAR



THE DOMED CITY OF MARENTINA

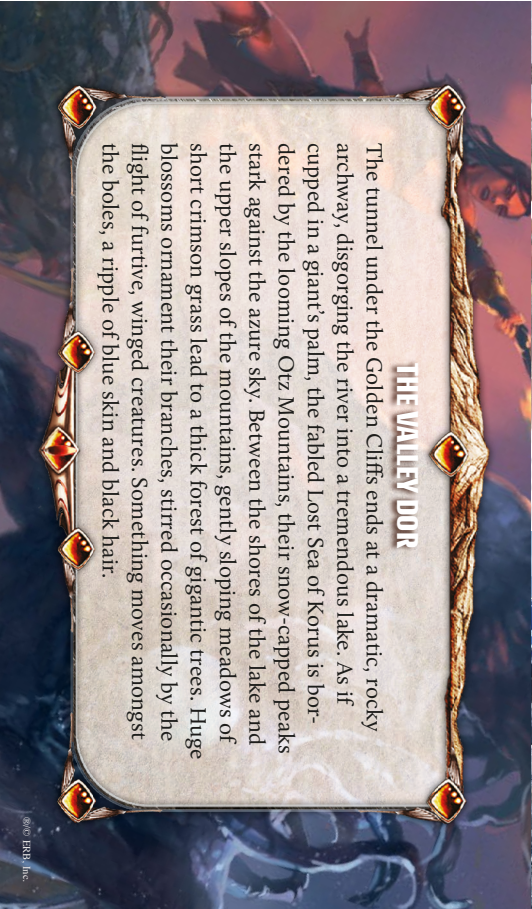


THE COURT OF ISSUS



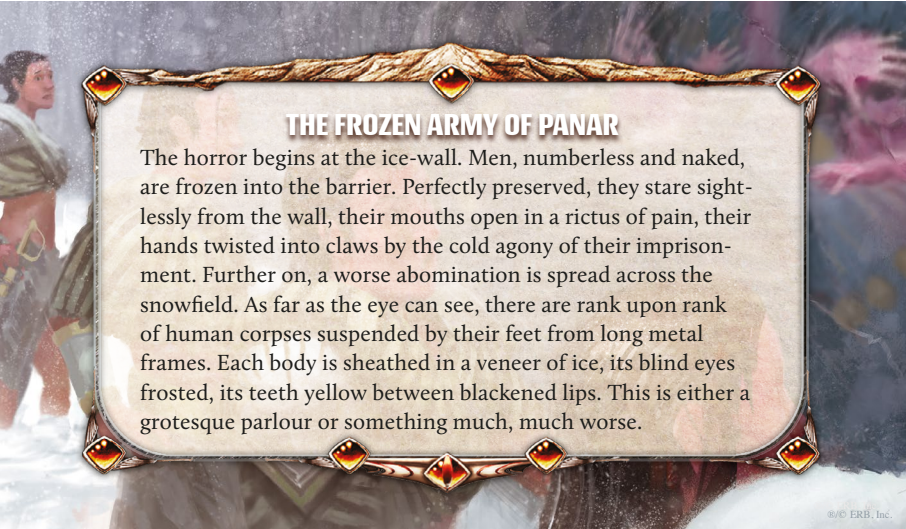
THE VALLEY DOR

THE GREAT TOONOLIAN MARSHES



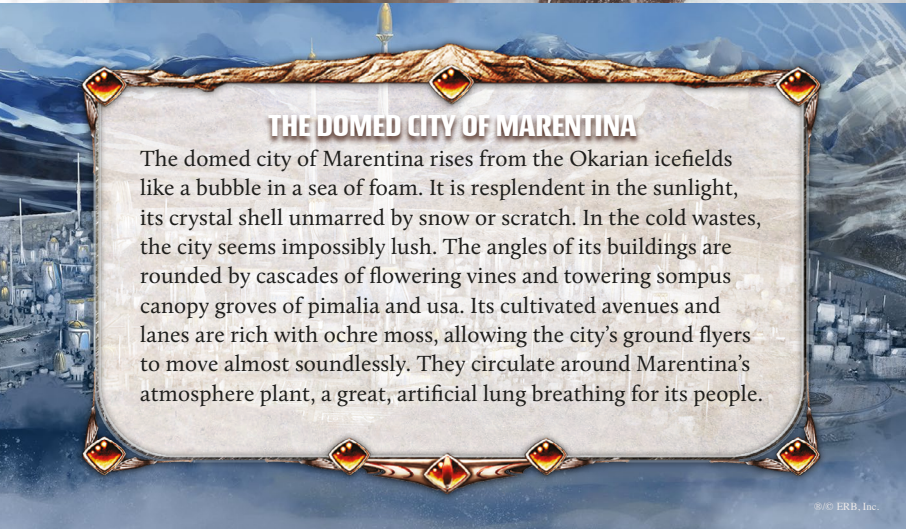
THE VALLEY DOOR

The tunnel under the Golden Cliffs ends at a dramatic, rocky archway, disgorging the river into a tremendous lake. As if cupped in a giant's palm, the fabled Lost Sea of Korus is bordered by the looming Otz Mountains, their snow-capped peaks stark against the azure sky. Between the shores of the lake and the upper slopes of the mountains, gently sloping meadows of short crimson grass lead to a thick forest of gigantic trees. Huge blossoms ornament their branches, stirred occasionally by the flight of furtive, winged creatures. Something moves amongst the boles, a ripple of blue skin and black hair.



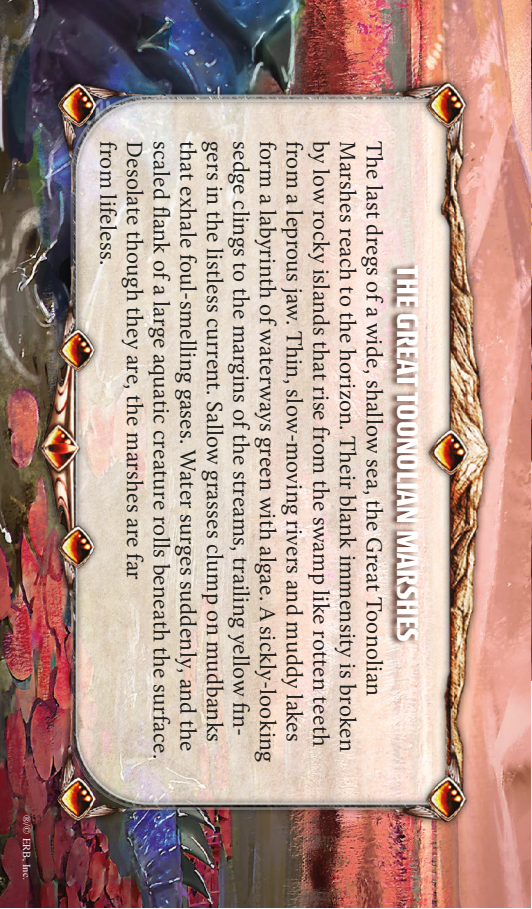
THE FROZEN ARMY OF PANAR

The horror begins at the ice-wall. Men, numberless and naked, are frozen into the barrier. Perfectly preserved, they stare sightlessly from the wall, their mouths open in a rictus of pain, their hands twisted into claws by the cold agony of their imprisonment. Further on, a worse abomination is spread across the snowfield. As far as the eye can see, there are rank upon rank of human corpses suspended by their feet from long metal frames. Each body is sheathed in a veneer of ice, its blind eyes frosted, its teeth yellow between blackened lips. This is either a grotesque parlour or something much, much worse.



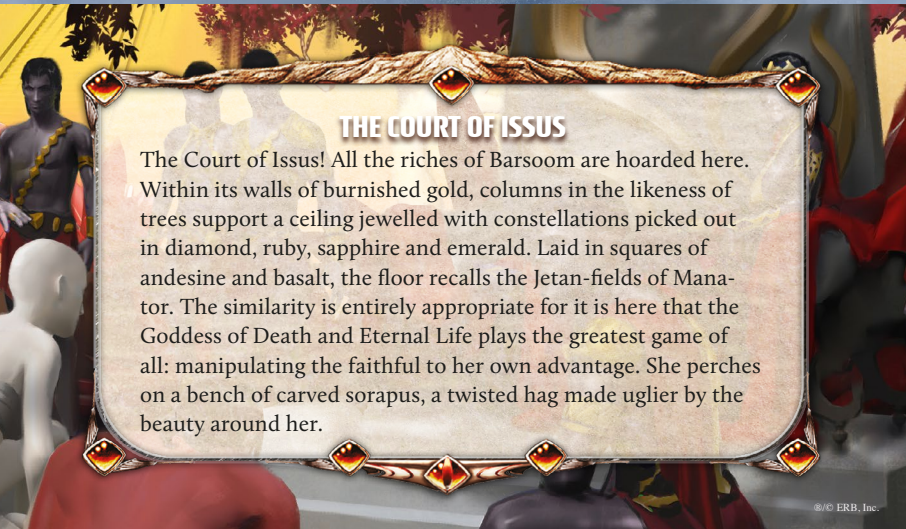
THE DOMED CITY OF MARENTINA

The domed city of Marentina rises from the Okarian icefields like a bubble in a sea of foam. It is resplendent in the sunlight, its crystal shell unmarred by snow or scratch. In the cold wastes, the city seems impossibly lush. The angles of its buildings are rounded by cascades of flowering vines and towering sompus canopy groves of pimalia and usa. Its cultivated avenues and lanes are rich with ochre moss, allowing the city's ground flyers to move almost soundlessly. They circulate around Marentina's atmosphere plant, a great, artificial lung breathing for its people.



THE GREAT TOONQUIAN MARSHES

The last dregs of a wide, shallow sea, the Great Toonquian Marshes reach to the horizon. Their blank immensity is broken by low rocky islands that rise from the swamp like rotten teeth from a leprous jaw. Thin, slow-moving rivers and muddy lakes form a labyrinth of waterways green with algae. A sickly-looking sedge clings to the margins of the streams, trailing yellow fingers in the listless current. Sallow grasses clump on mudbanks that exhale foul-smelling gases. Water surges suddenly, and the scaled flank of a large aquatic creature rolls beneath the surface. Desolate though they are, the marshes are far from lifeless.



THE COURT OF ISSUS

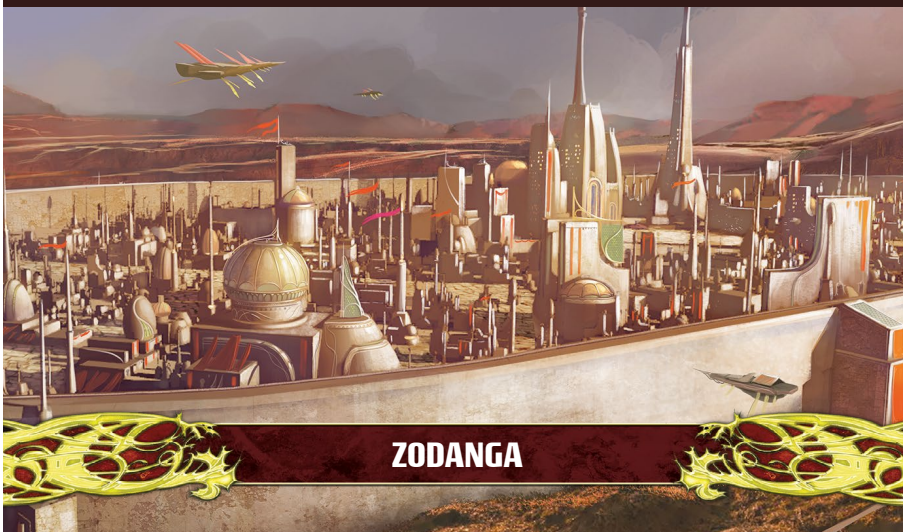
The Court of Issus! All the riches of Barsoom are hoarded here. Within its walls of burnished gold, columns in the likeness of trees support a ceiling jewelled with constellations picked out in diamond, ruby, sapphire and emerald. Laid in squares of andesine and basalt, the floor recalls the Jetan-fields of Manator. The similarity is entirely appropriate for it is here that the Goddess of Death and Eternal Life plays the greatest game of all: manipulating the faithful to her own advantage. She perches on a bench of carved sorapus, a twisted hag made uglier by the beauty around her.



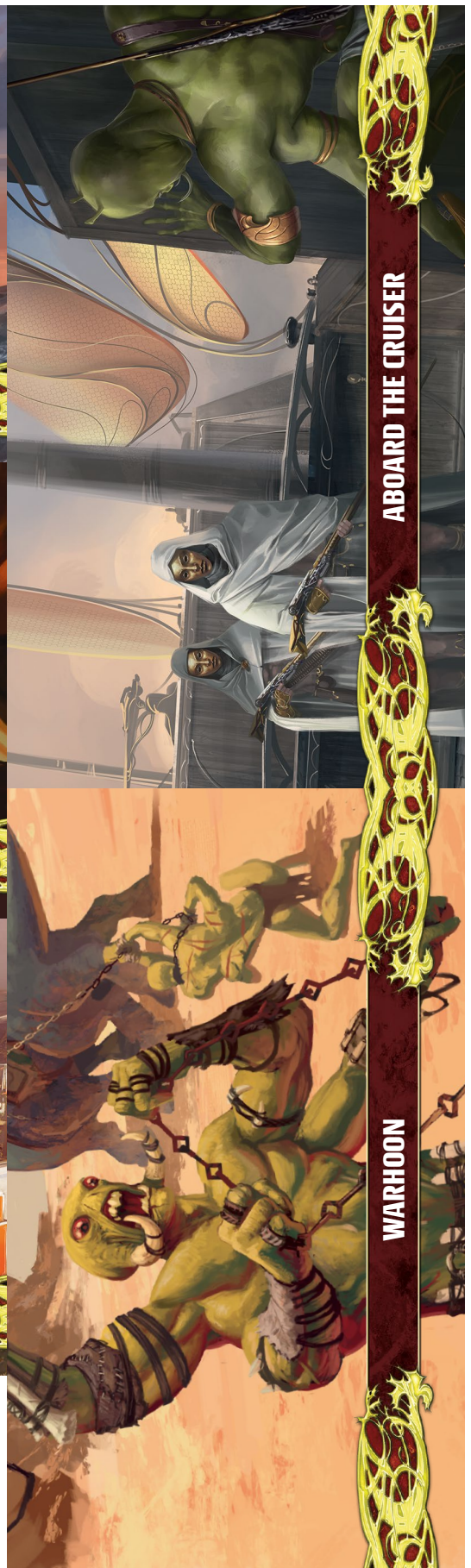
THE GUARDIAN OF THE NORTH



HALLWAYS RUN WITH BLOOD



ZODANGA



ABOARD THE CRUISER

WARHOON

THE GUARDIAN OF THE NORTH

Striking up from Barsoom's magnetic pole, the Guardian of the North spears the sky. In the bright, arctic light, its ominous black shaft inscribes a fell shadow on the landscape, sweeping Kadabra and its precincts like the gnomon of a malevolent sundial. At its base are the hulks of innumerable flyers – cruisers and dreadnoughts, merchantmen and pleasure craft – one wreck piled upon another to create a talus of twisted metal and splintered wood. Their faded pennons, fluttering weakly, bear the colors of Helium, Zodanga, Ptarth, Toonol and Gathol. Whatever unknown force has drawn these vessels to disaster appears indiscriminate and irresistible.

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HALLWAYS RUN WITH BLOOD

The palace is wrapped in darkness. Folds of shadow run thick along its corridors and gather in its unlit chambers. Pedestals and statues loom ominously, their outlines vague and tenebrous. A night breeze whispers along hushed passages, brushing the skin like a caress and insinuating itself as a whisper in the ear. It troubles the air, bringing with it the copper tang of blood. Two guards are dead beneath a sun in splendour. Red drops cover its face like blisters and spot the white marble where the dead men lie. They have been struck down decisively and silently, without a struggle.

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ZODANGA

Fear or prudence built Zodanga. Its walls, constructed from monolithic blocks of shimmering carborundum, reach seventy-five sofads in height. Fifty sofads thick, they house a warren of barracks, magazines and armories. Protected by this mighty structure, the city gathers around a central plaza almost three haads square. It is bordered by the royal palace, the villas of the nobility, and Zodanga's main public buildings. Between the walls and this exclusive area are a maze of cramped streets and airless courts where the city's poor rub shoulders with thieves and the agents of Barsoom's assassin's guilds. Guarded against threats from without, Zodanga breeds her own threats within.

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ABOARD THE CRUISER

The deck shifts as the cruiser's buoyancy tanks lift her into Barsoom's clear skies. She's a fine vessel, and the sudden exhilaration of flight makes her seem all the more wondrous. Her prow describes a slow arc, moving like a compass needle until it fixes on her destination. She is all sleek lines and polished steel, an airborne sculpture dedicated to speed. Rapid fire radium guns bristle fore and aft, and her low gunwales are punctuated with compact emplacements. At a word from her helmsman, her woodwork thrills to the stuttering chop of her rotors and she leaps forward into the void.

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WARHOON

Few of Barsoom's ancient cities have fallen as far as Warhoon. Its fine walls are stained black with smoke. Several of its towers have been gutted by fire. Filth lines its thoroughfares. The trophies of a savage tribe hang from makeshift scaffolds or swing suspended from crude hooks driven into stone. Flayed skins ripple and snap on chains slung over piers of broken masonry. Bones bleach beside corroded armor. The bodies of many Martians, red and green, are piled together without ceremony. Most are missing heads and hands. For a moment, the city is still as a mausoleum, then a ferocious howl tears the silence.

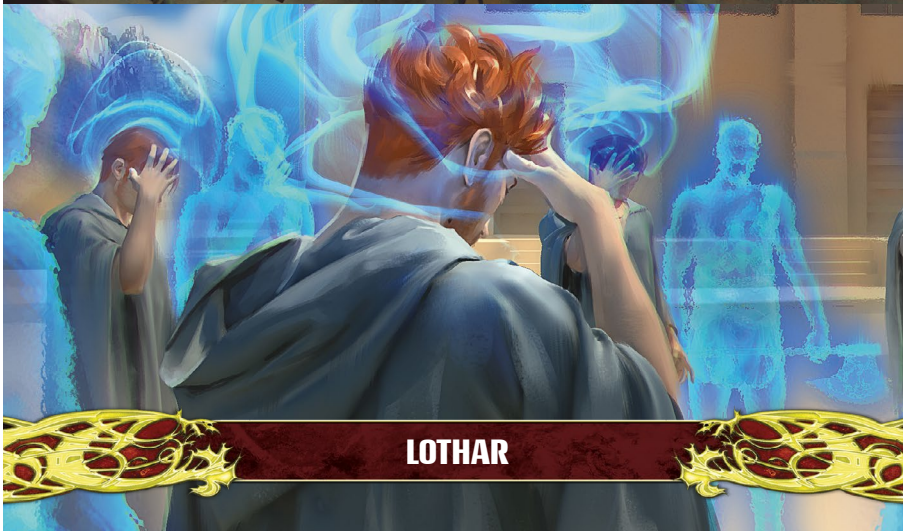
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LESSER HELIUM



KOBOL



LOTHAR



ON MIGHTY WINGS



THE BEAUTY OF PTARTH



LESSER HELIUM

Lesser Helium's yellow tower is as tall as its red sister in Greater Helium, though more delicate and finely tapered to affirm the city's lower status. It soars skyward over one of Barsoom's most refined urban centers. Streets and boulevards radiate from its foundation in expanding circles of villas, mansions, temples and emporia like ripples in a pond. The air rings with the peal of armorers and weapon-smiths, the call of priests, and the cries of traders dealing in soft silks, subtle perfumes, and finely-made harnesses for highborn warriors and princesses. At night, the sounds of commerce fall silent, replaced by music and merriment.

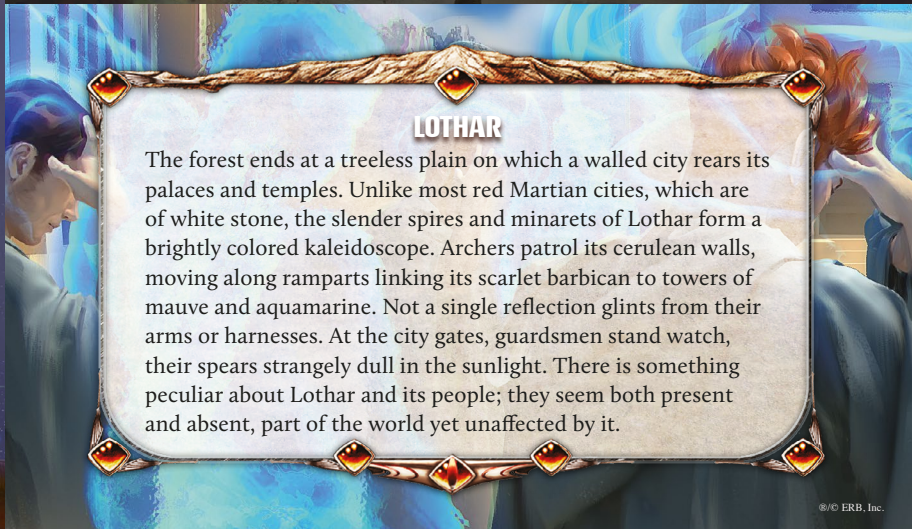
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KOBOL

As incongruous as a wart on the bosom of a red princess, the bombed-out shell of Kobol disfigures a clean breadth of dead sea bottom. Since the city was razed by Helium's navy, its surviving population has struggled to restore their city. Tent villages occupy its old squares and plazas, filling the air with the smell of cooking, sweat, and ordure. Artisans – stonemasons, carpenters and metalworkers – make these their home, striking out in well-armed parties to renovate and rebuild. They risk everything. Kobol's scorched and shattered buildings are nests to ulsios and green Martian renegades. White apes have colonised its margins, seizing the unwary.

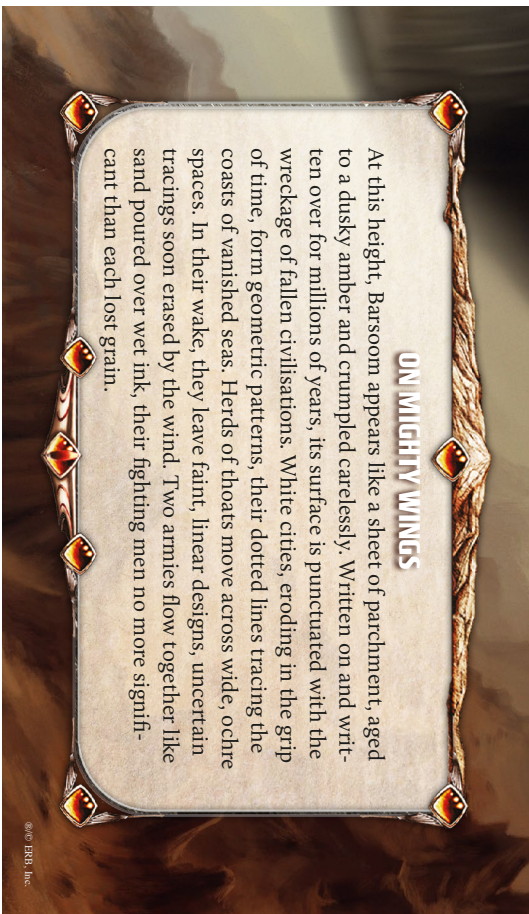
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LOTHAR

The forest ends at a treeless plain on which a walled city rears its palaces and temples. Unlike most red Martian cities, which are of white stone, the slender spires and minarets of Lothar form a brightly colored kaleidoscope. Archers patrol its cerulean walls, moving along ramparts linking its scarlet barbican to towers of mauve and aquamarine. Not a single reflection glints from their arms or harnesses. At the city gates, guardsmen stand watch, their spears strangely dull in the sunlight. There is something peculiar about Lothar and its people; they seem both present and absent, part of the world yet unaffected by it.

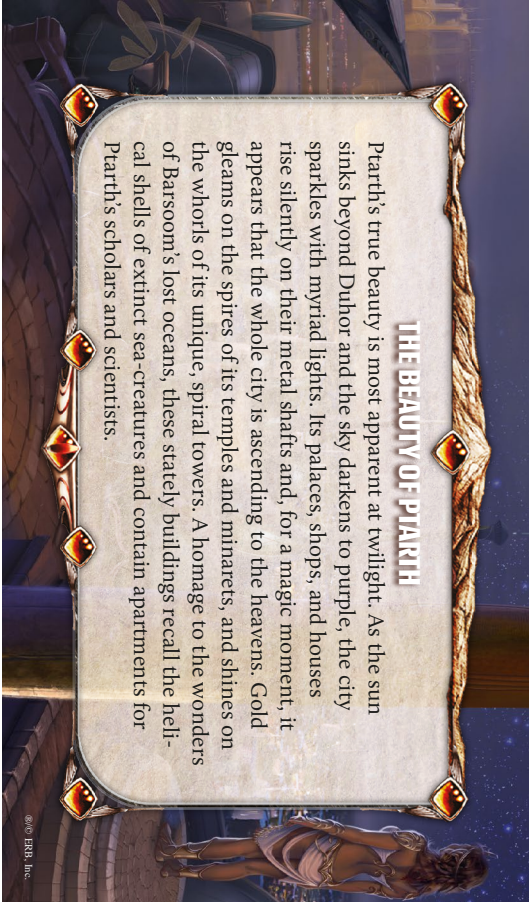
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ON MIGHTY WINGS

At this height, Barsoom appears like a sheet of parchment, aged to a dusky amber and crumpled carelessly. Written on and written over for millions of years, its surface is punctuated with the wreckage of fallen civilisations. White cities, eroding in the grip of time, form geometric patterns, their dotted lines tracing the coasts of vanished seas. Herds of thots move across wide, ochre spaces. In their wake, they leave faint, linear designs, uncertain tracings soon erased by the wind. Two armies flow together like sand poured over wet ink, their fighting men no more significant than each lost grain.

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THE BEAUTY OF PIARTH

Piarth's true beauty is most apparent at twilight. As the sun sinks beyond Duhor and the sky darkens to purple, the city sparkles with myriad lights. Its palaces, shops, and houses rise silently on their metal shafts and, for a magic moment, it appears that the whole city is ascending to the heavens. Gold gleams on the spires of its temples and minarets, and shines on the whorls of its unique, spiral towers. A homage to the wonders of Barsoom's lost oceans, these stately buildings recall the hell-cal shells of extinct sea-creatures and contain apartments for Piarth's scholars and scientists.

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THE DEAD OF MANATOR

The dead do not lie down in Manator. Instead they stand, in full regalia, in palaces and temples, villas and estates, their blank eyes regarding a city thinly populated by nobles and slaves. Taxidermy is Manator's peculiarity, and the ghoulish preservation of corpses in a semblance of life defines its character. Its citizens, indolent by habit, lavish attention on their departed kin. They buy them exquisite harnesses or tapestries. They carry them to the jetan fields and consult them on affairs of family and state. Manator's aristocracy have kept the past alive more effectively than any other Barsoomian race. It is their particular madness.

IN THE PITS

Dimly lit by low-powered radium bulbs, the pits are a warren of cells, antechambers, narrow passageways, and sudden, deceptive ramps. Tall pillars cast barred shadows making the area appear as a single, labyrinthine cell. The dirt floor, pounded flat by aeons of stumbling feet, show the marks of other prisoners. Arrows and instructions are scratched into its anonymous dust, signs of optimism and the hope of escape. They all lead not to a way out, but to the bones of their authors lying dull in the murk. Other marks surround the skeletons: the unmistakable script left by the many paws of the ulsio.

THE RIVER ISS

The river flows without a ripple, an uncanny, serpentine waterway that has carved out a deep, meandering valley unhurried and unobstructed for aeons. Cold and leaden, it passes between banks littered with the abandoned rafts of pilgrims who sought eternity and found nothing but death. The bleached bones of the faithful clutter the shores, yellowed offerings to the goddess Issus. In places, the Iss flows beside titanic shrines cut into the valley walls or erected from cyclopean blocks and adorned with sculptures both wondrous and awful. Dark and mysterious, the river runs forever southward, bearing the exhausted and the lost down to paradise.

TOONOL

Isolated by geography and the obsessive distrust of its people for their fellow Barsoomians, Toonol is nevertheless an attractive city, clean and ordered. It appears more so for its proximity to the Great Toonolian Marshes, which lie like a stinking door mat to the west. Architecturally, Toonol favors a bare, simple style which contrasts with that of other Martian cities. There are no extravagant flourishes here, no cupolas or fluted towers, nor are there any temples. It is a sober, slightly sombre place, brightened by the laughter of tiny figures wheeling on gossamer wings above its spires, their equilibrium propelling them through the sky.

THE CITY OF HORZ

From Horz, their proud capital, the Orovars calculated lines of latitude and longitude, dividing the planet to better navigate its five oceans. It seems an act of hubris now, this mapping of a world over which they had no real control. The seas are gone, the Orovars' ships are lost beneath the sands, and the prime meridian has moved to Exum on the equator. Horz is their tomb, a terraced, mouldering metropolis that pursued the receding waters until it fell exhausted into ruin. Only the splendid buildings of its prime endure, perched on the lip of a vast plateau, the lair of white apes, and worse.



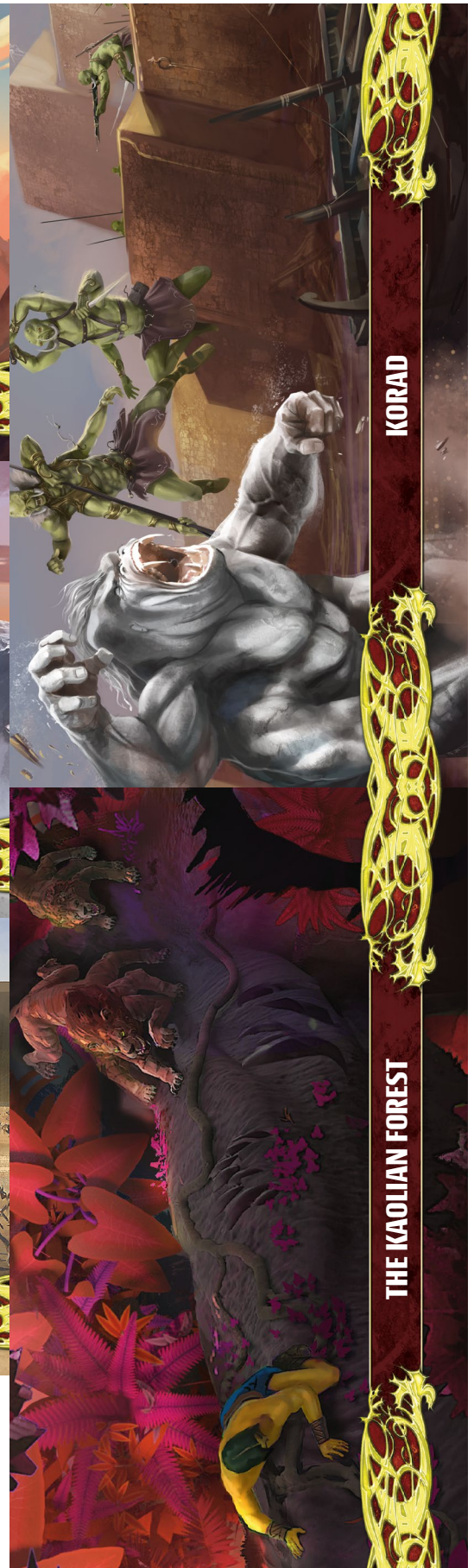
THE DEAD SEA BOTTOMS



ARTOLIAN HILLS



U-GOR



KORAD

THE KAOLIAN FOREST

KORAD

Away from the redundant harbor, the baking streets converge at a plaza cluttered with the debris of a green horde on the move. Across the litter of broken weapons, split harnesses, cold ashes, and stinking hides, a magnificent marble edifice glitters with gold and precious minerals. Its broad entrance, canopied in matching stone, offers respite from the sun. Within, a slope leads up to an enormous circular chamber, its walls adorned with murals of primordial Barsoom. Timeless rivers pass through green meadows. Oceans curl, motionless waves never breaking on their sun-stained shores. Trees bend and doze like children, careless of their fate.

THE DEAD SEA BOTTOMS

Between the continents of yellow-orange moss, lines of footprints lead straight across the flat sea bottom. Stands of mantalia have been shouldered aside and their broken trunks weep thin milk into the hungry earth. The rocks are slick with it, and its evaporation leaves a bitter tang in the breathless air. A green Martian war-party came this way, showing all the rashness of their species in their search for...what? Revenge? Hostages? Spoils? Their tracks are mute, their motives obscure. Barsoom is a world at war with itself and its pocked and tractless surface bears the scars of generations marching into battle.

ARTOLIAN HILLS

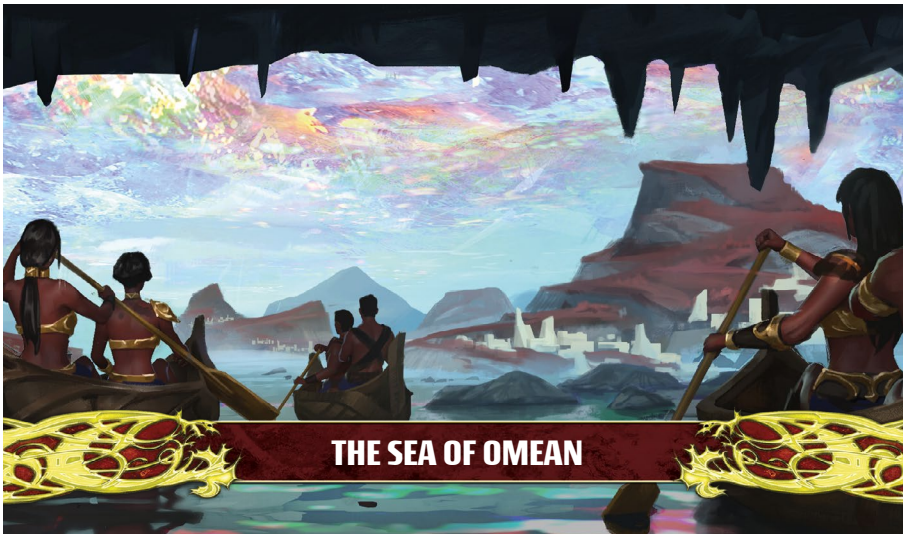
The ground rises steeply, ascending through a chain of low foothills to a series of plateaux. These tablelands form a prelude to high bluffs leading upwards to a curtain of sheer-faced slopes. Higher still, the Artolian Hills grow to bald mountains, some crowned with snow as white as the hair on a great ape's head. Lines of shadow mark where trails zigzag down the gentler slopes, cutting between the bluffs like old scars. Whether these paths are the result of primeval melt-water or the migration of green Martian nomads, they provide a starting point for a route through these awesome peaks.

THE KAOLIAN FOREST

A tropical forest. On Barsoom. Like an emerald on the breast of the dead sea bottoms, it is an astounding sight. It streams, filling the jungle glades with sweet-scented vapors. Unseen creatures call from the canopy, their cries a symphony of grunts and growls, snarls and shrieks, as predator and prey engage in their eternal, deadly dance. A bass buzzing, as if of great wings, strums the humid air, adding a strange, ambient tension. This is Kaol: an immense wooded depression, isolated by broken hills and waterless barrens, crossed by splendid roads leading from city to city, and haunted by veiled dangers.

U-GOR

The land has been scoured clean of all vegetation save for some blanched, withered weeds, nibbled to mere stumps. Not even the hardy yellow moss that covers so much of Barsoom remains. It is a desolate realm whose devastation blights the spirit. Melancholy reminders of its past deepen the sense of loss. Farms stand derelict, their ordered fields dug up, their irrigation pipes exposed and cracked. Skeletons of thoats lie in their pens and litter the wasteland. A flyer, folded into ruin, is crumpled beside the oddly stacked bones of its crew. Some power has devoured all that this territory once could offer.



THE SEA OF OMEAN



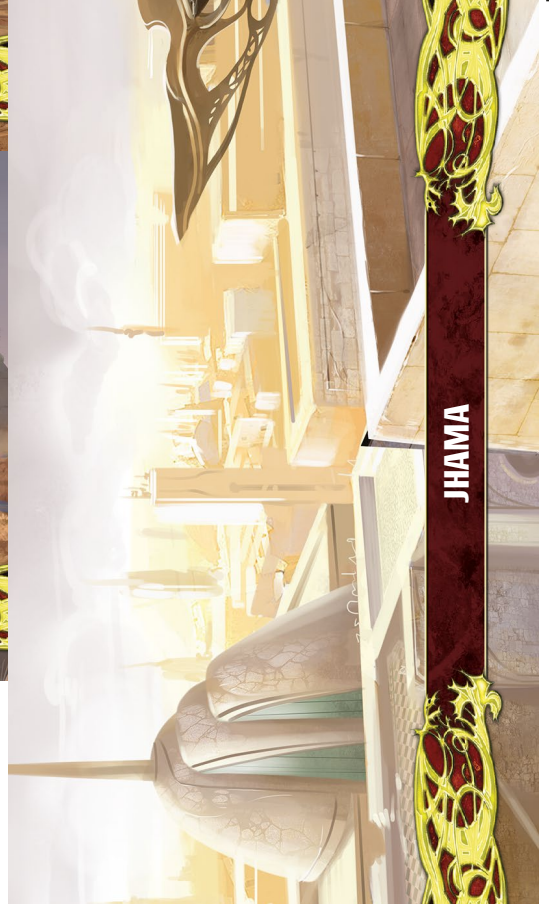
EXUM



GOOLI ON OMPT



GULF OF TORQUAS



JHAMA

GULF OF TORQUAS

Like a grand processional way, the broad, flat-bottomed valley links Torquas in the east to Xanator in the west. As with most of Barsoom's dead sea bottoms, it is carpeted abundantly with ochre moss. The plant, scarcely touched by grazing or harvesting, creeps over everything, softening and smoothing the arid, rocky terrain beneath. Its spongy texture eases fatigue and uncounted heads pass without notice. Nevertheless, the landscape's monotony dulls the wits. It is difficult to judge distances in this dreary expanse, and the eye seeks always for variation: the rounded prow of a wrecked flyer, a cage of giant ribs, a green movement on the horizon.

THE SEA OF OMEAN

Enclosed in a cavern of titanic proportions, the Sea of Omean stretches beyond eyesight until its margins are lost to night and distance. The vaulting ceiling above is similarly obscured. Only the slight phosphorescence of its islands and the lanterns of myriad ships restless on its surface make Omean appear any-thing less than infinite. Caught in this bubble of blackness, the sea heaves uneasily, lapping at isles and ships with waves like thick, slow tongues. Pallid vegetation grows along the shorelines of the islets, ethereal, colourless boughs drooping as though sick. All around, oily shapes move sinuously in the waters.

EXUM

Clustered around a central core of spires shaped like fantastically elongated fungi, Exum resembles no other red Martian outpost. Its buildings ramble, lacking the clearly-defined squares and courts of larger settlements. They flow into one another with an almost liquid quality. It thrums with energy. The ground around the unwallled station resonates sympathetically, sending vibrations up through the soles of boots and sandals. Above, its huge ninth ray accumulator towers crackle. Sparks arc between the collectors, discharging a sharp smell of ozone. A pneumatic hiss bursts from vents tucked within the curves of parabolic arches. There is more to Exum than Barsoom's meridian.

JHAMIA

Coral pink in the sunlight, the castle of Jhama is an oasis of beauty in a sequence of low, unremarkable hills. Encircled by a formidable wall, its elegant, flat-roofed structures are separated by open courts and impeccable gardens. Tall, sculpted trees shade scarlet lawns laid out between beds of nodding flowers. Weaving between the buildings, meandering paths ring dry, antique fountains and statues made featureless by time. Yet, despite its beauty, the estate is disconcerting. Its avenues are empty and its courtyards spectrally silent. Doors are closed tight and windows shuttered. Either Jhama lives in fear, or it has something to hide.

GOOLI ON OMPT

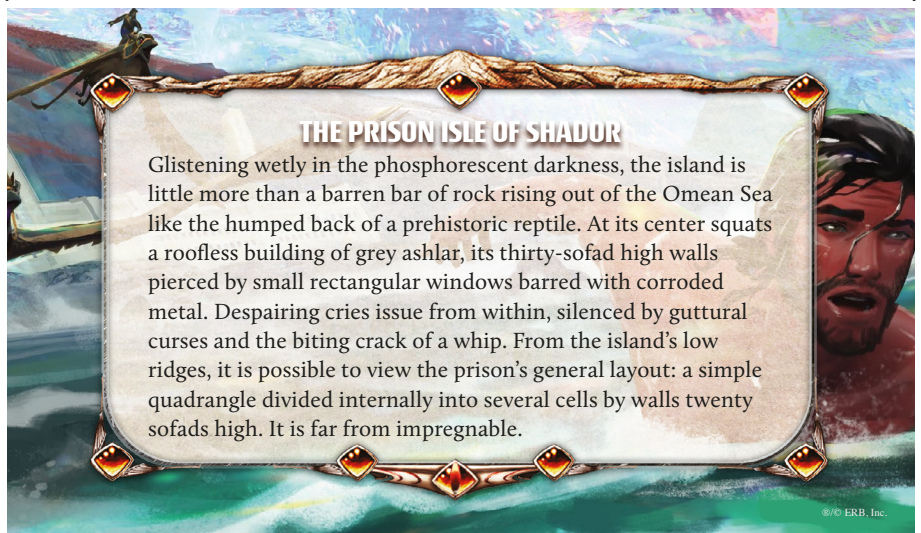
Sinking slowly into a mire, the village of Gooli is a huddle of shabby grass huts thatched with the slimy reeds common to the Toonolian Marshes. Outside each shack is a poorly-constructed hearth, a scattering of battered pots, and some rough cooking implements. Weeds, dead leaves, and matted grasses give the hamlet an unkempt air, as if its inhabitants were too preoccupied, or too slovenly, to attend their own hygiene. Its squalor contrasts with the unspoiled, rolling landscape, forests and clear stream of the island it occupies. On approaching, an unwholesome smell issues from the huts, redolent of rotting fruit.



THE PRISON ISLE OF SHADOR



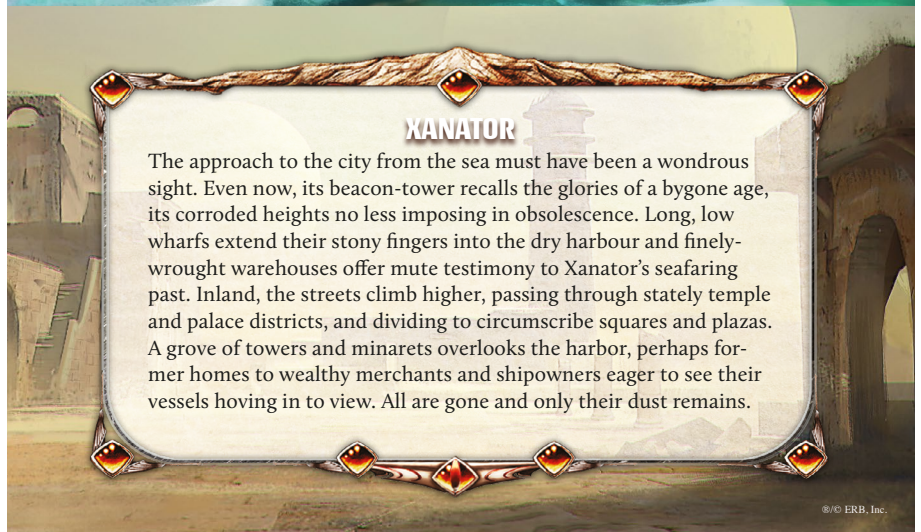
XANATOR



THE PRISON ISLE OF SHADOR

Glistening wetly in the phosphorescent darkness, the island is little more than a barren bar of rock rising out of the Omean Sea like the humped back of a prehistoric reptile. At its center squats a roofless building of grey ashlar, its thirty-sofad high walls pierced by small rectangular windows barred with corroded metal. Despairing cries issue from within, silenced by guttural curses and the biting crack of a whip. From the island's low ridges, it is possible to view the prison's general layout: a simple quadrangle divided internally into several cells by walls twenty sofads high. It is far from impregnable.

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XANATOR

The approach to the city from the sea must have been a wondrous sight. Even now, its beacon-tower recalls the glories of a bygone age, its corroded heights no less imposing in obsolescence. Long, low wharfs extend their stony fingers into the dry harbour and finely-wrought warehouses offer mute testimony to Xanator's seafaring past. Inland, the streets climb higher, passing through stately temple and palace districts, and dividing to circumscribe squares and plazas. A grove of towers and minarets overlooks the harbor, perhaps former homes to wealthy merchants and shipowners eager to see their vessels hoving in to view. All are gone and only their dust remains.

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