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Dungeon Crawl Classics #35
Gazetteer of the Known Realms

A COMPLETE CAMPAIGN SETTING

by Mike Ferguson, Jeff LaSala, and Harley Stroh

the
World
of
Áereth
Gazetteer

Dungeon Crawl Classics #35

Gazetteer of the Known Realms

Contents

Introduction 2
Chapter 1: The Northlands 3
Chapter 2: The Southlands 43
Chapter 3: The Lostlands 64
Chapter 4: Geographic Features 81
Chapter 5: Organizations 100
Chapter 6: Beyond the Known Realms 111
Chapter 7: History of the Northlands 113

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Introduction

The grimoire you hold in your hands first surfaced in America more than one hundred years ago. Discovered in the ruins of the Great Chicago Fire of 1871, the tome made its way from collector to collector and finally to the good Doctor S_____ W____, who—knowing my interest in bibliotic obscurities—entrusted the tome to me for translation.

Upon inspection, the first thing one notices about the tome is its smell: musty incense, wood smoke, and oiled steel. Bound in splitting leather and scarred with runes, the cover conjures visions of the ceaseless march of the ages.

Between those thick covers are several hundred hand-written pages, each inked and illuminated in dyes and pigments that bear little resemblance to any known by modern bibliophiles. Sadly, the bulk of the tome has been damaged beyond recognition or is simply untranslatable. But from the scattered passages, a determined researcher may infer this much:

The codex is the work of a handful of unidentified scriveners or monks, living during what might be termed a Dark Age—a time of marauding savages, unknown powers, and desperate heroes. By collecting the sum of their knowledge into a single work, the tome, these scribes hoped to stave off the press of darkness and barbarism.

Whether or not their gambit was successful, and if they accomplished with pen and ink what sword and spear could not, will likely never be known.

The codex is seventh in a work of twenty-one volumes, and serves as catalog for the later volumes and a brief gazetteer of what the scribes refers to as the *Umbris Mundus*. The first term, "shadow," certainly refers to the threats that plagued their civilization. The second translates to "world," but whether the scribes intended "world" as we understand it, or "continent," or simply "the lands of our lord-liege," remains unclear.

Similarly, a thousand other priceless historical details, deemed too trivial or universally understood to record, remain lost, waiting for future scholars to coax them from the mists of antiquity. Given the absence of accurate maps, it remains for the reader to decide if the codex is a pre-history of our world, or an inexplicable shadow-echo of another, unnamed realm.

We have done our best to present this translation of the tome in its original context, without attempting to conceal its flaws. I encourage the good readers to fill in the gaps with their own reasoning and logic, so that the world of the scribes might live on in their imaginations—and perhaps stave off the darkness a bit longer.

Harley Stroh
Curator of Esoteric Collections
Chicago, 2006

Chapter 1
The Northlands

The nations of the Northlands are steeped in eldritch history, and are often—quite literally—built upon the ruins of those that came before them. The mightiest citadels stand on the ruins of dwarfholds, holy sanctums are built atop fallen rings of druidic stones, and loggers harvest timber from fae-haunted glades. Every spring a farmer uncovers new ruins beneath his fields, often warded in dead languages unknown to modern sages. The past is the North's constant companion, dark-cowled and mysterious, revealing tales of high sorcery, heroism, and slumbering horrors at her leisure.

A careful study of these ruins, and of the scrolls and tomes brought back by explorers, reveals that the kings of men are not the first to rule the Northlands. Some legends speak of ancient races and gods familiar to scholars, while others whisper of foul cults and forbidden powers.

Sages debate these epochs endlessly, but all can agree that the current age is rightly called the Reign of Man. Whether by mortal ambition or some mystic turning of the cosmos, the power of the Gods has waned, permitting the rise of heroes, and granting men, elves, dwarves, and the wee-folk the freedom to fashion their own destinies.

This waning has also ushered in a new host of threats and dangers. The marauding armies of the Scourgelands threaten the heart of the civilized world, barbarians raid with greater frequency each spring thaw, and shrieking comets tumble from the night sky; witches, seers, and astrologers alike presage a time of coming darkness.

It remains to be seen whether this is a prelude to an age of prosperity and peace, or an end to humanity's reign.

Climate and Seasons

The Northlands encompass ecologies ranging from the temperate grasslands and vales of Crieste to the inhospitable wastes of the north. Climates and seasons are dependent largely on latitude and precipitation, with certain marked exceptions due to geographic and magical anomalies.

The Criestine Empire and the other nations adjacent to the Lirean Sea enjoy mild summers, brief winters, and long springs and autumns. Dense stands of deciduous hardwoods offer sturdy beams for shipbuilding, while fertile soils provide abundant crops and grasslands for cattle and sheep.

Moving north, the climate grows steadily cooler, reflected by a marked hardiness in the people and beasts. The Warlands, renowned for their wealth of natural resources, expect deep winters with heavy snowfall and months of isolation. The summers, unmitigated by the cooling Lirean Sea, can be equally severe, and times of hardship force farmers to augment their crops and herds with wild game. The deciduous forests slowly give way to primeval coniferous stands and the mighty Ashwood groves.

East, across the vast ranges of the Ul Dominor Mountains, are the Mirdar-Luminar Steppes. The little moisture that reaches the steppes is brought by raging storms that sweep down from Hoarfrost Bay. In years of drought, the steppes become a vast tinderbox, and wildfires rage up and down the high prairie, tainting the air for hundreds of leagues in every direction and shading the sunsets the color of spilled blood.

North of both the Mirdar-Luminar Steppes and the Warlands are endless swaths of high tundra, gnarled oak, and icy wastes. Here the temperature retreats below freezing every night of the year, and savage beasts swarm the land. While hunters, outlaws, and hermits choose to make their home in the forbidding wastes, they are the exception, not the rule.

Timekeeping and Celestial Bodies

The Emperor of Crieste, in his divine wisdom, determines all units of measurement, including the span of the days, months, and years. Following the end of the Interregnum, the empire adopted a sidereal calendar of 365 days, but many of the smaller nations hold to the older lunar calendar.

Every nation and religion celebrates a host of holy days throughout the year, and travelers can expect to encounter any number of festivals and feasts as they travel the North. While universal celebrations are rare, the following holidays are common to all cultures:

Swordfall: Spring in the Northlands is the season of war. Foes abound, and even nations of common cause have reason to settle border disputes with blade and lance. Swordfall is observed on the Spring Equinox, marking the customary beginning of the war season, when roads are passable and the weather tenable. Swordfall is traditionally celebrated with martial tournaments and tests of courage, but just as often the holiday heralds a full-scale invasion, presaging a season of rapine, fire, and death.

Day of Fates: Celebrated on Summer Solstice, the Day of Fates is the culmination of a weeklong celebration honoring patron deities and local saints. On the last day of the week, newborns are named, couples renew their vows of love, and oaths to lord and liege are declared anew. It is a common practice for knights to embark on quests on this holiday, and it is deemed a blessed day for wizards to choose apprentices. Adventuring companies often choose this day to make their first vows of brotherhood.

Harvestmoon: Falling on the full moon closest to the Autumn Equinox, Harvestmoon is a celebration of thanksgiving and preparation for the winter ahead. The dead are honored with tributes of wine and sweetmeats, and priests go from house to house offering blessings in return for the same. The revels stretch from moonrise to moonfall and lively celebrations are believed to ward off winter's chill.

Forge Feast: Observed on the Winter Solstice, Forge Feast celebrates the rebirth of the year, when hearth fires are relit from the forges of village smithies; woe is the smith who has let his forge fire die. The day culminates in an exchange of gifts, and a single enormous feast with every member of the community bringing an offering to the table.

Empires, Kingdoms, Fiefs, and City-States

What follows is a catalog of the empires, kingdoms, free-states, and principalities of the Northlands. The noted populations are only rough estimates; the actual figures fluctuate wildly with the seasonal depredations of war, plagues, and other acts of the Gods. This catalog is by necessity incomplete: towns, hamlets, and even some cities were passed over due to incomplete records and cartographical disputes. Local lords and elders should be always consulted before the beginning of any journey.

At first glance, the Known Realms might appear to be a patchwork of nations covering every league of Áereth, but veteran explorers know better. Each nation's borders extend only as far as its lord's ability to enforce his rule, leaving vast swaths of borderlands given over to roaming bands of escaped slaves and serfs, violent outlaws, monstrous humanoids, and far worse. Passage between nations without armed escort is attempted only by the bold or desperate.

The majority of Northlanders live in simple villages and hamlets, earning their livelihood by farming, herding, and hunting. The average farmer passes his entire life without traveling more than twenty miles from his homestead. Cities and towns are essential hubs of trade, defense, and religion. Any time a city is sacked by marauding hordes, the surrounding lands suffer.

Similarly, the cities rely on outlying farms to provide the enormous amounts of grain, vegetables, fruits, and meats necessary to support their swollen populations. A prince that punishes his people with high taxes and refuses to defend them in times of distress quickly discovers how difficult it is to maintain a cavalry without grain, or arm his knights without iron.

Exceptions to this rule are plentiful, and benign despots are few and far between. In the hostile realms of the North, civilization is best thought of as a curious anomaly in a long history of savagery and barbarism.

Cinai

(Vale of the Blood Hunt)

Thane of the Blooded, Ashir the Maul

Population: 569,601 (humans 75%, dwarves 10%, half-elves 4%, gnomes 3%, halflings 4%, elves 2%, other 2%)

Resources: Furs, mercenaries, raw wool, leather, timber

Capital: Marzakol

The wind-scoured hills and dark forests of the Cinai Highlands breed fierce warriors and deadly monsters. With the constant threat of the Scourge and the fierce hill trolls that are native to the Highlands, life in the Vale is often short and always violent.

The people of Cinai are forged in the fire of violence and tempered in the blood of their foes, hence their chosen name, the Blooded. Centuries of conflict have made them hardy in battle, quick to fight and slow to forgive insult. Dark and coarse of hair, their sun-weathered skin runs from olive to rich brown. Commoners dress in rough homespun cloth, while warriors and priests wear the pelts of the mighty northern great cats and dire wolves.

While considered savages by most civilized people, the Blooded's most valued possession is their honor—as anyone accusing them of deceit quickly learns. The folk of Cinai believe that life is a fleeting experience, but that the legends and stories told after death are eternal.

War is a way of life for the Blooded. Every boy and girl learns to use a sling by the age of five, and the study of sword and bow are quick to follow. While most warriors are unkempt barbarians, the most esteemed warriors gather in one of three Orders, the warrior fellowships that give the Vale its fierce reputation.

The Order of the Lion is comprised of holy warriors who charge into battle atop the shaggy steppe ponies; the Lions are renowned for fighting with lances, shortbows, and wickedly curved axes feared for their razor edges and lethal blows.

The warriors of the Raven are recognized as fearless rangers and scouts, fighting in the rocky highlands and dense forests with ease, striking from the shadows like ghosts.

Last of all is the Order of the Wolf: a collection of tireless foot soldiers sworn to victory or death. Tales hold that, in the course of a single night, a troop of Wolves can run dozens of miles in full armor and fight in the morn-

ing, as if they had spent the night sleeping in their homes.

Warriors of the Blooded record their victories in blued, runic tattoos. After years of battle, the tattoos evolve into sprawling works of art that cover a warrior's entire torso. The hordes of Blooded—dirty, wild-eyed and tattooed—inspire terror in the bravest knight, and send lesser men scattering to the four winds.

Fortunately for the civilized lands, the Blooded's favored enemies are the monstrous humanoids of the Scourgelands. Every spring the Orders can be found on the Mirdar-Luminar Steppes, frothing at the mouth, beating their axes against their wooden shields, calling the orcs and ogres to battle.

The armies of the Cinai follow a fearsome warrior of near-divine might: Ashir the Maul. A legend amongst his people, Ashir embodies all the virtues of a Cinai warrior. Strong, brave, and cunning, the Maul is fearless in battle and terrible in his wrath. Ashir's throne is found in the primitive city of Marzakol, but he holds court on the field of battle. Like the warriors serving in his hordes, the master of the Blooded is most at home in the heat of combat, howling in triumph as he cuts a swathe of death and destruction through his foes.

The majority of the Cinai people live in simple sod huts scattered about the lonely highlands, and spend their days herding shaggy sheep and the highland cattle. The nation's cities, if they can be called such, are often no more than haphazard collections of tents and crude cabins and lodges.

Marzakol: (Large town, pop. 4,299) The capital of Cinai is built atop the ruins of an ancient dwarven city. Granite blocks form crude walls, raven-picked ogre skulls adorn tall pikes, and smoky fires from the town's many forges are visible for miles in every direction. Despite its simple defenses and coveted location, it has never fallen to foreign armies.

Ashir the Maul, Thane of the Cinai, rules the highlands from atop a low hill in the center of the city. Numerous trophies of fallen foes adorn his feasting hall and surround his throne: broken shields from fallen knights, shattered skulls from every sort of beast and demon, sundered swords and splintered lances. From here he plots new ways to bring terror to his foes, and honor to his people. Such plans invariably include battle.

The city is also home to dozens of smithies. The forge fires burn at every hour of the day, transforming the dark dwarven ore into razor-tipped spears and bright shields. Arms and armor forged in Marzakol bear distinctive markings, a blue-gray patina visible only in starlight. The origin of these markings is a mystery to even the smiths, but sages are quick to note that Marzakol is dwarven for *Starfall*.

Iderag: (Small city, pop. 6,902) It is fitting that Cinai's greatest city exists only one season out of the year. At the end of summer, merchants brave the fierce highlands, bringing a year's worth of trade goods, dried fruit, and coveted foreign spices. The merchants flock to the Fartrader River, and raise a city of tents, bringing trade goods to the Cinai herdsmen and hunters.

With the southern merchants come a host of southern vices. Thievery is rife, as are fights over foreign women. Quick-tongued merchants can make a fortune over the course of a few weeks, but at the first hint of winter's chill, the merchants flee south, and Iderag vanishes as quickly as it appeared.

Namana: (Village, pop. 640) Namana is home to the Order of Lions, the fierce war band that serves as Cinai's medium cavalry. At first glance, the village is unassuming; for all the legends attributed to the Lions, the village is deceptively small. This is because at any time the bulk of the Order is roaming the highlands, patrolling the border or watching the herds of shaggy steppe ponies.

Those riding into the small village will find only aging men and women and young babes in arms. The men and women are the band's elders and shamans, while the babes are those too young to ride on their own. The elders nourish the children on pony milk and war stories, and as soon as children can ride they rejoin their parents on the high steppe.

Hali: (Small town, pop. 1,372) Concealed in a glacier

valley, high in the southern Ul Dominor Mountains, the fastness of Hali is the home to the Order of the Ravens. Like its scouts and rangers, the stronghold is difficult to find and harder to reach. A visitor to the mountain fastness is met with an entourage of solemn warriors long before he draws within a dozen miles of the valley. The sight of silent watchers silhouetted atop the sheer canyon walls unnerves even the stoutest soldier.

Those passing the tests of the Ravens meet with a quiet woman of undeterminable age. If rumors are to be believed, this nameless woman is one of the most accomplished assassins in all of the Northlands. Such tales are surely nothing more than idle speculation, the spurious work of feeble minds.

Kursan, Chanshi, and Qumarli: (Small castles, pop. averaging 1,000) The leadership of the Order of the Wolf is divided between three nearly identical citadels. Easily recognized by their colossal central tower and concentric rings of ditches and simple wooden walls, each fastness is capable of disgorging a roaring horde of Wolf warriors. The three fortresses are spaced evenly across the highlands, shouldering the responsibility of the nation's defense.

Each citadel is governed by a council of thanes drawn from the highest echelons of the Order. Their roundtable decisions, made by howling warriors bearing terrible weapons, are things of legend. But once a consensus is reached, and the Wolves are mobilized, little can stand in their path.

Crieste, Empire of

His Divine Eminence, the Rampaging Lion, Immortal Emperor of Crieste

Population: 3,209,000 (humans 59%, half-elves 11%, halflings 7%, dwarves 7%, elves 5%, half-orcs 5%, gnomes 4%, other 2%)

Resources: Silver, foodstuffs, trade goods, livestock

Capital: Archbridge (during Summer Court), Kassantia (during Winter Court)

Oldest of the western nations, and arguably the most powerful, the Empire of Crieste once dominated the North. Its vast holdings, built atop the moss-covered ruins of the Nimorian Empire, have themselves fallen into ruin; once again fierce monsters roam the wild, travel between the towns and cities is seldom undertaken without escort, and sellswords and warcasters are in great demand.

The reach of Crieste once extended from the Mirdar Forest, east to Hoarfrost Bay, and south past the golden sands of the Ghetrian Desert. But with the disappearance of Emperor Oststad, the empire passed into the Interregnum: three hundred years of internal feuding that culminated in the secession of the Southern Province. Other kingdoms and principalities were quick to follow, eagerly making their bids for freedom.

Hoping to stem the tide of seceding states, the lord-barons displayed a rare moment of consensus and elected a seven-year-old boy to sit upon the Dragonskull Throne. Now ten years of age, the Child-Emperor rules according to the dictates of his vizier, Lady Mortianna, who ensures that the child remains "untroubled" by the onus of empire. The child will assume full powers upon his fifteenth birthday, but until that day it is Mortianna and her coterie of power-hungry barons who direct decadent Crieste.

Thankfully, the Child-Emperor is served by Captain Sentri, Master of the Sable March and General of the Seven Armies. Sentri embodies all the virtues of chivalry, swearing loyalty to the Emperor while spurning the lord-barons. This often places the captain in the dangerous role of commanding the armies to obey the Vizier's orders, while sending agents of the Sable March on missions to counter the same. Thus far the captain has successfully countered the worst of Mortianna's schemes, but as the Emperor draws nearer to his Rite of Ascendancy, Sentri's gambit grows steadily more dangerous.

Crieste is celebrated for the honor and nobility of its knights, and no knighthood captures the spirit of galantry better than the Order of the Sable March. Stories of the knights defending mountain passes against the press of giants, single-handedly defeating hordes of demons, and sacrificing their lives for the common man are almost too improbable to be true, but this doesn't stop the younger squires from striving to emulate the tales. Many squires die in the pursuit of impossible ideals, but those who survive go on to become legendary warriors without peer. The Knights of the Sable March can be recognized by their coat of arms: a black background pierced by three silver stars. The background signifies the darkness that threatens humanity and Crieste; the stars signify the three tenets of the order: honor, duty and courage. The Knights of the Sable March are quartered in the fortress known as the Citadel, in the city of Archbridge, but can be seen regularly patrolling the farthest reaches of the empire and its neighbors, fighting injustice and carrying out secret missions on behalf of Captain Sentri and the throne.

Even more secretive than their armored brothers are the wizards and sorcerers belonging to the shadowy cabal known as the Ordo Arcana. Rumor holds that the spell-

casters meet on every full moon, wearing elaborate masks to conceal their identities. The aims of the Ordo Arcana, and the reasons for their intense secrecy, remain unknown, but a masked sorceress has been spotted leaving a clandestine meeting with Captain Sentri on more than one occasion. It comes as no surprise that that the Ordo Arcana makes its headquarters in the magic-laden city of Kassantia, but seekers would do well to inquire discreetly before attempting to enter the tower known as the Howling Fane.

Despite the chaos of the Interregnum and the greed of its lord-barons, the Criestine Empire retains much of its former greatness. Until the secession of the Southern Province, all trade passing through the Lirean Sea had to stop at a Crieste port, filling the empire's coffers to bursting. Crieste maintains strong ties with the Steel Overlord (see *Holdfast of the Steel Overlord*) and benefits greatly from trade with its dwarf allies. Relations with the Fae Lords are much cooler; during the Interregnum, northern kingdoms aggressively expanded their domains, sparking conflicts between human foresters and elven scouts. Abroad, the empire's colonies continue to offer their annual tribute, and none dare to challenge the Imperial Navy.

At present, both the Empire of Crieste and the Southern Province lay claim to the Dragonskull Throne of Kassantia, and the scions of both nations aver to be the true Son of Heaven. So long as the two emperors fight for the same throne, the empire's outlying kingdoms will continue to exercise their independence, growing stronger with each passing season. Within one hundred years, the mightiest human empire the world has ever known may be nothing but a memory.

The empire recognizes nearly a thousand settlements, ranging from small hamlets to the greatest cities of the north. Following is a brief list of Crieste's more notable towns and cities:

Archbridge: (Metropolis, pop. 48,250) Also known as "Summerhold," Archbridge is home to the summer imperial court. The city also houses the Imperial Army and their chief rivals, the Order of the Sable March. One of the great cities of the Northlands, Archbridge is governed by Crieste's warrior class, men and women famed for their honor and martial pride. Status in the Imperial Army is determined by nobility of birth, while in the Sable March, rank is accorded by honor and bravery in the defense of good. It follows then that the Army and the Knights of the Sable March are bitter rivals, each striving to outdo the other on the field of battle. Too often these tensions boil over, resulting in deadly back-alley duels and running street battles. Officially, the generals of the Army and the Sable March refuse to condone the duels, but high-level commanders can be often seen returning to their barracks late at night, sporting bloody wounds and ferocious grins.

Many aspiring young warriors make pilgrimages to the city, hoping to join the ranks of the fabled March or the Imperial Army. Those that fail quickly find their way to the city's taverns and gambling dens, where they nurse their wounded pride with liquor and brawling. It is said that Archbridge is a city of warrior-lords, but this only partially true; for every true knight, there are a dozen pretenders hoping to catch the Emperor's eye.

The majestic city is built atop the ruins of a previous acropolis, and Archbridge's vast undercity is notorious for its ancient passageways, forgotten tombs, and secret corridors. The Imperial Army sends regular expeditions into the undercity, but few return.

Axebury: (Hamlet, pop. 125) A sleepy hamlet founded on the southern edge of Mosswood, the folk of Axebury make their living harvesting timber for the dark glades. Recent expeditions into the heart of the wood have uncovered peculiar standing stones of ancient origin. Whether the stones are baleful or blessed has yet to be discovered.

Blihai: (Small town, pop. 16,801) A vibrant fishing town with a deep natural harbor and easy access to old growth forests, Blihai also serves as the western staging area for the Imperial Navy. Seamen are highly regarded in Blihai, and those with little or no deck experience are often dismissed as "greens." With a rotating pool of over one thousand sailors and marines, Blihai has grown notorious for its rollicking nightlife, and—in times of war—its sea captains' practice of "enlisting" drunks into the Emperor's navy.

Carnelloe: (Large thorp, pop. 86) Isolated from major trade routes and battered by frequent storms, this lonely costal hamlet is often dismissed by imperial mapmakers. Carnelloe (Elvish for "desolate place") is noteworthy only for its proximity to Gurnard's Head, a rocky spire that served as a strategic landmark in the early days of Crieste. The solemn tower atop the spire was hard put during the Siege of Sorrows, and has since fallen into ruin.

Dhavosin: (Large town, pop. 4,014) Known to merchant lords as the Crossroads of the Empire, Dhavosin hosts a steady stream of caravans and traveling traders. In the peak of autumn the town hosts Candlemeet, a festival and bazaar drawing farmers and craftsfolk from across the empire. The population swells to over 10,000 souls, the tent city spilling past the town walls and onto the outlying grasslands. During the heady, month-long festival, people of every creed and color meet to drink, gamble, and barter, and entire fortunes are won or lost overnight. Swarthy southern merchants mingle with dwarf traders offering crates of gleaming weapons fresh from Holdfast forges, while Kassantian mages shop for exotic spell components and trade secrets with the elves.

Dundraville: (Village, pop. 452) Overlooking the shores of Lake Dundrae, Dundraville is a sleepy village of fishermen and farmers. Local features of geographic note include a ring of druidic standing stones, and a peculiar rock formation known as Skulltop Hillock.

The Graves: (Small city, pop. 11,901) Officially known as Sirael Citadel, the prison island of Crieste is better known as the Isle of Many Graves, or simply the Graves. When Criestine criminals are judged too vile to be redeemed, they are placed on a ship and sent to Sirael Citadel. Few ever return.

The prison is administrated by a grim warlock known as the Maelidoch. It is whispered that the Maelidoch is guilty of his own crimes and that his service as master of the island is part of a cruel sentence. It is also rumored that the dark wizard performs experiments on his wards; those few who do return from the Graves report tormented screams ringing from the prison dungeons, screams that resemble the screech of metal on metal more than the cries of flesh-and-blood humans.

In the years since its creation, Sireal Citadel has grown to encompass the entire island. Prisoners constantly labor on the citadel, building its towers ever higher and digging its dungeons ever deeper. The currently citadel is a maze of old and new construction, with half-finished towers and passageways leading nowhere; the purpose of the completed citadel—and *if* it is even intended to be completed—is known only to the Maelidoch.

Hadler's Gap: (Hamlet, pop. 253) The northernmost reach of the fallen empire, Hadler's Gap is a collection of small farms nestled amongst the Urkallan Hills. To the west, a forbidding, craggy mountain rises from the grassy hills. Local legend holds that the mountain was the fantastic result of an ancient duel between warring arcanists, and passing merchants aver to the unnatural aura that haunts those living in the shadow of the mountain.

High Cross: (Small castle, pop. 910) Raised at the juncture of two royal tradeways, and overlooking the sparkling waters of the Blade Reach, the stronghold of High Cross wards the empire from monsters making their way up from the Great Swamp and southern Ul Dominor Mountains. On occasion, beasts threaten the castle itself, and many prominent weaponsmiths and armorers work forges inside the castle walls. Captains of the watch constantly seek to recruit would-be-heroes, as the stronghold's outriders suffer high casualties in their defense of the empire.

Kassantia: (Metropolis, pop. 62,870) In all of the Northlands, the city of Kassantia is second in size only to Punjar, and second to none in eldritch grandeur. Home to the Winter Palace of the Emperor, the prestigious Royal Academy of Sorcery, and the mysterious Ordo Arcana, the city is rightly said to be the Gem of Crieste. Wondrous sights and sounds abound in the city's shops, archmages can be seen arriving astride pegasi and enormous rocs, and the brightly armored knights of the Sable March patrol the well-cobbled streets.

Kassantia is also the home and destination of the imperial tribute fleet. Twice each year the fleet sails into port, bearing gold and exotic wonders tithed by the empire's far-flung colonies. While the fleet generally takes six months to complete one circuit, the precise timing and arrival of the fleet is one of the empire's most carefully guarded secrets. Only once has a treasure ship ever fallen to piracy: to the fell pirate Bloody Jack. Jack's success has inspired many a knave to dream of cutting galleys from the gold-laden fleet, and the shipping lanes leading to Kassantia are littered with sunken pirate vessels.

Sainfoin: (Village, pop. 620) Hidden deep within the Warderwood, the village of Sainfoin is renowned for its rangers and woodsmen. Ruled—if such a word could be used—by an ancient druid, the citizens of Sainfoin refuse to swear fealty to the Criestine Empire. The dense groves of Warderwood are highly prized by shipbuilders, and the woodsmen of Sainfoin often find themselves in skirmishes with lumberjacks sent by the Imperial Navy. Elves and half-elves are common in Sainfoin, and respected as equals by the humans.

Silverton: (Large thorp, pop. 76) A small mining village perched high in the mountains north of the Fangs, Silverton's livelihood depends entirely upon the plentiful

silver mines that dot the rocky hillsides. Regular Miner's Guild caravans make their way through the deep canyons to Archbridge, and caravan guards are always in high demand.

Sparport Watch: (Small town, pop. 1,380) A towering citadel straddling a rocky ridge, Sparport surveys the land and sea for miles in every direction. The lord-baron, Izod the Shark, has been tasked with taming the pirates of the Wreckers. And yet—to the Emperor's disappointment and Izod's bitter chagrin—for every pirate crew he hangs, another two ships seem to spring from the sea itself. Responding to veiled threats from the court, Izod has redoubled his efforts, swearing to hang the crew of any ship, pirate or otherwise, that he finds sailing the Wreckers.

Soulgrave: While squarely within Crieste territory, the city of Soulgrave is claimed by no nation. See *Soulgrave, Free City of* for more information.

Tarrasine: (Large city, pop. 24,021) The city of Tarrasine is Crieste's chief port on the Lirean Sea. Built atop a low-lying swamp, the city has grown into a chaotic sprawl of docks, taverns, sinking towers, and smugglers' dives. While such a rowdy city might seem impossible to rule, Lord-Baron and Harbormaster Deor Cuthwilf thrives on the chaos. An iron-fisted ox, Lord Cuthwilf can be found on the docks nearly every day, meeting with ship captains and merchant princes. Those who cross him are quick to feel his wrath, and many captains pay tithes directly to Cuthwilf to stay in his good graces. Tarrasine smugglers are likewise expected to tithe, and the city walls are ringed with crow cages holding the skeletons of those who failed to pay. Lord Cuthwilf retains the Crimson Hawks, a small army of depraved thugs and henchmen, to enforce his rule. Well armed and universally feared, the Hawks enjoy unquestioned authority in the city streets.

Vaquerea: (Small city, pop. 8,110) Vaquerea is famous for its horse breeders and trainers, and is home to the fabled warhorses of Parelor. Intelligent, fearless, and unmatched in battle, the mighty warhorses are the exclusive steeds of the Knights of the Sable March. The citizens of Vaquerea are friendly but proud folk, with an obscene love of bargaining.

Vernaut: (Small city, pop. 11,680) A city of craftspeople and silversmiths, Vernaut is unusual for its high population of gnomes and half-elves. Ruled by Lady Imaril, a benevolent and fair governess, Vernaut enjoys the prosperity and peace that eludes much of the Northlands. In recent years, that peace has been troubled by savage raids from the Isle of Nos Caen. The raiders push ashore in the dark of night, sacking and pillaging with animal fury, before hauling women and children back to their savage isle. The people of Vernaut have pled their case before the Emperor, but his eminence has yet to commit a force capable of quelling the raiders.

Wicheath: (Village, pop. 460) Isolated from much of the empire, Wicheath is a lonely whaling village, ruled by a circle of matriarchs informally known as the Council of Crones. For reasons unknown to sages and scholars, the young girls of Wichheath are often highly talented sorceresses. Moreover, every seventh year a truly gifted child is born, one with the power to warp magic as weavers pull thread. These girls are quickly ushered away to the ancestral caves that dot the barren coastline, and tutored in the ancient ways of the crones. The crones of Wicheath have no tolerance for explorers and adventurers eager to plumb the depths of this mystery, and between their hardy menfolk and the formidable magics of the crones themselves, interlopers seldom stay long.

Elraydia

The Sestet

Population: 27,643 (humans 56%, half-elves 13%, elves 10%, halflings 5%, dwarves 4%, half-orcs 3%, maenads 3%, monstrous humanoids 3%, dromites 3%)

Resources: ?

Capital: The City of Elraydia

In a world prolific with magic, the less understood arts are often beheld with fear and mistrust. Those possessing psionic talent usually hide their powers from public view or disguise them as magic. In many lands, organized witch hunts, usually led by paranoid spellcasters unwilling to tolerate what they cannot understand or control, slaughter and imprison psionic-using people. For millennia, the persecution of their talents drove such individuals and even entire bloodlines into isolation or constant flight. Existing on the fringes of society, or hidden within it, these psychic people could find no enduring solace.

A mere two hundred years ago, six powerful human psions shared the dream of a haven for their "kind." These men and women, each a master of one of the six psionic disciplines, went to extraordinary lengths to realize this dream. Committing great acts of good and evil, they became notorious outlaws across the Northlands, wanted by kings, high priests, and archwizards for their crimes. Yet their efforts were not in vain, for at last they found a remote, barren valley in the Nyfall Mountains and there made their home, laying the first stones of Elraydia for the generations to come. Having erased all knowledge of the vale from records across the nations and assassinating all those who could reveal it, they had secured their new home.

Having discovered in their quest the secrets of psychic rebirth, they were free to retire their old lives. Transforming themselves into elans, they purged their memories of their former lives, crimes, all their power, and even their names—but not their goal. They began anew as the peaceful elders of young Elraydia. In the span of a few decades, the small community became a city and the six slowly regained the power they once held. Now they focused their power to preserve their beloved home and guard its people. Elraydia has remained safe for many years, the knowledge of its existence reduced to a myth in the Northlands.

As large as any of Crieste's civilized metropolises, Elraydia's architecture is a wonder to behold. The buildings and towers, wrought by the stonemasons of several races, have been shaped and reinforced with the powers of metacreativity. Its outer walls form a great hexagon at the center of the valley. The majority of the city's buildings comprise Low Raydia, the residential and market districts. At the center of the city, rising nearly one hundred feet above Low Raydia, is the plateau district of High Raydia. This great pedestal houses the governmental buildings, major temples, and at its very heart, the Mindspire. Fresh water is drawn up telekinetically from a subterranean river through the plateau itself and issues from the rock face on each of six sides of the hexagonal plateau. Since their redirection overland, these rivers have invigorated the valley's flora and fauna. Among the cobbled streets and glittering spires of Elraydia, many races live in relative harmony; the common humanoid races mingle freely with half-giants, maenads, and dromites. While psionic-using creatures make up the majority of the population, other peoples seeking refuge from persecution have been welcomed as well and now make up a large portion of Elraydian society.

The six great mountains that enclose the valley form a natural barrier to hide the city, but within them the concerted efforts of some of Áereth's most powerful psions protect it from scrying, remote viewing, and even aerial scrutiny. The weather itself has been tamed for agriculture and the forests and plains of the valley floor have become rich with game since the inception of the six Elraydian rivers. Though winters are longer here than in more temperate lands, the valley does not share the merciless cold of the surrounding mountains.

Elraydia is ruled by the gentle administrations of the Sestet, the governing council of which only four of the original six seats remain. Day-to-day affairs are handled loosely by a confederacy of district lords known as the Low Vibration. Serving the Low Vibration is the Reaching, a militia of soulknives who act as the city watch. All serious matters and judgments defer to the High Vibration, comprised of the Masters of the Sestet and their select advisor-confidants, anonymous citizens selected randomly from month to month. It is said that, in time, every citizen will be called upon to advise the Masters. Based out of the Mindspire, the Masters of the Sestet meet frequently and discuss the present and future concerns of Elraydia. A tower hewn of solid crystal, the Mindspire slowly shifts its color based on the Sestet's disposition, though few in the city can interpret this phenomenon.

Each of the Masters is one of the Elraydia's founding psions, elans whose collective power ensures the city's continued existence. Having given up their former lives and identities, the Masters of the Sestet live for Elraydia first, protecting their dream made manifest. Though they appear as middle-aged men and women, as elans they are effectively immortal, growing slightly more aloof with the passage of years as their humanity slowly dissolves. The Master of Images, youngest of the red-haired Masters, is an imaginative shaper whose powers of metacreativity have sculpted and honed the defenses of the city since its birth. The Master of Time is a seer of seeming omniscience whose far-sighted powers help find those in need of Elraydia's aid. The Master of Light, a peerless kineticist, finds and apprehends those threats that do penetrate the valley's defenses. The Master of Soul is a nomad who serves as the headmistress of the city's education system, teaching that while flesh is transient, the soul is immortal.

Ten years ago, the Masters of Sight and Life were slain in a deadly insurgence that nearly ended Elraydia. Though the threat was quelled, the city lost two of its Masters. The others of the Sestet have been searching for new candidates to the office, but so far no worthy claimants have been found. Of great concern is the Master of Sight, whose considerable powers of telepathy are needed to maintain vigilance on the hearts and minds of Elraydia's people—and to keep it free from treasonous minds. The Master of Life served as a healer and protector of the city, and her death has left a void felt by all.

Because of its seclusion, Elraydia is necessarily self-sufficient, drawing from the resources of the now-verdant woodlands and the neighboring mountains. Only rarely do the Masters of the Sestet consent to trade with other realms, and each occasion is a celebrated event in itself. Trade caravans, heavily armed and psionically protected, are willing to travel far to secure supplies that the valley cannot yield.

Elraydia, an idea as much as it is a place, is a city of tolerance and learning. It opens its arms to those in need that the Masters deem worthy, usually psionic-using creatures running from persecution but often any group suffering from the tyranny of ignorance. The Master of Time sponsors the Wanderers, an organization that trav-

els abroad, disguised as humble pilgrims or wayfaring gypsies, whose only goal is to find psionic-using creatures and invite them to the safety of Elraydia. At any given time, four or five caravans of Wanderers roam the Northlands in search of their psionic kin. Once brought to the edge of the valley, they must swear to Elraydia's secrecy. Leaving Elraydia is not as simple, however, and all who would depart must meet approval by the Masters of Time and Sight—and many will have their memory of its location purged from their minds. With the recent loss of the Master of Sight, Elraydia's security is now threatened. Rumors exist that already news of the valley's existence has begun to spread among the Northlands, graduating from myth to legend.

All citizens of Elraydia look forward to a time they call the Awakening, a future when the city-state has grown large enough to declare itself to the other nations of the world and will be too strong to overcome. The Awakening is the collective life goal of the Sestet, transforming their city into an open beacon to psionic-using creatures the world over.

Elven Nations, the

Various leaders

Population: 2,510,800 (elves 65%, half-elves 14%, halflings 12%, gnomes 5%, humans 3%, dwarves 1%)

Resources: Timber, furs, magic items, wine, herbs

Capital: —

The primeval groves, shadowed glades, and misty vales of the western forests are the uncontested realm of the Fae Lords. With leaders who are wise beyond all learning, yet who rule with the capricious hearts of children, the Elven Nations are synonymous with magical might and woodland lore.

Much to the dismay of the kings of man, there is no single ruler of the elfin folk. At best, the nations resemble a collection of independent city-states, each with its own governance and temperment. A human prince might take pains to secure permission to harvest wood from a particular forest, only to discover that the groves fall under the rule of not one, but several fae communities. This fundamental difference has fed racial tensions and resulted in the bloody clashes that taint human and fae relations to this day.

Elven communities are always found amongst natural wonders of unmatched beauty, but most commonly in the boughs of great Ashwood trees. Those who have seen these aboreal cities return telling tales of majestic manors built several hundred feet above the forest floor, graceful arches spanning the boughs, and floating globes that light up the night like arcane fireflies.

While not a leader in the human sense of the word, each nation has a designated queen, a noble elf whose spirit has been bound to an ancestor tree by arcane rites as old as the elven race. By accepting the binding, the queen willingly gives up a portion of her soul to the ancestor tree; in return, her senses are broadened to include all the animals and natural spirits in her domain. A bound queen is essentially immortal, serving as an ageless councilor and matriarchal advisor. Legend holds that every thousand years or so a queen will voluntarily resign her post and sever her bond with the ancestor tree; this separation inevitably results in the death of the queen. The queen and her ancestral tree are always protected by an elite guard of warrior-mages, elves who have sworn their lives to the defense of their queen and the ancestor tree.

More so than the realms of man or dwarf clans, the elven nations are autonomous and self-sufficient. They maintain cool ties with the Holdfast of the Steel Overlord, trading fine woods for metal ore and gems. Similarly, the elves' festive, joyous nature comes to an abrupt end whenever their forests are invaded by human woodsmen. Sadly, while the elven armies rival the dwarves' for their skill and training, they are inevitably overwhelmed by sheer numbers of their enemies. Nation after nation has fallen to the press of axe-wielding settlers, who trample faerie rings and other mystical sites of incalculable worth in their lust for the precious lumber.

While elves of some sort are found in nearly every woodland, few are organized into true nations. Following is a list of the recognized realms of elvenkind. Note that with certain exceptions, these are the names adopted by the human realms. Elven cartographers should refer to the original fae notes for accurate naming.

Amn'crith Forest: (Pop. 12,800) The elves of the Amn'crith forest make their homes in the tops of great Ashwood trees, traveling between them via a network of delicate suspension bridges that sway in the wind, or astride great rocs. A hardy, independent gathering of clans, the Amn'crith elves have suffered less at the hands of man, and enjoy peaceful relations with the Barony of Moran. The Amn'crith elves are masters of archery, and practiced at raining arrows down upon their foes from the backs of their swift rocs.

Anseur Forest: (Pop. 23,079) The elves of the Anseur are renowned throughout the Northlands for two attributes: their mastery of the arcane arts, and their passionate adherence to an ancient code of honor. They pride themselves as the keepers of traditional fae culture; correspondingly they place a high worth on arcane lore and eldritch mastery.

Every aspect of Anseur life is keyed to the progress of constellations, obscure ley lines, and the march of the sun and moons. Though this devotion has made the Anseur elves solemn and haughty, it is rightly said that only the druids rival their understanding of the cosmos.

Unlike their cousins in the Corsan and Mirdar Forests, the Anseur elves have enjoyed several centuries of uninterrupted peace. Other than the usual woodland monsters and human encroachments, the Anseur elves have been left largely undisturbed. Recent incursions of frost and hill giants have threatened this stability, however, and if the elves cling to their illusion of permanence, the kingdom of Anseur could fall.

Blackbriar Wood: (Pop. 1,209) The elves of Blackbriar are a cheerful, good-humored folk, given to lighthearted revelry. The elves maintain close ties with the mages of Kassantia, and enjoy great influence in the imperial court, having fought alongside the imperial forces in the Criestine Colonies. The elves' valor and courage won them respect of the barons, and a lasting presence in the colonies. Their ruby wine is popular amongst the lord-barons of Crieste, and gnome traders regularly leave the Blackbriar Wood, their badger-drawn wagons laden with wax-sealed jugs.

Despite the elves' welcoming nature, they refuse to allow outsiders within a copse of trees known as the Elder Vale. Those who have stepped inside the dappled glades report a darksome sump that radiates an icy chill on even the warmest of days. What lies at the heart of the forbidding sump—and its relationship with the elves of Blackbriar—is a mystery.

Cairnswild: (Pop. 3,901) Named for the profusion of barrows that dot the wood, the elves of Cairnswild are watchful and ever vigilant, wary of newcomers, but appreciative of warriors with strong sword arms and clerics who are quick with a prayer. They are under constant threat by marauding undead and worse, and centuries of conflict have welded them into hardened warbands. The elves of Cairnswild understand the importance of each member of the community; if a single elf falls, the loss is felt by all.

Corsan Forest: (Pop. 42,729) Ancient Corsan, home to the longest reigning queen of all the elven nations, is unequaled in matters of arcane lore. With her sister-nation—the Barony of Koranth—to the north, Corsan anchors the forces of good in the east. The Corsan armies suffered greatly defending Koranth and Leherti against the Scourge, and when the forces of Leherti crumbled before the rampaging host, the elven warbands were the last to withdraw.

Since the fall of Leherti, the elves of Corsan have been less willing to enter the affairs of man. Many of the elves

that were in favor of siding with the humans died in battle, and have since been replaced with their less tolerant kith. Given the elves' long lives, it will likely be many decades before the elves of Corsan answer the call of the outside world again.

Despite their reclusive nature, the elves of Corsan embody the best attributes of elvenkind. They carry themselves with the quiet nobility of solemn pines, move with the grace of majestic stags, and live their lives steeped in the innate magic of the fae. The elves of the Corsan watch the cycles of the universe with the patience, knowing their time will come again.

Crystalmeet Wood: (–, Pop. ???) Once a northern bastion of fae might, the nation of Crystalmeet has seemingly been laid low by an unknown power. The elves of Crystalmeet now stalk the diseased glades as cursed undead. The few brave souls who have traveled to Crystalmeet and returned report having seen mockeries of elven courts, complete with the corpses of elves adorned in rotting finery, rusting arms, and foul rites to aberrant gods. See the entry for *Crystalmeet Wood* in Chapter 4.

Mirdar Forest: (Pop. 64,091) Last of the great forests, the Mirdar was once home to Arovarel, mightiest of the elven cities. Arovarel fell in a single night to the combined might of orcish hordes and drow armies, led by Chalychia, a scheming drow sorceress. One year later, Chalychia was defeated, but the elven folk of Arovarel never resettled their ancient city.

Now the Mirdar Forest is ruled by two elven nations with

radically divergent beliefs, though humans and dwarves struggle to tell the two apart. The folk of Olheim are watchful stewards of the woods, keepers of Arovarel's lost lore. Wise in the wild ways, slow to anger, but terrible in their wrath, the elves of Olheim maintain friendly relations with the other races.

Conversely, the folk of the Ashoch nation are dedicated to ridding the wood of non-elves. Painting their faces in somber hues of blue and violet, they stalk the game trails, intent on driving out all foreigners. Rangers and archers, the Ashoch clans can be recognized by the black fletching of their arrows and the razor sharpness of their arrowheads. Often, among the dense glades of the Mirdar, that is the only warning given.

Both the Olheim and the Ashoch follow their own sovereigns, and neither nation has sought to discover what came of Arovarel's old queen. Whether the ethereal queen still lives among the ruins of her city, or if she was driven mad or slain in the battle with Chalychia, remains but one of the many mysteries hidden by the shadows of Mirdar.

Myrwych Forest: (Pop. 6,823) The northern swath of the Myrwych is home to the Horrors of Zamon (see *Wastes of Zamon* for more information), tormented beasts twisted by magic that run howling through the darksome glades. Once, before the arrival of Zamon, the woods were ruled by clans of wild elves. The barest remnant of the old clans remains, struggling to hold the south against the rampaging horrors. The elves of Myrwych lost their queen and their ancestral holdings decades ago, and now fight as scattered half-clans, fierce with passion, but too divided to hold their own against superior numbers.

FREEHOLDS, THE

(THE OUTLAW TERRITORIES)

VARIOUS WARLORDS

Population: 42,601 (humans 65%, half-orcs 19%, dwarves 6%, elves 5%, monstrous humanoids 4%, halflings 1%)

Resources: Mercenaries, leather, furs

Capital: —

A loose collection of brigand enclaves ruled by brutal warlords, the Freehold badlands are in a constant state of lawlessness and unrest. The fall of Leherti swelled the ranks of the bandit lords, but thus far the Freeholds have limited themselves to raiding caravans and outlying settlements of nearby lands. They're plentiful enough to form a fearsome army, but without a charismatic figure to guide them, the brigands are nothing more than bands of disorganized raiders and poorly armed militias.

What passes for a city or town in the Freeholds is often nothing more than a filthy stronghold at the back of a box canyon, atop a ridge, or in some other place with natural defenses. Most strongholds sport wooden walls atop earthen ramparts, while the rare fort might be found within the decaying stone walls of a previous fortress. Invariably, each stronghold has one (or more) mead halls and taverns, a smithy and armorer, a corral, and a well-defended tower or keep.

The quality of arms and armor carried by Freehold ruffians depends entirely upon the success of their raids. The lowliest of bands wear piecemeal bits of scavenged armor and fight with improvised polearms. The more successful bands field mounted raiders wearing ringmail or boiled leather, and fight with bows and well-forged spears. Bandit leaders are unique, armed as fortune and chance permits.

With little in the way of agriculture, the brigands rely on raids into civilized lands to swell their grainaries. In times of dire need, the outlaws may turn to hunting and foraging, but more often a season of hardship only presages a deadlier season of raids.

While little can be written about the Freeholds that won't have changed in a fortnight, following is a list of established towns and bandit holds:

Ashaven: (Hamlet, pop. 381) Shortened from its original name *Ashe's Haven*, Ashaven is a staging ground for many of the raids into Leherti and the Theocracy. The

hamlet had been razed by armies of Leherti on several occasions (known locally as "the shaving of Ashaven"), but the rogues became masters of escaping into hidden cellars and secret bolt holes. The collapse of Leherti has granted Ashaven a reprieve, and the community is stronger than ever, with new brigands arriving each day. Presently the fortified hamlet is ruled by Hadrun the Shadowhand, a swarthy skinned warrior-mage hailing from the Uru'Nuk Highlands.

Bald Tower: (Small town, pop. 1,308) The town of Bald Tower is built around the base of its namesake: a fearsome tower rising from atop a barren ridge. Bald Tower is unique among the Freeholds in that it fields its own militia, a light cavalry easily recognized by the midnight black raven feathers used to decorate their shields and arrows.

The raiders of Bald Tower answer to Cyn Alfwen, a half-elf blackguard who once served in the armies of Leherti. Witnessing the abject failure of her sovereign, Cyn recanted her faith and rode into the Freeholds to forge her own destiny. The half-elf still bears a hatred for her old life, and the sight of a Lehertian soldier spurs her to madness. Apart from this weakness, she serves as a cunning ruler, commanding her raiders with martial discipline and generously rewarding their success in battle.

The tower itself is something of a mystery. Prior to Cyn's arrival, the tower was believed to be haunted. Whatever pact the blackguard made with the dark inhabitants has served her well, for now the tower is home to Cyn and her militia. Regular offerings of slaves are made to the things beneath the tower, and Cyn uses the threat of the tower's dungeons to keep her troops in line.

Cragskeep: (Small castle, pop. 562) Perched like a hawk atop its high mountain crag, Cragskeep was once a monastery devoted to prayer and self-reflection. Now the mountain fastness revels in its reputation as the home to raiders feared up and down the coast of the Lirean Sea. Key to the raiders' fame are their fearsome black-winged hippogriffs. Raised on the cliffs above and below Cragskeep, the hippogriffs allow the raiders to strike with surprise and impunity, evading pursuit by vanishing into the sky.

Combined with their nearly unassailable stronghold, the bandits of Cragskeep have risen to the status of folk legends. The actual Riders of Cragskeep are no better than other bandits of the Freeholds, but the fanciful imaginings of bards ensures that a band of adventurers assaults the keep at least twice every year. Invariably, the would-be heroes are picked from the rocky climb, falling thousands of feet to their deaths.

Cragskeep is ruled by the Kuthot, a mystic theurge of legendary might. Much is rumored about the Kuthot, but little is known. Even the Riders of Cragskeep seldom glimpse their hooded master, giving rise to wild suppositions that the Kuthot is some extraplanar monster or worse. His (Her? Its?) goals and aims remain a mystery to all, and given Cragskeep's defenses, it is unlikely the puzzle will be solved any time soon.

Helsouk: (Large town, pop. 4,904) When brigands raid the outlying towns of the Theocracy or Free Cities of Leherti, whatever plunder that can't be eaten, spent, or drank eventually makes its way up the Roguewash River to Helsouk. A labyrinth of shadowed bazaars, brutal slave markets, and sinister shops, Helsouk is recognized across the Northlands as a stinking hole of wantonness and vice.

The town's demeanor is matched by the depravity of its rulers. A triad holds court in the Black Square, an unholy sanctuary devoted to exalting the decadence that permeates the town. On the left throne squats Rimry the Toad, a corpulent, filthy man with a love for fresh meat and young elves. On the right throne rests Cimos Korfar, a monstrously large half-orc with the manners of a savage and the mind of a sage. And atop the center throne, looking down upon the entire hall, perches Eren Fellstaff, a small, quiet woman feared throughout the Freeholds for her unpredictable fury. Together the three hold Helsouk in their merciless, uncaring fist.

While many brigand bands pass through Helsouk, the triad is careful to ensure that none make their home within. Instead, Korfar maintains a roughshod mercenary company made up of murderous brutes and thugs. Fed information by Rimry's network of thieves, beggars, and snitches, and reinforced by Eren's spectral agents, the crude mercenaries rule the streets with violence and fear.

Irontooth Castle: (Large castle, pop. 2,470) The grand title conceals a depressing stronghold teetering on the verge of collapse. The castle is a collection of fallen walls and tottering towers, a condition mirrored by the sorry folk that seek shelter beneath its rain-soaked roofs. The brigands of Irontooth have little in the way of arms or armor, and months of poor leadership have shaken their already weak morale. Now the brigands of Irontooth follow their bandit-lord out of sheer desperation.

The ruler of Irontooth is a young Lehertian calling himself the Scarlet Duke. As pompous as he is handsome, the Duke maintains his hold over the motley band simply because there is no one else charismatic enough challenge him. It is only a matter of time before the brigands desert their useless leader, seeking their fortunes with other bands.

Wolfhold: (Village, pop. 835) A miserable collection of war refugees and cruel outlaws, Wolfhold takes its name from the desperate nature of its folk. During the day, the town appears deserted, but at night, street gangs vie for

territory in murderous battles fueled by desperation and hopelessness. With nothing to lose, the brigands have resorted to attacking each other; to walk the muddy streets of Wolfhold is to invite assault from every quarter.

It is rumored that the gangs are battling over a great treasure hidden in a vault somewhere beneath Wolfhold, but one look at the feral brigands washes away any speculation of treasure, great or small.

Freeport, City of

Lord Mayor Rhenal Montier

Population: 42,601 (humans 65%, half-orcs 19%, dwarves 6%, elves 5%, monstrous humanoids 4%, halflings 1%)

Resources: Slaves, mercenaries, black market trade, fish, whale oil

Capital: The City of Freeport

Once an infamous pirate city, Freeport now promotes itself as a legitimate trade power. In truth, the pirate tradition is alive and well in Freeport, camouflaged by a fanciful veneer of respectability. The city's pirates have become privateers, hiring out to the highest bidder.

Amidst the soiled city streets, little has changed. Gangs continue to fight wars over drugs, slavery, and crime, while mad cultists dedicated to foul and unspeakable gods plumb the ruins of ancient civilizations for power, knowledge, and secrets of the past.

Rhenal Montier monitors his empire like a rat atop a pile of rotting corpses. The Lord Mayor is a master at keeping his rivals busy fighting one another, leaving little time or resources to challenge his rule. Montier has ruled Freeport for seven years in this manner, plying one challenger against the next, and always working to entrench his own power base.

It is whispered that Montier sees and hears all that transpires in his city. While there might be some truth to his near-mythic powers, the more likely answer is that Mortier keeps his people so poor and desperate that they are eager to sell out their fellow citizens for a single worn copper.

The captains of Freeport are true privateers, willing to sail for any cause or crown if the color of the coin is right. An unspoken code prohibits Freeport captains from engaging one another in battle, but gold has a way of bending this code, resulting in grudges between mercenary captains that can stretch on for years.

Frost Barrens, the

Numerous barbarian chieftains

Population: ??? (predominantly humans, monstrous humanoids, and dwarves)

Resources: Furs, timber

Capital: None

Nowhere in the North is there a land more forbidding than the icy reaches of the Frost Barrens. Terrible monsters stalk ancient ruins and blizzards sweep the land without warning. Remorhazes and frost worms prowl winter's endless night, and summer's bleak light does little to repel the arctic orcs or frost ghouls.

The ferocity of the land is mirrored in its savage children. The barbarians of the Frost Barrens are often little better than animals, their constant struggle for survival leaving no room for the niceties of civilization. Here the questions of life and death are decided by the strike of a battleaxe or the thrust of a spear, and each day is a battle that must be won.

Of the barbarians' society, little is known. An oral culture with no written language, their history is replete with apocryphal folktales that may or may not have a grounding in truth. And while many sages have journeyed to the Frost Barrens in the hopes of recording these, none has ever returned.

Unique to the Barrens are the barbarian witches known as the Hexas of the Eternal Flame. These aging hags maintain fires that they claim have been burning since the creation of the world. Wielding tremendous influence over the superstitious barbarians, the Hexas work their fell magics from hidden huts and caves. The Hexas use a complex system of glyphs to shape and contain their mystic powers. What relationship—if any—the Hexas share with the deserted ruins dotting the north remains a mystery; given the Hexas' abhorrence for outsiders, and the dangers associated with the Barrens, it is unlikely that the mystery will be solved anytime soon.

Ambroshea Trades: (Hamlet, pop. 375) One of the few civilized trading outposts in the Frost Barrens, Ambroshea Trades is nearly impossible to reach for all but three months of the year. The small, orderly trading post does brisk business with the savages, trading weapons and armor for rich furs and skins. The outpost is ruled by Darston Isles, a man respected for his quick wit and wisdom as well as his skill with a blade.

Halls of the Mountain King

The Mountain King, Oro Loroth

Population: 497,205 (dwarves 68%, orcs 11%, humans 10%, goblins 6%, half-orcs 5%, some ogres and hill giants)

Resources: Gold, silver, coal, iron, weapons and armor

Capital: Risinox

If Hades had coal mines, they might resemble the soot-stained Halls of the Mountain King. Filled with armies of foul dwarves, depraved humans, and cruel orcs, the Halls are a poisonous blight on civlization, a thorn thrust directly into the heart of the Northlands.

Oro Loroth, the dwarf daring to call himself the Mountain King, is an outcast of the Holdfast (see *Holdfast of the Steel Overlord*). No one knows why Loroth was exiled from the Holdfast, and the dwarves aren't telling. But within five years of his exile, Loroth returned at the head of an army of orc and human mercenaries. The brutal army struck quickly, taking full advantage of Loroth's knowledge of the mines, overwhelming the Dwarfhold of Clan Dronil. Isolated from their brothers in the Holdfast, the Dronil warriors fell in a series of ferocious battles, culminating in the complete slaughter of the Dronil clan.

Since seizing control of the Halls, Loroth has quickly cemented his control of the mines, welcoming other dwarven outcasts into his kingdom and actively recruiting dwarves of an evil bent. Today, nearly one hundred years after the destruction of Clan Dronil, the armies of the Mountain King are stronger than ever.

Loroth maintains order by ensuring that the armies of the Mountain King are never sedentary for long. He directs aggressive raids to the west and south of the Halls, into the Sylvan Downs and beyond. The rich plunder and plentiful slaves keeps his armies content, and attrition in battle does away with the rest. Thus far, Loroth has managed to keep a tight fist over his horde, but many believe that it is only a matter of time before the Mountain King overextends himself. If his kingdom were to collapse, however, the broken armies of evil humanoids would rampage throughout the Northlands, pillaging and burning everything in their path. Some scholars argue that the Northlands are better with Loroth in command of the Halls than without. At least, the argument goes, Loroth is predictable.

Isolated from the Holdfast of the Steel Overlord, the mines of Dronil are home to dozens of small fortress communities. Those of historical or strategic interest are listed below:

Risinox: (Large city, pop. 13,907) Once the clanhold of the Dronil, the vast galleries and vaulted halls are now home to slave markets, roaring forges, and dark temples. Bored high into the walls of a mighty mountain, Risinox commands a view of the western Northlands and gives the Mountain King his name. Any army hoping to assault Risinox would have to fight up a steep slope, dodging hurled rocks and streams of flaming oil, up to a two-hundred-foot wall carved from the mountain itself—all before the *real* battle began.

Loroth collapsed the tunnels leading into Risinox hours after seizing the city. Now the only approach (save a series of hidden passages known only to the Mountain King) is overland, a deadly proposition under the best of circumstances.

Orgemouth: (Small town, pop. 972) Found at the foot of the Ul Dominor mountain range, the soiled city of Orgemouth is the trade center for the Mountain King. Pretty elven slaves, kidnapped from the Sylvan Downs, fetch a high price with southern traders, while swords and armor, forged in the hellfires of the Halls, are much sought after by immoral mercenary generals.

The fortress is ruled by Volei Ojar, a retired half-orc assassin. Once Ojar roamed the Northlands, serving duplicitous princes and corrupt merchant lords. While the half-orc hasn't worked as an assassin in years, he continues to practice his skills, as if knowing the Mountain King's days are numbered.

Azaegal's Hold: (Village, pop. 860) Azaegal's Hold takes its name from the ancient red dragon that lairs atop the barren mountain peak. Through regular tribute of gold and slaves (and some say, bargains made with infernal powers), the Mountain King has succeeded in coercing the mighty old wyrm into service.

Azaegal's Hold is a cold, spartan fortress, inhabited by ogres, hill and stone giants, and orcs. Above it all sits the mighty Azaegal, a fearsome wyrm of legend who—centuries ago—terrorized the Northlands with his fury and violence. Regardless of whatever hold Loroth claims over the dragon, Azaegal's demeanor hasn't change from his younger, wilder days, and it is only a matter of time before Azaegal terrorizes the Northlands again.

Holdfast of the Steel Overlord

Longbeard of the Clans, Saraas Helsborne, the Steel Overlord

Population: 3,001,480 (dwarves 79%, gnomes 8%, humans 7%, elves 2%, other 4%)

Resources: Gold, silver, platinum, gems, iron, steel, weapons, and armor

Capital: Ul Balhar

With the ruins of forgotten clanholds and mines scattered about the mountains of known world, scholars can be forgiven for assuming that the Bearded Folk of the Mountains are in decline. Such cynics need only trek within sight of the scarred tower-gates of Ul Gaolnor to know the truth of the matter:

The forges of the dwarf clans burn brighter than ever.

Once, the dwarves were a disparate people, with no unified governance above that of the clan. This changed when the dwarf seer Nomothamai peered into his dark crystal and foresaw the coming age of Man. Rather than surrender their lands to a war of slow attrition, the Bearded Folk abdicated their scattered mines and spent the next thousand years consolidating their power into a series of connected strongholds centered about the Ul Dominor Mountains.

While independent clanholds still thrive, it is the Holdfast of the Steel Overlord that embodies the might of the dwarves. Unified beneath the will of a single Overlord and the Council of the Clans, the dwarves have successfully avoided the endless skirmishes that plague the elves. The present Overlord is a hardy long-beard named Saraas Helsborne, who first sat upon the throne one hundred years ago, and fully expects to rule for another three hundred.

The choleric dwarves have embraced war as a philosophy and lifestyle; their guiding principle is to answer every injury or slight tenfold. The saying goes that if a human cheats you in trade, crush his family; if an elf snubs you in court, burn her forest to the ground; and if any mortal is so foolish to attack a dwarf at home or abroad, level entire nations to punish the guilty.

The law is seldom enforced to the letter, but its spirit pervades Holdfast society. Whereas a human duelist might count himself a master after a decade of training, dwarven warriors study for hundreds of years. Their weapons, armor, and tactics are all the result of thousands of years of innovation and endless refinement. Heroes of all races make regular pilgrimages to the Holdfast clans, hoping to apprentice with a renowned weapons master, for while the dwarven physique might limit the practice of certain combat styles, it in no way limits their study of warcraft.

The halls of Holdfast are open to all, but few races can tolerate the dark galleries, clammy mines, and dour company for long. Most visitors attend the seasonal trade-meets, when thousands of traders and merchants fill the outer halls of Holdfast. The Holdfast maintains cordial ties with the lord-barons of the Criestine Empire, and makes regular shipments of mithril and adamantine to the elven nations.

Dwarven cities are nearly entirely underground, hidden beneath mountaintops or in the walls of craggy canyons. Exposed elements like towers and gates are always well defended and can only be entered via tunnels and the like. The following is a partial list of the strongholds that pledge allegiance to the Steel Overlord.

Stalgard: (Small city, pop. 7,016) Lording over the Saedre River, the city of Stalgard is the Holdfast's chief trading post to the west. Goods are hauled upstream on barges and then hoisted several hundred feet up sheer cliffs, to wide stone balconies set in the face of Mount Ajai. There, in the stuffy bazaars and low-roofed caverns, dwarven traders exchange fine blades, armor, and shining ingots for fortunes of smoked meats, cheeses, fruits and vegetables. The dwarven traders are notorious for their copper-pinching avarice, and greedy Northlanders are often accused of having "cousins in Stalgard."

While well defended, the city is less martial than most. Nevertheless, dwarven axemen patrol the balconies and bazaars, while well-trained artillerists scan the skies. The accuracy of dwarven ballistae teams is famous throughout the Northlands, as is the deadliness of their razor-sharp bolts. Ballistae ammunition is often augmented by spells to cause terrible wounds, spread panic, or—most effective of all—paralyze fliers.

Ul Balhar: (Metropolis, pop. 27,203) In the dwarven tongue, *Ul* means "place of battle." Built as a testament to ancient Amonzadd, the capital of the stout folk is also the site of a celebrated dwarven battle.

Mighty Ul Balhar has exceeded even the great dwarven cities of legend. All of the complex's original caves have been enlarged and reinforced, the galleries decorated with flagstones and martial murals, and a maze of mines bored into the heart of the mountain. It would take the armies of several nations to even threaten mighty Ul Balhar.

The city has never lost sight of its violent origins. The

dwarves maintain a standing army of disciplined heavy infantry, tunnel fighters, artillerists, and sappers. With the constant press of marauding giants, humanoids hordes, and worse, the soldiers' battle prowess remains sharp. A proud martial tradition has evolved over the centuries, with warriors and warrior-priests revered by the common folk.

Ul Gaolnor: (Small castle, pop. 1,592) Warding the eastern border of the Ul Dominor mountains, Ul Gaolnor sees more regular battle than all other dwarven citadels combined. The formidable iron gates of Ul Gaolnor are flanked by massive stone towers. Scarred from iron-bound battering rams, terrible spells, and the blood of a thousand foes, the gates stand in opposition of any who would dare challenge the might of the Steel Overlord.

The armies of Ul Gaolnor are legendary among martial circles. To have fought atop the towers is to have stood beside the greatest warriors in the history of the Northlands, and any dwarf that has served at Ul Gaolnor is honored and admired by his people. Sadly, for every dwarven war hero returning from Ul Gaolnor, there are twenty warriors that never return, slain by dragonfire, an orcish spear, a harpy's lance, or any of the hundred other perils that regularly threaten the citadel.

The commanding officer of Ul Gaolnor is the revered general Durgin Dwurthiel. Respected by his armies, feared by his foes, "Irongut" Dwurthiel has commanded the armies of Ul Gaolnor for over ninety years. Old before his time, the craggy dwarf conceals a heavy sorrow born of regret for the thousands of dwarves that have died under his command. So far the sadness has yet to affect his ability to command his armies, but Dwurthiel can often be seen stalking the battlements late at night, in full armor, urgosh glinting in the moonlight.

Ul Yazhmotk: (Large town, pop. 3,804) Once a citadel built to stand down the armies of human barbarians raiding from the north, Ul Yazhmotk has grown into a community where dwarven smiths, generals, and engineers retire to live out the end of their lives.

The tradition began when the citadel, beset by an army of frost giants astride remorhazes, put out a call for aid. The beleaguered Holdfast had few warriors to spare, leaving the call to be answered by ancient and venerable warriors. When the threat had passed, the old axes remained.

Since that time, Ul Yazhmotk has served as a living vault of dwarven wisdom. Great smiths, warriors, and artisans of every culture make pilgrimages to apprentice with the citdel's masters or simply gaze upon the vast collections of matchless masterworks.

A council of seven master craftsmen, elected by their respective guilds, rules the citadel. More than simple politicians, the craftsmen are artisans selected to represent the height of dwarven culture.

Zan Tarkhaal: (Small castle, pop. 2,058) While the Holdfast is not known for the might of its spellcasters, the outcome of many of its battles has rested on the casting of a single well-placed spell. The underground galleries and lonely watchtowers of Zan Tarkhaal are home to the war casters, sorcerers, and battle priests of the Holdfast.

The stout folk of Zan Tarkhaal are fiercely passionate (even for dwarves) about their studies, resulting in unusual collaborations between arcane and divine spellcasters. To hail from Zan Tarkhaal is to be keenly aware of the mystic forces that shape the multiverse, and of a spellcaster's place in dwarven society.

The town's nominal ruler is a young general named Yuthor Relmarok, a dwarf with little appreciation—and even less respect—for mystic studies. Relmarok has come to regard his post as a form of punishment, and passes his sentence finding ways to impede the work of the spellcasters.

Koranth, Barony of

Lady Kesheba, Baroness of Koranth, Magister of the Aurora

Population: 638,910 (humans 67%, half-elves 9%, elves 7%, gnomes 5%, dwarves 4%, halflings 3%, other 5%)

Resources: Timber, furs, magic, whale oil, fish

Capital: Stromblaen

Koranth is a nation under siege. With the fall of Leherti and the rise of the Scourge, the people of the northwest barony have been cut off from the remainder of the civilized world. Without the resources to reestablish trade routes, the empire and its allies have effectively abandoned the barony to its own fate. In desperation, the barony has turned to smugglers to ferry vital supplies north, an expensive gambit that exacts an enormous price in lives and gold.

Founded six hundred years ago by mages seeking freedom for their esoteric studies, the archbarony has a history of isolation and arcane might. The mages of Koranth are second only to the Elven Loremasters in sheer mystic might, and are peerless in the arcane schools of evocation and transmutation. Both the Ordo Arcana and the Crescent Coven trace their origins to the northern fens, and many of the known world's most famous (and infamous) wizards, witches and warlocks maintain hidden demesnes in Koranth.

Traditionally, the baron has always been a master of the arcane arts; the current baroness is no exception. Lady Kesheba is reputed to be an archmage of no small talent, and she retains the council of specialists in the arts of divination and summoning. The truly powerful spellcrafters, though, shun politics to concentrate solely on esoteric mysteries.

Despite the work of the mages, the barony's chief exports have always been timber and furs. Since the advent of the Scourge, exports have slowed to a trickle, straining the baron's coffers and spurring exploration of the northern wastes.

The barony's borders are patrolled by sorcerer-warriors astride fearsome arcane chargers. These outriders, already few in number, have been strained to the breaking point by the press of the Scourge. They have survived this far through a cunning mix of tactics and deadly magics, but the lonely Mirdar-Luminar Steppes leave little room for error.

The cities and town of Koranth are highly independent and are expected to fend for themselves. Stout walls, solemn watch towers, and watch ravens are common sights, and each city fields its own guard.

Ardwall: (Small city, pop. 7,156) The gray towers of Ardwall look west to the Mirdar-Luminar Steppes, home of the swarming hordes of the Scourge. The folk of Ardwall are ever vigilant, awaiting the day the Scourge turns from Leherti and strikes east. The fierce citizens refuse to abandon their city, preferring instead to stockpile supplies, hire sellswords, construct siege weapons, and train every able-bodied adult to serve in the city's militia.

Ardwall is ruled by two siblings, Aelimon and Cimor Wyverun. Aelimon is a slim, silver-haired witch who spends her time ministering to the poor folk of her beloved city. Respected for her wisdom and feared for her magical skill, Aelimon directs the day-to-day work of the city. Her brother Cimor is a rangy warrior who splits his days between training the city militia and patrolling steppes with the city's outriders.

Northwatch Keep: (Keep, pop. 210) Built on the frigid shores of Hoarfrost Bay, Northwatch Keep is ringed by icicles and snowdrifts nine months out of the year. For three brief cycles of the moon, the snows recede, warm winds blow from the south, and the flowers of the tundra blossom and die.

The hearty souls of Northwatch Keep guard against tribes of savage orcs and ogres that cross the ice floes when the Hoarfrost freezes over, bearing arms and armor made of a meteoric black metal and wielding unknown spells. The origins of these monstrous foes have yet to be discovered; no hero has ventured north of the Hoarfrost and returned to tell the tale.

Rakewight: (Small city, pop. 10,392) Built atop ruins of indeterminable age, Rakewight was founded two hundred years ago by the notorious wizard Elroth Isencrith as a haven for necromancers wishing to practice their craft without shame or dishonor. The city has grown dramatically since Isencrith raised the first black tower, but Rakewight has never succeeded in shaking the shadow of its past.

Nor, many argue, does it care to. The city's architecture makes dramatic use of skulls, death runes, and arcane signs. Its citizens favor dark colors and darker humor, and the scent of rot lingers on everything and everyone passing through the city. The officials of Rakewight decry any attempt to characterize the city as evil, but none can deny the city's bizarre obsession with all things dark and dead.

The current ruler of Rakewight is Lady Elise Isencrith, a direct descendent of the city's founder. Exceedingly thin

and pale of skin, Lady Isencrith is often compared—unfavorably—with a corpse. A pair of silent warriors, anonymous behind spiked plate armor and wielding wicked scythes, accompany the good lady wherever she goes. Deliberate or not, her affects and demeanor have proven effective when bargaining with visiting officials and foreign merchant lords.

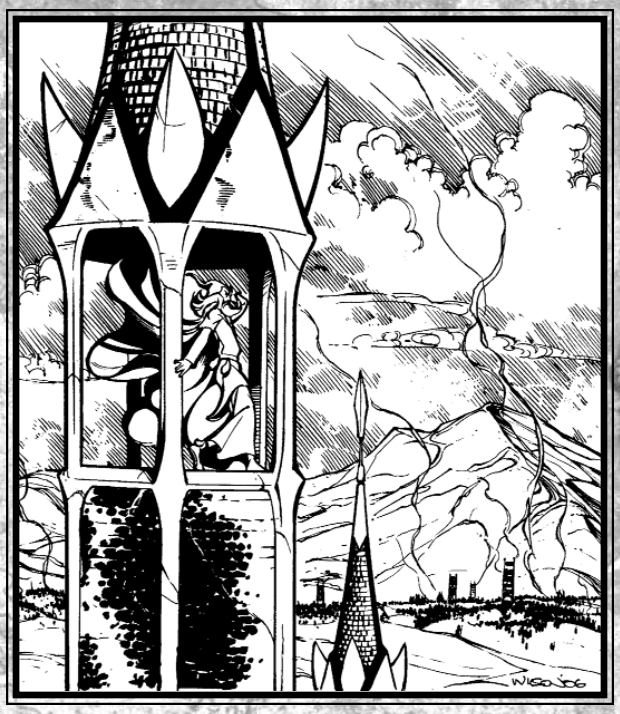
Raven Hollow: (Small town, pop. 1,270) Situated in the shadow of the Corsan Forest, Raven Hollow serves as a gateway to the eastern wilds. A surprising number of visitors pass through Raven Hollow; the trading post is far more prosperous than its size would suggest, and its shops are legendary for having at least one of every mundane item.

Raven Hollow is ruled by consensus, but in times of need the citizens turn to the Witch of the Wood. No one knows the withered crone's age, but it was her raven that led trappers to Raven Hollow when the trading post was established four hundred years ago.

Stromblaen: (Large city, pop. 24,058) The capital of Koranth is respected throughout the Northlands as a place of esoteric lore. While Kassantia is grander, and Corsan enjoys a far more ancient lineage, Stromblaen is where mages go to test their wildest theories. This attitude is captured in the crisp, excited air of the capital, where mages engage in heated discussions in the cafes and taverns, harried apprentices rush from shop to shop at their masters' beck and call, and not a day passes without some summoned beast lumbering down the royal promenade.

With so much talent, many assumed that Koranth (and Stromblaen in particular) would hardly be inconvenienced by the threat of the Scourge. Sadly, until the Scourge is hammering at the gate of their beloved city, the free-minded archmages and sorcerors will be loathe to focus on something so mundane as a horde of savage humanoids. Lady Kesheba has done her best to rally the arcane might of Koranth, but with mages secluded in their lone towers and pocket demiplanes, it is nearly impossible to convene a congress of mages, let alone secure their commitment to a course of action.

Lady Kesheba, for her part, is fully aware of the threat posed by the Scourge. Forced to choose between her respect for individual freedom and the love of her country, she has begun an ambitious plan to ensure the compliance of the mages of Koranth. Lady Kesheba knows in her heart that a web of duplicity may cost her the one thing that she loved most, but the Magister of the Aurora would rather be exiled from her beloved Koranth than watch it fall to the Scourge.



Kalia, Kingdom of

His Royal Majesty, King Taranax, Regent of the far Horizen, Lord Admiral of the Open Sea, et cetera

Population: 610,780 (humans 73%, halflings 8%, half-elves 5%, elves 4%, dwarves 4%, half-orcs 3%, gnomes 2%, other 1%)

Resources: Trade goods

Capital: Avenors

While small in landmass, the kingdom of Kalía is the undisputed master of the high seas. Her sea captains have set foot on every known continent, bringing back tributes of gold and spices, as well as tales of danger and close escapes. The success of Kalía is so great that her galleons sail under the flag of Crieste as the emperor's Royal Society of Explorers and Fartraders.

The people of Kalía are wanderers, never satisfied with any one horizen. The open sea is their constant companion, singing young children to sleep at night, and calling old men back into her dark embrace. This mistress does not come without a price; every year dozens of ships are lost, smashed against hidden reefs, devoured by terrible sea monsters, or simply consumed by raging storms. Every citizen of Kalía has a family member or friend who

has died at sea, and every hamlet and town has a shrine dedicated to sailors lost to the depths. The people of Kalía know that the sea cannot be conquered, but they also know that it shouldn't be feared.

The nation is ruled by Olann Taranax, a dashing young king who always seems to have a dozen noble sycophants in tow. The Taranax line is famous for their elaborate fetes and masked balls, and it is said that a Kalían who is not dancing, sailing, or making love must be either drunk or—more likely—dead.

Avenors: (Metropolis, pop. 38,930) One of the great cities of the north, Avenors is a city of exotic wonder. Flush with trophies and tributes gathered from every corner of the world, Avenors is a chaotic whirl of bright colors, foreign languages, and pungent smells. Every day a new ship sails into port with tales of adventure, just as another ship departs for distant lands.

While under the rule of King Taranax, the day-to-day management of the city is left to a dozen or so merchant houses. Regarding themselves as nobles, the merchant houses rule from palatial manors set high in the surrounding hills. But while nobles quarrel over territories and lands, the merchant houses squabble over trade routes and tarrifs.

Avenors is also known for its distinctive schools of fencing. Cadres of duelists, rapiers slung low on their hips, strut through the bustling markets and busy taverns, eager for any excuse to demonstrate their swashbuckling prowess. The duelists of Avenors dismiss armor as the "coat of cowards." Instead, the duelists rely on their speed and swordsmanship to keep them from harm's way. Accordingly, healers are in high demand in Avenors, and some duelists even take out contracts with their favorite surgeons and leech-using barbers.

Saltmoon: (Village, pop. 722) A lonely fishing village situated above a sheltered cove, Saltmoon is a typical Kalían community. Ruled by a council of elders, Saltmoon makes its living off of the large, seasonal salmon, and by sailing explorers to the remote sea caves known as the Grottos. The Grottos are extensive, extending through several miles of known caves and fissures, but with nearly one-third of the caves underwater, thorough exploration has been nearly impossible. Locals tell of buried treasaure, undead sea elves, and a lost civilization making its home far underground. These tales are suspect at best, but that doesn't stop would-be heroes from hiring sailboats and vanishing into the Grottos.

Veltos: (Large town, pop. 2,819) While all of Kalía's merchant houses maintain envoys in Veltos, nearly all of the town's citizens are foreigners. Some are drawn by the wealth that passes through the city gates, others are agents of distant nations, while others are simply caravan masters keeping their fingers on the pulse of the Northlands.

Hide-armored barbarians brush shoulders with swaggering rogues, gnome traders toss dice with green-skinned half-orcs, and dark-skinned magicians garbed in rune-covered robes watch silently. Veltos is a city of extremes and oddities, and it takes a very odd stranger indeed to draw the stares of her citizens.

Sellswords and mercenary spellcasters are always in great demand, either as caravan guards or discrete agents of merchant intrigue. Several mercenary companies make their home in Veltos for this purpose, including the Company of the Minotaur, the Brotherhood of the Bladed, and the League of the Mask; violent turnover ensures that the companies are always looking for promising young warriors.

Leherti, Grand Duchy of (Occupied)

Archduke Filip Ramaster the XII (in exile)

Population: 1,901,480 (humans 52%, orcs 21%, goblins 8%, half-orcs 7%, ogres and giants 4%, elves 2%, other 6%)

Resources: Slaves, some trade goods

Capital: None (once Araloges)

The Grand Duchy of Leherti, once a shining gem in the crown of the Criestine Empire, now stands in ruins, a testament to the might of the Scourge and the folly of mankind.

For the last five hundred years, the royal Andithil dynasty, a family of haughty aristocrats, ruled the Grand Duchy. Consistent inbreeding, however, reduced the heirs to feebleminded regents convinced of their divinity. When the Scourge rode out of the north, Archduke Ramaster declared that he would lead the armies himself. Sensing imminent disaster, the Archduke's advisors attempted a coup; amazingly, Ramaster survived. In a single night, he had every advisor, general, and commanding officer executed for treason, leaving the ducal army in disarray. The Scourge swept into the Grand Duchy unopposed, laying waste to all.

Now the Archduke reigns in exile, planning his return to power. His realm stands in ruin, his people enslaved by the Scourge or scraping out wretched existences in the ruined cities. The heirlooms of the duchy, magical weapons and treasures beyond compare, are lost some-

where in the smoking ruins of Araloges, along with any hope for the Grand Duchy's return to greatness.

The fell generals of the Scourge now rule the land. Orcish warbands and roving gangs of outlaws prey upon the small towns and villages, while the cities are crushed beneath the iron grip of vicious warlords and infernal priests. With only enough troops to maintain order within the cities, the Scourge has permitted the outlands to descend into lawlessness.

Araloges: (Ruined metropolis, pop. 15,890) Once the great city of Araloges was esteemed throughout the Northlands, her proud citizens parading along the wide promenades, proclaiming their undying admiration for the Archduke. Today the old capital is in ruins, her citizens enslaved, the promenades covered in debris, her legendary treasures carried back to the Scourgelands in rude canvas sacks.

The remaining citizens labor beneath the cruel whips of the Scourge, slowly rebuilding the city in a cruel mockery of its former grandeur. The city is ruled by Shanac, a sorcerous medusa with a gift for warcraft. The general wears an elaborate veil while holding court in the ruined city, and is known to fight with wands and staves. A host of petrified slaves ring the city, standing as a constant reminder to those that would dare to challenge Shanac's rule. While her slaves rebuild the city, the medusa sends search parties to comb the ruins of the palace, searching for lost and forgotten lore.

Canliath: (Ruined large city, pop. ???) With temples devoted to nearly every faith, Canliath was once known as the City of Gods. Rather than daring to rule the city and risk the wrath of the Gods, the hordes of the Scourge blockaded the famous bronze gates, locking its citizens inside, and put the city to the torch.

What curses escaped the searing lips of the faithful, and what foul bargains were struck with infernal powers will never be known. Now the City of the Gods is a city of soot-stained marble and cinder. Vague reports tell of demonic shapes that pick through the ruins, burnt corpses stumbling through the broken streets, and nameless horrors that haunt the city at night. Many faiths offer bounties for recovering artifacts lost in the disaster, but few are the heroes that will dare the fire-scarred ruins.

Invergin: (Metropolis, pop. 28,915) Of the hundreds of thousands of slaves taken in the fall of Leherti, over one-half were sent to the infamous slave pits of Invergin. Once a crossroads of trade with the east, the city of Ivergin has become a vle city of slave masters, amoral wizards, wicked priests, and merchant lords of the worst sort.

Unlike most cities in the Grand Duchy, Invergin was spared total destruction. But with the arrival of the slave

merchants, this blessing has been turned on its head. Now the city, reasonably undamaged, is entirely inhabited by the depraved and corrupt. Houses of ill repute line the avenues, filthy taverns and gambling are found on every corner, and temples devoted to dark gods and infernal powers have been built atop cathedrals and monasteries.

Worst of all are the slave pits. A massive arena has been built in the center of the city, and slaves that fail to fetch a good bit of coin on the auction block are forced to fight for their lives against a menagerie of monsters and wild beasts. Slaves that win are never released, only returned to the auction. The gladiatorial battles draw enormous crowds, and fortunes are gambled on the outcome.

Invergin is ruled by Bael, a muscular giant of a man. Blinded in the assault on Leherti, Bael fights in a visorless helm, made from the same dragon scales that were used to forge his half-plate armor. Legend holds that the scales came from the silver dragon that stole Bael's eyesight. Delighting in personal combat, Lord Bael has promised to free any slave that can best him in single combat. Many have taken Bael up on his offer, and all have been buried in a mass grave beyond the city walls.

Yithain: (Ruined large city, pop. 16,378) With the collapse of the Grand Duchy, most patriots withdrew to Free Cities or the Theocracy of the Lance, leaving behind hapless peasants of the Grand Duchy to fend for themselves.

But some patriots remain, hiding out in scorched forests and caves. They fight a guerilla war against overwhelming odds, sustained by the belief that although the war has been lost, meaningful battles can still be won.

The city of Yithain is one such place. Beset by the armies of the Scourge, the city should have fallen like every other in the Grand Duchy. Instead, the city found unexpected relief in a flood of warriors, priests, and mages, fleeing before the march of the horde. The soldiers rallied beside Morgan Ironwolf, a legendary sellsword from the Southern Province. Standing atop the battlements, Ironwolf and her companions watched the plains darken with the sheer number of the Scourge; accepting certain death, Ironwolf and her companions prepared to lead the final defense of Yithain.

Frost giants led the assault with hurled volleys of boulders, destroying the city's walls in mere hours. Orcs, goblins, and trolls swarmed through the rubble, setting a fire that leapt from building to building, quickly overtaking their entire city. Celebrating their easy victory, the fell army relaxed.

With the flames of Yithain reaching to the sky, Ironwolf and her ragtag force struck from the ruined city, slicing through the confused horde, and laying waste to an army five times their size.

Reports allege that the general realized that she couldn't save the city, but that she could destroy her foes. Tacticians debate the merit of Ironwolf's strategy, but none can fault her ends: While all of Leherti has fallen to the Scourge, the Company of the Ironwolf still occupies ruined Yithain, and harries the Scourge from the very heart of the fallen Duchy.

Leherti, Free Cities of

Khorjala the Hawk

Population: 1,788,910 (humans 63%, half-elves 10%, elves 8%, dwarves 7%, gnomes 5%, halfings 4%, other 3%)

Resources: Trade goods, copper, gems

Capital: None

When Archduke Ramaster and his armies fled the raging Horde, Leherti was assumed lost. Handfuls of desperate generals rallied their men in a costly holding action, fighting not for the feeble Archduke, but for honor and the glory of Leherti. Unable to stop the Scourge, they did manage to slow its advance, permitting the cities of Cyros, Ilnoth, and Amthor to launch a counterattack. The forces of the Scourge and Leherti met at the Battle of Minérond's Ford, where the armies ground each other to a bloody stalemate that holds to this day.

Those three battle-scarred cities and the surrounding lands are now known as the Free Cities of Leherti. They continue to wage a bitter guerilla war against the Horde, rangers and scouts striking from the forests and broken hills, while gnome sappers undermine roads, walls, and bridges, and druids call forth lightning from the sky. Each attack brings a bitter reprisal, and the Lehertians live under the constant threat of death and rapine at the hands of the Scourge.

The Lehertian resistance is led by Khorjala the Hawk, a dusky-skinned, enigmatic ranger. The men that follow him are a motley mix of hardened soldiers, displaced nobility, and rustic peasants. Of Khorjala, much is rumored, but little known for certain. His name is not found on any of the pre-war rosters, nor is he known to any of Ramaster's generals. Cunning in his tactics and vicious on the field of battle, legend holds that Khorjala has been nearly captured a dozen times, and yet always manages to slip free. Tarkhan Khurzog—Master of the Scourge—has taken a personal interest in the Hawk, sending demons, assassins, bounty hunters, and worse to bring in the notorious general.

The Free Cities of Leherti continue to scratch out an existence in the shadow of enemy occupation. The people are haggard and frail, and exhausted refugees line the muddy streets. Overcrowding and poverty has led to the rise of criminal bosses who offer protection, food, and other necessities … for a price. The Lord Mayors of the Free Cities do their best to contain the bosses' power to the slums, where they are permitted to rule uncontested.

Of the many bosses vying for dominance, two stand out as the most successful and ruthless. Phendel the Beggarmaster, a corpulent bull with a legendary appetite for sweetmeats and attractive women of every race, rules from the Old Slums of Cyros; his greatest rival is Teshin, an up-and-coming rogue, late of Punjar. Already the two have clashed on several occasions, leaving trails of bodies throughout the filthy slums. It has been suggested that the lord mayors encourage this sort of violent rivalry as a means of weakening the bosses' overall power.

Amthor: (Small city, pop. 28,190) Flooded with refugees, Amthor's population has nearly tripled since the Fall of Leherti. Tents and shacks crowd the streets, and malnourishment and disease are commonplace; meanwhile, the city's resources are exhausted simply trying to maintain the status quo.

The lord mayor is Alden Morward, corpulent son of a powerful merchant, placed in power as a favor to his father. The Fall of Leherti transformed Morward's post from one of ease to one of constant crises. Surprisingly, Morward has risen to the challenge, maintaining order in a delicate balance between diplomacy, back-alley deals with the gang bosses, and the constant presence of city guards. Still, dozens of new refugees arrive daily with no

end in sight; it is only a matter of time before Morward's house of cards collapses under its own weight.

Cyros: (Small city, pop. 11,201) During the last months of the war, it was said that Leherti wouldn't fall so long as Cyros stood. Occupying a small island near the western shore of Wyrm's Deep, the citadel-city became the lynchpin of the Lehertian Resistance. Cyros weathered terrible assaults from hordes of humanoids, archmages, sea giants, and even a pair of adult red dragons. Under the direction of Tesron Valri, the city's half-elf lord mayor, Cyros gave as good as she got, withstanding the concentrated might of the Scourge.

Now Cyros is a staging ground for most of the attacks into the occupied territory. However, this has again focused the might of the Scourge on a single city, and the citizens of Cyros have cause to be frightened. They may pay a steep price for saving the Free Cities of Leherti.

Ilnoth: (Metropolis, pop. 26,737) There is little doubt that the Scourge will go to war again soon, and standing at the foot of Wyrm's Deep, Ilnoth is likely to bear the brunt of the invasion. This places the lady mayor and her council in the uncomfortable situation of supporting the Resistance while dreading its inevitable result.

Bethtar the Sade has served as Lady Mayor for over a decade, and refuses to let harm come to her beloved Ilnoth. She and her council have initiated negotiations with Tarkhan Khurzog, Master of the Scourge; thus far, these dealings have been kept secret except for a privileged few, but if the Scourge does go to war again, the city's duplicity will become quickly apparent.

Luithea, Kingdom of

White Drake of the North, His Royal Majesty King Beldor

Population: 638,250 (humans 64%, half-elves 8%, halflings 7%, dwarves 6%, elves 6%, gnomes 5%, half-orcs 4%)

Resources: Timber, gold, copper, trade goods

Capital: Armadel

Oldest of the northern kingdoms, the nation of Luithea was once a humble fiefdom awarded to a Criestine knight. Since its inception, the country has slowly expanded its borders, adopting new lands and developing a rich sense of history and tradition. The people of Luithea take great pride in their motherland, elevating her folk heroes into demi-saints.

For its entire history, Luithea has been ruled a single unbroken dynasty; the current regent is the beloved King Beldor. Once a valiant knight who protected his kingdom from atop a mighty charger, the old king seldom has call to raise a blade, and only dons his majestic full plate armor for ceremonies and festivals. King Beldor knows that his seasons are numbered, and he quietly longs for the lost years. Beldor's son, Seremac, is a conniving worm who delights in his father's anguish. With no other heir, Beldor fears what will become of his beloved kingdom after his death.

While relying on natural resources for the bulk of its income, Luithea is more developed than most of its northern cousins. Among the many farmers, miners, and woodcutters, there is also a healthy population of artisans and traders. King Beldor encourages the education of his people, but this runs counter to the wishes of the Crieste lord-barons, who would prefer Luithea to remain a simple backwater. Every year the people are forced to watch as the kingdom's finest knights and spellcasters are conscripted into the imperial armies. Inspired by idealistic young nobles, the citizens have begun to cry out for freedom from their imperial overlords. So far, this has resulted in nothing more than scuffles with imperial tax collectors, but the court in Archbridge has caught wind of Luithea's impudence, and has sworn to execute any citizen daring to defy imperial decree.

At the sunset of his life, King Beldor finds his nation at a turning point. The coming years herald turmoil and unrest, and Beldor cannot guide his nation forever. Soon he will be forced to decide between passing the crown of Luithea on to his son, or choosing another heir and ending a dynasty of a thousand years. The decision weighs on the aging monarch, but if he waits much longer, death may make the decision for him.

Armadel: (Large city, pop. 18,250) The glorious city of Armadel is a vision of grandeur and majesty. Built high atop a tall hill and defended by high walls, the towers of the central citadel rise above the common morning fog, earning the castle the name of Cloudwatch.

Armadel is renowned for its Wyrm Knights, an elite cadre of warriors who ride into battle astride wyverns. Few in number, the knights are celebrated heroes of the people. When they take flight from the towers of Cloudwatch, citizens crowd the streets and balconies, shouting and waving to their venerated knights.

King Beldor holds court in Armadel, but every spring he leads the royal court in a tour of the cities, villages, and towns of Luithea. Beldor savors this chance to see the countryside, and his people celebrate the arrival of the popular monarch.

Eisenhold: (Large castle, pop. 3,582) The dark, solemn castle with its grim defenders stands in stark contrast to

the nobility and gleaming spires of Armadel. The castle of Eisenhold and the surrounding town is home to Seremac Beldor, the Black Prince, heir apparent to the Kingdom of Luithea.

A bitter young man, the Black Prince spends his days sulking in Eisenhold's highest tower, plotting new and ever more devious ways of dishonoring his father. The Black Prince dallies in illicit affairs with the wives of his father's knights, but even these distractions offer only temporary reprieve from his foul demeanor. The only time the Black Prince is truly happy is when he is killing something, preferably a sentient creature. Lean, lithe, and cunning, Seremac has matured into a deadly swordsman, a talent sure to serve him well in the years to come.

Welwyn: (Small town, pop. 921) A wilderness town standing in the shadow of the Cairnswild forest, Welwyn is home to trappers and huntsmen who earn a dangerous living hunting the dangerous dire boars that rut in the forest glades.

The town is ruled by the young and charismatic Lady Arabella, daughter to the late mayor. Arabella shares the duties of her post with the town's magistrate, a grim man known as Malchor.

Morrain, Kingdom of

King Mirias Stormwarden, the Argent Sovereign

Population: 294,910 (humans 54%, half-elves 16%, dwarves 11%, elves 6%, halflings 5%, gnomes 4%, other 4%)

Resources: Silver, gems, jewelry

Capital: Galaron

Founded by a band of sworn brothers five hundred years ago, the Kingdom of Morrain owes fealty to Crieste in name only. Morrain weathered the Interregnum alone, fending off goblinoid hordes and giants, and emerged as the face of independence in the north. While other nations raise the clarion cry for freedom, the people of Morrain live it.

A small kingdom with limited resources, nearly every citizen is asked to take part in the nation's defense. Old men and striplings, merchants and knaves—all are expected to take up arms when the watchfires flare on the towers.

King Stormwarden embodies the noble ambitions of his people. A white-haired half-elf skilled with the bow and blade, Stormwarden spent his youth exploring the rocky passes, game trails, and ancient dwarf-highways that weave through the wilds of Morrain. Now a mature sovereign, Stormwarden rules from the citadel in Galaron, with old adventuring companions ringing his throne. In battle, Stormwarden fights with a terrible silver greatsword that rumbles with thunder and calls down lightning from the sky.

With his forces committed to border patrols, the Argent Sovereign is always on the lookout for stalwart heroes. The people of Morrain can handle most small threats on their own, but when giants, dragons, and worse prowl from their dark lairs in the Frosteye Mountains, the call goes out for courageous champions.

Cillamar: (Small town, pop. 1,030) A thriving community set on the doorstep of a vast wilderness, Cillamar grows with every passing season as explorers and adventures press further into the frontier. Cillamar trades lumber, furs, and grain with the dwarves of Ul Yazhmotk, in return for masterwork arms and ore.

Cillamar is ruled by the wise Patriarch Ranz Mentzer. The Patriarch was once a high priest in the Theocracy of the Lance, crusading in the name of good and justice across the face of Áereth. Now the aging Patriarch wears a long white beard in place of a breastplate, but he is no less passionate in his defense of good. The Patriarch welcomes all good and neutral temples to Cillamar, but refuses to tolerate practitioners of evil faiths.

Within a day's ride of Cillamar rise the skeletal ruins of Whiterock Castle. Lady Chauntessa, a mysterious sorceress and the proprietor of the Inn of the Slumbering Drake, often hires young adventurers to explore the Castle's labyrinthine dungeons. Local legends tell of a fearsome dragon, the great Benthosruthsa, who is said to lair in the ruins. Regardless of the truth of the rumors, the expeditions are fraught with peril, and few of Lady Chauntessa's expeditions ever return.

Galaron: (Small city, pop. 8,527) Compared to southern metropolises, Galaron is little more than a rural backwater, its people simple and seldom given to intrigue. Those same "simpletons" will also climb the city walls at the first sign of trouble, willingly defending their home to the bitter end. This isn't to say that Galaron doesn't have its share of cheats and con men, but in Galaron even scoundrels rally; if the city falls, there is simply nowhere else to go.

The largest city for hundreds of miles in any direction, Galaron serves as a waypoint for adventurers riding north and east, and for merchants traveling south. The people of Galaron are fishermen and hunters, specializing in exotic specimens and rare furs. In summer and early fall, daring captains can be hired to sail north, dropping explorers off on the northern shores. Returning to pick up explorers can be something of a challenge, however.

Fierce ice storms can build within hours and last for weeks, and the Bay of Dyzan can freeze over with little or no warning.

Despite the hardship of northern life, or perhaps *because* of it, the folk of Galaron are renowned for their lively revels. It is said that while every man dies, it takes a warrior from Galaron to sing his own dirge.

Far Cirque: (Small town, pop. 1,145) Nestled in the base of a high glacier vale, Far Cirque (known as "Far Town" to locals) is home to a number of plentiful gem mines, accounting for the unusually high population of gnomes. The gems are brought down from the high mountain mines to be weighed, cut, and polished by master artisans before being shipped to Galaron under heavy guard.

Local legends tell of a lost mine and an enormous gem infused with magical properties. This "mother diamond" is said to be responsible for the profusion of gems in the surrounding lands, and that if anyone removes the fabled stone from the nearby gem mines, all will go dry.

Far Cirque is ruled by Rorínna Berick, a sharp-witted gnomish sorcerer with a knack for spotting thieves and cheats. Berick spent her younger years on the wrong side of the law, and it is a point of personal honor that the gem shipments arrive in Galaron undisturbed.

Mystenmere: (Small town, pop. 1,890) A quaint village overlooking Valfors Bay, Mystenmere enjoys its role as gateway to the Anseur Forest (see *the Elven Nations*). Non-elven mages studying with the elves of the Anseur often stay in Mystenmere. For their part, the elves of Anseur tolerate the presence of Mystenmere, even going so far as to offer the protection of the elven nation. For many scholars, Mystenmere is the closest they come to the Anseur's hallowed glades.

Mystenmere is governed by Aragoth, an ancient human mage with the unnerving habit of consulting his familiar (a gray-haired rat) before making any significant decision. Having lived in Mystenmere longer than any can recall, Aragoth seems content to live out the end of his days (however many that might be) in quiet esoteric contemplation. The old man makes his home in an unassuming tower in the center of town, and those hoping to visit the old sage would do well to bring a magical present of some sort, and to observe their manners—the old mage has been known to make impolite guests wait for weeks before admitting them to the tower.

Ibelot: (Ruined large city, pop. ???) Standing high atop the Cliffs of Dyzan, the ruined city of Ibelot is the source of much fear among the rulers of Morrain. Explorers who have ventured within sight of Ibelot's ruined walls report soaring black towers, bronze domes, and elevated skyways. Those who step inside the walls are never seen again, and fishermen regularly report witnessing wisps of smoke curling up from the wells in the center of the city.

Nos Caen, the Isle of
(Province of New Kassantia)

The Great Druid

Population: 610,390 (humans 67%, elves 14%, half-elves 10%, gnomes 4%, others 5%)

Resources: Timber, furs, slaves, whale oil

Capital: Folkevern

The Isle of Nos Caen is the Criestine Empire's least effective attempt to establish a tribute colony. The native humans of Nos Caan are an olive-skinned, dark-haired folk, the last remaining vestiges of the druidic civilization that once stretched across the whole of the Northlands. Regarded as sub-humans by Lady Mortianna, Vizier of Crieste, the savages of Nos Caen have proven more than a match for the armies of Crieste. Worse, the occupation has transformed the disorganized tribes of Nos Caen into a unified savage horde. What began as a simple occupation has grown into a quagmire that threatens to engulf all of Crieste.

The tribes of Nos Caen are true savages, living in caves and simple mud huts, with only a rudimentary understanding of metalworking. This is changing with the coming of the Crieste army; now the tribes raid the Crieste camps for weapons and armor, even burning buildings to ash in order to recover nails and metal artifacts.

For the soldiers tasked with subduing the natives, the tribes of Nos Caen have proven to be terrifying foes. Donning the bloody skins of animals, the tribes of barbarians attack in the dark of night astride dire war beasts. Howling like demons, the tribes know neither fear nor pain. The savages use war horns carved from the tusks of dire boars to orchestrate their attacks and withdrawals, but the savages have taken to blowing the horns simply to weaken the morale of the Crieste soldiers.

The master of Crieste's forces is General Arion, an aging warrior approaching the end of his career. While the general's heart isn't in the occupation of the Isle, he is unquestionably loyal to the crown and carries out his orders to the best of his ability. The general's lack of passion is reported back to the crown by Connence the Ashwind, an agent of Lady Mortianna. Unless Arion makes gains against the tribes soon, he will be sent back to the mainland to finish his career in the dungeons of Kassantia.

Folkevern: (Large town, pop. 3,956) While most of the Caenan people live in small villges and hamlets, the war against Crieste has united the disparate tribes under one ruler: the Great Druid of Folkevern. An ancient druidic grove, Folkevern has grown into the savages' chief staging ground.

In recent memory, no non-Caenan has ever returned from Folkevern; the only details of the grove are culled from old rumors and folktales. Stories whisper of mighty standing stones carved with powerful runes, blood sacrifices, and preserved corpses rising from the boggy moors. The Great Druid is said to be an ancient man with a long white beard that reaches down to his feet, and a pair of intelligent ravens that perch on the back of his throne. Whether or not the stories are true, it is clear that the Caenan tribes have begun to orchestrate their savage attacks, and that the natives are commited to forcing the Crieste armies from Nos Caen—at any price.

There are dozens of small Caenan villages and hamlets, and five Crieste forts on the isle. The following is a brief examination of the most noteworthy settlements.

Halsgate Castle: (Large castle, pop 4,010) Nos Caen's chief port, the city of Halsgate is the staging area for all supplies and forces sent to the isle. Halsgate Castle is a citadel built on the ruins of an old druidic observatory. The surrounding city is a cold, dour place, where chimney smoke seems to linger in a permanent haze, and constant streams of dead soldiers are borne back from the front atop their rent shields.

General Avion does his best to support his soldiers' moral, but at times it seems that the very land conspires to thwart Crieste's forces. The mist-shrouded ruins surrounding the city and the catacombs beneath her muddy streets hint at long-lost secrets. Avion has ordered all entrances to the undercity to be barred over, but the earth beneath Halsgate is riddled like a rat's warren. Recently, night sentries have begun vanishing. Whether the soldiers are abandoning their posts, or are being slain by horrors remains unknown—all Avion can do is double the guards and hope for the best.

Warringhill: (Small castle, pop. 733) The fort on Warringhill is the spearhead of Crieste's assault on the Caenan folk. It has been said that the Criestine soldiers live little better than the savages they hope to conquer, and this is certainly true of Warringhill, a perennially wet fort built atop a rocky outcropping. Veteran soldiers are forced to hole up in muddy huts in the spring, cluster around smoky fires in the winter, and watch the woods with sullen wariness throughout the year.

New recruits are regularly rotated into the fort, but soldiers seldom leave. Half of all new soldiers stationed at Warringhill die in their first month of service. Fully two-thirds are dead after three months of duty, and only five warriors out of every hundred live out a year. Those that survive the tour of duty are deadly warriors with a gift for survival, and are considered too precious to be dismissed from duty.

Veterans of Warringhill could easily be mistaken for savages, and indeed, many adopt the ways of their enemies, doning hide armor when chain and plate armor rusts, and forsaking heavy crossbows and unwieldly polearms for quicker shortbows, halfspears, and short swords.

Warringhill is commanded by Thoradin Axewind, a gruff veteran with little time for the niceties of civilization. Cold and brusque to newcomers, Thoradin takes personal responsibility for every life in his command, leaving him little time to entertain fools or braggarts. Thoradin's chilly demeanor warms instantly after witnessing skill on the field of battle—but it is the deed, not the word, that sways his opinion.

Porthmeor, City-State of

Lord Mayor Yughinuss Lorenam

Population: 35,700 (humans 65%, half-orcs 10%, dwarves 9%, elves 8%, monstrous humanoids 4%, halflings 4%)

Resources: Trade, fish, whale oil

Capital: The City of Porthmeor

A free city on an island in the southern Lirean, Porthmeor enjoys regular trade with the merchants of the North as well as the nomadic tribesmen of the Southland. In addition, the city serves as the easiest access point to submerged Lirean ruins, a constant draw to adventurers, sages, and treasure seekers. In this case, "easy" is a misnomer, since even the nearest ruins are submerged by over fifty feet of water and inhabited by foul creatures of the depths.

In ancient times, the city-state of Porthmeor fought a brutal war against a race of aquatic elves. After a decade of inconclusive conflict, the elves offered the hand of Iasmini, their princess, to Porthmeor's lord mayor as a peace offering. He accepted. A few months after the wedding had taken place, Iasmini killed her husband and most of the court, throwing the city into chaos. Princess Iasmini was captured in the final battle, and legend holds that her tomb was buried somewhere beneath the city.

The current lord mayor is a tall, slender man with dark eyes and a quick wit, who is known to wander the streets of his city in disguise in order to gauge the morale of his people. Pirates, some say hailing from Freeport, have begun preying upon Porthmeor traders once again, and soon something will have to be done.

Saramanthia

Various barbarian khans

Population: ??? (mostly humans and monstrous humanoids)

Resources: Furs, spices, leather, copper

Capital: Tiam'tze

Occupying holy land once coveted by both the Abylos and Uru'Nuk nations, Saramanthia is but a distant echo of the mighty empires. While Abylos and Uru'Nuk were implacable foes, the people of Saramanthia exhibit traits of both. Fierce in battle like the war-hungry Abylos, and devoted to strange god-totems like the religious Uru'Nuk, the people of Sarmanthia embody

the worst and best of both ancient empires. This integration came at the cost of Uru'Nuk's learning and sophistication; the modern Saramanthians are nomadic barbarians that seldom venture into the gilded cities of old Uru'Nuk.

Saramanthians range the grassy steppes astride ceratons, scaled lizard beasts that run on two legs. The horned ceratons are typically barded in hide armor, but the ceratons of chieftains and powerful warriors often sport chain barding pieced together from the mail of fallen foes. Saramanthian warriors prefer to fight with lances and short bows, using scimitars for close combat. Pride, honor, and a fast ceraton are a warrior's greatest assets; to insult any of the three is grounds for a duel.

Inheritance is passed onto the eldest child, forcing many second and third born to seek their fortunes abroad. Thus, Saramanthians encountered in civilized lands are often called "No-zins," or *Thirdsons*. Having tasted the sweet fruit of civilization, many choose to stay in civilized lands. No matter how cultured these barbarians become, they still hear the seductive call of the lonesome wind, and often return to the high steppe in their final days.

Tiam'tze: The "capital" of Saramanthia is nothing more than a grassy burial mound rising three hundred feet above the surrounding plains. Every year on the Spring Equinox, the leaders of the tribes assemble on the mound to settle blood feuds, arrange marriages, and decide territorial disputes. Three basalt monoliths atop the mound serve as a sophisticated calendar; the foundation stone is scribed with an accurate spiral that traces the progress of the monoliths' shadows through the year. Any other significance of the monoliths or of the mound itself remains a mystery, but sages warn that in the old Uru'Nuk tongue, *Tiam'tze* translates to "devil-dragon's blood."

Scourgelands

Tarkhan Khurzog, Master of the Scourge

Population: 3,059,981 (orcs 49%, goblinoids 14%, half-orcs 13%, ogres 7%, giants 4%, other 13%)

Resources: ???

Capital: Hellspawn Keep

For most of recorded history, the tribes of goblinoid raiders that roam the Mirdar-Luminar Steppes had been little more than a trifling threat, raiding the realms of man when overpopulation—a problem common to the barren steppes—forced them to look beyond intertribal feuds. Poorly armed, chaotic, and suspicious by nature, the raiders seldom campaigned more than two hundred leagues beyond their usual hunting grounds. Whether they succumbed to the well-armored and disciplined armies of man, dwarf, and elf, or to their own infighting, made little difference. The decimated hordes would return to the steppes, recoup their numbers after a year or three of frantic breeding, and the cycle would begin again.

This changed in the summer of 3195 EC (Empyrean Calendar). A ten-year drought had reduced the steppes to a tinderbox, decimating the herds of migratory draex and reindeer. Late summer lightning set fire to the steppes, forcing the hordes of ogres, goblinoids, and giant-kin into civilized lands. A single warlord emerged from the ensuing storm of chaos and conflict, a monstrous ogre mage steeped in sorcerous blood, more cunning than any merchant prince—terrible in his wrath and merciless in battle. In a single campaign, he hammered the orc-hordes into a unified army and swept through the Grand Duchy of Leherti, razing the City of Gods, setting fire to the ancient libraries of Luxon, forcing a treaty from the Criestine Empire, and putting over half the nation to the spit.

Now the entire known world trembles at the name of Tarkhan Khurzog, Master of the Scourge.

The end of the tale remains to be told. Presently the Tarkhan resides in the smoking citadel of Hellspawn Keep, gathering mercenary sorcerors, infernal priests, and wicked sellswords to his already-formidable army of orcs, goblins, and giants. Scholars and generals, eager to stave off the seemingly invincible Tarkhan, hotly debate the best way to put an end to the mightiest army the world has ever known, and they fear the Tarkhan's wrath if they should fail.

On the field of battle, the Tarkhan relies upon lightning-swift orcish cavalry bolstered by boulder-hurling giants and goblin infantry riding into battle on armored draex-odons. The Tarkhan has been quick to take advantage of his foes' hubris, turning pride, chivalry, and honor into deadly weaknesses. More than one Lehertian general led a doomed charge against the horde, expecting the enemy lines to break, only to discover the goblins and orcs fear their demonspawn general more than the charge of any armored knight.

The following is a brief examination of the most infamous of the Tarkhan's holdings. Scholars and generals should note that there are certainly other cities, citadels, and orc-holds loyal to the Scourge that have yet to be discovered.

Hellspawn Keep: (Large citadel, pop. 24,301) A city of antediluvian origins, the mountain bastion of the Tarkhan is a towering citadel built atop smoking, steaming pits. Named Hellspawn Keep by the humans, the fell palace is known to the wicked as Azmog-Azmennum. Although it's not the largest of the Scourge's cities, an explorer would be hard pressed to find a greater concentration of malefic might in all the Northlands. Goblins labor day and night to stir the smoking pits, demons stalk the dark halls conveying messages for their infernal masters, legendary heroes of good are tortured into forswearing their noble causes, and constant streams of slaves are sacrificed to hosts of foul deities.

At the center of it all sits the mighty Tarkhan Khurzog, plotting his next conquest. The Tarkhan has never known defeat, and his armies—having tasted the sweet fruits of civilization—clamor for war. Ogre mage, sorcerer, and fearsome warrior, the blight-fisted commander of the Scourge is the undisputed master of all he surveys. Spring will bring war, and the Tarkhan will be ready.

Ibinfang: (Large castle, pop. 4,200) Ibinfang is the adopted home of the Ruin Knights, an order of cultic warriors dedicated to bringing about the end of the world. Once an obscure cabal in the Grand Duchy of Leherti, the coming of the Scourge allowed the abyssal Ruin Knights to fully embrace their unholy beliefs. The Tarkhan placed the order in Ibinfang in order to keep an eye on them, and to ensure that the Scourge reaps the benefits of their nightmarish ways.

So far all has worked as planned. The wicked leaders of the cult, former citizens of Leherti, have produced thirteen demonic knights to fight in the service of the Tarkhan. How long this pact will stand remains to be seen. But for now the goals of the Ruin Knights and the Scourge are one and the same, and the Ruin Knights ride at the head of the Tarkhan's armies, heralding dread and death to the foes of the Scourge.

The Lost Vale: (Unknown, pop. ???) The Valley of

Wistfast was once the ancestral homeland of the gnomish peoples. Isolated from most of the other humanoid races, the gnomes pursued a life of peace and solitude, mining the rich veins of gems and gold, developing their peculiar magics, and encouraging a gentle balance between nature and craft.

That solitude and independence led to the gnomes' downfall. Many hundreds of years ago, the fell mage Tsathzar Rho unleashed an army of enslaved creatures upon the valley, and with few allies to call on, the gnomes were slaughtered by the advancing horde. Once the gnomes were all scattered or dead, Tsathzar Rho dismissed his army and set about collecting the seven sacred gems of the Gnomish Lords. What Tsathzar Rho did with the fabled gems remains a mystery, and the gnomes have been a race of wanderers to this day.

The fate of the valley is also unknown. Soaked in the blood of the gnome race and tainted by the touch of demons, the Lost Vale sinks further and further into the shadowed mire of the forgotten past.

Morazuin: (Metropolis, pop. 127,020) Were not fully half of Morazuin underground, it would be the single largest city in the Northlands, a fact that taunts many a human sage. Even considering only the surface portion, Morazuin ranks among the great cities of the North.

Home to the armies of orcs and goblinoids that now swarm the lands of Leherti, Morazuin is a foul cauldron of activity. Goblin builders work feverishly to construct new siege engines, orc generals train their wards into ferocious warriors, and mercenary sellswords and mages arrive daily.

While Azmog-Azmennum is mythic in its might, Morazuin is impossibly *large*. The Tarkhan has prohibited building outside the city's fabled iron walls, so the orcs and goblinoids settled on building *up*. The city is under constant construction, level stacked upon level like the haphazard accretion of soil after a flood. At night, the smokey fires of Morazuin rise like bitter stars struggling to climb back into the firmament, the highest levels indistinguishable from the night sky.

A city as large as Morazuin cannot exist for long. Currently, the orcs thrive off the spoils of Leherti and the flesh of thousands of slaves. But in the next five years, the population of Morazuin will double, and plundered resources of Leherti will dry up. Driven by hunger and an insatiable lust for violence, the armies of Morazuin will spill out onto the plains like a horde of demonic locust, destroying all in their path. Some scholars fear that this cycle is but one part of the Tarkhan's fell plan, but most discount this theory as too orchestrated to be the work of a simple ogre-magus. The truth of the matter remains to be seen.

Yazh'mon: (Small city, pop. 11,980) Every army needs its weapons and armor, and the Scourge is no exception. Orc and goblinoid hordes have traditionally suffered from poor arms. Part of the Scourge's success is due to the quality of their armor and weapons. While many of the Scourge's goblins still fight with improvised weapons and scavenged armor, the orcs, giants, and large goblinoids are all outfitted with arms equal to that of most human armies. Orcish officers and even some of the giants even carry masterwork or magical arms, many of which were forged in the perpetual fires of Yazh'mon.

The forges of Yazh'mon smoke constantly, casting a sooty pall over the countryside. Hundreds of smiths, supported by thousands of assistants, work day and night to turn out implements of destruction. The land surrounding the city is barren; every last tree and shrub has been taken to fuel the forge fires, and an army of Lehertian slaves bring in the tons of ore needed for smelting.

Key to Yazh'mon's success is the efreeti Imiz-kil, and his legion of salamanders. How the Tarkhan managed to secure their labor is a matter of much debate and consternation. The Scourge's deadliest weapons were all forged in the pits of Yazh'mon, and the finest among them bear the mark of the efreeti's work: a wavy, black watermark and a serrated edge that sings when tasting living flesh.

Soulgrave, Free City of

Boss Bomar

Population: 8,809 (humans 61%, half-orcs 12%, half-elves 8%, dwarves 6%, halflings 6%, elves 2%, others 5%)

Resources: None

Capital: Soulgrave

The true Soulgrave (see *Soulgrave, the* below) is a burial site too sacred to be claimed by any one nation. The Criestine Empire has always protected this independent status, partly out of a desire to honor the dead buried at Soulgrave, and partly out of *fear* of those same dead. By declaring the Soulgrave, and all lands within two leagues, to be neutral territory, Crieste opened the way for the Free City of Soulgrave.

Originally a waystation for priests and burial processions en route to the Soulgrave, the Free City has grown into a sprawling, lawless town. A territory unto itself, the Free City has become a haven for criminals fleeing Crieste and surrounding nations. While still a waystation with porter services, hostelries, and outfitters, the Free City is also a town of gambling dens, brothels, and black markets.

The streets of Soulgrave reflect the city's lawless citizenry. Most buildings are temporary and are built with no regard for city planning, creating a maze of alleys and dead-end streets. Well-to-do visitors are advised to bring bodyguards for their protection, and to avoid the local thugs offering the same services. There is an informal city watch, but the men of the watch are accustomed to enforcing rules as they see fit, or even creating them on the spot. A well-placed bribe can accomplish much, but if rogues scent a fat purse, it may take a well-placed dagger to ward off danger. The fabled Black Dougal is said to have been born in the Free City, and some guild thieves even accuse the rogue of running the Free City, but Dougal hasn't been seen in some time and is presumed dead.

Currently, justice (such as it is) is meted out by Boss Bomar, a barrel-chested half-orc known for his crude sense of humor and unpredicatable temper. While Bomar doesn't run this city so much as balance atop it, he is the one to go to when looking for something, or *someone*, in the Free City. As is often said in such places, visitors should always keep one hand on their purse, and one on their blade.

Soulgrave, the

Ranosh, Prince of Undeath

Population: —

Resources: —

Capital: —

Ages ago, the Soulgrave was nothing more than a high mountain valley where druids of yore brought their fallen heroes. The greatest of the dead were given sky burials: The bodies were cut up by initiates, and offered to the enormous black vultures that make their home in the nearby peaks. When the powers of the druids waned, the site was adopted by regents who built tombs and catacombs for their royal families. Slowly, the valley was transformed into a vast necropolis, with each new ruling family adding to the city of the dead. A mighty wall and great iron gate were erected. Everflaming braziers were placed atop empty towers, and the mountain trails were widened into uniform roads.

After dusk, the graves crack their musty shells and the dead walk the city. Whether or not the risen corpses are tormented undead or something else altogether is a question best left to theologians, for the creatures surely have a hunger for the living. Legends tell of Ranosh, a vampire who speaks for the undead citizens of Soulgrave. Accounts paint Ranosh as neither evil nor good, but simply devoted to Soulgrave as hallowed ground, and he is perfectly willing to kill the living to inspire respect for the city of the dead.

Southern Province, the

Trayr Sains, Overlord of the South, Master of Heaven and Earth, Dragon of the Lirean Sea, etc., etc.

Population: 2,462,900 (humans 73%, half-orcs 9%, half-elves 7%, dwarves 6%, other 5%)

Resources: Slaves, spices, black market trade, copper, timber

Capital: Punjar

One hundred and thirty years ago, the Province was simply the largest of the empire's many fiefs. In a revolution led by a cunning and aggressive lord-baron, the Province seceded from the empire, setting the example for all the kingdoms,

provinces, and colonies that rushed to independence in the years to come.

Today the Southern Province stands as a mirror to the Criestine Empire. While Crieste is mired in the bureaucratic quagmire of a millennium-old aristocracy, the Province is home to the young and ambitious guild houses; while Crieste seeks to govern every aspect of the economy, the Province lets the houses do the work and taxes their profits; while Crieste is a pondering behemoth of military might, the Province is a nimble player of economic and political intrigues.

Wealth is everything in the Southern Province. Those that have it—and more importantly, can *keep* it—are envied and respected by all.

The present ruler is Trayr Sains, a cunning man who had the good fortune of being a bastard son of imperial blood. The child of a discarded harem concubine, Sains fought his way out of the vicious slums of Punjar, working his way from petty thief to slayer to guild master. Boss Sains was coronated Overking after the notorious Night of the Long Knives, when fully two-thirds of the Southern Province's nobility were assassinated and replaced with royal-blooded representatives of the guild houses. When the sun rose on the blood-soaked capital, the surviving nobles who were willing to openly declare the virtues of law and good were few and far between. Sains' claim to the Dragonskull Throne is laughable at best, but it provides the veil of legitimacy necessary for the Province's political skullduggery.

The Southern Province challenges the Criestine Empire's dominance of the sea lanes by trading in slaves, dark idols, and every other sort of contraband. Very little is deemed illegal, and nearly every crime can be ameliorated with a bag of gangling coins. With no navy to speak of, the Province issues letters of marque authorizing privateers to fly Province colors and prey on Imperial ships. This informal sea force is little better than a band of pirates, but there is little the Imperial Navy can do to halt the practice, barring a full-scale invasion of every Province port.

Azur: (Small city, pop. 6,100) The Southern Province's answer to dweomer-rich Kassantia, Azur is known as the City of the Archmage. Dismissed with amusement by many, the city streets swarm with scheming mages eager to assume the title of Magister of Azur. What the city's rulers lack in arcane power, they make up in ambition and ruthlessness.

Azur is divided into three wards situated about the grim castle named the Host of Five Towers. The city openly openly welcomes temples and shrines devoted to fell powers; priests make blood sacrifices over smoking pits during the day, and demons stalk the streets at night.

With no law enforcement to speak of, each mage employs a personal retinue of bodyguards and enforcers. Commoners are left to fend for themselves, dependent upon the whims of the mages for safety. For these reasons, mercenary humanoids are a common sight in Azur, ranging from half-orc assassins to ogre-magi bodyguards and hill giant thugs.

Jolzin: (Large town, 4,814) Jolzin is the Province's primary source of timber, employing a number of expendable goblins to operate the city's lumber mills. Skilled shipwrights are in high demand, as are adventurers willing to defend the forest paths from rebellious fae and elves.

The town is ruled by a ruthless hobgoblin cleric-warrior going by the title of Vendig the Destroyer.

Kastulo: (Small city, pop. 8,092) The city of Kastulo thrives on black market trade with the pirates of the Barrier Isles. An open air bazaar is host to any number of disreputable merchants doubling as fences, and known pirate ships regularly drop anchor in the city's deep-water harbor.

The city's lords maintain order with the Worm Guard, a police force composed entirely of undead and their evil masters. Members of the Worms are outfitted in red-stained breastplates and are typically armed with polearms and heavy crossbows. Rumors allege that the master of the Worm Guard is a powerful lich.

Castle Mortis: (Citadel, pop. 6,700) Seen from the sea, the spires of Castle Mortis rise from the rocky cliffs like dark spears. The citadel is home to a fleet of black-sailed

ships, privateers that sack and pillage for the Overlord. Its forces are led by Lady Soraline, a cruel, conniving blackguard trained in the arts of dark wizardry. Lady Soraline secretly covets the title of Overlord. She carefully monitors politics of Punjar, looking for her chance to seize power.

Punjar: (Metropolis, pop. 75,100) Largest of all the cities in the Northlands, Punjar is also among the most dangerous. Her chaotic, sandy streets, torturous alleyways, and dense buildings are encircled by more than a dozen walls, each built to encompass the city in an earlier time. Now the walls serve to divide the city into wards, each less affluent, more densely populated, and more desperate than the last. In the center of the city, atop a high ridge, stands the palace of the Overlord, the dark spider at the center of a vast web.

Of the many disreputable guilds laired in Punjar, the most notorious and far-reaching is the brotherhood of assassins known as the Slayers. Feared throughout the known world, rumors attribute supernatural abilities to the Slayers, including the ability to walk through walls and cloud the minds of their targets. Some rumors even go so far as to suggest that the Slayers were directly responsible for the Night of the Long Knives. Even if none of the rumors are true, it may be said with certainty that the Slayers maintain spy rings that operate throughout the world.

Whole volumes have been written on the labyrinthine intrigues of Punjar, and it serves no purpose to recount those plots here. Suffice it to note that every citizen conspires to get ahead in Punjar, and each one plans to do it standing on the backs of his neighbors.

Taktian: (Small city, pop. 10,832) A southern gateway to the Lost Lands, the city of Taktian is a city of dark bazaars, crowded marketplaces, and smokey dives. Host to diverse mix of sharp-eyed traders, strange warriors from the exotic South, and Northland traders looking to make their fortune, the city is the last stop for supplies before crossing into the Great Desert.

Taktian is ruled by a trio of secretive mage-lords. All three wear featureless black robes and porcelain masks, concealing their identities. At least one of the three is believed to be a woman, and all are accomplished evokers.

Sylvan Downs

Council of Five (Ilyarin es Nost, Speaker for the Council)

Population: 257,205 (half-elves 34%, elves 28%, humans 20%, halflings 8%, gnomes 6%, other 4%)

Resources: Timber, weapons, spices

Capital: Oakenmeet

A loose collection of small dales, hamlets, and villages, the Sylvan Downs is a humble nation of farmers, woodsmen, and retiring elves. With no single king, cities, or armies to speak of, the people of the Downs are often dismissed as simple, rural bumpkins. And indeed, their virtues are simple ones: freedom, happiness, and a life lived in harmony with the seasons.

This humility should not be mistaken for meekness. Living in the shadow of the Mountain King, the elves and men of the Downs are regularly forced to take up arms in the defense of their homes. Many aging heroes make their home in the quiet Downs and eagerly lend their swords and spells to the fight. Roused, the folk of the Downs make a relentless foe, and friends in need could not ask for a better ally.

When a major decision is needed, the five largest communities sends their leaders to Oakenmeet, an ancient circle of standing stones dating back to the druidic priest-kings. There, beneath the open sky and before all who attend, the Council of Five rule on the matters of state, always working toward the good of the people. The Council makes its decisions by consensus; if any one council member stands in opposition, the measure fails. This can be a slow and aggravating process for foreign ambassadors accustomed to dealing with kings and regents, but despite its flaws, the process has one crucial virtue: there are no dissenters in the Downs. When an issue is decided, the people of the Sylvan Downs move as one.

Aside from raw materials, the greatest resource of the Sylvan Downs is its people. Master swordsmen live as humble farmers, aging wizards pass their last days in the sun-dappled glades, and elven lord-rangers stalk the dark woods. Apprentices seeking masters need look no further—if they can convince the masters of their worth.

Ternyziem, Free City of

Turoch Mas, Overlord of Ternyziem, Master of the Endless Wastes

Population: 438,250 (humans 57%, half-elves 10%, half-orcs 8%, elves 7%, dwarves 7%, halflings 5%, gnomes 4%, other 2%)

Resources: Timber, copper, furs

Capital: Ternyziem

Known as the City at the End of the World, the Free City of Ternyziem stands sentry over the Frost Barrens, amid snowbound forests and white-capped fjords. Sharp-eyed archers stand atop the city's high towers, alongside mighty siege weapons. The skulls of remorhazes, white dragons, frost worms, and worse ring the battered towers, and each season brings new trophies.

The men and women of Ternyziem revel in the dangers associated with the City at the End of the World, and few—if any—of the Free City's populace travel without at least a spear or fighting dagger at their side. Many are drawn to the lands surrounding Ternyziem for their rich resources. A brave heart and quick blade go far in the icy north, and many adventurers have returned laden with gems, exotic furs, and ancient magics. Of course, many more never return, their corpses frozen to the white tundra, or dragged into the lair of one of the many fierce arctic beasts. Despite the many dangers, heroes and adventurers continue to stream north, eager to take their place among Ternyziem's heroes of legend.

Less recognized by scholars and bards is that many of Ternyziem's citizens actually *hale* from the north. The Free City has a fluid population of savage barbarians who come to trade furs and knowledge in exchange for weapons and armor. When the barbarians stay, they are slowly immersed in the ways of civilization (or at least, what passes for civilization in Ternyziem), and nearly all of the Free City's native-born citizens can lay claim to barbarian blood.

Unique to the Free City is a shadowy order of wizards and sorcerers. Called the Sightless, the group has no formal name; their moniker is earned by the cult's practice of blinding their members. The lowest rank of initiates wear elaborate eyepatches, but the higher ranks actually pluck out their own eyes. Even more curious is their master: a mage with bare, unmarked flesh where both missing eyes should be. Local tales hold that by giving up physical sight in elaborate rituals, the Sightless gain "inner sight," but the order is so secretive—and the ritual so bizarre—that the truth of these claims has not been independently established.

Ternyziem is defended by the Reavers, a ragtag company of motley soldiers and rogues. Despite their lack of formal organization, and any sort of uniform whatsoever, the Reavers take great pride in the defense of Ternyziem and the nearby realms. They have devoted themselves to the service of the common citizen. It is not uncommon to see a burly, hide-armored barbarian, great sword slung over his shoulder, stopping to check in on a shepherd's flock, or helping to repair a wall.

Ternyziem's present ruler is Turoch Mas, an enormous bear of a man. Mas spent his youth ranging across the wild north, warring with and against the barbarian tribes, hunting the giant frost worms, and exploring the frozen ruins that dot the wastes. Now Mas spends his days ruling Ternyziem—the city is his one true love. Mas' belly is a little larger for the years, but he still carries a mighty bastard sword over his shoulder side, and he is still the first to the wall when terrors threaten the Free City.

Kyarovsk: (Village, pop. 480) Kyarovsk is typical of the half-dozen or so outlying towns that pay allegiance to the Free City. It is a hard life, living in the frozen North, and the village's trappers and traders are a rowdy, rough-cut crew. Law and courtesy carries little weight here, and every man (and the rare woman) is expected to be able to take care of himself.

Uthur, Kingdom of

His most Royal Majesty, King Rolward, First Knight of Uthur

Population: 338,910 (humans 67%, dwarves 10%, half-elves 9%, half-orcs 5%, elves 4%, other 5%)

Resources: Timber, silver, gems

Capital: Talisade

The Kingdom of Uthur is blessed with abundant natural resources, but this wealth comes at a price. The threat of goblinoids has forced good King Rolward to rely heavily on dwarven mercenaries to augment his own armies. This has led to a tenuous situation, with the king beholden to mercenary captains to keep peace in his own land. Rolward walks a fine line, struggling to placate both the mercenaries and his own armies, but it is only a matter of time before an ambitious general from either side attempts to take the crown by force, plunging the nation into chaos and war.

Ironvale: (Large castle, pop. 3,806) A mining settlement squatting at the base of the Dünerain Mountains, over half the citizens of Ironvale are dwarves. The town is also the headquarters for the Company of the Long Axe, the chief mercenary company responsible for maintaining order in Uthur. The town's current mayor, Feald Thordo, was selected in a hurried election when the last mayor vanished after criticizing the Company. A retiring shopkeeper, Thordo has been careful not to make the same mistake.

The Company of the Long Axe is led by Duruth the Ogrebane, a vengeful dwarven warrior renowned for his fiery temper and ferocious skill in battle. Duruth bears a secret animosity towards the Rolward family, dating back to when King Rolward's grandfather failed to provide assistance to dwarves caught in a collapsed mine. Duruth's older brother was lost in the mining accident, and the young dwarf has bided his time ever since, waiting for his chance to bring the Rolward family to ruin.

Stagdale: (Small town, pop. 1,933) Standing within bowshot of the Amn'crith Forest, Stagdale has always been regarded as a simple trading post and waystation for timber merchants on their way to Crieste. That changed when a troupe of woodcutters returned with a slim metal disk roughly the size of a shield and covered in glowing runes. Curiously, the disk bore no signs of age, as if it had been forged and enchanted the day before.

Four of the disks have been found in the woods now, and the elders of Stagdale have begun acting strangely and often spend their nights in secret council. Members of the Ordo Arcana have been seen about the town, but the mystery of Stagdale remains unsolved.

Talisade: (Large town, pop. 4,154) Talisade sits on the hillside beneath the watchful eye of Castle Oakthorn, home to King Rolward and his family. The people of Talisade are simple, hardworking peasants and craftspeople, loyal to their king and country, and the town prospers as a result of their labors.

Talisade is also home to the League of the Rook, a loose association of heroes working towards the betterment of Uthur and the Northlands. When every avenue has been exhausted, and he has nowhere else to turn, King Rolward knows that he can always turn to the League for help. The official register of Rooks is kept secret, but best estimates put their numbers between seventy-five and one hundred and fifty. Members of the League can be recognized by the onyx raven pins they carry pinned to the inside of their cloaks or to the pommels of their weapons, but bards tell of Rooks forsaking the pins to operate in secret.

Every winter, the town of Talisade hosts Frostfall, a weeklong tournament devoted to tests of strength and martial skill, culminating in a joust attended by the finest knights of the Northlands. The winner of the tournament is awarded a silver lance and shield, and often an invitation to serve in the king's elite guard. The tournament is regarded as a proving ground for young warriors, and warriors who comport themselves well can expect to be courted by royal emissaries offering prestigious appointments in the armies of Crieste, the Theocracy of the Lance, or even distant Koranth.

Theocracy of the Lance

His Holiness, the Bishop of the Shining Lance

Population: 2,346,500 (humans 62%, half-elves 13%, dwarves 7%, elves 5%, halflings 7%, gnomes 4%, half-orcs 2%)

Resources: Fine trade goods, art

Capital: Arvale City

The Theocracy began as a small monastery devoted to reverent study of the aspects of Aristemis, Justicia, Thormir, and Ghoran. Together, these deities made up what monks called the "Lance" of law and goodness.

In time, the monastery grew in power and esteem within the Crieste imperial court. With each passing year, Emperor Lyonod relied more and more on the monks to negotiate disputes between provinces. In the final years of his life, the emperor became a deeply religious man, awarding the Theocracy with sovereignty over its lands, including the right to maintain a standing army.

The Theocracy flourished during the Interregnum, growing strong in the absence of imperial dominance. Armored priests and holy warriors patrolled the nation's borders, while wise theocrats ruled from Arvale City. The peace and stability attracted skilled craftsmen and artisans from neighboring countries, and the confluence of talent and wealth resulted in a flourishing of arts, the one source of light and truth during the dark time between emperors.

While the folk of the Lance are no more pious than any other folk, the ruling caste of the Lance have sworn their lives to the service of good. The country is governed by his Holiness, the Bishop, who rules with the blessing of the Theocrats, holy men and women currently numbering thirty-three. The Theocrats are served by three sects, each representing an aspect of the revered Lance.

The first is the order of the Chosen, a sect of monastic priests who have forsaken lives of peace and contempla-

tion for those of conflict and loss. The Chosen serve as ambassadors throughout the Northlands, acting as objective negotiators and unbiased judges. Surprisingly to some scholars, certain Chosen also serve the countries of the North as unprejudiced executioners. This particular sect wears black helmets that conceal their features, and are practiced in the use of the greatsword or greataxe.

These missions of service have earned the Chosen much esteem and much enmity; Chosen are frequently targeted for assassinations, forcing the disciples of peace to be accomplished warriors, equally at ease on the battlefield or in the imperial court. Between assignments, the Chosen return to their order's abbey, in Arvale City.

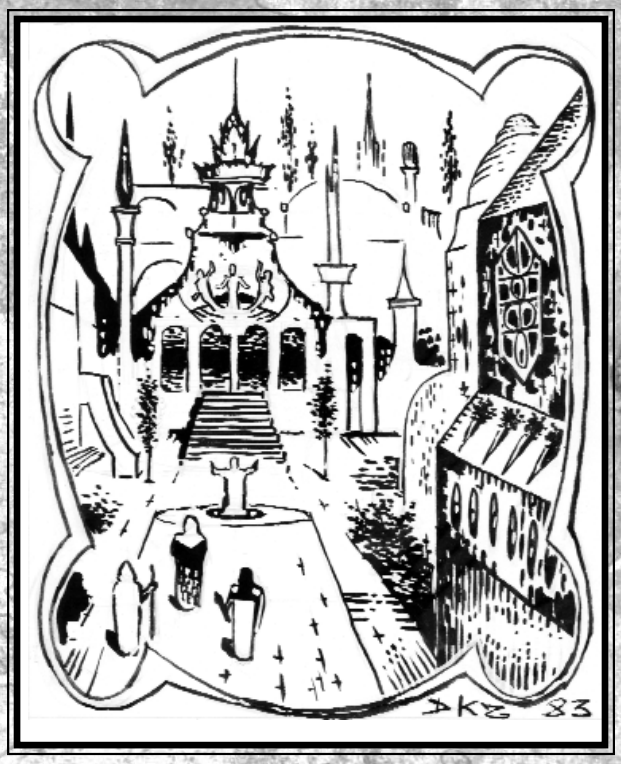
The second order is the Knighthood of the Lance. Holy warriors dedicated to justice and honor, the Knights of the Lance ride far afield, seeking out injustice, defending the helpless, and sacrificing their lives in the service of good. The Knights of the Lance adhere to a strict code of honor and law, but this code often runs counter to the autocratic wishes of wicked tyrants; bureaucrats hoping to use unjust laws to bend knights to their will are often unpleasantly surprised. The Knights of the Lance make their headquarters in Brighthawk Castle, but ride far afield in service of good.

The final sect is simply known as the Black Watch. Vilified by many and understood by few, the Black Watch is a secretive order of holy warriors who dedicate their lives to ridding the world of evil. Made up of demon hunters, vampire slayers, and others devoted to their obscure shadow war, the Black Watch are often depicted as obsessed madmen willing to adopt any means to achieve their goals. Whether or not this is true, it cannot be disputed that when terrible villains emerge from the shadows to threaten the Northlands, the tormented souls of the Black Watch are the first to rise to the challenge.

Arvale City: (Metropolis, pop. 32,450) The city of Arvale is one of the great wonders of civilization. Every graceful arch, every shining tower, every flawless dome, was conceived, designed, and built to exalt the glory of good. A city of golden palaces and broad promenades, Arvale is rightfully home to the Theocrats and their agents, the Chosen.

Also inhabited by some of the most brilliant craftsmen and artisans ever known, Arvale is the source of the finest items in the North. The master craftsmen congregate in salons and universities, furthering the disciplines of magic and the young field known as science. The Theocrats encourage all such learning, confident in their belief that all of creation points to the truth and power of good.

Blessings-Be: (Small town, pop. 915) The town of Blessings-Be is located near the expansive Ferahn Forest,



nestled along White Tip Lake. The town has a thriving fishing trade, but is best known for its proximity to the Mourning Cave, an important holy site for pilgrims of the lawful god Honorus.

The Mourning Cave bears several holy relics, as well as the entombed body of Arden Brightheart, a paladin of Honorus. Arden fell in battle many years ago against the Dread Watcher, an undead diviner who could see into the future through necromantic rituals. The Dread Watcher was an important seer in Albrecht Skullshank's employ.

The Sword of Conviction, Arden Brightheart's legendary blade, was used to battle the Dread Watcher. With a dying effort, Arden drove his holy blade into the creature, pinning him to the wall of the cave. The magic of the sword bound the Dread Watcher to a state of torpor, preventing the creature from regenerating or fleeing.

Unfortunately, the Sword of Conviction has been removed by a greedy local man, not knowing the sword's role in keeping the Dread Watcher bound. The Dread Watcher awoke, slew the man, and quickly summoned undead to assist him in his duties.

The Dread Watcher stripped the trappings of Arden Brightheart and hid the paladin's remains deep in the bowels of the cave. Today he sits upon a crude throne of pure white marble—but now wearing Arden's tabard and armor.

Wearing the paladin's regalia has tricked the townsfolk into mistaking the Dread Watcher for their patron hero. The holy symbol of Honorus and the Sword of Conviction are suspiciously absent, however.

Brighthawk Castle: (Large castle, pop. 4,070) Watching from atop the shining towers of Brighthawk Castle, the Knights of the Lance are pictures of selfless nobility and true chivalry. Led by General Arenal, the Knights of the Lance travel the length and breadth of the Northlands, taking the battle to the enemy. Arenal's current focus is the Scourge, and she works tirelessly to raise men and gold for the retaking of Leherti. Always on the lookout for valiant and courageous heroes, Lady Arenal offers secret bounties for leaders of the Scourge. This practice runs counter to the beliefs of the Theocrats, and if they discover the general's work, her passion could be her undoing.

Fair Haven: (Village, pop. 550) A prosperous port on the Lirean Sea, Fair Haven enjoys a small cove sheltered from all but the fiercest of the sea's storms. The village maintains a trio of docks, used by local fishermen and the occasional merchant galley.

Fairweather: (Village, pop. 425) A small, druidic commune, Fairweather provides nearby townships and villages with fresh produce and milk, and it boasts the most successful farms in the region. The small community is also respected for the high quality of its manufactured wooden goods. Staves, bows, and arrows, as well as some farming tools, are culled from specially cultivated trees. The woodworkers of the community produce only a limited amount of these masterwork items in a given year, readily commanding high prices from enterprising merchants.

The commune's leader, Thistle, is a sentient plant being of a race known as the thornblood, and is a powerful druid in his own right. Thistle has come to the aid of heroes on numerous occasions, providing them with shelter, food, and healing in his humble home.

Orden: (Small town, pop. 1,930) The last Lancean outpost on the caravan route to the East, Orden maintains close ties with its trading partner, the town of Lastever. Together the two maintain the mountain fortress of Whitefang, warding off the predations of bandits and worse.

Whitefang: (Keep, pop. 450) Standing atop the pass between the towns of Lastever and Orden, Whitefang Castle is a small but mighty stronghold built with the cooperation of both communities. Caravans crossing through the Dragonspire Mountains must travel through this pass, and pay a small toll for the protection of Whitefang.

In the three years Whitefang has stood, the depredations of the nearby humanoids have been severely checked, and merchants may now travel safely through Aurora Pass. A relief of fresh soldiers arrives every month like clockwork, and supplies are purchased from caravans passing through as needed.

The keep's severe castellan, Lord Malvolth, hires adventurers as scouts and outriders to root out the tribes of goblins and orcs that lair in the nearby caves. The outriders suffer a high rate of attrition, but in Lord Malvolth's eyes, a dead adventurer doesn't draw a wage, and there are always foolhardy young whelps eager to make a name for themselves in the Dragonspire Mountains.

Woodroe: (Thorp, pop. 40) Woodroe is a tiny village, with only seven buildings lining the sides of a single, woefully bumpy dirt track. Fields of wheat and apple orchards surround Woodroe, and the town's lone inn doubles as a general store.

Thire, Free Province of

Lady Aedwyn Cyrean, Warden of the Folk

Population: 308,920 (humans 44%, elves 18%, dwarves 12%, halflings 10%, half-elves 8%, gnomes 5%, other 3%)

Resources: Furs, timber

Capital: Hath Hall

Since its bid for freedom one hundred years ago, Thire has walked a fine line between supporting Crieste in the constant struggle against the forces of evil, and maintaining its separation from the old empire. Fortunately for Thire, its people are a hardy, stubborn folk, with little use for any ruler whose reach extends further than a town council and the arc of a longbow.

The ruler of Thire is a charismatic half-elf named Aedwyn Cyrean, a warden respected for her woodsense and quiet wisdom. Young by half-elven standards, the maid rules from Hath Hall, a manor overlooking the fertile lowlands that stretch all the way to the Lirean Sea. Gossipmongers hint at a scandalous romance between Cyrean and Captain Sentri, Master of the Sable March; if the rumors are true, it could lead to a clash that would threaten the thrones of both nations.

Argalis: (Large town, pop. 4,705) Argalis is typical of Thire's coastal towns, with a small but well-developed port, stout walls for defense, and a devoted corp of marines and city watchmen. The town is governed by Lord McDurmott, a stalwart defender of the town with an abiding hatred for pirates and their kin. The people of Argalis pay regular tribute to a band of giants, but in recent months these relations have deteriorated, and the lord has begun casting about for hardy adventurers willing to take on the giant horde.

Hath Hall: (Small town, 1,806) Small and unassuming, Hath Hall rests at the confluence of two rivers which meet to form a raging waterfall that crashes and rolls down several hundred feet to a lake below. Hath Hall sits like a watchful dragon atop the falls, surrounded by clouds of rolling mist and the thundering rivers. Crafted almost entirely from soaring wooden beams, polished river stones, and living trees, the manor is far more majestic and awe-inspiring than its size would indicate.

As the capital of Thire, Hath Hall is home to the land's Warden Queen and her guard of silver-mailed warriors. Hath Hall is also host to a number of accomplished elven and half-elven wizards, and even the occasional reclusive druid can be found within its quiet corridors.

Without a true standing army to defend her people, the Lady of the Falls is constantly on the lookout for promising young adventurers who have proven themselves to be faithful and courageous in the face of danger.

Garland's Fork: (Thorp, pop. 51) A small trading settlement in the heart of Stagwood forest, Garland's Fork serves as a trading post for the woodsmen and huntsmen of the forest, and as a welcome place of rest for weary travelers. The town is composed of a handful of small farmhouses, a blacksmith's shop, and a small inn.

Longdale: (Large town, pop. 3,207) A walled town surrounded by a vale of lush farmland, Longdale is situated at the foot of the Trolltooth Peaks and weathers regular attacks from monsters, humanoids, and worse. There are several mining communities within a day's ride of the town, and a regular stream of silver, gold, and gems pours into Longdale before being carried by caravans south to Hath Hall and Rockport. Longdale enjoys an unusually high population of gnomes, dwarves, and halflings, and most inns and merchants make certain to accommodate the wee folk.

Rockport: (Large town, pop. 3,250) Rockport overlooks the Lirean Sea and welcomes traders and merchants from across the Known Realms. Built around a stout citadel known as the Raven's Roost, the town is divided into four wards separated by imposing stone walls. Each ward caters to a slightly higher (and richer) class of citizen, and much can be learned about a citizen of Rockport simply by finding out where he lives.

Rockport is ruled by a council of the town's leading guilds, who elect a single lord mayor every four years. The present lord mayor is Khalrik Canagur, a scarred man who is reputed to have spent the early years of his life as a cutpurse and thief. Regardless of the truth of the rumors, Canagur has proven to be a shrewd and cunning ruler, capable of juggling the diverse—and oft times opposed—interests of Rockport.

Warlands, Baronies of the

Various barons

Population: 310,780 (humans 67%, half-elves 9%, half-orcs 7%, dwarves 5%, elves 3%, gnomes 2%, halflings 2%, other 5%)

Resources: Sporadic at best

Capital: Varies by ruler

One hundred years ago, the rolling plains and rich steppes of the Warlands were a part of the Barony of Valsund, mightiest of the northern kingdoms. But with the unexpected death of King Jarregüt the Great, the kingdom passed on to his five children.

Unable to decide upon a single ruler, the siblings fell into bickering that quickly escalated to outright war. Divided by suspicion and greed, no one sibling was strong enough to best all four others, and Valsund decended into ferocious infighting known as the War of Barons. Today, the glory of Valsund is a faded memory, replaced by the five fragmented baronies and their endless conflict.

Every spring brings a new season of struggle. The barons have learned to fight for small, strategic gains, and most battles are waged for control of cities and key bridges and fortresses. The same knights face off year after year, developing bitter rivalries that spill into subsequent generations. A warrior code has evolved over the decades of conflict, dictating the rules of war, surrender, and ransom. To foreign dignitaries, the Code seems to make little or no sense, but any child of the Warlands know its rules by heart. Of course, these customs apply only to those of noble birth; for the common spearman, the wars are as deadly and costly as any other.

A century of war has also taken a great toll on the baronies' resources. With the constant threat of death, production hovers just above subsistence levels, and the barons are forced to tax their people heavily to maintain their war chests. Recently, the barons have taken to commissioning adventurers to explore old ruins in the hopes of discovering lost treasure hordes. While this has yielded some success, the returns are far from reliable, and the cost in lives is high.

The barons wage their war games from ancestral citadels and city-states, ruling only as far as the reach of their armies. Territories can change hands overnight, and in the cloud of war, little is certain until the dust settles and the smoke fades. The following is a brief list of the baronies competing for dominance of the Warlands:

Araduin: (Metropolis, pop. 49,067) Araduin is a sprawl-

ing city-state that has more than doubled in size since the beginning of the war. Once renowned for its high, white granite walls, well-made homes, and towering citadel, the picturesque city is now surrounded by a tent city of several thousand refugees. While the original citizens of Araduin cling to their old ways, those outside the white walls scratch out their days in forced squalor. The stark differences have fed a growing unease on both sides of the walls, which, in turn, has fed the rise of fixers, smugglers, and neighborhood bosses. Once a city without crime, Araduin is facing the rise of a powerful criminal underclass.

Meanwhile, the War of Barons drags on. Araduin's heavy cavalry are knights of legend, one thousand strong. When the knights assemble on the high plains, plate armor and lances shining in the dawn light, even the most jaded warrior is given pause. Each knight is attended by at least one squire, and when the army is on the march, its baggage train stretches for dozens of miles. While truly a mighty force on the field of battle, the size of the knights' force has proven to be a detriment against smaller, agile armies.

The master of Arduin and her armies is the great chevalier-paladin, Cedric Erewulf the Wyrmbane. A holy warrior in the prime of his life, none can fault the lord-baron for his personal honor or courage. Sadly, in his obsession to unify the Warlands, Erewulf has begun to compromise his previously unquestionable morals. Soon Erewulf will be forced to choose between his priniciples and his duty to the Warlands—a decision that threatens to shake the moorings of the paladin's religious life.

Celinost: (Metropolis, pop. 10,720) Celinost is a barony without a baron. The last ruler, Baroness Haelynn, the Silver Lady, vanished two years ago and is presumed dead. In her absense, the metropolis has dwindled to a third of its original size. With no ruler to take the Lady's place, the barony has been left defenseless against its enemies. Many of the nation's generals have already left to join the armies of Arduin or Morcaut, and the warriors that remain loyal are few.

Most of the people of Celinost have fled for other lands, reducing the communitities surrounding the city of Celinost to mere ghost towns, prime for looting. Each of the four remaining baronies look to annex Celinost before a new baron can rise.

Kithmon: (Large city, pop. 11,058) With none of the might of her neighbors, Kithmon has been forced to rely on diplomatic intrigue and foreign heroes to augment her army of light cavalry, archers, and spearmen. On the whole, the people of Kithmon have fared better than most in the Warlands, and the armies of Kithmon are no less proud for the caution of their generals.

Primarily light lancers and archers, the Riders of Kithmon are easily recognized by their distinctive warhelms, decorated with trophies taken from fallen foes. The manes of dire lions are common, while some elite Riders sport the horns of dragons.

The Baron of Kithmon is an unlikely ruler, Iminric of the Lute, a slender, catlike man. Known as the King of Bards, Iminric prefers to spend his time entertaining emissaries and visiting foreign courts, leaving the day-to-day matters of the barony to his trusted seneschal. Regarded by most as a worthless courtier with a weakness for beautiful women, the true Iminric is a cunning leader, masquerading as a fop. The King of Bards maintains an elaborate network of spies throughout the Northlands, and often the lady on his arm is one of his agents. Of course, just as often the lady on his arm is an enemy agent, but Imininic delights in the subtle games of cat and mouse. With a lute in his arms, and a rapier slung low on his belt, Iminric can be found in any royal court, quietly recruiting heroes to his cause.

Morcaut: (Metropolis, pop. 31,813) Second largest of the baronies, Morcaut surely would have conquered her sister baronies years ago were it not for the intrigues of her chief foe: Reyngemar. A barony of sullen, broken-spirited serfs and cunning nobles, Morcaut is infamous for her peoples' cruelty and ruthless spite. Less well known is the subtle diplomacy of her rulers. Among bardic circles, it is said that every emissary to Morcaut is met with a smile and hearty greeting . . . and leaves with a knife in her back.

Morcaut is ruled by Baron Mrir, also known as the

Demon Son of Morcaut, a rogue entirely unfettered by morals or qualms of conscience. While rumors surface annually of demon blood running in the Mrir line, most sages agree that the current baron is neither demon nor cambion, but simply a heartless young noble with a gift for brutality. Unfortunately for the people of Morcaut, their ruler also possesses a brilliant intellect nearly unmatched in the Northlands. Baron Mrir is quick to exploit his gifts, constantly weaving new and ever more devious plots to rule the Warlands.

Those meeting Baron Mrir for the first time are often taken aback. The baron is a young man of no more than twenty winters, with unmarred, pale skin and raven black hair. Mrir has a slender build, and while he is seldom seen on the field of battle, the young lord trains incessantly with the longsword and fencing dagger, and is a master of the art of two-weapon fighting. Rumor holds that the baron keeps captured criminals (and heroes) in the dungeons beneath Morcaut, and uses the unfortunate souls as dueling partners. If true, and if his unmarked skin is any evidence, the Baron of Morcaut has never lost a duel.

Reyngemar: (Large city, pop. 23,508) The nation of Reyngemar is like much of the Warlands: her people weary from the endless seasons of conflict, her roads churned into muddy tracks by passing cavalry, her towns stained by the soot of war. The people of Reyngemar are more resilient than most, believing that the wars will soon end, with Reyngemar ruling the Warlands. Much of this has to do with their unquestioning loyalty to their queen, an enigmatic sorceress known only as the Ashen Witch.

While all five of the Warlands are locked in a constant struggle for territory and title, the nations of Reyngemar and Morcaut reserve a special hatred for each other. If the two ever succeeded in resolving their differences and formed an alliance, the other baronies—and indeed much of the Northlands—would tremble at their combined might.

Thankfully, so long as the Ashen Witch rules Reyngemar, an alliance with Morcaut is doubtful at best. A legend in the north, the Ashen Witch is a beautiful, white-haired sorceress of indeterminable age, who dresses in white robes and carries a bone staff adorned with mystic sigils and strange runes. Apart from her enmity for Baron Mrir, little is known of the Witch's motives. Emissaries of foreign nations have vanished into her crystal palace only to emerge as old men, aging dozens of years in a single night; meanwhile, nearly every nation in the north has been rescued by her mighty magics at one time or another. Examples of her kindness and cruelty are equally common, and the Ashen Witch remains among the enduring mysteries of the North.

The armies of the Ashen Witch are an assortment of medium cavalry and spearmen, supported by archers identified by their white-fletched arrows. Unique to Reyngemar is a martial order composed entirely of women. Known collectively as the Swordsaints, the warriors of this order can be recognized by their white, fur-lined cloaks, and peculiar, otherworldly eyes that glow with a soft blue radiance.

Wastes of Zamon

Competing Magocrats

Population: ???

Resources: ???

Capital: None

The fetid swamps and icy forests that make up the Wastes of Zamon stand in dark opposition to shining Koranth. A loose coalition of evil warlocks and wizards, the wizards of Zamon broke away from the Barony of Koranth a mere seventy years ago, seizing control of the high tundra and wooded wastes north of the Mirdar-Luminar Steppes.

Sequestered far from civilized lands, each wizard rules as absolute tyrant of his own realm. The wastes bear the name of the most powerful archmage to make his demesne in the forsaken wilderness. Zamon, or the soul-stricken shell of the mortal once known by the accursed name, maintains a domain in the highlands just south of the Myrwych Forest, where the hills are populated by the twisted creations of the ancient mage and his demented apprentices.

The wizards maintain no standing armies apart from their own personal henchmen, but these and the threat of a mage-tyrant's personal reprisal is enough to dissuade most would-be trespassers. It is said that every tree, rock, and stream has been twisted by the surrounding magics, and that no secret is safe from the mages' prying grasp.

Years of dark experiments have filled the Myrwych woods with tormented aberrations. Known collectively as the Horrors of Zamon, the twisted beasts shun the light, only emerging at night to stalk the rocky hillsides. Amalgamations of a dozen monsters, the Horrors unleash the pain of their existence on the living, striking out with mindless abandon. To the great consternation of sages, the Horrors seem to be multiplying; each year their number, size, and ferocity increase. Whether this is due to breeding between the aberrations, or some unholy aspect of the woods themselves, remains to be discovered. Exploration of the Northwoods has revealed a series of

dark obelisks that draw the aberrations like moths to flame. The proliferation of Horrors makes real exploration nearly impossible; some of the Empire's finest heroes have died not seven steps within the forest bower.

Toth-Minul: (Small city, pop. 8,500) In such a forbidding realm, towns and cities are few and far between. Toth-Minul, the Wastes' largest city, is occupied only seasonally. Every summer solstice, traders make the long trek to Zamon for the city's Blacksun festival, bringing caravans of slaves, weird artifacts, rare spell components, and scraps of long forgotten lore. For three weeks, the merchants fill the outskirts of the city with their bazaar of the strange and wicked. Agents of the wizards scour the markets for their arcane needs, haggling with the dirty-handed merchants over the price of truenames. Those that return from Zamon come laden with sacks heavy with coin, but for every fortune made, there are several arrogant merchant who paid with their lives after failing to show the proper deference to their customers.

Wildsgate, Free City of

Kaldal Aborn, Baron of Wildsgate

Population: 2,010 (humans 67%, half-elves 9%, dwarves 8%, half-orcs 5%, elves 5%, gnomes 3%, halflings 3%)

Resources: Grain, lumber, furs, trade

Capital: Wildsgate Keep

Wildsgate began as little more than a crude hill fort built in the shadows of the Foehammer Spires. Protected by ramparts of earth and watch fires, the fort quickly grew to prominence as a bastion of civilization in a savage frontier. Brave men and women answered the call of adventure and the fort grew to include stone walls, docks, and a towering citadel that offered a view of the land for miles in every direction.

This expansion and growth came to a shuddering halt with the theft of the Heirlooms of Wildsgate. Construction was never completed, leaving Wildsgate as it appears today: unfinished and raw. Wildsgate has retained much of its rough and tumble ways; the fortress is not a safe town or a pleasant city, but a citadel surrounded by a savage wilderness. The people of Wildsgate live every day to its fullest, knowning full well that it might be their last.

The present Baron of Wildsgate, Kaldal Aborn, is the last of the original line, a young man struck down by the "curse of Wulfrun." Sickly and pale, Kaldal hovers on death's door. While the baron still rules the city-state in name, all decisions of import are made by his seneschal, the cruel half-elf Sodersund.

Wildsgate and its surrounding environs hold ample opportunity for adventure for those who are skilled (or lucky) enough to venture into the Wilds and return. The Foehammer Spires, once home to a clan of mighty dwarves, are now occupied by ferocious barbarians and goblin raiders. Local legend holds that the lost mines of the Foehammers still conceal treasure hordes and weapon caches of immesurable value. Wildsgate also serves as a trading post for dwarven merchants traveling down from the Holdfast of the Steel Overlord.

Chapter 2
The Southlands

The Southlands are a glittering prize of limitless intrigue, bearing the treasures of long-forgotten civilizations and the myriad dangers hiding them. For those willing to find and face their guardians, they hold magics and works beyond belief. Those that survive the Southland perils bring back stories of monsters unimagined and locales undreamt.

Drawn along the southern border of old Northland maps, the name first given to Xulmec has since expanded to include all the lands north and south of the great peninsula. Cartographers have observed the far latitudes of the Southlands, realizing that its landmasses range as far north as the Kingdom of Luithea and as far south as the Old Khonsurian Empire. Yet the misnomer endures, and the Southlands have become synonymous with the exotic and wondrous lands throughout the continent.

Though it is nearly impossible to trace humans' first contact with the Southlands, ancient Xulmec codices and scrolls from the Lostlands agree that it occurred during a time when humans served fearsome, more powerful races. Perhaps because of these masters, this initial contact abruptly came to an end. When next the humans made contact, it was centuries later, their destinies were their own, and glory and wealth were their goals. Early visitations to the Southlands were violent, as Northland kings sought conquest in the gold-laden hills of Xulmec and the natives defied them. Even today, in a time of relative peace, an undercurrent of contempt endures.

Populous with humans, the dominant race of the Known Realms, the Xulmec city-states are the living heart of the Southlands. Though regarded as savages by the Northland nations, the Xulmec civilizations, at once superannuated and glorious, have spanned thousands of years—their traditions older than the oldest Northland country. Once a primitive people, they were mentored and enslaved by the naga race, and since finding their freedom have carved their own path in history.

Yet the Xulmec peninsula is by no means the only center of civilization. Dominating the jungle coasts of the Laeysian Sea, the drakon nation of Ssorlang is a permanent and deadly fixture. The surrounding wilds and swamps are rife with lizardfolk and other reptilian peoples unfriendly to explorers. North of Xulmec, the land of Dujamar comprises a mass of smaller islands and rocky shoals, its waters concealing vast territories of sahuagin, locathah, and other aquatic-dwelling races hostile to most humanoids. The latest domain founded in the Southlands is the Criestine Colonies, firmly ensconced on the fringes of the Eztenqui Jungle, serving as the chief gateway for merchants and explorers.

Beyond them all is Zimala, the Island of Obsidian, once the home of the great naga empire that quickened the cultures of all the land-dwelling races of the Southlands. Lost cities of old Zimala still lure adventurers with promises of magic as old and powerful as the mythic Naga Council or the dragons that ruled before them, but the sheer distance of Zimala from the Northland world and the thousands of perils that lie between them keeps the Island of Obsidian a place of legend.

To those familiar with the Northlands, the Southlands often seem trapped in the beliefs of the distant past. In the Northlands, the names of the gods are spoken by clerics and shamans, but here they are everyday utterances among commoners and kings. Here divine right of kings is a concept familiar and unquestioned by all. Here sacrifice is as important as drawing breath for continued life. Here sacred quests of goodly proclamation are undertaken and unapologetic genocide is carried out, as decreed by the patron gods of each realm. Madrah, the Lord of the Earth and Sky, rules above all, but his more active scions, the lesser powers who rule as god-kings and elemental lords, are invoked in all occasions, from everyday family meals to bloody campaigns of conquest.

The mystic megaliths and vine-covered ruins found in the wild reflect such ties to the divine. Etched with hieroglyphs instead of runic writing, the equivocal reliefs and sculptures portray a time when gods took personal interest in the world—yet not so different than the present—and a future time when all things will transform or perish altogether.

Climates and Seasons

The varying elevations and latitudes of the Southlands allow for such disparate climates as steamy jungles and snow-capped mountain peaks.

To a Northland captain sailing due west to the island of Tarras, the seasons and landscapes are much akin to his homeland. But for its resident menagerie of murderous beasts, the island would have become a Northland colony long ago. Moving south, the climate grows warmer, and it becomes clear to any visitor to the humid rainforests and grassy steppes that the natives are well adapted to this land, as evidenced by their tanned skin, dark hair, and uncanny endurance. The sun is a fierce and unabated presence in the Southlands, a fact that becomes more ominous when one learns of Xulmec beliefs. Though life-giving, the sun scorches the land, bleaches the stones, and darkens or burns the skin.

Timekeeping and Celestial Bodies

The standard Northland calendar is often observed in the Southlands out of convenience, but it is not the primary system. When Northland captains sail their vessels across the Empyrean, a second moon reveals itself to them in the evening sky, waxing and waning like the moon they know but bearing a swifter course. This is the Spectral Moon, the violet-hued disk upon which the Xulmecs base their calendar. Even Áereth's most learned do not know why this moon can only be seen from the Southlands and their surrounding waters.

In Southland Reckoning, the number of days in the year (365) remains the same. However, there are thirty moons (months) in a year, each affiliated with a creature or elemental force and consisting of twelve numbered days. The five remaining "unhallowed days" at the end of the year—coinciding with the end of the Northlands' winter—mark a moonless time when demonic forces are said to roam the land uncontested. Xulmec priests fast and pray through the reigning darkness, making sacrifices to coax the arrival of the new year. The more cynical drakon of Ssorlang observe mystic rites to declare a truce with the demons and ensure their own protection. The first days of each year are celebratory indeed, for it means that destruction has been staved off yet again. Festivals are commonplace, as bonfires and costumed dances fill city streets and village squares. Xulmec drums, called *huehuet*, express the rhythms of a people whose ancestry spans thousands of years.

When the Spectral Moon is eclipsed by the White Moon (as the Southlanders call it), the latter simply vanishes. On rare occasions when the Spectral Moon eclipses the White Moon, its light is magnified and the land is illuminated by a pale violet glow half as bright as sunlight.

Such events are of great spiritual significance to all Xulmecs, especially the Amoyas, and often serve as the launching of great quests and the purging of evil.

Every nation, city, and village observes its own holidays, and most can trace their origins to the customs of the various Zimalan provinces when the naga, not the human or drakon, reigned supreme. Holy days are generally based on the whims of nature, the gods, or circumstance, and are seldom determined before their occurrence. The people of Kaatlan, who revere Calchoti the Rain Queen, celebrate a holy day when the greatest rainstorms appear, while aggressive followers of Tlachinozal mark a holy day when their pool of captives is sufficient for a mass sacrifice. During these times, most of the people cease their work and make sacrifices large and small to their gods. On such days, children are named, omens are observed, and relics are closely guarded.

The following are notable holidays observed largely among the Xulmec city-states and some even among the drakon of Ssorlang. The people of the Criestine Colonies observe a few Southland traditions, but most adhere to the Northland calendar and holidays.

Day of the Three Guardians: Observed only in Xulmec—and in Teotcoatlan more than any other—the Day of the Three Guardians acknowledges the three legendary guardian nagas (Zacatla, Chetutec, and Saymal) who helped emancipate the human slaves from the Dark Council of Zimala. The holiday marks the true birth of the Xulmec nation, and the leadership of Huamec, the legendary hero and chieftain. The day is solemn from morning through the afternoon, in observance of the sacrifices made by the Xulmecs' ancestors, but the evening is a party of great merriment and feasting.

March of Lightless Despair: Among the Amoyas, the "unhallowed days" marking the end of the year are a dark holiday, five cold nights when the moon goddess Anahuara must leave her post and protect the land from Tzitzimitl, the Demon Queen of Air. Without the moons' light to reveal evil and empower the magic of goodly mortals, creatures of darkness gain an advantage. Demonic minions of Tzitzimitl and her mortal cultists carry out their schemes, while clerics of Anahuara set out to oppose these foul enemies. It is not uncommon for the clerics to recruit adventurers to assist in such dark times.

Festival of the Dead: Undoubtedly the most anticipated holiday in all the Southlands, the Festival of the Dead is a six-day observance that honors all who have passed on into the mysteries of death. Great celebrations and feasts are held and families visit the graves, tombs, or sites of their deceased loved ones. Tributes are made, songs and dances are performed, and the people try to commune with the spirits of those once close to them.

For the Xulmecs, no answer is expected from the recently deceased; the journey through Mictlan, the Underworld, is believed to take at least two years, during which the spirits of the dead cannot make contact with the living. After that, the living await for signs that their loved one's journey to the peaceful realms of the afterlife was successful. Battles are forbidden upon this day, even for the bloodthirsty priests of Coatlimict. It is a day to honor the dead, not the dying. The Amoyas take council with their mummified deceased, believing that they have merely transcended into another state of existence. In contrast, the Darawans hold celebratory bonfires in their fields as they dance and sing to the sky, whence the spirits of the dead are believed to have ascended.

In Ssorlang, the drakon celebrate the Festival of the Dead with the intemperance common to their kind. Although the snake men do seek communion with their dead, they also choose this day for important executions and violent sparring. Criminals are thrown to giant constrictors as the drakon spectators gorge themselves on dire rodents and other delicacies. The coliseum in Xincayot, filled to capacity, dispenses with its usual gladiatorial games and pits slaves and criminals against overwhelming odds. Important duels between drakon nobles are also common, as the sovereigns merely look on with amusement.

Southland Reckoning

Any given day is simply named by the moon and day number. The fifth day of the Earth moon would be Earth Five. The count of Southland Reckoning, observed by Ssorlang and Xulmec, begins at the fall of the Zimalan Empire. The present year is 3675, as opposed to 3200 in the North.

1. Angel
2. Wind
3. Star
4. Serpent
5. Flower
6. Bird
7. Storm
8. Cat
9. Earth
10. East
11. Dragon
12. Water
13. Tree
14. Sun
15. North
16. Insect
17. Fish
18. Magic
19. Fire
20. West
21. River
22. Rodent
23. Reed
24. Turtle
25. Death
26. South
27. Light
28. Salt
29. Mountain
30. Demon

The Barrier Isles

Cozette LeRoux and Lord Raazt

Population: 16,437 (humans 56%, monstrous humanoids 22%, half-orcs 12%, elves 3%, halflings 3%, dwarves 2%, gnomes 2%)

Resources: Trade and contraband

Capital: Bloodport

The chain of islands known as the Barrier Isles are named for their occupants' propensity to harass, plunder, or sink merchant vessels sailing between the Northlands and the Southlands. The Isles are an unrivaled haven for pirates and buccaneers, a cluster of ports so rife with humanoid vermin that lawmen from the Northlands dare not approach with standards raised.

Before the infamous Bloody Jack made a name for himself more than one hundred years ago, the Barrier Isles were merely a temporary anchorage for Northland seamen making the voyages south and west. A collection of docking ports were settled, each governed by an appointed official from its founding country. The greatest of these was Port Isolé, established by the Criestine crown. A puzzling array of ruins half buried within the forested isles became a distraction to explorers, leading to conflicts among them as each competed to delve the ruins first. Over the years, the number of buccaneers who hid their loot in the ruins began to outnumber the isles' reputable inhabitants, a situation which deterred merchants and imperial captains.

Then came Bloody Jack Dascombe, the most reviled and feared pirate of his time, with his fleet of loyal raiders. In a single night of blood-soaked violence, he rid the isles of all those he deemed to be in service to Crieste or its allied nations. Just as swiftly, Jack sailed on again, deigning to hide his own treasures elsewhere. Indeed, it was rumored that Jack had a secret island of his own, a place not found on any map, where he stashed his marvelous treasures. Of course, rumors endure today that Bloody Jack left behind small caches of his treasure within the Barrier Isles and many ambitious pirates have given their lives searching for them.

A cloud of mist perpetually wreaths the Isles, enduring all but the strongest of winds, granting them a sense of myth among Northland sailors and making the Isles difficult to chart. Though they are considered a symbolic barrier between the Northlands and the Southlands, the Isles themselves are seldom seen. A captain who sails anywhere too close is likely to find his ship boarded, gutted, and burned into the sea by Barrier pirates patrolling their waters. For this reason, most captains give this region a very wide berth, extending their voyages by many days simply to eliminate the risk. Thus, the Barrier Isles are a constant thorn in the side of Crieste, Kalía, and other seafaring parties—a vicious thorn they are unable to locate, much less remove.

The horrid accounts told by sailors about the Barrier Isles are never far from truth. Savage bugbear pirates are seen sailing into Bloodport in their gruesome galleys with sails of human skin and their latest captives—usually sea elves and tritons—lashed to the prow with razor-edged chains. A fleet bearing orc buccaneers launches yearly from the Isles on their infamous slave hunts to bring living currency to the markets of Djeser al-Maqqara. Even the intelligent undead have been known to bring their ghostly ships to port, bartering loot for living sustenance. These descriptions and countless more are carried to the mainland, ensuring the Barrier Isles' reputation as a place of dread.

Though no Northland country recognizes their autonomy, the Isles possess their own sanguinary government. There are no official regulations, yet an unspoken armistice is observed within the lawless ports. While rivals frequently stab one another in the back and corpses turn up in the gutters, there is an overriding fear that one of the Isles' pirate lords will take personal notice and intervene. Such a threat keeps the daily skirmishes and brawls from becoming anything more. At the top of this chain of lords are the infamous pirates Cozette LeRoux and Lord Raazt, who owe their offices to their unfettered ruthlessness. They are considered the rulers of the Barrier Isles because they are the primary predators, having climbed through the ranks with cutlass and coin.

Cozette LeRoux, the Red Piratess, is a smuggler and pirate who has never known defeat. Of Criestine blood, some believe that the fiery-haired piratess is a bastard descendant of Bloody Jack himself, a rumor she neither confirms nor denies. Lord Raazt is a retired pirate of fiendish lineage, a monstrous scrag famous for scuttling the ships of his enemies. LeRoux and Raazt maintain an uneasy truce, keeping their clandestine plots against one another to a respectable minimum. All obey and fear these two wicked pirates, although occasionally would-be usurpers attempt to dethrone one of them. Those upstarts who are not slain outright are hung by the waterfront as examples to the rest. The necromancers in LeRoux's employ often animate these unfortunates as ghouls and lock them in metal cages in public view, denied the carrion flesh they so desperately crave.

Despite their differences, both LeRoux and Raazt pay tribute to the Lord of Ash, a mysterious authority who leads an unsettling fleet that sails up from the far, uncharted Southern Seas every two years to collect payment. The flagship is an ominous and exotic catamaran

with a virtual palace built between its colossal hulls. Claiming true ownership of the Isles—as well as other unknown lands far away—the Lord of Ash wields might beyond understanding. His fleet is crewed by mute humanoids that, according to all accounts, "seem wrong somehow." The pirate lords pay this tribute without question as the Northland governors reluctantly did before them, and only LeRoux and Raazt have ever been aboard the flagship. All those who have dared to follow or assail the armada are destroyed with impassionate efficiency.

On occasion, elite lawmen and bounty hunters from the mainland find their way surreptitiously to the Barrier Isles, adopting false identities to avoid detection among the scum they hunt. Most are unmasked, tortured, and flayed alive. Yet a few have succeeded in tracking down their quarry, smuggling them back home to face justice or merely slitting their throats in the night to end their lives of crime. One such vigilante, known only as the Pale Knight, has become something of a bogeyman among the Isles.

The ruins of the Barrier Isles perplex scholars and pirates alike. Half swallowed by the earth, the arrangement of the geometric architecture suggests that each ruin is a single piece of a much larger whole. Linked by bridges and interconnecting undersea corridors, the sunken buildings may have constituted a single massive city—an impressive accomplishment considering the Isles lay near the center of an ocean. A marked lack of writing within the ruins frustrates those who seek to unravel their mystery, but in its depths, the almost seraphic statuary has fostered many theories. Regardless, the shattered stone bridges and multi-level tunnels now serve as pirate troves and monster lairs.

Tiny ports—some little more than a row of shacks and a single dock—honeycomb the coasts of each isle, many without names at all. The largest of these are detailed below.

Bloodport: (Large town, pop. 4,904) Once known as Port Isolé, Bloodport was renamed in honor of Bloody Jack's "red tide" of salvation that freed the Isles from Northland control more than a century ago. It is the sullied gem of the Barrier Isles, the first and largest of its ports. Its populace comprises the paramours and bastard children of pirates—and the men and women too sick or frail to continue their maritime crimes. As the pirate life is not one conducive to old age, the elderly are few in number. The streets and hovels are thick with youths, from small children to blustering adolescents, their numbers divided into rivaling gangs, each boy and girl claiming that his or her notorious parent will soon return from the sea with untold wealth and influence. Most are disappointed; pirates as often feed the sharks of the Empyrean as return home with hard-earned swag.

Carved into the rocky outcroppings of the largest Barrier Isle, Bloodport comprises a semicircle of tiered streets. The hovels are clustered together like swarming vermin frozen by isolation and privation. Lacking skilled architects and loyal laborers, the town's ramshackle buildings and leaking flats frequently collapse. The cobbled, crumbling streets thrive with activity, but the licentious pursuits of its citizens are a mockery of true urban commerce.

This budding generation of seafaring raiders, isolated from the imperious laws of the mainland, faces many hardships. For all its considerable population, disease runs rampant in the streets of Bloodport, with more than half of its young dying in their first year of life. Few healers reside in town—or even advertise their magic—and fewer still serve gods compassionate enough to care for the infirm at all. Those who survive to adulthood are hearty indeed, but most of these end up as crew for the pirate ships that come to port. Yet from such iniquitous beginnings a precious few manage to escape, finding lives more fulfilling than the acquisition of blood money and stolen goods.

Cozette LeRoux, the Red Piratess, lives in the town's topmost tier, ruling from a mansion whose opulence rivals the estates of Crieste's lord-barons. It is said that the annual galas hosted from her manse—and the clandestine activities that take place therein—presage each year's greatest pirate exploits. Many Northland spies have attempted to infiltrate these momentous balls in the hope of acquiring coveted information, but LeRoux's traps and guardians snare them all. The lucky ones are slain outright.

Dead Man's Cove: (Small town, pop. 1,767) A small port sheltered within a wide coastal cave, Dead Man's Cove is the lair of the scrag Lord Raazt, who rules with absolute authority. The followers of LeRoux are not welcome here, but all freelance privateers and freebooters may dock if they pay the appropriate fee. Shielded from direct sunlight, the Cove lays in perpetual shade, making it a favorite of light-sensitive races such as orcs, kobolds, and sometimes even drow. Contraband, illegal in most nations, can be obtained openly here, provided one has sufficient coin or skill with an unseen blade. It is often through Dead Man's Cove that psychotropic drugs produced in Ssorlang are divvyed for Northland distribution.

Lord Raazt himself often deals in secrets, selling maps and information for the same in turn. He is hard to impress and impossible to bribe with treasure or even magic items. His small empire of cutthroats and privateers, many of whom pay lip service to Northland governments, ensures that any who oppose him quickly find a watery grave.

Mysterious treasures, local lore proclaims, are amassed within the extensive network of caves beyond the town proper, concealed both above and below the sea level. Explorers and buccaneers alike are frequently lured into these caves, but few return.

Last Chance: (Small town, pop 1,954) The harbor of Last Chance caters to freelancing buccaneers and all those who would spurn the deadly intrigue of the pirate lords. Many who begin a life in piracy—or give it up—do so in Last Chance, though the town is as unwelcoming to Northland law as any in the Barrier Isles. Treasure hunters who have plundered the ruins of the Southlands often come here to sell their spoils, keeping such activity free from imperial scrutiny. Even legitimate merchants can be found in harbor, selling information about their rivals and unloading contraband.

The closest thing the town has to a government is a guild of racketeers calling itself the Shroud, canny rogues who snub violence, preferring blackmail and extortion to accomplish their goals. Although its operation is based out of Last Chance, the Shroud extends its reach far outside the Barrier Isles, steering clear of the pirate lords and piracy itself. Rogues of the Shroud are well known for their mastery of forgery and counterfeiting, though its members are all but impossible to implicate in such crimes.

Less well known are the excavations funded by the Shroud to yield the treasures of the Barrier ruins. Behind the town, a timeworn façade of draconic design leads into tunnels beneath the isle's forest. Adventurers willing to explore these ruins and claim its treasures for the Shroud are frequently rewarded with favors and furtive services.

The Criestine Colonies

Viceroy Raylen Durand

Population: 502,800 (humans 63%, half-elves 20%, elves 8%, halflings 3%, gnomes 3%, dwarves 2%, half-orcs 1%)

Resources: Bananas, beef, coffee, fruit, ginger, lobster, lumber, peanuts, shrimp, sugar, tobacco

Capital: Voltigeur

Early Northland expeditions across the Empyrean Ocean brought home stories of a land filled with murderous savages, beast-ridden jungles, life-stealing spirits—and a wealth of resources that would fill the treasure vaults of the first kingdom that could claim them! With the large peninsula of Xulmec already occupied—its natives as often hostile as conciliatory—and the imposing continent of Zimala too far and dangerous to reach, the Northlanders were hard-pressed to find lands safe for colonization.

It was an explorer named Darel Voltigeur who found the route north of the Tarras Isle and south again through the Sea of Desperation. There he came ashore the Isle of Tlahuaco, as it was known among the savage Xulmecs, and began to colonize the fringes of the jungle in the name of the crown. Little did Darel realize that the jungle already lay in the grip of the drakon warlord known as Xiuhcoatl the Emerald Cobra. The bloodshed that followed quickly dispelled the Northlander dream of easy settlement. Unwilling to relinquish their claim on this promising new land, the Criestine forces fought back against the vindictive snake men.

The Xulmecs soon came to their aid, finding in the Criestines allies against a common enemy. Dire prophecies had predicted the rise of the Emerald Cobra, giving the Xulmecs a reason to end their enmity with the Northlanders. New prophecies appeared, citing that friendship with the foreigners may be the salvation of the world.

With their allies beside them, the Criestines waged war against the Emerald Cobra for several decades, with elves from the Northland forest of Blackbriar joining the imperial reinforcements in exchange for some sovereign presence within the colonies. The forces of Xiuhcoatl were at last defeated, the spirit of the Emerald Cobra himself magically bound in a staff by a Teotcoatlan wizard. When the drakon retreated from the Eztenqui Jungle, the Criestines settled their colony unmolested and have remained there since, contending only against the creatures of the jungle and the occasional attack from the Xulmec city-state of Chuzec.

Existing as a colony for centuries, the people have become largely independent from the Empire of Crieste and most consider their home a separate nation altogether. Nevertheless, the merchant-mayors of each town answer to the crown—usually in the person of Raylen Durand, a pretentious but artful politician appointed by Lady Mortianna herself as colonial viceroy. The Beryl Conclave, a small counsel of aristocratic wizards and sorcerers, are assigned as protectors of the colony and its people.

The boundaries of the Criestine Colonies are uncertain. The Isle of Tlahuaco and the southern coast of the Sea of Desperation lie within its province, but if one presses further into the jungles, Criestine influence and protection quickly fades. Though rife with natural resources, the Eztenqui Jungle is nefarious for the dangers it hides—lizardfolk, venomous snakes, and jungle cats are only the least of these.

The Colonies maintain strong trade relations with the Xulmec city-states of Kaatlan, Teotcoatlan, and Amoya. The centuries that have passed since their arrival in the Southlands have given the colonists a cultural and religious syncretism unseen in any Northland realm. A mix of Xulmecs, a merchant caste drawn from various Northland nations, and elves from Blackbriar have given rise to a racially diverse population quite distinct from the Northlands. An outspoken minority seeks further independence from Crieste—total secession from the crown—but the royal vizier and her pet viceroy have invested many resources in preventing this. The Colonies are a firm gateway to the Southlands, and the lord-barons of the mother country will not give it up.

At present, the mayors of the Colonies have become complacent, hoping for trouble no greater than merchant disputes, periodic aggression from Chuzec, and the occasional wandering beast from the Eztenqui Jungle. The Scourge that now threatens the motherland is but a rumor to the colonists. But more substantiated rumors have begun to appear of the return of the Emerald Cobra, even as spiritualists from among the towns speak in frightened tones of the sinking of Tlahuaco by unnamed forces. Sahuagin from neighboring Dujamar have been spotted in small teams in the Sea of Desperation, fueling anxiety that King Azghaar gazes upon the Colonies with conquest in mind. And amidst all those concerns is the constant fear of colonial merchants that privateers or Barrier pirates will sack the treasure-laden ships they send back home. Adventurers who come to the Criestine Colonies are sure to find their spells and swords in demand; whose cause they take up or whose gold they accept is a matter of honor, greed, or desperation.

Abbey of St. Terinmora: (Keep, pop. 487) When the violence between Northland explorers and the people of

Xulmec began to abate centuries ago, many attempts were made to convert the Southland "savages" to the faiths of the Northlands. Most missionaries, the well meaning and the pharisaical, were rebuffed, for the Xulmec adherence to their gods was strong.

One exception was Terinmora, a young paladin of Justicia who gave much of herself—and ultimately, her own life—in service to the Xulmecs. The passion and mercy exhibited by this remarkable woman brought many of the jaded natives to the outlandish doctrines of the Restoring Flame and even other gods of the Sancturn Pantheon. While some of these have abandoned the worship of the Xulmec gods altogether, others blend the beliefs of their native gods with their adopted divinities.

Built within the foothills of the Atlauhti Mountains, the Abbey of St. Terinmora is a religious fastness dedicated to the gods introduced by the Northland visitors. Humans from both sides of the Empyrean Ocean dwell here, as well as an influx of pilgrims. Named after the sainted lady paladin herself, the Abbey serves as a bastion of faith and a launching place for sacred quests within the Southlands. Shrines to most of the benign religions of the Sancturn Pantheon can be found within the great abbey, and clerics of almost any god are welcome.

Abbot Kallus Wayrenne, a stern man of middling years, presides over the activities and guests of the abbey. His sleepless devotion is best exemplified by his consistent victories against the attempted sieges of the Chuzec warriors.

Feronte: (Village, pop. 679) Feronte is a simple village dwelling closest to the infamous volcano in which, if legends are true, the Emerald Cobra once laired. The people of Feronte are considered by the other colonial towns to be a wilder folk than most. Many of the Xulmec-blooded humans of the Colonies settle here, finding a place in the fishing trade common among the Northland colonials. Strange hermits and reclusive rangers dwell on the outskirts of town, maintaining the local folklore that the longer one lives within the jungle, the more fey one becomes.

Feronte is mayored by Senth Lavrousse, a ranger and half-elf of Crieste-Blackbriar descent who feels at home among neither. He spends most of his time scouting the wild and seldom corresponds with the Colonies' other mayors or its viceroy. Unsubstantiated rumors abound that Senth hides a paramour in the jungle somewhere, a dryad of bewitching power.

Ft. Montsiang: (Town, pop. ?) Both a military fastness and a frontier town, Ft. Montsiang is a strategic outpost in Omian Pass. Built atop a steep escarpment on one side of the road, the fort commands a view of all primary traffic between the Xulmec peninsula and the Criestine Colonies. Many Xulmecs resent this overt military presence, but few can deny its advantageousness against the aggression of Chuzec, whose war-like people always seeks fresh captives for their blood sacrifices and bear no tolerance for Northlanders.

Commanding the fort is Lieutenant Raquelle Clavet, a no-nonsense veteran of the Sable March from the homeland. Honorably discharged by Captain Sentri himself, she was assigned to Ft. Montsiang to "cool down" from her frightening and unceasing devotion to the crown. Raquelle finds her time occupied maintaining vigilance against those Xulmecs who decline peaceful coexistence with the Northlanders and keeping the pass free of bandits.

Pleniere: (Village, pop. 534) A sleepy fishing port on the isle's western coast, Pleniere faces the channels that run between the Eztenqui Jungle's wetlands. The locals live their lives probing the waterways for fish, avoiding the hazards of the jungle, and passing time with stories about the time when snake men ruled the land between Voltigeur and the Atlauhtli Mountains.

Pleniere's mayor is a lazy merchant named Loremer d'Arisseux, whose position in the remote, backwater town suits him fine. Recent sightings of the walking dead rising up from the salty waters, however, have him worried.

Gerronotte: (Village, pop. 687) At the southern tip of Tlahuaco Isle, the village of Gerronotte serves as the gateway to the colonial outposts across the water. A ferry regularly crosses to St. Ferrau, a service that imposes a steep tax upon travelers unaffiliated with Crieste's merchant guilds.

The salty marshland surrounding the town is feared by visitors for its haunted appearance, but local hunters frequently venture into the waters in search of exotic waterfowl. At night, even the locals avoid the swamp, for will-o'-wisps and wraiths are said to emerge from its depths. Stories suggest that the wraiths were spawned from the spirits of Criestine soldiers who died in the war against the Emerald Cobra, although they cannot explain why such spirits turned to evil.

Lieux-Claren: (Village, pop. 830) Across the bay from the colonial capital, the small port of Lieux-Claren is accessible only by sea. Unable to establish a safe route through the marsh to the south, it relies upon its proximity to Voltigeur to bring in trade. Lieux-Claren is home to fisherman who know Xayactl Bay better than any, drawing from it more fish than anywhere else in the Colonies.

St. Ferrau: (Large town, pop. 3,405) As the only outpost of civilization within the Eztenqui Jungle, St. Ferrau was intended to serve as a launching point for expeditions into its wild depths. The ruins of hastily erected drakon redoubts can be found swallowed by the jungle just outside the town limits. Renamed after a martyred cleric of Delvyr who saved the town in 2601 EC (Empyrean Calendar) from an attack by dark nagas, St. Ferrau boasts hearty folk and a courageous militia. The daily presence of the infamous jungle has weeded the town of the feeble and skittish.

A road of flattened stones, laid by the Xulmecs, leads southeast from St. Ferrau through Omian Pass to Ft. Montsiang. In this capacity, St. Ferrau also serves as the crossroads between Xulmec and the Isle of Tlahuaco. A large ferry makes round trips to Gerronotte and Voltigeur twice each day, transporting passengers at a reasonable price but imposing an imperial tax on trade goods or questionable accoutrements.

Mages sometimes visit St. Ferrau—and vanish soon after—to study the preternatural nature of the great Eztenqui. Of more recent concern is the Blackfield, a stretch of blighted land several miles southeast of town that history records as having once been further away. Druids and wizards alike have been summoned to investigate the corrupted earth, but most have either turned away or disappeared within it.

Voltigeur: (Large town, pop. 4,678) Named after the founding explorer, Voltigeur is the capital of the Criestine Colonies. A flourishing port, it is the hub of Southland commerce among Northlanders. Though merchants from all nations are welcome to trade here, heavy taxes are levied on them to increase the coffers of the viceroy, the Emperor, and the town itself—often in that order.

Voltigeur's mayor is Acatzalan, a man controversial for his Crieste-Xulmec blood. Beloved by the locals, he is despised by most Criestine nobility for his "sympathy for the savages." Viceroy Durand tolerates Acatzalan's philanthropy, knowing that his presence soothes the separatist population of the Colonies. Durand frequently undermines the mayor's authority with imperial mandates, inflammatory acts of spite that will likely harm Durand's standing as well.

At the center of town, at the foot of a monument to the Crieste-Xulmec alliance, an enspelled glass case bears

Micohuani, the Deathstaff. Capped with a large blue diamond, the staff bears the spirit of the defeated Xiuhcoatl, and to the proud colonists remains a symbol of both their alliance with Xulmec and the defeat of a great evil. Although it's in plain view of all citizens, powerful magic protects the Deathstaff from theft or destruction. Melisine d'Aurielle, a mage of the Beryl Conclave, perpetually watches over it.

The Blackbriar Quarter houses the pure-blooded elven families that first lent martial aid to the Criestine settlers. Though considered haughtier than their Northland kin, the Blackbriar elves yet retain their homeland culture, importing their fine ruby wine and often hosting revels for all to enjoy. Many half-elves in the Colonies trace their bloodlines to the Blackbriar Quarter, but few are recognized by these proud families. Even humans and Southland natives achieve greater respect in their eyes than the half-blooded "bastards." These elven patriarchs regard the Criestine government coldly, believing themselves overlooked by the Empire for the martial assistance their ancestors once gave to the colonial founders against the Emerald Cobra.

Dujamar

No ruler

Population: Unkown

Resources: See text

Capital: None

The sprawl of islands known collectively as Dujamar is a place feared by mariners of every persuasion. A long chain of islets and disjointed landmasses, it is a place of exotic wildlife, rare flora, and hidden death. The rocky shoals and inlets that fill its waters have given Dujamar its nickname, the Razor Islands, by seamen who know to keep a respectful distance.

Though the natural hazards are forbidding enough, it is the evil and intelligent creatures lurking beneath the waves that make Dujamar a no man's land. A tremendous population of sahuagin, ranging from isolated villages to whole kingdoms, live in communities carved from stone and coral, making the sea devils Dujamar's dominant race. Of these, King Azghaar the Malevolent is the undisputed tyrant, the ruler of a sahuagin kingdom numbering one hundred thousand strong of his scaly kind, if reports are accurate.

At odds with the interests of King Azghaar are the covens of sea hags, who compete with the sea devils to capture and devour those who wander into the region by foolish choice or unfortunate circumstance. The hags are said to use the bodies of their victims to fuel their profane ceremonies. It is believed by some sages that, given enough victims, the sea hags will be able to breed their own ghoulish armies. Against all of these, a hermitic order of druids dwells among the islands, waging a perpetual war against the hags and sea devils and guarding the pristine animal and plant life from their depradations. Friends to none are the many species of wyverns of Dujamar, from the swarms of small hatchlings to the oversized cliff wyverns whose ominous shadows bring on sudden darkness a heartbeat before sudden death. The wyverns sit firmly at the top of the food chain, lairing in the taller outcroppings of the isles. Gliding over their domains in search of meals from among the diverse wildlife, a favorite among all species is the exotic flesh of humanoid intruders.

The waters of the Javran Sea, just east of the Dujamar islands, are known to be the demesne of krakens, making them among the most feared places anywhere in the ocean. King Azghaar is believed to consort with these abhorrent, deep-dwelling monsters, and some even say the monarch himself is but a puppet for the evil krakens.

Recently, a rumor has spread among the merchants of the nearby Criestine Colonies that a safe, passable trade route exists somewhere between the islands of Dujamar, linking the Sea of Desperation with the Empyrean Ocean. If this "golden passage" can be found and secured, the voyage between the Colonies and their home country would take only a fraction of the time, and the expense of

the journey reduced manifold. Colonial merchants, as well as dignitaries of the Emperor, have begun to hire adventurers willing to find the rumored passage. Whether the path is real or simply a ruse cited by Dujamar's monstrous denizens to lure more victims, none can say.

Rutuan: (Small town, pop. 1,138) Constructed on a sodden marsh upon an extensive network of warped platforms, Rutuan is the only place in Dujamar where land-dwelling creatures are granted amnesty by King Azghaar. Pragmatic despite his bloodlust, Azghaar recognizes the benefit of trade with civilized surface realms, so mariners may dock here without fear of attack by his scaly subjects. The other creatures of Dujamar offer no such protection, but the threat of retribution from the sahuagin king prevents any overt hostility.

The Black Covey, hags of the vilest predilections, governs Rutuan. The trio consists of an annis named Alunine and two green hags, Meglea and Sayocia. Each is a sorceress of considerable might, and has made enemies with Dujamar's sea hags, for the latter refuse any truce with humanoid mariners. The Covey retains an elite militia of ogres whose sole purpose is to ensure that violence is kept to an acceptable minimum. Commanding this brutish unit is Guloresh, a lycanthropic ogre who reports to Alunine directly. Rumors in town suggest that she gifted the ogre boss with his bestial mantle as payment for murdering her predecessor. Azghaar and the Covey enjoy a solid truce within Rutuan and its surrounding environs, but even the sahuagin king's wicked ambassadors are loath to enter the hags' gruesome cottage at the center of town.

The waterlogged planks of the platform city appear unsafe, but magic and the uncanny woodwork of the locals secures every hut and ramshackle fort. Even so, strategically placed planks have been left to rot for the misfortune of unwary intruders. Beneath the city's platforms is a foul landscape of mephitic sludge, where the city's refuse is dumped by means of evenly spaced wells. Among the horrors lurking in the slime are scores of shambling mounds—and the Black Covey's magic prevents the treasures of their victims from rising to the city above. Whenever an unfortunate traveler accidentally drops a valued possession between the cracks of the city's boardwalks, he has a choice: Wisely dismiss the item forever or risk near-certain death "among the shamblers." Wealthier visitors to the city usually hire the foolish or desperate to retrieve lost objects.

Halcyon, Free City of

Lady Mayor Elarabeth

Population: 39,508 (humans 60%, half-elves 12%, elves 10%, half-orcs 7%, dwarves 6%, monstrous humanoids 4%, halflings 1%)

Resources: Trade, some mining

Capital: The City of Halcyon

Once a small port of no consequence, Halcyon was established as an independent city only fifty-five years ago by the famous Kalían priestess Captain Dinadae, and quickly became known as a sanctuary from piracy. It is the stopping point for most traffic between the Northlands and the Southlands, a place of free trade and ordered freedom where merchants seeking barter with the people of Xulmec can find safe harbor and resupply their ships.

The legend of Halcyon comes from its founder, Captain Dinadae, a priestess of Pelagia and high-ranking Siren. When her entire crew was slain by Barrier pirates, she found herself lost in the Empyrean, fleeing an armada of ruthless enemies eager to inflict torture and death. Spying a kingfisher flying above a rising storm, the story holds that she crewed the galleon alone with only her prayers and the blue-feathered bird as a guide. As the tempest swelled and the shrieking winds closed in on her, she cried out in supplication. Just as the storm broke into a calming roil, the last of its wrath fell full upon the pursuing pirates and smashed them into the sea.

Captain Dinadae found herself drifting into a small port town, astonished to learn she'd sailed so far. Coming ashore, she searched for the kingfisher. What she took for a small bird she saw was in fact a massive avian, perched now upon a cliff overlooking the town. A celestial creature the size of a roc, its crested head, long beak, and bright sapphire plumage shone in the bright dawn. Dinadae named the majestic animal Halcyon, blessed of Pelagia. When the Barrier pirates sent reinforcements against the town, Halcyon herself attacked and razed each ship. The celestial bird and her hatchlings would become creatures of myth. Many have searched the mountain above in vain for her secret aerie.

A white mountain wall rises behind the city, pitted with the aeries of sea birds and riddled with small caves rumored to lead deep into the mountain's heart. A massive lighthouse, built on the foundations of an old cloud giant ruin, looms above the city on a wide mountain shelf, its beacon of magical blue fire guiding errant ships to port each night. An enigmatic wizard keeps the lighthouse in working order.

Lady Elarabeth is the city's latest mayor, a half-elf of aquatic elf lineage retired from a life of pirate-hunting among the Sirens of Pelagia. Though she has many enemies, Elarabeth is well guarded in her new home, and no city is safer from pirate retribution. The city watch, known as the Sea Wardens, are experienced seamen, and are as often patrolling the Imacuan Sea as they are their beloved city's streets. The Sirens are known operatives active within Halcyon, with Elarabeth as their local benefactor, but the true location of their temple-island remains unknown.

Elarabeth's troubles come not from the crimes of Halcyon's citizenry or visiting mariners, but rather from the many Northlander dignitaries seeking to persuade her to surrender her city to the care of their respective nations. Who controls Halcyon, they surmise, controls the waters between the Imacuan Sea and the Empyrean Ocean. At present, Elarabeth imposes no tax on merchants, a fact the greedy lord-barons of the North cannot understand. These wealthy dignitaries often hire adventurers to explore the caves of the mountain, for legends older than the city itself speak of an ancient draconic relic buried within, a rod that gives complete control of the weather for many miles. Such a treasure would, no doubt, give great power and influence to he—or she—who wields it. Lady Elarabeth has been hiring adventurers as well, fearful that if this artifact does exist, she will lose her city to its keeper.

Halcyon is still a young city, its rain-swept streets fringed with the stones of unfinished houses and temples. Although its populace is predominantly human, many elves and half-elves have made their home here—especially those with connections to the sea. Merfolk, tritons, and aquatic elves make frequent visits to the city, one of the few places they are able to do so without persecution. Though its citizens are not without their worldly prejudices, most who call Halcyon their home bear an innate love of the sea and the creatures within it.

Of course, such freedom welcomes enemies, and Halcyon has many. Fortunately, it has as many defenses. The coastal waters on either side of the docks are shallow and rocky, forcing invading ships to approach the city directly and in full view of its defenders. As if blessed by Pelagia herself, the waters surrounding Halcyon have attracted a number of sea-dwelling creatures that possess the insight to recognize friendly traffic and a penchant for attacking marauding ships. Water elementals and even a pair of mated dragon turtles neutralize the threats from the sea itself. According to legend, when the city finds itself in true peril, the hallowed bird that gives the city its name will appear again.

Ssorlang

Keeper of the Emerald Throne, Prince Zurasak

Population: 1,857,475 (drakon 55%, human 25%, lizardfolk 7%, tzopiloani/inphidians 5%, other 8%)

Resources: Copper, fish, gold, jewelry, minerals, psychotropic drugs, rice, textiles, timber

Capital: Myashtlan

Hatched from the sins of the latter-day Zimalan Empire, Ssorlang is the only unified nation of drakon in the known world. The nagas' Dark Council conducted magical experiments in a bid to create humanoids in their image, and these foul rites gave birth to the race of snake men. Within years of their creation, the drakon revolted in a civil war known as the Wrath of Serpents. The surviving nagas retreated south beyond the Nahualli Mountains, leaving the drakon to occupy the jungles alongside Cipachtli Bay. The humans, also former slaves of the nagas, had by this time fled north and settled into the Xulmec peninsula.

The future of the young race was uncertain. With their common enemy defeated, their chaotic nature divided them, spawning two warring factions: the Amotuan and the Impiluan. The Amotuan maintained that drakon were the rightful heirs of the Zimalan Empire, meant to inherit the traditions and lands of their naga forebears. The Impiluan, however, wanted to renounce the old ways and establish an empire and identity of their own.

After centuries of virulent coexistence, the two factions united under the intelligence of Tlalteucti, an Amotuan wizard of sinister power. Having returned from mysterious travels abroad, Tlalteucti envisioned a world ruled by drakon. He promptly led his people into a savage war against the Xulmec city-state of Uatazan. Even though the humans of Darawan and Amoya came to the aid of their brothers, Uatazan was utterly defeated; those who were not slain became slaves. In the midst of this war, Tlalteucti created the Emerald Throne, an ensorcelled artifact that served as the seat of power for the drakon in the city they renamed Myashtlan. Soon after, Tlalteucti was killed by a priest of Anahuara, but the drakon's grandson, a warrior named Xiuhcoatl, struck down the Xulmec and led his people to victory.

Xiuhcoatl, calling himself the Emerald Cobra, rallied his followers to continue their path of conquest. The Impiluan faction refused to join him, believing that the drakon should secure their new realm before pursuing further expansion. Despite their perceived cowardice,

Xiuhcoatl pressed on. Knowing his armies were not strong enough yet to challenge all of Xulmec, he led them through the Xocoatic Marshes, killing those humans from Amoya that dared to challenge his advance.

The Emerald Cobra established his new seat of power in the vast Eztenqui Jungle. From there he sent word to his southern brethren, entreating them to join him in his attack against Xulmec from two fronts and thereby extend the reach of their empire. The Impiluans did not respond. Soon after, human settlers from the faraway Northland empire of Crieste began to colonize at the edge of Xiuhcoatl's domain. Xulmecs from Kaatlan and Teotcoatlan allied with these newcomers and fought back against Xiuhcoatl. The Emerald Cobra met his defeat at last when a Teotcoatlan wizard trapped his essence in a staff.

Without their leader, the surviving drakon of Xiuhcoatl slithered back to their southern cousins, only to find that the Impiluans had established the nation of Ssorlang. Having ventured to mystic lands in the Shadowed West, many changes had come to the drakon people. The Impiluan faction had found its new identity at last, and their culture transformed in a matter of decades. The Amotuans, followers of the old ways, became a quiet minority in Ssorlang society.

The sovereignty established by Tlalteucti yet remains. While the monarch who coils upon the Emerald Throne governs Ssorlang, its royal families have been assassinated and replaced numerous times since the kingdom's inception. Though they fancy their nation an empire, the drakon have never expanded, nor have they succeeded in keeping a single dynasty in power for more than five generations.

The current ruler is the ailing Emperor Vithoon, a cantankerous old serpent whose wizardry has begun to wane. It is his son, Prince Zurasak, who wields the true power of the Emerald Throne. The drakon, an eldritch knight of fearsome skill, has personally foiled every coup attempt, and with his father still ensconced upon the throne, he is free to carry out many of his plans without the added burden of state.

The drakon of Ssorlang are aggressive, but constant infighting keeps their power in check. Ssorlang and the Xulmec city-states have reached a stalemate that neither side can break. The Xulmecs are far too powerful now for the drakon to rise against, and the Xulmecs cannot hope to dislodge the snake men from their strategic seat in the former Uatazan lands. With Myashtlan as their capital, the drakon control all traffic on the Laeysian Sea, the Strait of Kamasha, and all adjacent coasts. Most Xulmecs maintain a cool, often hostile, view towards the snake men, while only the city-state of Darawan maintains a tense relationship of mutual benefit. Darawan offers Ssorlang untaxed trade, while the drakon allow the humans limited passage through their waters.

Ssorlang is a rainy tropical realm that includes the mountains of northwest Zimala, the Laeysian Sea, and the surrounding peninsulas south of the Anduran Mountains. Along the western coasts, the jungle quickly gives way to the Kharan Plateau that overlooks the Tletl Plains to the north. Beyond that lies the Shadowed West, a mystic realm that intrigues and frightens the drakon.

Notoriously arrogant, most snake men consider all who are not drakon tools to be manipulated or cattle to be subjugated. They do not typically kill foreigners on sight as they, like the Xulmecs, have learned to subdue and capture enemies. But unlike Xulmec, they practice slavery and seldom release their captives.

Angkar: (Small town, pop. 1,895) Named for the massive temple looming above it, the small port of Angkar lies in a cove shadowed by the Kharan Plateau. It has seen the arrival of pilgrims for centuries, surviving every monsoon and political shift since its creation untold millennia ago. Though it lies now within the demesne of Ssorlang, even the Emerald Throne acknowledges the site as a holy place. The waters of the Laeysian Sea are controlled by the drakon, but travelers citing pilgrimage to Angkar will be granted safe passage—provided they pay the "protection fee," after which they are closely followed to port.

The town itself consists of an even mix of human, drakon, and humanoid locals, and is overseen by Nentawat, who serves as mayor-priest. Visitors from the Shadowed West often arrive by the Strait of Kamasha to visit the temple as well.

A massive stone face, bearing a fearsome humanoid countenance, is carved into the high wall of the Kharan Plateau, rising less than a mile west of the town. Said to depict an aspect of Madrah, the face marks the entrance to the Temple of Angkar itself. Thousands of rough stone steps lead up the steep cliff face into the gaping mouth. Capacious chambers and tight corridors, carved with bas-reliefs and sculptures older than the rise of the Zimalan Empire, lie within. Hallowed to all who believe in the ways of Madrah or his many progenies, the Temple is said to preserve many old secrets, and hidden passages are rumored to lead further into the depths of the earth.

Kanthara: (Large city, pop. 17,827) Built at the edge of a natural headland, the city of Kanthara is adjacent to the Laeysian waters on three sides. The majority of Ssorlang's human population dwells in this well-guarded city at its geographic heart, far from easy liberation. Most are slaves of the state, struggling in the privation of its crime-ridden streets. At their best, these humans, descendants of fallen Uatazan, share with each other what little they have, spreading their resources thin. At their worst, they murder, betray, and even cannibalize each other. Sometimes insurgents escape the city, but the drakon sentinels have learned to defend it from those who would emancipate their slaves, and so the city is walled in with numerous towers.

When a drakon requires a servant or slave, he ventures into the markets of Kanthara to look for the best he can afford. Those who seek bodyguards often choose from the street thugs who have survived by intimidation and violence. Those who seek finesse and intelligence in their retainers purchase those who can resist the spells of drakon mages, then bring their purchases to Myashtlan for education.

Kanthara is ruled by an aging drakon named Sakda, a snake man who has been in office for so long that he's become more tolerant of humans than any of his kind. Some royal courtiers accuse him of sympathizing with the human situation. The Emerald Throne is content in assuming that his kindness is a ruse to keep the humans tame.

Myashtlan: (Metropolis, pop. 28,900) Rising at the north end of Cocohuan, the Serpent Isle, Tenochtzaya was once the second capital of Zimala, the city where the Dark Council of nagas guided their wounded empire. During the Wrath of Serpents, the nagas withdrew their forces to the south, allowing the city to be seized by the rebel human slaves. While most of their people journeyed north to settle on the Xulmec peninsula, the people who settled in Tenochtzaya established the city-state of Uatazan.

When the drakon conquered Uatazan, they claimed the city as their own and renamed it Myashtlan. Where the Uatazans had sealed the temple pyramid of Axaluatl as an unholy, cursed place, the drakon plundered it. The many shrines and repositories of the nagas were dissembled, their treasures added to the snake men's growing vaults. The only edifices sacred to the nagas that remain in the city are those with magics yet to be breached.

The shining jewel of Ssorlang, Myashtlan is both the symbolic capital and the economic center of the empire. A raised city of sharp spires and architecture inspired by the temples of the Shadowed West, Myashtlan commands a panoramic view in all directions: the Laeysian Sea to the south and west, the Anduran Mountains to the north, and the forests and rivers of neighboring Darawan. From here the Emerald Throne surveys its own lands and looks to those that the drakon one day intend to conquer.

Humanoids willing to pay the steep entrance fees are welcome in Myashtlan, invited to bring foreign goods and trade in the legendary emporiums of the City of the Emperor. The weapons, exotic materials, poisons, and hallucinogenic drugs available in Myashtlan markets—most of which are illegal in the Northland kingdoms—are commonly purchased and carried into foreign lands.

The Noctayshan Palace, an elegant fortress crowned with a tall, glyph-carved obelisk, rises above all other buildings at the city's heart. Situated closest to the surrounding forest, one of the city's most feared locations is the Moryan Temple, home to the assassins' guild known as the Brood of Ahzari.

Xincayot: (Small city, pop. 9,329) Nestled in a steamy Laeysian bay, Xincayot is a mist-shrouded city that preserves the old lore from early Ssorlang and the Zimalan culture that sired it. As the home of the Amotuan faction, those drakon who would delve into the secrets of their erstwhile naga masters come to Xincayot and entreat the ruling council. Though publicly outlawed by the Emerald Throne, worship of Axaluatl exists in Xincayot in underground shrines. These Amotuan cultists who venerate the Shadow Serpent often fund expeditions into Zimala, hoping to tap the power of the long dead naga empire and unearth its buried secrets. Such expeditions are always led by zealous drakon, but other humanoids are indiscriminately hired as well—so long as they prove their loyalty to the cult by submitting to its venomous rites.

A wide, squat pyramid, built in the style of old Zimala, is the city's centerpiece. The entire structure serves as an arena for gladiatorial sport, where drakon champions entertain the city's elite daily as they battle humanoid captives of the state. When the slave stocks are emptied, the snake men cull from slaves of Kanthara, selecting the hardiest specimens to ensure good sport. Gladiators who prove the most resilient earn the right to move onto the next level. The bottom of the arena is flooded with water

and the slaves must survive the entrance of one or more dire anacondas. The very few who manage to slay these dreaded beasts earn the right to fight against—and find dignified death at the hands of—Ssorlang's most renowned warriors. Emperor Vithoon and Prince Zurasak personally attend these sports several times each year, especially during the Festival of the Dead. Of greatest renown are those occasions when the prince himself deigns to enter the arena.

Recently, a brash and arrogant drakon was exiled from the Xincayot for planning to overthrow its current ruler. Lord Yollotl, feared for his exceptional sadism, has quelled many such coups. Commoners who dare to rise against him adorn the shoreline, spitted on tall pikes.

Tarras (Atlacatlan)

No leader

Population: Unknown

Resources: Many, but none exported

Capital: None

Half the size of the Xulmec peninsula, the great island of Tarras is a place of great frustration to the expansionist-minded lords and kings of the Northlands. Lush with untapped natural resources, treasure-laden ruins as old as dragonkind, and priceless fauna and flora awaiting retrieval, the island yet remains a prize that none can touch. Throughout recorded history, there has always been a monster dwelling on the island—no one can kill it, and all those who have tried have been slain and devoured. It is known simply as the Beast of Tarras.

It is said that the monsters that dwelt in Tarras were no match for the dragons that once ruled the world, and that their servitor races—including humans, dwarves, and elves—were once able to build cities, temples, and tombs within the island. Yet when the Reign of Dragons ended, the monsters went unchecked, forcing the servitor races who remained to flee the island or be eaten. Since that time, thousands of years in the past, the island has been a perilous frontier too dangerous to settle upon.

Many have tried. Captains sailing close to Tarras will see an eerie chain of ruined ports along every coast, each a failed colony. Bodies are seldom seen, remains having been devoured, and the buildings themselves smashed as though stomped upon by titans. Over the centuries, kings and lord-barons have sent champions to the island—knights, wizards, adventurers—to slay the Beast of Tarras. None have returned.

Some see the Beast as apocryphal, a grandiose hoax perpetuated by pirates to keep the sovereigns of the Northland away from their hidden troves—though the existence of the Barrier Isles discredits this notion. Others say Tarras is in fact a paradise island, and all who have ventured deep within its primeval groves found a fey, utopian city whose enchantments ensure they never leave. Occasional spans of time without sightings of the Beast have led to speculation that it periodically hibernates from anywhere from one year to one hundred at a time. During these periods, the bold and adventurous dare to land upon the island's shores and journey inland. Inevitably, the Beast reveals itself again, and the fledgling ports join the others in the tortuous graveyard of ruins upon the Tarrasan shore.

Most believe the monster is very real, yet a hundred survivors claiming to have glimpsed it have provided a hundred different descriptions. Some claim it is like a dragon, though wingless, stalking about like a predatory dinosaur, while others claim it is made of stone and walks like a bird with numerous sword-like talons clawing the air … or shelled like a turtle, spine-ridged, beaked like a roc … or slithering like a snake, with pincers that can sunder rock and teeth that can lacerate metal. Each account does agree on several points: The monster is a behemoth, terrible to behold, and mindless in its pursuit for food—both magic and steel fail against it, and the only means of survival is unfettered flight. The sole consolation remaining is that the Beast never leaves the island.

Although it is the most feared creature on Tarras—or indeed, possibly anywhere in the Known Realms—the Beast is by no means the only thing worth fearing. Dinosaurs roam in great numbers within the ancient forests and hills, dire animals of all kinds stalk the landscape, and more extraordinary monsters such as bulettes, gray renders, and yrthaks have been seen. According to many reports, even dragons still lair in mountainous aeries ringing the island, their hoards containing riches from ages past.

Tarras has played a role in many cultures over the centuries. Barbarians from the Frost Barrens often send their young men and women to the island's northern edge to survive for a few nights as a coming-of-age rite. Northland kingdoms occasionally send hated exiles to the island for the beasts to slay when their laws prohibit execution. The people of Xulmec name the island Atlacatlan, the Dwelling of Cursed Things, and believe that the overgod Madrah imprisoned the demons of the earth there. If the people do not give him proper reverence, he will forge a bridge between Atlacatlan and Xulmec, unleashing its monstrous denizens upon them. Cynical priests believe that the very presence of the

Dujamar islands is evidence of this belief—that the land is steadily rising up from the water to create that bridge, a clear sign of Madrah's growing displeasure.

Xulmec City-States

Various sovereigns

Population: ?

Resources: Gold, cloth, salt, animal pelts, cotton, rubber, corn, cacao beans, jade, obsidian, greenstone

Capital: —

The seven city-states known collectively as Xulmec (*shool*-mek) grew from the discarded shackles of the mighty but long-faded Zimalan Empire. When the snake men struggled against their naga progenitors during the Wrath of Serpents millennia ago, the human slaves fled captivity. Too focused on their own survival, the nagas were unable to stop this exodus. Some even claim that it was the altruistic guardian nagas who set them loose, prompting their rise to freedom.

A slave named Huamec took charge of his people and led the thousands through the dangers of the Azcatlepi Jungle. Legends claim that Huamec revealed and slew the drakon assassins sent against him, kept at bay the monstrous dinosaurs of the jungle, and defeated the minions of the Shadow Serpent.

Huamec led his people west, hoping to reach lands far beyond Zimalan dominion. In a dream, a winged serpent, plumed with the feathers of the quetzal bird, came to Huamec and told him to journey northward instead. He named it the *quetzal couatl* ("bird-snake"), and in his mind it became a symbol of hope and freedom. When Huamec led the way north, his people followed without protest. Crossing the Texcalapan Strait, they reached the shores of the Xulmec peninsula, located on Zimala's northern frontier.

According to myth, Huamec and the tribal chiefs were met there by nine couatls, who promptly disappeared into the jungle. The tribal chiefs pursued them, hoping for visions of their own. In an event known today as the Feathered Hunt, the couatls led each on a chase through the forests, and it is said that where each chief found his quarry, there he claimed the land where his city would be built. In every incarnation of this myth, each chieftain's pursuit of the couatls led to a different creature altogether, and around this creature each city-state has based its culture.

Taking these events as an omen to cease their flight, the humans settled into the lowlands, highlands, and lush rainforests, becoming the Xulmecs. Divided into nine large, oft-warring tribes, they built magnificent cities and found new identities free of naga lordship. Though independently ruled, each city pays homage to Madrah, Lord of the Earth and Sky. The first kings of each tribe were granted divine office by Madrah, and now lead their cities through the intermediaries of the priests and the wisdom of their mortal kings.

Xulmecs are a hardy people, averaging five and a half feet in height. Their skin is light brown and their hair is coarse, dark, and straight. Hairstyle is based on social class; for instance, the way a warrior binds his hair reflects his martial accomplishment. One Xulmec can gauge the prowess of another according to this varying style. Women always wear their hair long and loose, braiding it with ribbons only during festivals or religious ceremonies. While this description is a rough approximation of the people, there are many varied exceptions—such as the ruddier complexions of Amoyas and the sharper features of the Darawans.

Clothing worn by Xulmecs reflects the temperatures of their respective homes. They typically wear loose garments made of cotton, adorned with beads, flowers, and precious metals as appropriate by class. Most Xulmec warriors wear leather or quilted armor, covered with a *tlahuiztl*, a cotton body suit whose color and array of feathers reflect military status. A warrior's status is based not on the number of his kills, but on the number of people he has captured in his lifetime.

Though Xulmecs have their own language, a tongue descended from Old Naga, they do not have a written language as the Northlanders understand it. Their writing is logographic, with symbols representing an entire spoken word without indication of its pronunciation. These glyphs serve as ideograms, in which the image depicted expresses its own nature but not other associated concepts. Thus the idea of new life can be represented by a swaddled newborn, daytime by a blazing sun, and murder by a sundered skull. To convey movement, migration, or a sequence of events, a trail of footprints may lead in the relevant direction. Xulmec glyphs are carved in many surfaces, usually temples and the houses of nobles, and are frequently recorded in sheaves of bark-paper called *amatl*, a type of book called a codex.

Xulmec art is produced from a wide variety of materials. Obsidian, turquoise, precious metals, gemstones, feathers, and even human remains are manipulated with astonishing patience and skill, usually in the form of masks, pottery, statues, shields, headdresses, and mosaics. Reliefs are commonly carved in stone surfaces, whether it is the façade of a great temple or the natural walls of a commoner's home. Artists incorporate animal figures into most of their art, reflecting the Xulmec respect and

fear of the natural world. Depictions of unnatural creatures such as demons or the undead is considered blasphemous and beckons ill fortune. Curiously, skeletal representations of their fallen are common, for the Xulmec people are not as averse as Northlanders to the presence of the true dead.

Xulmec architecture is a testament to their past, for each city is a multitude of buildings made of adobe and stone. Peasant homes, which sprawl throughout the city and along its fringes, are small affairs, thatched with grass and constructed with interwoven twigs and mud. Houses of nobility are made of plastered brick or stone and painted with bright colors. Government buildings and royal palaces are two or three stories high, containing hundreds of rooms, and are a labyrinth of wide and narrow passages intended to mislead intruders.

All buildings are arranged around the centerpiece of Xulmec society: the great terraced pyramids, immense structures thrust into the sky like small mountains. A multitude of steps leads to flat summits, which are crowned with the extravagant High Temples, stone edifices dedicated to the cities' patron gods. Surrounding enclosures house priests and elite warriors and open courts for sacred games. Before each temple, a paved plaza makes room for crowds on holy days and daily sacrifices. Lesser pyramid-temples of smaller size are scattered throughout the cities and even outlying villages. Worship at such shrines so pervades Xulmec culture that even the lowliest peasant can reach a temple from his home within a matter of minutes. While not every city-state boasts structures of this design, this pyramidal architecture reflects their ancestry among the Zimalan culture and can be found in smaller scale upon sacred buildings of every city.

The city-states have made some remarkable achievements over the millennia. Roads connect most cities, laid with flat stones and walled at higher elevations. A complex irrigation system of aqueducts and channels links each city to nearby rivers, ushering water into the city proper. Artificial gardens called *chinampas* lie upon shallow lakes and riverbeds and provide a wealth of crops, including corn, beans, squash, tomatoes, peppers, and flowers.

Xulmec society is guided by its priests, who possess status equal to that of the nobility. Sovereigns and high priests are the most powerful individuals in the land, directing the laws and holy days that govern the cities. Merchants and warriors make up the middle class, while commoners and laborers comprise the lowest tier of society. Because Xulmecs spent centuries as servants and ultimately slaves of the Zimalan Empire, slavery as a station is forbidden by law. However, the merchants and nobles they serve often treat commoners as little better than slaves. Commoners, by accomplishment or sufficient wealth, can elevate themselves to merchants, warriors, or priests, but Xulmec nobility are born into their caste.

The Xulmec emphasis on prophecy and cosmic portent should not be understated. Xulmecs believe that the Sun soars in orbit around the earth, steadily drawing closer to it like a ship caught in a maelstrom. When it reaches the earth, an apocalypse of fire will destroy the world. Only the might of Madrah keeps the fiery sphere at bay, and to maintain his strength, the god requires sacrifice from his people. Such sacrifices come in the form of treasure, food, plants, animals—and according to some Xulmecs, flesh and blood. The priests claim that the world was already destroyed once in this way. Madrah resurrected the earth and its people, but the effort weakened him so much he requires this sacrificial sustenance. Most Xulmecs believe that but for their daily sacrifice, the world would swiftly end in fire once more.

Though the city-states often contend with one other, they always unite against common threats to all of Xulmec. If Xulmec falls, so too does the world itself.

Existing in the depths of the earth is Mictlan, the Underworld of Xulmec belief, a realm whose description overlaps that of the Underdeep. The spirits of the dead venture through the Underworld, a journey believed to take approximately two years, in search of the immortal domains of the gods. Priests, nobles, and the wealthy are entombed with this journey in mind upon death, with magic items frequently interred with them to equip them for the trials they face. Although only spirits can traverse this labyrinthine realm, it is widely believed that the Mochitla River flows into Omictlan itself and those among the living who are foolish or desperate enough to try to reach the Underworld must first pass through the Maw of Death at the river's end. The people of Maras believe that the sacred cenotes of their land may also lead to Omictlan.

It is also believed that upon their death, the kings and queens of Xulmec are given a chance to attain divine status. If they can navigate the spiritual terrain of Mictlan and find the select path ordained by Madrah himself, they will transcend the mortal rulership they once knew and become gods of their beloved people. The strength of this belief (and the new deities created because of it) often prompts competition among the rulers of each state for any advantage that will assist them on their afterlife journey.

Xulmec relations with foreign powers vary greatly. Some city-states, such as Kaatlan, trade with visitors, while others, like Teotcoatlan, offer alliance and mutual education. Still others—notably Chuzec and the less tolerant

people of Kaatlan—see Northlanders as pale-skinned demons whose talk of trade and alliance is a mere preface to conquest. These Xulmecs are as likely to attack, scalp, or capture such visitors in the wild as ignore them altogether. Most folk from the Lostlands are seen as respectable, if untrustworthy.

Central and eastern Xulmec is a land of verdant rainforests, winding rivers, lowland marshes, and limestone cliffs, while in the west rise the Anduran and Atlauhtli Mountains. Teeming with life, the animals of the peninsula range from harmless plant-eaters to deadly carnivores. Jaguars, revered by the Xulmecs of Maras, prowl the rainforests along with deer, capybaras, and all manner of serpents. Birds of prey and carrion rule the skies overhead, and piranha and caimans haunt the waterways. Hardy llamas are used in the mountains for transportation of goods, from water to building materials, though human porters carry heavier loads.

Horses are not native to Xulmec, and whenever Northland foreigners bring them across the ocean, they are seen as strange, exotic beasts. In their place, may Xulmecs ride the huezcatla, large rodents as tall as horses with thin, coarse fur. As dire cousins of the capybara, they are ideal for travel across marshes and rivers, for they move faster in water than on land.

The people of each city once belonged to a different province within the Zimalan Empire. Thousands of years later, in their own way, each still adheres to the customs of their old masters. Some, like the people of Amoya, have shunned the old ways and embraced newer ideas, while others, like the Chuzecs, have married old traditions with the edicts of new divinities.

There are seven existing city-states within Xulmec and are summarized as follows. The culture of the eighth city-state, Uatazan, was all but annihilated by the drakon centuries ago (see *Ssorlang*), the tattered remains of its populace now serving the snake men as slaves.

Amoya: (Large city, pop. 23,550) When Anahuara, the chieftain of the Amoya (ah-*moy*-uh) tribe, climbed into the Anduran Mountains during the Feathered Hunt, she met a grim figure wrapped in dark shrouds. The high mountain wind stirred the cowl from its face, and she found herself looking upon her father, who had been slain by the drakon several years before. Unafraid, she took counsel with the apparition and soon founded the mountain province of the Amoya tribe. She disappeared a few years later, having ventured into the Maw of Death on a quest to secure the future for her people. Anahuara returned again as the patroness of the young city-state and the goddess of the moons.

The city of Amoya, lodged nearly ten thousand feet above sea level, holds dominion over the southern half of the Anduran Mountains. Walled roads wind about the jagged terrain and suspension bridges span otherwise impassible gorges, linking an extensive web of villages with the city at its hub. The highland-dwelling people raise llamas to serve as pack animals, carrying wool and meat to the villages along the coastline and the foot of the mountains in exchange for crops. The city of Amoya itself is arranged in terraces formed upon the steep slopes of Mt. Cuahtec, encircling the mountain halfway around. The Andurans offer many resources, yielding guano for fertilizer, and many precious metals. Most prized is silver, the "Tears of Anahuara," which is crafted into elaborate jewelry and forged into ceremonial weapons.

The people of Amoya revere their dead like no other culture in the Southlands. To them, the death of one's body is a transition of life, and not death at all, a state where the body becomes inert and the spirit strengthens. When their loved ones pass into this second phase of existence, their bodies are mummified and seated in places of honor. Commoners inter them in sacred, communal chambers, visiting them when they seek guidance and during holy days, while nobles and those of royal blood clothe their dead in fine garments and jewelry, even escorting them out of family vaults for all to see. Due to this belief, Amoyas fear fire and acid, for these energies consume the material body and disperse the spirit. For the same reason, they are horrified by the sky burials practiced by the Darawan.

It is common for Amoya warriors to adorn themselves with the bones of their ancestors, believing that a portion of their spirit guides and protects them. Those who can afford it often have these macabre accoutrements enchanted or blessed by their high priests, fashioning weapons and armor from the corpses of their beloved dead. The tombs of the Amoya are never fully sealed, but they are frequently trapped to discourage Northland treasure hunters.

Ten years ago, the last king of Amoya was slain by drakon wizardry, his body horrifically disintegrated. With no heirs to assume sovereignty, the royal bloodline was broken. Communing with their eternal matron, Anahuara, the priests performed ancient rites and reanimated the mummified remains of Chull'pak, the king's father and predecessor, who once ruled the city-state for forty years before passing into the next phase of his existence. Now King Chull'pak reigns again, a man so dedicated to his people that he is willing to deny the well-deserved repose of "death" to bear the mantle of sovereignty indefinitely. A figure of frightening spiritual and corporeal power, the king is a mummy lord who will suffer no complacency from his people and no aggression from his enemies.

Though the king's policy includes vigilance and hostility against the snake men of Ssorlang, he encourages trade

with all human societies. However, only the undaunted or the morbidly fascinated emissaries of other lands are willing to seek audience with the undead king, whose chilling presence is difficult to endure.

Athua: (Large city, pop. 24,108) During the Feathered Hunt, Ilhuicatl, first chief of the Athuan tribe, was led eastward across the peninsula until he came to the edge of the land itself. Here he found his quarry, a beautiful mermaid to whom he professed his love. Yet the siren evaded him. At last he returned to his people and established the city of Athua. When this long labor was complete, the mermaid returned, beckoning him into the waves. Ilhuicatl joined her and was presumed drowned—yet he emerged again years later as Athua's patron god, sponsored by Madrah himself and the goddess Pelagia.

The most powerful of the coastal city-states, Athua is second only to Teotcoatlan in size and influence. Ruled by Queen Citlalli and her family, Athua controls the eastern coastline and protects the peninsula from seafaring invaders. Along with Darawan, Athua is the undisputed master of the waters surrounding Xulmec. Any foreign power that seeks to invade must contend with the boatmen of Athua, whose knowledge of the sea is unmatched.

The Athuans worship the god who was their first chieftain, Ilhuicatl, and believe that the world owes its life to the bounties of the water. The respect and affinity Athua has for the sea has made them a number of marine-dwelling friends, including merfolk and tritons. Alliances with the merfolk are as ephemeral as the tide itself, as their fickle disposition does not lend itself to dependable, long-term cooperation. The tritons, however, are committed to aiding their human friends in times of need, for they revere the same gods. Though smaller in number—as most of their people dwell farther north in colder waters—the tritons are a boon to their human allies. Yet this friendship has earned Athua the enmity of both sahuagin and locathah, against whom the people remain vigilant.

On the eastern fringe of their realm, the Athuans give a wide birth to the ruin of Ayoxatlan, a dark and dangerous hulk perched upon the rocky coast. A remnant of the old Zimalan Empire, the structure is believed to have been one side of a vast bridge spanning the Surya Sea.

Chuzec: (Large city, pop. 23,100) Nearly one thousand years ago, the people of Chuzec were believed destroyed when the twin eruptions of Mt. Ixli and Mt. Tapayxain buried their valley in molten lava and ash. In the years of silence that followed, few ventured into the valley to look upon the volcanic cairn. To the astonishment of the other city-states, the people of Chuzec emerged from the cracked basaltic shell that had sheltered them. The city remained perfectly intact, believed to have been shielded from the killing lava by Tlachinozal, a god of fire. Reborn within the earthen cocoon, the Chuzec culture had been transformed, and they forsook all gods but Tlachinozal, whom they name as their savior. Such monotheism and theocracy is blasphemous to most Xulmecs, but the war-like Chuzecs are fanatical in their devotion and will kill any who challenge them.

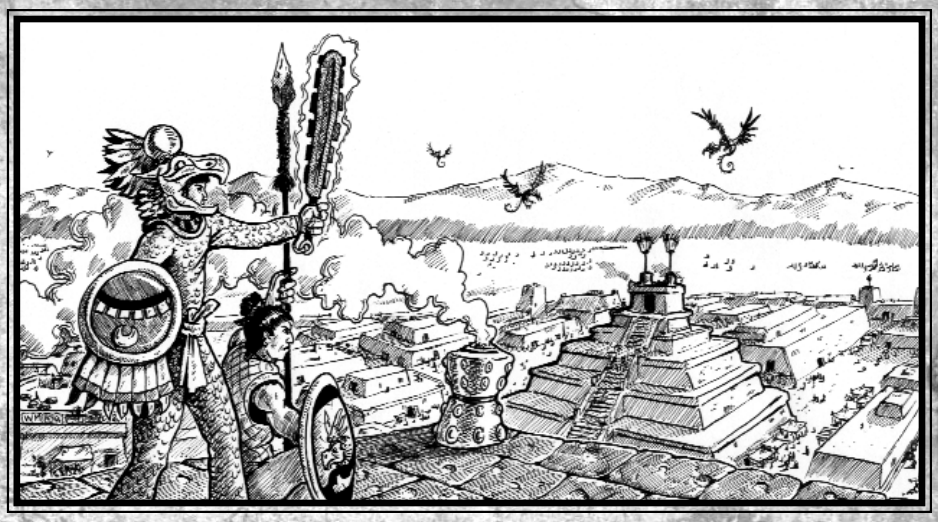
Xolatl, the Fire Priest, rules the Chuzec. Within the Burning Temple, Xolatl and his gruesome priests sacrifice captives to the Fire God daily, wrenching out their still-beating hearts and casting their corpses into a holy inferno. This frightening aspect of their culture makes trade with the other city-states a terse, uncomfortable affair, but the Chuzecs are the chief suppliers of obsidian to the region, trading in exchange for the produce unavailable in their volatile home. Despite the apparent ignorance of the clergy of Tlachinozal, Chuzecs were the first Xulmecs to practice metallurgy as it is understood by Northlanders. While blacksmiths throughout the Southlands remain few, the mastery of the Chuzecs has been known to rival that of Northland dwarves. For a very steep price, non-Xulmec foreigners are allowed to visit the city for adventuring or mercantile business.

The volcanoes in the surrounding valley remain active, deterring invaders and treasure hunters both, though the meandering flows of lava never touch the city of Chuzec itself. Despite these natural dangers, rumors abound of caches of gold and platinum guarded by the fiery denizens of the mountains, and Chuzec glyphs often depict salamanders swimming in the magma beneath the valley. Much of Chuzec's architecture was destroyed and rebuilt after the War of Divine Right and the glyphs upon them depict that infamous time when the Chuzecs staved off the fire giant invaders.

Darawan: (Large city, pop. ?) Before the rise of Ssorlang, the people of Darawan (DAR-uh-wan) made forays with the people of Uatazan into the Shadowed West. They brought back strange customs, which have seeped into their culture over the centuries, along with philosophies and dialects often viewed as heretical by their neighboring Xulmecs. The people themselves dress in darker tones than their fellow Xulmecs, and although their physical appearance is quite similar, they often imprint their skin with tattoos and frequently shave their heads.

Highly skilled boatmen, the Darawans often troll the coastal waters of the entire peninsula in small merchant fleets, trading with the people of Athua and Teotcoatlan as they go. Wary of foreigners yet frequenting the coastlines, Darawans are often the first Xulmecs that Northlanders meet when approaching the peninsula by sea. Their frosty demeanor does not paint a welcoming picture of the Xulmec people, a fact that dismays the

friendlier folk of Teotcoatlan. Locally, Darawans use kayaks in narrow rivers and large canoes along the coast.



Darawan is the only city-state that regularly trades with the hated nation of Ssorlang, and for this it earns the animosity and scorn of their neighbors. The relationship is a pragmatic one; the Darawans export untaxed goods to the drakon for free access to the Laeysian Sea and its connecting waterways. Such water traffic gives Darawan merchants plenty of imports that the rest of Xulmec could not otherwise procure, a fact the other city-states try to ignore. Tensions between the Darawan humans and drakon are often strained, for the arrogance of the latter is difficult for the freedom-loving Xulmecs to tolerate. Darawans do not approve of the drakon's predilection for slavery, but remain politically neutral and do not take action against them. Prince Zurasak, the son of Ssorlang's emperor, has instigated numerous border skirmishes, however, that Darawan cannot long ignore.

Governed by a council of minor sovereigns, who in turn represent the many villages of the city-state, Darawan is the closest thing Xulmec has to a republic. Councilor Jutarat is Darawan's most influential figure, a serious-minded man who considers all sides before taking action.

Darawans honor all the Southland divinities, but they also maintain strange philosophies that respectfully deemphasize the importance of the gods. They revere the intangible forces of time and destiny, believing less in the physical and more in the spiritual. Such doctrines are often seen as heretical to the other Xulmec city-states.

Most Darawans practice sky burial, ritually dismembering their dead and offering the remains to the mountain vultures. Believing the spirit is released upon death from the body, they do not see this custom as disrespectful. The dead of Darawan nobility are taken to the mountain monasteries and offered to the scavenger birds in great ceremonial gatherings.

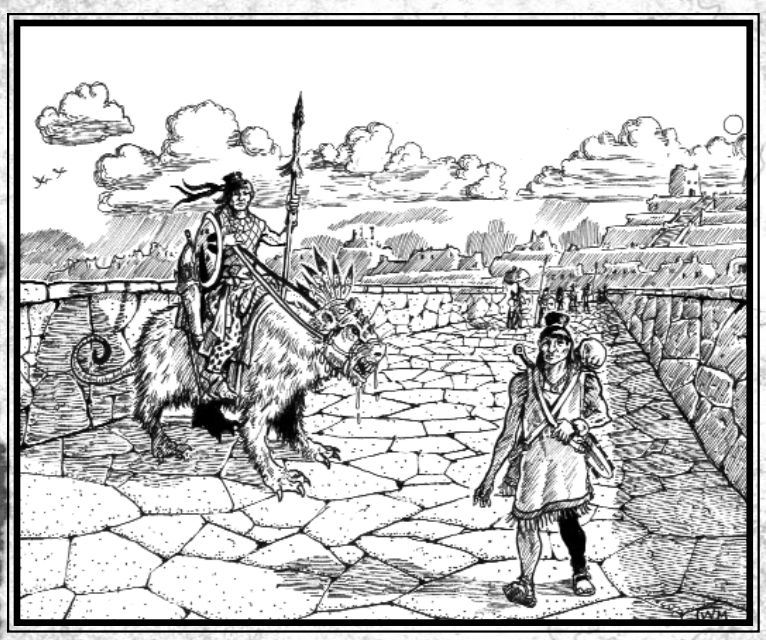
Kaatlan: (Large city, pop. 21,700) Dominating the forests and hills of western Xulmec, Kaatlan (*kot*-lan) has been an ally and enemy many times to every other city-state throughout the course of the peninsula's history. At once both warlike and peace-loving, the people are guided by the two gods who share rulership of Kaatlan. Whichever holds sway over its priests and sovereigns at any given time directs it to war or trade. Most feared is Coatlimict, the bloodthirsty Skull-Father, who commands his people to battle, capture, and sacrifice all others. More benevolent is Calchoti, the goddess of rain and bringer of life, who through her followers extends the welcoming hand of friendship to all other nations. While Coatlimict demands blood sacrifice, the only sacrifices Calchoti requests are gifts of charity and personal devotion.

The political dichotomy of Kaatlan unnerves its neighboring city-states. Even in times of peace, merchants from neighboring cities approach well-armed, ever unsure of Kaatlan's disposition. Most are willing to accept this duality and trade with them, for Kaatlan is Xulmec's primary supplier of gold and greenstone; the former is famous for appealing to the greed of foreigners and the latter has sacred value to most Southlanders. Kaatlan regularly trades with the Criestine Colonies by means of Omian Pass, but whenever the creeds of Coatlimict become dominant, the colonists are quick to withdraw the hand of commerce.

Presently, the city-state is ruled by King Oztahua, a warrior who serves the interests of Calchoti. However, his truest friend and royal advisor is Yaotopol, a priest of Coatlimict, and many fear the day when the king yields to his friend's counsel of bloodshed.

Kaatlan's legend of the Feathered Hunt ends with the chief unexpectedly cornering a cockatrice the size of a man. The hideous bird-thing turned the chief into the stone statue that now stands at the edge of the great city itself. Yet since that fateful day, the people of Kaatlan have found the flocks of small cockatrices that dwell on the plains beyond their city to be a boon, deterring invaders with the threat of magical petrification.

Maras: (Large city, pop. 23,090) When Ahpuchac, first chief of Maras (muh-*ross*), found his quarry in the



Feathered Hunt, he stood face to face with a great jaguar, sitting at the edge of a deep cenote. The dire beast eventually dove into the cavernous sinkhole, and after settling his people into the surrounding region, Ahpuchac became obsessed with his vision and eventually ventured into the great hole himself. This natural well, considered the sacred grave of their chief, became the center of the growing city. Several years later, Ahpuchac "resurfaced" as the Black Jaguar, the god in whose province the Underworld of Xulmec belief lies.

Dominating the southern rim of Xulmec, the city-state of Maras is a realm teaming with life and beauty. Endless rainforests surround limestone hills, sawgrass marshes, and sheltered coves. Mangrove and hardwood jungles lie to the west surrounding Yectena Bay, while the rocky shoreline with its sheltered coves lies to the south and east. Of greatest spiritual significance to the people are the freshwater cenotes that riddle their domain—large limestone sinkholes that lead to an enormous network of subterranean rivers. Aside from supplying clear, fresh water to the city and its outlying villages, these waterways are believed to lead eventually to Mictlan, the Underworld—much like the Mochitla River.

Each of the hundreds of cenotes in Maras is different. Many lie beneath stony overhangs, while others are open to the sky like wells. The caverns within are expansive and beautiful, filled with crystal-blue waters and the limestone teeth of stalactites and stalagmites. The natives' preoccupation with Mictlan has led to numerous expeditions among the caves and rivers below. The Maras continually work to secure this subterranean realm from mortal enemies even as Ahpuchac himself secures it from immortal enemies and evil divinities. Encounters with deep-dwelling creatures have become more commonplace over the years, and recent skirmishes with drow patrols venturing close to the surface may be a warning of a greater conflict to come.

The city itself is a vast sprawl of pyramids that scarcely intrude on the natural world. Houses and temples are spaced within gaps in the rainforest and carved into the limestone hills. At the very heart of the city, below the sacred Temple of the Cat, lies the largest cenote of Maras—its depths considered the lair of the Black Jaguar himself. King Zacatal is the current ruler of Maras, a warrior renowned for his uncompromising defense against the mortal threats from below.

Teotcoatlan: (Metropolis, pop. 42,600) At the end of the Feathered Hunt, Mazlopan, first chief of the tribe that founded Teotcoatlan, beheld a couatl of great size winding a sinuous dance above an enormous lake. Taking this vision as an omen, he laid the foundations of Teotcoatlan, the City of Divine Serpents, upon an island at the center of Lake Tlanec. When Mazlopan passed into death, he declined divine status so that his friend Huamec could ascend in his place.

Teotcoatlan is the glorious pinnacle of Xulmec civilization. Sometimes called the Gilded City for its golden avenues and glittering spires, the expansive metropolis is connected to the mainland by three stone causeways that span the waters of Lake Tlanec. Within the city proper, canals allow for canoe traffic along each major street, and on its outskirts, fields of *chinampas* are arrayed to feed the populace. In the central plaza, the immense World Pyramid rivals the sacred monuments of old Zimala in size. The tall structure is surmounted by twin temples dedicated to Madrah and Huamext, the gods greatest revered by the Teotcoatlans. A series of ascending channels, designed to accommodate serpentine bodies, are a tribute to the guardian nagas the Xulmecs once served. Carvings along each tier of the pyramid tell the history of the Xulmec people.

Except in times of war, Teotcoatlan welcomes all Xulmecs freely, but visitors are expected to pay tribute at one of the city's many temples to gain the graces of its people. Temples and shrines for every Xulmec god can be found here, although Huamecti, Necalli, and Yaotlamec are favored above all, save Madrah himself. Even foreign clerics are treated with respect, albeit grudgingly at times. Teotcoatlan is a city of religious tolerance, one of the few places in the Southlands where foreigners can find sanctuary and worship freely.

Teotcoatlan is ruled by King Mactezu and Queen Itlanexca, betrothed adolescents newly granted the full powers of their titles with the passing of Mactezu's mother, Queen Cetlana. Rumors have spread far and wide that the young king and queen are mentored by a benevolent guardian naga in the deep halls of the palace, who teaches them the virtues of Cynhara, the peace-loving goddess fathered by Madrah himself millennia ago. Reports of such a creature trouble the cynical nobles of the city and generate unrest among those who profit from strife.

Boasting the largest military in all of Xulmec, the Teotcoatlans are respected by all. They are also the most famous riders of the huezcatla, their soldiers seemingly living on huezcatla-back and always patrolling the fringes of Lake Tlanec and the nearby rivers.

Zimala

(The Old Naga Empire)

No Ruler

Population: Unknown

Resources: Gold, silver, jewelry, jade

Capital: Teoyotlan

The Island of Obsidian, Zimala, is a lost world riddled with ancient ruins, buried wealth, and death in many forms. At least, that is how the nations of the Northlands regard it. The truth of this unsettled realm lies beyond the Azcatlepi Jungle and behind the monolithic Nahualli Mountains. As the fabled homeland of the nagas—said to be one of the first races to crawl the face of Áereth and having built one of history's most glorious civilizations—it is a place about which many tales are told and few facts are known.

The humans of Xulmec, whose education and civilization were refined by the nagas, know better than their Northland cousins to penetrate the hunting grounds of their ancient masters. Nevertheless, boatmen from Darawan and rangers from Maras are known to sell their services as guides to foreign explorers—provided they are paid well and in advance.

Though their society is long since shattered and their magic no longer unified, nagas are by no means extinct. Some lurk still in the dark places, coiled and hateful. Many have made their way, one by one, to lands beyond their old borders, and it is not unheard of for nagas to forge alliances with other beings. Naturally dominant, nagas make servants out of lesser creatures. Many lone nagas, insane and malevolent, now wander hidden beneath the surface of the world. Yet most are still found here, in the prolific jungles where nature—and nature's most fearsome servants—roam free.

Zimala holds great appeal to the Northland kingdoms. The promise of untold wealth, lost magics, and lush natural resources is a constant siren cry to the avaricious kings and lord-barons. Many expeditions have launched, but the dangers of the Barrier Isles and the Surya Sea forces most explorers to find an alternate route. Those who reach the mainland must press through the dense Azcatlepi Jungle, a humid realm as rife with tropical flora as with bloodthirsty fauna.

Monstrous creatures such as achaierai, behirs, and shaduars are said to prowl the shadowy depths. Yet tales also speak of sentinels sent by the gods to watch over the once-blessed island, beneficent creatures such as couatls and lillends who offer lost explorers safety for a day or week. Behind the curtain of rainforests lie great cities raised millennia ago by the magic of nagas and the hands of their servants and slaves. Rumored to lair in these ruins are the nagas themselves, ready with poisonous fang and lethal spell against intruders who would plunder their homes. Guardian nagas, the exiled species that once befriended humans, are said to wait in solemn vigilance over the tombs and oldest secrets of the Zimalan Empire. Whether an adventurer today would face their friendship or their wrath is a matter of great speculation.

In the millennia since the fall of the Zimalan Empire, nature has reclaimed the land where its cities were built. Few maps exist now that mark the location of these vanished cities, though rumor suggests that the kings and queens of the Xulmec city-states may possess some. To date, only the ruined city of Teoyotlan, the ancient capital of Zimala, has been found and is often marked on explorers' maps. Such a mark, however, does not mean the perilous journey to the city itself is any easier to make.

Chapter 3
The Lostlands

Once one of the cradles of civilization, the scattered realms that comprise the Lostlands are but shadows of the mighty empire that brought them to life. Although the Sphinx Emperors have been gone for eons, their legacy lives on—virtually all of the tribes and nations in this desolate region remain entwined with the past in some manner or another. Travelers from the North have always found that journeying to the Lostlands is akin to stepping through a portal in time—the majestic buildings in these exotic lands are all centuries old, the poetry and paintings are products of artists long deceased, and the laws and traditions, to be charitable, are barbaric and primitive. The rest of the world has moved toward the Age of Man; the Lostlands, primal and savage, have not.

For this reason, many sages believe that the Lostlands are doomed to remain savage and bleak for still more centuries to come. Unlike their neighbors to the North, the denizens of the Lostlands have been unable to let go of their past, and so cannot forge their own identity. While several scholars believe that this is merely the result of eons of slavery—the former servants of the Sphinx Emperors still do not know how to act as masters—others believe the stagnancy of the region to have a more sinister cause. Several theories champion the notion that the races currently living in the Lostlands are unwitting caretakers, controlled by powerful eldritch forces and unable to become independent. These theories also claim that when certain prophecies come to pass, the Sphinx Emperors will return to their homelands, and reclaim their birthright and power.

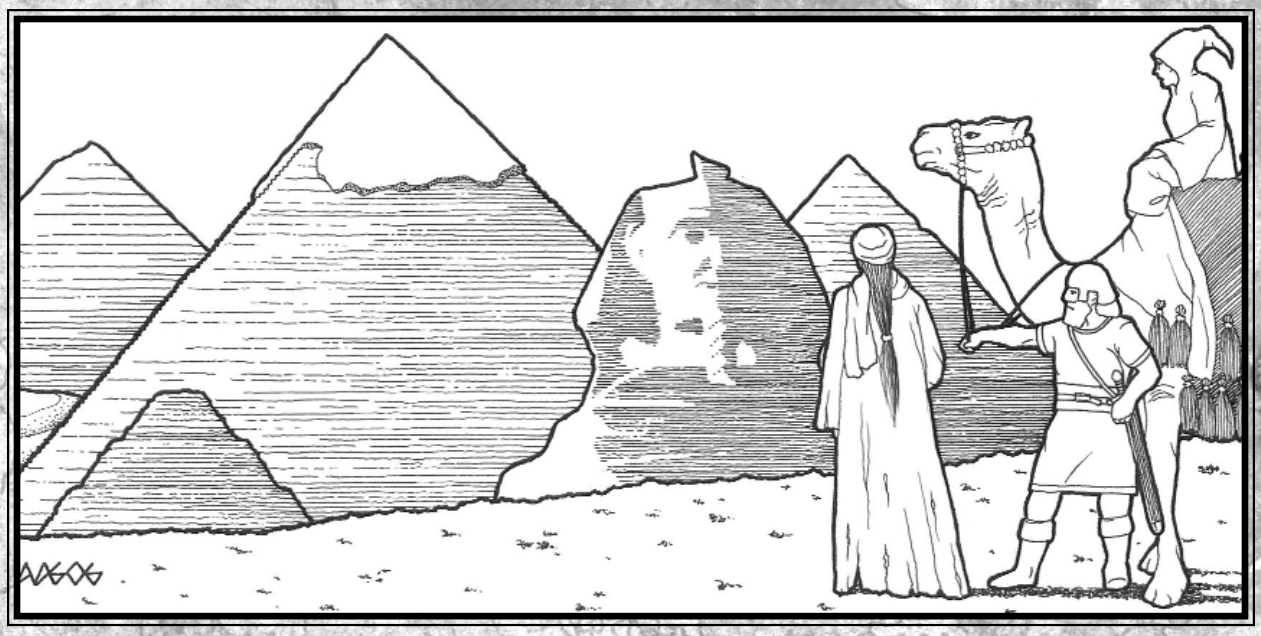
The legendary ferocity of the Lostlands is also what makes the region a mystery to the rest of the world. Few who dare to make the arduous journey down to these wild regions ever return to civilization … even fewer return unscarred by the experience. Not without good reason is it said that the Lostlands are a breeding ground for madness. However, ancient stories and riddles about the Khonsurian Empire and its treasures lead certain adventurous souls—the brave and the foolish—to this part of the world. It is commonly said that every mortal desire can be lost or found, bought or sold in the Lostlands … it is all just a matter of paying the price.

Climate and Seasons

For the most part, the Lostlands are home to challenging and oftentimes hostile environments. The temperatures and seasons in this part of the world are relatively constant, with uncomfortable warmth permeating this strange region throughout the seasons. The only primary difference between the various regions of the Lostlands is precipitation—some areas are quite arid, while others are dank and humid, with their skies constantly darkened by ominous storm clouds. Only in these humid regions is the passing of the seasons apparent, as the summer and autumn seasons offer brief respite from the unending rains.

The nations of the Lostlands are dominated by the vast Ghetrian Desert. As go the fortunes of the desert, so go the rest of the Lostlands. Mild seasons in the desert generally mark good weather and bountiful crops in the region, while powerful sandstorms or blistering summers can create havoc. Only the secretive Isles of Tharnaka manage to escape the touch of the desert, but even there, the lush jungles and persistently heavy rains make the lands virtually inhospitable to travelers.

In the northernmost regions of the Lostlands, the environment is not quite as treacherous as in the rest of the forbidding territory, yet it still has its perils. The Vermilion Steppes, still gently touched on its southern border by the desert, can reach blistering temperatures during the summer months. However, the area is also renowned for the powerful winds that slash across the crimson grasslands, dropping temperatures at night to near-freezing. The fact that the elven tribes can even grow crops in this violent region, let alone do so successfully, is a tribute to the skill and the persistence of these wild creatures. This is the part of the Lostlands that is perhaps best known to the rest of the world, as most of its more civilized merchants can be found in this particular region.



The center of the Lostlands is completely dominated by two massive areas: the Ghetrian Desert and the Devil's Cauldron, which still burns brightly at the westernmost border of the desert. All life depends on the twin rivers that wind their way through this hellish inferno, the Ctesiphal and the Ctabakul (or the Twins, as they are commonly called in the remnants of the Old Empire). All of the inhabited towns and cities lie on the banks of these rivers, save for the dark city of Rhaz al-Khali, which is rumored to thrive only by the grace—or the damnation—of the darkest gods. Even the old imperial roads never stray too far from the banks of these mighty rivers, serving as a reminder that to wander too far into the desert is to risk death, madness … or worse.

In the southernmost regions of the Lostlands, the Herennia Mountains serve to shield most of the area from the punishing heat of the Ghetrian Desert. However, this region is no less hostile, as thick, sinister jungles sprawl relentlessly over this territory. Between the powerful rainy seasons and the gigantic black trees that tower over the land, the light of the sun rarely reaches the ground, keeping the region perpetually shrouded in shadow. The few breaks in the rainy seasons are marked by the coming of the Pteral Swarms, which rain death upon the land instead of dark water.

Timekeeping and Celestial Bodies

The manner by which time is measured in the Lostlands was established eons ago by the first rulers of the Khonsurian Empire. This calendar, which is commonly called the Sphinx Calendar throughout the rest of the world, is based on the lunar cycle, and spans only 10 months, each of which is 35 days. A leap month called the Imperial Reckoning is inserted into the calendar every third year (or, in times past, by imperial decree) to restore balance between the calendar and the traditional seasons. The Imperial Reckoning lasts 15 days, and is marked in most of the nations of the Lostlands with three festival days—one to open the Reckoning (the Dawnday), one at the month's midpoint (the Midday), and one to close the Reckoning (the Duskday). A few areas in the Lostlands have adopted the more modern Criestine calendar, but most of its inhabitants still cling to the old customs and follow the traditional Sphinx Calendar.

Each of the individual nations and religions of the Lostlands celebrate many holy days during the year, and travelers can expect to encounter any number of festivals and feasts. While there are few common festival days or celebrations, the following holidays are common to all cultures:

Day of the Fifth Prince: Celebrated each year during the summer months, this three-day festival is a time of somber mourning and reflection, meant to honor the dead. The holiday dates back to the Second Dynasty of the Khonsurian Empire, when a favorite son of the great Emperor Cnedaten—Djedkara, the Fifth Prince—vanished under mysterious circumstances, supposedly kidnapped by a powerful demon prince and taken to the Underworld. Although few still care to honor the loss of the Fifth Prince (except in Xa Deshret), the tradition of remembering the missing and the dead during this time remains throughout the entire region. Most formal burials take place during this festival, followed by traditional toasts of wine to the dead.

Shadows Fall: This holiday, which is celebrated on the fourth day of each new year, marks the anniversary of the arrival of the Shadow Star—the great dark star that fell from the heavens and cracked the world, creating the great crater in the eastern regions of the Vermilion Steppes known as the Devil's Cauldron. Like the madness that was unleashed during the coming of the Shadow Star, the revelries of Shadows Fall are marked by chaos. The celebrants of Shadows Fall typically wear loud, outrageous costumes and drink copious amounts of hard spirits throughout this two-day festival, and the feasting is capped with the burning of giant crimson pyres, which are said to drive away evil spirits and the touch of madness from the souls of the innocent.

Thirdstar: Celebrated every third year, this holiday is traditionally observed a dozen or so days before the Summer Solstice, when three stars—Pharisen, Otergal, and Xherhu—align themselves together in a straight line above the moon. Thirdstar is a holiday of new beginnings, and it is considered fortuitous to embark upon new journeys or enterprises at this time. Wars (and offering of peace) are often declared at Thirdstar. Additionally, it is believed that the gates to both heaven and hell open during the stellar alignment, allowing spirits to travel between the various planes of existence.

Ironically, while the holiday is celebrated throughout the Lostlands as a time of beginnings, it still possesses very different meanings to the region's various cultures. It began in the Khonsurian Empire, where it marked the arrival and ascension to power of the sphinxes. The nalvor still inhabiting the remains of the old Empire continue to celebrate the holiday for this reason. However, in most of the other kingdoms of the Lostlands, the belief is held that the day marks the fall of the Empire and the beginning of the newer kingdoms. Also, in Rhaz al-Khali, it is thought that the day marks the "beginning of the end"; the Day of Apocalypse that this nation anxiously awaits is prophesied to begin during the alignment of the three stars.

Regardless of region perceptions, Thirdstar is usually celebrated with much feasting and revelry throughout the Lostlands. Additionally, in most of the kingdoms in this savage region (except for in Rhaz al-Khali), young men and women receive a small tattoo of three stars on their right wrist, marking the beginning of their journey into adulthood.

Kingdoms, Tribal Lands, and City-States

What follows is an index of the various kingdoms, principalities, tribes, and free cities of the Lostlands. The noted populations are only rough estimates; little facts regarding the Lostlands are known by the scholars of the North, and many of the "truths" about this savage region may in fact be decades, if not centuries, old. The number of sages in the world that possess copious amounts of accurate knowledge regarding the Lostlands can be counted on the fingers of one man's hand.

Compounding the difficulties of providing accurate information for the various "nations" of the Lostlands is the fact that few formal nations exist in this part of the world. Most of the borders between the various territories of the Lostlands are under dispute; only those borders clearly defined by natural, impenetrable boundaries serve to provide any sort of clarity.

Lostlanders generally live in the ruins of cities once built by the slaves of the Sphinx Empire. Those who move too far past the walls of these once-mighty cities risk the wrath of the evil bandits or monstrous horrors wandering throughout the region. Even the farmlands and herding areas of the Lostlands tend to be found protected behind the walls of the sprawling ancient cities. Any creature daring to live far beyond the protection of a city wall, or of a tribe or clan, is either powerful indeed or courting death.

The majority of resources of these many tribes and kingdoms are all old—like carrion, the people of the Lostlands are still picking away at the remains of their Sphinx masters and the Old Khonsurian Empire. The farmlands, while no longer required to sustain the populations enjoyed by the Empire at the height of its power centuries ago, provide smaller and smaller crops with each passing year. No new mines have been discovered since the halcyon days of the Empire, and those that have not since run dry or collapsed have been all but picked clean. Although few in the Lostlands are aware of this grave situation, it is likely that only a few decades remain before the resources of the Lostlands run dry. Then, without a shadow of a doubt, famine and civil war shall run across this wild country like a plague. It is most likely that this inevitable plague shall infect the Northlands and Southlands as well …

Achaemia

The Grand Prince of Princes, Cambujia Calhi

Population: 12,450 (rakshasa 55%, other 20%, human 10%, drow 7%, half-elf 5%, genie 3%)

Resources: Silks, oils, ships

Capital: The City of Achaemia

This bustling city-state is ruled by the enigmatic rakshasa, and zealously guarded by djinni and other genies. Located along the desolate coast of the Twisted Sea, the strange city still manages to attract a surprising array of visitors. Achaemia is commonly called "The Gateway of Áereth" by sailors, due to the fact that all sorts of demihuman, humanoid, and monstrous creatures casually wander the streets of the city. Extradimensional portals are said to exist in the ancient sewers beneath the city, and while this rumor has never been confirmed by reliable sources, the djinni that fiercely guard the sewer gates seem to lend the idea credibility. Many grand marketplaces can be found within the walls of Achaemia as well; while not nearly as impressive as those found in Gadjarria or Quaysarria, they are still remarkable in their own right.

For many years, Achaemia was an active participant in the affairs of the Lostlands. A human mercenary army known as the Company of the Bright Barrow served as the military might for the rakshasa city for many generations, inspiring fear throughout the Lostlands at the mere mention of their name. At Achaemia's whim, many of the small bandit kingdoms that traversed the Ghetrian Desert over the past several centuries were obliterated by the blades of the Bright Barrow. Even one of the mighty Vermilion Tribes proved to be no match for this mercenary army—it was utterly destroyed in a grand, monumental battle. The Company of the Bright Barrow has not been seen in the Lostlands for many years, however, leading many enemies of the city to wonder if the mercenary army has been disbanded by its rakshasa masters … or if the Company is simply doing battle on another plane of existence.

On rare occasion, the master rakshasa artisans of Achaemia build massive ships of sea called grandships, which have tremendous range and speed. Many merchants from the Northlands and Southlands purchase the grandships from the rakshasa for sailing conventional trade routes, but in recent years it has been noted that some have set sail to the east across the Twisted Sea … and none have returned. Although the disappearance of Denys Morcault and his fleet led most sailors throughout

Áereth to believe that only the realms of the dead lie beyond the Twisted Sea, the increased number of grandships headking off in that directions has led some to whisper that perhaps something else, like treasure beyond imagination, can be found to the east—and whatever that something may be, the rakshasa know its secrets.

Djeser al-Maqqara

The Slave King, Lord Marko Hellmont

Population: 252,960 (human 66%, humanoid 31%, other 3%)

Resources: Slaves, beasts of burden

Capital: —

Thriving upon the misery of others, the city of Djeser al-Maqqara is the largest and most infamous slave market in the world. The city was once one of the greatest in the Khonsurian Empire, known for its exquisite temples and palaces. The remnants of these once-proud buildings now serve as pens for slaves, filled to capacity and nearly beyond by the new, unscrupulous masters of the city.

After the fall of the Khonsurian Empire, the city quickly

fell into ruin, and its location on the eastern coast of the Empyrean Ocean made it an ideal hideout for rogues, slavers, and pirates alike. However, it has only been in the last century or so that the city has risen to prominence as the world's premier slave market. The reason for this was the arrival of Lord Darryn Hellmont. A former nobleman from Crieste, Hellmont was stripped of his title and exiled from his homelands because of his dealings in slavery—specifically, his selling of his peasants as slaves to foreign lands. However, if the crown of Crieste had sought to punish Hellmont, its aim was sadly misguided. By allowing him passage to Djeser al-Maqqara, the corrupt nobleman was able to restart a far more profitable slave trade than he ever had before, and with his contacts in Crieste, he was able to turn the city into the undeniable slave capital of the world. He was also able to establish unbreakable control over the city—his grandson, Marko, rules over Djeser al-Maqqara with the same ruthless authority that his grandfather once enjoyed. He and a group of six other powerful slave masters are known simply as the Slavers' Council.

The law in Djeser al-Maqqara is simple: "Pay the Slavers' Council." Any crime from petty theft to blatant murder is conceivably legal in the city, provided that the slave masters of the city give the action their approval and receive a tax upon that action. An individual who feels wronged by another may take his grievance to one of the slave masters of the ruling council; from there, virtually anything can happen. The slave master may take no action, or may levy a tax … either against the plaintiff or defendant. The tax may range from a single copper coin to the lives of one's entire family. The taxes are enforced by the council's own tax collection squad—a mix of half-ogre barbarians and skilled elven assassins. Despite having but one official law, Djeser al-Maqqara remains a fairly orderly and civilized city.

Although primarily sold to be used as laborers, slaves for virtually any purpose or vice can be found in the street markets of the desert city. Pleasure slaves, trained by some of the best courtesans and artists in the entire world, are available at the auction blocks to the highest bidder. Entire trained legions of slave soldiers are available to rent or to buy—these range from common soldiers to specialized warriors, such as archers or cavalrymen. These mercenary armies have been known to turn the tide in many a civil war between feuding noblemen.

Also available for sale are trained, exotic beasts. This is a more recent development in Djeser al-Maqqara, one of Marko Hellmont's design, and has proven in recent years to be extremely profitable. Trained beasts such as basilisks, chimeras, or even dragons can be found for the right price. Djeser al-Maqqara has become home to some of the most skilled animal trainers in the world, who are known to blend sorcery, psionics, and more conventional training methods to mold the minds of their charges into whatever an owner wishes. It is also said that these trainers can do the same to humans, or elves, or other intelligent creatures.

Another new venture of Marko Hellmont was the introduction of the gladiator pits. Although gladiatorial fighting is somewhat commonplace in other nations, the fights and spectacles offered by Djeser al-Maqqara are without a doubt the grandest the world has ever known. The Arena of Eternal Flame, built from crimson slabs of marble, sits on the northern end of the city and seats nearly one hundred thousand bloodthirsty patrons a day, with nearly two hundred thousand spectators on festival days and for special events. While the majority of the fighting takes place between conventional gladiators—albeit the finest that the world has to offer—it is the more unconventional battles that draw the most attention. Gladiators pit themselves against foul, dangerous monsters like the remorhaz; thrice yearly, battles of magic between wizards and sorcerers take place, leading to grisly displays of magic within the Arena that are unrivaled. Of course, the gambling that occurs on all gladiatorial matches—supervised by Hellmont and his slave masters, of course—ensures that the coffers of Djeser al-Maqqara remain full at all times.

A unique alliance between Djeser al-Maqqara and the Barrier Isles exists, allowing both to remain independent and profitable. In earlier times, the two independent city-states were bitter rivals, each one trying to outdo the other and engaging in clandestine wars. However, in recent years, both the Barrier Isles and Djeser al-Maqqara came to the realization that they faced far too many enemies without also trying to destroy one another. Djeser al-Maqqara scaled back its black market and piracy activities, choosing instead to focus solely on the slave trade; meanwhile, the Barrier Isles renounced its claims on the slave trade, serving only to ferry the human cargo of Djeser al-Maqqara from one land to another. While not exactly allies, both Djeser al-Maqqara and the Barrier Isles look out for one another, providing each other assistance when profitable to do so; bounty hunters searching for criminals in either area inevitably find their efforts stymied to no end. Alliances and partnerships with thieves' guilds and assassins' guilds throughout the world make Djeser al-Maqqara a haven for rogues and criminals of all kinds.

Gadjarria

Caliph of the Free Tribes, Hazaay Gho

Population: 6,338 (halfling 91%, human 6%, other 3%)

Resources: Trade goods, secrets

Capital: Bahadur

More commonly called the Kingdom of Gypsies or the Kingdom of Thieves, this nation is comprised of loosely allied clans of halfling wanderers. These tribes keep to the southernmost regions of the Lostlands, generally skirting the outer regions of Xyr Muthal and the Gloom Marshes of Tashgar, foraging for wild crops and animals in these regions. Despite its extreme isolation, this wandering band of halfling gypsies is still well known and well sought after by many travelers. This is partially due to its close contacts with the Bazaar of Quaysarria, and partly due to the goods that the halfling gypsies choose to sell—namely, forbidden knowledge.

The united tribes of Gadjarria convene annually at the abandoned Khonsurian city of Bahadur, during the Day of the Fifth Prince. It is during this time of feasting that the various chieftains of each gypsy tribe meet and hold council, determining where the tribes will travel and what tasks need be done during the coming year. If necessary, a caliph to lead all the tribes is elected, but such an election has not been held for over fifty years. The Caliph Hazaay Gho has held this position during this time, and he shows no sign of relinquishing his position. Hazaay Gho is famous for a sharp tongue and a sharp dagger—and both have been known to strike without warning.

Gadjarria is reputed to hold arcane secrets that can be found nowhere else. These secrets may come in the form of items—artifacts outlawed in a dozen nations, perhaps, or tomes thought only to exist in the infernal planes of torment—or they may come in the form of the spoken word, uttered by the various mystics of the Gadjarrian tribes. Though not spellcasters or practitioners of magic in the traditional sense, the Gadjarrian mystics have the ability to divine both past and future with uncanny precision, and to cast powerful hexes on unsuspecting souls. These services are available with frightening ease among any of the Gadjarrian tribes, but always at a high price.

Despite such sinister trappings, however, the gypsies of Gadjarria are not evil. They merely believe that they act to provide what others desire, even though these desires are invariably evil and corrupt. In fact, it is Gadjarrian custom to deny a customer's request three times, and always with the phrase "You do not want what you seek." It is only after the fourth request is made that a price is named, and the task completed.

Legend has it that the gypsies of Gadjarria are cursed to wander the eastern regions of the Lostlands, and are doomed to do so until the end of days as penance for their dabbling in dark arts. Others believe that there is a more practical purpose to their wanderings—that an ancient Khonsurian treasure lies somewhere in this section of the Lostlands, and that somehow the city of Bahadur acts as a key to this treasure. No one knows why they choose to relentlessly wander through this dangerous territory, but in Gadjarria, perhaps the answer can be learned … for a price.

Bahadur: (Small town, pop. 2,890) Once a mighty military outpost for the Khonsurian Empire, this barren town is all but abandoned, occupied by a handful of grain mills and a few smithies, which support the basic needs of the wandering tribes. Most of the stone buildings of the old city have been torn down and used to reinforce the walls surrounding it. When the tribes convene during the summer months, they instead choose to put up their pavilion tents in these clearings, rather than use the few remaining abandoned buildings.

The only building of significance in Bahadur is a giant fortress, made of black marble walls and standing nearly five hundred feet tall. Even though no gypsy has set foot in the fortress for nearly a thousand years, its gates remain locked and fires still burn brightly inside of it. The old Khonsurian histories speak of the Black Fortress of Necherophet, where the Pharaoh Senakhet was murdered by his brother Novurath, who usurped his throne and took his crown. The ghost of the slain Pharaoh is said to endlessly walk the corridors of the Black Fortress in search of vengeance and blood. Though there is no proof

in the written histories, the Black Fortress of Necherophet and the abandoned fortress at Bahadur are thought to be one and the same.

Gorhgijesk

Lord of the World Below, Gyoratyllion Ghorwu, First of His Name

Population: 901,000 (drow 59%, duergar 14%, derro 10%, abollar 7%, aboleth 6%, other 4%)

Resources: Mineral ores, precious metals

Capital: Rythnaisym

When the easternmost regions of the Vermilion Steppes were shattered by the falling of the Shadow Star, it created a smoking crater called the Devil's Cauldron—a vast area miles wide and descending far into the depths of the earth. From the dark recesses of this eternally burning crater appeared a kingdom of vile depravity, one that immediately began to stretch its evil talons across the Lostlands. Whether the creatures lurking in the depths of the Cauldron were always there, or arrived with the Shadow Star, no one can say for sure. However, what it known for certain is their dark ambition. They clearly represent one of the most dangerous threats known to the entirety of the Lostlands.

Gorhgijesk is ruled by an uneasy alliance between the aboleth and the drow. The supreme ruler of the evil underground kingdom has always been the mighty Gyoratyllion Ghorwu, a vampire aboleth who supposedly has lived and ruled for well over two thousand years. However, providing guidance to Ghorwu is the Council of Three, which is comprised of the mightiest war leaders in the kingdom. Presently—and for the first time—the Council is comprised entirely of drow war leaders. Tensions between the aboleth and the drow have never been higher, and while Ghorwu's iron grip on power has always seemed as certain as the rising sun, rumblings from within the Council indicate that perhaps the time of the drow in Gorhgijesk is at hand.

The servants and slaves of Gorhgijesk are the duergar and derro, who resent their aboleth masters with a passion. However, the aboleth have been able to beautifully manipulate the two races of evil dwarves against each other for centuries, keeping them focused upon fighting one another instead of uniting against their masters. Both derro and duergar—when not engaged in their lethal clan feuds—work the extensive mines located deep beneath the Devil's Cauldron. The duergar work the more common ores—copper, iron, gold, and the like—while the derro work the far more dangerous one, namely the mines for mithril and shadowstone. The rare ore shadowstone, while highly coveted for its magical properties, is said to cause insanity in those who remain in contact with it over time. Indeed, many believe that shadowstone is what originally caused the derro to go mad. The rare minerals found beneath Gorhgijesk are also the reason that "good" kingdoms have not united to destroy this sinister nation—the truth of the matter is that while most of the world finds Gorhgijesk to be utterly abhorrent, the appeal of its valuable resources also makes it too valuable to destroy.

The other servants of Gorhgijesk are the abollar, monstrous hybrids of human and aboleth. Unlike the derro and duergar, the abollar serve their masters with fanatical loyalty, and would gladly die for their king and kingdom. The abollar comprise much of the military might of Gorhgijesk, and are known throughout the Lostlands for their military prowess. However, while rightfully feared, the abollar legions are known to achieve victory by sheer force and brutality rather than by any particular cunning or tactics. In recent years, much to the dismay of Gyoratyllion Ghorwu and his Council of Three, the armies of Gorhgijesk have been soundly defeated in several battles by the Vermilion Tribes.

The Devil's Cauldron is the main point of entry to Gorhgijesk for most of the world. Winding roads—some no wider than four feet—descend down the sides of the still-smoldering crater in wide spirals, eventually reaching the main roads to the cities of Gorhgijesk at the crater's bottom. Guides to these cities can typically be found making camp at the edge of the cauldron. Some are abollar emissaries who "officially" represent the underground kingdom, while others are rogue scouts from the Vermilion Tribes, cast out of their nation for unsavory reasons. The cities of Gorhgijesk can also be reached by underground rivers—fast skiffs are believed to move swiftly between Gorhgijesk and some of the other drow kingdoms in the World Below.

Gorhgijesk currently finds itself as a crossroads. While it has since time immemorial sought to conquer and dominate the rest of the world, it faces the dilemma of deciding what its next step toward that aim should be: Its desire to conquer parts of the surface world has become much more difficult with the rise of the Vermilion Tribes, while recent conflicts with the drow have equally jeopardized some of their below-ground ambitions.

Rythnaisym: (Metropolis, pop. 68,400) Also known as "The Devil's Eye," Rythnaisym is built over the remnants of the ancient meteor known as the Shadow Star. A twisting labyrinth of tunnels leads from the bottom of the Devil's Cauldron to this mighty city. Many of these tun-

nels are filled with horrors such as colonies of green slime, or packs of otyugh—without an experienced guide, traversing these tunnels without incident is all but impossible. Rythnaisym itself is surrounded by a moat of molten metal. Drawbridges of enchanted black iron are lowered but thrice a day, limiting entry into the city.

Prominent throughout the streets of Rythnaisym are the many public pools of hot salt water. Many of the aboleth within the city spend much of their time here, conducting both business and pleasure from the comfort of these hot pools. The pools are said to have many magical and regenerative properties, thought to be the result of being built over the remains of an ancient dragon graveyard.

Phumarik: (Small city, pop. 22,560) Home to the smithies of Gorhgijesk, the city is more commonly referred to as the "Unending Thunder" due to the incessant din of hammers relentlessly falling on anvils. Armor and swords for a small army can be made in a day in the smithies of Phumarik, if need be. Most of these skilled and proficient smiths are duergar, but the best of them are in fact a small clan of mercenary fire giants, renegades from the Northlands that made their way to the shadowy lands of Gorhgijesk. These giants are paid handsomely for their work by the Council of Three, and are known to hunt the tunnels surrounding Phumarik for sport, using trained manticores as hunting dogs.

Viomorgyn: (Small city, pop. 14,820) This city is home to many of the most infamous practitioners of the darkest arts of magic. Sealed behind thick stone walls, this underground enclave is perhaps the world's largest university of magic—the Arcanum Infernal—and nearly all of its areas of study are forbidden throughout the rest of the known world. Although the majority of its most esteemed teachers are of drow origin, Viomorgyn is unusual amongst the cities of Gorhgijesk in that it is more open to outsiders; many of its teachers and students are of human origin, and have traveled thousands of dangerous miles to learn the teachings that are available at Viomorgyn. Such teachings come at a price, however: Visitors to the magical underground city are not permitted to leave for the rest of their living days. Those few who manage to escape are hunted down like dogs by elite drow assassins.

Morena Nova

The Grand and Majestic Emperor, Grimaud IV

Population: 54,900 (human 95%, dwarf 3%, other 2%)

Resources: Trade goods

Capital: Dupleiux

The self-styled Kingdom of Morena Nova is something of a pariah in the Lostlands. Formed by expatriates and dissidents exiled from a disgraced duchy of Crieste, Morena Nova struggles to maintain the "purity" of its cultural traditions and zealous religious beliefs from the influence of the surrounding Lostlands. Although this adherence to tradition and custom is nothing short of remarkable—traveling through Morena Nova is much akin to stepping through a portal in time, traveling to the early days of the Criestine Empire—the Lostlands have still exerted a subtle influence. Over the years, the kingdom has slowly transformed from the proverbial stranger in a strange land to an unwilling bridge between the Northlands and Southlands.

The land that would eventually become Morena Nova was originally discovered eight hundred years ago by the Criestine Emperor Mattias II. He used this relatively desolate jungle expanse as a staging ground for a holy crusade against Xa Deshret, which he saw as a nation of unclean heathens. Although this holy war was an unmitigated disaster, it did serve to establish the city of Dupleiux as a viable colony, capable of defending itself against the other nations of the Lostlands. When the Schism of Morena occurred some four hundred years later, the defeated Duke of Morena and a few loyal followers set sail for the Lostlands and the fledgling colony of New Morena, and began a new kingdom in exile. As Crieste had mostly lost interest in the colony by this time, the formation of "Morena Nova" met little resistance. The exiled nobles became the new leaders of this renegade nation, and the direct descendants of those exiles are now the present-day lords and ladies of the Morenan court.

Although the first hundred years of Morena Nova's existence were difficult, the small kingdom of proud exiles fought hard to rise above the savage wastelands that had abruptly become their new home. Fortunately for the exiles that formed Morena Nova, a wild herb called marishi-tao grows in great abundance throughout the valleys in the region. The herb, which possesses a number of magic healing properties, is difficult to grow properly, but the desperation and ingenuity of the Morenan settlers led to practical ways of cultivating it in mass quantities. Through this—and through reluctantly making trade

agreements with other nations of the Lostlands, such as Taijin and Quaysarria—Morena Nova was able to grow into a small but formidable power in the Lostlands. Even at the present time, rich Morenan nobles continue to grow this exotic herb, which is still the kingdom's main source of revenue. The original small, struggling farms have gradually become massive plantations the size of small cities, and are owned and supervised by the new Morenan gentry.

The society of Morena Nova is modeled after that of its Criestine ancestors. The courts, comprised of the royal family and several rich noblemen and aristocrats, hold sway over the rest of the city. Lesser merchants and artisans have some say in the goings-on of their city, while most of the commonfolk are merely the Emperor's servants, expected to obey his every whim. The harshness of the Lostlands has also injected this societal structure with a dose of brutal reality: Facing far greater dangers and having fewer numbers than their brethren in the Northlands, the crown of Morena Nova generally accedes to the demands of its people rather than face the threat of revolution. This reality has always been held in check by the pragmatism of its emperors; in recent years, though, concern has grown as the Emperor Grimaud IV's son, the Dauphin Prince and future Grimaud V, has shown the signs of megalomania that could one day be the kingdom's doom.

Presently, Morena Nova is experiencing a renaissance of sorts, which has filled the kingdom with both anticipation and fear. For many years, Morena Nova maintained a policy of isolationism. They viewed themselves as far too cultured and civilized to mix with the savage creatures of the Lostlands. However, increased trade between the dwarven Kingdom of Taijin and the rest of the known world has indirectly created a financial boon for Morena Nova, filling the coffers of the royal treasury with mountains of gold coins. The current political unrest in Crieste has also renewed some long-forgotten ties between Morena Nova and its former homeland. This has caused much excitement in the streets of the kingdom about the possibilities of a reunion with Crieste, or at least a friendly alliance. On the other hand, there is also a growing patriotic movement within Morena Nova that is proud of the independence it has achieved, and wants nothing to do with the mother empire that spurned it so long ago. Today, the future of the once-exiled kingdom is very much in question.

Dupleiux: (Large city, pop. 33,699) With humble beginnings as a crude fortress manned by a handful of scared colonial soldiers, the city of Dupleiux has transformed over the centuries into an impressive city. Sitting on the shores of the Khiazan River, Dupleiux is the main point of entry for many merchants, sailors, and adventurers traveling to the Lostlands. Most of the buildings are built from red clay, save the Royal Palace itself, which was painstakingly built from expensive, imported granite and black marble. The markets of Dupleiux are located at the corners of the city, with each given a specific day during the week to operate. It is not uncommon to see merchants scurrying from one corner of the city to another during the predawn hours, attempting to set up their wares in times for the opening of the new corner market.

Unknown to most citizens, the sewers of Dupleiux contain several golden idols of hideous monsters. The few sages who are aware of their existence say that their presence predates the Age of Dragons, and that they may signify the seal of a grand mystical lock—possibly something that could be trapping an infernal or even god-like being of immense power.

Bourdonnais: (Small city, pop. 10,895) This open city sprawls for miles across the plains of Morena Nova, with the oppressive sun beating down heavily upon the many fields of marishi-tao scattered throughout this region. Over twenty massive plantations grow the wild herb in this region; all the fields are tended by Morenan criminals and by slaves purchased from Djeser al-Maqqara. Due to the relentless heat and the slightly toxic nature of raw marishi-tao, slaves never last long in the fields of Bourdonnais—a field worker able to last more than two years is a rarity indeed.

Despite being in one of the most hostile regions of the world and having no walls to protect it, Bourdonnais is still considered to be one of the most secure cities in the Lostlands. This is because the plantations are closely guarded by an ancient golden dragon, one by the name of Foucauldé, who may have come over from Crieste with its original settlers. In exchange for tribute from the crown of Morena Nova, the proud dragon protects the plantations, keeping them safe from raiders.

Quaysarria

Emir of Shadhalia, Sha Abbas

Population: 14,875 (human 80%, half-elf 8%, halfling 7% other 5%)

Resources: Trade goods

Capital: Shadhalia

Better known as the Bazaar of Quaysarria, this traveling nation is perhaps the best-known kingdom of the Lostlands. While this is primarily due to the fact that the merchant kingdom is the least dangerous and most welcoming of all the nations of the Lostlands, it also has to do with its location. Located in the "no-man's land" between the Ghetrian Desert and the Vermilion Steppes, the ever-changing borders of Quaysarria fall squarely between the Northlands and the Lostlands. As such, it is fairly accessible to travelers, unlike the rest of the region. Additionally, this accessibility makes the nation one of the few reliable sources of information about the Lostlands that is available to the remainder of the world.

The kingdom is only a nation in the loosest sense of the word. Mainly, Quaysarria consists of a few of the northernmost cities of the Old Khonsurian Empire, now ruled by humans and united by a single but powerful thread. That thread is the famous traveling Bazaar of Quaysarria, which travels throughout the steppes and the deserts of the region. The cities tend to act as resting points for the bazaar, or places for the bazaar to seek refuge should it find itself under attack.

Quaysarria is ruled by the Emir Sha Abbas, who travels with the bazaar, and rarely visits the capital of Shadhalia. Affable and never without a smile, the Emir is an incredibly successful merchant with nerves of steel and an iron will—few other mortals would be capable of negotiating trade terms with the likes of Gorhgijesk and Djeser al-Maqqara, and fewer could negotiate deals that proved profitable. Part of the deals negotiated with all of these various places in the Lostlands and the Northlands are non-aggression treaties, making the Bazaar a veritable traveling safe haven (apart from the occasional attack by a rogue Vermilion Tribe). It is not uncommon for kings and queens from faraway warring nations to make their peace under a pavilion tent in the traveling Bazaar of Quaysarria.

The Bazaar is a place where nearly anything in the known world can be bought or sold. The few exceptions to this are slaves and black magic. This is not because of any sense of morality, though—it is more the result of negotiated deals with Djeser al-Maqqara and with the halflings of Gadjarria, who respectively own the markets on such items. Much of the Bazaar's success is due to the wide variety of merchants who travel thousands upon thousands of miles to reach it, particularly during the Seven Days of Gold. However, the Emir Sha Abbas often sends his own merchants through the world to look for new goods to buy or sell. This inadvertently gives the Bazaar yet another valuable commodity: information. A local proverb in Quaysarria says, "If someone in the world whispers a secret, someone in Quaysarria knows what it is."

Shadhalia: (Large town, pop. 7,220) A veritable ghost town for much of the year, this desert port city comes to life at the start of spring, when a festival known as the Seven Days of Gold takes place. During this time, merchants and ships from around the world come to Shadhalia, bringing all their goods with them. The seven-day festival is perhaps the largest market in the world, allowing goods from every corner to be freely bought and sold. Anyone in the world may participate in this market festival; however, all merchants must pay a festival tax in order to enter the city, making the Bazaar handsomely rich for seven days. Besides its share of merchants, the festival also attracts plenty of rogues and pirates, who lurk outside the city … and who often sell the ill-gotten goods stolen from these merchants back to the Emir for a finder's fee.

Naafi al-Yrka: (Small town, pop. 2,390) Like Shadhalia, the outpost of Naafi al-Yrka remains deserted throughout most of the year. The town essentially acts as the warehouse for the Bazaar of Quaysarria, and is only visited by the traveling city when its supplies run low. Despite the vast amount of goods and treasures contained within this city, it remains isolated, and is rarely attacked by bandits or thieves. This is because Naafi al-Yrka has two prominent, powerful guardians: massive copper dragons, known only as Bone and Battle. According to local legend, the dragons guarded the city long before the Bazaar began to meander through the Lostlands, and will continue to do so long after the Age of Man has ended. More pragmatic souls believe that the Emir struck a deal with the two mercenary dragons to guard his city—but what the actual terms of such a deal might be, no one knows for sure.

Rhaz al-Khali, City of

Overlord of the Undying City, the Immortal Shahriyel Jhek

Population: 96,253 (humans 35%, orcs 20%, half-orcs 16%, half-fiends 15%, monstrous humanoids 9%, dwarves 4%, elves 1%)

Resources: Slaves, black market trade

Capital: —

Rumors about the fabled lost city of Rhaz al-Khali are commonly found throughout the rest of the world. Although it seems that no two are alike, they all describe the city as a haven for the lost and the damned, a place for those with no future to find themselves and be born anew. Although the journey is said to be arduous and the city quite dangerous, redemption and hope can be found behind the metal walls of Rhaz al-Khali, should one be desperate enough to seek it.

Nothing could be further from the truth.

True, the city is vile and dangerous. But hope cannot be found in this desolate place. Rhaz al-Khali is ruled by the mad lich lord Shahriyel Jhek, who fervently believes that the end of the world is imminent … and that the end shall begin at the gates of Rhaz al-Khali. The only things to be found in the ruins of this once-proud city are fear, emptiness, and despair.

Once one of the most powerful cities of the old Khonsurian Empire, Rhaz al-Khali began its fall long before the rest of the Empire collapsed. The city was known as a conclave for some of the greatest wizards in recorded history. However, during some explorations into the darker aspects of magic, a portal to a hellish dimension opened up in the heart of the city, instantly transforming Rhaz al-Khali into a vile breeding ground for demonic creatures. The city was quickly abandoned, and chaos reigned supreme in its ruins, with fiends and the undead transforming the streets into a never-ending bloodbath.

Order was restored, however, with the arrival of Shahriyel Jhek some hundred-odd years ago. A fearsome lich with formidable power, Jhek instantly assumed control of the chaotic ruins, slaying all those who dared to challenge his power, and forcing the remaining fiends and half-fiends in the city to obey his every command.

Since Jhek's arrival, the lich has bent the will of every creature in Rhaz al-Khali to serve his obsession: an obscure, ancient prophecy called the *Riddle of Darkest Qartepre*. This prophecy speaks of the end of the world, and of the transformation of mortal existence into one of eternal torment. Because the few known travelers ever to return from Rhaz al-Khali during Shahriyel Jhek's reign have all gone mad, no one knows for certain what evil lurks beyond the city's iron walls. However, rumor has it that over a thousand souls a day are sacrificed to dark, ancient gods by the hand of Jhek himself, and the constant flow of slaves into the city from Djeser al-Maqqara lends some credibility to this whispered claim.

With a distinct absence of merchant caravans coming from Rhaz al-Khali (apart from the slavers of Djeser al-Maqqara), it is unclear how the city manages to exist, let alone thrive. Occasionally, an artifact from Rhaz al-Khali finds its way to black markets around the world, but apart from these items, nothing is known to ever leave the wicked place. Riders from the Vermilion Tribes have reported seeing strange airships sailing toward the city on moonless nights, leaving some sages to believe that the city in fact acts on behalf of a far greater power. Who or what that power may be, no one can say with authority.

The Kingdom of Taijin

His Majesty and Overlord of the Mountain Peaks, King Ogamito X

Population: 106,816 (dwarves 80%, gnomes 10%, humans 6%, other 4%)

Resources: Iron, copper, wrought metals, precious gemstones

Capital: Raiju Khor

Although little more than a few loosely connected dwarven cities, the Kingdom of Taijin has been a growing power in the Lostlands over the past few decades. Taijin sits in the Herrenia Mountains, just north of Morena Nova, which until recent years was its only significant trading partner. All of the kingdom's cities lie far beneath the mountains in the World Below, surrounded by endless caverns and rich mines. The dwarves of Taijin successfully exterminated all of the kobolds, goblins, and other evil humanoids that once laired in the mountains in a massive, genocidal war some centuries ago called the Seppuku Cleansing. As a result of this, Taijin and the mountains surrounding the kingdom are perhaps the safest region in all of the Lostlands—a fact now being realized by enterprising merchants all over Áerth.

Taijin is currently ruled by King Ogamito X, who has led the kingdom to its newfound prosperity. There are thirteen main Merchant Houses that govern Taijin on a day-to-day basis, but the King of Taijin holds ultimate authority over the nation. For the past eight hundred years, the largest of the Merchant Houses—the Bakar Deyoshi—held sway over the secluded underground nation, keeping it isolated from the rest of the world and limiting its trade opportunities to just the kingdom of Morena Nova. King Ogamito, however, is

from the younger upstart Merchant House of the Bakar Kigahara, and surprised many traditionalists in the Houses by daring to extend Taijin's reach. Over the past forty years, King Ogamito has made key alliances with Gadjerria, Quaysarria, the Vermilion Tribes, and Xa Deshret, greatly expanding the role of the dwarves in the Lostlands.

Ogamito also in recent years has begun to invite royalty and rich merchants from the Northlands and Southlands to be his royal guests in the palaces of Mount Raiju. Although invitations were politely declined at first, more and more important visitors from the far-flung corners of Áereth have made their way to the Herrenia Mountains, and have been suitably impressed by the grand kingdom lying beneath its peaks. While this has led to a surge of economic and political power for Ogamito and his kingdom, this influx of foreigners into Taijin has caused unrest amongst some of the rival Merchant Houses. Already, crime and violence have escalated to levels not known since the Seppuku Cleansing. Additionally, the influx of foreigners has led to sightings of goblins and trolls in the Herrenian Mountains, leading some to believe that retribution for the Seppuku Cleansing may not be far off.

Taijin is only reachable by a single path—an old imperial road leading from Morena Nova. This broken road winds slowly from Bourdonnais up to the dwarven city of Cyaxar, which acts as the primary gateway to the kingdom. The upper reaches of the road are quite treacherous, and either a ranger or a dwarven guide from Taijin is necessary to traverse the icy, serpentine pathway. Despite the difficulties in reaching this dwarven kingdom, Taijin's peaceful nature and even-handed temperament make it the most sought-after trade partner in the Lostlands. Taijin's dealings with the traveling bazaars of Quaysarria and Gadjarria provide the kingdom with a wealth of trade goods available for sale. Also, the available mines and skilled artisans within Taijin itself make the kingdom a formidable weapons supplier, capable of outfitting a small army in short notice. Although all these items are available—some in copious amounts—from other places in the Lostlands, the dwarven kingdom is a relative safe haven compared to the rest of the savage lands.

The underground roads between the cities of Taijin can be a deathtrap for new visitors to the dwarven kingdom. Huge carts pulled by trained bulettes sprint madly through the labyrinthine corridors that connect the cities, and messengers donning *boots of speed* hurtle relentlessly from merchant house to merchant house, knocking over unwary travelers as they make their way through the maze of passageways. Goods and information move quite quickly between the cities of Taijin.

While the dwarves of Taijin are physically similar to their cousins in the Northlands and the Southlands, the similarities end there. The dwarves of Taijin have a fondness for fine clothing and are notoriously well groomed, keeping their beards cropped closely at all times. They love art and literature. They also enjoy speeches and debate, and dwarven orators are held in high esteem in Taijin. They deplore physical combat and hate violence; however, they remain formidable fighters and are still capable of attacking their foes with great ferocity and cunning.

Raiju Khor: (Large city, pop. 44,112) The city of Raiju Khor is built in the heart of a volcano, silenced ages ago by the sorcery of powerful dwarven magicians. The magic that keeps the fiery magma at bay pulses inside thirteen magic seals—one located in the heart of each Merchant House. Should the seals ever be broken, the volcano might surge back to life in a fiery inferno. Fortunately, the mightiest warrior from each Merchant House stands watch over each seal day and night, ever vigilant to protect both seal and city.

The main buildings in the underground city are all mighty natural towers, carved with great care out of the stalactites and stalagmites that have formed over the millennia. Each of these towers is decorated with certain gemstones, to indicate loyalties to certain Merchant Houses. A tower loyal to the ruling Merchant House of Bakar Kigahara, for example, would be decorated with diamonds and gold. The only exception to this is the Palace of Raiju Khor, which is decorated with the bones of the kingdom's fallen foes. The natural rock walls of the palace are no longer visible, as the bleached white bones of dragons, giants, goblins, trolls, and countless other evil monstrosities line the roads that lead to its gates and completely blanket the palace itself.

Amytis: (Small city, pop. 20,777) Amytis is a city held more in esteem for its proximity to deep mines rather than for its heritage. Some centuries ago, Amytis was known as Jarlok, the Goblin City, but the original goblin denizens were wiped away during the Seppuku Cleansing. Although the dwarven conquerors of Amytis gave their conquest a new name and purged all traces of its original inhabitants, it is said that the foul stench of goblin blood still fills the air, and goblin ghosts continue to haunt the city. The dwarves of Taijin care little for the city itself; however, pragmatists that they are, they still care deeply for the vast silver and copper mines that run deep beneath it. Most of Amytis is a transient population, seeking to make quick money from the mines, then leaving the tainted city as fast as possible.

Cyaxar: (Small city, pop. 18,954) Cyaxar is split in two by a small but powerful underground river, which leads directly into the Empyrean Ocean. Although infrequently used by merchants, the river acts as a passageway for merfolk, aquatic elves, and a small number of other intelligent creatures that live in the depths beneath the sea, who bring their underwater bounty from the ocean floor to trade with the dwarves. Many extraordinary treasures from beneath the sea can be found in the markets of Cyaxar.

Tharnaka

The Exalted of the Isles, King Cacambo

Population: ??? (white apes 90%, humans 6%, other 4%)

Resources: Foodstuffs, perfumes, jewelry, spices

Capital: Jomoa

Little is known of the volcanic Isles of Tharnaka. Located near the Shattered Straits off of the coast of Xa Deshret, the Isles are surrounded by a maze of harsh barrier reefs, making them extremely difficult to reach.

It is believed that the Isles are predominantly inhabited—and ruled—by large, intelligent apes, ones standing nearly ten feet tall and covered in white fur. The reason this is conjecture instead of fact is because few living souls have ever seen these apes, and those who have done so have either been sworn to secrecy, or been somehow affected by sorcery to forget what they have seen.

Traveling to the Isles of Tharnaka is known to be a fool's errand; not only are the best and bravest sea captains in the world required to navigate through the Shattered Straits, those who arrive at the Isles seem to vanish like ghosts, never to return to their homelands. No, the only known travelers to Tharnaka are merchants and sea captains, who receive handwritten, cordial invitations from the king. These invitations are delived by blind human eunuchs, who dress in black from head to toe and are the only known emissaries of the Isles.

What is actually on the Isles, no one can say with any authority. Rumor has it that the blind eunuchs also act as escorts to their invited guests once they reach the mysterious islands, limiting what can and cannot been seen, and where they can travel in the cities. However, what comes from the Isles is certainly known, and is certainly remarkable. Colorful silks, exotic perfumes, intricate trinkets and the like flow forth from Tharnaka like water, making the invitations to the Isles quite coveted by powerful merchants. Many rich nobles regard imports from Tharnaka as a mark of sophistication, making the trade goods highly desired … and very expensive.

The largest of the Isles is believed to be uninhabited. That is because it is also a massive volcano, one that erupts with fearsome power every few years. The force of these eruptions can be felt all the way in Xa Deshret. Caves beneath the volcano are said to lead to the World Below and a renegade drow kingdom—but like the rest of the Isles, the truth behind such stories is shrouded in mystery.

Jomoa: (Large city, pop. ???) The few legends known of the capital of Jomoa indicate that it is a city that sits next to a small, dormant volcano. The stone road that leads from its seaside docks to the city gates is lined with thousands upon thousands of human bones—supposedly, the remains of unwanted intruders who sought entrance to the city.

In the center of Jomoa is a silver throne, upon which the mighty King of Tharnaka sits when matters of state must be attended. The throne, however, is said to be alive—whenever a King of Tharnaka dies, his soul enters the throne and becomes one with the artifact, joining the souls of the hundreds of kings who passed on before him. The throne of Tharnaka acts as an advisor to the living kings of the land, and is said to be one of the wisest repositories of knowledge in the Known Realms.

Huatalo: (Large city, pop. ????) The city of Huatalo produces most of the wondrous foods, grains, and spices that come from Tharnaka. However, the city sits atop one of the dormant volcanoes of the Isles, making the origin of all of these bountiful goods a curious riddle. One of the few clues to this riddle are three golden archways that lie somewhere in a maze of tunnels beneath the city. These archways—referred to as the "Tomorrow Portals" by a few of the ancient texts about Tharnaka—are said to lead to other places. Perhaps they lead to the true source of Tharnaka's bountiful resources.

Huatalo is also home to the legendary White Oracle—a blind but powerful white ape thought to be well over a thousand years old. Although the Oracle rarely speaks, and usually remains far from public sight inside a building known as the Stone Citadel, he reputedly is able to discern the true meaning of any prophecy. Should one speak the words of a prophet to the White Oracle, the ancient ape instantly is able to reply with the true meaning of those words. Because of this, the apes of Tharnaka keep the Oracle well hidden, even more so than their usual treasures … but it is said that for the right price, one can obtain an audience with the Oracle.

Cunegonde: (Large city, pop. ???) Perhaps the most mysterious of the cities on the Tharnaka Isles, Cunegonde is said to be the birthplace of a long-forgotten dragon god. The legends of Cunegonde say that it is a city that cannot be traveled to by any road, and that its walls are made of sorcery. What this exactly means is not known, but one truth that is certain about this legendary city is that it contains gold beyond imagination. On rare occasions, gold coins the size of a human fist and stamped with the visage of the crown ape make their way to the outside world—these coins are Tharnakan currency, and supposedly flow from the coffers of Cunegonde like water from the mightiest waterfall. Whether part of a vast, unending mine or the spoils of the dragon god's treasure horde, no one can say. However, it is undisputed that Cunegonde is home to treasure beyond imagination, and its location is Tharnaka's most tightly guarded of its many secrets.

The Vermilion Tribes

Master of the Dragonfire, Malkhaine Svyato

Population: 384,900 (wild elves 77%, half-elves 10%, humans 6%, gnomes 4%, halflings 3%)

Resources: Timber, foodstuffs, trade goods

Capital: Goryati

The Vermilion Tribes are a loose confederation of nomadic warrior elves that claim the harsh Vermilion Steppes as their homeland. For the past several centuries, there have been anywhere from three to eight tribes, each ruled by a chieftain or khaine. The most powerful of the khaines, known as the malkhaine, is chosen in a blood duel between the khaines of all the Tribes. A new malkhaine is chosen whenever the previous one dies. Fighting and battles between the tribes is commonplace; however, it is the malkhaine who prevents these battles from turning into full-blown tribal wars, and leads the united Vermilion Tribes to greater glory against their other enemies in the Lostlands.

The Tribes are comprised predominantly of wild elves, born to hunt and to fight. There is no distinction in tribal society between males and females, and both have equal rank. Nine out of ten elves that are born in the Tribes become part of the fighting hordes. Tribal warriors are legendary masters of the longbow, and are also masters of riding a creature known as the shadroquus, a strange hybrid of horse and blue dragon. Some of the khaines are known to ride on the backs of red dragons as well.

All warriors hold themselves to a strict code of honor, though this unfortunately means little to their enemies. Respect and honor is held only for other tribesmen, and for the battles between the tribes. This combination makes the hordes of the Vermilion Tribes one of the most feared fighting forces in the entire world—disciplined, fearless, and able to strike with deadly force at lightning speed. Since the Tribes have very little resources to call their own, it is up to these warriors to raid the surrounding regions of the Lostlands for fortune and glory, and to demand tribute from their fallen enemies.

The remainder of the Tribes consists of the farmers, the tradesmen, and others who maintain the home cities of the tribes. These individuals tend to be those who are too old or too frail for battle. Also, those not of pure elven blood—mostly humans desiring to seek fellowship with the Tribes—serve and live in the Cities as well. These tribesmen are the few who actually live in the cities on a permanent basis. For the most part, the warrior hordes roam the Vermilion Steppes and the surrounding regions of the Lostlands, and only return to the home cities of their tribes for festivals or after long military campaigns.

At the present time, Malkhaine Svyato is the youngest and possibly the strongest malkhaine to rule over all the Vermilion Tribes in nearly five hundred years. He also possesses a perspective that most of his fellow Tribesmen do not—his father was a merchant, and traveled to the faraway kingdom of Crieste. As such, Syvato is aware of the world beyond the Vermilion Steppes, and believes that it is his destiny to spread the influence of the Tribes beyond their traditional homeland.

Goryati: (Large city, pop. 15,395) Built by the shores of the Ctesiphal River, this northernmost permanent city of the Vermilion Tribes is renowned for its blood-red walls and the three silver spires that rise from its center. Goryati is home to the Ashika Tribe, which is the birthplace of Malkhaine Svyato. Because of this, the Ashika currently enjoy the most prestige and honor amongst all the Vermilion Tribes.

Goryati is the only city amongst the Vermilion Tribes that possesses both ships and sailors. Few sailors from the Northlands or Southlands dare to travel too far up the Ctesiphal River, despite the possible trade advantages—the reaver ships of the Ashika are feared more than most pirates. These reavers frequently travel down along the coast of the Empyrean Ocean in search of prey; the Tharnaka Isles are a constant target of their ravenous nature. Members of the Ashika Tribe are trained from an early age to be equally adept in combat on land and at sea; should the need arise, they are comfortable serving whenever they are needed.

Tanghali: (Large town, pop. 9,438) This walled city sits atop a mighty cliff that overlooks the western expanses of the Vermilion Steppes. Home to the Taira Tribe, Tanghali is the oldest of the home cities of the Vermilion Tribes. It is thought to be built over the ruins of a Khonsurian palace, but no trace of this ruin has ever been found by those who have explored the catacombs of the city. The walls of Tanghali bear the scars of many pteral attacks; its proximity to the Blood Hives of Sahaptia makes the city the first line of defense against the swarms of frenzied wasp-men.

Tanghali is ruled by the Khaine Genmei, daughter of the previous Malkhaine. Although unusual in that she is far more skilled with a spear instead of a bow (and rides a blue

dragon into battle instead of a red), her prowess as a leader and a warrior is renowned throughout the Vermilion Tribes. Within the Tribes, many believe that she would be a far better Malkhaine than Svyato, as Genmei is considered more traditional and loyal to the old ways of life. It is thought that a blood duel between Genmei and Syvato is inevitable; however, for the time being, she remains steadfastly loyal to her leader.

Qazan: (Large town, pop. 7,844) Partially hidden by a small forest near the center of the Steppes, Qazan is a far less imposing city than its neighbors, with walls of crude rock and mud instead of marble and gold. However, the city, which is also home to the Huligai Tribe, is perhaps the most important to the Vermilion Tribes, both for the surrounding forests that provide timber for their ships (and the resulting export) and for the farmlands near the city. Most of the artisans of the Vermilion Tribes make residence in Qazan. Although the proud Vermilion warriors are loathe to admit it, the commerce created by Qazan and its labor allows the traditions of the Tribes to exist.

Unusual in that it accepts warriors not of wild elf blood into its ranks, the Huligai Tribe has become even more unusual in recent years with the ascension of a human Khaine—Sir Gyles Durran, formerly a knight in service to the crown of Crieste. The reasons for his exile are unknown, but he has earned the undying loyalty of his new tribesmen. He is considered a brilliant and ruthless tactician, as well as Syvato's closest advisor.

Jhavitri: (Large town, pop. 5,361) Resting on the border between the Ghetrian Desert and the Vermilion Steppes, Jhavitri is a harsh and grim place. Part of the city is underground, buried beneath the dusty hills to shield it from sandstorms and the constant, oppressive heat. Jhavitri is the main area where the Vermilion Tribes breed and raise their shadroquus mounts. It is also rumored that they breed dragons here as well.

The Jhokyu Tribe makes their ancestral home in Jhavitri. They are lead by Khaine Morgyat, a venerable and fierce warrior who has ruled over his tribe for nearly a thousand years with an iron hand. Some say that he is in fact even older than this, and was once a servant to Pharitis IV, one of the last Sphinx Emperors. Despite his advanced age, Khaine Morgyat is still said to be one of the best warriors in the Vermilion Tribes, and is considered to be one of the best teachers of the arts of fighting that has ever lived.

Members of the Jhokyu Tribe tend to have darker skin than their brothers and sisters in the other Vermilion Tribes. Because they make most of their raiding forays into the desert, they also tend to be nocturnal, and are excellent night-fighters. Additionally, most of the skilled assassins in the Vermilion Tribes begin their training among the warriors of the Jhokyu.

Vivekanika

Ruler Unknown

Population: 1,000 (golems 99%, unknown 1%)

Resources: Metal ore

Capital: —

It is quite possible that not a single living soul resides inside this grand, cryptic city. Although temples, palaces, and many other majestic buildings can be found within the walls of Vivekanika, they are all uninhabited, and have apparently been this way for thousands of years. That is not to say, however, that this large walled city is abandoned. Methodically plodding through the streets of Vivekanika are hundreds of golems, each laboring at responsibilities assigned to them long, long ago. While there are no signs of their masters, the golems of Vivekanika still toil relentlessly, showing no indication that their tasks will ever end … or, for that matter, what those tasks might be. There are no known pacts or treaties between Vivekanika and any other nation on Áereth; anyone who has allied themselves with the golem city-state has certainly done so in a clandestine manner.

Vivekanika is an isolated city, located near the southernmost point of the Lostlands—a small peninsula called the Chimera's Eye. Two dormant volcanoes flank the city, effectively shielding it from most raiders and unwanted visitors. Twin stone roads lead from the city and wind up past the volcanoes to the blazing Sands of Shanbilai. It is believed that these roads once led to ancient cities; however, all they lead to now is an arid wasteland. If any cities once existed where these twin roads now abruptly end, their ruins are buried far beneath the desert sands.

Still, three times a year, a cadre of iron golems drag massive amounts of finished metals—iron and steel plates, refined adamantine ore, and the like—out along these roads, and inexplicably leave them out among the blowing sands when the roads end. For many, many years, intrepid merchants simply waited for the golems to make their regular trek out into the middle of the Sands of Shanbilai, and promptly took the abandoned metals to marketplaces and bazaars all over the world. However, with the recent influx of demonic fiends into the wastelands of the Sands, the metals usually remain abandoned, with the harsh desert conditions either reducing the materials to blemished, rusted sheets of junk, or burying them far below anonymous dunes. For a daring adventurer, though, the opportunity still exists to grab unwanted treasures from the desert on a regular basis.

Despite the presence of so many golems in Vivekanika, these hulking monstrosities usually leave visitors to the city alone. It is possible to wander throughout the many abandoned buildings in the strange city for weeks on end and never once be disturbed—let alone noticed—by a single golem. This is an uneasy tranquility, though, as the slightest

random disturbance in the city can provoke golems to attack intruders. There is no rhyme nor reason to this—destroying a building may evoke no reaction from the golems, while plucking a single flower from a ruin make provoke a lethal response from a score of clay giants. The capricious nature of the golems is one main reason that most wise wanderers steer clear of this city.

One thing that has never properly been determined is where the metals emerging from Vivekanika actually originate. Several large expeditions have attempted to fully explore the city to find where the metals come from, but all have failed. It is thought that huge mines must lie somewhere beneath the city, but so far the locations of these mines remains a mystery.

Xa Deshret
(New Khonsuria)

Steward of the Sphinx Emperor, Orkhon II

Population: 104,990 (nalvor 75%, humans 10%, halflings 6%, gnomes 4%, half-elves 3%, other 2%)

Resources: Copper, silver, spices, foodstuffs

Capital: Sakhaen Tair

From the ashes of the fallen Khonsurian Empire came the land of Xa Deshret, "the waiting kingdom." The ruined cities built by the slaves of the Sphinx Empire are still filled with the descendants of their most loyal servants: the nalvor. While the deadly sands of the Ghetrian Desert swirl about this desolate region, the nalvor continue to maintain the ancient cities and buildings exactly as their former Sphinx masters once left them. Xa Deshret has little interest in the rest of the world, and apart from the infrequent merchant caravans that are sent north for necessary supplies, it has relatively little contact with the rest of the world, including the other kingdoms of the Lostlands.

The nalvor are a quiet, patient people, content to exist in isolation from the rest of the known world. However, this does not mean that they are gentle, as would-be invaders have learned to regret over the centuries. They believe themselves to merely be the temporary caretakers of the Empire, awaiting the return of their Sphinx masters. Anyone or anything that could potentially threaten the Empire—or the return of the Sphinx—is a threat that must be dealt with swiftly and without mercy. The nalvor were once the most feared foot soldiers of the Armies of the Sphinx; their descendents are equally skilled with both bow and blade, and equally as ruthless on the battlefield.

Xa Deshret is ruled over by a democratically elected Senate, which consists of one hundred members elected from the

various communities of the desert nation. These elections occur every three years, on the eve of the Thirdstar festival. Whenever a new Senate is elected, its members choose a new steward, who serves as acting regent of Xa Deshret in the absence of the Sphinx Emperors. The Senate—under the guidance of its Steward—oversees all of the laws and the functions of the kingdom, ranging from the most trivial matter to the most important.

Despite this power, the spectre of the old Sphinx Emperors looms ominously over the shoulder of the Senate. Before the Senate commits to any decision, they always must first determine if their decision would have been acceptable to their former masters. This requires poring through the texts of the Libraries of Zadjem for precedents and interpretations of centuries-old law, a task that can often cripple the entire nation for the most trivial of reasons.

All of the efforts of the nalvor for the past several centuries revolve around a single, unyielding belief: Their departed Sphinx Emperors are about to return, and the Khonsurian Empire will return to its former glory upon this return. This belief has led the nalvor to merely maintain Xa Deshret as it once was, rather than moving on and leading their nation into the present. Much of this obstinate belief is due to the nalvor's collective refusal to believe that their masters would ever desert them; however, this is also due to a prophecy known as the Shadhalian Codex, which speaks cryptically of a "return of ancient kings."

There are three main castes in the society of Xa Deshret, which are remnants from the slave era of the nalvor: the

Hand, the Fist, and the Word. The Hand, which represents the majority of Xa Deshret's populace, are the workers—they work the farmlands, work the mines, and tend to the more brutal physical tasks that comprise the lifeblood of Xa Deshret, just as their ancestors once did.

The Fist are the warriors of Xa Deshret. Although not large in number, these warriors are ruthlessly efficient, and have been known to defeat hosts triple their size upon the field of battle. Perhaps the most unusual aspect of these warriors is that they have no conventional generals or leaders—the warrior caste is trained instead to obey the rules of war taught in a famous Khonsurian text, *Seven Songs of Blood and Honor*. Warriors fight in tight groups called tyraks, and these tyraks are taught to read and react to events occurring on the battlefield as one. They never retreat or surrender, making them a difficult foe to defeat in combat.

The Word are the scholars, merchants, and learned tradesmen of Xa Deshret. The leading members of the Word caste also usually comprise the members of the Senate. The Word are easily identified by the silk azure robes they wear, and apart from accompanying merchant caravans to foreign lands, they almost never leave the confines of their cities.

Sakhaen Tair: (Large city, pop. 31,520) The capital of Sakhaen Tair is built near a vast canyon called Nhalo's Scythe, through which the mighty Akhneten River flows. An ingenious system of mystical aqueducts diverts sections of the river upward into the city, providing it with plentiful water for both the city and its surrounding farmlands.

Orkhon II is steward of Xa Deshret and has ruled it well for nearly three decades, protecting the remains of the Sphinx Empire from the savagery of the Vermilion Tribes and the ever-growing menace of Gorhgijesk and Rhaz al-Khali. While he respects the old ways and beliefs of the nalvor, he privately does not believe that the Sphinx Emperors will ever return to his homeland. With the dwindling of Xa Deshret's current resources, and with growing interest by foreign traders in his kingdom, Orkhon II is struggling to move Xa Deshret into a position of strength in the world. He is a savvy and intelligent politician, but knows that to push a position of progress too hard with his countrymen is to risk civil war.

Sakhaen Tair is also home to several tombs of the ancient Sphinx Emperors. The perimeter of the city is surrounded by a circle of twelve pyramids, each of which is gilded in gold. These pyramids, commonly known as the First Twelve, are the final resting places of all the Khonsurian Emperors from the First Dynasty. Although looted centuries ago by daring bandits, the remains of these Emperors still rest within the pyramid walls. Some say that the Emperors never truly died, but instead exist in undead torment. They wander restlessly between the pyramids, searching for peace in the underground catacombs that connect all of their tombs….

Rheksus: (Small city, pop. 16,745) Further down the Akhneten River is the city of Rheksus, located at the feet of the Mountains of the Fifth Prince. Rheksus is home to many silver and copper mines, which worm their way deep below the mountains. It is also as a center for Xa Deshret's trade routes, with an impressive port that acts as a central link between the Lostlands and the civilized world.

Because there are few nalvor miners to extensively work the many older Khonsurian mines, the hills surrounding the city are rife with bandits and thieves seeking to exploit the available riches. Many of the bandits are drow and derro from the Devil's Cauldron. The imperial roads outside of Rheksus are extremely dangerous, making passage by boat the only safe way in and out of the city.

Zadjem: (Small city, pop. 6,844) Oldest of the cities of Xa Deshret, Zadjem is located near the oases of Sheshat-Semet. It hosts the legendary Imperial Libraries of Khonsuria, which are reputed to contain the rarest and oldest books in the world, some of which date back to the Age of Dragons. Scholars and sages from the far reaches of the world have made pilgrimages to Zadjem in search of the Libraries and the forgotten secrets held within their walls. It is unknown if these pilgrims ever find what they seek, though—the Libraries are reportedly guarded by a mysterious iron creature known only as the Keeper, and those who enter the ancient building never come out again.

In addition to the Libraries, Zadjem is known for its production of exotic spices and herbs. These spices, which are said to be created with arcane influences, are much sought after in the high courts of the Northlands by rich nobility. Some are also reputed to be highly addictive, and have in recent times begun to make the coffers of Xa Deshret full of gold coins again.

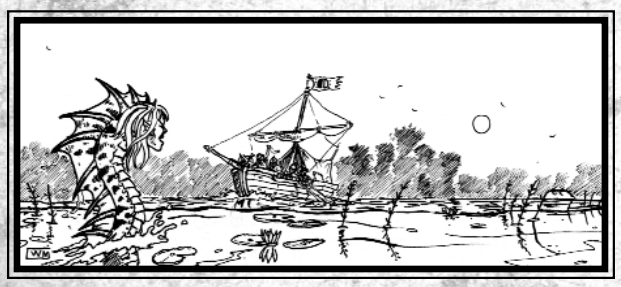
Chapter 4
Geographic Features

The Known Realms of Áereth are so vast and diverse that a dozen tomes could be penned solely on the subject of geography. People and beasts alike bear the mark of their homeland; fierce and inhospitable lands breed savage tribes and terrible monsters, while tamed lands produce domesticated men and animals. As the sages have often averred, to know the land is to know its inhabitants.

Of Geographical Taxonomy and Nomenclature: The sights and landmarks of the Northlands have been named a dozen times in a dozen different tongues, beginning with the first elf and dwarf scouts, and then the wandering tribes of man, and their profusion of kingdoms, nations, and empires.

Where the elder races still reign, the forests, mountains, and bodies of water bear their original names. Where humans have made inroads, the landmarks bear their stamp, and oft times succeeding empires of humans rename the landmarks of their fathers. The result is a profusion of names—elven, dwarven, human, and others—scattered across the globe like fistfuls of coins.

What names the mighty wyrms or sphinxes might have given to the trackless expanses—and what power those truenames might still hold over the land—is the exclusive domain of sages and madmen.



Oceans, Seas, Lakes, and Lesser Notable Bodies of Water

Akhneten River: This majestic river is the gateway to the Lostlands. Reaching out almost two thousand miles from the Warriors' Gate, the Akhneten cuts deeply into the heart of the Ghetrian Desert, where it finally splits into the Twins. Both deep and wide, the river is easily able to support the largest of ocean-faring merchant ships, making it the primary lifeline between the Lostlands and the rest of the world.

Archen River: Fed by Dundrae Lake, the Archen connects much of northern Crieste and is congested with river traffic for most of the year. River pirates plague the rural stretches, masquerading as legitimate traders or boarding merchant barges on moonless nights.

Ayalan Sea: The cerulean waters of the Ayalan Sea are difficult to reach, requiring sea captains to navigate south of Zimala or through the dangers of Ssorlang, but legends of the god-touched sea have endured throughout the ages. The baleen whales of the Ayalan Sea are said to be celestial-blooded, granting good fortune to those who catch a glimpse of their white skin.

Ayashtica River: Fed by countless rivers and streams through the Azcatlepi Jungle of northern Zimala, the Ayashtica is one of Áereth's largest watercourses. The central river ranges from half a mile to several in width, making it navigable to ships that wish to travel inland on the Island of Obsidian. Thinking to avoid the hazards of the jungle, most travelers find themselves beset by river monsters far more dangerous. Water naga ambushes, still defending their ancient home, are almost expected the farther inland one travels. For this reason, riverboat captains often bring valuables in hopes of placating the intelligent serpents.

Bay of Asur: Fed by mighty glaciers, the Bay of Asur is

home to legendary white icebergs throughout the year. Most drift southward, slowly melting on their course, but some remain, caught in the mysterious eddies and currents of the bay. The most ancient of these have existed for centuries, and serve as floating, hoary lairs to white dragons and worse.

Bay of Valfors: Located north of the Kingdom of Morrain, Valfors Bay is known by local fisherman as the Bay of Storms. Regularly beset by terrible gales, Valfors Bay has claimed more than its share of lives with storms strong enough to sink the mightiest merchant ship. Despite this fact, the Bay of Valfors is also home to some of the richest fishing waters in the North, and the promise of wealth has lured many a sailor to his doom.

Blade Reach, the: For as long as the Northlands have known war, the long inlet known as the Blade Reach served as a strategic landmark. Hordes of marauding barbarians, orcs, trolls and goblins have all perished trying to cross the narrow inlet, or fight their way along its rocky beaches. The western shore of the Reach is dotted with towers and strongholds, some dating back thousands of years. While watch fires still burn in many of the citadels, scores have fallen into ruin and are now home to fell beasts and the undead.

Blueblade Lake: Found on the eastern border of the Theocracy, Blueblade Lake is renowned for the nymph making her home beneath the clear waters. Legend holds that the nymph guards an ancient sword of unmatched power, and that the nymph permits worthy warriors to take up the blade in times of dire need.

Chael Lake: Located in the center of the kingdom of Luithea, Chael Lake has long served as a source of food and trade. Before the rise of the Devil Lich, fishermen traded with the elves of the Corsan, but now relations are tense and often end in threats of violence. The north shores, where the lake is fed by the Corsan, are claimed exclusively by the Ashoch elves, who have declared the shores sacred to their people. The elves can often be seen at night, pushing their dead out onto the lake in burning reed skiffs.

Chaelti River: Fed by the frigid waters of Chael Lake, the Chaelti rushes south to join with the Saedre and Kolheim. Though a major waterway for Amin Dor and its neighbors, the river is infested with predatory lizardfolk mounted atop *tocinths*, the giant albino snakes peculiar to the region.

Cipachtli Bay: Named for a mythic crocodile of titanic size, the Cipachtli Bay was once a vast marsh that has since been flooded by the rivers of the Pochectic Mountains. Allegedly ruled by the primordial beast, the Bay is now fed from the east by the jungle rivers and is a popular spawning ground for locathah tribes. Though they seldom attack explorers in their nomadic wanderings, the locathahs are fiercely aggressive when defending Cipachtli Bay.

Empyrean Ocean: The largest body of water in the Known Realms, the Empyrean Ocean divides the eastern continents of the Northlands and the Lostlands from the Southlands. Fearsome storms regularly sweep across the darkened waters, raising waves that can swallow entire galleons in a single crash. Mysterious whirlpools, enormous sea monsters, water drakes, and more have been reported by sailors crossing the deadly ocean.

For much of known history, the Empyrean served as a barrier between the North and South. Only in recent centuries have advancements in sailing and magic made it possible for regular trade to exist between the continents. Even with these advancements, travel across the Empyrean remains an arduous, dangerous journey; of every ten ships that set sail for the Northlands, only seven arrive.

Traders and merchant lords attempt to offset these dangers by traveling in groups of three or more. This has proven effective in warding off pirates, but the ocean's terrible sea monsters have proven adept at striking the single weakest ship in the dead of night.

Some sages aver that Áereth's largest ruins rest somewhere beneath the waters of the Empyrean. While exotic, strange artifacts do occasionally wash ashore on either side of the ocean, the thought of a single continent as large as the Empyrean sinking beneath the waves of the ocean is too much for even madmen to grasp.

Fartrader River: The Fartrader once served as merchants traveling from coastal Arvale, all the way to savage Iderag. With the fall of the Grand Duchy, this supply line has been greatly diminished. Orcish armies have pulled great chains across the Fartrader to seize any boat foolish enough to attempt river passage, and hundreds of goblin archers and scouts guard the banks of the river to discourage portage. A handful of daring smugglers continue to make runs from Cinai to

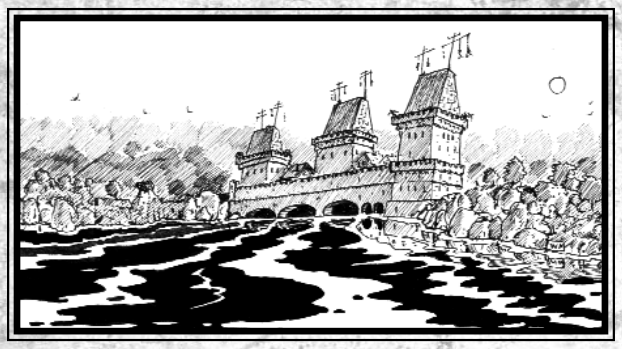
the coast in shallow skiffs, but their numbers grow fewer with each passing day.

High Sea, the: Named for its commanding view of the surrounding hillsides, the High Sea rests inside the blasted crater of a dormant volcano. While not a sea in the true sense, the crater and its lake are nonetheless legendary in proportions. The waters are fed by boiling hot springs and roaring geysers. Drank from their source, the spring waters are said to have mystical properties, but few explorers survive the heat-loving monsters that flock to the steaming waters.

Hoarfrost Bay: Few places in all of Áereth can boast of fouler weather than that of Hoarfrost Bay. Nine months out of the year, the bay is locked in seething plates of ice that shred the hulls of ships like paper toys. Blizzards scour the frigid waters, blinding sailors so that ships run aground, their crews frozen at their stations. The remaining three months of the year, fierce storms batter the coastline with driving rain and hurricane-force winds. The savage weather of the Hoarfrost is matched only by the wealth beneath its waves. The plentiful schools of narwhales, emer fish, and lions of the sea draw fishermen and adventurers to the bay year after year.

Imacuan Sea: The waters of the Imacuan Sea provide access to Northern Xulmec. The city of Halcyon, nestled between the sea and the rest of the Empyrean, offers surcease from the pirates of the Barrier Isles who would otherwise harass Southland-bound vessels and make the Imacuan a more dangerous place. Xulmecs from Athua and Darawan are frequently encountered along the Xulmec coastline.

Ironflow, the: The Ironflow is renowned for the wealth of minerals that are regularly washed down from its high cascades. Explorers report of a citadel of gnomes built over the very river. The citadel's inhabitants attack trespassers with uncharacteristic ferocity, driving away, capturing, or slaying all comers.



Izindol River: The Izindol flows east across the steppes to the city of Stromblaen where it empties into Hoarfrost Bay. The river is constantly plagued by fearsome creatures spawned in the Wastes of Zamon, and by Scourge raiders testing the resolve of the Koranthian people.

Javran Sea: Avoided by most sailors, the dark waters of the Javran Sea are the known demesne of the dreaded krakens. Even the sahuagin are said to pay tribute to these lords of the deep. Consequently, the sea devils are known to raid ships daring to approach the Island of Tarras from the east.

Jester's Tail, the: Named by the Criestine explorer Denys Morcault during his legendary voyages some one hundred years ago, this deep and powerful river flows through the southernmost reaches of the Lostlands. It is the only known passage between the Empyrean Ocean and the Twisted Sea. Evil nymphs and fairies are said to lurk along the shores of the river, luring sailors and other travelers along the river to their doom.

Khiazan River: The Khiazan is a narrow but fast river, which leads from the city of Dupleiux in Morena Nova down to the southern regions of the kingdom and the Empyrean Ocean. Sahuagin raiders often prowl near the mouth of the Khiazan, attacking Morenan merchant ships as they make their way up to the cities.

Kolheim River: The Kolheim River wends its way through the Warlands, feeding Raxem Lake before joining its sisters, the Saedre and Chaelti Rivers. The river's banks run high late into spring, often delaying invasions from competing baronies. "With Kolheim's blessing" is a black prayer commonly uttered by rogues scheming violent plots.

Laeon River: The mighty Laeon takes its name from the unusual profusion of the manticores that make their dens in the gorge walls. The winged terrors display remarkable behavior akin to swarming, working as one to drive away those foolish enough to intrude upon their rocky domain.

Laeysian Sea: The Laeysian Sea is fed on all sides by rivers and connected to the great seas by the Strait of Kamasha and the Texcalapan Strait. It is surprisingly serene for most of the year, but each year monsoons batter the coastline on the western edge for two months.

The deep blue-green waters of the Laeysian are controlled by the drakon of Ssorlang, and any entering ship is likely to encounter a darkvenom captain. At best, foreigners will find their cargo and passage steeply taxed. At worst, the ship will be confiscated and its crew shipped to the Ssorlang slave city of Kanthara. Only the Xulmecs of Darawan—and the mysterious Xanthous from the Shadowed West—are permitted to move across the sea unmolested.

Lake Tlanec: The largest lake in the Southlands, the Tlanec houses the island city of Teotcoatlan, the apex of

Xulmec civilization. Despite the dense human population of this city and the three long causeways spanning the water, Lake Tlanec is vast, teaming with natural flora and fauna and boasting the greatest population of huezcatlas in the Southlands. The Teotcoatlans have domesticated the animal, but countless wild huezcatlas dwell on the banks of the lake.

Lake Tyrgyz: This mystical lake, found in the eastern outskirts of the Valley of Xyr Muthal, measures some ten miles in diameter, and reputedly is as deep as it is wide. The lake is supposedly the source of the Valley's magical power. In addition, the waters of the lake are said to "cure" the undead and bring them back to life.

Leath River: With its headwaters at the spring-fed aquifers of Invergin, the Leath runs south, emptying into Wyrm's Deep. With Invergin's rise as a slaving capital, the Leath has begun to serve a more foul purpose: disposal of the city's dead.

Lirean Sea: Located squarely between the North and Lostlands, the Sea of Lirea is at once the best-mapped sea of the North and its greatest mystery. Legend holds that the sea was once a landmass home to ancient empires of both dwarves and elves. These same myths tell that an ancient apocalypse of unknown origins caused the lands of Lirea to sink beneath the rushing waters of the Empyrean Ocean. Modern scholars doubt the legends of the Lirean—what magic could be strong enough to sink an entire subcontinent?—but weapons and coins of ancient make and unknown metals regularly wash ashore, keeping the rumors alive. Many companies of adventurers have tried to plumb the depths of the Lirean in search of lost treasure hordes; those that return tell of entire cities hidden beneath the waves, defended by fierce squid-men astride mighty dire sharks.

Lost Lake: Lost Lake is named for the many-spired silver citadel that fishermen sometimes see through the mists or on moonlit nights. The mysteries of the fae-haunted palace are closely held by the elves of the Corsan, who refuse to betray its secrets.

Mochitla River: The Mochitla is a river of supernatural significance to the people of the Xulmec, for it defies the natural order, leading to what they believe is a physical gateway to Mictlan, the Land of the Dead. The river is fed by the great Tlata Falls, where the waters of the Imacuan Sea topple over an immense cataract into a wide, misty bay. From this anomalous headwater, the Mochitla—the only saltwater river ever known—flows *inland*, wending its way through the rain forests, hills, and marshes of Xulmec leading into the narrow gorges of the Anduran Mountains. Along this meandering path—from the northern coast of the peninsula to the wetlands to the mountain ravines—mangroves grow in thick clusters along its shores, prompting an assortment of natural and unnatural fauna.

Though sacred to the Xulmecs, the Mochitla is a turbulent and dangerous watercourse not easily navigated. Aquatic creatures normally limited to the oceans and seas find in the Mochitla an opportunity to raid inland. Even the ocean-dwelling sahuagin have been known to seek vengeance against their terrestrial enemies by means of the Mochitla.

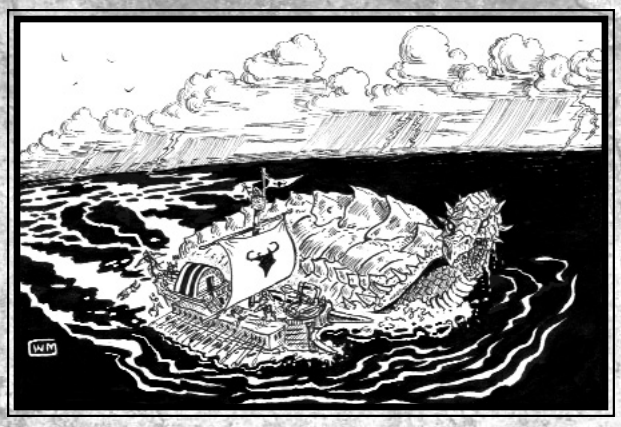
Morro River: Named for the legendary founder of Morrain, it is believed that the icy flow of the Morro conceals the tomb of the First Lord. How such a crypt might be constructed—or how it could be uncovered—remains unknown. The Morro is one of the chief spawning rivers for the emer fish, and fishermen and dire bears alike flock to the river's shores during the annual spawning period.

Quetli River: One of Zimala's fastest-running rivers, the Quetli swells year round from a labyrinth of mountain streams, then divides in the east to join the Ayashtica watercourse and the Chiauhtli Delta. Explorers crossing the river have reported a mysterious cloudiness to the otherwise healthy water, which is usually attributed to the Pochectic Mountains that feed it.

Raxem, the: The Raxem marks the southernmost reaches of the Warlands, where the baronies brush up against the realm of the Mountain of the King. The lake is reputed to conceal ancient vaults beneath its dark waters, but a profusion of giant water serpents and tentacled horrors protect the Raxem's secrets.

Red Death, the: Named for the bodies of Laerdian slaves that wash downstream, the Red Death also serves as a waterway for Scourge forces on the move. Laerdian insurgents constantly watch the river, reporting troop

movements back to their commanders, but just as often the spies wash ashore in Wyrm's Deep, reinforcing the river's wicked reputation.



Roguewash, the: Named for the profusion of bandits and ruffians that make their homes along its muddy banks, the Roguewash serves as the primary means of transportation for those traveling long distances through the Freeholds. More than one outlaw has escaped a mob of pursuers by plunging into the Roguewash, emerging several miles downstream and vanishing into the wilderness.

Saedre River: The Saedre River cuts across the western Northlands, meeting the mighty Chaelti and Kolheim before plunging down the Black Gorge and into the Straits of Ymtal. The river marks the southern boundaries of the Wilds; those venturing across the north shore are courageous, mad, or foolhardy in the extreme.

Scragtooth Strait: Named for the aquatic trolls that raid along the northern coastline, the cold waters of Scragtooth Strait are dangerous for those that linger. Mariners sailing between the Criestine Colonies and their Northland benefactors make the voyage through the strait as quickly as possible. Ships that throw anchor for even a single night along the strait are seldom seen again. According to old seamen's tales, the ships that tarry in the night are swallowed by the night itself; when they are seen again, they are crewed by the undead.

Sea of Desperation: The tempestuous waters of the Sea of Desperation are as mystifying as the landmasses it touches. Nebulous magic as old as dragonkind is believed to exist within this ancient sea—even experienced seamen have found countless anomalies amidst the roiling waves. Historical recordings and ancient Southland pictographs document a time when the sea was half its current size. If the local soothsayers speak the truth, the Sea of Desperation is slowly swallowing the land in a westward advance. The Eztenqui Jungle slowly dissolves even as land rises up amidst the isles of Dujamar. If one sails due west of Tarras, the waters are said to darken to the color of pitch as it nears the outlands of the Shadowed West.

Scar Lake: Scar Lake is the largest artificial body of water in the North. The Scar was quarried for the granite blocks that built the foundation of Azmog-Azmennum, and grew to serve as a highway for drow and orc traders from the Underdeep. When the dark elves attempted a coup against Tarkhan Khurzog, the ogre-mage flooded the quarry, obliterating the drow and forming the reservoir now known as Scar Lake.

Straits of Ymtal: While sheltered from the raging storms that terrorize the Empyrean shipping lanes, the Straits of Ymtal harbor fearsome sea monsters, including the terrible dragon turtle. Sailors have reported finding carcasses of massive sea snakes, some over a mile long, bearing terrible gaping wounds and floating in the Ymtal. It is unknown what sort of monster could be large enough to prey upon this size of sea snake, and if any sailors ever witnessed such a beast, they didn't live to tell the tale.

Surya Sea: Named after an elemental lord referenced in many mythologies, the Surya Sea has always been a place of divine activity. During the Reign of Dragons, mighty wyrms communed with their ocean-dwelling brethren and beseeched the goddess Pelagia to shelter some of their greatest artifacts beneath the waves. During the Reign of Cats and the Reign of Serpents, the naga and sphinx empires are said to have constructed a causeway of monumental size that stretched across the Surya. If those stories can be believed, the bridge was collapsed after an epic war and treasures from both empires sank into the depths. A scattering of islands within the Surya still bear the ruined foundations of an ancient civilization, speaking to the possible truth of such stories.

Whatever legend says of the Surya, its present dangers are indisputable. Odd rock formations beneath the waves have razed the hulls of countless ships, and most attempts to chart these perilous rocks have failed. Even the pirates of the Barrier Isles brave the Surya only when the promise of wealth justifies the risk. Only the adept boatmen of Athua regard the sea with little fear, for their patron god is said to have ascended to divinity within its depths. Additionally, the waters along the eastern rim of Xulmec are the domains of merfolk and tritons, friendly if shy to humanoid sailors who do not bear the trappings of pirates.

Texcalapan Strait: Dividing the Island of Obsidian and the peninsula of Xulmec, the Texcalapan Strait is a wide channel notoriously patrolled by the drakon. Though not strictly within Ssorlang's province, the imperious snake men accost all who brave these waters, demanding steep taxes or slaughter. All Zimalan expeditions launched from the city-states of Xulmec are certain to cross the paths of the drakon pirates in this strait, forcing travelers

to contend with them or pay their unreasonable tolls.

Tlata Falls: The miraculous Tlata Falls defy the natural order, as the waters of the Imacuan flow into a wide basin *below* sea level and form the headwaters of the salty Mochitla River. How the sea does not overtake the surrounding land altogether is not understood even by the Xulmec druids who serve as caretakers to the Falls. Though anomalous to nature, the phenomenon is considered god-touched by the natives, not the ministrations of evil.

Tojan Bay: The icy waters of Tojan Bay were renamed for the curious creatures that appeared there three centuries ago. Tojanidas, outlandish omnivores that legend says came from beyond Áereth's mortal realms, lurk amidst the waves and observe all who sail through them. Peaceable but quite willing to defend themselves, the tojanidas are said to tell many tales to those who speak their elemental language.

Twins, the: Branching off of the Akhneten River near the city of Sakhaen Tair, these twin rivers—also known by the more formal names of the Ctabakul and the Ctesiphal—cut through the blazing Ghetrian Desert like scimitars, providing life to this arid wasteland. The Ctesiphal heads northeast toward the Vermilion Steppes, while the Ctabakul winds its way toward the Herennia Mountains and through Xa Deshret.

Twisted Sea, the: This unexplored sea lies along the southeastern coast of the Lostlands. Few sailors are daring enough to venture out into these black, cruel waters; the last known explorer to challenge the Twisted Sea was Denys Morcault, and his fleet of five ships disappeared forever. The little information that is known about this vast southern sea is that navigation is exceedingly difficult—compasses and sextants give wildly inaccurate readings, and even the constellations seem to shift in the evening sky. Other scattered stories about the Twisted Sea speak of giant krakens and armies of sahuagin; however, these stories are little more than sailors' folklore.

Ukhorvus Nuur: This giant freshwater lake in the southern regions of the Lostlands is the primary source of water for both the Ctabakul River and the Jester's Tail. Also known as the Dark Blue Pearl, this massive lake is more than 70 miles wide, and acts as a welcome source of relief for those crossing this desolate region of Áereth. Raiders from nearby Rhaz al-Khali, though, are said to patrol the banks of Ukhorvus Nuur, searching for unwary travelers to abduct and use in their unholy rituals.

Urdu River: The Urdu has a sinister reputation born from Tiam'tze, the ancient mound-city at its headwaters. Annually, the river's waters flood red, and hundreds of tiny dragonlings are flushed down the rocky gorges. Resembling pale, foot-long worms, the dead dragonlings are quickly devoured by the carrion eaters of the Urdu and Saltwitch. The origins and significance of the dragonlings remains a mystery.

Warriors' Gate: Immense white crystal cliffs completely surround this massive bay, which feeds into the Akhneten River. These gigantic crystals gleam so brightly in the sun that navigating through the bay is a task best left to the most experienced of sailors. Many a shipwreck lies beneath the jagged crystals of the Warriors' Gate. Unfortunately for most merchants and explorers traveling to this part of the world, Warriors' Gate is the primary gateway connecting the Empyrean Ocean to the rest of the Lostlands.

Parts of the crystal cliffs were carved eons ago into an elaborate mural, which depicts the ancient battles between the sphinx and the naga. Lying behind many of the carved figures in the mural are a system of caves and tunnels, rumored to be home to many vile beasts and to many ancient treasures.

Wyrm's Deep: The shoreline of the Wyrm marked the last stand of the defeated armies of Leherti. Unable to retreat, unwilling to let the Scourge pass, the generals rallied their broken forces—reinforced by an alliance of human knights, dwarves, and elves—and held the Wyrm against impossible odds. Today the shallows of Wyrm's Deep are littered with the bones and armor of a thousand soldiers and the hundreds of fell beasts they fought to a stalemate.

Hills, Highlands, and Mountains

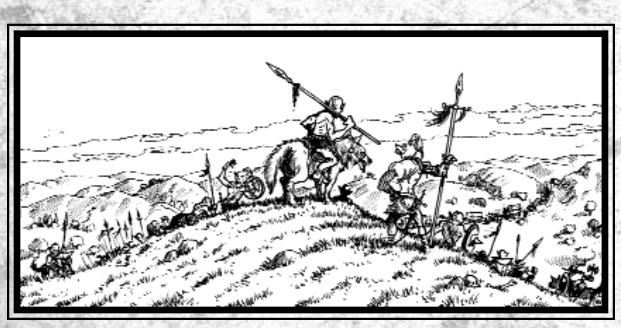
Anduran Mountains: Along with the Atlauhti Mountains, the massive Andurans form a natural barrier that sequesters the peninsula of Xulmec from the rest of the Southlands. These cold highlands further insulate from the unnatural heat of the Eztenqui Jungle and the Plains of Fire to the west. The climate of the Andurans varies drastically throughout its full length, mostly by its diverse elevations. Though the mountains are dominated chiefly by the humans of the Xulmec city-state of Amoya, many other creatures beyond the ken of any humanoid province make the mountains their home. Great eagles and condors lair in the rocky aeries, while rumors exist of white dragons living among the ice-encrusted peaks. From the colder foothills, trolls occasionally venture out in search of human flesh.

Atlauhti Mountains: Also called the Canyon Peaks, the Atlauhti Mountains run east and west, joining the Andurans to separate Xulmec from all other lands. Only Omian Pass allows for easy passage between them. Warmer and lower in elevation than their neighboring mountains, the Atlauhtis are infamous for their sheer and jagged slopes and the volcanic activity common throughout. The city-state of Chuzec owes it very identity to these infernal mounts.

Barrows, the: The Barrows take their name from the scores of cairns and tombs hidden among the rock clefts and ridges. Those returning from expeditions to the Barrows report of a curse that hangs over the area; most adventurers die within six months of returning from these haunted hills.

Blackore Hills: Running along the eastern coast of the Criestine coast, the Blackore hills hide numerous cave complexes, and are notorious for their profusion of goblinoids and their wicked ilk. Merchants passing within sight of the Blackores are advised to be on their guard for worg riders and worse.

Caverns of Menkauhor, the: Located near the northern stretches of the Jester's Tail, these craggy caves serve as lairs for dozens of tribes of kobolds, goblins, and orcs. It is a savage and formidable area—skilled warriors are essential for traversing this region safely. Many of the caverns lead to twisting passages that descend downward for miles, with some of the major caverns acting as gateways that reach down to the World Below.



Cliffs of Dyzan: Locked in the icy reaches of the Northlands, the Cliffs of Dyzan loom above the Bay of Valfors, rising a thousand feet above the crashing surf. Worn smooth by time and cruel northern storms, the red stone cliffs house a number of sea caves at the water's edge. With no beach to moor on, exploration requires maneuvering skiffs into the caves, a dangerous proposition under the best of circumstances.

Dragonspire Mountains: The sharp peaks of the Dragonspires define the eastern border of the Northlands. Drawn like a line between the younger nations of the west, and the antiquated empires of the east, the mountain range is home to ruins older than either civilization. Entire dead cities stand watch atop the high passes, enticing sages and treasure seekers alike.

Dünerain Mountains: Running along the western coast of the Northlands, the Dünerain mountains are home to some of the richest mineral veins in all of the North. Attempts at mining are plagued by evil giants and their kin, who consider the Dünerains to be an ancestral homeland, sacred to their kind. Ruins of giant-sized tombs and palaces bear testament to this theory, as does the profusion of elder dire beasts. It is well known that a red wyrm of unmatched age and ferocity dozes somewhere beneath the Dünerains, guarding a trove of ancient treasure. The dread beast hasn't been seen for a century or more; if it still lives, then it is certain to stir soon.

Fangs, the: Local legend holds that the Fangs are the last remains of a mythic "world dragon." Whether or not the tales hold any truth, it is clear to all that the formations are distinctly *unnatural*. The calcified white spires are home to a multitude of winged beasts that prey upon each other and the deer of the plains.

Frosteye Mountains: The Frosteye Mountains stand stark against the northern reaches of the Dominor range. While not as awesome as the Ul Dominors, their northern latitude ensures that the Frosteyes are encased in ice and whirling snow through out the year. The glaciers atop the Frosteyes fracture into deep crevasses and endless ice mazes. None but the hardiest of monsters make their home amid the icy spires, and woe to any who should cross their frozen paths.

Herennia Mountains: Warring tribes of thunder giants, lightning giants, and trolls inhabit these tall, imposing mountains, which are located in the northern regions of Morena Nova. In recent years, these giants have also constantly raided the human settlements located near the

base of the mountains, turning these villages into ghost towns.

The northernmost parts of the Herennia Mountains serve as the ancestral home of the dwarven kingdom of Taijin, who keep mostly to the tallest of the mountains, Mount Raiju.

Kharan Plateau: Looming high over the western edge of Ssorlang, the Kharan Plateau extends well beyond the western edge of the Known Realms and eventually reaches the Shadowed West. Upon first gaining the highland from the countryside of Ssorlang, one will find a hospitable forest edge offering a panoramic view of the Laeysian Sea. As one ventures further west, a vast, sterile heath presents itself, with fewer traces of life showing with each mile. Only the hardiest of flora endures within the Kharan wasteland, and shelter from its aberrant monsters grows scarce.

Kitezhan Mountains: These tall, inhospitable mountains once served as the stronghold for many powerful clans of marauding orc barbarians. However, during the War of the Greatspear four hundred years ago, the Vermilion Tribes eradicated the Kitezhan Mountains of these barbarian orc clans in a long and bloody siege. Orc ghosts and vampires are said to still haunt the ruins of the few remaining orc enclaves not utterly razed to the ground.

Litzitlan Hills: At a glance, the Litzitlan Hills are picturesque and serene, not the kind of place a visitor would believe is universally shunned by the Xulmec natives. Nevertheless, spending any length of time there is an invitation to death or capture, for lurking beneath the hills are legions of formians, ever building and securing their domain. The Xulmecs respect and fear the alien, hive-minded creatures, avoiding them whenever possible and, with only very limited success, trading with them on rare occasions. In the fifty years since their appearance in the hills, the formians have not sought to invade any of the city-states, though their sudden presence forced the Xulmecs to reconstruct their trade roads and circumvent the insect people. The queen formian has on occasion sent out a few of her myrmarchs to make contact with the neighboring humans, reminding them that the Litzitlan Hills belong to the hive-city, whose name cannot be pronounced by humanoid tongues. All trespasses into their domain are taken as offers of service, as trespassers will become formian slaves.

Mirdar-Luminar Steppes: Named for the ancient elven nation that once ruled the plains, the steppes are now home to the armies of the Scourge. By night, thousands of bonfires blanket the plains, like reflections of the starlit sky, and by day raiders scour the steppes for escaped slaves and outlaws.

Ruins of elven towers still dot the Mirdar-Luminar, rising like spears from the windswept steppes. Tarkhan Khurzog has placed sentries around each tower, and scores of Scourge explorers have vanished into the various ruins, never to be seen again.

Montzulec Mountains: Along with the Nahualli Mountains, the Montzulecs serve as the natural barrier between Zimala's humid jungles in the north and the arid plains in the south. Many of these peaks are dormant or dead volcanoes, though their volatile activity in the distant past gave Zimala its name as the Island of Obsidian. The dark, volcanic glass is still found in great abundance within these mighty mountains—though accessing it is another matter.

Little is known about what other secrets and dangers lie hidden in the Montzulecs and Nahuallis, but many unsubstantiated legends have endured. Mt. Huicatl, also known as the Pedestal of Heaven, rises from the center point of the Montzulecs where they meet the Nahualli Mountains and is believed to be the tallest mountain in the Known Realms. A cloud giant city is only one legend among many affiliated with Mt. Huicatl. Another is that of Gørmnaar, a moving city of frost giants—some say, the homeland of all their kind—carved out of a massive glacier that slowly advances through the mountains at the behest of their shamans. Yet another story tells of the Stormspire, a tower once inhabited by silver wyrms and their humanoid apprentices during the Reign of Dragons. Guarded now only by a single draconic lich, the lost Stormspire housed magical experiments too deadly for the proximity of more populous lands.

Mount Icpitl: On the Isle of Tlahuaco, Mount Icpitl is a dead volcano rumored to house the pyramid fortress of the legendary Emerald Cobra, Xiuhcoatl. The few Criestine scouts who have braved the Eztenqui Jungle in search of it have reported lizardfolk and other hostile reptilian creatures dwelling in the vicinity of Mount Icpitl.

Mountains of the Fifth Prince: Effectively the main barrier between the Lostlands and the Northlands, the

Mountains of the Fifth Prince stretch across the entire continent, connecting the Empyrean Ocean to the Twisted Sea. The Mountains of the Fifth Prince are named for Djedkara the Bold, an androsphinx and imperial prince who was the predecessor to the Great Queen Ankharet. Djedkara, who died under mysterious circumstances, is said to be buried along with three other Sphinx Kings somewhere in the Mountains, in a series of connected tombs called the Nekropolis Magna.

The Mountains of the Fifth Prince are also home to roving tribes of gnolls, which frequently raid the nalvor settlements that lie near the base of this range. The few mountain paths that cut through the Mountains and connect the Lostlands to the southernmost regions of Saramathia are well hidden, and known only to a few daring guides and rangers.

Nahualli Mountains: See *Montzulec Mountains*.

Omian Pass: A natural canyon in the Atlauhti Mountains widened by time, Omian Pass was secured by the Criestine colonists and Xulmecs when their alliances were formed centuries ago. Its center smoothed by frequent passage, both ends of the pass were laid with the stone roads by the Xulmecs of Kaatlan and Teotcoatlan. Nicknamed the Passage of Bones for the bleached color of the canyon walls, travel through the pass is kept relatively safe by the patrols from Ft. Montsiang. Recently, reports of a mated pair of rocs have limited the number of caravans, while a pride of strange, black-furred krenshars have been attacking travelers on the fringes of the pass's southern side.

Pearl Spires, the: Along the western coast of Xa Deshret are a series of jagged mountain peaks, steep and formed from dazzling white stone. Inhabited by tribes of giants and trolls, the Spires are a deadly region, with only a handful of winding trails leading from the shores of the Empyrean Ocean to the Ghetrian Desert and the imperial roads of Xa Deshret. Abandoned silver mines lie deep below the mountains, which were worked centuries ago by dwarf and nalvor slaves.

Hidden somewhere amongst the tallest of the Spires is thought to be the Tower of the Shattered Sword. Built several centuries ago, the Tower was then used as a stronghold by the Criestiene Emperor Mattias II, who attempted in vain to invade Xa Deshret as part of a misguided holy crusade. Its exact location has been lost to the ages.

Pochectic Mountains: The perennial mists that cling to the summits of the Pochectic Mountains have given rise to numerous legends. The drakon of Ssorlang believe that the mists hide ancient dragon citadels, while the Xulmecs claim that they conceal the thrones of elder gods, divinities so old they have passed into retirement and now look upon the world from these enshrouded peaks. Whatever the truth, expeditions into the Pochectics are seldom without incident. Reports of illusionary terrains and sudden, unnatural rockslides lend credence to the belief that the mountains have something to hide.

Saint's Blood Mountains: Wreathed in snow and shackled by ice, the Saint's Bloods stand guard over the distant north, marking the furthest reaches of the Known Realms. Sages promote many theories of what lies beyond, and of fell monsters that make their home in the inhospitable wastes, but these speculations have yet to be proven.

Trolltooth Peaks: Rising where the Ul Dominors approach the Lirean Sea, the Trolltooth Peaks are smaller than their northern cousins, but no less inhospitable. Sharp and craggy like their namesakes, the Trolltooths are home to savage ogres, goblins, and many tribes of stone giants.

Ul Dominor Mountains: Home to the mighty Holdfast of the Steel Overlord, the Ul Dominor Mountains divide the Northlands in two. The highest peaks in all the North, the Ul Dominors are covered with snow year-round. Crossing the high peaks requires either dealing with the dour folk, or risking encounters with fell beasts that make their home in the mountaintop glaciers.

Urkallan Hills: Marking the northern border of the Criestine Empire, the hills have long been a source of mystery. Reportedly raised during a battle between two great wizards, those passing over the hills at night speak of seeing strange lights and unexplained noises, and merchant traders refuse to camp in the hills. Regardless of rumors, the Urkallans clearly serve as home to kobolds

and ogres that make a habit of preying on the villages scattered about the hills.

Uru'Nuk Highlands: The grassy highlands are home to the nomadic tribes of Saramanthia, and several species of migratory lizard-beasts. Fertile and blessed with regular rain, the tall-grass prairie is also reputed to conceal an enormous ruin beneath the grassy plains. Half-buried walls and grass-covered seals dot the highlands, lending credence to the theory of multiple ruins; certainly the whispers of a single massive ruin beneath the turf are nothing more than an exaggerated myth.

Valley of Xyr Muthal: An isolated paradise in the heart of the Lostlands, this lush, fertile valley is home to dinosaurs and other primitive beasts. Creatures thought to be long extinct can be found in abundance wandering through the Valley of Xyr Muthal, making this strange and wondrous place a living anachronism that seems to exist outside of time. Rare plants grow in abundance throughout the entire region, and gigantic herds of game animals roam freely across the flowing grasslands.

Despite its obvious riches, the Valley of Xyr Muthal remains largely untouched and undisturbed by the rest of civilization. This is not due to any lack of desire by the kingdoms that surround it. Sorcery permeates this land—those who wander through the valley seem to quickly lose their memories, and physically transform into more savage, primitive versions of what they once were. Only the most powerful of magics can protect travelers against this transformation. The main source of magic for the valley is reputedly Lake Tyrgyz, which can be found in the eastern regions of this area.

Although the Valley of Xyr Muthal has not been ruled—or, for that matter, successfully claimed—by any of the kingdoms of the Lostlands since the fall of the Khonsurian Empire, the denizens of the Valley are led in loose fashion by a strange barbarian queen called Sionala. Although little is known about this barbarian warrior, the few stories that have slipped out of the Valley suggest that she is a warrior of immense power with magical abilities, and may in fact be a demigod. The extent of her influence over the rest of the Valley of Xyr Muthal is unknown.

Vermilion Steppes, the: Known primarily for the tough, blood-red grass that permeates the entire area, the Vermilion Steppes are an unforgiving land. Only the hardiest of creatures are able to survive in this desolate place, let alone thrive. The climate of the Vermilion Steppes alternates wildly between fiery heat and brutal cold, often within the span of just a few days. Winds whip harshly through the Steppes like a sword stroke throughout the year. Small bands of kobold and goblin raiders make their home here, as do herds of shadroquus and an elusive dragon or two, but the undisputed rulers of this wasteland are the Vermilion Tribes of the wild elves.

During the time of the Sphinx Emperors, a mighty battle was once fought upon the Vermilion Steppes against a demonic horde. The Armies of the Sphinx were victorious, but the blood of the fallen demons permanently stained the battlefield a crimson red. To the present day, if a warrior drives a dagger deep into the soil of the Vermilion Steppes, the tip of the blade still comes out wet with fresh demon blood. For this reason, many undead creatures that feast on blood, such as ghouls and vampires, have made their lairs in the Steppes.

Forests, Jungles, and Woodlands

Amn'crith: The Amn'crith is home to the largest-known specimens of Ashwood trees found in the North. Rising several hundred feet above the forest floor, the massive old-growth trees house cities of elves and great rocs that make their nests in the trees' uppermost branches. The floor of the forest is less traveled and much more wild, and reports of gnolls and ogres surface from time to time. See also *Elven Nations* in Chapter 1.

Azcatlepi Jungle: Logographic glyphs in ancient naga ruins suggest that before the Reign of Serpents, the Azcatlepi Jungle was half its present size, with arid plains dominating the Zimalan landscape. Despite this assertion, there is no disputing that the Azcatlepi remains Áereth's largest-known rainforest. Comparable to the Eztenqui Jungle with its dangers, the sheer size and density makes the Azcatlepi even more impenetrable. Animals of every size and color live in the verdurous depths, along with giant vermin, supernatural serpents, and both carnivorous and herbivorous dinosaurs. Rain

falls frequently, and tropical fevers have been known to claim the lives of entire expeditions.

Yet benevolent creatures are said to share the jungle with monstrous predators. Where most explorers report ambushes and numerous casualties, others have reported friendly fey and strange, otherworldly beings. The Xulmec guides who lead Northland explorers to old Zimala speak of mythic beings from celestial countries seeking isolation on the mortal world.

Blackbriar Wood: The sun-dappled vales and tumbling waterfalls of the Blackbriar are regarded as among the most beautiful vistas in all the north, but the forest is best known for its ambassadors: the celebrated Blackbriar Elves. Fiery warrior-mages, the elves of the wood have distinguished themselves in military service in the Criestine colonies and in royal courts throughout the north. In turn, the Blackbriar has been spared the depredations common to other ancient woodlands, allowing the elves to nurture the beasts and flora of their ward. While certainly not devoid of predators or monsters, the woodlands of the Blackbriar are also home to the healthy populations of good creatures, including pegasi and even the occasional retiring unicorn.

Cairnswild: Peaceful and welcoming during the day, at night the rocky trails and shadowed dells of the Cairnswild become the hunting ground for untold numbers of undead that rise from the abundance of crypts, cairns, and barrows that dot the forested hills. At dusk, the branches seem to close in, absent vines hang from dead limbs, once-familiar trails take new turns, and woe to anyone caught within the forest's chill grasp after nightfall.

Corsan Forest: Ancient Corsan is much like her elven wardens: stately, noble and mighty, the tall pines and moss-lined trails whisper secrets of the ages. Sylvan and monstrous beasts exist in a careful balance; the elves did not orchestrate this balance, but they do protect it, ever mindful of the forest's health.

Similarly, the forest is home to fae of both good and wicked bent, and those venturing into its sheltered glades are advised to make offerings to its oldest residents. A singular black unicorn has been sighted in the woods, and mages across the North have offered vast sums for its capture.

Crystalmeet Wood: A foul curse has overtaken the Crystalmeet, twisting its trees into tormented mockeries of nature, transforming its beasts into slavering aberrations, and slaying its elven keepers and raising them as intelligent undead. The origins of this curse, and any indications to its remedy, are all a mystery. Those investigating the Crystalmeet are seldom seen again, and those who do return are never quite the same again. One notable example is the righteous paladin, Lady Shandovar of the Lance, who now resides in an Arvalis sanatorium, where she spends her days drooling on her shocked gray hair and mumbling rites to aberrant gods.

Eztenqui Jungle: Primeval magic dwells in the heart of the Eztenqui Jungle, and it seldom benefits its intruders. Sweltering heat permeates the jungle at all times of the year, making the surrounding lands more tropical than their latitude would suggest. Arcane scholars even surmise that this torrid magic is linked to the Plains of Fire to the south. The animals and beasts that prowl the Eztenqui, however, have adapted to its extreme humidity and high temperature. Of great danger to frontiersmen and explorers are the storms of stirges that inhabit the jungle, although even the dried husks of animals and humanoids are insufficient warning to the true threat these creatures pose when they arrive in great numbers. Assassin vines, twisted fey, and even green hags are said to dominate the deep jungle, but the promise of treasure-laden ruins in the jungle continue to draw in the greedy despite common wisdom.

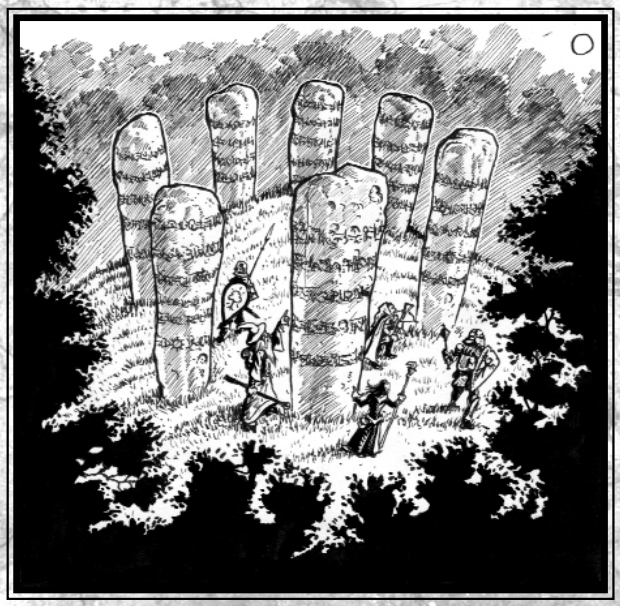
Despite its menace, the Eztenqui Jungle is diminishing. Carved in the face of one of the Atlauhti mountains, a crude map presumably once used by stone giants depicts the Eztenqui Jungle as reaching from where the Xocoatic Marshes lay to halfway across the Sea of Desperation. In the few centuries, the jungle's eastern fringes have softened, dissolving into a marshy network of tiny isles and salty channels. When the Criestine colonists first settled upon Southland shores, the eastern side of the Eztenqui Jungle was known as the Tlahuaco Coast—yet Tlahuaco has since become an isle of its own, only the largest of many as the Eztenqui is slowly swallowed by the Sea of Desperation.

Ferahn Forest: The Ferahn Forest is notorious for being thick with goblins and orcs, and merchants passing through its darkened glades are advised to retain the service of stout warriors and spellcasters. Less well known are the small communities of reclusive elves, hidden far from the usual trails and prying eyes. The elves make

their homes in grassy glades and beneath the boughs of ancient trees. It is said that the elves, though few in number, wage constant war against the goblinoids, and welcome those who would lend a bow to their cause. The Ferahn marks the eastern border of the nation of Thire.

Jungles of Sahaptia, the: This region of mighty jungles sits along the southeastern border of Xa Deshret. The jungles are well known throughout the world for their legendary darkfyre trees, which grow as tall as four hundred feet in height and often have a diameter of fifty feet or more. Wood from the darkfyre trees is highly coveted by shipbuilders, who claim that the wood can be used to build warships twice as strong and as fast as a normal ship. Loose bands of evil treants skulk about the jungle, making the cutting and cultivation of darkfyre trees difficult for ambitious timber merchants.

However, this jungle region is perhaps most infamously known as the home of the pteral race—hideous insect-like humanoids with a voracious appetite for the flesh and blood of humanoid creatures. The pterals live in giant blood-red hives, which either hang from the darkfyre trees or have been built inside the ruins of Khonsurian temples standing on the outskirts of the jungle. Although the pterals mercifully stay dormant for long periods of time—usually for seven years—at the end of this hibernation, they emerge in a feeding frenzy, annihilating everything within several hundred miles of their blood hives. According to the written histories in Xa Deshret, the Sphinx Emperors once were able to keep the wasp-men at bay. However, the secret to this success has been long forgotten, and with each awakening, the reach of the pterals edges ever closer to the rest of the civilized world.



Mirdar Forest: Last of the great forests, the Mirdar is home to many sylvan-born creatures that cannot be found anywhere else in the North. Intelligent lynx, owls, and hounds all roam the woods, keeping watch for their fae allies. Despite the strong presence of good creatures, the dangers of the Mirdar should not be overlooked. Since the fall of Arovarel, fell creatures have been sighted with increasing frequency, along with wicked treasure hunters seeking to despoil the ruins of the elven capital.

Mosswood: Mist-shrouded Mosswood is home to a number of standing stones, which are believed to have been constructed by the Druid Kings of old. The significance of the stones—and the undecipherable, glowing runes that decorate their surfaces—has yet to be determined. The locals promote any number of theories, ranging from the stone circles serving as portals to other worlds, sacrificial sites keyed to elder gods, or foci designed to channel a vast network of world-spanning energies.

Myrwych Forest: The dark, misty glades of the Myrwych are haunted by wicked magic and tormented aberrations. Horrors of Zamon stalk the forest trails in search of prey, while summoned demons and devils watch over corrupted glades that were once home to the sylvan folk. The elves that remain in the Myrwych have been forced to adopt some of the characteristics of their enemies; those visiting the forest report that the tribes of elves are a grim, melancholic folk, reduced to savagery in their fight for survival.

Oldarch Forest: Inhabited by a handful of loosely organized elf tribes and their sylvan allies, the Oldarch is also home to a temple hidden far from prying eyes. Guarded by elf paladins sworn to the Theocracy, the forest-bound temple houses secret texts and lore of the Lance. The temple is visited most

often by scribes and librarians researching specific questions, but on occasion even his Holiness of the Lance has been witnessed riding into the shaded wood … with an army of devoted bodyguards at his side.

Stagwood: Standing on the borderlands between Thire and Crieste, Stagwood is no less dangerous for the regular patrols of Thirian wardens that watch over its trials and glades. The wardens of Thire are a good if rustic folk, welcoming to strangers and quick to defend their beloved homeland. While the wardens can watch over the eastern wood, the western forest is held in the cruel grasp of monstrous humanoids.

Thornswild Wood: Found in the northernmost reaches of Thire, Thornswild Wood was once a place of great druidic power. In recent decades, though, the Thornswild has fallen upon ill times. The wicked vines that give the woods their name crawl about at will, hooking unfortunate creatures and feeding upon their blood. It is rumored that a site of great power remains somewhere within the woods, but few are willing to dare the narrow, thorn-lined trails. In the very center of the wood rises a great stone spire, atop which lies the abandoned ruins of an ancient keep.

Wailingwood: Infested by brigands and rogues, the Wailingwood is a haven for outlaws fleeing the Free Cities of Leherti. Merchants passing within sight of the foul place travel with a full complement of warriors, mages, and priests. Of late, rumors have filtered down to the coast telling of brigands pretending to be mercenary companies and hiring themselves out as guards for those making the trek north.

Warder Wood: Despite its location in central Crieste, Warder Wood conceals an unusually high number of orcs and goblinoids. Attempts to root out the monsters inevitably end in tragedy at the foot of the five temple-fortresses secreted in the heart of the woods.

Wilds, the: The forests known as the Wilds are situated south of the Halls of the Mountain King and north of the river Saedre. These dense and forbidding forests are universally feared and respected. Human and goblinoid savages alike lay claim to the dark woods, attacking those foolish enough to enter their realm. Legends whisper of forgotten dwarf vaults hidden beneath the forest floor.

Wintermere Forest: Blasted by incessant ice storms and blizzards, the Wintermere is encased in a frozen tomb for all but two months of the year. During these brief days of respite, the trees shed their coats of ice, and the forest comes alive with both predators and prey. A hardy breed of pale-skinned savages are believed to make their home in the woods, dressing in furs and worshipping elder dire beasts with totems carved from Ashwood trees, towering stones, and the ever-present ice. The Wintermere Forest is found on the western banks of the Hoarfrost, north and east of the fetid Wastes of Zamon.

Witch Wood: Also known as the Bane of Morcaut, the Witch Wood is shunned by all. The woods appear no different than any other mundane woodland, but it is well documented that anyone who enters the wood vanishes, only to reappear in other woods, sometimes thousands of miles away. Given the danger of most woodlands, it is not surprising that few of these wayward travelers are ever heard from again.

Swamps, Fens, and Moors

Black Fens: Heated by searing hot springs, and frozen by the ice storms of the Hoarfrost, the Black Fens are perpetually shrouded in dense mists that stink of sulfur and hellfire. Ice grows where the hot springs wane, blackened by the sooty mineral discharge that gives the fens their name. Explorers crashing through the fragile crusts of ice are often surprised by the scorching heat of the springs, and those trapped in the boiling mud quickly cook to death.

The fens are inhabited by trolls of every sort, including a rare sorcerous breed that delights in enslaving weaker creatures. Both ice- and fire-loving beasts can be found in equal abundance; similarly, creatures that shun the light of day find a welcome respite in the mist-shrouded swamp. A small enclave of drow make their home in the center of the swamp, defended by crude stone walls and a fortress of raised mud and magicked stone.

Chiauhtli: A tributary of the Quetli River splinters into the wide Chiauhtli delta, a large and notoriously unpleasant bog to most explorers, but a wondrous ecology of animal and plant life. Nomadic tribes of lizardfolk dwell in

the marshlands, driving away intruders and killing only repeat offenders. The drakon of neighboring Ssorlang have attempted many times to subjugate these tribes as they have countless times before them, but the Chiauhtli lizardfolk have countered every invasion with guerilla tactics impressive for so primitive a people. Explorers from the city-state of Maras have reported a camarilla of powerful lizardfolk druids who use the land itself to stave off the drakon scouts that precede each would-be invasion.

Gloom Marshes of Tashgar, the: Lying due east of the Valley of Xyr Muthal, these forbidding marshlands are constantly shrouded in thick gray mist. Zombies and skeletons wander aimlessly through the outskirts of these marshes, attacking travelers along the few roads that come near this dangerous place.

The Gloom Marshes are also home to many vile reptilian creatures, including large tribes of lizardfolk. These lizardfolk make occasional raiding forays to the north, but for the most part keep to themselves.

Great Swamp, the: Straddling the border between the nations of Crieste and Thire, the Great Swamp is claimed by none. A fetid, dismal place, the thick mists and watery bogs of the Great Swamp conceal secrets dating back to man's first attempts at civilization. Most of the ruins from this time sank below the waters centuries ago, but a few crude temples and towers still stand, clinging to ages long past. Lizardfolk and their kin can be found within the swamp, inhabiting the old ruins and adopting their savage customs.

Saltwitch Swamp: The low-lying basin of the Saltwitch floods annually when the tides of the Lirean are at their highest. When the tides recede, they leave a salty crust covering stunted trees and rocks alike. The remainder of the year, the swamp is a hot, muddy salt flat, devoid of fresh water or shelter.

Aberrations, freed from the salt flats during the wet season, rage across the Saltwitch stalking prey captured in the muddy tides. Those caught outside their lairs when the flats harden quickly descend into a madness; driven by hunger and the harsh conditions of the Saltwitch, they venture into the nearby Barrows or lurk along trade routes established by merchants crossing the flats.

Xocoatic Marshes: As explorers step off the foot of the Anduran Mountains, they find themselves in an unpleasant, humid bog. Travel is slow in this sucking mud and insect-ridden quagmire, but far preferable to the open fens to the west that comprise the Xocoatic Marshes. The air is filled with acrid fumes, and it is clear to rangers and druids that these are not natural swamp gasses but something more sinister and likely magical in origin. Worse, hidden rents in the endless mud have been known to spew caustic, flesh-searing liquids. Rumors of black dragons dwelling in the corrosive marshland are sufficient to discourage exploration of this foul region.

WASTELANDS

Achsfel Wastes: Located on the southeastern coast of the Lirean Sea, these blighted lands were once fertile plains. Few creatures live here, and fewer plants thrive. All are considered unclean to eat. The area is regularly scoured by an acid rain that burns flesh and metal but leaves stone intact. No sages today know the reason for the ancient transformation; however, the rare travelers have reportedly seen a mysterious palace in the Wastes from afar, but none have dared to investigate.

Blackfield: The Blackfield—or Capotzitlalli, as it is known in the Xulmec tongue—is a patch of desolate, blackened land roughly three miles in diameter. Named for the sooty consistency of its cursed soil, it was the site of a prominent battle when the Criestine colonists fought against the drakon in the early years of their settlement. The battle was a pyrrhic victory for the colonists, for as it progressed, the ground and sky darkened and the slain from both sides seemed to blacken and reanimate, dragging down their former companions in a terrible slaughter. Whether invoked by some magic by one of the armies or the manifestation of an unnatural phenomenon from the land itself, the Blackfield was born that day.

The Blackfield is a tract of coal-colored soil, littered sporadically with human and drakon bones bleached bright white. The remains of other unfortunates who have ventured onto the field have sunken into the ground, giving rise to the belief that ghouls, shadows, or worse dwell beneath the earth. Even on a bright sunny day, those standing within see the sky in coppery hues, and even bereft of trees, the land seems cast in permanent shade.

The Blackfield is a lure for curious wizards, but is universally shunned by the Xulmec people. While difficult to confirm, a few repeat visitors have raised suspicion that the field is "drifting" in the direction of Ft. Ferrau. Reportedly it has only moved a few yards since the phenomenon was first noted, but where perfectly healthy ground once lay to the north, the blight seems to have encroached. Meanwhile, along its southern rim, the land seems to be "healing." A group of local druids, considered obsessed with the Blackfield and more than a little mad, have even suggested that the field's movement is accelerating.

Burned Lands, the: In addition to cracking the world and creating the Devil's Cauldron, the falling of the Shadow Star also created a vast wasteland that straddles the eastern regions of the Vermilion Steppes and the Ghetrian Desert. Such was the heat that spewed forth from the falling Shadow Star that the ground below was completely incinerated, leaving a wide path of scorched earth in its wake. Since that fateful day, the Burned Lands created by this event have remained fallow and barren, and black smoke still billows from the charred ground.

Although the Burned Lands themselves have remained lifeless, they have still managed to become a haven of nefarious activity. Drow raiders emerge occasionally from this area, as they battle with the Vermilion Tribes when they get too close to this region. Additionally, large numbers of bugbear hordes have been spotted making the arduous trek into the heart of the Burned Lands.

The Burned Lands are also home to the mysterious Silver Citadel of Niraz.

Devil's Cauldron, the: Since the beginning of time, the comet known as the Shadow Star had been a fixture in the evening sky. Even the most ancient dragon lore speaks of this peculiar fireball, which blazed past the moon and stars once every ten years, setting the night sky ablaze with sinister purple light. The visits from the Shadow Star ended, however, when the glorious comet fell to earth almost twenty centuries ago. Although how the comet arrived is somewhat disputed—according to the lore of the Vermilion Tribes, the Shadow Star floated to the ground like a feather, rather than crashing violently as assumed by most sages—none can argue the result of this arrival. After the comet left a giant scar across the north, the eastern expanses of the Vermilion Steppes were blown apart, leaving a large, smoldering crater over three miles in diameter and reaching down even further into the depths of the earth. Scorching purple smoke still billows forth from the crater as powerfully as the day the comet first fell to earth, giving the crater its more commonly known name.

The Devil's Cauldron is a dangerous place. Prolonged exposure to the foul purple smoke causes the flesh to burn and scar horribly, and those who breathe the vapors too long invariably go mad. Additionally, the area is patrolled heavily by drow and derro raiders, who climb up the narrow paths from the bottom of the crater and attack those who wander too close to their homelands. The Cauldron is a place best left alone, unless one should desire to travel down into the World Below.

Frost Barrens: The sweep of icy tundra and stunted pines known as the Frost Barrens is a place without mercy or pity. Those venturing onto the Barrens forgo the assumptions of civilization, giving themselves over to the savage rule of the wild. Remorhazes, white dragons, and frost worms are the masters of the tundra, and all others simply struggle to survive in their shadow. The frozen remnants of failed expeditions dot the icy tundra, a testament to the brutal, unforgiving nature of the Barrens and its denizens.

Traders report of encountering fire witches who make their hovels in forlorn ice caves and muddy huts. Tales speak of the fires maintained by the witches, who claim that their wards have burned since the beginning of time.

Ghetrian Desert, the: The vast stretches of the Ghetrian Desert (also called the "Great Desert" by locals of the region) encompass nearly all of the northern regions of the Lostlands. Once but a fraction of its current size, the desert has grown tremendously since the fall of the Sphinx Empire, creating a fiery wasteland in what was once a tropical paradise. The nalvor of Xa Deshret stubbornly believe that the growth of the desert is a parting curse from their departed Sphinx Emperors, and that the desert shall retreat and wither once the Sphinx return.

In additional to the abandoned cities of the Khonsurian Empire and the nalvor, the Ghetrian Desert is also home

to wandering tribes of human and halfling merchants. These merchants traverse the majority of the Lostlands, and perhaps have a better perspective upon the entire Lostlands than any of the other creatures that live there.

Icenwastes: The western wastes are protected from the fierce conditions that claim the Frost Barrens, and monstrous humanoids of all breeds roam the tundra. Nearing the Hoarfrost, the Icenwastes assume a character akin to the Barrens, the tundra changing to snow drifts, ice ledges, and then entire glaciers. The eastern Icenwastes rival the Frost Barrens for their ferocity and bleak desolation. The largest of the world's white dragons is believed to make its home atop a glacier in the eastern reaches of the Icenwastes.

Plains of Fire: If one looks westward from a vantage in the Anduran Mountains, a vast and perpetual cloud of mist obscures the horizon, dominating earth and sky beyond the Xocoatic Marshes. The Xulmec people call the land within the mist Ixtlatla, the Plains of Fire, and do not venture there. Their priests say that the Plains are not meant to be crossed, serving as the supernatural barrier between the Known Realms and the Shadowed West.

In truth, the endless miles of mist are sempiternal clouds of steam, roiling up from the geysers of boiling water that blister the plains for hundreds of miles. What natural or unnatural geology generates such heated water so continuously none can say and few can observe. Within the Plains of Fire, the first few miles are uncomfortable, quickly giving away to scalding clouds and killing steam. Only creatures inured or immune to such heat can venture further west. Reports from adventurers magically equipped for the extreme temperatures speak of seeing salamanders, mephitis, and even elemental creatures of fire.

Sands of Shanbilai, the: This southernmost desert of the Lostlands forms the main barrier between Morena Nova and the rest of its hostile neighbors in the region. Somewhere deep in the heart of the desert is a gateway to a dark dimension. Through this gateway, fiends and other infernal beings wander into the Sands of Shanbilai, slaughtering all that they encounter. For this reason, the roads that criss-cross the desert have been abandoned for many years—even the Morenan armies are terrified to patrol them. It is a region best left alone by travelers. The only area of solace known in this fiery desert is the Oases of Sheshat-Semet, which can be found near the center of this region.

Wall of Ablyos, the: Also known as the Gorge of Saramanthia, the Storm Chasm, and Giants' Folly, the Abylos Wall is actually a canyon of mythic proportions, rising a full mile from floor to rim. During the dark years of the War of Divine Right, with armies of giants and their kin threatening from the south and east, the Abylos Empire summoned together the mightiest of the Druid Kings, elven wizards, and entire legions of slaves. Over the course of a single year, the united forces enlarged a river valley into a mighty canyon unlike any other, building ramparts and battlements along its western rim, and created siege weapons on a scale never witnessed since.

The armies of the giants arrived confident in their might, having easily conquered all other challengers. The giants poured into the canyon and swarmed up the far side, only to be met by the focused might of the Abylos Empire. Legions of archers rained arrows down into the rushing hordes, soul mages slew slaves by the thousands to call down storms of fire from the heavens, and spearmen and swordmaidens fought the few invaders that climbed their way to the rim of the canyon, casting the corpses down upon their fellows.

The defense was entirely too successful, funneling the trapped giants south and west toward Foresthome, where the giants raged, destroying the surrounding lands and setting the stage for the destruction of Lirea.

Today, ancient ruins can still be found on the western rim. Few creatures are foolish enough to venture to the chasm floor, where the ghosts and specters of slain giantkin wander uncontested.

Wastes of Zamon: The dark moors and high ridges were synonymous with wickedness long before the sorcerer-exile Zamon raised his demon-born tower. Like a people hungry for a king, the wastes have flourished beneath Zamon and his ilk, spreading their foul corruption south and east with each passing year. Now over one hundred evil sorcerers, necromancers, and black witches and warlocks make their home in the wastes.

Wicked beasts, both summoned and created, roam the Wastes, searching for prey and performing missions for their demented masters. Few, if any, of the Wastes' original fauna can be found. Every tree and flower, every mammal, bird, and insect has been twisted from its original form. Insane treants and corrupted nature spirits are especially dangerous, refusing to even recognize the wizards that call the Wastes their home.

Ruins, Dungeons, and Antediluvian Curiosities

It would be impossible to list all the ruins of the Known Realms; several tomes could be devoted to the Northlands alone, and fresh ruins are being uncovered each year. The following is a partial list of the ruins most often cited by bards and minstrels. Adventurers and treasure seekers should beware: The notes collected herein are incomplete at best, and misleading at worst.

Amonzadd and Ahna-Vithyre: Few legends can compare to the two great nations that were swallowed by the Lirean Sea during the War of Divine Right. Amonzadd, the ancestral citadel of the dwarves, and Ahna-Vithyre, the Foresthome of elven lore, were both consumed when the subcontinent of Lirea sank below the waves. While few contend that anyone (or anything) could have survived the cataclysm that swallowed the two great cities, rumors persist of elven archmages sleeping away the ages in their sealed vaults, and of dwarf-lich regents ruling lost forges hidden beneath the ocean's floor. The fires of rumor are rekindled whenever a shallow water diver returns with a few coins minted of an unknown metal, or the body of a grizzled dwarf lord, armored in ancient fashion, washes ashore.

Ayoxatlan: With its dark, pitted towers clawing the sky and its massive girders jutting out over the Athuan shoreline, the ruins of Ayoxatlan are still an impressive sight. If the old legends are true, the lofty structure once served as the gate and abutment for a bridge of titanic proportions that reached across the Surya Sea itself to the Lostlands. Casual observance of the expansive sea makes this possibility difficult to believe, but the impeccable architecture and monumental size of the structure gives the beholder pause. Stories told by Xulmec priests suggest that the gods once favored the great empire of Zimala, approving the nagas' desire to reach across the sea to foreign lands.

Even if this is true—and that a causeway once spanned the many miles to the Lostlands—then the gods have since withdrawn their favor. The stories even say that islands once supported the bridge's columns, but they are nowhere now to be seen. The only evidence is the island at the center of the Surya and the corresponding ruin on the far side.

Ayoxatlan is a perilous ruin now. The anchorage alone is a multi-leveled structure, a monolith of cratered stone that has become the lair of monsters. The abutment and towers, scarred by millennia, comprising a labyrinth of passages and guard chambers, hold dangers of their own—creatures who require no contact with civilization or wish to hide their deeds. Where the towers sink into the jagged shoreline, sea monsters have gathered and proclaimed a dominion of their own. The levels beneath the waves are nigh inaccessible.

Castle of the Crow: Home to the Crow Queen, a witch of exceeding power and wickedness, the Castle was a mighty citadel built high atop the southern Ul Dominor mountains. The Crow Queen demanded a tribute from all the traders crossing the pass beneath her citadel, accepting gold but preferring souls. When a party of Crieste's most powerful heroes launched a surprise raid on the citadel, slaying the Crow Queen and laying waste to her army, it was assumed that the world was now rid of her evil. That night, as the party rested on the pass below, the citadel broke free of the mountain and rose into the moonlit night.

The Castle of the Crow has been sighted hundreds of times since, often presaging a terrible tragedy or natural disaster, with hundreds of crows circling its high towers.

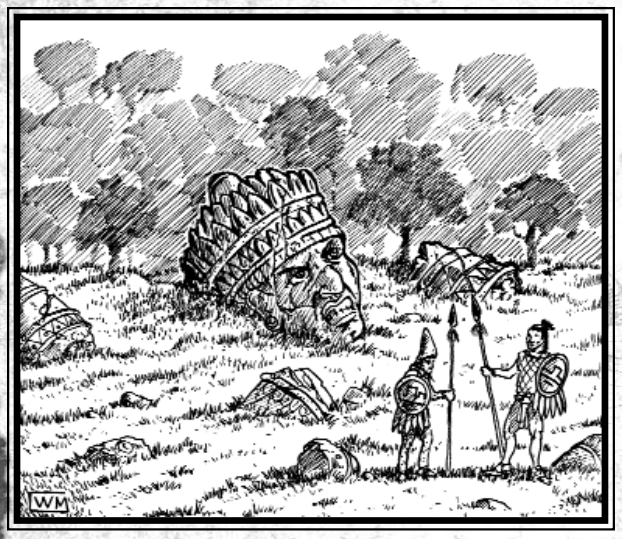
Catacombs of Nos Caen: Discovered beneath the foundations of Halsgate Castle, the extent of the catacombs is unknown. Preliminary expeditions have revealed that the crudely carved catacombs belong to a sort of undercity. Sages doubt that the savages of Nos Caen could have built such an extensive complex, but few offer theories about who—or what—might have done so.

Coatopolan: Sometimes called the Snake Ruin, Coatopolan was once a city built on the edge of the Zimalan Empire, the nagas' sole outpost at the northern edge of their empire. Hidden at the heart of the Xulmec peninsula, the ruin has been largely reclaimed by the land and now serves as the home of many animals and unnatural creatures. The one exception are the Miztlani, an order of paladins who have claimed the western edge of the ruin as their own. It is the site of the holy tomb of the heroine Cihuamiztli and the lammasu champion Naramsin (see *Miztlani*, Chapter 5). Though the ruins of Coatopolan hide many dangers, much exotic flora thrives here as well. Of greatest note are the miztli vines, hearty aerophytes indigenous to the ruin that bear tiny golden blossoms said to resemble a feline face.

Cohuatlizon: Cohuatlizon was a ruin even during the rise of the Zimalan Empire. Situated at the heart of the forested Serpent Isle, Cohuatlizon was once a city of draconic origin, but it has been long since plundered of its greatest secrets. The only treasures to be found here now are in the lairs of those monsters bold enough to take up residence within.

Cohuatlizon's greatest danger—and greatest appeal—is the Serpent Oracle, a legendary medusa of prophetic powers who dwells within a shattered temple at the city's heart. She offers frighteningly accurate visions of the future to those who can find her—and those of whom she approves. Those who sought to exploit her powers of prescience are now permanently displayed in a vast gallery of statues. If reports are true, no fewer than a thousand figures of lifelike stone adorn the city's central promenade. A gang of stone giants is said to guard the Serpent Oracle, and will smash her greatest offenders into rubble once they've been rendered in stone.

Crypt of Kothean: The lords of Kothea once ruled an empire that united much of the western Northlands. Seven generations of lords were buried in a secret tomb hidden somewhere in the heart of the Myrwych forest,



along with the bodies of their devoted servants and attendants. Rumor holds that the extensive crypt also contains portals that reach across the face of the North, allowing quick movement of armies in times of great need.

Fane of Elder Gods: Bards speak of a blasphemous palace-temple hidden somewhere atop the Ul Dominor mountains. This windswept, snow-laden ruin is said to be the home of a race of giants originally destined to rule the lesser races. These stories also tell of a stone palace built to an enormous, giant-sized scale. While none can speak to the fate of the giants, their temples-fires still burn, offering praise to weird shapes and deities foreign to the known world.

Floating Island of Orskenia, the: Moving throughout the Empyrean Ocean like a relentless predator, the Floating Island of Orskenia is more of a sailor's tale than an ominous terror. The circular island, which by all accounts is a volcanic monstrosity measuring some twenty miles in diameter, appears in a cloud of greenish-gray mist once every sixty years. The island never appears in the same location twice, although it usually materializes within a few days' sail from the coastlines of the Lostlands. Once it arrives, the island may remain in the Empyrean Ocean anywhere between a week to a year, drifting slowly through the murky waters without rhyme or reason, and moving just a few leagues each day. All ships that pass near the Floating Island disappear or are wrecked within days of sighting the mysterious place.

No one knows what actually lives on the island, if anything at all. Many sailors and pirates strongly believe that Orskenia is some sort of purgatory for those that drown at sea, and that the island crawls with undead creatures. Still others believe that the island is a haven for the sphinx that left the Khonsurian Empire centuries ago. Whatever the origin of the Floating Island, it is a place believed to best be avoided at all costs.

Huetzetoc: Meaning "he lies fallen" in the Xulmec tongue, Huetzetoc is the half-buried remains of the obsidian idol of Huamec, the savior and first god of the Xulmecs. During the War of Divine Right, when giantkind united against the smaller races of the known world, the people of Xulmec faced certain destruction from the armies of storm and fire giants who assailed them. It was Huamec who answered their prayers, instructing his priests to build a colossal statue of obsidian into which the god fused his own spirit. The might of his avatar turned the tide for the Xulmec people, but in the struggle Huamec himself was slain.

Centuries later, what remains of that great idol now lies shattered and inert. Only parts of the statue's three–hundred-foot frame remain intact. The head is set apart, jutting diagonally from the soil. All Xulmecs consider Huetzetoc hallowed ground, and the city-states often take turns sending patrols to watch over it.

Lost Mines of Avjitar: In the desert mountains south and west of Punjar, there exists a series of mines that follow a rich vein of pure adamantine. The location of the mines was a carefully guarded secret, and a citadel was built atop the mines to protect against raiders and foreign armies. Avjitar prospered for many years, sending a steady stream of adamantine north to Crieste, only to be buried by a magical sandstorm that swept up from the Great Desert, burying the city and obliterating all traces of its inhabitants. The source of the sandstorm, and the location of the mines, have been lost to the ages; maps to Avjitar are a popular item in Punjar, found in the stall of any dealer in antiquities, although their authenticity is dubious at best.

Maw of Mictlan, the: The terminus of the Mochitla River—or merely its threshold—the Maw of Mictlan is the entrance to the Land of the Dead according to Xulmec belief. Virtually inaccessible on all sides, the great chasm into which the river drops in a waterfall spanning hundreds of feet can only be viewed in one of two ways. The first is from the Lamasery of the Dead, an ancient building that resembles a sepulcher more than the monastery it is. Overlooking the Maw from a high precipice, it offers visiting pilgrims the only safe vantage of the impressive plunge. The second means of accessing the Maw is from the river itself, a course as certain as it is deadly. If the water merely drops into an abyss deep in the earth, then the fall alone is sure to kill. If the water of the saltwater river truly passes into the realm of the dead, one's safety cannot be assured.

Oubliette of Tybor the Mad: When the great magician Tybor, Elder Seer to the Emperor of Abylos, predicted the rise of the giants prior to the War of Divine Right, he was ridiculed as a fool and chased from the royal court by children armed with stones and rotten vegetables.

Consumed by madness and anger, Tybor built an inescapable dungeon-maze, warded with powerful magics and watched over by a contingent of summoned demons. On the eve of the war, Tybor stole into the palace, kidnapped his king, and delivered the regent into the heart of the maze.

Legend holds that the demons were tasked with keeping the errant king alive to wander the maze until the end of ages. Whether such a feat is possible, and if it is true that the regent still carries his crown and scepter of office (the powerful relics vanished the same night as the regent) are questions that seem destined to remain unanswered.

Thora-Ulimet: Legends tell of a great city of dark elves founded in the years following the Eldritch Coalition. A city of merchants and Underdeep traders, the drow of Thora-Ulimet were reputed to have dealt extensively with wicked humans, dwarves, and the intelligent monstrous humanoids. The city was laid low by a flight of silver dragons and an elf paladin bent on avenging her fallen brethren. Legends allege that the ruined city still deals with the surface races, and place the lost city somewhere in the Ul Dominor mountains.

Silver Citadel of Niraz, the: Sitting in the center of the cracked and blackened Burned Lands is a mighty fortress, with gleaming silver walls over one hundred feet tall, and golden towers that seem to touch the sky. Although the size of the fortress suggests that it was built for titans or giants, the Citadel was built sometime after the fall of the Shadow Star. According to the folklore of the Vermilion Tribes, the silver fortress arose from the ashes of the Burned Lands in a single moonless night

In recent years, much activity has been spotted surrounding the Silver Citadel. Flickering lights burn faintly in the towers of this fortress, which has seemed dormant for many generations. Additionally, the silhouettes of dragon wings have beeen spotted flying in and out of its gates. Whatever secrets that lurk inside the Silver Citadel of Niraz seem ready to burst forth from this odd place, and to spread across the Lostlands like wildfire.…

Standing Stones of the Druid Kings: When scholars of the North seek out evidence of the past, they need to look no further than the Standing Stones. Scattered across the North, and found in nearly every region, the circles of stones and monoliths were raised according to the will of the Druid Kings.

Some, like those found in Mosswood, bear glowing runes etched deep into their faces. Others are as smooth as polished glass and crackle with untapped energies. Others keen aloud when approached by orcs and half-orcs, and still others heal any who approach them. The purpose of the stones, and the reasons for raising them across the face of Áereth, are lost to antiquity.

Well of Worlds: Found deep within the bowers of the Anseur forest, the Well of Worlds is a forty-foot-wide pit, lined with rough stones, whose depth is unknown. The stones all bear powerful runes and sigils, thwarting all attempts to discern the nature of the magic at work in the Well. The elves of the Anseur report that every full moon the Well is lit up from below. During the time, according to legend, it is possible to use the Well to travel to other times and places. Unfortunately, no one has ever returned from such a journey to verify this.

Chapter 5
Organizations

While nations are the principle face of Áerethian politics, numerous cabals, secret societies, cults, and brotherhoods work their agendas across borders and beneath the noses of unsuspecting regents. Some of these organizations labor in the defense of good, but many, many more are sworn to evil ends.

In the history of the Northlands, as many regents have met their death at the end of a poisoned dagger as on the field of battle. Those who deal with secret societies know it is not enough to be guarded by a high city wall and defended by an army of loyal men-at-arms. For when shadow wars rage across the face of Áereth, any man, woman, or child could be the agent of the enemy, and no one—archmage, bishop, general, or regent—is safe.

In many lands, clandestine societies are simply a way of life. It is understood that deception is the first rule of diplomacy, and a knife in the back is simply a way of conducting business. Success—whether with sword, or spell, or coin—can only be obtained through strategy and some luck. Much as in a chess game, moves and countermoves must be plotted well in advance of their execution. Knowing the secret organizations of a land provides advantages toward ultimate triumph in the region, and joining their ranks may offer even more.

The Arcanum Infernal

This infamous school of magic in Gorhgijesk teaches necromancy and other sinister arts. Run by a small council of drow wizards known only as the Enclave, this institution of darkest wizardry seeks to preserve the evil knowledge outlawed and banned throughout the rest of Áereth, to teach that knowledge to those daring enough to seek it, and to create new kinds of magic. Despite the malevolent atmosphere that permeates the Arcanum, its students and teachers rarely view themselves or their work as evil—instead, they see themselves as pioneers, daring to push the boundaries of sorcery and science far past the timid borders of the outside world. At any given time, there are a dozen or so masters and nearly two hundred students living within the walls of the Arcanum. Students are marked with tattoos of dragons on their forearms; should they ever be deemed worthy of becoming a master, ornate designs of magical fire are added to the original tattoo.

Those acolytes who travel to the Arcanum Infernal, and seek to gain the forbidden knowledge within its walls, must first pass a series of trials in order to become a novice student. While the exact number and order of these trials remain secret, it is known that some test magical ability, while others strive to push the limits of the mind. Few actually pass all the tests and gain admittance to the Arcanum Infernal; the walls of the sinister institution are surrounded by the rotting corpses of failed students. Lunatics spouting utter nonsense also sit by the gates of the Arcanum Infernal, their minds twisted and broken by the harrowing trials.

In addition to teaching and preserving the darkest magical arts, the Arcanum Infernal seeks to create horrific new spells and magical devices that defy imagination … or sanity. The terrible experiments conducted by the institution remain guarded secrets, but rumors abound that the latest endeavors of the Arcanum involve dimensional forays into the foulest planes of existence. Several times a year, a sizable shipment of slaves arrives at the gates of the Arcanum. Their true purpose inside the evil institution remains a mystery, although the screams that echo throughout the city following their arrival suggest a nefarious intent.

The Black Watch

The warriors of the Black Watch are no less dedicated or devout than their brother order, Knights of the Lance, but are often mistaken for minions of the fiends they seek. An order of hunters, the Watchmen spend their (often short) lives in pursuit of demons, devils, vampires, hags, and any of the other fell monsters that prey upon humanity.

The average member of the Black Watch is dressed in soiled armor, stinks of necromantic laboratories and forgotten libraries, and carries a veritable arsenal of exotic weapons. Silent and sullen, most hunters have the gaunt, haunted look of wolves, and a blatant disregard for the niceties of culture.

Unlike their brothers, the hunters do not swear to any code of honor or the defense of good. Each Black Watchman has but a single vow: to do everything in her power to slay her chosen prey. While most begin with bright eyes and a heart for goodness, years spent watching her friends fall to the claws of fiends and suspecting every stranger of possession quickly wear away at the soul, until even the most idealistic hunter is reduced to bitter cynicism. For a hunter, every day brings the threat of brutal violence and every night brings its haunted dreams.

No member of the Black Watch has ever survived long enough to step down from the order. The only hunters that are called from service are those who have been driven mad by the horrors they have seen. Surprising to those outside the Theocracy, the dark hunters of the Black Watch enjoy a special relationship with His Holiness, the Bishop of the Shining Lance. The reason for this is simple: The warriors of the Watch are the souls with the greatest need of absolution.

For obvious reasons, membership in the Black Watch demands absolute secrecy. If the order has a headquarters or a leader, they have been well concealed.

Brotherhood of the Silver Raven

A loose organization of bards, storytellers, and good-natured rogues, the Brotherhood of the Silver Raven works as a network of information throughout the Lostlands, disseminating news, rumors, and innuendo throughout the region with remarkable speed. It also serves as a support system for adventurers who find themselves in dire straits, far from home and without allies. With thousands of Brothers scattered throughout the Lostlands and the rest of Áereth, a member of the Brotherhood can always find a friend willing to help.

It is not believed that there is any formal structure to this enigmatic group, nor does it have any true leaders; all that is really known of the Brotherhood of the Silver Raven is that it began some fifty-odd years ago in the traveling Bazaar of Quaysarria. Membership in the organization is quite simple—a Brother who wishes to induct another person into the Society merely has to give that person a silver medallion. That medallion, which features the insignia of a raven with spread wings, is the mark of association with the Brotherhood. Those who become part of this informal society always wear this medallion in a visible—but not always conspicuous—manner. There is one simple rule of the Brotherhood of the Silver Raven: "Help your Brothers who need help, and expect the same in your hour of need." The rule generally works, though those few who fail to abide by it usually find their medallions missing or stolen in short order.

The other main aim of the Brotherhood of the Silver Raven is to pool information wherever possible. For this reason, sages and scholars are often members of this informal fraternity, and provide support to other members whenever possible. There are few rumors in the Lostlands unknown to a member of the Brotherhood. Poorer members of the Brotherhood with a sharp ear and a good memory can always find a copper coin or two at a sages' guild.

Brood of Ahzari

The Brood of Ahzari is an old order of drakon assassins feared above all others west of the Empyrean Ocean. Operating out of the Moryan Temple in Myashtlan, the Brood is frequently employed by the Emerald Throne, yet it keeps to its own mystic code entirely outside of Ssorlang law. The Brood hires its services to anyone in the Known Realms willing to meet

its steep fees. For this reason, small cells of the Brood can be found in every metropolis in the Northlands, provided one knows where to look or with whom to inquire.

The Brood of Ahzari is comprised only of brightvenom drakon. Whether this racial limitation stems from the order's founder or is merely pragmatism for the trade, the tradition is unswerving now. With their ability to transfigure themselves, the assassins can move through human societies with little scrutiny, using magic and legerdemain to further conceal their heritage. Like any accomplished guild of killers, little is publicly known about the Brood of Ahzari. Some believe they are affiliated with the secret clergy of the Hidden Lord, while others speculate a connection to Axaluatl, the Shadow Serpent of old Zimala. While there is no uniform appearance among them, Brood assassins can be identified with their signature weapon: the keris blade, usually enchanted or dipped in potent snake venom.

Mystery enshrouds the Brood's founder, an ancient black wyrm known as Ahzari. Some legends say that he was once a darkvenom wizard who permanently transformed himself into a dragon, while others claim he was a pariah among dragonkind. What is known is that Ahzari disappeared from history for centuries somewhere in the Shadowed West, returning at last to Ssorlang to found his brotherhood of assassins. Rumor suggests that Ahzari's body is interred, either in slumber or in death, somewhere beneath the Temple.

The leaders of the Brood of Ahzari are ten deadly monk/assassins who never leave the Moryan Temple. They personally defend the monastery and train every new recruit. Though only those of brightvenom stock are admitted membership to the Brood, the drakon have been known to hire freelance assassins from other humanoid races to carry out certain jobs—particularly those with which the snake men wish to avoid any implication. Many lone assassins have grown wealthy partnering with the Brood. Just as many have been eliminated as rivals. The Moryan Temple itself, named for an esoteric philosophy to which Ahzari subscribes, is a massive, multifaceted dome filled with expansive halls, marble columns, and velvet tapestries.

Company of the Bright Barrow

This clandestine group of mercenary warriors is infamous throughout the Lostlands, inspiring terror with the very utterance of their name. The name of the Company comes from a ritual that each of its soldiers performs before heading out into battle. Each warrior digs a shallow grave the morning before battle, and then places a lit candle in that grave. A lone soldier remains behind to watch over the candles and to keep them all burning, until the rest of his brothers return to personally extinguish the flames … or to occupy the graves. In battle, the Company of the Bright Barrow is perhaps best known for its bloodthirsty savagery—they never take prisoners, never surrender, and frequently send the rotting hearts of their fallen foes back to their native soil in black silk packages.

For the past one hundred and fifty years, the Company of the Bright Barrow has been in the exclusive employ of the city-state of Achaemia. The ruling rakshasa of Achaemia, although fearsome warriors in their own right, have no organized militia of their own. Apart for the djinni and other genies who are allied with the rakshasa, the mercenary Company remains the only true defenders of the city. It is not entirely clear how the rakshasa compensate the members of the Company for this role; although the mercenary soldiers certainly collect countless gold coins for their ruthless service, it is believed that they receive other, more powerful gifts as well. Rumor has it that the soldiers of the Company have received immortality from their rakshasa masters, and cannot die so long as they serve the mystical creatures.

Most soldiers of the Bright Barrow have never known life outside of their infamous ranks. Once per year, the Company of the Bright Barrow makes a pilgrimage to the slave markets of Djeser al-Maqqara to select ten to twenty male human children, no older than two years of age. These children are bought and raised by the Company, and are molded into unemotional killing machines. Upon rare occasion, outsiders are permitted to join the ranks of the Bright Barrow; however, such exceptions are only made for warriors of unparalleled skill.

Cult of Akfokal Nel

Concealed from the mysterious aboleth, this group of drow warrior-priests works in great secrecy to take control of Gorhgijesk. They make their stronghold in a hidden stronghold just outside the city of Viomorgyn. The Cult of Akfokal Nel is closely allied with the Arcanum Infernal; many of the that evil institution's wizards are also instrumental members of this secretive sect.

Although its members are mostly drow, cells of the cult have spread throughout all of Áereth, reaching so far as some regions in the Northlands and Southlands. These cells always work under the firm command of a drow war leader. All members of the cult can be identified by a magical brand: a pair of crossed swords. The brand is

only visible through magical means, such as a *detect magic* spell or the like.

The goals of the Cult of Akfokal Nel are twofold. Firstly, they plot to bring about revolution in Gorhgijesk, wresting power away from the aboleth and placing control of the nation solely in the hands of the drow. On a grander scale the cult eventually aims to bring about the resurrection and return of the "First Drow": Akfokal Nel, a legendary sorcerer whose power reputedly once rivaled that of the gods themselves. They believe that with the rebirth of Akfokal Nel, Gorhgijesk will rise into a mighty empire that will dominate and enslave the rest of Áereth. Although the location of the sorcerer's tomb has long been lost, the cult supposedly possesses ancient texts that cryptically speak of its whereabouts. Certain cult leaders toil endlessly in the search for their icon, while others labor to build a shrine for Akfokal Nel—one that contains the necessary devices of alchemy and sorcery to return him to the world of the living.

Knights of the Lance

Clad in shining suits of plate and chain mail, sword and shield at their side, their colorful pennants flapping from their lances, the stout Knights of the Lance are the very vision of nobility. Most are drawn from the ranks of aristocracy, but the order is open to any who can achieve its lofty standards, and many of its finest knights were once war orphans or paupers.

Questing far across the land in the name of god and glory, the knights are sworn to the tenets of the Theocracy as well as the service of good. In addition, each knight takes what is known as a *silent vow*, often either a wrong to be avenged or a principle to defend. A knight's silent vow is highly personal and questioned only under the direst of circumstances.

A martial sect of the Holy Theocracy, the order of the Lance is composed entirely of paladins and holy warriors. The order was begun when the legendary general Cuthair the Crimson gave up her titles and ranks, and swore herself to the defense of a humble priest. Since that day, thousands of warriors have answered the call to lives of sacrifice.

With their wide-ranging, far-flung goals, the knights are rarely summoned together. Once every five years, a Grand Assembly is called to order, and knights from across the North flock to Brighthawk Castle. Reports of the state of Áereth are presented before the order's officers, a month-long tournament is held, and the resulting pageantry is wondrous to behold.

The Knights of the Lance benefit greatly from their ties to the Theocracy. Each knight rides forth with ancestral arms and armor, often the finest ever crafted by legendary smiths of Arvale. Similarly, knights can expect room and board at any castle or manor across the North. In wicked realms, claiming the Right of Asylum often presages an attempt on the knight's life, but even the wickedest of sovereigns thinks twice before assassinating a knight in his care.

The Knights of the Lance suffered terrible losses in the Fall of Leherti, but this hasn't diminished their dedication. Indeed, it has only increased their fervor, the ranks of order clamoring for permission to return to war. Lady Aernal, commander of the order, keeps a close watch on the Scourge, knowing that the time will come when her knights will again ride against its armies—only this time, she doesn't intend to lose. Presently more than four thousand knights fly Theocracy pennants, with several thousand more squires and attendants sworn to their service.

Knights of Tenhoku Jigai

Traditional guardians of the Kingdom of Taijin, these dwarven warriors have acted as war leaders and protectors of the realm for generations. They lead the charge in every battle and refuse surrender. Battalions of Taijinese soldiers led by a Knight of Tehoku Jigai know only two ways for a battle to end: victory or death. For a Knight, there is no honor in defeat.

The Knights of Tenhoku Jigai—so named for the ancient King of Taijin who originally formed their noble order—select their ranks from the courts of the kingdom, taking those trained from an early age to be skilled with both blade and bow. Most Knights of Tenhoku Jigai are either traditional warriors or paladins; however, rangers and clerics that have proven their worth upon the field of battle have been accepted into the order as well. At the present time, the Knights have well over five hundred worthy dwarves in their ranks.

The Knights of Tenhoku Jigai have little patience for ceremony. Save for times of national crisis, they meet but once every four years, and then only to briefly discuss matters of state and changes in the art of warfare. The Knights have a magnificent castle in Raijin Khor called the Palace of Toba Meiji, which mostly collects dust from inactivity.

To join this order of noble warriors, a candidate must first serve as a squire to a Knight for a period of three years. Should the candidate prove his worth during this time, he is sent out on a mission called the Prophet's Quest. The squire studies passages from an ancient text called the Ochimo Codex—from those passages, it is believed that the candidate will find a purpose and calling of epic importance. Then the aspiring Knight sets forth on a long and arduous journey … and may not set foot in Raiju Khor until the quest is complete. It often takes two or three decades to complete the Prophet's Quest—and many times, the hopeful candidate is never seen again. Those who are successful and do return are immediately inducted into the Knights of Tenhoku Jigai, and receive all the honor and prestige that is associated with that mantle.

Miztlani

The Miztlani (mist-*lon*-ee) are an order of paladins active in the Southlands who have devoted themselves to the virtues of the legendary heroine Cihuamiztli, the Golden Lady. Centuries ago, Cihuamiztli saved the people of Teotcoatlan and Athua from an infestation of undead that threatened to overrun eastern Xulmec. Along with her greatest friend, Naram-sin, a celestial lammasu of unequaled valor, Cihuamiztli martyred herself in the climactic battle against the source of the threat: the lich-queen Tecitzin.

For her sacrifice, a hallowed tomb was erected in the ruins of Coatopolan, and Xulmecs from across the peninsula came to visit the Golden Lady. Much to their surprise, lammasus from far-off lands arrived at the holy site to pay their respects to their fallen hero, Naram-sin, whose many brave deeds were famous in the Lostlands. Some humans and lammasus lingered at the shrine, and before ten years had passed, a small order of holy knights had formed in honor of Cihuamiztli and Naram-sin.

The Miztlani—sometimes called Miztli Tepiani, the Golden Protectors, or the Knights of Cihuamiztli—live to wage war against evil in all its forms and emulate the life and combat techniques of both Cihuamiztli and Naram-sin. Based out of Coatopolan, the Miztlani welcome all Xulmec warriors to the hallowed Tomb of the Golden

Lady, but retain only the purest of heart and spirit. The Golden Protectors have strong ties to the churches of Calchoti and Ilhuicatl, but the paladins also revere lawful divinities whose province lies well beyond Xulmec. Accordingly, some of the order's paladins take their spiritual crusade to foreign lands, adventuring even among the Northlands.

A paladin of the Miztlani wears the quilted armor common among Xulmec warriors. Their *tlahuiztli* is decorated to resemble the leonine body of the lammasu, which the order reveres above all other creatures. Eagle feathers adorn the suit and hardwood helmets are arrayed with manes that resemble a lion's. The Miztlani are frequently arrayed with jewelry of polished gold; to them, the divine value of gold far outweighs its monetary value. Some fashion elaborate wooden shields, called *chimalli*, and many favor the razor glove.

The Miztlani are directed by the Knights of Gold, seven paladins said to embody the values of Cihuamiztli. A family of lammasus also dwells in Coatopolan, advising the paladins in their endeavors and defending the shrine from intruders. The family's matriarch, a noble lammasu named Shatu-murrim, is always consulted by the Knights of Gold before any important decisions are made by the order.

Order of the Sable March

Respected by the people of Crieste and reviled by its barons, the Knights of the Sable March are the Emperor's personal guard, the nation's foremost horsemen and duelists, and implacable defenders of good. That their agenda runs counter to the sinister plots of Lady Mortianna, Vizier of Crieste, only gives credence to the many ballads and legends hailing their bravery and valor.

Officially answering only to the Emperor, the Knights of the Sable March are secretly directed by Captain Sentri, master of the Criestine Army. Obliged to obey the Vizier's commands, Sentri uses the knights to subvert her wicked plots in a dangerous game of cloak and dagger. Although suspicious of the popular captain, the Vizier has yet to discover irrefutable evidence of his duplicity. The day she finds proof (or manufactures the same) is the day that Captain Sentri will be crucified atop the palace's highest tower. Until then, Sentri and his knights will continue working for the good of the Emperor and all of the North.

Knights of the Sable March are handpicked by Captain Sentri and sworn to secrecy. While not all knights are warriors or paladins, their missions are dangerous enough to ensure that every knight knows how to handle himself in a fight. The Order of the Sable March is firstly sworn to the Emperor of Crieste, then the good of the Northlands, and then to one another. They carry themselves as shining visions of chivalry; even when surrounded by bloodthirsty assassins, a Knight of the Sable March is dauntless and noble, though no less deadly for his gallantry.

The Order makes its headquarters in the city of Archbridge, in the fortress known simply as the Citadel, but their missions can take them to the furthest reaches of Áereth. The Citadel houses the collected rolls and libraries of the Order, as well as master smiths that turn out the distinctive arms and armor of the knights. In times of war, the Citadel serves as the last defense of the Emperor, and has stockpiles allowing it to survive a full siege. The Citadel is also home to the stables of Parelor, the legendary, tireless warhorses of the Order. Presently, the rolls of honor name roughly one thousand knights, aided by twice as many squires and henchmen.

The symbol of the Order is a black background pierced by three silver stars signifying the tenets of the order: honor, duty, and courage. Unlike most knighthoods, members of the Order never alter their banners with personal heraldry; the simple banner suits the single-minded devotion of its knights.

The Ruin Knights

A secretive cult of warrior-priests dedicated to Zühn and the fell god's plot to bringing about the End of Days, the Ruin Knights and their agents are universally hated and feared throughout the North. While making their home in the Scourge city of Ibinfang, the agents of Ruin are far from beholden to Tarkhan Khurzog. Secreted within their stronghold of scorched stone and iron, the disciples labor to create an army of fell creatures that give the order its name. The purpose of the Ruin Knights, and the place they play in the cult's planned apocalypse is unclear, for few have survived first-hand encounters with them.

Abroad, agents of Ruin seek out ever more powerful magics to outfit their forces and feed their dweomer forges. They have been known to lurk at the entrances of dungeons and caverns, ambushing weakened heroes laden with treasure. Similarly, agents have been found aiding tribes of giants, ogres, and orcs, arming them with foul artifacts and orchestrating their battles against the civilized lands. Assassination attempts on regents are also not uncommon, although in order to disguise their true agenda, agents of Ruin often masquerade as servants of an enemy nation.

Cells of the cult are suspected to work in large cities throughout the North; however, few give credence to this speculation. Given the cult's limited appeal, it is hard to imagine even the wickedest of villains supporting the cult's apocalyptic goals.

Most sources allege the master of the Ruin Knights to be Uskgol the Destroyer, a half-orc assassin-priest sworn to the service of Zühn. While agents of Ruin can appear anywhere, and under any number of guises, most cult leaders have training as warrior-priests of Zühn.

The Slavers' Society

One of the most secretive groups in all of Djeser al-Maqqara is the Slavers' Society, a council of slave masters and criminals that effectively has power over all black market activities throughout the Lostlands. Effectively the main guild controlling all other thieves' guilds and assassins' guild, there is neither a purse cut nor a pocket picked without the blessing of the Slavers' Society. The ruling council of the Slavers' Society decides upon many things that seem bizarre to outside, but have much practical purpose to the underworld of the Lostlands—the standard price for slaves, the accepted contract rate for assassins, the untouchable nobles who may never be robbed. Freelance rogues in the Lostlands trying to operate outside the directives of the Society quickly find themselves on the wrong end of an assassin's blade.

All thieves and assassins in the Lostlands are part of the Slavers' Society, whether willing or unwilling; a tithe of a gold coin must be given to a local guild on the Day of the Fifth Prince. Most rogues, bards, and other adventurers who engage in questionable activities also pay this tithe, if only to avoid potential conflict with the Society. These local guilds, in turn, pass on these fees to the Slavers' Society, along with a portion of their revenue. Strangely enough, in this instance there does seem to be "honor among thieves"—the Society has an uncanny knack for discovering dishonesty, and makes pointed examples of those who would withhold from them. Troublesome guilds have literally vanished overnight, the victims of favored assassins in the employ of the Slavers' Society.

Society members in "good standing"—that is, those who pay the Slavers' Society beyond what is owed—can often turn their relationship with this dark council to their advantage. Prison gates have a way of opening prematurely for these miscreants, and the law often finds itself always a few steps behind those favored by the Society. The Slavers' Society also has greater resources—rare maps, exotic tools, and the like—than the typical local guilds for illicit activities. For a steep fee, rogues who seek out high-ranking members of the Slavers' Society in Djeser al-Maqqara may be able to obtain these resources, or at least borrow them for a time.

Sirens of Pelagia

The Sirens of Pelagia began as a single crew of devoted pirate hunters nearly two hundred years ago, but has since grown into a masterful, widespread organization as difficult to oppose as to hide from. Sponsored by the church of the Coral Queen, the Sirens comprise a network of female clerics and bards. Though they are famous for their pirate hunting, the Sirens seek to safeguard the open sea from all magic and mundane threats. Pollution, maritime warfare, and excessive whaling and fishing are kept to a minimum wherever the Sirens of Pelagia operate. To these ends, the Sirens will sail to any sea in the Known Realms, but their strongest influence lies within the Empyrean Ocean and the Lirean Sea.

While most are seafaring warriors or priestesses trolling the waters in search of malefactors, some Sirens dwell on the mainland, representing their interests by recruiting new members or employing silver tongues in political circles. Official membership is restricted to females of

any humanoid race, but plenty of men—husbands, paramours, or friends—assist with spell or blade. The Sirens usually crew schooners and galleys of their own, but some Sirens travel the oceans aboard commercial vessels and naval warships, hired to protect the crew and grant the blessings of the Coral Queen. The organization has a very loose hierarchy, and adventuring Sirens need only serve Pelagia's interests in whatever capacity they can.

Their public façade may be valorous, but the Sirens are not paladins of the sea. They serve Pelagia and her oceanic realms foremost, and toward their preservation they do not offer their pirate-hunting services for free. Having the most to lose, Northland kings and merchant guilds pay the most for Siren escorts in dangerous waters. They curse the Sirens for their harsh fees, but secretly know that facing criminal privateers or Barrier pirates would be a worse fate. Humbler sailors, such as lone captains and unaffiliated merchants, more often find the services of the Sirens offered freely. Monetary donations from all castes are, of course, always encouraged.

Sirens vary in appearance, but whenever they engage in official, church-sponsored capacities, they wear modest blue tabards bearing the symbol of Pelagia. The typical member wears leather armor—at sea, anything heavier is unwise—and adorns her hair with small seashells, carrying a rapier at her hip. Devoted to the Singing Sea, they learn many songs unique to the faith and will often identify each other with such melodies. There is an elusive charm to the Sirens, as they strive to both oppose and study their enemies. A Siren carries herself with the elegance of a patrician at sea, consorting with melodic merfolk and aquatic elves. Yet she can curse and spit with the best of sailors and sing the bawdiest of sea shanties.

As famous as the Sirens have become, theirs is an endless quest. For every devout Siren patrolling the waters, there are a hundred unscrupulous pirates who callously run Pelagia's domain red with the blood of innocents. For every true prayer to the Coral Queen, there are a thousand curses and acts of greed for the worship of gold. To be a Siren is to be marked by the lawless as a sworn enemy, as every day she risks her life and virtue against the cruelty of the Barrier pirates and their monstrous allies.

Three women lead this widespread organization. The first is Analee Waveseer, an aquatic elf and high priestess of Pelagia, who maintains the Temple of the Sacred Wave on the organization's hidden island-base, the Isle of Argent. The second is Isolia Seyene, a Criestine lord-governess who works to gather support from politicians and regents across the Northlands. The third is Saley Lonesinger, a virulent privateer who personally hunts the most notorious pirate vessels.

The Secret Kings

When the empire of Nimoria passed into antiquity, torn apart by internecine warfare, it was assumed that the legacy of its demon-blooded priest-kings ended as well. Unbeknownst to most, a secret cadre of aristocrats went into hiding, and emerged to seize power when the nation of Crieste was still young.

Though few in number, these families wield extraordinary power and wealth, and even sit on the Council of Lords. Their aim is nothing less than the destruction of Crieste and the rise of a new Nimoria, complete with its infernal masters of old.

The Secret Kings are made up of seven families, each with an infernal patron. Three of these families sit upon Crieste's ruling body, the Council of Lords. While their numbers are far short of a majority, the influence of the families in the imperial court is enough to sway the opinions of many other lords.

Like the priest-kings of old, many of those serving the Secret Kings are soulless husks, their souls sold into damnation in return for terrestrial powers. This is not undertaken lightly, since the Secret Kings are far from achieving their goals and enemies abound. More commonly, the scions of the Secret Kings carry demon blood within their veins. Cambions, tieflings, and half-fiends, so common during the reign of the Priest-Kings, still exist within the dark halls of the Secret Kings.

The following is an incomplete list of families that are alleged to make up the Secret Kings; even the most suspicious researcher has yet to determine the seventh family of the cabal. Eager crusaders should take note: The following families are also some of the most respected and honored of the empire. To openly accuse them of diablerie or dealing with infernal powers will only expose the accuser to scorn and ridicule, and draw the slow, sure wrath of the Secret Kings.

Asinard: A line of brilliant generals and warriors, House Asinard is best known for its Archbridge martial academy. Within the white, marble halls, young men and women of the empire come to study Crieste's hallowed military history and to train beneath masters in the art of warcraft. The academy turns out some of the nation's finest swordsmen and lancers, the future leaders of the imperial army.

The family's patriarch is Conach Asinard, a white-bearded warrior who never lost the passion or fury of his youth. His son, a fearsome warrior named Theodric the Black Eagle, is poised to take his father's place, but few expect Lord Conanch to retire soon.

Castellain: The scions of House Castellain have always served as advisors to the emperor. The family spends their days attending the far-flung courts of the barons, and there is never a gala or fete held where a Castellain is not in attendance. It is said that the family must have fae blood in their line, for their sons and daughters are unusually alluring and charismatic. Most agree there is no secret that the Castellains can't discover, and that the quickest way to the Emperor is through his Castellain ladies-in-waiting.

The family's head is the young matriarch, Inweth Castellain, a woman of exceeding grace, cunning, and dark beauty. Inweth and Lady Mortianna, the Emperor's Vizier, are mortal enemies, constantly scheming to subvert the power of the other. Inweth, a master of social graces, demonstrates none of this openly, but Mortianna lacks the subtlety of her rival.

Herac: A family of ranger lords and huntsmen, the sons and daughters of House Herac are respected masters of the wild. Their home is an ancient castle in northern Crieste, decorated with the hides and heads of scores of animals and monsters. Watchful and quiet, the lords of Herac are most at home in the woods and fields, in pursuit of their quarry. It is whispered that—for the right price—the Heracs will track down outlaws. If this is true, then there is nowhere in the North for a criminal to hide.

The ruler of Herac is a lean, older woman, with steel-gray hair and the eyes of a hawk. Lady Camoren Herac is respected as one of the finest rangers to tread the North, and is personally responsible for over half the trophies hanging in her ancestral halls. Her husband, Lord Raener, is a minor son of House Neraux who married into the Herac line.

Neraux: An honored family of astrologers, diviners, and seers, House Neraux prides itself as keepers of arcane lore. Hopeful apprentices travel the length of the empire to study at the feet of the masters of House Neraux. Located in Kassantia, the family hosts an informal academy with each member taking on as many apprentices as he or she sees fit. The sweeping, graceful towers of Neraux have become symbolic of arcane wisdom in service of the empire.

Master of the house is Emberin Neraux, a solemn warlock fond of wearing rusted iron masks and dark, concealing robes adorned with glowing sigils and crawling runes. Commoners and nobles alike delight in speculating about the reason behind the iron mask; some allege it conceals a deformity, others that the master of House Neraux is a demon-born cambion, lich, or worse. The only ones who might know the truth of the matter are the twin spearmaidens who attend Emberin's every need—were both not blind and mute.

Seyod: Of all the families of Crieste, House Seyod has the deepest coffers. A wildly successful family of traders, agents of the house roam the breadth and width of Áereth with their merchant galleons and well-guarded wagon trains. It is well accepted that the libraries of House Seyrod hide the most accurate maps of the North and its environs. Such maps are greatly coveted by explorers, and even a map alleged to be a "copy of a Seyod" is a priceless find.

While mighty House Seyod is only one of many merchant houses originating in Crieste, other merchant lords are quick to follow its lead. The family has ruined more than one city by refusing to deal with their inhabitants, and even regents are loathe to anger the masters of the house. House Seyod is directed by a council of three patriarchs: Misyl, Rosnold, and Jesail Seyod.

Tarasard: The minstrel-scions of House Tarasard enjoy an open invitation at courts across the North, and draw crowds wherever they play. Women swoon to their men, and it is said that no man alive can refuse the smile of a Tarasard bardess. The minstrels are sources of the latest gossip and of stories of faraway lands, and it is uncommon to find a court without a Tarasard bard in attendance.

House Tarasard also boasts the most elite fencing schools in all of the western Northlands, and perhaps all of Áereth. Each spring, hundreds of Creiste's finest young warriors compete in a tournament hosted by House Tarasard. A mere twenty warriors are chosen to attend the school and the rest are turned away. Curiously, it is not always the winners of the tournament who are selected to

attend the school. Theories about the school's criteria for students abound, but this in no way diminishes the enthusiasm of its applicants.

The master of House Tarasard is an aging bard, Haldrus Tarasard. Master Haldrus personally oversees the fencing school and is respected as an authority on nearly all matters of politics and state.

Threnodim

The Threnodim are a sect of bardic priests who serve Soleth, the god of dignified and merciful death. Derisively called the deathsingers by those who do not try to understand Soleth's macabre tenets, the bards of the Threnodim are better respected by those who must lay their loved ones to rest.

When adventuring, the Threnodim always bury the bodies of the anonymous fallen that they encounter. Often these are other, less fortunate adventurers who succumbed to the traps or monsters before them. The bards sing sweet, mournful elegies for these unknowns, and will compose great lamentations for their own companions if they are slain.

Misunderstood by most, the Threnodim do not long for death, either for themselves or for others. They celebrate life by honoring death and acknowledging its inevitability. Like all bards, their music can still inspire their companions to valor, but most of their melodies are grave and haunting. The dirges that they frequently perform are melancholic to their traveling companions, and for this reason Threnodim often go from one group to another. Yet the efficiency with which these solemn bards can confront the undead often makes them welcome among adventuring parties.

Hailing from any temple of Soleth, the Threnodim have no official base of operations. At least once in their lives, however, most make a pilgrimage to the Hall of Requiem in Soulgrave. Resembling a massive mausoleum, the Hall is the largest known temple to Soleth in the Known Realms, and the pilgrimage requires one to venture deep into the streets of the necropolis. A permanent clergy dwells there, and each night the Threnodim and their more numerous clerical counterparts labor to lay as many of the undead of Soulgrave to rest as they can before retreating into their tomb-like fortress.

Threnodim dress in somber tones, choosing leather dyed with black or gray when required to wear armor. The favored instrument of the Threnodim is the threnody chime box, a complex device that issues melodious, haunting tones. Those who cannot afford or find threnody chimes favor recorders, flutes, or harps.

Trader's Cabal

More commonly known as the "Traitor's Cabal," the alliance is composed of the twelve dominant merchant houses of the Southern Province. While the Cabal's membership is always changing due to shifting fortunes, the blades of assassins, and ceaseless internal strife, the group's goals remain unchanging: absolute control of Northland trade, by any means necessary.

While not evil in the usual sense of the word, the Cabal is utterly amoral and often engages in wickedness that even a devil would shun. The Cabal's single driving principle is profit, and its plans can span entire decades. Regents have been raised with the support of the Cabal, and just as many meet their end when they dare to thwart the Cabal's interests.

Based in Punjar, the Trader's Cabal is headquartered in the sprawling sandstone citadel known as the Souk. Within its labyrinthine halls, the fortunes of whole nations are bandied about like so many soiled coins. Tariffs are discussed, taxes argued, and the long-range strategy of the Cabal is endlessly debated and revised.

With coffers that rival those of a wealthy nation, an army of thugs and assassins, and ships that ply every waterway and sea of the North, many consider it incredible that the Cabal isn't the uncontested ruler of the Northlands. The answer lies in the internecine warfare that plagues the Cabal's ranks. Fearful and distrustful, the members of the Cabal are their own worst enemies, constantly vying against one another for power. Even as one merchant lord seizes control, three others ally against him, only to backstab one another in the mad rush for power. If any one lord were ever to secure absolute control of the Cabal, it would threaten the foundations of the North, but until such time its members are forced to content themselves with the lesser nations, playing with them as they would puppets on a string.

At the time of this scribe's penning, three merchant houses maintain an uneasy alliance. Most agree that it is only a matter of time before one of the three attempts to usurp the others, igniting a bloody shadow war in alleys of Punjar.

House Hoshuet: Ruled by a sweaty boar of a man, House Hoshuet has long enjoyed a presence in the Trader's Cabal. Its ruler, Zanji the Poisoner, is a master at politics, turning the lesser houses upon one another, buying and selling allegiances at will, and keeping the finest assassins in Punjar under his exclusive employ.

House Quartian: Openly dealing with infernal powers, Tesjin the Soulless rules his house through fear and the

threat of his demonic servants. The master of House Quartian has placed his soul in a canopic relic of great power, thereby foiling all attempts on his life and rendering Tesjin—for all intents—immortal.

The house specializes in forbidden magic, and pays highly for wicked artifacts or relics, especially those stolen from the naga cities hidden in the far Southlands. Its agents scour the corners of Áereth in search of lost cities, hiring independent adventurers to do the dirty work of exploration.

House Zaran: The traders of House Zaran are a mystery even to their peers. Composed of Lostland shahs, the traders refuse to name their city of origin, or provide any explanation for the seemingly endless stream of slaves and magic items they offer in their tented bazaar. Those that have attempted to follow the caravans south invariably are caught and slain, the corpses left staked on spears as a warning to others.

For all intents, the traders appear to be human, but they are never found without their hooded cloaks and the heavy cloth wraps that conceal all but their eyes. The traders speak in a soft whisper, reminiscent of a hissing cobra, and often smell of the strange herbs and oils used in the mummification of dead kings.

WANDERERS

The nondescriptly named Wanderers are, in fact, a guild of psionic creatures that set out frequently from the hidden city of Elraydia. At any given time, at least five caravans of Wanderers, each led by a high-ranking captain, trek the roads and wilds of the Northlands and Lostlands seeking more of their own kin: humanoids gifted or cursed with wondrous powers of the mind. Many such beings hide their powers, rightly fearing persecution, while others misuse their talents and endanger themselves and others. The Wanderers have seen the limits—and the unfettered possibilities—of controlled psionic power, and they wish to lead the world to a future that acknowledges this divinity of the mind.

Although they first appear to be simple vagabonds and gypsies, or even common adventuring companies, a closer inspection reveals that these caravans contain members of at least several races. In this sense, the Elraydian predilection for tolerance and variety can give them away. They rely upon racial diversity to help them along the dangerous paths of Áereth—but those with an eye for psionic-using creatures are usually able to see them for what they are.

When a caravan is in need of supplies, they either return to Elraydia or hire themselves out as beneficent mercenaries to purchase more. Accustomed to hiding their talents from nonpsionic peoples, the Wanderers have developed their own vagabond cant to speak to one another. Even without narrow-minded scrutiny, they typically employ euphemisms to refer to their own phrenic interests. "Kindred spirits," for example, are the psionic-using creatures that the Wanderers seek to find, liberate, or safeguard, while "sharpers" are narrow-minded mages and priests who persecute psions because they do not understand the powers they manifest.

When the captain deems that enough kindred spirits have been found during their journey, he leads the caravan homeward again. Most caravans have at least one cleric of Auzarr to serve as a healer and spiritual advisor, while a handful of psychic warriors serve as the muscle. Captains are appointed by the Sestet whenever a Wanderer caravan prepares to depart Elraydia, though some impressive psions have served in this capacity numerous times. Currently, a bardic psion named Linni and a psychic warrior named Kashya have made names for themselves as captains in the guild, spending more time abroad than any other.

Chapter 6
Beyond the Known Realms

The Shadowed West

West of the Xocoatic Marshes and the Plains of Fire is a realm referred to only as the Shadowed West. Though not considered part of the Southlands, nor drawn on any maps of the Known Realms, it is a mysterious land whose mystic beliefs have seeped into the religions, customs, and everyday mindsets of the peoples of Ssorlang and Darawan—and perhaps in time, the rest of the Southlands.

The few arrivals from the Shadowed West—mostly human, and typically referred to as the Xanthous by Northlanders—have distinct appearances: skin yellowed by their climate, hair as dark as Xulmecs', and pronounced epicanthic folds giving them a more slanted look by Northland perception. Whether from early exposure to these beings or the elapse of centuries in close proximity to the Shadowed West, the people of Darawan and the drakon themselves often bear similar physical traits. Sages have speculated that the humans of the Southlands and the Shadowed West can trace their lineage to the same tribes first subjugated by dragonkind ages ago.

The land separating the Known Realms from the Shadowed West remains a natural—or perhaps unnatural—barrier, preventing both worlds from establishing regular trade routes. In the north, the Eztenqui Jungle grows more perilous with each westward mile. The mordant Xocoatic Marshes and the scalding Plains of Fire bar passage for common mortals. In the south, the Kharan Plateau becomes a desolate wasteland where few trees thrive and only hardy grasses cling to life. If one can endure the countless miles of bleak life, perhaps the Shadowed West can be reached. Such an overland journey, requiring one to penetrate Ssorlang first, is said to take months, at best. Most journeys to the Shadowed West are by sea, but the jagged coastlines south and west of Ssorlang, which seem to stretch on endlessly, are wracked by monsoons in every season, making the voyage a perilous one.

Whatever the nature of the Shadowed West, great works of good and evil have come from these unseen lands. Despite the dangers of the journey, the perplexing Xanthous make periodic, if infrequent, visitations to the Known Realms, usually by way of the Ayalan Sea in the south or the Sea of Desperation in the north. Their customs are bizarre even to the Southland mindset, yet they bring trade goods that cannot be found anywhere else. Outlandish foods are brought to the famous emporiums of Myashtlan and medicinal wonders to the Criestine Colonies. Paintings of their homeland depict curve-roofed, storied towers, and majestic pagodas.

However strange, they possess many similarities to the folk of the Known Realms. Noble warriors, clad in exotic armors of iron, leather, silk, and brass bear a resemblance, in a fundamental way, to Northland paladins.

Robed mountain warriors and arcane monks employ fighting styles similar to those practiced among the monasteries of the Known Realms, while spellcasters in colorful mantles call upon spirits of nature to fuel their magic like the wizards and druids of the Southlands.

Underdeep: The World Below

With the falling of the Shadow Star so many centuries ago, a smoldering rift was created in the Lostlands that became a dark doorway. The World Below, for eons limited in its abilities to reach the rest of Áereth, suddenly had a gateway to the nations of the Lostlands. The impact of the Shadow Star was felt in more ways than one as the Devil's Cauldron began to boil, as the denizens of this underground region began to extend their reach and ambition into the sunlit kingdoms above.

In the region of the Lostlands, the World Below has always been dominated by the aboleth. Miles beneath the deserts of this barren, desolate region are hundreds of cold, murky lakes, with a labyrinthine network of powerful underground rivers connecting them all. The aboleth rule from the depths of these waters, using sorcery and guile to enslave all that they encounter. The abollar, derro, and duergar are the aboleth's loyal—and violent—servants.

The drow are the other formidable power to be found here. Although not possessing the raw power of the aboleth, their sheer numbers make them a force to be reckoned with. They are a relatively recent arrival into the underground realms below the Lostlands; much of their strength lies to the North, where their rule is unchallenged. While they have no love of the aboleth, they also have no desire to engage in a genocidal war with them; hence, the drow have deferred to the aquatic monstrosities … for the time being.

The kingdom of Gorhgijesk acts as the main power ruling the World Below in this part of Áereth. However, there are several small independent areas that remain isolated from the kingdom, and they keep their nefarious activities to themselves.

The connection between the Lostlands and the dark kingdoms beneath it began long ago. Dwarves, sent by their sphinx masters to mine shadow stone so many centuries in the past, eventually went mad and tunneled their way deep into the mountains, finding their way into the World Below. These insane dwarves—who had mutated into the monstrosities known as derro—fell into the mental clutches of the mighty aboleth. From the derro, the aboleth learned of the Khonsurian Empire, and the politics of the lands above them.

Drow scouts began to spy upon the lands above them. They learned that the powers that ruled the strange surface lands, though formidable, were stagnant … and careless. The successors to the Khonsurian Empire, like the sphinxes before them, had become complacent. The aboleth and the drow sensed the opportunity for conquest, and from that moment forward began the slow, patient steps necessary for invasion.

The underground rivers and caverns reach far throughout the Lostlands, to the Northlands and beyond, reaching like sinister tentacles into every nook and cranny. Aboleth gold falls quietly into the hands of many a merchant or noble in the Lostlands, providing the aquatic horrors with an effective network of spies and informants. Additionally, drow assassins can drop into any city or village in the Lostlands with ease, merely following their grand system of tunnels to the destination of their choosing. As they and the aboleth now begin to amass their forces in earnest, it may not be long before armies—not just assassins—pour out of these tunnels, and make the presence of the World Below known upon the World Above.

Chapter 7
History of the Northlands

That Áereth is a world of antiquity is disputed by none. An armchair scholar need merely walk into the fields outside his pastoral home and gaze a while upon the standing stones of the druids, walk to the village along a road laid by armies of forgotten slaves, examine the ancestral blade hung on the belt of the shire's reeve, or consider the hearth stone above his lord's fireplace and the strange runes etched thereon.

In many ways, citizens of the Known Realms are foreigners in their own land, blissfully unaware of all that came before. Living day to day with the threat of raiders, dire beasts, and marauding giants is challenge enough. To these poor souls, history is a curiosity best left to the sages.

For their part, the sages agree, knowing that if the common serf understood the truth of civilization's fleeting nature, there would be little to enforce the rule of kings. For the history of Áereth is extensive, and the Reign of Man is but a brief notation scribed in the tome of ages.

Just *what* came before and in what *sequence*, few scholars can agree. The elven libraries of the Corsan were lost with the razing of Arovarel. Tablets of unknown antiquity exist in the secret libraries of the Theocracy, but their pictographs resist all attempts at decoding. Worst of all, few are the regents who can be troubled with the work of history; like the unschooled peasants laboring in the fields, most kings and lords are consumed by the daily struggle to maintain order and defend their realms against the incursions of man and beast.

Surprisingly, it is those with the least history that have the greatest interest in its study. Adventurers, risen from the ranks of common sellswords, alley toughs, and street-corner magicians, spend their careers deep within the ruins of civilizations long past. The success of their ventures—and the length of their careers—depends entirely upon the accuracy and depth of knowledge gained prior to the expedition.

Just as veteran explorers consult sages, so too do sages seek out adventurers who are brave, skilled, and lucky enough to return with firsthand knowledge and relics of the bygone ages. Together, the Hero and the Sage are slowly piecing together an accurate history of the world. It is a mammoth work and subject to constant revision, and yet it represents the best presentation of knowledge agreed upon today.

Finally, it must be acknowledged that this history shows a human bias. Explorers returning from the colonies report of dynasties—like those of the dwarves and elves—that shame the earliest known Northland nations. Who can say what mighty empires rose and fell before humans learned to walk erect? Civilization was a late-comer to humankind and her Northlands. But until more can be learned of these ancient cultures, and of their place in the destiny of Áereth, our focus must remain on the mysterious North.

Time Line of the Northlands

Dates use the Empyrean Calendar (EC).

Date	Events
–120	The storm giant Aeshotal begins his campaign to unite the disparate giant tribes of the Known Realms into a single alliance bent on domination of Áereth.
–66	The War of Divine Right begins. Fleeing the march of the giants, tribes of human savages scatter across the North.
–46	The humans of Xulmec construct a colossal obsidian idol at the behest of the god Huamec.
–44	Possessing the obsidian idol himself, Huamec defeats the fire and storm giants that assail the Southlands. The idol is broken in the conflict, and the god is believed slain.
–43	Attempting to stem the march of the giants, the armies of the Abylosian Empire, along with

druids, wizards, and countless slaves create the Wall of Abylos.

–41 Ahna-Vithyre, the great elven homeland, burns.

–37 Aeshotal and the armies of giants surround Ahna-Vithyre and Amonzadd in the land of Lirea. The dwarven and elven nations join forces to form the Eldritch Coalition.

–34 The cloud giantess Jathra seeks out the leaders of the Eldritch Coalition, bearing the secrets of the *Pillars of Expulsion*.

–15 The *Pillars of Expulsion* are completed and activated, but magical interference from the Coalition's dissenters creates a backlash of the artifacts' might, leading to the slow destruction of Lirea. The land sinks beneath the waters of the Empyrean, drowning the armies of the giants, elves and dwarves, and destroying the great cities of Ahna-Vithyre and Amonzadd. The Lirean Sea is formed in its place.

–7 The War of Divine Right comes to an end.

1 The shattered remnants of the elven and dwarven nations agree to solemn treaties in honor of the Eldritch Coalition, then retreat to their clanholds to rebuild their nations. The tribes of humans descend into unchecked barbarism, heralding the First Dark Age.

252 The last of the Mages of Nemfar create the secret order of Druid Kings to guide the humans in the ways of the ancients.

260+ For one thousand years, the Dark Age stretches on. Countless nations rise only to fall back into savagery, swept under by hordes of barbarians and monstrous humanoids. The nations of elves and dwarves slowly rebuild their power.

1200+ The legendary mage Tsathzar Rho rises to power. At the apex of his might, the wizard's stronghold is destroyed and the surrounding lands reduced to ash.

1550 The nations Kothea, Nimoria, and Erheim emerge from the tide of barbarism.

1753 The barbarian hordes of Abylos begin their war against the Druid Kings.

1760 Erheim falls before the Abylossian horde.

1779 The war between Kothea and Abylos grinds to a halt. The slave people of Uru'Nuk rise up against their Abylossian masters and fight their way to freedom in the East.

1800+ The Priest-Kings of Nimoria strike bargains with Infernal powers. The scouts of Kothea make first contact with elves and dwarves.

1810 Nimoria raises an army of cambions, devils, and demons and goes to war with the nations of elves and dwarves.

1814 The dark armies of Nimoria are defeated and the Priest-Kings turn to infighting and bickering.

1978 The monks of the Monastery of the Dawning Sun establish the cloister of Clynnoise to protect the collected lore of the Known Realms.

2100+ Nimoria descends into civil war. Kothea slowly breaks into a score of fractious kingdoms.

2185 Clynnoise is destroyed by the Orcs of the Broken Tusk, who, with the aid of giants, build a keep on the site.

2200+ The empires of men descend back into chaos and internecine warfare. Gunere Numon begins to unite disparate warbands, forging the nation of Crieste from the ashes of Nimoria.

2233 The Knights of Gorhan retreat to the north, building the Cloister of the Ordocar and dedicating themselves to lives of contemplation and service.

2250+ Crieste expands its borders north, east and south, slowly growing to a great empire. Alliances are struck with the elves and dwarves, and the first halfling caravans begin their march across Áereth. Legends of a gleaming white tower, protected by an invisible wall, begin to circulate.

2400+ Criestine explorers sail west, making new contact with the Xulmec city-states, and marking the Golden Age of Crieste.

2521 The renowned fire wizardress, Soranna of the Stolen Ember, and her companion, the swordsman Bezentaine, vanish into the northern Ul Dominor mountains.

2553 The Company of the Black Osprey clear out the ruins of Clynnoise, claiming Castle Whiterock for their own. Fifty-eight years later, the last member of the Company dies and Castle Whiterock falls into ruin and disrepair.

2670 The armies of the drow-fiend Chalychia, armed with the *Shadowstone*, conquer the elven city of Arovarel. The very next year, she is defeated by a band of heroes led by the paladin Valinus. The ruined city of Arovarel is never rebuilt.

2887 In a private imperial court, the eldest son of the emperor, Ghorrene the Black Eagle, is convicted of deviltry. Ghorrene is exiled from Crieste and the imperial throne is awarded to his younger brother, Oststad the II.

2894 The Black Eagle raises an army of evil mercenaries, slaves, and monstrous humanoids, and sails on eastern Crieste. The warriors stationed at Gurnard's Head are ordered to hold their posts at all costs, beginning the Siege of Sorrows.

2899 The armies of the Black Eagle are defeated, and Ghorrene vanishes into the East.

2903 Emperor Oststad the II is abducted from his palace in Kassantia. The lord-barons are unable to decide upon a new emperor. The Interregnum begins, lasting for the next 300 years.

2905+ The majority of the North slowly reverts into unclaimed wilderness, isolated fiefdoms, and small kingdoms. Human woodsmen break ancient treaties with the elven nations, and harvest vast swaths of scarred timber, sparking numerous conflicts.

3075 The Southern Province secedes from the Criestine Empire. Crieste goes to war with its old province, but fails to regain the territory.

3098 The pirate Bloody Jack Dascombe plunders the imperial tribute fleet. He is caught six months later and executed, but the treasure is never recovered.

3100+ Thire and Luthea declare their independence, and the remainder of the northern kingdoms follow suit. The Empire of Crieste shrinks to a tenth of its original size, leading sages to prophesize the coming of a Second Dark Age.

3101 Silverton miners accidentally uncover and release the vampire Sorrenna. The mine's owner, Jaspar Gannu, is held responsible. Master Gannu is lynched and his wife and child are run out of town. The Gannu family home is burned to the ground and the site is sown with thorny vines.

3171 The wicked conjurer, Erasmus Lore, seizes control of Dundraville, only to be defeated by the Company of the Silver Lute.

3195 The ogre mage Tarkhan Khurzog seizes control of the Scourgelands, marching on the Grand Duchy of Leherti.

3196 The disparate nations of man, elf, and dwarf rise up together, arresting the halt of the Scourge, but not before the Grand Duchy of Leherti is left in ruins.

3197 Unable to stem the tide of secession, the lord-barons of Crieste elect a seven-year-old boy to be Emperor, bringing the Interregnum to an end.

3198 Whitefang Citadel is built atop Aurora Pass in the Dragonspire Mountains.

3199 *Spring:* A trio of hurricanes strike Argalis and neighboring coastal towns. *Winter:* The Star of the Black Sun appears in the night sky.

3200 Present Day

The First Dark Age

Humankind's dominance of the North began with the War of Divine Right, when the race of giants rose up as one in an attempt to enslave the lesser, humanoid races. No one knows how long the war waged, or how many thousands of heroes gave their lives in defense of freedom, but when the waters of the Empyrean swallowed the last peaks of Lirea, the ancient empires of elves and dwarves had been laid low. The elves retreated to their remaining forest sanctuaries, and the dwarves sealed the gates to their mountain clanholds. Both races had suffered mightly in the war and only by turning their backs on the world were they able to survive with their cultures intact.

In their stead rose the fledgling nations of mankind. Scattered in the aftermath of the war, isolated from their elven and dwarven mentors and struggling for survival in the savage wilderness, Northland humans quickly forgot the secrets of metalcraft and magic. With few traditions of their own, they descended into savagery and barbarism. Within fifteen generations—not even the lifespan of a single elf or dwarf—all that remained of their former greatness was a collection of oral histories retold by skalds, and a handful of ancestral weapons and armors, passed from one conquering warchief to the next.

Reign of the Druid Kings

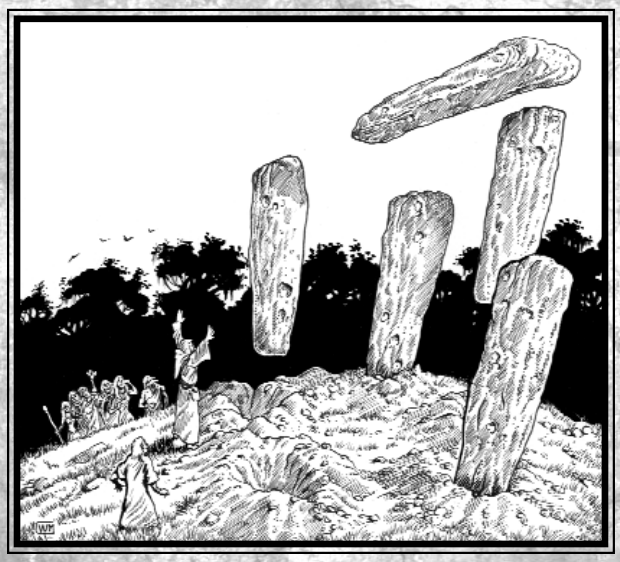
Witnessing the rapid decline of man, the last of the great magi sought ways to preserve the fragile advances of mankind. Some entombed themselves within the earth to wait out the march of ages, dark wizards pursued the promise of lichdom, and others sought to transfer their intellect and souls within staves and constructs.

The mages of Nemfar sought another solution, and summoned together a coalition of young druids. The druids were given the rudimentary secrets of arcane magic and entrusted with the destiny of mankind. Binding arcane magic with the divine might of the druids, the dying archmages spent the last of their powers raising the standing stones that dot the Northlands and imbuing them with mighty dweomers and the power to work miracles.

Armed with magic of old, the Druid Kings built temple-palaces atop high mountain passes, within misted forest vales, and alongside tumbling waterfalls. Protected from the endless wars of the barbarians, the masters amassed the collective knowledge of the elder races, met with the dragons of old, and sought out alliances with the elves and dwarves.

Knowing the power of their lore, the masters were cautious when revealing it to their barbarian brothers. They carefully chose initiates from among the savage hordes and tutored these select few in the ways of the ancients. In time, the initiates returned to their tribes, where they served as wisemen, healers, and advisors. Progress was slow as untold civilizations rose and fell, but over time the mightiest of the new nations—Kothea, Nimoria, and Erheim—emerged from the sea of barbarism, carefully guided by the hidden masters.

The Druid Kings' machinations went undetected by most, but the leaders that were too cunning or willful to submit to the rule of advisors rebelled. Chief among these rebels were the painted barbarians of Abylos. Summoning a great horde, they swept over the Dragonspire Mountains and poured into the heart of the Northlands. In the ensuing slaughter, hundreds of initiates were burned alive, the palaces of Druid Kings were razed, and their ancient libraries were put to the torch.



Kothea, Nimoria, and Erheim

Flames of war raged throughout the west. Erheim fell before the horde, but not before the horde's master was slain in single combat by the Princeling of Erheim. Both were carried back to Abylos and buried beneath the Dragonspire Mountains.

Nimoria, protected in the west, weathered the assault behind crude stone walls and wooden towers. Kothea took the brunt of the assault, and the war with their Abylossian brothers lasted for twenty blood-soaked years, the Kotheans and Abylossians slowly adopting the others' traditions.

Meanwhile, far to the east, the people of Uru'Nuk rose up against their Abylossian masters. The horde of Abylos, unable to wage war on two fronts, collapsed. The liberated Uru'Nuk people migrated east, taking up residence on the high prairies that now carry their name.

The Age of Empires

The Priest-Kings of Nimoria, seeing their chance to seize control of the west, struck foul bargains with infernal powers, foolishly believing that they could turn the depravity of demons and devils to their advantage. The souls of the royal line were sold into eternal damnation and the fortunes of Nimoria rose to precipitous heights. Cambions ran unchecked through the imperial court. Its nobility engaged in bloody sacrificial rites, and its corrupt populace bartered with wicked creatures of every sort.

To the east, the nation of Kothea slowly recovered from decades of war. Strengthened by the infusion of barbarian blood, the warriors of Kothea rode east and north, battling with monstrous humanoids and encountering the outriders of the sylvan realm. Meeting with the elves for the first time in centuries, the Kotheans began trade relations with their cousins of the woods. Led by gnome guides into the Ul Dominor mountains, the Kothean scouts held council with the dwarven lords. After years of explorations, the Kothean expedition returned to their emperor with tales of grand palaces atop great trees and the mightiest of cities hidden beneath the roots of mountains.

Armed with the knowledge of a much larger world, Kothea began trading with the elder races in earnest. But the infernal-blooded kings of Nimoria, foolishly believing the counsel of demons, saw the dwarves and elves to

be a threat to their power. Raising an army of slaves, demon-blooded sorcerers, and aberrations, they marched on the forests and mountain holdfasts. The armies of Nimoria were met with the unrestrained fury of the dwarf and elf races. In less than five years, the demon-spawned armies were crushed by the might of the elder races. Defeated, the Priest-Kings turned to bickering and then outright warfare among themselves as each vied for power over his peers.

Meanwhile, the people of Kothea had spread far to the north, scouts coming within sight of the Hoarfrost Bay. But as they encountered elves, dwarves, and other races—some savage, some not—the Kotheans were slowly absorbed into the local customs and cultures, until they were Kothean in name only. Stretched over the far reaches of the North, the sun slowly set on the greatest empire the Northlands had yet known. Mighty Kothea, jewled crown of the east, sank under the weight of its own success, splintering into a dozen fractious realms.

The Demon Empire

Even as Kothea began its inevitable decline, the Priest-Kings of Nimoria continued their internecine warfare. Heeding the calls of their diabolic and demonic advisors, each believed that he or she was destined to be the one true emperor of Nimoria.

Armies of slaves, driven on by demonic taskmasters wreathed in azure flames, marched to their death. Chariots thundered across the land, and war horns sounded the call to battle. The armies clashed on the high plains of Samshem, churning the fields to mud beneath their sandaled feet. Mighty war mammoths crushed entire legions, as prides of dire lions tore through ranks of slave-soldiers. Cambion generals fought alongside summoned devils, while the Priest-Kings themselves brought down fire from the heavens.

When the battles had ended and the last war horn sounded, the empire of Nimoria had fought itself into ruin. A nameless spearman found the last two Priest-Kings locked in mortal combat amid the smoking remains of armies. Begging forgiveness for the sins of his empire, the spearman slew both regents with a single blow, then raised a pale, blood soaked flag of surrender over their soulless bodies.

In the months and years that followed, the empire—lacking a single leader—fell into chaos and savagery. Strange cults emerged and flourished, predicting a coming apocalypse and the end of days. Bandit warlords ruled the countryside, while the adjuncts of the lost Priest-Kings fought for control of the faithful. Monstrous humanoids swarmed unchecked, and once again beasts preyed upon man. From the smoking ruins of an empire rose the warlord Gunere Numon, the same man who would one day be crowned the Emperor of Crieste.

The Rise of Crieste

Born a slave, Gunere Numon distinguished himself in the war years, rising through the ranks of the Nimorian army. In the years after the war, he sought refuge among the warbands, swearing loyalty to one of the nameless bandit lords that rose to power. In short order, Numon assumed command of the band, leading a series of successful raids on the fortresses of nearby warlords.

But Numon was not content to be the master of brigands. As a young man, he had witnessed firsthand the ravages of war, and knew that so long as fractious warlords ruled the land, peace would elude his people. Taking up arms and the mantle of *Crieste* (Nimorian for the dire lions that roam the Samshem plains), Numon systematically conquered the surrounding warlords, expanding the sweep of his domain. Surrounding himself with a handpicked council of warriors, Numon and his generals unified the scattered ruins of the empire.

Now hailed as King Numon the Lion, the general sent his warriors to the farthest reaches of the empire, quelling the threat of monstrous humanoids and rebels and making the roads and fields safe for the commoner. Even as an aging warrior, Numon the Lion refused to put down his sword, leading quests against dragons, barbarians, and any foe that would threaten his people. In his final years, he granted each general a barony, and empowered the Council of Lords to guide his fledgling empire.

When the great regent died, the entire nation mourned his passing. Throughout the winter, solemn flags hung from the tops of citadels and towers, while the Council of Lords met to discuss the future of the empire.

When spring finally broke winter's frosty grasp, the mourning flags were replaced with the triumphant banners of Crieste, and a young baron, Korde of Kassantia, was crowned Emperor of Crieste.

Of Barons and Colonies

Crieste flourished for seven hundred glorious years, slowly expanding its borders east and north, creating new baronies as territories were explored and conquered. Criestine ambassadors were granted audience with the elven and dwarven nations, new alliances were struck, and humanity entered a cultural renaissance. Knights rode against barbarians to the

north and east, raising blade and shield in the defense of civilization. Contested by orcs, giants, and lost tribes of savage humans, they claimed entire wildernesses in the name and glory of Crieste.

Meanwhile, Kalían ships sailed far to the west, bringing home stories of savage cannibals, impenetrable jungles, and unimaginable wealth for the taking. Darel Voltigeur, a cunning sea captain, established the first Criestine colony, incurring the wrath of the drakon that ruled the land. The snake men rose up, and it took the united might of the Xulmec allies, the Criestine navy, and the elven warrior-mages of the Blackbriar to defeat them.

But the empire's success brought decadence. While the Criestine armies struggled mightily on the borderlands and in the colonies, the lord-barons and generals of the interior grew steadily more complacent, indulging in extravagant balls and raising monuments to their own glory.

It was not to last. On the eve of his thirtieth year, Emperor Oststad vanished from his palace, abducted in the night. The lord-barons sent for the empire's greatest astrologers, seers, magicians, and diviners, while knights of the realm scoured the countryside, but to no avail. The ruler of the most powerful empire in the world had disappeared without a trace.

Each lord-baron sought to turn the situation to his advantage, vying for power before a new emperor could be elected. One year turned to five and then ten. Unable or unwilling to agree upon a new emperor, the fractious Council of Lords allowed the empire to descend into interregnum.

The Interregnum and Rise of the Free Kings

For three hundred years, Crieste limped along without an emperor. Seasons passed, the fortunes of the baronies rose and fell, and still the corrupt Council of Lords refused to agree upon an emperor.

Life was little changed in the empire's interior, but on the borders of the empire the baronies had to fight for their very existence against monstrous threats and barbarian raiders. The baronies turned to mercenary companies for support in their desperate fight for survival. Each year they sent emissaries to the imperial court, begging the lords to set aside their differences and agree upon an emperor, and each year their requests were denied.

Beset by danger on all sides, the baronies became the masters of their own fate. Treaties and alliance were broken with the elven nations, as woodsmen cut into the hearts of the great forests of old. Man warred against elf, driving the sylvan people further into isolation. The dwarves, high atop their mountain citadels, suffered less at the hands of men, welcoming those that came in peace, and easily crushing the rest.

The Southern Province was the first to declare independence from Crieste, seceding from the empire in a bloody revolution. The nations of the North watched with interest as the Council of Lords struggled to respond. When, after a decade of empty threats and meaningless posturing, Crieste had failed to regain the Province, it was clear how powerless the Council of Lords had become. Acting on the ineffectual weakness of the empire's government, the barons took matters into their own hands, declaring independence in quick succession.

Fearing the collapse of their empire, the Council of Lords hastily convened. For seven days and nights, they argued and fought, debating the virtues of one candidate against the next. On the eighth day, they threw open the doors of the Council and announced the sixteenth Emperor of Crieste: a seven-year old boy. The child would rule alongside his vizier, Lady Mortianna, until his fifteenth birthday, when he would assume full mastery of the Dragonskull Throne.

Starved for leadership and desperate for an emperor, the surviving baronies quickly welcomed their new emperor.

Wrath of the Scourge and the Fall of Leherti

While Crieste writhed in the death throes of an empire, its greatest fief, the Grand Duchy of Leherti, teetered on the brink of collapse. Years of inbreeding had reduced the Andithil dynasty to feebleminded figureheads incapable of leadership. Blessed with abundant resources and bountiful harvests, there was little need for true leadership, and for too long the Grand Duchy was able to eke by on the widom of its seneschals.

The illusion came to an end in the summer of 3195. A ten-year drought had reduced the Mirdar-Luminar Steppes to a tinderbox, and brought low the migratory herds of draex and reindeer. When a late summer lightning storm set fire to the Mirdar Forest, the hungry tribes of ogres, goblinoids, and giant-kin swarmed into the Grand Duchy. Tarkhan Khurzog, a demonic ogre-mage of unmatched cunning and cruelty, seized control of the hordes, hammering the chaotic mob into a disciplined, regimented force. Seeing the might of the Tarkhan, evil mercenary companies, foul wizards, and infernal priests rallied to his banner.

Previously, the disorganized humanoid mobs of the steppes had posed little threat to the knights of Leherti. But by summer's end, the plains shook to the awful beat of marching soldiers, mighty siege engines dotted the horizon, and dragons rode upon the smoke of war. The Scourge had been born.

Idiot-born and spineless, the ruling family of Leherti struggled to mount a defense against the coming darkness. Seeing their nation in danger of destruction, the generals of the Grand Duchy launched a desperate coup. The assassins failed, and Archduke Ramaster the XII executed each of his generals in retribution, and the Scourge marched on Leherti unopposed.

The ensuing chaos is well documented. Abandoned by their rulers, each city was left to its own defenses. The northernmost cities fell first, their citizens taken as slaves or sacrificed to the Scourge's demonic patrons. Noble warriors of Leherti marched against the Scourge and were defeated time and again.

Knights of the Lance and the Sable March, and the steel-clad legions of Holdfast dwarves, bolstered by the elven mage knights of Corsan and the sorcerers of Koranth, rode to the defense of the Grand Duchy. The ragtag alliance of good clashed with the Scourge on the plains above Wyrm's Deep. When winter brought the season of war to an end, over three-quarters of Leherti had fallen to the armies of the Tarkhan.

Present Day

A grim cloud hangs over the Northlands. At the time of this scribe's feeble scratchings, scarcely one-third of the North can be properly termed civilized. The great empires of yore have all slipped beneath the march of time. Where great cities once thrived, tall forests now stand. The magnificent works of wizards abound, but few can lay claim to their arcane might. Ruins of old whisper of long-lost secrets, waiting only for those daring enough to uncover them. Fell monsters prowl the borderlands, while barbarian raiders grow ever bolder. The civilized nations of mankind, once the shining rulers of the North, are poised on the brink of ruin.

Majestic Crieste has shrunk to a handful of baronies. Its emperor, a mere child, is counseled by corrupt barons and a vizier of unchecked wickedness. Once again monsters and monstrous humanoids roam the darkness, setting upon the helpless and weak. The Priest-Kings of old have returned, and wage a secret war for control of the empire.

The Grand Duchy of Leherti lies in smoking decay, its cities put to the torch and its people enslaved to monsters. The surviving free cities are hard put to hold their own, let alone retake that which was lost. The armies of the Scourge, far from defeated, bide their time and recoup their forces, waiting only for the time to finish what they have begun.

The Southern Province and northern nations, once beholden to the Emperor of Crieste, now strike out for their own. They carry humankind's fiery torch, but are threatened on all sides, contesting with each other as much as with monsters.

Travel between nations grows ever less frequent and ever more dangerous. Meanwhile, barbarians of the North and Abylos of old, threaten at the borders, raiding deeper into the heart of civilization. Dark seers consult their fiendish masters and declare an end to the Age of Man.

And yet, not all is lost. Courageous heroes hail from every quarter, eager to take up arms and spells in the defense of civilization. In Crieste, the Knights of the Sable March fight in the name of the Emperor and wage a secret war against their evil vizier. Dwarven warlords take up axe beside elf knights of the Blackbriar, Corsan, and Anseur. Knights of the Lance ride to the ends of the North, fighting for justice and good. And everywhere, adventurers, refusing to slip silently into the annals of history, fight their way into forgotten ruins and ancient dungeons, returning with untold riches and arcane relics.

It is a time of heroes, when power, riches, and honor can be won by anyone courageous enough to take risks against the threatening darkness.

And Thus Unfolds The Age of Man. What Legends Will You Tell?

the World of Aereth

Kingdom of Kalia

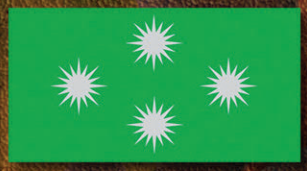
Free City of Halcyon

Holdfast of the Steel Overlord

Cinai

Rhaz al-Khali

The Southern Province



Theocracy of the Lance

City of Freeport

Lord Raazt

Free Cities of Leherti

Gorhgijesk

Barony of Koranth

Free City of Soulgrave

Xa Deshret

The Barrier Isles

Cozette LeRoux

Halls of the Mountain King

Kingdom of Morrain

Sylvan Downs

Kingdom of Uthur

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Dungeon Crawl Classics #35
Gazetteer of the Known Realms

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by Mike Ferguson, Jeff LaSala, and Harley Stroh

the
World
of
Áereth
GM's Guide

Dungeon Crawl Classics #35

GM's Guide to the Known Realms

Contents

Introduction 2
Chapter 1: Creation and Early History 4
Chapter 2: Deities, Demigods, and Infernal Powers 16
Chapter 3: Bestiary of the Known Realms 49
Chapter 4: Setting Rules 75
Chapter 5: Rogues' Gallery and Hall of Heroes 97
Chapter 6: Zero-Level Characters 117
Chapter 7: Paths of Adventure 123
Appendix 1: DCC Index 127
Credits and Afterword 133
Legal 135
DCC Character Sheet 136

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Introduction

Welcome to the Known Realms, a world of adventure, arcane secrets, and untold riches, where a sharp sword and a shirt of mail are a warrior's only defense against wicked mages, monstrous hordes, and fierce dragons of yore.

Culled from the pages of an ancient tome, the Known Realms represent the scribes' world simulated by the d20 rule system. Whether the codex is the spurious work of a dark-age madman or a medieval tome of esoteric conjecture will never be known. What is certain is that it provides a wealth of information for the modern gamer.

During the arduous process of translation, concessions were made to fit the Known Realms to the d20 system, but otherwise the spirit and tone of the tome was left unchanged. Until such a time that the lost companion tomes are discovered and translated, it falls to you, the GM, to answer the lingering mysteries and fill in the unknown realms.

A World of High Adventure

The world of Áereth is foremost one of legendary adventure. Noble knights ride to the ends of the earth questing against legendary dragons and wicked warlords. Mighty wizards wage eldritch battle atop high mountain peaks and in the halls of lonely towers. Cunning rogues creep along rooftops of smoky cities, stealing past lethal traps and demonic sentries. Devout priests fight for the common good, bringing freedom to enslaved masses. Fearless adventurers unearth forgotten tombs and plumb the depths of endless caverns, ride at the head of armies, and cast powerful spells that shape the very nature of reality.

The Known Realms are vast. Many of its locales are recorded in the Dungeon Crawl Classic series of adventure modules, but these are only the first, tentative steps into the world of Áereth.

Looking for a shadowy port to sell your ill-gotten loot? Wicked Punjar beckons. Craving high intrigue and backstabbing politics? The Council of Lords awaits your petition. Hungry for the wail of war horns and the crash of armies? The armies of Leherti cry out for your command. Want to carve out your own fief from the untracked wilderness? The wild borderlands call. Eager to sink your glowing blade into the gullet of a dragon and ransack its fabled trove? Look no further. All these adventures and more are contained herein.

While the scribes of the codex outlined their world, it falls to you and your players to bring the Known Realms to life. Bind it to your home campaign, ravage its lands with the march of armies and dragon fire, make its people come alive through the heroics of your players.

Our work with the codex is finished. The legends of Áereth have only begun.

Styles of Play

Just as PCs gain levels and face more challenging puzzles and foes, so too must a campaign world evolve to paint an ever-broader horizon, luring heroes with treasures and ambitions just beyond their reach. As a world, Áereth can accommodate any number of styles of play, ranging from classic dungeon crawl to convoluted court intrigue. GMs need simply hold to a simple rule: Always make the PCs the focus of your world.

With this in mind, consider the following adventure suggestions for your evolving campaign:

Low-level PCs: Beginning and low-level PCs spend their time exploring nearby ruins, working as caravan guards, serving wizened sages, studying beneath noble knights, and fighting in merchant companies. Most settlements in the Northlands are isolated from their neighbors, and are forced to turn to unproven young heroes in times of desperation and need. The PCs might undertake short wilderness journeys, or the GMs may choose to simply assume that PCs begin their adventures at the

entrance of the dungeon. A band of low-level PCs can spend their first few levels simply exploring the surrounding lands, mapping out the wilderness and clearing dungeons and cave complexes of wicked creatures.

Mid-level PCs: Mid-level characters are often heroes who have carved out names for themselves. While not yet legends, they have established themselves as dangerous foes worthy of respect. These adventurers often travel far and wide, exploring the Southlands and Lostlands in the service of kings and regents, secret societies and knighthoods, or simply in the search of greater wealth and power. As renowned heroes, PCs quickly attract the notice of those more powerful than themselves. Some of these powers may choose to recruit the heroes to their noble causes; others may perceive the PCs as threats, and work to eradicate or corrupt the heroes before they grow into powerful threats.

High-level PCs: No longer the servants of emperors, high priests, or guildmasters, high-level PCs are these rulers, conquering existing kingdoms or carving new ones from the wilderness. Gathering wisdom, power, and fame, PCs undertake epic quests, riding at the head of armies, challenging dragons and demons alike. Only the fiercest or most numerous of foes present a challenge to a party of high-level PCs. As living legends, the heroes are responsible for defending their people from threats that can span entire planes. High-level games can also focus on the subtle plots of courtly intrigue, where a single careless phrase can plunge entire nations into war and chaos.

Epic-level PCs: Epic-level PCs can reshape the face of Áereth at their whim, rallying entire races to their cause, or laying waste to whole empires. Epic-level PCs are on the path to becoming minor divine powers and masters of Áereth. At this level, PCs can expect to regularly draw the attention of gods and infernal powers, working either with or against the PCs as suits their moods.

Contained Herein

The Known Realms are comprised of three continents: the Northlands, a collection of isolated kingdoms, faded empires, and majestic forests and mountains; the Southlands, a land of dense jungles and forgotten cities occupied by drakon and the ancient nagas; and the Lostlands, once the cradle of civilization, now a place of fearsome monsters and ancient, sand-swept ruins.

This boxed set contains the following:

Gazetteer of the Known Realms: a reference guide to the three continents, detailing the myriad nations, cultures, and monsters;

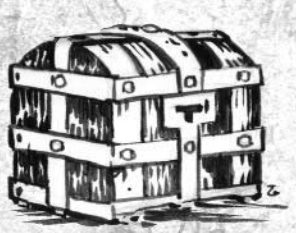
GM's Guide to the Known Realms: the book you hold in your hands, containing secrets and information crucial to running a campaign set in the Known Realms;

Dungeon Crawl Classics: Halls of the Minotaur: an introductory adventure designed to bring 0-level characters to 1st level and beyond;

Dungeon Crawl Classics: Vault of the Thief Lord: a challenging adventure designed for expert players and character levels 4-6, set in the deadly city of Punjar;

Three full-color maps detailing the vast sweep of the Known Realms; and

The Player's Map to the Known Realms, an incomplete map of the world for the players to complete in the course of their adventures.



Chapter 1
Creation and Early History

The summation below is gathered from the creation myths of many of Áereth's religions and cultures. No single church will cite this information in such a concise, comprehensive form, but if one made a painstaking study of the clergies of the Sancturn Pantheon, interviewed disciples of numerous demigods, and consulted scholars of the Triad, one might gather an account similar to the one below.

GMs are encouraged to alter this mythology as they see fit to better accommodate their campaigns. This is merely one possibility regarding the origins of Áereth.

In a formless age measureless to mortals, there arrived a clan of beings that theologians would one day name the Greater Gods. Leading them was the Triad, and the eldest among them was Choranus, the Seer Father and the figurehead of Law. At his side was his equal and consort Ildavir, the Giver of Form, and his brother, Centivus the Shaper. When the Triad and its kin entered the Void, its sole occupant, a being of Chaos known as Zhühn, fled before their luminous presence.

With the help of his children, Choranus began the creation of the world, a place of light, water, and air. He designed laws to govern the course of nature and the powers that could suspend them, setting the stage for impending life. Yet even as the Greater Gods forged this world, Zhühn extended his hands and unmade it, for ever was destruction swifter than creation. Again and again they fashioned their world anew and Zhühn, their Great Enemy, broke it apart. Choranus sought to bring order into the vast expanse, but Zhühn would allow only entropy.

After the Triad took counsel, they welcomed an assemblage of other gods to take part in creation. Most pivotal was the Sancturn Pantheon, divinities who sought refuge from the ruin of their previous home. The Triad granted them their protection and magnified their power. These divinities, later named the Lesser Gods by theologians, were exemplars of good, evil, and neutrality—moralistic ideologies carried over from their former home. Once the Sancturns had settled themselves among the Outer Planes, the Triad invited them to take part in its designs.

With their collective work, Choranus oversaw the construction of a ghostly new world—a place of raw magical convergence suffused with the spirit of nature and the collective power of the Greater and Lesser Gods. Under the direction of Ildavir, the gods gave physical substance to the world by drawing upon the Inner Planes, and Choranus set it spinning within the spiral arrays of the Material Plane.

Though he fought to unmake it, Zhühn's power was outmatched. Dwelling in the corners of his diminishing Void, Zhühn recoiled at the sight of such enduring creation. To him, the existence of anything but the Void itself was a blasphemy, for he was a being of chaos and oblivion and knew only those. Now light and life flourished, spoiling the endless gloom. This new world, having survived the Great Enemy's will to destroy, has come to be known in the current age as Áereth—derived from a phrase in the Old Giant tongue meaning "where we walk."

Seeing it safe from Zhühn's negation, Choranus at last asked Centivus to devise the first creatures to inhabit Áereth. As his brother set to work, the Seer Father and Giver of Form rejoiced at his artistry and lent their skills to his. From the hands of the Triad, many beings entered the world. This was an antediluvian age of legendary beasts, a time when rocs alone soared the skies, krakens swam the depths, and colossal worms bored the earth unchallenged. Ever was Centivus the artist, his divine imagination given free rein to shape new beasts. This he did with the counsel of Ildavir, whose knowledge of nature and balance lent focus to his work. It was she who infused his creations with life and substance, giving each the ability to proliferate its own kind. At last, Choranus decided which would be given sentience, sharp intellect, or the gift of magic.

The three gods continued to create, experimenting with flesh and blood to set a multitude of strange and monstrous creatures free to roam all the lands. From these

beginnings the animal features of the Known Realms find their origin. When Centivus designed the first felines, Choranus marveled again at his brother's skill, and he gave the most powerful among these features like those of he and his consort: fair faces crowned with flowing hair. These became the first sphinxes, and they were graced with wisdom and prescience. The next creatures were serpentine, and Choranus smiled at their colorful, scaled bodies, and he gave them, too, faces like the gods' own. These became the nagas, and they were graced with cunning and a talent for sorcery.

Seeing the need for greater balance in the world, Ildavir began to populate Áereth with a host of lesser forms, taking her inspiration from the great works of Centivus. These became the animals, and they would thrive in all climates and terrains and rule the wild places. From sphinxes, Ildavir created lions and great cats of all varieties. From nagas, she created reptiles and all species of serpents. From rocs, she created birds, and from the great ocean dwellers, she created fish. These new beasts were at first larger than their eventual progeny, and are known in the present world as dire animals.

Then Choranus crafted a race formed fully in the gods' own image. This effort took the form of titans, large of stature and great in strength. Intending the titans to rule over all others, he found that they did not obey the edicts intended for them. They became a race of discord—seeded, perhaps, by the subtle hand of Zhühn—and the titans went their separate ways and withdrew to the mountainous corners of the world. The magic within them adapted their bodies to the regions in which they chose to dwell, and their power slowly declined. They became the giants, lesser forms of the titans. Lost in their own selfish struggles, the giants abandoned their heritage and forsook the gods.

Disappointed in the fallibility of the titans, Choranus turned to Centivus again. He asked him to devise a ruling race, one that perfected on the forms that came before. As his younger brother set to work on these next creations, Choranus delighted at the beauty of their draconic form. Cunning as the nagas, they possessed the strength of titans and the wisdom of sphinxes. Ildavir gave them life in the cradle of a mountain valley, and Choranus gave them sovereign minds. The Seer Father also granted them profound skill with magic that they might shape their civilizations and defend themselves against enemies who would supplant them. These beings were the first dragons.

As the most intelligent creatures on Áereth, and possessing breaths of deadly elemental power, dragons lorded over all others. At their head, Choranus placed four avatars shaped much like the titans but draconic in feature. These were the Dragon Kings, ambassadors of the gods, given the task of relaying the laws of Choranus to the dragons and those in their charge.

At this time, Choranus longed to recreate his attempt with the titans, this time on a smaller, more numerous scale. Taking inspiration from his own family, he created the smaller humanoid races that would serve the dragons in their mighty empire. In the likeness of Ireth, his sagacious, eldest daughter, he fashioned the elves. For Daenthar, his stout and industrious eldest son, Choranus hewed the dwarves. From the image of Poderon, his good-humored, hard-working son, he forged the gnomes. For the harmony of Olidyra, his diminutive, wayward daughter, he conceived the halflings. Foreseeing the eventual rise of these humanoid races, Choranus at last created humans, a people who would embody the virtues—and failings—of all others. One by one, these five races revealed themselves, and they were at first wary of the great beasts that ruled the land. As they increased in number, the intelligent creatures that came before began to contend with them. In time, some adopted the humanoids as a master might foster an apprentice, beginning with the dragons. As intended, the elves, dwarves, gnomes, halflings, and humans became as servitors to the wiser, more powerful dragons.

Watching the works of their superiors, some of the Lesser Gods grew jealous and began to experiment with the powers of creation, giving rise to goblinkind and many others. Hags, harpies, ogres, and trolls numbered among the many monstrous denizens. Affronted by these bastard creations, Ildavir appealed to her consort and his brother. With their approval, Ildavir countered with new creations of her own. Beings such as centaurs, merfolk, satyrs, sea cats, treants, and all things fey came from this time.

The ethics of law and chaos, loyalty and disobedience, were in flux within Áereth. Each race fought for its place in the young world and many refused to bow to the lordship of the Dragon Kings, sovereignty decreed by Choranus himself. Zhühn, seeking to subvert the work of creation, sent forth his mightiest servant, a fallen titan named Cadixtat that the Great Enemy had fostered since that race's birth. Once instrumental in the titans' defiance against the gods, Cadixtat, the most powerful of his kind, now marched across the face of Áereth sewing chaos and disloyalty wherever he went. Empowered with a portion of Zhühn's own anarchic power, even the Dragon Kings dared not challenge him. Unwilling to allow the Great Enemy this heavy-handed stratagem, Choranus sent forth a sentinel of law named Teleus to defend Áereth, imbuing him with some of the Seer Father's own axiomatic power.

The battle between Teleus and Cadixtat spanned the world and carried far into the Reign of Dragons, as the

law of Choranus and the chaos of Zhühn sought to rule the fate of Áereth. This Great Conflict of ideologies, physical, and spiritual power never knew a victor, however, for when Teleus at last disarmed Cadixtat of his Axe of Unmaking, Choranus recalled his champion. Content to allow the absence of both ethical extremes, the Triad commanded the rest of the Greater Gods to stay their influence as well. In their place, they charged the Sancturn Pantheon to watch over the mortal races of Áereth and allow their morals of good, evil, and neutrality to hold sway. The Greater Gods would remain only the distant figureheads of creation.

Unable to exert his power physically upon the world again, Zhühn endeavored to dissolve it slowly, piece by piece, with the patience only a creature of the Void could understand. Though he was great in power, many of the gods of good and evil would forever oppose him.

The time had come for mortals, not gods, to shape the course of the world.

Early History

The Reign of Dragons

From the moment they entered the world, the dragons were lords, and at their head were placed the immortal Dragon Kings. Cast in the likeness of the gods themselves and infused with draconic might, they were paragons of virtue who ruled over the dragons and their great empires. Embodying the elements of fire, lightning, cold, and acid, each was affiliated with a direction of the world itself.

In addition to their roles as rulers, the Dragon Kings served as mediators between the gods and mortals, delivering divine will to Áereth. Under their wisdom, the dragons' dominion flourished during a time of peace and discovery. Many beautiful things were wrought and many magics woven. Mountainous cities were constructed like vast aeries and sprawling temples were raised in swamplands, fertile steppes, and secret valleys. There was no soil on the surface of Áereth that had not felt the talons of a dragon walk upon it.

As the eons passed, the gods began to look to their newer creations, and the influence of the Dragon Kings over their own vassals waned. Sensing their own fading power, they erected the Vault of the Dragon Kings deep within the Frosteye Mountains. It became a haven for dragons who wished to hold onto the glory and virtues that their empire once held dear. Within lay the Pool of

Dreams, a reliquary that cared for the souls of dragons that passed from the mortal world. The Pool would preserve the collective knowledge and memories of the dragons until the gods favored the world's firstborn again.

In the creation of the Pool of Dreams, the Dragon Kings of the East and West sacrificed their power and succumbed to death. Unforeseen by the remaining two, this tumultuous event divided dragonkind as never before, for now dragons had witnessed the frailty of their lieges. Some retained their loyalty to the remaining Kings, while others claimed that a new era had begun and sought to grab the power for themselves. From this ideological rift, their magic became manifest. With the march of time, each faction evolved into the variances of metallic and chromatic. Abandoning the Kings and the gods they served, the rebellious chromatic faction began to lose their luster, their scales dulling to the matte hues of the color spectrum.

When the transformation was nearly completed, a great red wyrm named Sevrylascarethiin—or Sunscratch in the Common tongue—rose to prominence. Together with his brethren, he waged war against the remaining Dragon Kings and their followers and personally struck down the King of the South at its outset. The King of the North in turn slew Sunscratch but himself fell gravely wounded in the struggle.

With the death of their champion, the chromatic dragons fled the ancestral valleys, while the remaining Dragon King retreated into the Vault and barred its doors. The metallic dragons disbanded, disillusioned by their loss, and left their homeland as well. As the centuries passed, the Vault was lost and its memory passed from common knowledge into legend.

The Reign of Cats

When the dragons ruled Áereth with their great empires, many intelligent and ambitious creatures vied for petty dominance under their expansive shadow. When the Dragon Kings and their vassals fell from power, the first to walk abroad uncontested in the world at large was the sphinx.

Believing themselves to be paragons of physical and mental perfection, the sphinxes saw themselves as caretakers of the world. They used their wits and their appetites to maintain order among the lesser races by devouring those who could not answer their riddles. In the eastern deserts and hills, the collective might of the sphinxes elevated them above all others. Building upon the ruins of the dragons who came before and studying their abandoned works, the sphinxes united as a single power. Any enemies who attempted to challenge them were swiftly cowed or devoured.

Seeing the need for servants, the leonine race ceased devouring the numerous humanoids and began to subjugate them instead with the persuasive acuity only a sphinx can employ. They coaxed the elves from the forests of Ahna-Vithyre with cryptic promises of magic

and bribed the dwarves from the Gorzeruun Mountains with promises of mithral and gold. With riddles and promised knowledge, they lured the gnomes from their overrun homeland, and the halflings of Gadjarria dwelt already upon the doorstep of their desert home. Humans, a race of uncertain desires, were brought under wing with sheer aggression. Even great numbers of hobgoblins, haler than their goblin cousins, were seized by the sphinxes for their own purposes.

Some resisted. The dwarves who refused the lure retreated to depths into which they knew the sphinxes would not venture, and these would become deep dwarves and duergar. Some gnomes, upon reaching the sphinx homeland, found hidden tunnels in the earth and delved deeper still, eventually becoming the svirfneblin known today. Those elves who refused to leave their forests were the wood elves, while sea elves retreated deeper into their waters when the sphinxes approached.

With the lesser races in tow, the sphinxes carved a vast empire throughout the Lostlands and named it Khonsuria after its first pharaoh. The humanoid servants were viewed as pets or pack animals to the sphinxes; useful, even affectionately cared for at times, but patronized nonetheless. While some humanoids were afforded a measure of esteem within Khonsurian society, even the greatest among these were considered beneath the lowliest of sphinxes. The empire expanded its borders north and west, reaching its paws partially into the Northlands.

A family of androsphinxes ruled the young empire, and the third such pharaoh was a brutal tyrant whose cruelty tested the loyalty of his own kind. His daughter, however, was a high priestess of Amun Tor and was beloved by her people and even their humanoid servants. Legends say that Amun Tor himself consorted with the beautiful gynosphinx and that their child was destined from conception to rule the gilded empire. Whatever her origin, the last and most enduring sovereign to rule the Khonsurian Empire was a Queen. With the approval of the sphinxes and the gods themselves, she dethroned her wicked father and took his place.

Her name was Ankharet the Blessed, an immortal gynosphinx who ruled the Empire for prosperous millennia. She took as her consort the great gold wyrm Kozuragen, who had served the Dragon Kings in his youth and fought against the armies of Sunscratch in his prime. Now he sat at Ankharet's side and offered the council and wisdom of his long life.

Under the Queen's guidance, each species of sphinx was given a role within their society. The noble androsphinxes became the empire's prophets, leaders, and priests, serving as councilors and interpreters of the Queen's law. Gynosphinxes served as Ankharet's ambassadors, and carried her diplomacy into foreign lands. The bloodthirsty hieracosphinxes served as the warriors of the empire, defending it from all enemies. Criosphinxes carried the Queen's directives to her humanoid subjects, overseeing the construction of pyramids and monuments to the glory of Khonsuria and its Queen.

The empire was not without its insurrections. A faction of elven rebels sought freedom from the desert sands and searched in vain for the tunnels that the early svirfneblin had used long before. When their brethren refused to join them in their escape, the rebels named them traitors. The sphinxes, deigning not to risk their own against the insurgents, sent the loyal elves to retrieve their wayward kin. The Kindred War ensued, and the rebels found their only escape to be an ominous rift called the Devil's Cauldron. Corrupting fumes seeped into the elves, seeding their hearts with evil and initiating a slow change within their bodies. Fleeing into the chthonian depths, the rebel elves found their own dark paths in history, heard the call of a goddess, and would one day be known to the surface world as the drow.

The Reign of Serpents

Shortly after the rise of Khonsuria and across the Surya Sea, another creature came into its own. On Zimala, the Island of Obsidian, the totemic nagas had united their tribes and established their own budding empire. Though the dragon empire that preceded them had been unrivaled in its power, the nagas held conviction that they had been created first, that the limbless serpentine form was one of perfection. The god Madrah, they knew, had been charged to oversee the lands of the west, and though the nagas themselves varied in their chosen virtues, all paid homage to him and the spirits he engendered.

With the help of lizardfolk, marsh-dwelling neighbors north of Zimala whom the nagas had coerced into alliance, the nagas began to expand their lands. As their empire grew, the god Madrah took an empress to be his consort and from her egg was hatched a female they named Cynhuara. When the empress died suspiciously, he took a consort of common blood and she hatched a male they named Axaluatl. Immortal nagas of great power, the two half-siblings were revered by their kind as gods, and in their name stately temples were raised even before their coming of age.

Eldest of the two, Cynhuara was given the Zimalan Empire to rule as her own. However, she eschewed the role of Empress, instead establishing the Naga Council. Populated with all species of nagas, it was predominantly comprised of wise and benevolent teotl-nagas (guardian nagas). Axaluatl became an emissary for the Council who traveled abroad and explored beyond the

empire's borders. Incredulous that his half-sister would relinquish the power of regency, he plotted in secret to become Emperor. Axaluatl's conspiracies included a number of tlanti-nagas (dark nagas) of sinister power.

The Naga Council was given the task of overseeing all aspects of the Zimalan Empire with a view toward its eternal preservation and the needs of its subjects. Cynhuara herself sat at the Council's head, and together they led the Empire into a peaceful coexistence with many races for long years. Within Zimala and some of the lands north of the Island, the nagas were dominant, and those who challenged them were struck down with fang and spell. Within naga society, the tlanti-nagas served as explorers and military leaders along with the ehecatl-nagas (spirit nagas). The mali-nagas (earth nagas) and atl-nagas (water nagas), by far the most numerous, served as warriors on land and sea whenever force was required.

Under the teotls' guidance—and against Axaluatl's—the humans of neighboring lands were taken into Zimalan protection. Existing formerly in a loose society of feuding tribes, the humans were inlaid into naga society like an intricate mosaic and were taught minor magics and the arts of medicine and industry. As with nobles of modern Áereth, nagas and their human retainers would often form strong bonds of friendship. As apprentices and servants, the humans helped the nagas build their glorious cities and raise pyramids and temples in devotion to Madrah and his divine offspring, Cynhuara and Axaluatl.

The Clash of Empires

Both the Khonsurian and Zimalan Empires contended with many hostile creatures, for they were wealthy and harbored many coveted secrets. Humanoid and monstrous enemies arose and fought to raise their own nations, but the might and magic of the Serpents and Cats put down every challenge.

Yet the two great empires remained unaware of each other for centuries, with only the whispered rumor of a faraway empire ever crossing the ocean that divided them. Ankharet the Sphinx Queen forbade her people to fly west across the sea, for they believed that only the Realm of the Dead lay there. To travel to where the sun met its demise each day was to join the Accursed. The Naga Council, meanwhile, did not seek to expand its holdings beyond their own continents and the far north was filled with barbaric peoples not worth the effort to conquer. They had little desire to sail the oceans.

The ventures of Axaluatl, however, brought him at last to the far north, where he heard still more rumors of the Khonsurian Empire. With his entourage of supporters, he crossed the Surya Sea and there at last met the outlying sphinxes. When Ankharet learned of the Zimalan Empire, she embraced the discovery. Her people believed then that the gods had pushed the Realm of the Dead further to the west and in doing so had revealed new allies.

In the minds of some, the discovery prompted dreams of invasion and further conquest. Yet Cynhuara and the

Naga Council extended the tail of alliance and mutual trade. Ankharet responded in kind. Though they were great rivals in power, each empire agreed to maintain peace, for neither desired the other's land and there was much they could share.

For long years, both empires prospered. Beseeching the gods of the earth and sea, the nagas and sphinxes called upon great elemental magics and drew up a chain of islands across the Surya Sea. With the labor of millions, nonpareil magic, and a technology now lost from the world, the nagas and sphinxes constructed Ayoxatlan, a causeway of colossal scale that stretched across the miles of the sea. Using the god-given islands as their primary support, the bridge allowed for easy passage between the two empires. Though a sphinx could fly the distance unladen, the journey was overly taxing and they welcomed the convenience of a paved roadway where they could cross the water with their humanoid attendants and other trade goods. In the tongue of sphinxes, the marvelous span was known as Harak Manu, or "bridge to the west."

This golden era came to a close, however, when corruption entered the heart of Ankharet the Blessed. What led to the great Queen's fall none can accurately say, whether she was lured into darkness by the whisperings of Zhühn or whether her soul had been steeped in depravity from the very beginning. Perhaps it was her acquisition of the mysterious Shadowcrown that darkened her heart or the many potent gifts given her by the nagas. Yet even as the final stones were laid in place within Ayoxatlan, so did Ankharet and the wicked Axaluatl agree to a secret plan of mutual benefit.

In secret, Ankharet began to prey upon the servitor races—and even her own kind—as a vampire would its victims. Her deepest crime was the murder of her own consort, Kozuragen. To disguise her sin and set in motion her plans with Axaluatl, the Queen publicly accused the Naga Council for his death, claiming it had sent assassins to kill both she and her consort in a bid to sow confusion for an inevitable naga attack.

The sphinxes' faith in their revered Queen was absolute. Without hesitation, the sphinxes turned baleful eyes upon the Serpents across the sea. Led by the Queen's own daughter, Meraph the Golden, the Khonsurian Empire launched a vengeful crusade against the Zimalan Empire. Fury at the death of her father burned in the heart of Meraph.

The nagas were ill prepared for the invasion. Cynhuara, shocked at Ankharet's accusation, sought to calm the attacking sphinxes and clear away the misunderstanding. When she confronted the arriving Meraph, Axaluatl at last betrayed his half-sister and used his magic to silence her. The half-dragon sphinx, blinded by rage and unwilling to hear diplomacy, killed Cynhuara with the help of her elite warriors. The Naga Council fought back, but half its members were slain outright. An all-out war had begun between the powerful races. The nagas collapsed the bridge Ayoxatlan to prevent easy access for the Khonsurian armies. As if both empires had lost the favor of their gods, the isles upon which the great causeway had been built sank into the sea again.

Axaluatl, whose agreement with Ankharet only included the removal of Cynhuara and the Naga Council, realized that the Queen had betrayed him. She sought now to eliminate the Zimalan Empire altogether. Enraged at her duplicity, Axaluatl led his subjects in frequent counterattacks. For years, the two empires struggled against one another, Serpent against Cat. The nagas were nearly annihilated in the great war.

The War of Brothers

An androsphinx of prophetic power named Khubsheth, who was a disciple of Choranus and the consort of Meraph, discerned the corruption of the Sphinx Queen. He saw the Naga Council to be innocent of the crime for which the war had been waged, and revealed the truth to Meraph and her wrathful armies on the eve of the nagas' destruction. When the sphinxes halted their attack, Meraph, stunned by the magnitude of her mother's treachery and the genocide Meraph herself had begun, fled in grief. Khubsheth pursued his beloved and asked her to return with him and confront the Queen.

Yet Ankharet's loyal subjects were many, and sphinx turned against sphinx in a great civil war known as the War of Brothers. Years of bloody conflict ensued, ending at last when Meraph and her followers were victorious. Ankharet's defenders were routed and the Queen herself captured. During the conflict, however, the servitor races had found their freedom and the sphinxes' many enemies had advanced on the weakening empire. The surviving sphinxes from both sides, thousands strong, disappeared from the Lostlands almost overnight, a mythic event that modern historians cannot explain. The few sphinxes that remained chose solitary existence over the united civilization they once ruled.

Meraph, Khubsheth, and their few remaining allies were left standing with their shackled Queen. Divinely protected from her own kin, Ankharet the Cursed could not be slain. Khubsheth, granted divine foresight, determined that those destined to slay Ankharet would not be born until thousands of years later. Until that day, he knew, the Queen would have to be bound. And so the Tomb of the Sphinx Queen was built, the last monument to a once-great empire and a prison for its traitorous Queen.

Meraph insisted upon interring herself within the tomb to await the prophesized heroes and the death of her mother. Khubsheth, granted immortality for his vigilance, would wait through the passage of centuries for that fated time.

The Khonsurian Empire itself was no more, brought low by its own beloved Queen.

The Wrath of Serpents

Meanwhile, the nagas nursed their wounds in the aftermath of their war with the sphinxes, struggling to recover from the devastating losses. The dark nagas found an opportunity in the chaos to reshape what little remained of the Zimalan Empire. Seeing that the actions of Axaluatl had led to the slaughter of his own people, his former devotees renounced him. Once a strong disciple of Axaluatl, a dark naga priest named Zuyuan seized political power and led a revolt against the Shadow Serpent. Unable to slay the immortal—for he, too, was divinely protected like Ankharet—Zuyuan outlawed his worship. Those who professed loyalty to the betrayer were slain, and Axaluatl, diminished in status and power, was forced into seclusion.

Excited by his success and lusting for more power, Zuyuan led a campaign of persecution against the Naga Council for failing to perceive the sphinx threat. With great support, he dissolved the now-impotent Council and exiled the teotl-nagas who had backed it. Into this void of power, Zuyuan established the Dark Council. Staffed with his chosen cohorts, he rebuilt the struggling Zimalan Empire into a regime of tyranny. Zuyuan insisted that magic and intrigue, not peace and diplomacy, were the tools of survival for their kind. Unwilling to trust anything that was not a naga, they tightened their coils on their human servants until they become little more than slaves and chattel.

As the years passed, the humans grew restless. Rumors reached Zimala that the servitor races of the far east had been freed by the fall of the sphinxes. The once-great Khonsurian Empire was fast fading into mere legend, and elves and dwarves began to rise in great numbers in the Northland regions. It seemed to the wise that the gods now favored beings that walked on two legs. Unable to recover their former might, the nagas grew cynical and jealous. Hearing the stories of freedom, the nagas' human slaves began to chafe against the oppression of their masters.

Realizing that the future belonged to these lesser, more numerous races, the Dark Council decided to breed their own humanoid species in a bid to retain dominance. If humanoids were to inherit Áereth, then the nagas would control those who ruled them. Inspired by the lizardfolk race but desiring a people of greater power, the nagas sought to create a race in their own serpentine image. Zuyuan supported experiments with human slaves and captured lizardfolk, infusing them with foul sorcery and the blood of reptiles. From these unholy trials came inphidians and tzopiloani, evil human-reptile hybrids. When the nagas began to use their own sorcerous blood in the experiments, they spawned their greatest achievement, and also their ultimate downfall: the drakon.

Possessing the same ambition as humans, the innate magic of nagas, and a sinister lack of fear, the drakon eventually rebelled against their progenitors in a conflict known as the Wrath of Serpents. With the inphidians and tzopiloani on their side, the drakon threw down the Dark Council. In the chaos, the nagas were unable to maintain constriction of their slaves. The humans slipped their bonds and fled toward the northern reaches of the old empire and the wide peninsula known as Xulmec. Some believe it was the exiled teotl-nagas lurking beneath the earth who first broke the humans' shackles to set them free. The Naga Council of old, after all, would never have enslaved their humanoid servants.

Even as they struggled against the nagas, the drakon sought to replace them as slavers of the humans. Assassins were sent against Huamec, the human slave who dared to lead his people to freedom, but they fell at his hand. Locked as they were in the death throes of naga might, the drakon could spare no further attempts against the refugees.

And so the Zimalan Empire was no more, destroyed by its own desperation and insolence. The nagas that survived the Wrath of Serpents withdrew from the politics of the world and hid away in dark places, coiled in hate. Only the teotl-nagas, though few in number, remained seekers of peace. They laired in the tombs of their ancient civilization, lived the virtues of Cynhuara, and guarded the secrets of their once-mighty empire.

The Homecoming

While the Xulmecs sought to establish their own civilization bereft of naga rule, the former servants of the Khonsurian Empire had migrated north into the vast, unspoiled lands whence they had first emerged before sphinx rule. The remnants of long-vanished draconic realms riddled the lands that they settled into. Each race found its own path, contending whenever another's presence threatened.

As the elves wandered, they sensed the familiar presence of Ireth, goddess of verdure and wizardry. Following her voice they settled once again in the forests of Ahna-Vithyre, for there it was that elves had first awakened in

Áereth. In the Foresthome, Ireth taught them the deepest secrets of magic and forestry. This tutelage came to the elves as memories long buried, for their time among the sphinxes had suppressed their origins. When they returned to the woods, they met again their wild kin in the deepest groves and their sea-dwelling cousins in Ahna-Vithyre's coast.

Guided by the rhythmic intonations of Daenthar, the earth god of industry, the dwarves climbed back into the mountains. With his mentoring, they resumed their ages-old love of mining and crafting amidst their native stone, and steadily the dwarven kingdoms forged strong alliances with one another. The mightiest of these nations was the mountain kingdom of Amonzadd, whose great stone windows looked down upon the vast forests of Ahna-Vithyre.

The savage tribes of humans dispersed among the Northlands, trading eagerly with their neighbors but never making enduring allegiances among their kind as did the dwarves, nor did they settle in large numbers like the elves. Without exception, no race ever exhibited as much diversity in culture as humans. They were vast in number but largely divided, and so their inherent desire for expansion could not include the holdings of the stronger races.

The gnomes had no homeland to return to, for their gem-laden hills in the far northeast had been largely depleted of their mineral wealth and the lands were rife with goblinoids. Never a people to despair of the past, the gnomes settled wherever commerce was good, serving as mediators and tradesmen between towns, cities, nations, and races. Poderon, the earth god of levity, became their patron, and gave them the optimistic worldview that gnomes still enjoy.

The last of the servitor races to leave the Lostlands—and the only to regularly return—were the halflings. Despairing at the malignance their homeland had become, the music of Olidyra, the goddess of travel and exploration, called to them and instilled in them a love for the open road. Gypsies and vagabonds all, the halflings chose a life of constant wandering and could be found in all realms. Traditionally, halflings returned each year to Gadjarria, where they weep at their loss and sing of their freedom.

Explorers of all races began the long journey across the Empyrean Ocean and rediscovered the humans of the Southlands that they had once met when the sphinx and naga empires had been allies centuries before. Culturally, the Xulmecs were considered primitive and the coastlines were riddled with dangerous creatures. The threat of drakon and lizardfolk lurked deeper within the jungles, and few explorers would approach the remote Island of Obsidian, Zimala.

Powerful with magic and crafts reminiscent of the old naga and sphinx empires, the elves and dwarves exerted their influence across the lands. The greatest human wizards apprenticed themselves to the elves of Ahna-Vithyre to refine their art. Master blacksmiths of the human lands studied in the hold of Amonzadd. Gnomes and halflings, for their part, wound their way as peaceably as possible through all racial societies. Whenever the ambitious humans pushed their borders too far, they were swiftly reminded with overwhelming force that their dominions existed only at the behest of elven and dwarven mercy. Goblinoids occasionally emerged from the plains, hills, and mountains, but the concerted effort of local territories inevitably drove them back.

With this influx of magic and artistry, the elves and dwarves grew haughty over the years and made enemies of jealous races—and even each other. Humans continued to study at the foot of their trees and mountains and some sought ways to steal their arts for themselves. Nations began to war with one another even as they fought off the ever-persistent hordes of goblinkind.

The War of Divine Right

Far from civilized lands, a young storm giant named Aeshotal grew restless from the turbulence of Áereth and its bloody conflicts. He set off on a pilgrimage around the Known Realms. Giantkind in its many, scattered tribes had dwelt outside of the march of history, and the troubled Aeshotal sought a place for his people. The storm giant's quest led him to the monasteries and libraries of many kingdoms, yet always his search found no answers.

At last, in the deepest catacombs of a mired temple in the Great Swamp, Aeshotal heard a disembodied voice address him from the shadows. The voice told him to find the Cave of Truth in the Frosteye Mountains, a place labeled on no map nor named in any tome. With nowhere else to turn, Aeshotal journeyed to the Cave and found a great door guarded by a curious sentinel. The strange human tried to convince the giant to turn away, explaining that only death and the ruin of Áereth lay beyond.

In his mind, the mysterious voice whispered to Aeshotal that the smaller races were hiding the truth from his kind, and that the destiny of giantkind lay within. Conflicted and angry, Aeshotal struck at the man with lightning, only to find the energy passing harmlessly through him. When he struck at him with his greatsword, he found that this, too, could not pierce him. Aeshotal simply stepped through the ghostly man, wrenched open the door, and entered the darkness beyond.

Within he found a network of chambers with ancient lore etched into stone walls in thousands of glyphs, bas-

reliefs, and even sculptures. He spent years meditating here, attempting to decipher the glyphs, aided only by his patience—and the mysterious voice. At last he found the answer to his quest: the knowledge that giants, formerly the titans, had been created by the gods *before* the smaller races, and had in fact come before the Dragon Kings themselves. With this knowledge came the conviction that giants were *meant* to reign over all others. Cold, logical madness gave Aeshotal the answer he'd long sought. If the giants united now, as their godless ancestors had failed to upon their creation, they could bring order to the world and rule as they were divinely decreed.

Aeshotal left the chamber and began his campaign to unite the giant tribes. He spoke of prophecies and the divine mandate that giants were sovereign to the smaller races. Highly charismatic and growing in power as he went, Aeshotal was seen as a visionary and messiah, and most giants were easily seduced into joining his dream of righteous conquest. In the frigid reaches of the Northern Wastes, he won over the frost giant jarls. In the fiery mountains of the east and west, he found support with the fire giant kings. The primitive hill giants from the Valley of Xyr Muthal and stone giants from around the Northlands flocked to his banner, though some cloud and storm giants were not as easily swayed. After more than fifty years, he'd established an insurmountable force at his disposal in all corners of the Northlands, the vast majority of giantkind poised at his command.

United as never before—and never since—the giants of the Known Realms laid siege upon the humanoid kingdoms in the War of Divine Right. On many fronts and in terrains advantageous to the giants, they laid low city after city, destroying those who refused to surrender to their authority. For the first time since their service in the Khonsurian Empire, the elves, dwarves, and humans banded together against the collective might of the giants—against which they steadily lost ground. Even gnomes and halflings joined their fellows and fought against the giants with guerilla-style warfare, excelling as they always had against large opponents.

During these years, each side searched for every advantage as battles took place in every part of the civilized world. While the humanoid races struggled to unite, the giants persuaded other monstrous and giantish creatures to join in their war. Ogres and ettins swelled their armies against the elven realms, while trolls and gargoyles emerged from the mountains to assail the dwarf holds. Kapoacinths and scrags joined the storm giants against the sea elves and coast-dwelling humans. Cloud giants threw their magic against the nations' capitals. Chief among Aeshotal's supporters were the sinister and wealthy Stormbringer family of storm giants and the Stone Wings, an extensive clan of fiendish gargoyles summoned from the hellish Outer Planes.

As the Northlands were steadily subdued by his persistence, Aeshotal sent storm and fire giants across the sea to conquer the humans of Southlands, whom he regarded as impotent primitives. Even united against the onslaught, the Xulmecs were unprepared for the attack and lost many lives. They called upon Madrah and their god-kings to save them. When death seemed inevitable, it was Huamec, the first Xulmec god-king, who answered. He instructed his priests to build an icon in his image carved in pure obsidian. Constructed of immense size, Huamec possessed the idol and led a counter-attack against the giants. The giants in the Southlands were soundly defeated, but Huamec himself was slain in the endeavor and the monolithic idol itself was cast down.

In the Northlands, the humans of the Abylosian Empire, in an attempt to halt the advance of giants east and south, enlarged a river valley into a gorge of titanic proportions with the concerted efforts of druids, wizards, and countless slaves. Becoming a permanent scar in the land, the barrier worked only too well, funneling the full strength of the giants back toward the elven Foresthome and surrounding lands. The frontiers of civilization were either smashed flat or conquered by the giants, their people enslaved.

Against Aeshotal's hordes, the crafts of the dwarves and the arcana of the elves were sorely tested. Working together now efficiently, the greatest dwarven artisans and elven wizards crafted golems of stone and iron to counter the strength of the giants, while elven sorcerers bargained with genies for elemental conjurations to use against them. These efforts slowed the giants but could never push them back.

The War of Divine Right raged on, with the smaller races continuing to lose ground each year. Aeshotal and his greatest forces eventually surrounded Ahna-Vithyre and Amonzadd in the land of Lirea, enclosing the power bases of both elf and dwarf civilizations within his grip. Once the defenders' lines broke, the giants would swarm into their capitals and lay claim to all of Áereth. The elders of the elves and dwarves formed the Eldritch Coalition, an alliance comprised of archmages, high priests, and generals of both peoples. They came together in desperation, ready to discuss new strategies, contingencies—or even surrender to Aeshotal.

At this time, a cloud giantess named Jathra fought her way through the elf and dwarf fortifications, subduing but not killing every guard who dared to arrest her infiltration. When the slender, white-skinned giant broke into the council chamber of the Eldritch Coalition, the elves and dwarves thought they had come to their end at last and prepared to fight. Instead, Jathra bowed and intro-

duced herself to them, speaking words of peace and pacifism. She had not been sent by Aeshotal, she explained, but represented a faction of giants who opposed the war.

Desperate, the Eldritch Coalition listened to the giant, but some among them doubted her intentions, so full of hate for giants that they were blind to her offers. Jathra presented to them a cache of scrolls she'd recovered from the fabled Vault of the Dragon Kings, relics that harbored magics that she believed could end the war peacefully.

The scrolls contained the arcana needed to construct the Pillars of Expulsion, artifacts that could exert powerful enchantments that could forcefully compel the giants to leave the region and scatter their armies. Originally conceived by the Dragon Kings to mercifully defeat Sunscratch and his followers, the project had been abandoned in favor of the Pool of Dreams. The Pillars had therefore never been created, but the lore to build them lay now in the hands of the Eldritch Coalition. It was Jathra's belief that the giants were never meant to rule; they were meant to dwell in remote places and offer guidance to the smaller races who sought them out. The scrolls offered the means to bring peace to the land again.

The construction of the Pillars—adamantine obelisks carved with complex runes and woven with many spells—would represent the ultimate achievement of the artifice of elves and dwarves. The elves of Parhokk, a city famous for its enchanters, were called upon to imbue the Pillars with the compulsion magic that was their core.

When the obelisks were complete, Jathra explained that the placement of the Pillars of Expulsion was vital, and that they would have to be arranged in a great ring around the land outside the giant encampments. She spoke of sacrifice and honor, and such virtues struck a painful cord within the hearts of the long-lived people of Ahna-Vithyre and Amonzadd.

Once they were built, the greatest elven and dwarven champions carried the obelisks, at great risk, through the enemy lines. Though most of these heroes fell at giant hands, the Pillars were placed without exception in a great ring around the land of Lirea, fully encircling the giant forces. When the time was right, the Eldritch Coalition called upon their gods and their magic and activated the Pillars of Expulsion as Jathra had instructed.

Had the Coalition worked in concert, the plan might have succeeded. But doubt gnawed at the hearts of some, who feared that Jathra was as evil as the rest of her kin and was deceiving them. Some tales say that the surreptitious hand of Zhühn was at work within them, corrupting them as he may have Ankharet the Blessed, Aeshotal, and countless other across the ages. These elf and dwarf dissenters dared to believe that they could alter the magic of the Pillars, to transform their compulsion magic into energies deadly to the giants. They channeled their magic and their hate into the whole, and the Pillars of Expulsion came to life.

Thus polluted, it was not enchantment magic that flared from the obelisks, but another power altogether that rent

apart the elements around them. The fabric of the Material Plane was torn asunder in the immediate vicinity of each obelisk, turning into a churning mass of deadly elements. Much was drawn back into the elemental planes even as portals to the same planes were opened nearby. Fire, lightning, cyclones, and great torrents of water poured through. Tremors shook all the land within the circle of Pillars, and great caverns beneath the earth collapsed.

As a result of this cataclysm, the land known as Lirea slowly sank into the sea as portals to the Elemental Plane of Water spilled onto the landmass. Ocean waters from the Empyrean Ocean flooded inland, spilling over the Foresthome of the elves and the dwarven hold of Amonzadd. The devastation was vast and thorough. Giants, elves, and dwarves—along with numerous other creatures in the crossfire—were swallowed up.

The land sank too fast to save the nations but slowly enough to horrify those looking on from outside the deadly ring. In the end, Aeshotal and the giants had been defeated, but at a cost greater than anyone ever imagined. What once crowned the land in magic and majesty now dwelt at the bottom of a vast bay that would later be named the Lirean Sea. Ruins of the elves' and dwarves' former glory were held now in the dominion of the world's oceans and its denizens.

In time, the elemental portals were closed, and the wild storms were tamed by druids and clerics. Those elves and dwarves that survived the cataclysm were those who'd settled in outlying forests and mountains beyond Lirea. Though many humans had lost their lives in the devastation, there were countless more scattered throughout the land, greater in number than any other. The remaining elves and dwarves could not recover their former might, nor repopulate their own kind as swiftly as humans. Gnomes and halflings, like humans, could be found in all countries and never built their own kingdoms. Sea elves, who once dwelt along the coasts of Ahna-Vithyre, now swam the newly formed Lirean Sea and kept a vigil over the ruin of their homeland, to protect its secrets from treasure hunters.

With the sudden end of the giant-led war and the fall of Lirea, the thinking races of the Known Realms knew that an era had ended. Seasons passed differently now, distant threats seemed more ominous. Great magics had been wrought and cast down upon the mortal world, and devastation could come swiftly. The dwarves and elves formed solid treaties in honor of the Eldritch Coalition, living tributes to their fallen heroes and sovereigns. In the aftermath of the War of Divine Right, it was clear to all who was left standing stronger than all others.

The era of humans had begun.

Chapter 2
Deities, Demigods, and Infernal Powers

The races of Áereth pay homage to many powers, beliefs, and divinities. Though the gods themselves are many, only some—arguably the most well known—are described here. The names given are merely the most common. Almost every god has at least a dozen names—some have many more or none at all—which stem from the languages and cultures that revere them.

GMs should feel free to alter the pantheons to suit the needs and themes of their campaigns. Whereas an epic story set in the Southlands might make frequent use of the Xulmec demigods, another campaign set in the Lostlands may never make mention of those endemic gods across the ocean. GMs are certainly invited to include new pantheons of their own or those borrowed from other mythos. This chapter assumes that the Sancturn Pantheon—many of whose members have been gathered from the DCCs—is the primary spiritual authority in the world of Áereth.

Other pantheons could be assigned to other Material Plane worlds, but still count followers from among the people of Áereth. Conversely, the gods of various pantheons could share dominion over this world. Finally, pantheons may be intermingled with the Sancturns, or the names used by the gods can vary to accommodate all gods in one. Variag, for example, may also be the same as the Norse god Ymir. Odin may be another name by which Choranus is known, and Tyr may be the same as Gorhan or Thormyr.

The Triad and the Greater Gods

According to a consensus of belief, above all divinities is the Triad, the eldest of the Greater Gods whose mighty works begat the world. They are Choranus the Seer Father, his consort Ildavir the Giver of Form, and his brother Centivus the Shaper. The children of Choranus and Ildavir are Ireth, Daenthar, Poderon, and Olidyra. At least five other gods of great power were invited to have a hand in the world's creation. These were Amun Tor, Auzarr, Madrah, Ahriman, and Ormazd, beings of unknown origin.

The arrival and subsequent creations of these beings were an offense to Zhühn, the Dweller in the Void, a creature of such power that he would later be worshipped as a Greater God himself by the nihilistic and the mad. Knowing only nonexistence and timelessness, Zhühn is the antithesis of creation itself.

The Sancturn Pantheon

Áereth has been the battleground for the lofty ideals of the gods since its first dawn. Before the doctrines of Good and Evil began their eternal struggle, the ethics of Law and Chaos sought to dominate the course of the world. Eventually recognizing the need for a balance of the two—and the need for choice—the Triad withdrew its overwhelming influence from the world, and today seldom intercedes in Áereth directly.

Instead it is the Lesser Gods of the Sancturn Pantheon who hold the greatest sway in everyday life. Refugees from their own long-vanished cosmos, the Sancturns now give the mortals of Áereth the capacity to shape their own world. Once led by Ôæ, these gods now answer only to the Triad. Given power over the provinces of Áereth, the Sancturns keep at bay those mortals whose ambitions would threaten to unseat the cosmic order—and indeed, disorder—of the multiverse itself.

Demigods

Though the Greater Gods remain as they are, the powers of the Lesser Gods can wax and wane. As well, some deities have taken mortal creatures as consorts and from such unions demigods have been formed. Other, less understood means exist to create new divinities.

One such source is the lifeblood of the gods themselves. When Áereth was still young, Zhühn sought to sabotage its existence by attacking those who gave it life. The

Great Enemy, in his naïveté, dealt a grievous blow to the body of Ildavir, the Giver of Form. From the wound sprang the goddess Elyr, fully formed. In her wake, Ildavir's injury was healed, and Zhühn had gained a serious new enemy.

Seeing that his aggression only resulted in the bane of new life, Zhühn learned that divine flesh was both malleable and enduring. When the ocean goddess Pelagia gave birth to a son aeons later, the Great Enemy seized the child and wrenched his body in two. Unable to perish so easily, the sundered halves of the newborn god still shriveled under Zhühn's touch and became the twin demigods of Narrimunâth and Nimlurun. Legends tell of other occasions where divine interference has created new divinities, intentionally or otherwise.

Though the slaying of a god is difficult, at best, many have been altogether forgotten or shunned. Meelkor, once the god of humility, was accused of complicity in unforgivable divine crimes by Zhühn centuries ago and was forcefully driven from the cosmos. Sothulth, a demigod of paranoia, represents another such exiled divinity, though he has attempted to return to mortal memory.

Outer Gods

Referred to collectively as the Outer Gods, these blasphemous beings are believed to exist outside of the known planes. Worshipped on Áereth only by the most aberrant creatures, the insane, or the misguided, they are abominations among gods. Zhühn himself is sometimes affiliated with the Outer Gods insofar that he may have had a hand in their making—or he may be one of them who broke away, a pariah among corruptive gods.

Infernal Powers

Devils and demons do not fit neatly into the scheme of mortals and gods. Ancient beings of evil power, some may have been wrought from the detritus of failed worlds when the Triad first began creation. Others may be older still, creatures possessed of law, chaos, and evil long before such words had meaning. Or perhaps they're merely the manifestations of the cumulative sins of free-thinking beings. Whatever their origins, the fiends prey upon mortal souls of the Material Plane, finding sustenance from their misery, despair, and every choice sin. They only bring death upon a mortal when doing so also siphons his soul, or when they have been denied it altogether.

A mere sampling of ten archdevils and demon princes are described below, though a great deal many more fiendish lords look upon Áereth with voracious, soul-craving appetites.

A Final Note

The gods are not the celestial bodies they care for. Ildavir is not the earth, but she is its caretaker. Shul is not the moon, and Pelagia is not the ocean itself. The gods stand apart from their creations and their charges, yet none knows a sculpture as well as the sculptor, none a child as well as its parent.

The GM is encouraged to use the gods to give flavor to his or her campaign, for the clergies of all gods have agendas of their own, for good and ill. The church of Gorhan could serve as the driving force behind a PC cleric, to help guide her and the adventures she accepts. The evil cults of the Hidden Lord could provide a steady stream of antagonists for the PCs. The machinations of the Great Enemy, Zhühn himself, could dwell behind the scenes in a campaign destined to become epic. But GMs should not use any of these too heavy-handedly. Although gods influence the world, they do not themselves move it. That is the job for the heroes.

If the god's alignment in the accompanying table (following page) has a smaller letter in parentheses after it, that means the ethos of the religion often leans in that direction (for example, "g" for Good).

Mictlan

Mictlan is the Underworld of Xulmec belief. Drawing their culture from the provinces of the former Zimalan Empire, the humans of the Xulmec city-states maintain that upon a man's death, his spirit is drawn into Mictlan, the Land of the Dead, a subterranean landscape.

Northland scholars make the obvious comparison between this spiritual realm and the Underdeep itself, but while many similarities between the two exist, fundamental differences abound. Scholars of the arcane and planar lore surmise that Mictlan is simply the name given to that portion of the Ethereal Plane or the Plane of Shadow that overlaps the upper regions of the Underdeep beneath the nations of the Southlands.

The Triad

Name	Align.	Portfolio	Gender	Domains
Centivus	N	Creation, Artistry, Possibility	m	Creation, Knowledge, Protection, Travel
Choranus	LN	Creation, Destiny, Magic	m	Creation, Knowledge, Magic, Protection, Strength, Travel
Ildavir	N	Creation, Life, Nature, Animals	f	Animal, Creation, Earth, Plant, Protection

Greater Gods

Ahriman	CE	Death, Disease,Darkness, Suffering	m	Chaos, Death, Destruction, Evil
Amun Tor	N	Mysteries, Riddles	m	Air, Fire, Knowledge, Magic, Weather
Auzarr	N	The Transitive Planes, Teleportation, Psionics	f	Knowledge, Magic, Travel
Daenthar	LG	Earth, Industry, Vows, Trust	m	Earth, Good, Law, Protection
Ireth	CG	Astronomy, Forestry, Wizardry	f	Air, Animal, Earth, Good, Knowledge, Magic
Madrah	N	Earth, Sky	m	Air, Earth, Magic, Travel, Weather
Olidyra	N(g)	Travel, Exploration, Adventure	f	Luck, Plant, Trickery, Travel
Ormazd	LG	Creation,the Sun, Prophecy	m	Creation, Good, Law, Sun
Poderon	NG	Earth, Commerce, Festivity	m	Animal, Earth, Good, Trickery
Zhühn	CE	Deception, Corruption, Falsehood	m	Destruction, Evil, Magic, Trickery

Lesser Gods

Delvyr	NG	Knowledge, Learning, Light	m	Glory, Good, Knowledge, Sun
Denithae	N	Agriculture, Harvest	f	Earth, Plant, Protection
Elyr	CG	Healing, Life, Succor	f	Good, Healing, Liberation, Luck
Fenwar	N	Fire, Lightning, the Hearth	m	Air, Fire, Sun
Gil'Mâridth	CE	Nightmares, Fear, Night Terrors	f	Dream, Evil, Trickery
Gorhan	LG	Valor, War, Chivalry	m	Good, Healing, Strength, War
Hidden Lord	CE	Secrets, Misdirection, Forbidden Lore, Shadows	m	Darkness, Evil, Knowledge, Trickery
Justicia	LG	Justice, Mercy, Defense	f	Good, Healing, Law, Protection
Klazath	LE	War, Subjugation	m	Destruction, Evil, Law, Strength
Lasheeva	NE	Undeath, Murder, Affliction	f	Death, Destruction, Evil
Myna	CN	Chance, Circumstance, Fortune	f	Chaos, Luck, Trickery
Neshti	CG	Thievery, Trickery, Vigilantism	f	Chaos, Good, Luck, Trickery
Ôæ	NG	Dreams, Imagination, Storytelling	m	Dream, Good, Protection
Pelagia	N	Oceans, Seas, Music, Travel	f	Protection, Travel, Water
Rathul	CN	Lies, Dissimilation	m	Chaos, Knowledge, Trickery
Shul	LN	The Moon, Measurement, Tradition, Literacy	m	Air, Knowledge, Law
Soleth	LN	Peaceful Death, Solitude	m	Healing, Law, Protection, Repose
Tororthun	N/CE	Subterrane, Denizens of the Underdeep / Malice, Spiders	f	Drow*, Earth, Poison*, Spider* / Drow*, Evil, Poison*, Spider*
Ulesh	LG	Peace, Pacifism	m	Good, Knowledge, Law, Protection
Valdreth	LN	Time, Longevity, Integrity	m	Law, Magic, Protection
Variag	N	Ice, Winter, War	m	Air, Strength, War, Water
Wyshalar	CN	Survival, Vitality	f	Protection, Travel, Trickery
Xeluth	NE	Violence, War, Strife	m	Destruction, Evil, Strength, War
Yvyn	NE	Conspiracy, Holy War, Rebellion	f	Evil, Trickery, War

Demigods

Ahpuchac	N	Maras, the Underworld	m	Earth, Protection, Repose
Anahuara	NG	Amoya, the Moons	f	Good, Healing, Magic, Repose
Ankharet	NE	Khonsuria, Sphinxes	f	Destruction, Evil, Knowledge, Trickery
Aristemis	NG	Strategy, Diplomacy	f	Good, Knowledge, War
Axaluatl	LE	Zimala, Nagas, Reptiles	m	Evil, Death, Law
Bargúl	LE	Death, Undead, Drow	f	Death, Drow*, Law, Undead*
Bobugbubilz	CE	Evil Amphibians	m	Chaos, Evil, Water
Cadixtat	CE	Chaos	m	Chaos, Destruction
Calchoti	CG	Kaatlan, Rain, Charity	f	Good, Healing, Plant, Water
Chondri	NG	Marine Life, Aggression	m	Good, Strength, Water
Coatlimict	NE	Kaatlan, War, Carnage, Undeath	m	Death, Evil, War
Cynhuara	LG	Zimala, Nagas, Reptiles	f	Good, Healing, Magic
Elas	NE	Marine Life, Ambush	f	Evil, Trickery, Water
Gadraak	CE	Territorialism, Violence	m	Chaos, Evil, Strength, War
Huamext	NG	Xulmec, Protection	m	Earth, Good, Protection
Ilhuicatl	NG	Athua, the Sea	m	Good, Protection, Travel, Water
Ilquot	CN	Cold Waters, Marine Predators, Retribution	m	Protection, War, Water
Kagnar	CE	Savagery, Animality	m	Destruction, Evil, Strength
Lagos	CE	Antagonism, Reptiles, Savagery	m	Chaos, Destruction, Evil, Strength
Malotoch	CE	Scavengers, Ruin, Cannibalism	f	Air, Chaos, Death, Evil
Molgrem	LE	Militarism, War	m	Evil, Destruction, Law, War
Narrimunâth	LE	Disease, Vermin	m	Death, Destruction, Evil
Nimlurun	CE	Filth, Pollution	m	Death, Destruction, Evil
Septych	LE	Avarice, Tyranny	m	Evil, Law, Trickery (current)
Sothulth	CN(e)	Paranoia, Insanity	m	Chaos, Destruction, Knowledge, Trickery
Teleus	LG	Law	m	Good, Law, War
Thalass	N	Terrestrial Waters, Music	m	Animal, Protection, Water
Tlachinozal	LE	Chuzec, Fire	m	Earth, Evil, Fire
Thormyr	LN(g)	Honor, Duty, Protection	m	Healing, Law, Protection, Strength
Traitor	CE	Betrayal, Chaos, Madness	m	Chaos, Healing, Madness, Trickery
Urath	CE	Terror, Voracity	m	Chaos, Destruction, Evil

Infernal Powers

Lords of Hell

Amzolol	LE	Deception	m
Bei'thor	LE	Cruelty, Sadism	m
Jezuel	LE	Pain, Torture, Indignity	f
Nethruel	LE	Obsession, Addiction	m
Sestyruas	LE	Envy, Covetousness	m

Lords of the Abyss

Azi Dahaka	CE	Storms, Waste	m
Izmaledt	CE	Obscenity, Malformation	m
Obitu-que	CE	Domination, Prepotency	m
Qäyaqiq	CE	Curiosity, Desperation, Suicide	?
Tzitzimitl	CE	Destruction, Ruin	f

** Domains introduced in The Complete Guide to Drow from Goodman Games.*

The Powers

Ahpuchac (The Black Jaguar)

Demigod, N — The Underworld, Maras

Ahpuchac (*oh*-pu-chak), the Black Jaguar, is the patron god of the Xulmec city-state of Maras and the guardian of Mictlan, the Underworld. He is the bringer of balance, ushering good and evil into death and the afterlife that awaits. It is believed by the people of Xulmec that one's destination is determined as much by the journey through the Underworld as by the life one led. Ahpuchac prowls Mictlan to ensure all are given a fair chance on this momentous quest.

Once the tribal chieftain of Maras and the founder of its city-state, Ahpuchac gained the mantle of godhood when he was lured into the depths by a spiritual jaguar sent by Madrah, the Lord of the Earth and Sky. Fulfilling a spiritual need for the Xulmec people, the Black Jaguar now oversees mortality itself, guarding the Underworld from the sabotage of other divinities.

The domains associated with Ahpuchac are Earth, Protection, and Repose. His favored weapon is the razor glove, and his symbol is the depiction of himself in perfect profile.

Ahriman (The Deathbringer)

Greater god, CE —Death, Disease, Darkness, Suffering

Ahriman, the Fiendish Spirit, the Deathbringer, is the ancient god of darkness and destruction, suffering, and disease—and some believe, one of the authors of evil itself. Like Ormazd, his radiant twin, Ahriman is believed to have spawned from an obscure, if powerful, neutral deity named Zurvan. Ahriman merely watched as the Triad and the other deific powers coalesced the world, studying its creation so he could learn how to destroy it again and remake it in his own nightmarish image.

The Fiendish Spirit has given rise to many infernal beings and darkened the hearts of many mortals. During the Reign of Dragons, he sowed the desire for destruction among the mightiest of dragons to bring about their own civil war. When Ahriman's worship was at its most profound, the desert-dwelling people of Abylos named him Angra Mainyu, the Deathbringer. Although the faith of the Fiendish Spirit has waned, his few remaining followers wait patiently for signs of his return. They cling to the prophesied age when Angra Mainyu slays his twin, the god Ormazd, Lord of Wisdom.

Ahriman is the only god willing to treat with Zhühn openly, forging the occasional alliance with the Great Enemy for their mutual benefit—although both mighty gods know that should their schemes of destruction break apart the world, they will vie for dominance. While Zhühn seeks the annihilation of existence itself, Ahriman seeks destruction for its own sake, intending to rebuild again under his administration.

When Ahriman is depicted in religious art, he takes the form of a giant-sized demon with a pair of massive black horns and wielding an oversized kukri. The Fiendish Spirit and his hateful clerics weave hidden alliances among many evil factions, sewing destruction from the darkness and hiding from the followers of Ormazd until Ahriman's return, when he will raze the mortal world undisguised.

The domains associated with Ahriman are Chaos, Death, Destruction, and Evil. His favored weapon is the kukri, and his symbol is a demonic visage with two black horns.

Amun Tor (The Father of Riddles)

Greater god, N —Mystery, Riddles

Amun Tor (*ah*-mun-TOR), the Lord of Mystery, the Father of Riddles, is a mysteriarch among gods, the deity of knowledge, the known and unknown. He is the god once charged by the Triad to oversee the realms now known as the Lostlands. It was Amun Tor who first led the sphinxes to the majesty that was the Khonsurian Empire, and it was Amun Tor who warned his daughter, the immortal Queen Ankharet, from the path that led to its ruin. He watches still over the wind, hills, and deserts of the Lostlands, the unseen lord of every city and desolation.

The Father of Riddles has many followers, mostly among the peoples of the Lostlands, but few real priests

devote their lives to his enigmatic dogma. True worship of Amun Tor is a mystery in itself; an acolyte must study the hieroglyphs of his mazelike temples for many years to discover his doctrines. One of Amun Tor's only known tenets is that true power is worth searching for and is therefore hidden in riddles. The greatest of his temples, usually half-buried in the wilds of the Lostlands, are labyrinthine pyramids hiding divine reliquaries and arcane libraries. Adventurers faced with the prospect of infiltrating one of Amun Tor's temples know that exceptional perils and exceptional rewards lie within.

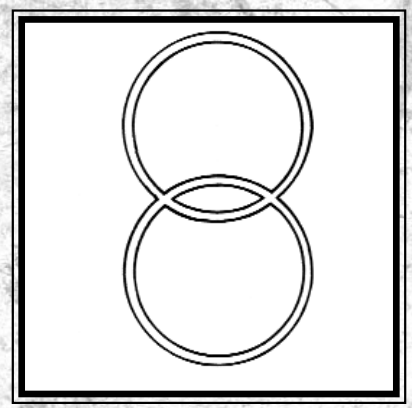
The Lord of Mysteries is depicted differently in each culture of which he is a part. Some see him as a great androsphinx, while others see him as a tall elf gilded like the noble servants of old Khonsuria. Still others represent him only as an eye-shaped glyph.

The domains associated with Amun Tor are Air, Fire, Knowledge, Magic, and Weather. His favored weapon is the quarterstaff. His symbol varies with each culture but often incorporates an image of an eye.

Amzolol

Archdevil, LE —Deception

Amzolol (*ahm*-zoe-lol), the Lord of Deceit, is a cunning archdevil who adheres strictly to the lawful nature of his infernal kind but weaves loopholes into the promises he makes. Mortals who wish to deceive their enemies beseech Amzolol for the guile to swindle, outwit, or frame their enemies, little realizing that the deepest deception and greatest loss is their own. The Lord of Deceit suspends his trickery for his most promising mortal thralls that they might grow in worldly power to carry out Amzolol's will—though the artful promises of the Lord of Deceit are sure to snare them in the end. Most of his human agents are clerics, roguish bureaucrats, and politicians.



Anahuara (the Blessing of Night)

Demigod, NG — Amoya, the Moons

Anahuara (*on*-uh-woh-ra), the Blessing of Night, the Lady Eidolon, the Lucent Guardian, is the patroness of the Xulmec city-state of Amoya and the divine keeper of the Southland moons. To the Xulmec people, where the sun grants the world life only from afar, the moons grant greater vitality the closer they are to the earth. While the Spectral Moon measures time and bestows magic and spiritual balance upon the land, the White Moon keeps the world in physical equilibrium. Anahuara is the guardian of both.

Once the chieftain-founder of the city-state of Amoya, Anahuara now watches over it as a sentinel of life and death and the magic of the Spectral Moon. She is afforded her lunar power by Shul, the Watcher in the Sky, but affinity for the violet-hued Southland moon is hers alone. Anahuara is depicted as she was in life, a tall woman with very long, unbound hair. The mantle of her godhood is represented in the suit of bone armor she wears, and in her hands she carries a mace that glows with the violet light of the Spectral Moon. She is often shown with a nimbus of the moon behind her. Silver, called the Tears of Anahuara, is a holy material to her faithful and is never used as simple currency among the Amoyas. As the moons wax and wane, priests of Anahuara interpret her will for the lay followers. As with most Amoyas, the followers of Anahuara revere death as much as life itself, seeing both as coterminous states of existence. In the dogma of the Lucent Guardian, undeath has its appropriate time and place. More often than not, the undead are considered subversions of the natural order, but there are times when the animated dead are sanctioned by Anahuara.

The domains associated with Anahuara are Good, Healing, Magic, and Repose. Her favored weapon is the light mace, whose head clerics typically coat with alchemical silver. The symbol of Anahuara is formed of both moons in varying positions, usually one half-eclipsed by the other.

Ankharet (the Cursed)

Demigod, NE —Khonsuria, Sphinxes

Ankharet (*on*-kar-ret), the Cursed, the Sphinx Queen, was the demigoddess who once ruled the Khonsurian Empire millennia ago. Once known as Ankharet the Blessed, she was fathered by Amun Tor himself and set upon the throne of the glorious sphinx empire. She ruled for countless years and brought prosperity to her kind, ensuring the Reign of Cats as one of the greatest ages of Áereth's long history.

Yet Ankharet brought her own empire into ruin when she succumbed to corruption and evil. The civil war that came of her crimes resulted in the death of half her kind and drove the survivors into a mysterious exodus. The Sphinx Queen herself was defeated and imprisoned in a massive tomb in the Barren Hills, where she slumbers still under the watch of the androsphinx prophet Khubsheth, and Ankharet's own daughter, Meraph the Golden. According to prophecy, Ankharet will sleep until those destined to slay her arrive—or until the champions of her faith free her to reign again. Within the tomb, Ankharet's power is greatly diminished, but should she escape its mystic confines, she will return to her full glory.

Few sphinxes remain in the Known Realms, and fewer still revere the goddess who brought destruction to their ancient empire. Yet even the sinister dreams of the sleeping Sphinx Queen have inspired humanoid cults devoted to returning her to power. None suspect that the great statue near Prophet's Leap, the mysterious stone sphinx, now hides the Queen's physical body. But it is only a matter of time before her followers find her.

Clerics of Ankharet gather in Lostlands ruins, consorting with evil creatures such as lamia and chimeras. These cultists venerate sphinxes above all, but the magical beasts seldom treat with them, devouring them more often than not. On rare occasions, hieracosphinxes allow themselves to be bribed by these humanoid minions of their ancient queen, perhaps in the tiny hope of seeing their empire reborn one day. Ankharet herself is depicted as a gynosphinx of transcendent beauty, mighty in stature and graceful of body.

The domains associated with Ankharet are Destruction, Evil, Knowledge, and Trickery. Her favored weapon is the razor glove and her symbol is a fair feminine face, adorned with a Khonsurian headdress and a black crown. Often this symbol is paired with an ansate cross.

Aristemis (The Insightful One)

Demigod, NG — Strategy, Diplomacy

Aristemis (uh-*riss*-teh-miss), the Clear Thinker, the Insightful One, the Arrow of Vision, is the demipower of strategy and intelligent combat. She is the patroness of warriors and generals, and sometimes politicians, traders, and even rogues. Alhough Aristemis bears the courage of her lieges, Gorhan and Justicia, she also knows the wisdom of choosing her battles, when to walk away from them, and when to use diplomacy in the place of violence. Generals who redirect their armies in bold maneuvers, engage in daring strategies, or even retreat, call upon Aristemis for her insight. Clerics of the Clear Thinker often serve as war advisors and some multiclass as rangers to serve as military scouts.

Aristemis is portrayed as a woman in robes with piercing eyes, strong features, and short-cropped dark hair. She carries a great bow, but she is seldom shown using it. In religious art, Aristemis is often depicted standing to the right of Gorhan, whispering in his ear.

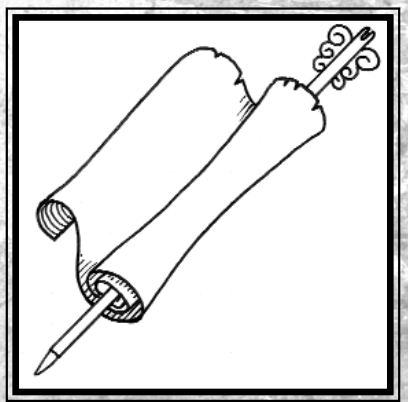
The domains Aristemis is associated with are Good, Knowledge, and War. Her favored weapon is the longbow, and her symbol is an arrow wrapped loosely in a scroll.

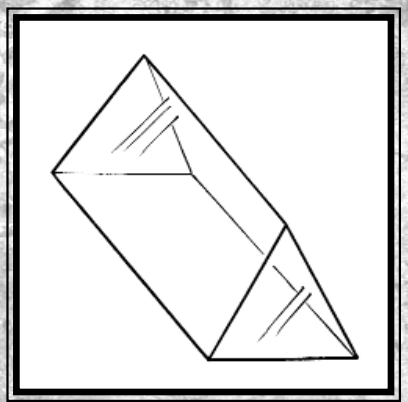
Auzarr (Keeper of the Nexus)

Greater god, N — The Transitive Planes, Teleportation, Psionics

Auzarr (*oh*-zar), Keeper of the Nexus, is the abstruse deity of the Transitive Planes, the conduits between realities, and all supernatural passage. She is the guardian of the fabric of reality and the strands that bind them, maintaining all extra- and nondimensional spaces. Auzarr's mantle of connectivity does not make her church a popular one on Áereth, but even for a Greater God Auzarr is largely apathetic toward mortal worship.

Those who do revere the Keeper of the Nexus understand the need for her work and strive to encourage or limit the magic of spatial relocation. Psionic creatures often pay homage to Auzarr as well, as much of their





power is drawn from astral energies. The Keeper of the Nexus is seldom portrayed in religious art, rendered as a nimbus of radiant energy or a tall, stately woman.

The domains associated with Auzarr are Knowledge, Magic, and Travel. As she has no favored weapon, the few clerics of the Keeper use the unarmed strike in its place. Her symbol is a prism or a silver loom.

Axaluatl (the Shadow Serpent)

Demigod, LE — Zimala, Nagas, Reptiles

Axaluatl (*ah*-shal-*wah*-tuhl), the Shadow Serpent, is the demi-power fathered by Madrah himself to assist his sister Cynhuara with the rulership of the Zimalan Empire. In an effort to usurp control from the Naga Council, the scheming of Axaluatl helped bring about the empire's eventual fall. In the wake of Zimala's war with the sphinxes of Khonsuria, Axaluatl's own disciples turned against him, withdrawing their devotion and slaying his loyal minions until his divinity became impotent.

Alone in the dark for millennia, the Shadow Serpent has slowly garnered support from small cults of lizardfolk, troglodytes, and even dark and spirit nagas still dwelling in the ruins of Zimala. Determined to rise again, Axaluatl seeks to expand his worship to include humans. Rumors have reached followers of the Shadow Serpent that the worship of Cynhuara may draw her back from death, a concern that frightens Axaluatl more than any other. He is determined to stamp out such misguided devotion to his dead sister and slay all remaining guardian nagas. The likeness of Axaluatl remains carved in the ancient temples of Zimala, depicting him as a dark naga of tremendous size. Legends suggest that he exists in physical form somewhere beneath the ruins of Teoyotlan.

The domains associated with Axaluatl are Evil, Death, and Law. His favored weapon, employed by those servants who can grip a weapon, is the garrote. The symbol of the Shadow Serpent is his own body twined around a jeweled sceptre.

Azi Dahaka

Demon prince, CE —Storms, Waste

Azi Dahaka (oz-*ee*-da-*hah*-kah) is a bestial demon spawned by Ahriman himself, one of many evil divinities unleashed upon the world by the Deathbringer to wreak destruction. Considered the spiritual inspiration of the hydra, Azi Dahaka is not a subtle demon prince, caring nothing for deception or cunning. He lives to destroy and suffers mortal thralls only if they promise to carry out schemes that bring ruin and waste to civilization. Long ago, a physical manifestation of Azi Dahaka was imprisoned within an Áerethian desert beneath a dome of enchanted glass. Releasing this multi-headed serpent is only the first step in stirring the bound demon. Like the hydra's head, killing one of Azi Dahaka's physical forms spawns two in its place. Each new body is birthed in the bowels of the Abyss and sets upon one goal: Return to the Material Plane to destroy.

Bargúl (the Sword of Darkness)

Demigod, LE — Death, Undead, Drow

Bargúl (*bar*-gool), the Sword of Darkness, Leader of the Hosts of Thorrin, is the heroine goddess of the drow. When the rebel elves fled from the subjugations of Khonsuria, it was the warrior-maid Bargúl who drove the Kindred Wars to its bloody climax and led her people into the depths of Áereth. Having brought her people so far into the darkness, Bargúl at last found salvation when she heard the call of Tororthun, the estranged goddess of the depths.

Upon her death, the Leader of the Hosts was rewarded with divinity as the necromantic swordmaiden of Tororthun's evil aspect, the Spider Queen—Bargúl brings the only semblance of true law to the otherwise selfish society of her people. Serving now as the drow patroness of death and the undead, the Sword of Darkness is only sparingly worshipped but remains a hero to drow throughout the Underdeep for having freed them from the tyranny of the Overworld.

The clergy of Bargúl are militant warrior-priestesses whose strategy in battle involves animating the dead of their fallen that they may fight anew. Despite this practice—or perhaps to explain it—all drow life is sacred to Bargúl. Her faithful are forbidden to slay other drow in cold blood and

must take care even if forced to fight them fairly. This respect for her own kind is often at odds with the Spider Queen's erratic ways, but Bargúl does not relent on her stance.

The domains associated with Bargúl are Death, Drow, Law, and Undead. Her favored weapon is the long or short sword (clerics must choose one), and her symbol is a skeletal soldier, usually depicted with flowing white hair like her own.

Bei'thor (Centurion of Evil)

Archdevil, LE — Cruelty, Sadism

Bei'thor (*bay*-ih-tour), an arrogant archdevil styling himself the Centurion of Evil, leads an eternal campaign to corrupt mortals with sins of wanton cruelty. When triumphant armies conquer neighboring lands, it is his influence which leads to needless slaughter, wickedness, and privation. Blackguards of Bei'thor are called the Knights of Darkness, a name as vainglorious as the devil they serve. Bei'thor, once a half-fiend mortal, attained the title of archdevil after centuries of unspeakable deeds. Despite his nefarious reputation, Bei'thor is most famous for his legendary defeat at the hands of Tevron. A powerful hound archon and champion of Justicia, Tevron saved the Northlands with his brilliant stratagems, personally sending Bei'thor in retreat to the depths of Hell.

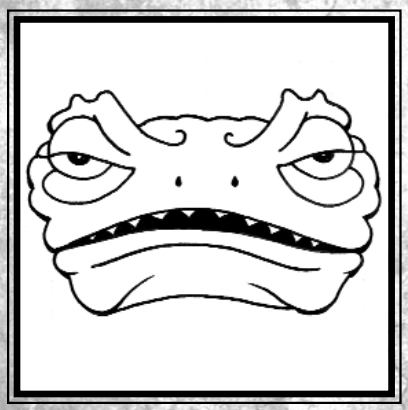
Bobugbubilz (the Toadfiend)

Demigod, CE — Evil Amphibians

Bobugbubilz (bo-*bug*-bub-ilz), the Toadfiend God, is the slimy god of evil amphibians, turbid water and slime, and the mephitis of foul places. A chaotic power of mires and malodorous life, Bobugbubilz is content simply to spread his putrid offspring across the planes and let them multiply and sow discord and misery where they will. The Material Plane is, of course, his favorite realm upon which to inflict his foul progeny. The disgust he and his clergy garner among the fairer races serves only to amuse Bobugbubilz.

The Toadfiend bears no relation to Pelagia, but many of his servants dwell within her oceans and seas. He is served primarily by anomalous members of various amphibious races, including locathahs, scrags, and sahuagin. Human cults spring up now and again in his wake, carrying out deviant rites and spawning new creatures in his name. Appropriately, Bobugbubilz's physical form is believed to be a bloated, toad-like monstrosity of alarming size, his rancid odor preceding his appearance.

The domains associated with Bobugbubilz are Chaos, Evil, and Water. His favored weapon is the whip and his symbol is the leering, malformed head of a toad.



Cadixtat (the Severed Chaos)

Demigod, CE — Chaos

Cadixtat (*kah*-dix-tat), the Sundered Master, the Severed Chaos, was once a deific titan and champion to Zhühn's goals of entropy on Áereth. When Teleus the Obedient severed his hand, his Axe of Unmaking and his great power were lost to him. The balance of Law and Chaos was restored when Teleus was withdrawn from the world, allowing the morals of Good and Evil to contend in their place. Seeing Cadixtat's purpose neutralized, Zhühn butchered the rest of his body and cast it in pieces down upon the world. Thus disarrayed, each part of the once-great titan twisted into a slumbering aberration of near-sentience deep beneath the surface. Over the subsequent ages, cults have coalesced to worship these creatures, laboring with profane magic to awaken them. The consciousness of Cadixtat himself is effectively inactive, dispersed and unknowing, but rumors among some circles of the occult claim that uniting his limbs could resurrect the Sundered Master. What agenda Cadixtat would follow or who he would serve, were he to reform, are a matter of pure speculation.

The domains associated with Cadixtat and his aberrant body parts are Chaos and Destruction, though Zhühn himself likely grants any spells from his worship. The favored weapon of Cadixtat is the battle axe and his symbol is simply a mesh of crisscrossing lines in random directions. Children who scribble are often scolded for accidentally evoking the sign of Cadixtat.

Calchoti (the Rain Queen)

Demigod, CG — Kaatlan, Rain, Charity

Calchoti (*kal*-cho-tee), the Rain Queen, the Virgin Water, is the magnanimous patroness of the Xulmec city-state of Kaatlan. She is the bringer of rainfall and verdant life, playing a vital role for the crops the Xulmec harvest. The Rain Queen is a deity who teaches that life is sacred and not to be wasted; one must offer friendship and charity to one's neighbors and even one's enemies.

Any day of rainfall is a hallowed day to her clerics, and even violent storms are regarded with wonder and fear of her power. The clergy of Calchoti shares an oddly symbiotic relationship with that of Coatlimict the Skull-Father that none outside of either faith can understand. While each god will hold greater sway than the other during any given season, the two never war with one another despite their strongly opposed tenets. Calchoti is depicted in temple carvings as a small woman with rain falling from her body.

The domains associated with the Rain Queen are Good, Healing, Plant, and Water. Her favored weapon is the *atlatl* and her symbol is a pitcher pouring water.

Centivus (the Shaper)

Greater god, N — Creation, Artistry, Possibility, Conjuration, Transmutation

Centivus (*sent*-ih-vus) the Shaper, the Great Artist, is the embodiment of imagination and possibility, a deity of Creation as one of the Triad. Lesser known than Choranus and Ildavir, Centivus is a humble god, caring little for mortal worship. He is the incidental patron of all artists and wizards who study the schools of conjuration and transmutation. Though few worship him directly, many offer prayers to the Great Artist when in need of inspiration. Centivus is less adamant in his opposition of Zhühn, but the Shaper, as the ultimate purveyor of creativity and inventiveness, is still anathema to the Great Enemy.

The domains associated with Centivus are Creation, Knowledge, Protection, and Travel. His favored weapon has changed over the years; lately, it is the light crossbow. The symbol of Centivus varies with each culture in which he is revered.

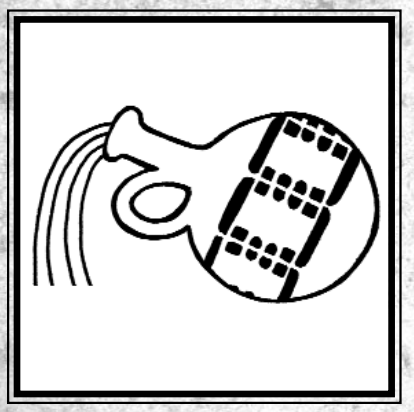
Chondri (the Voracious)

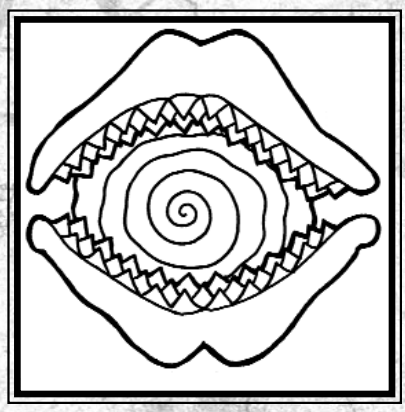
Demigod, NG — Deep-dwelling Marine Life, Aggression

Chondri (*chon*-dree), the Voracious, Seraph of the Deep, the Sea-Angel of Blood, is the twin of Elas as a god of deep waters. Often considered an aspect of Pelagia, he is in fact merely one of many children of the Coral Queen. He is a patron of the natural animals of the deep sea, most often associated with sharks.

Chondri is depicted as a gigantic shark with a flattened, skate-like head and fitted with a terrifying, serrated snout like that of some monstrous sawfish. Though his form strikes horror into the hearts of all who see him, the respectful have nothing to fear of this goodly deity.

The domains associated with Chondri are Good, Strength, and Water. The favored symbol of the Sea-Angel is the trident and his symbol is the open jaws of a shark.





Choranus (the Seer Father)

Greater god, LN — Creation, Destiny, Magic

Choranus (*kor*-uh-niss), the Seer Father, is arguably the most powerful being known to Áereth. Most races and cultures in the Known Realms speak of a god that first created the world, and most point to a power like him. He watches Áereth remotely, concerned with its future perhaps more than its past, delegating present concerns to his children and the lesser gods.

Though his worshippers are few, Chroranus is often invoked by prophets, seers, and wizards for his divine omniscience, and by all those who seek the knowledge that one's own destiny imparts. Followers of Choranus maintain that every spell or psionic power that glimpses the future—be it mere seconds or long years—must meet approval with the Seer Father. He alone, they believe, can perceive the enormity of the future and decides what portents to divulge to the mortal world. In a thousand cultures Choranus is given a thousand names and a thousand representations. As a member of the Triad, he is the consort of Ildavir and the elder brother of Centivus. Choranus is the chief enemy of Zhühn, whose empty Void the Seer Father invaded with his very presence.

The domains associated with Choranus are Creation, Knowledge, Magic, Protection, Strength, and Travel. He has no favored weapon. The symbol of Choranus varies with each culture in which he is revered.

Coatlimict (the Skull-Father)

Demigod, NE — Kaatlan, War, Carnage, Undeath

Coatlimict (ko-*aht*-li-*mikt*), the Serpent-Haired, Skull-Father, Prince of the Summer Harvest, and the Reaper of Men, is the Xulmec god of carnage and undeath. Once a mighty king of Kaatlan, Coatlimict was a favored disciple of Calchoti who turned from the peace and altruism of her faith. The final years of his tyranny ran red with the blood of his enemies. After Coatlimict was slain, his many pacts with the Lords of Hell earned him a tenuous position as a demigod. The god of bloodshed and undeath, the Skull-Father is the patron of warriors, necromancers, and blackguards.

Despite his fall into evil, the clergy of the Skull-Father bears an enigmatic state of peace with the priesthood of the Rain Queen, allowing both faiths to coexist within Kaatlan. Coatlimict is usually depicted as a giant, overly muscled human with a fleshless head and living serpents for hair, wearing a cloak of feathers and bearing his favored weapon. Clerics of the Skull-Father are frightening to behold, as they often wear the flayed skins of their victims and adorn their temples with the animated, severed heads of their enemies mounted upon pikes.

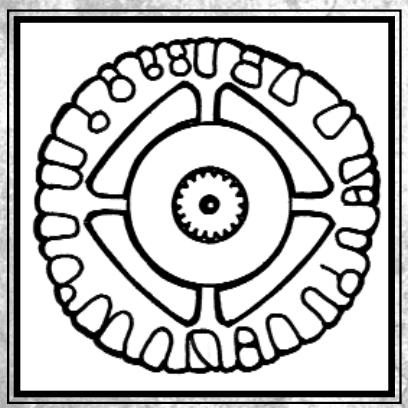
The domains associated with Coatlimict are Death, Evil, and War. His favored weapon is the two-handed *macuahuitl* and his symbol is a stylized skull from which serpents slither like the rays of the sun.

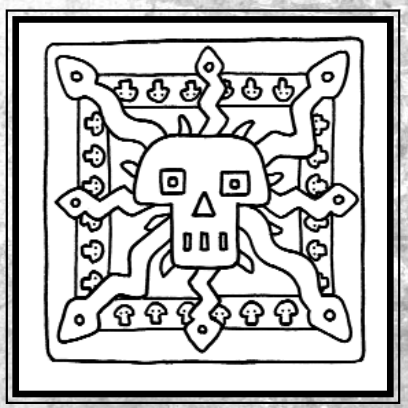
Cynhuara (the Radiant Serpent)

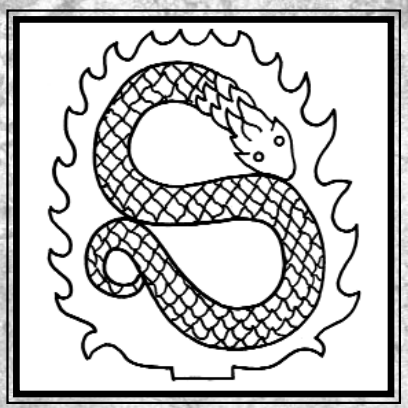
Demigod, LG — Zimala, Nagas, Reptiles

Cynhuara (sin-*wahr*-uh), the Radiant Serpent, was a demi-goddess sired by Madrah to rule the Zimalan Empire. When she came of age, she created the Naga Council, a democratic assembly that gave greater voice to her subjects. With the Radiant Serpent at its head, the Council begat an age of peaceful expansion and magical progress. The peace came to a terrible end when Cyhara's brother, Axaluatl, betrayed her and the Council, bringing war from the Khonsurian Empire that decimated the population. In the attack, Cynhuara herself was slain by Meraph, the half-dragon daughter of Queen Ankharet.

Yet divinity is not so easily extinguished. Cynhuara has lain in the slumber of death for millennia, but the rumor of prophecy has begun to circulate among the guardian nagas who live today and a handful of devoted cults of the Radiant Serpent.







Asserting that the goddess can be returned from death, the disciples of Cynhuara have come to understand that only one person, a young human female, can avail this prophecy: Itlanexca, the adolescent queen of Teotcoatlan. Herself only a young acolyte of the Radiant Serpent, the queen is unaware of her destiny and of the enemies who would see her dead to prevent it.

Clerics who worship the slumbering goddess have their spells granted by Madrah himself—until the goddess's rebirth. The domains associated with the Radiant Serpent are Good, Healing, and Magic. Her favored weapon, for those of her followers who can grasp one, is the flail. Her symbol is a serpent surrounded by a halo of flame.

Daenthar (the Hallowed Forge)

Greater god, LG — Earth, Industry, Vows, Trust

Daenthar (*dane*-thar), the Hallowed Forge, the Mountainlord, is the earth god of industry, blacksmithing, and oaths. He is the patron of miners and all who draw from the rock to shape tools of defense and war. Dwarves were hewn in the image of Daenthar, and it is indeed the Hallowed Forge that most of the Bearded Folk venerate. Yet other races pay their respects to him as well, particularly mountaineers, blacksmiths, and those who work with their hands. The Mountainlord, a stern god of unwavering law, is well known for his promised word; when an oath is made by him or his clerics, one can be assured the oath will be fulfilled. Though seldom are curses made in his name, vows of love, justice, and revenge are common.

Daenthar is one of the Greater Gods, and the most serious-minded of his siblings. He is an earth god like Poderon, but he is dour by comparison, lacking the levity of his younger brother. Gaining the friendship of Daenthar is a promise of security, for the Mountainlord defends his own. Daenthar is widely acknowledged but his clergy is small; clerics of the Hallowed Forge are found mostly within stony temples deep within mountain holds. In ceremony, they are clad in full battle armor that varies with each temple, but the everyday vestments of the Mountainlord's clergy resemble well-tailored workman's attire that is uniform across the Known Realms. When the likeness of Daenthar is carved in religious art, he always appears as a stout human or tall dwarf, either standing over a forge or arrayed in heavy battle armor.

The domains associated with the Mountainlord are Earth, Good, Law, and Protection. His favored weapon is the warhammer, while the symbol of Daenthar is a forging hammer set against a cracked mountain.

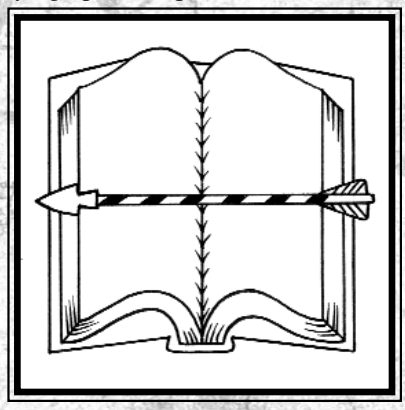
Delvyr (the Luminous)

Lesser god, NG — Knowledge, Learning, Light

Delvyr (*del*-veer), the Luminous, the Revealing Light, the Hallowed Docent, is the deity of education, knowledge, and radiance. He is the patron god of scholars, librarians, educators, and warriors who fight for the preservation of truth. Learned bards and chroniclers revere Delvyr above others, for he strives to reveal all secrets and unmask the guises of evil and all those who would bury knowledge. He is also the god of sunlight and exposure, the purveyor of open truth and unclouded opinion. Clerics and paladins who serve Delvyr are chief opponents of the undead, bringing purifying sunlight to bear against them. Monks, bards, and scholars devoted to the Revealing Light often spend long hours in research, although Delvyr does not seek to hold up his followers in dusty libraries forever. The search for knowledge is an active one; the Church of Delvyr often funds expeditions to recover lost lore, forgotten mythos, records from fallen civilizations, or even magics buried by the ages.

In religious renderings, Delvyr is always shown dwelling in places of lore, such as libraries, archaeological digs, and council chambers. Within these environments, he is shown in four stages of life: a child, a youth, a middle-aged man, and an elder to depict one's need to learn throughout one's life. Delvyr is a known enemy to the Hidden Lord, whose shadows he intends to illuminate, whose secrets he aims to reveal. Though a deity of undisputable good, Delvyr believes in truth for truth's sake; even harmful or blasphemous lore is best brought to light and carefully guarded, rather than left hidden for the unwary to find.

The domains associated with Delvyr are Glory, Good, Knowledge, and Sun. His favored weapon is the shortbow and his symbol is an arrow lying upon an open book.



Elas (the Lurker)

Demigod, NE — Deep-dwelling Marine Life, Ambush

Elas (*ee*-loss), the Lurker, She-Devil of the Deep, is a wicked and capricious terror of the ocean floor. Ever at war with her brother Chondri the Voracious, together they rule over the deep seas and its most fearsome creatures.

Elas is a deity of extreme cunning and a mistress of ambush. She is depicted as a colossal manta ray with the head and notorious jaws of a massive moray eel. When Elas takes physical form within Áereth's ocean, she is a true monster of the deep. While her dorsal side is perfectly camouflaged against the seabed, her ventral is an otherworldly wash of prismatic effulgence. Those who look upon it are irresistibly drawn into her waiting jaws of death. Her numerous tails are long, barbed, and poisonous. She spends most of her time resting on the ocean floor, laying in wait for prey deserving of her interest. Clerics of the Lurker are primarily sahuagin and locathahs.

The domains associated with Elas are Evil, Trickery, and Water. The favored weapon of Elas is the trident and her symbol is a manta ray or a sand dollar rimmed with spear points.

Elyr (the Healing Touch)

Lesser god, CG — Healing, Life, Succor

Elyr (*el*-eer), the Healing Touch, the Maiden of Life, the Binder of Wounds, the Sustainer, is the goddess of continued life, the purging of sickness, and the binding of all hurts. She is the patroness of those who give aid to others, be they home-dwelling healers or warriors who brave enemy territory to rescue captives. Born immaculate from the blood of Ildavir, Elyr takes her mother's devotion to life to a zealous extreme, believing that life should be sustained at all costs and is worth any risk.

Elyr's well-meaning, uncompromising dogma is often at odds with the tenets of Soleth, which state that there is a time for merciful death. Clerics of the Healing Touch are a blessing to the wounded and those in peril, but often a bane to the dying who prefer the release of death. Elyr does not enjoy suffering, but her drive to stave off death outweighs the need to relieve pain. Accordingly, the Maiden of Life abhors the undead, and her clerics often join the faithful of Delvyr in their crusades to destroy them. Elyr wages great opposition to the machinations of Zhühn, for she adores creation and the restoration of life in all its forms. The Maiden of Life is usually depicted as a radiant young woman in simple robes, tending the sick and wounded. No matter what armor or vestments they wear, clerics of Elyr are recognizable by their very long, well-groomed hair, vowing never to cut it once they join the clergy, as a symbol of long and enduring life.

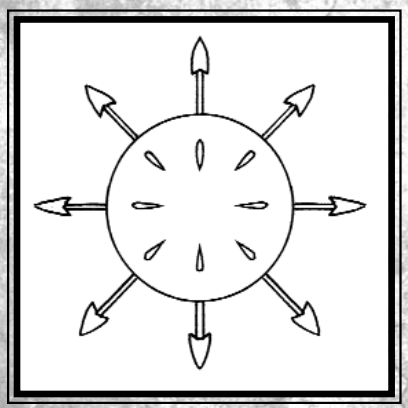
The domains associated with Elyr are Good, Healing, Liberation, and Luck. Her favored weapon is the sling. The symbol of the Maiden of Life is a radiant hand, sometimes shown clasping or touching the palm of a withered hand.

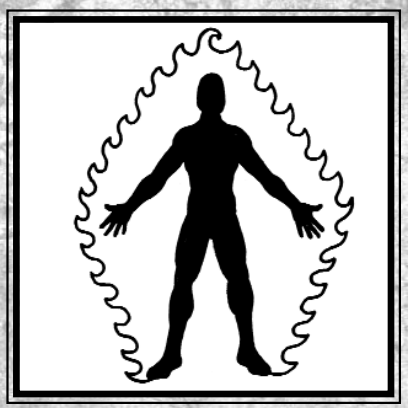
Fenwar (the Firelord)

Lesser god, N — Fire, Lightning, the Hearth

Fenwar (*fen*-wahr), the Firelord, the Blazing King, is the god of forest fires, lightning storms, hot springs, and the kinetic energies of nature wherever they manifest—volcanoes, auroras, fireflies. He is the patron of creatures inured to fire or lightning, but also of simple people who rely upon the fires of the hearth to keep their homes warm. As a god in service to Ildavir, Fenwar maintains the balance of nature with his phenomena of heat and flame.

Known for his temper, Fenwar does not tolerate those who abuse his dominion. Clerics and druids of the Firelord never cause forest fires, but they do permit them to run their course as part of Áereth's cycle of life. They do investigate such holocausts, however, if they have reason





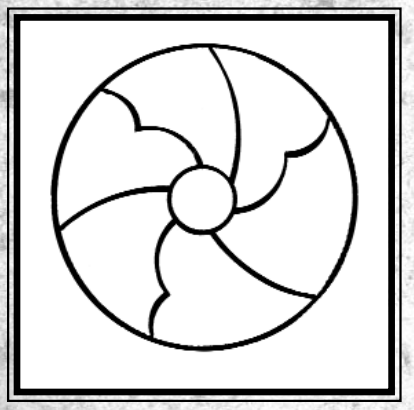
to suspect mortal instigation. Temples of Fenwar, though uncommon, are great lodges of stone with windows open to the sky. Altars, resembling massive hearths, are usually guarded by fire, magma, or steam mephits. Holy days are observed during lightning storms, when Fenwar is the most active.

The domains associated with Fenwar are Air, Fire, and Sun. His favored weapon is the halberd, and his symbol is a man-shaped figure wreathed in flame or electricity.

Gil'Mâridth (the Torment)

Lesser god, CE — Nightmares, Fear, Night Terrors

Gil'Mâridth (gil-*mahr*-idth), the Torment, the Great Hag, the Dread of Night, formerly a being of unmatched evil and power in the Sancturn Pantheon's homeworld, refused to be lowered beneath Áereth's greater gods. Instead, she escaped into the Dream held aloft by Ôæ where she reigns rivaled only by Ôæ himself and, like him, exists almost without body or awareness beyond that imagined realm. Out of sight to most dreamers, Gil'Mâridth and her cult of shanghaied dreamers wage a tireless battle with Ôæ and his faithful in an effort to reclaim the Dream and shape it to her liking, just as she has since before the dawn of Áereth. The Great Hag's dominion within the Dream is a realm of unimagined horror, and she will not relent until every dream has been made part of her nightmare.



With the near-consummate power of Ôæ, however, Gil'Mâridth's aim is not an easy one. Yet the march of fear and misery in the waking world disquiets dreamers' dreams, inviting the Torment's terrifying intrusion. Unbelieved if not unknown by most mortals, the war she wages threatens very real repercussions for every dreamer in the waking world should she achieve her frightening designs. For the Cult of Mâridth, the enormity of potential misery brought on from such troubles as plagues and wars—and especially the Northlands' Scourge—gives them hope.

The unquiet clerics of the Torment are recruited by senior priests of the faith who enter their nightmares and drive them to the edge of sanity until they come to understand the creeds of Gil'Mâridth. These disturbed believers live anonymously and work diligently to poison the waking lives of dreamers with terror they should carry with them in their sleep. Most of them function independently, haunting individuals according to instructions received in their own tortured dreams, but elite sects of the Cult of Mâridth exist, often in coordination with other evil faiths. The spread of mental anguish—and hence, troubled dreams—fuels the Torment's power within the Dream. The Dread of Night is the antithesis of hope and safety, fulfilling a dreamer's worst imagined horror. By default, she is depicted as a night hag, a creature commonly connected to her faith.

The domains associated with Gil'Mâridth are Dream, Evil, and Trickery. She is no purveyor of death, preferring the sedation and unconsciousness of her enemies to ensure their arrival in her dominion. For this reason, clerics of the Torment employ poisons such as oil of taggit and blue whinnis. When forced into combat, they wield the sap, Gil'Mâridth's favored weapon. Her symbol is a dark spiral or vortex reflecting the reoccurring image central to her priests' nightmares.

Gorhan (the Helmed Vengeance)

Lesser god, LG — Valor, War, Chivalry

Gorhan (*gor*-han), the Helmed Vengeance, the Brave One, He Who Fights First, is the deity of assertive combat and valorous accomplishments. He is the patron god of those who fight with courage against the lawless and corrupt. Nonhumans often favor Gorhan in their darkest hour, but usually know him by a different name. Most of the Brave One's faithful are paladins and cavaliers, and even elves have founded knightly orders in his name. His fervor against evil often outweighs his reason, and his followers evince the same trait.

Gorhan is always depicted as a slender knight in luminous, golden armor, a radiant longsword and shield in hand. The visor of his helm always hides his face, revealing him as neither human nor elven in countenance. Gorhan is the husband of Justicia and embodies the emphatic force that carries out her righteous decrees. When forgiveness or reprieve are no longer options for the guilty, the Helmed Vengeance becomes the executioner. Clerics of Gorhan respect valor above all, and

those who've proven their courage against the face of true evil earn the right to wear armor emblazoned with their deity's sacred symbol. Though they wear standard vestments within their temples, clerics and paladins of the Brave One favor the anonymity of visored helms on the battlefield.

The domains Gorhan is associated with are Good, Healing, Strength, and War. His favored weapon is the longsword, and his symbol is such a sword stained with black blood. Those temples that honor both Gorhan and his wife merge their symbols together as one.

Hidden Lord

Lesser god, CE — Secrets, Misdirection, Forbidden Lore, Shadows

The Hidden Lord, the Cloaked One, the Keeper of Forbidden Lore, or He of Many Names is a deity of the shadows, an unseen master of dark places and darker secrets. Those mortals who seek heretical writings and buried truths inevitably find themselves coveting the power of the Hidden Lord—whether they know it or not. The Cloaked One is one of the few gods who do not openly preach their tenets, for his ways are by their very nature concealed. His clergy, the Hidden Path, is a well-organized secret society that carries out its evil agenda through clandestine means, feigning the worship of other gods and communicating to each other with complex codes. In every land he is known with a different name—such as Nuurifar, Crypticus, or Salderast—and whenever one of these names become fairly established, his clergy renames him.

The Hidden Lord is never portrayed in any form; any depiction of him is intended to mislead. Some affiliate the Hidden Lord with Zhühn due to his secret agendas, but this is inaccurate; the Hidden Lord seeks power, while Zhühn seeks to remove all power. There is no common appearance among his faithful. If there is a means to identify a cleric of the Hidden Lord, they do not share it outside their own. Any priest who turns from the Hidden Path is marked for death.

The domains associated with the Cloaked One are Darkness, Evil, Knowledge, and Trickery. His symbol, very rarely seen, is a black cowl concealing a wispy visage and a pair of glowing eyes. A cleric of the Hidden Lord can use the holy symbol of any neutral or evil deity to channel their spells. The Hidden Lord's favored weapon is a wavy-bladed dagger.

Huamext (The Restored)

Demigod, NG — Xulmec, Protection

Huamext (*woh*-mesht), the Guardian and Preserver, is the reincarnation of the hero-turned-god Huamec the Deliverer. Once a chieftain of his people, Huamec first led the human slaves to freedom from the naga empire of Zimala. After establishing them in the Xulmec peninsula, Huamec ascended into divinity, only to sacrifice his immortal life to save his people in the War of Divine Right. Centuries later, Huamec emerged again, revived by one of his descendants, a priestess named Ixtique. Having achieved divinity herself with the sole purpose of resurrecting her ancestor and god, her spirit fused with his and a new aspect of both exists in the form of Huamext. Huamext is the god of vigilance for all of Xulmec, a deity keeping surveillance on the lands and its people.

Huamext is often considered the eldest human son of Madrah, for he gives of himself more than any of Madrah's progeny. Although he is worshipped primarily in Teotcoatlan, Huamec is a legend and hero to all tribes of Xulmec, and shrines to Huamext exist in every city so the people can pay him their respect. In his temples, the Guardian is depicted as he was in life, a bear of a man wielding a massive warclub and sometimes wearing armor made from the scales of a dragon; at his side is always a young girl, representing the spirit of Ixtique who gave Huamec renewed life. Nevertheless, both are worshipped as Huamext, a single deity. Priests of the Guardian and Preserver are open-minded, willing to form allegiances with foreigners but never willing to risk the security of all Xulmec. Huamext and his clergy disapprove of the infighting that often exists between the city-states, a state of attrition they cannot foil. It was priests of Huamec who were first taught the rites to create living idols (see Chapter 3), and for this reason every temple to Huamext is guarded by one of the idols.

The domains associated with Huamext are Earth, Good, and Protection. His favored weapon is the greatclub and his symbol is a quetzal-feathered phoenix.

Ildavir (The Giver of Form)

Greater god, N — Creation, Life, Nature, Animals

Ildavir (*il*-duh-veer), the Giver of Form, the Mother of Essence, is often overlooked but is no less powerful than the others of the Triad. It was Ildavir who first gave corporeal form to the creatures of Áereth, setting them into the cyclic arrays of nature and granting them the ability to procreate. As a goddess of Creation, Ildavir stands aloof from the world, seeing that it moves as intended only on a global scale. Even so, some choose to worship her directly. Clerics and druids of the Old Faith, as it is called, know the Mother of Essence to be the foremost god of nature itself, the origin of all earthly life. They place great value in physical creatures, objects, and places. Simultaneously materialistic and humble, Ildirians preach the value of the world and its workings and strive always to protect nature and its children. Farmers, agriculturists, and even hunters regularly offer tribute to the Giver of Form.

When depicted, Ildavir is envisioned as a winged dryad or sylph and bearing the antlers of a caribou or gazelle. She stands always apart from the world, and yet in contact with it, providing nourishment. She is the consort of Choranus and the mother of Ireth, Daenthar, Poderon, and Olidyra. The goddess Elyr is her youngest progeny, who sprang fully formed from a wound dealt her by Zhühn, her foremost enemy. The gods who despoil nature, such as Malotoch, Nimlurun, and Narrimunâth, are often the objects of her anger.

The domains associated with the Mother of Essence are Animal, Creation, Earth, Plant, and Protection. Her favored weapon is the scythe and her symbol is a leaf, frond, or tree.

Ilhuicatl (Lord of the Reef)

Demigod, NG — Athua, the Sea

Ilhuicatl (il-*hwee*-kotl), Lord of the Reef, is the patron god of the Xulmec city-state of Athua, given divine status by Madrah and fostered by the ocean goddess Pelagia. To the Athuans, he is the personification of the sea itself, though even they recognize the existence of Pelagia as the motherly, oceanic goddess above him. Ilhuicatl is the protector of all goodly, marine-dwelling creatures, including merfolk and tritons.

Ilhuicatl is depicted as a noble triton with the Southland features of a Xulmec human. According to legend, as a mortal man he fell in love with a mermaid who beckoned him into the sea, where he joined with the spirit of Pelagia herself. Porpoises and dolphins are sacred animals in the faith of the Lord of the Reef, and human clerics of Ilhuicatl maintain strong contact with the clerics of merfolk and tritons who also revere him.

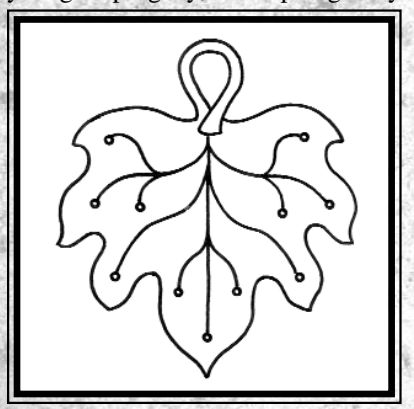
The domains associated with Ilhuicatl are Good, Protection, Travel, and Water. His favored weapon is the spear, and his symbol is a conch.

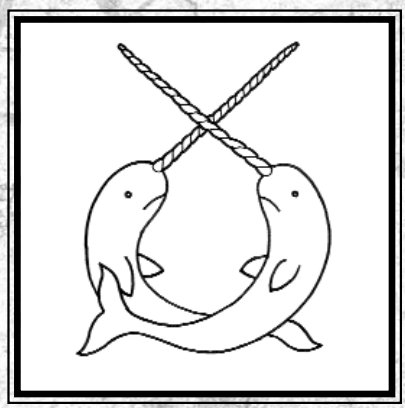
Ilquot (The Bell in the Deep)

Demigod, CN — Cold Waters of the North, Marine Predators, Retribution

Ilquot (*il*-quot), the Bell in the Deep, the Bellowing Bray of Night, is the fierce and jealous protector of the frigid northern oceans. He is the patron not only of those living upon the northern coasts but also the predators that keep their fragile ecosystems healthy. Ilquot is, in fact, their top predator, a rare and unseen hunter letting no beast take more than its fair share.

Like his brothers and sisters, Ilquot watches over a realm bequeathed to him by his mother Pelagia. Among them, his reputation is the dourest, yet his spirit is as ferocious within the seas' krakens and orcas as it is gentle with its puffins' chicks. The savage clerics of Ilquot must live a life as wild and brutal as his favored children, the creatures of the icy waters, though their numbers are few and dwindling. Without the presence of Ilquot's clerics as wardens of the cold northern seas, local priests have had to take special care not to





infringe upon this gelid divinity's simple yet easily disregarded tenets. When a larger number of mortals are disrespectful of the sea, Ilquot is quick to bring retribution upon them, inciting his faithful to war. The Bell in the Deep is usually depicted as an intimidating humanoid with the head of some great animal of the arctic seas, typically a walrus, polar bear, or octopus.

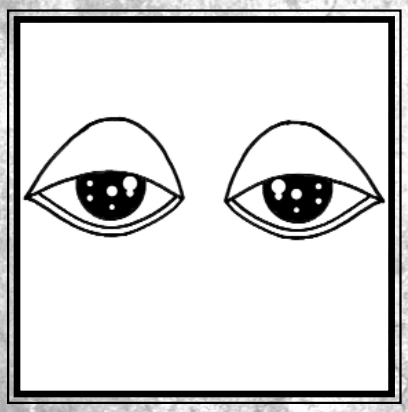
The domains associated with Ilquot are Protection, War, and Water. The favored weapon of Ilquot is the harpoon, interchangeable with the javelin. His symbol is a pair of crossed narwhal tusks, often frozen in ice.

Ireth (the Starmistress)

Greater god, CG — Astronomy, Forestry, Wizardry

Ireth (*eer*-ith), the Starmistress, the Stargazer, the Verdant Mantle, is the goddess of the night sky, woodlands, and magic. She is the patroness of astronomers, navigators, and woodsmen who respect the balance of nature. Ireth is the primary deity worshipped by the elves of Áereth. The elven race was fashioned in her image, reflecting her virtues, love of knowledge and art, and fascination with magic. Though possessed of a disciplined mind, Ireth is nevertheless whimsical, a trait bestowed upon the elves at their creation.

Eschewing formal temples, the Stargazer's places of worship take many forms, from *hallowed* forest glades open to the sky to stargazing observatories and sky-lit libraries. Elves, studious wizards, and those who look beyond Áereth itself into the stars themselves all pay their respects to the Starmistress. She is a mystic deity who embodies both worldliness and the unearthly mysteries of existence itself.



Ireth is the eldest child of Choranus and Ildavir. When she is rendered in religious art, Ireth appears as a slender wizard in modest, voluminous robes with long, flowing tresses. She is often shown with a spellbook in hand and a sheathed sword at her hip—or else wielding the sword with the book under one arm. She is typically depicted as elven, half-elven, or human.

The domains associated with Ireth are Air, Animal, Earth, Good, Knowledge, and Magic. Her favored weapon is the longsword and her symbol is a pair of eyes with star-flecked pupils.

Izmaledt (the Lord of Many Forms)

Demon prince, CE — Obscenities, Malformation

Izmaledt (*iz*-muh-let), the Lord of Many Forms, is the demon prince of physical blasphemies, the purveyor of putrid flesh, and the hybridization of unnatural horrors. Those who find the loathsome worship of Nimlurun too systematic for their tastes often find themselves thralls to Izmaledt, for the Lord of Many Forms offers obscenity without reason. Usually stricken with contagions themselves, cultists of Izmaledt are typically found in the company of the fouler creatures of Áereth, such as otyughs, gibbering mouthers, or oozes. Wizards in the service of the Lord of Many Forms experiment with the flesh of their enemies, stitching and rearranging limbs from one creature to another, and a liberal use of transmutation magic is a common pastime for such depraved souls.

Jezuel

Archdevil, LE — Pain, Torture, Indignity

Jezuel (*jez*-ooh-el), a sadistic she-devil who calls herself the Queen of Tribulation, seeks always to bring physical and mental anguish to mortals. She alleviates the suffering of her worshippers while they live, only to bring it a hundredfold upon them when their souls are in her grasp. To earn her protection, the depraved cultists of Jezuel must inflict agonies upon others, but her demand for torment does not end with physical pain. Indignity and shame are her favorite afflictions to work upon the mortal mind, and for this reason she spends a great deal of her effort spreading misery like a plague. The father who cannot feed his starving children, the soldier whose terror leads him to abandon his comrades when they are in need, the midwife who fails to save the newborn child—these Jezuel names her greatest triumphs.

Justicia (the Helmless Vigil)

Lesser god, LG — Justice, Mercy, Defense

Justicia (jus-*ti*-shuh), the Highest Magistress, the Restoring Flame, the Helmless Vigil, is the goddess of mercy, justice, and defensive combat. As the patroness of judges, lawmen, and knights, she oversees justice in all its forms, be it in a court of law or the field of battle. As the patroness of guardians and the beneficent, Justicia seeks to remedy all hurts and redeem all evil. Those who admit their crimes can find forgiveness with the Restoring Flame, but when evil fails to repent, she burns with a purifying fire. Though she

favors the moral virtues of good, Justicia usually remains impartial to the laws of the land in which she is revered.

Justicia is the wife of Gorhan—she is the voice of reason behind his unwavering valor. She is depicted as a statuesque knight in silver armor. In one hand, she holds the scales of justice, and in the other, a gilded longsword. Long dark hair spills from her head. She never wears a helm, preferring to look into the eyes of those she judges. When armored, clerics and paladins of the Highest Magistress shun the use of visors, preferring open-faced helms as they march into battle.

The domains associated with Justicia are Good, Healing, Law, and Protection. Her favored weapon is a longsword. Her symbol, a shield bearing radiant eyes with a longsword held against its face, is often merged with that of her husband's in joint worship.

Klazath (the Crimson Banner)

Lesser god, LE — War, Subjugation

Klazath (*klah*-zuth), the Crimson Banner, the Rain of Death, is the god of glory through violence, conflict, and war for its own sake. He is the patron of conquerors, tyrants, and martial governments, as well as individual soldiers who believe that the honor of battle itself outweighs all consequences. Followers of Klazath consider peace an enervating state, a stagnation that weakens all parties. The dogma of the Crimson Banner demands the necessity of war, citing nature—the design of Ildavir herself—as a model for unending violence. The weak, Klazath teaches, must be slain so they do not consume the resources needed for the strong. Barring that, they must be subjugated to serve the interests of the conquerors. Klazath is not a popular god in many lands, but generals and kings often rally in the name of the Crimson Banner to justify their means. Be it true piety or lip service, the clerics of Klazath welcome all bloodshed in his name.

A god of needless war, Klazath is the current consort of Yvyn, the Righteous Slaughter. He is also a prime enemy of Justicia and Gorhan, whom he enjoys luring onto the battlefield. Klazath is depicted as a warrior in black plate armor, half spattered with blood, wearing an elaborate plumed or horned helm. In his mailed fists, he carries a great war axe. The war priests of the Crimson Banner smear their own blood on their armor before a battle, signifying their willingness to bleed for their faith.

The domains associated with the Rain of Death are Destruction, Evil, Law, and Strength. His symbol is a bloodstained, double-headed axe of black metal. Accordingly, the battleaxe is his favored weapon.

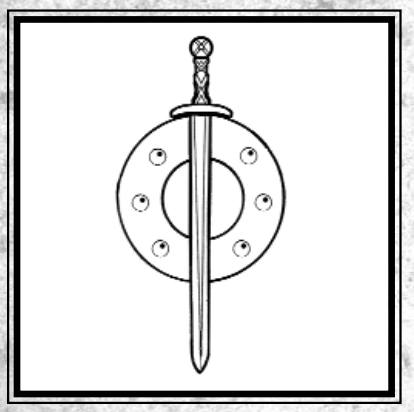
Lagos (the Scaly God)

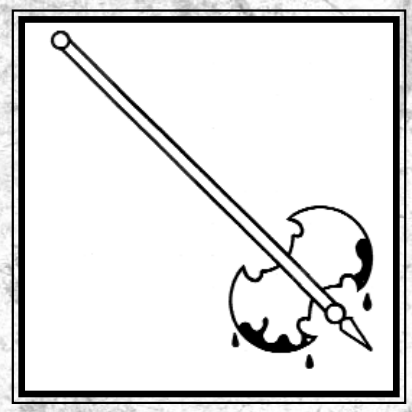
Demigod, CE — Antagonism, Reptiles, Savagery

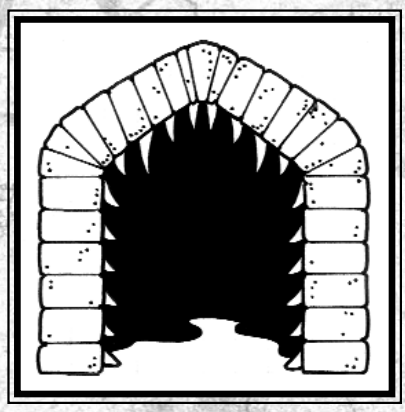
Lagos (*loh*-gos), the Scaly God, the Scaled One, is the demigod of reptilian creatures and subterranean caves, violence, and battles for supremacy. The hostility Lagos exhibits is fierce but brief, and this trait is common even among those he lords over. At the core, he is indolent and selfish, offering his favor only in passing and very little else. It is believed that he will personally devour those who displease him, and Lagos is not known for his patience. He is given to fits of rage and lustful indulgences.

Lagos is portrayed as a tremendous wide-mouthed reptile with a long tongue, razor claws, and a thick, club-like tail. His green-blue, scaly hide is scarred and peeling, and he is always depicted in acts of aggression. His servants, appropriately, are mostly troglodytes, kobolds, or evil-minded lizardfolk. Cave-dwelling humans have been known to worship Lagos as well, primitive barbarians as violent as the reptiles the Scaly God represents. Spiritual leaders of such tribes who serve Lagos are usually shamans and adepts, offering regular blood sacrifices at crude shrines.

The domains associated with Lagos are Chaos, Destruction, Evil, and Strength. Most of his followers







would rather use teeth and claws in combat; when forced to wield a weapon, the morningstar is the god's favored choice. The symbol of the Scaly God is a stony archway lined with reptilian teeth.

Lasheeva (Lady Dissolution)

Lesser god, NE — Undeath, Murder, Affliction

Lasheeva (lah-*shee*-vuh), Lady Dissolution, the Cold Seductress, the Black Desecration, the Daughter of Nightmares, is the goddess of undeath and the termination of natural life. When mortals first felt the cold grip of death upon them, it was Lasheeva who offered an attractive, if macabre, alternative. Granting choice creatures her chilling touch, the goddess personally introduced the curse of undeath to Áereth. Lasheeva is the unequivocal warden of the Negative Energy Plane and thereby gives new, "blessed" life to the dead. With this defiance of the gods' despotic mandate of mortality, she seduces countless souls into her dark fold.

Priests of opposing faiths theorize that Lasheeva was Áereth's first and most powerful lich who ascended to divinity with the support of a cabal of evil gods, but clerics of Lasheeva know that it was Lady Dissolution herself—an ancient princess of the Sancturn Pantheon—who bestowed the mantle of lichdom upon willing mortals and personally crafted the first phylacteries that sustain her greatest protégés. Even the most impious of intelligent undead acknowledge Lasheeva as the goddess of their own unliving existence, but many revere her outright. The largest temples of the Lady Dissolution, subterranean crypts desecrated in her name, are guarded by mummies and liches of the foulest sort. High priests and priestesses are, in fact, required to choose the path of either undead form at an hour appointed by Lasheeva herself. Her shrines are infamously rife with ghouls, zombies, and skeletons.

Lasheeva is the daughter of Gil'Mâridth and the immortal enemy of Soleth. Her followers are Áereth's quintessential purveyors of undeath, hoping to spread negative energy across the world like a plague. Lay followers of Lasheeva are almost always dabblers of necromancy and often find themselves targeted by paladins. Even the all-hating followers of Zhühn oppose her faithful, for undeath cheats the Great Enemy of the obliteration he craves for all life.

The domains associated with the Black Desecration are Death, Destruction, and Evil. Her favored weapon is the falchion and her symbol is a black, jawless skull set with open, living eyes.

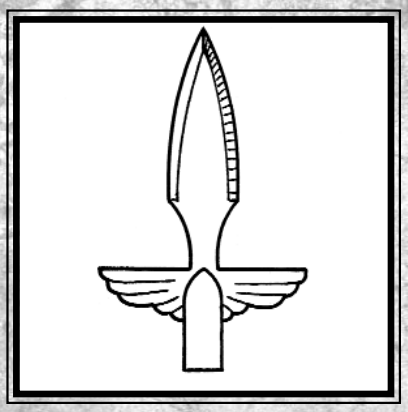
Madrah (Lord of the Earth and Sky)

Greater god, N — Earth, Sky

Madrah (*moh*-druh), the Lord of the Earth and Sky, Heart-of-Sky, the Mighty Eye, is a greater god of terrestrial life and aerial forces. Though his dominion technically reaches across all Áereth, he was charged by the Triad to oversee the continent and islands that make up the Southlands. Accordingly, he is seen by most natives of that land as the overlord of all gods. The Mighty Eye fathered the demigods Cynhuara and Axaluatl, the immortal rulers of the long-faded Zimalan Empire, and granted divine ascension to the gods of Xulmec. Madrah is powerful but equivocal, his incarnations as numerous as the cultures that worship him. While the humans of Xulmec believe he is the savior of all existence—the only being capable of keeping the Sun from burning the world to ash—the drakon of Ssorlang believe he is a great lord of reptiles preparing the world for serpent rule. Such varying aspects, tenets, and origins of the Lord of the Earth and Sky can be found carved in temple walls throughout the Southlands in the form of simple glyphs and vast, intricate mosaics. Though nearly every thinking creature in the Southlands pays some form of homage to him, few worship Madrah directly, instead worshipping the many spirits, demigods, and divine progenies who serve him.

Those few clerics who venerate Madrah directly, many of whom are druids, are as inscrutable as their god, often found wandering the breadth of the Southlands on an unceasing pilgrimage, like caretakers of his dominion. The faithful of Madrah can be found in many forms: in city streets, garbed in rags and muttering ancient incantations backwards, braving the isles of Dujamar in the raiment of dragonhide armor, or counseling the drakon Emperor in silken robes. Northland theologians are never certain what to make of this elder god, his esoteric ways, or his oracular priests.

The domains Madrah is associated



with are Air, Earth, Magic, Travel, and Weather. His favored weapon is the shortspear. The symbol of the Lord of the Earth and Sky varies with every culture in which he is revered.

Malotoch (the Crow God)

Demigod, CE — Scavengers, Ruin, Cannibalism

Malotoch (*mal*-uh-tock), the Carrion Crow God, the Mother of Ruin, the Mistress Defiler, the Crow Witch, is the patron goddess of scavengers, cannibals, and all those who practice unclean rites. She is the demonic mistress of the living and undead who feast upon carrion or otherwise benefit from the loss of mortal life. Like poisonous mushrooms that thrive on decay, so Malotoch thrives on the ruin of life. Living monsters such as hags, harpies, and rooks (see *DCC #5: Aerie of the Crow God*) pay homage to her, as do cannibalistic undead such as ghouls and ghasts. Where great battles end and the glorious fallen lie, there Malotoch and her foul children are drawn.

The Crow Witch is always depicted with the curvaceous body of a woman and the head and legs of a monstrous crow. Clerics of Malotoch frequently keep the company of zombies and ghouls and adorn their armor with the bones of carrion birds or their latest victims. Among the profane rites performed by Malotoch's cults are the corruption of birds of prey into anathemas of nature, and evils of this sort often draws the ire of druids. Unsurprisingly, Malotoch is despised by most gods, although she garners a grudging respect from Nimlurun and Narrimunâth. The clerics of all three gods work in concert to achieve loftier, fouler plots than any of their clergies could alone.

The domains Malotoch is associated with are Air, Chaos, Death, and Evil. Her favorite weapon is the short sword. Cultists who serve Malotoch and nearly all undead raised in her name have a bloodstone imbedded in place of their left eyes. The bloodstone, often surrounded by cracked bones, is one of her symbols; the other is a crow perched atop a skull.

Myna (the Maid of Fortune)

Lesser god, CN — Chance, Circumstance, Fortune

Myna (*my*-nuh), Fortune Herself, the Lady of Weal, is the goddess that many turn to when prayers to the other gods have gone unanswered. For some mortals, Myna's name hangs upon their lips every day, ever coveting a change in fortune. As the divine embodiment of fortune itself, Myna is an elusive deity whose intercession is often unwelcome to lawful deities of the Sancturn Pantheon. She tips the scale on small and large affairs, offering good fortune to the underdog or withdrawing her favor from the advantageous or those predisposed to victory. She is whimsy incarnate, and none can discern the patterns of, or requirements for, her favor. The immortal power that controls the dice, Fortune Herself makes plays at both good and evil, law and chaos, and the only certainty in her dogma is the need for perpetual change.

Once, Myna's faith was known to few outside of an exclusive cult of the serendipitous and the secretive, but gradually her capricious dogma resolved into theism. Clerics of the Lady of Weal, most multiclassed as rogues or bards, are seen as smaller versions of the goddess herself, frustrating and fickle yet bearing good fortune. Their blessings, however, are always welcome, and for this reason her church has grown wealthy from the tiny donations of countless peasants and considerable contributions from nobles rich with coin. When Myna is depicted in religious art, she is seen as a flighty young woman, dancing or casting dice.

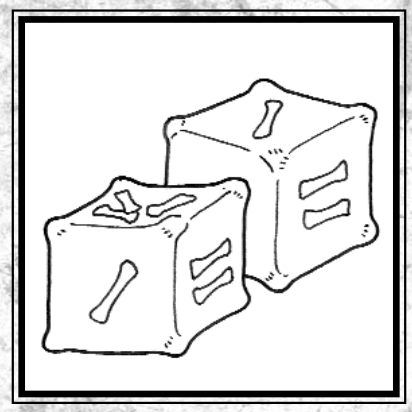
The domains associated with the Lady of Weal are Chaos, Luck, and Trickery. Her favored weapon is the dart, and her symbol is a stylized bullseye or a pair of dice made of bone.

Narrimunâth (the Lord of Disease)

Demigod, LE — Disease, Vermin

Narrimunâth (nar-ih-moon-*ahth*), the Rat God, the Lord of Disease, the Venerable, is the twin brother of Nimlurun and a demigod twisted to evil by the hand of Zhühn. He is the god of plagues and debilitating illness, the patron deity of wererats, those who would spread sickness, and other forms of vermin.

Narrimunâth is half of the god born of Pelagia, intended to be a god of purity. Zhühn's sabotage of the birth resulted in the sundering of the newborn deity, resulting in the twin gods



of sickness and filth. Narrimunâth gets along well with Nimlurun as well as can be expected between evil gods, and together they often scheme with Malotoch the Crow God. The Lord of Disease is always depicted as a half-man, half-rat abomination with a naked rat's tail, razor claws, and glowing red eyes.

The domains Narrimunâth is associated with are Death, Destruction, and Evil. His favorite weapon is the sap, and his symbol is a mangy, dead, or undead rat.

Nethruel

Archdevil, LE — Obsession, Addiction

Nethruel (*neth*-roo-el), the Fervent Lord, is a canny archdevil who feeds the sins of obsession among the mortal world. He is the devil of extremes, of ceaseless, unhealthy devotion. The veteran who looks for absolution in a bottle, the maiden who quits the company of her true friends in pursuit of a disreputable paramour, the wizard who neglects his family to focus on his magic—all these may have come under the influence of Nethruel. Cultists of the Fervent Lord, themselves victims of the demon prince, seek to afflict others with addictions and the debilitating reliance on objects, other people, or even ideas.

Neshti (The Stealthmaiden)

Lesser god, CG — Thievery, Trickery, Vigilantism

Neshti (*nesh*-tee), the Veiled Thief, the Stealthmaiden, the Lady of Shadows, is the goddess of thievery, malfeasance, and most pursuits on the wrong side of the law. She is the patroness of rogues, vigilantes, and peasant heroes, all those willing to stand against tyranny and cruelty. Many crimes are committed in her name, but the Stealthmaiden is only willing to grant her blessings on those who do so for the right reasons. A thief who steals bread to feed his children, a bard who swindles a cruel city official, and a sorceress who charms a miserly noble into granting a bit of his fortune as alms to the poor may all offer a prayer to Neshti—in the hope that she will veil their crimes so they will live to commit more. The Lady of Shadows offers no apologies, and will use any means necessary to see the greater good done, possessing no misgivings about stabbing her enemies in the back. Neshti and most of her faithful do not care for fair fights, as evil seldom does either. Although averse to murder, she is willing to deal violence upon her enemies and if death is the consequence of villainy, so be it.

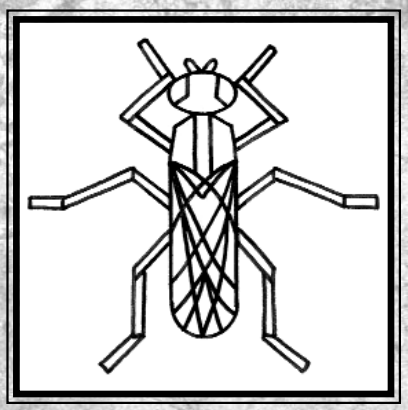
The Stealthmaiden's underhanded dogma is controversial among other goodly deities. In religious art, she is depicted as a hooded adolescent girl with raven-black hair, and is sometimes seen hiding from Justicia and Gorhan. Neshti does not care for temples and open worship, so her faithful usually gather in guildhalls or in small, nondescript shrines out of plain sight. There is no uniform appearance among her faithful; the black-clad, rooftop-dwelling burglar, the well-armed adventuring wizard, and the nondescript neighborhood cobbler could all be followers of the Lady of Shadows. Many of Neshti's clerics multiclass as rogues.

The domains associated with Neshti are Chaos, Good, Luck, and Trickery, and her favored weapon is the punching dagger. Neshti's symbol, more often seen tattooed in out-of-sight places than rendered on religious architecture, is a depiction of a blindfolded female face.

Nimlurun (The Lord of Filth)

Demigod, CE — Filth, Pollution

Nimlurun (*nim*-luh-roon), the Lord of Filth, the Holy Defiler, the Unclean One, was corrupted along with his brother Narrimunâth by Zhühn to bring further decay to the world. He is the god of refuse, putrescence, and all things unclean. Only the sick-minded and destitute pay deliberate homage to Nimlurun, but people who seek purity often speak the Lord of Filth's name in an attempt to placate him and avoid his attentions. His clerics seek to foul the skies of the world, pollute its waters,



and despoil the earth. As such, they often inspire the anger of druids and the gods of the earth.

Nimlurun is the twin of Narrimunâth, born of Pelagia and intended to be a god of purity. Zhühn's interference in the god's birth resulted in the making of two demigods of disease and despoilment. Nimlurun works often with his brother, and together they are known to treat with Malotoch, whom they reluctantly regard as an equal. Like his brother, Nimlurun is depicted as a half-man, half-rat beast, though his mangy fur is always coated in slime.

The domains he is associated with are Death, Evil, and Destruction. His favorite weapon is the light mace, and his symbol is an insect, usually a dung fly.

Ôæ (The Dreamer)

Lesser god, NG — Dreams, Imagination, Storytelling

Ôæ (*aw*-uh), the Dreamer, is the god of mortal dreams and imagination, the patron of wistful lovers, the downtrodden, and all who long for a better place than the waking world offers. Once the caretaker of the Sancturns before they arrived in primeval Áereth, the Dreamer forwent the gifts of the Triad to persist only within his memory: the Dream, that perpetual afterimage of their lost home.

Because of Ôæ's all-consuming preoccupation with sustaining the

The Dream

When the Sancturn Pantheon fled the ruin of their homeworld (see *Chapter 1*), a small impression of this transcendental place was preserved within the mind of their caretaker, Ôæ. Though this quality was not physically compatible with Áereth, its boundless wonderment was eagerly welcomed by the Triad as a blessing upon their creation. Ever since, the gift of dreaming has been bestowed upon all thinking beings—mortals and gods alike—as a nocturnal, fantastical playground. This is Ôæ's Dream.

Spatially limitless, the Dream is a world of pure imagination with its designs owing as much to Ôæ's memory of their home as it does to the sleeping fantasies of every dreamer since the dawn of Áereth. With each dreamer's dream, a slight aspect of this realm is upturned and reshaped in ways that may defy any waking sense of logic. But as extravagant as a mere dream may be, the changes to the Dream itself are mostly fleeting and rarely significant by themselves. But the sheer number of ever-churning dreams upon the dreamscape, each leaving their impressions, means Ôæ's Dream is a plane in constant flux.

The regular immersions into the Dream that each dreamer experiences are often forgotten (at least on a conscious level), and awareness of one's dreams as existing within the Dream is rare. Even the knowledge in the waking world that one's dreams take place within Ôæ's Dream is of little consequence once asleep. But for the followers of Ôæ, Gil'Mâridth, and other entities focused on the Dream, it is a world as real and potentially dangerous as any other.

Unbeknownst to most dreamers, the Dream at large is not the paradise it ought to be. A great war wages between the Knights of Ôæ and the crazed votaries of Gil'Mâridth who would transform the Dream into an infinite dreamscape of horrific insanity. Being Ôæ's Dream, he will always have the upper hand, for the hearts of good dreamers have long overcome fear and despair. However, Gil'Mâridth's influence cannot be overstated. Her domain within the Dream is vast and now situated at its very heart. By all accounts, it is an enormous black swirl of frantic nightmare. No dreamers—not even her most horrific mortal minions—have ever safely ventured deep within her realm. It is from this unspeakable stronghold that the Great Hag commands her agents of terror: the Cult of Mâridth, diverse denizens of both the Dream and the waking world, and if the rumors are true, more than one of Áereth's shadowy gods secretly bows to the Dread of Night as their queen.

Despite the horrors associated with Gil'Mâridth, her power does not dominate the Dream. For the most part, the Dream is a realm of benign wonders and mind-boggling scenarios with perils rarely in plain sight. Great dreamers and native entities alike can be found roaming its ever-shifting vistas. Races and civilizations unheard of on Áereth carry on in war and in peace in distant realms even the oldest of its dreamers may never see. Meanwhile, Ôæns guide lucid dreamers through their master's imagined terrain where the dreams of dogs, gods, and children revel and reel, touting and trumpeting their splendors into the Dreamer's living memory of home.

Dream, he is a god without body or awareness outside of the Dream itself. But within, he is an immensely powerful being, watching over his select flock of devotees and the dreams of all creatures alike. In the waking world, Ôæ's clergy rarely congregate or hold any formal shrines, and they wear no special vestments. They are characteristically imaginative daydreamers who have come into the faith after being approached by Ôæ himself in their sleep. Ôæns typically lead simple lives as artists and storytellers, encouraging children to hone their imaginations and jaded adults to reclaim their restless dreams of youth. In this, they hope to foster avid dreamers for Ôæ to bring into his fold. Clerics of Ôæ occasionally multiclass as bards, and many find that adventuring fuels their imaginations and enriches their dreams. Ôæns dedicate themselves to opposing the misdeeds of Gil'Mâridth and her clergy, a war that is waged only partially in the waking world. Within the Dream, these Knights of Ôæ assemble in imagined temples within holy cities of utterly fantastic design. There they work to protect and maintain this slice of their patron's—in fact, all of the Sancturn Pantheon's—ancient home.

The Dreamer is usually portrayed as a handsome, robed archmage or hierophant with his eyes closed. As the caretaker of the memory of their home, most gods of the Sancturn Pantheon look upon Ôæ fondly, but the Dreamer wages eternal war with Gil'Mâridth.

The domains Ôæ is associated with are Dream, Good, and Protection. His favored weapon is the sling, and his symbol is a closed eye set against a cloud, often with some fantastic dreamscape etched within. While priests of Ôæ must prepare their spells like any other cleric, their meditative state is much more of a vivid daydream.

Obitu-que

Demon prince, CE — Domination, Prepotency

Obitu-que (*oh*-bih-too-kay), Lord of the Five, is a demon prince who dreams of rulership and dominance over every living thing in existence. Though this vague desire is not uncommon among demons, the sheer focus and belief to which Obitu-que adheres is extraordinary. A lord of fire, slavery, and destruction, Obitu-que was once a mere balor among many, commanding demonic armies against the devils of Hell. After centuries spilling the ichor of the lawful fiends and his own kind, he carved for himself the Abyssal principality. Experimenting with loathsome magics, he mutated his own body and looked with new eyes—all five of them—upon the Material Plane with conquest in mind. Obitu-que met with brief success, personally razing and sacrificing whole villages, but his body was slain by the last of a line of noble human barbarians.

Yet centuries later, the spirit of the Lord of the Five lingers still, causing blight where his body remains. The demon prince is patient, and finds a great spiritual hold over like-minded mortals with dreams of predominance and tyranny. Nothing satisfies Obitu-que more than the feeling of domination, the subversion of his victims' wills.

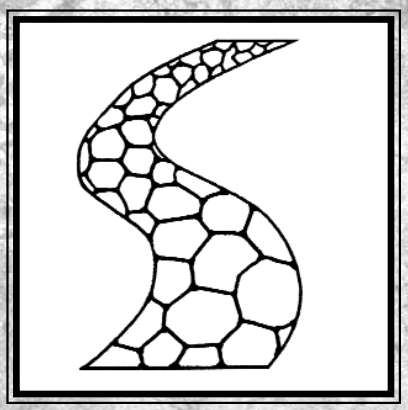
Olidyra (the Dauntless)

Greater god, N — Travel, Exploration, Adventure

Olidyra (*oh*-lih-*deer*-uh), the Dauntless, Lady Pathfinder, the Wanderess, is the goddess of exploration, adventure, and discovery. She is the patroness of wayfarers, vagabonds, fortune-hunters, and all those willing to make risks or venture into the unknown. Olidyra is worshipped primarily by halflings, the race whose creation she inspired, but all travelers and most adventurers know a brief prayer or two that entreats Lady Pathfinder for safe journeys.

The faithful of this wayward, roguish deity believe that Olidyra often breaks the mandates of the Triad, choosing to wander Áereth in mortal form simply to subvert its law and explore the ever-changing world. Such headstrong desire and naked curiosity are seen most often in halflings, who carry small shrines to the Wanderess in their wagons. Permanent temples to Lady Pathfinder are exceptionally rare, though the remnants of hastily built tributes of rock and wood are often found along well-beaten paths. Olidyra gets on well with most other gods, except those who seek to harm or imprison others. She is considered the only deity who "understands" the wiles of Myna, and is always quick to share a joke with her brother Poderon. Accordingly, clerics of Olidyra are on especially friendly terms with the faithful of these gods. When the Wanderess is depicted in religious art—typically painted in bright colors on the sides of wagons—she appears as a female halfling, human, or half-elf, with either a walking stick or a bow in hand.

The domains associated with Lady Pathfinder are Luck, Plant, Trickery, and Travel. Her favored weapon is the shortbow and her symbol is a winding or forked road.



Ormazd (the Changeless)

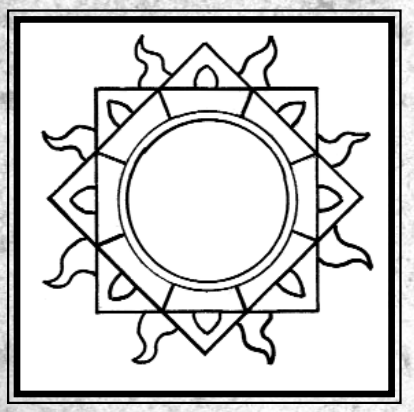
Greater god, LG — Creation, the Sun, Prophecy

Ormazd (*or*-mahzd), the Changeless, the Lord of Wisdom, is the creation god of sunlight, a mysterious deity of great power seldom heard in the current age. If Choranus is the god of destiny, then Ormazd is the god of the prophecies it engenders. Like Ahriman, his dark twin, Ormazd is believed to have spawned from a neutral deity named Zurvan, of which very little is known. Commonly associated with angelic beings, Ormazd is said to have sponsored a celestial host that once temporarily purged the world of evil when Ahriman's faith was as its greatest. Ormazd's skills of creation were paramount in the formation of Áereth, but his many battles against his brother have reduced his power over the ages and diminished his worship in the mortal realms.

When Ormazd's worship was at its peak, the desert-dwelling people of Abylos named him Ahura Mazda, the Lord of Wisdom. Such civilizations, believing him to be the sole creator of the world, are buried now in the desert sands. Yet in recent years, small clergies of Ormazd have sprung up in the Northlands, sometimes affiliated with the church of Delvyr and theologians of the Triad.

When Ormazd is depicted in religious art, he resembles a winged bull with the face of a bearded man and the blaze of the sun behind him. Ormazd and his prophetic clerics work always to oppose the designs of Ahriman, vigilant for traces of the evil god's influence. Priests of Ormazd inspire renewed interest in Áereth's distant past and the unknown, eastern lands.

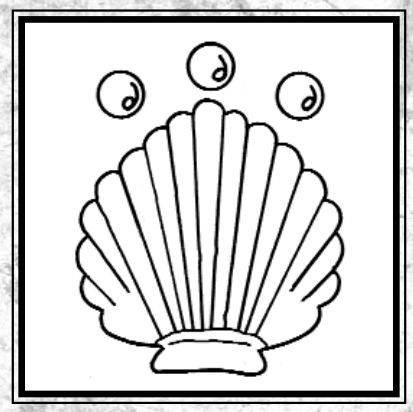
The domains associated with Ormazd are Creation, Good, Law, and Sun. His favored weapon is the kukri and his symbol is a blazing sun.



Pelagia (of the Singing Sea)

Lesser god, N — Oceans, Seas, Music, Travel

Pelagia (pehl-*ah*-gee-uh) of the Singing Sea, the Coral Queen, the Fish of Argent, the Maiden Voyager, is the goddess of the seas and oceans of Áereth, music in all its forms, and travel. She is the patroness of bards, fishermen, and folk who ply the sea for their livelihood. Though she can be as capricious as nature itself, Pelagia favors those who respect the waters of Áereth and the creatures within them. Whales are especially sacred animals in her faith, and their song is always considered a good omen. While many evil creatures make a home in the depths, Pelagia respects their right to dwell there, in keeping with the balance of nature and the morals of Áereth. The faithful of the Coral Queen never seek to destroy such wicked creatures but are permitted to defend themselves when necessary.



With the whole of the world's waters her dominion, Pelagia has delegated the aegis of each oceanic region to one of her many children. Most of them are demigods; Chandri, Elas, Ilquot, and Thalass number among the many. Pelagia names Zhühn her greatest enemy, for when she gave birth to a son, the Great Enemy tore him asunder and spawned the twin gods Narrimunâth and Nimlurun. Deities of filth and disease, her corrupted children often try to spoil the waters of Pelagia's dominion. Consequently, clerics of the Coral Queen seek to destroy every cult and shrine to the destitute demigods.

Pelagia's island-temples are scattered across the seas of Áereth, and most of her clerics live upon coastlines or aboard ships. Nearly every sailor offers a prayer to the Coral Queen when setting out to sea, whether it's a quick jaunt up the coastline or a voyage across the Empyrean. Rare shells and pearls are highly valued by clerics of Pelagia and make excellent religious donations. Particularly religious captains drop such natural baubles into the sea at the midpoint of their journeys. Music also plays a large role in the Pelagian faith. Clerics of the Coral Queen may sing sonorous anthems with the morning tide, while a devoted sailor sings a common sea shanty hymn during his nightwatch. The Maiden Voyager is usually depicted as a fair-haired mermaid adorned with coral jewelry, though in some lands she appears as a selkie with raven tresses.

The domains associated with Pelagia are Protection, Travel, and Water. Her favored weapon is the rapier and her symbol is a sea shell of any kind, usually a conch or cockleshell.

Poderon (the Deep Delver)

Greater god, NG — Earth, Commerce, Festivity

Poderon (*poe*-der-on), the Deep Delver, the Jovial Miner, is the earth god of commerce and merrymaking. As an earth god, he is the patron of miners, gemcutters, and merchants, but all those who purvey or seek merriment look to Poderon. Though the gnome race was first cast in his image and revere him more than any god, others pay homage to the Deep Delver as well, particularly those whose livelihood comes from the earth itself. Although his commitment to hard work and the preservation of the earth cannot be disputed, Poderon is best known for his optimism and appreciation for comfort—a trait seen everyday in the gnomes of Áereth. The Delver is famous for his sense of humor, but he becomes a dangerous foe when the happiness of his subjects is threatened.

Although he is one of the Greater Gods, the Deep Delver is more willing than his siblings to intercede in mortal affairs, a fact that often incurs the scrutiny of his father, Choranus. As a son of Ildavir, Poderon has a fondness for earth-dwelling animals and wooded realms. His places of worship exist in many places, from metropolitan sanctuaries to sylvan shrines, though his formal temples are kept well-hidden. Such hallowed chambers are reliquaries for as many rock samples as Poderon's clergy can procure. These stones vary from everyday granite and coal to the purest of sapphires and diamonds.

Gnomish clerics of Poderon follow a loose hierarchy of gemstone titles. Acolytes may be malachites, azurites, or garnets, while more senior priests may be topazes or jasmals. When the Deep Delver is rendered in religious art, he usually appears as a slender human teenager or a middle-aged gnome with a hammer or pick in hand. Just as often, Poderon is shown as a large badger or in the company of one.

The domains associated with the Deep Delver are Animal, Earth, Good, and Trickery. His favored weapon is the heavy pick, and his symbol is a mining pick and a halved geode.

Qayaqiq

Demon prince, CE — Curiosity, Desperation, Suicide

Qäyaqiq (*kah*-yuh-kik), the Fatal Dream, the Shaded Door, is a demonic power which prays upon sleeping souls. The Fatal Dream is a straightforward yet little understood entity, which coexists within the Abyss and the Dream, and is thus an enemy to both Ôæ and Gil'Mâridth alike. One thing is certain, however: Qäyaqiq hunts the souls of dreamers by a means unvaried since time immemorial. Appearing in their dreams as a gate or doorway cloaked in shadow, the Shaded Door beckons the curious to enter. What fate lies beyond that door may only be suspected, but once entered, neither men nor gods can account for the lost soul. Many lullabies and nursery rhymes warn young sleepers to "shun the Shaded Door."

According to mortal thralls, Qäyaqiq employs a clergy of one: Each is a deranged, suicidal dreamer believing that he alone is favored by Qäyaqiq and must find a worthy successor before finding absolution. Once this is done, the madman may enter the Shaded Door that night where a glorious reward supposedly awaits.

Sestyruas

Archdevil, LE — Envy, Covetousness

Sestyruas (ses-*teer*-ooh-us), a mendacious archdevil who calls himself the Lord of Ardor, aims to fan the flames of envy among mortals, driving them to crimes of jealousy and passion. He whispers to those who crave what they cannot have, offering only enough power and satisfaction to string them along until death brings their souls to the foot of his sulphurous throne. His mortal thralls are depraved clerics and rogues who treat frequently with erinyes, the chief servants of Sestyruas. Proficient liars, some multiclass as bards to better employ their forked tongues.

Septych (the Blackhammer)

Demigod, LE — Avarice, Tyranny

The Septych (*seph*-tish), the Dark Dwarven Gods, the Seven As One, are in fact seven aspects in a single deity. Once seven dwarven brothers, their concerted pursuit of immortality spanned centuries and the ruthless butchery of innocents. But in the end, each turned against his brother in the final grab for divinity. As punishment for their brutality and greed, the brothers were granted godhood only as a single entity. Since that day, only the personality of one of the seven brothers manifests at any given time, one brother for each period of seventy-seven years. While one rules, the other six wait, impotent, for the passage of centuries for their next "turn." Gods of avarice and blood-soaked tyranny, the Septych is worshipped in secret by thieves, assassins, evil warriors, and any

dwarf given over to the greed to which his race is often accused.

Currently, it is Sodoutym (so-*dooh*-tim), the Blackhammer, the Dark Foe, Hellbeard, whose mind rules the Septych. Like his brothers before him, Sodoutym spends his time searching for the means to separate his soul from the rest, and he will likely do so for eternity. To this end, the Blackhammer demands blood sacrifice from his followers as he scours the face of Áereth for the prophesied soul that can release him from his deific bondage. Sodoutym is depicted as a well-muscled dwarf with the outstretched wings of a bat and writhing tentacles instead of a beard. His clerics lair in caves, sharing the company of dire bats and foul aberrations.

The domains associated with the Blackhammer are Evil, Law, and Trickery. The favored weapon of Sodoutym is a seven-tailed scourge, though the other six Dark Dwarven Gods possess favored weapons of their own. The symbol of the Dark Foe is a swarm of attacking bats. The symbol of the Septych is a stylized version of the Dwarf rune for 7, which has made it an unlucky number among dwarves.

Shul (the Watcher in the Sky)

Lesser god, LN — The Moon, Measurement, Tradition, Literacy

Shul (*shool*), God of the Four Phases of the Moon, the Watcher in the Sky, the Glistening Orb, the Lawgiver, is the god of measurement, tradition, literacy, and the moon itself. Credited as the deity to give Áereth the standard, twelve-month calendar and Ùr, the oldest written language from which most humanoid languages descended, Shul is the patron god of educators and disciplinarians who follow strict curricula. Though his name is remembered in the modern age, true worship of the Lawgiver has faded.

In religious writings, Shul's name appears, but often only through his epithets. The Watcher in the Sky is an ally to Valdreth, the Enduring, and their collective clergies once worked with one another to record the passage of time. He is the sponsor of the Xulmec goddess Anahuara, a divinity he admires but cannot entirely fathom for her sepulchral dogma.

The Watcher in the Sky is depicted primarily as the moon itself, or the moon with a human male face. The faith of Shul was largely destroyed centuries ago, but small cults of the Lawgiver still dwell in remote places, maintaining the same traditions and rituals during precise phases of the moon. Such hermitic cults observe the march of time and preserve dead languages in carven stone. The holiest of days for all of the faith are lunar eclipses.

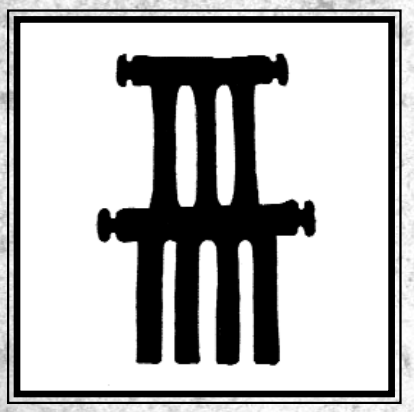
The domains associated with Shul are Air, Knowledge, and Law. His favored weapon is the dagger, and those used by his clergy are usually made from sharpened stone. The symbol of Shul is the moon.

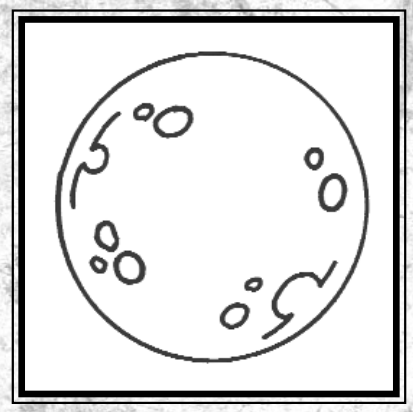
Soleth (the Silent Death)

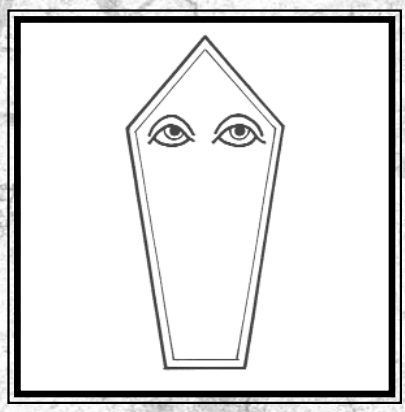
Lesser god, LN — Peaceful Death, Solitude

Soleth (*so*-leth), the Silent Death, the Merciful One, is the god of merciful, dignified death. He is the patron of morticians and healers who cannot save the dying. The somber-shrouded clerics of the Merciful One are a misunderstood lot, for they appear when there is no hope of continued life. Though they heal when they can, they are practitioners of euthanasia, and give last rites to those on their deathbeds to help usher them painlessly into the beyond.

Soleth teaches that death should be a quiet, dignified event. This belief is often at odds with the tenets of Elyr, whose fervor for life outweighs the need for its release. For this reason, the Silent Death's faithful seldom get along with the faithful of the Maiden of Life. However, like Elyr and Delvyr, Soleth abhors war and all forms of undeath. The Merciful One opposes the machinations of







Lasheeva at every opportunity, for she represents everything he despises.

Clerics of Soleth brew a special draught that they administer to the dead of their faithful which protects them from the taint of evil necromancy. Clerics and monks who serve the Silent Death wear grey and black robes and sashes, but clerics don heavier armor when questing or adventuring. Temples of Soleth are as solemn catacombs, their chambers and galleries furnished with sarcophagi, funeral biers, and rock-hewn graves. As grim as they appear, few places are as free from the touch of undeath. Respect for the dead and the living is Soleth's greatest tenet, a virtue best exemplified by a clerical sect known as the Threnodim. Multiclassed as bards, they compose impromptu eulogies for the unnoticed deaths of common men and perform great requiems for fallen heroes.

The domains associated with the Silent Death are Healing, Law, Protection, and Repose. His favored weapon is the bastard sword; his faithful loathe violence, but they are quick to dispense it to prevent further death. The symbol of Soleth is a stone coffin etched with a pair of open eyes.

Sothulth (the All-Seeing Orb)

Demigod, CN(e) — Paranoia, Insanity

Sothulth (*so*-thoolth), the Great Eye, the All-Seeing Orb, is a largely forgotten deity banished from the planes by the Sancturn Pantheon for a divine crime few can remember. Though exiled to the fringes of the multiverse and the Astral Plane, Sothulth is still able to make brief sojourns to the Outer and Material Planes. It manifests only long enough to carry out one of its erratic plans and move on again.

Once a more popular deity whose mantle was better understood, Sothulth offers very little to its worshippers, so the few cultists of the Great Eye are usually as insane as it is. An unpredictable god, the All-Seeing Orb will grant generous boons or afflict great curses upon its own followers. Some loremasters hypothesize that Sothulth was once implicated by Zhühn for a great crime, and its subsequent banishment drove it to the state of madness it is known for today. Usually depicted as a large purple or black eye emerging from a dark nebula, in any form Sothulth takes, a single staring eye remains its dominant feature.

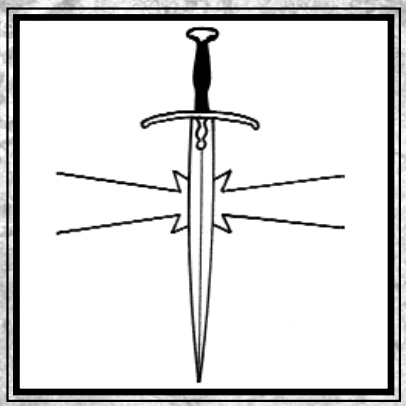
The domains associated with Sothulth are Chaos, Destruction, Knowledge, and Trickery. The favored weapon of the Great Eye is the scythe, and its symbol is an eye.

Teleus (the Obedient)

Archangel, LG — Law

Teleus (tel-*lee*-us), the Obedient, the Trusting Light, is the angelic champion of Law established by Choranus himself when Áereth was young. Charged with countering the chaos of Zhühn with order and unity, Teleus challenged the corruptive power of the titan Cadixtat. After their world-spanning battle, Teleus at last threw his enemy down when he severed Cadixtat's hand with his sword. Still, Cadixtat survived, and thus neither Law nor Chaos completely triumphed. Satisfied with the balance of the two, Choranus ordered Teleus to quit Áereth. A lord among solars, Teleus is sometimes worshipped as a god himself. Too humble to allow this, Teleus works to shift his clerics' devotion to another, like-minded god of law, such as Gorhan, Justicia, or even Choranus.

When mortals devote themselves to Teleus, the domains associated with his worship are Good, Law, and War. His favored weapon is the greatsword and his symbol is the same sword surrounded by parallel rays of the sun or held against a nimbus of light.



Thalass (the River Father)

Demigod, N — Terrestrial Waters, Music

Thalass (*thal*-us), the River Father, the Lakelord, the Purifying Flood, is the deity of inland waters, lakes, and rivers. He is the patron god of those who draw life from the water, rewarding those who respect nature with abundance. The Purifying Flood responds with deluges and violent rainstorms against transgressors.

Clerics and druids of Thalass often dwell near forest springs and lakes, sometimes consorting with nymphs, called the Daughters of Thalass. Always vigilant against the pollutions of Nimlurun, they have been known to hire adventurers when their waters are threatened by aberrations or enemy clerics. The River Father is said to resemble a noble satyr with garments of pure water, wielding a bow that fires arrows of crystal. Thalass is one of the many children of Pelagia, and his faithful often worship at the banks of rivers, for all rivers lead to the dominion of the Coral Queen.

The domains associated with Thalass are Animal, Protection, and Water. His favored weapon is the shortbow and his symbol is the syrinx, a set of hollow reed panpipes.

Thormyr (the Loyal)

Demigod, LN(g) — Honor, Duty, Protection

Thormyr (*thor*-meer), the Loyal, the Dauntless Warrior, is the god of duty and honor, especially in the face of evil. He is the patron of soldiers, guardsmen, and all men-at-arms who protect the innocent from the lawless. A stern, serious god, Thormyr rewards loyalty above all, granting his blessing to the steadfast and valiant and promising spiritual deliverance to the fallen.

Centuries ago, as a virtuous paladin in service of Justicia, Thormyr's unswerving duty to her laws drove him on a quest into Hell itself. The crusade led to an assault against archdevils, the saving of countless innocents, and the recovery of a holy relic—and to Thormyr's torture and death. After bargaining for the release of his soul, Justicia and Gorhan elevated the fallen warrior into divinity. Entrusted with the mantle of duty by the Greater Gods, Thormyr was forced to adopt a more neutrally inclined role as a deity.

The Dauntless Warrior is always depicted as a towering warrior in silver scale mail, holding a ranseur as he did in life. His lay followers often serve as bodyguards or court protectors, while his clerics are charged with vigilance against evil. Despite Thormyr's adherence to neutrality as the god of honor and duty, most of his followers are of good alignment. Paladins who serve him often refer to him as Honorus, the Duty and the Flame.

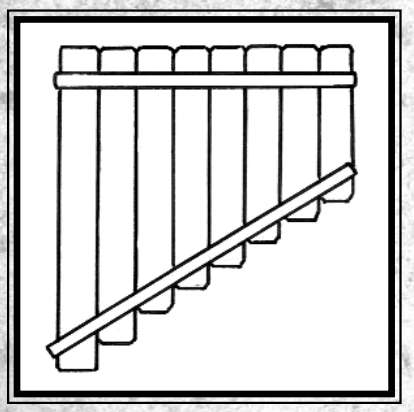
The domains associated with Thormyr are Healing, Law, Protection, and Strength. His favored weapon is the ranseur and his holy symbol consists of the polearm laid slantwise across a silver shield.

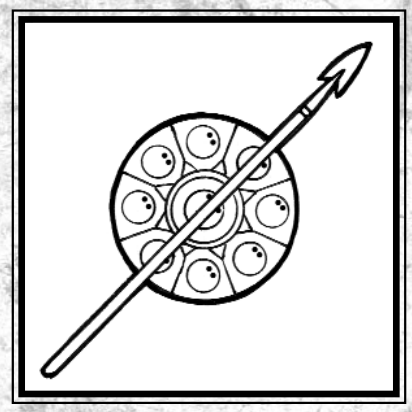
Tlachinozal (the Scorched God)

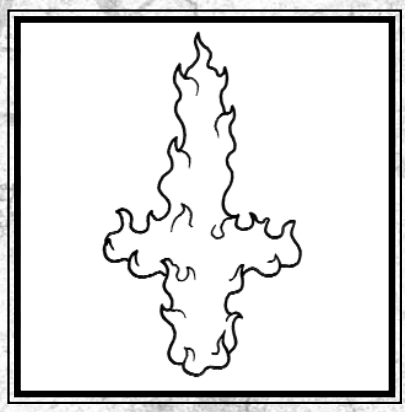
Demigod, LE — Chuzec, Fire

Tlachinozal (tla-*chin*-o-suhl), the Scorched God, the Fire Requiem, is the patron god of the Xulmec city-state of Chuzec. Having deposed the former goddess of Chuzec, whom he claims failed to protect his people from volcanic eruptions a thousand years ago, Tlachinozal is a militant deity of fire and earth. He teaches that fire can either destroy or strengthen that which it touches; infidels and foreigners will burn, while the faithful will endure and be reshaped like Chuzec itself. The Fire Requiem demands sacrifice in the form of captured enemies, whose hearts are taken from them and cast into braziers of holy fire.

Acolytes of Tlachinozal must learn to speak Ignan, then brand their bodies with sigils of their god. More dedicated priests of Tlachinozal often undergo a ceremony known as the Cleansing, whereby their skin is ritually burned but thereafter pro-







vides a stronger resistance to fire. Despite the xenophobia his militarism breeds, the Scorched God was the first Xulmec deity to approve of foreigners' art of forged metal, and many of his followers are metallurgists and blacksmiths. When his image is burned into the walls of his temples, Tlachinozal is depicted as a large, muscular man with red skin whose appearance suspiciously resembles that of an efreeti.

The domains associated with Tlachinozal are Earth, Evil, and Fire. His favored weapon is the shortbow, with arrows usually set aflame. His symbol is a shard of fire resembling an arrow, knife, or sword.

Tororthun (The Stone Spider)

Lesser god, N/CE — Subterrane, Denizens of the Underdeep / Malice, Spiders

Tororthun (toe-*ror*-thoon), the Stone Spider, the Eight Legs of the World, the Queen of the Damned, is the goddess of the cavernous depths of Áereth, the narrow, stygian passages, and all the crawling denizens of the Underdeep. When the rebel elves fled from the sphinxes millennia ago, it was Tororthun who called to them, lured them into the abyssal chasms of her dominion, and embraced them. As the fumes from the Devil's Cauldron slowly transformed them into the drow, the Stone Spider sheltered them from the scrutiny of the Overworld. Yet some say Tororthun is a goddess stricken mad, for she occasionally flies into a fury of senseless evil. Calling herself simply the Spider Queen during such spells, she retreats to her illimitable web in the demonic planes of the Abyss. Capricious and cruel, the Queen sets her minions against one another, favoring and disfavoring on a whim. Some sages familiar with the faith of Tororthun speculate that the evil of the drow infected their own matron deity, making a demon out of a goddess, while others say that Tororthun was stricken by a binding curse from Zhühn himself in an effort to undermine yet another of the gods' creations. When she is lucid, Tororthun is a fierce protector of her chosen followers, watching over the dark elves who have made a home in the earthen womb of her Underdeep dominion.

An uneasy ambivalence exists between Ireth, whom surface elves worship above all, and Tororthun. The Starmistress does not approve of the darkness the drow have embraced or the violent society they have spawned, but she is grateful that the Stone Spider has taken them under her care. Ireth, however, despises Tororthun's demonic alter ego, and ever searches for the means to "cure" the goddess of this affliction, hoping to steer the wicked drow back from evil. While priestesses of Tororthun are willing to treat with other faiths of neutrality, the clergy of the Spider Queen see all other deities as unworthy enemies. The Spider Queen has made a fierce enemy of the Xulmec god Ahpuchac, whose dominion of the subterranean world does not please her. Tororthun is depicted as a massive arachnid, a hybrid of chitin and solid stone, crawling perpetually through the Underdeep. Her Spider Queen persona is seen as a drow female of ravishing beauty and cruel countenance, or as a whip-wielding drider.

Those clergy who worship the Stone Spider have access to the domains of Drow, Earth, Poison, and Spider, while those who worship her demonic aspect have access to Drow, Evil, Poison, and Spider. The favored weapon of Tororthun is the longsword, while the favored weapon of her Spider Queen persona is the whip. Her symbol is an image of herself, a stony spider usually rendered symmetrically.

The Traitor (The Undying Lord)

Demigod, CE — Betrayal, Chaos, Madness

Once a mortal wizard named Thandric, the being known as the Traitor ascended to divinity centuries ago. Thandric and his brother, princes of a forgotten kingdom, were sent on a quest to find a legendary Elyrian potion called the Draught of Ages that could heal their dying father, the king, who was stricken with a magic curse. The people, beset on all sides by their enemies, needed their warrior-king to lead them from destruction. On their quest, Thandric heard rumors that the Draught could grant its imbiber eternal youth, and this desire germinated within him. When the princes returned with the potion, their father lay on his deathbed and the armies of the enemy had reached the gates of their capital city. Fearing for his own life in that moment, Thandric grabbed the Draught from his father's hand. Thandric drank the Draught, hoping to achieve eternal youth and save himself. As the

enemy breached the gates, Thandric watched his home overtaken and his people slain. When they attacked Thandric, his body sustained grave injuries but he would not die. He had gained immortality…and the curse of godhood.

For his betrayal, Thandric was "awarded" the immortal mantle of chaos. His identity as a man long since shattered, the Traitor is now the patron god of treasonists, betrayers—and of course, traitors. As a purveyor of chaos, the Traitor is infamous for his dark whimsy, and even his own followers are not immune. Sometimes he withholds spells, while at other times he aids his followers' enemies. His true name largely forgotten, he now has many names and titles, including Chaotor, the Undying Lord, and the Regenerating One. He is worshipped by medicine men, witch doctors, and shamans of evil bent. Those who forsake their former deities often find a twisted home in his service. The Traitor is usually seen as a kindly old man with subtle, disturbing bestial traits. Some believe the Traitor is an office more than an entity, that he whose betrayal outweighs that of the current Traitor will take his place.

The Traitor's domains are Chaos, Healing, Madness, and Trickery. His favored weapon is a staff of Caduceus (quarterstaff) with a hidden stiletto blade concealed beneath its cap. The symbol of the Traitor is a vial of poison, usually shown unstoppered and half empty.

Tzitzimitl (The Queen of Air)

Demon princess, CE — Destruction, Ruin

Tzitzimitl (tsih-tsi-*mitl*), the self-titled Queen of Air, is the demon princess of destruction and ruin, the patroness of outcasts and criminals who seek vengeance against the righteous. Selfish, cruel individuals turn to Tzitzimitl for worldly power, finding retribution in the fell rites of her worship. Among the Lords of the Abyss, Tzitzimitl is the mistress of vrocks, and it is usually these vulture-headed demons that her mortal followers endeavor to summon with their rituals. Sufficient blood sacrifice and evil deeds allow the cultists to summon a vrock to the Material Plane for greater lengths of time than spells would normally permit.

In the Southlands, where Tzitzimitl's thralls are greater than number, she is opposed by the humans of the city-state of Amoya—and their goddess, Anahuara. Of great import to cultists of Tzitzimitl is the March of Lightless Despair, the five moonless days at the end of each year, when it is believed that Tzitzimitl takes physical form on the Material Plane and battles Anahuara. Demonic allies of the Queen of Air also visit the land, as the magic of mortals wanes during the absence of the Spectral Moon. The demon princess and her allies have always been defeated, however, and punishment usually falls upon her worshippers for their insufficient devotion.

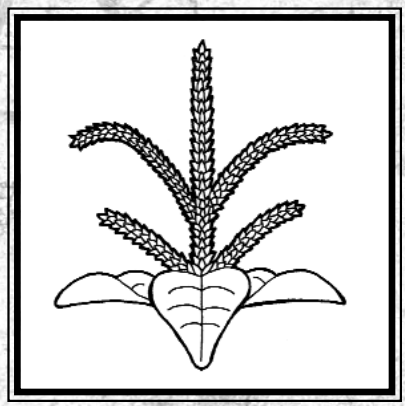
Valdreth (The Enduring)

Lesser god, LN — Time, Longevity, Integrity

Valdreth (*vahl*-dreth), the Enduring, the Unchanging One, is indisputably the oldest of the Sancturn Pantheon. Before Valdreth's arrival, time as it is understood did not exist in the Triad's creation. He is the god of the everlasting and the caretaker of time itself. A dying father who wishes to impart knowledge to his children, a desperate general who waits for reinforcements before the enemy horde appears, and a wizard in short possession of a valuable book may each beseech Valdreth to grant them more time. Yet the Unchanging One rarely stops the great march of time itself, teaching his faithful instead that they must take care to use what time they do have wisely.

Clerics of Valdreth are patient men and women who know well just how long an hour can be—and how short a lifetime. In religious art, the Unchanging One is depicted as a clear-eyed sage, sometimes middle-aged, sometimes venerable. Temples of Valdreth are known for selling *unguents of timelessness*, usually finding buyers in wizards, scholars, and those who wish to preserve frail writings otherwise subject to the ravages of time.

The domains associated with Valdreth are Law, Magic, and Protection. His favored weapon is



the light mace, and his symbol is an amaranth or a timepiece of any kind.

Variag (the Icelord)

Lesser god, N — Ice, Winter, War

Variag (*var*-ee-og), the Icelord, is the god of brutal winter and cold winds. He is the patron of those who thrive in the frozen tundra and relish the sound of cracking ice. Barbarians of the Frost Barrens revere the Icelord, mostly to placate him into relenting his frozen embrace. It is said that when winter descends upon Áereth, Variag is allowed to venture forth and bring storms of ice to lands normally forbidden to him. Winters longer and colder than normal are said to be the indulgences of the merciless Icelord. He is also a god of war, loving the clash of cold steel and the spilling of blood upon the snow.

Variag is not evil or malicious, but he cares little for those frozen by his administrations. His reign of ice is always kept in check by Ildavir, who ensures the balance of nature in all things. In the mountainous realms of Áereth, frost giants worship Variag, as do any humanoids willing to endure arctic conditions and glacial environs—for in such remote places few other clergies venture. Druids and rangers of the frozen north usually choose wolves as animal companions, for they are sacred to the Icelord.

The domains associated with Variag are Air, Strength, War, and Water. His favored weapon is the greataxe, and his symbol is the silhouette of a wolf etched into the blade of such an axe.

Xeluth (the Ravager)

Lesser god, NE — Violence, War, Strife

Xeluth (zel-*ooth*), the Ravager, is the god of violence and the brutality of war. He is the patron of all who use force to achieve their ends, those who delight in slaughter, and those who grow stronger with conflict. Xeluth cares more for the fight than the spoils, more for war itself than triumph or even its outcome. Although he shares many tenets with Klazath, Xeluth usually contends with the Crimson Banner for the attentions of Yvyn—a battle the Ravager seldom wins.

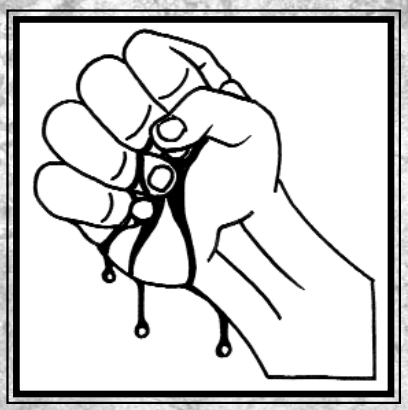
The conquests and schemes of Xeluth, often aided by other evil powers, have led to the spawning of several bloodthirsty demigods commonly worshipped by monstrous humanoids. These including Kagnar, the god of animality and rage (served by gnolls and minotaurs), Gadraak, the god of territorialism (served by orcs and ogres), Molgrem, the god of militarism (served by goblins and hobgoblins), and Urath, the god of mindless slaughter and fury (served by trolls). Often these very same humanoids turn directly to Xeluth, and for this reason his clergies are diverse. Fearless human priests in polished, spiked platemail and spear-wielding, hide-clad shamans from an orc tribe might both serve Xeluth. Given the Ravager's dogma, such disparate clerics are as likely to ally with one another as do battle. Advancement through challenge or assassination is common in Xeluth's brutal faith. The Ravager himself is depicted as a helmed warrior, his face concealed with a death's head mask. In his burly arms, he wields a great flail whose spiked ball resembles a black sun with a nimbus of fire.

The domains associated with Xeluth are Destruction, Evil, Strength, and War. His favored weapon is the heavy flail and his symbol is a skull, usually bloody or pierced with a blade.

Yvyn (the Righteous Slaughter)

Lesser god, NE — Conspiracy, Holy War, Rebellion

Yvyn (*ee*-vin), the Curdled Trust, the Vicious Cycle, the Holy Preemptor, the Righteous Slaughter, the Mastress Cabal, the Whisper in the Darkness, is the goddess of conspiracy, insurrection, and the evils of xenophobia. When each great race first emerged and feared the wonders of the world they did not understand, it was Yvyn who whispered into their ears, warning them of the treachery of their strange new neighbors. The Mastress Cabal nourishes the seeds of doubt and mistrust which bloom and grow until cries for war reach



fever pitch and great crusades are unleashed in the name of other gods. To her followers, the leaders of the land are corrupt, deserving to be dethroned. Yvyn ever champions the underdog, yet only until he is redeemed—then she moves onto the new underdog who wishes to usurp her prior darling. She is the Vicious Cycle churning whirlwinds of paranoia into great storms of bloodshed.

Very often, the Holy Preemptor seeks out other gods—great and small—with whom to conspire, caring not whether they be good or evil. Yvyn, whose causes are rarely her own, seeks only bloodshed and the joy of usurpation. In turn, every god knows that Yvyn is the first one to turn to when a violent alliance is required. Yvyn allies herself with the Hidden Lord more than any other deity, for the two share many of the same modi operandi. Indeed many of Yvyn's own secret and ferocious cultists are likely devotees of the Cloaked One as well. Her cults count among their members clerics from all walks of life and stations within society; yet their only true allegiance is to the Mastress Cabal and to each other. Their mission is singular: to foment insurgency in the name of the Righteous Slaughter. Yvyn is seldom rendered in art, but when she is, she is seen as a middle-aged woman looking upon a battle from afar, clutching in her hands a military fork.

The domains associated with Yvyn are Evil, Trickery, and War. Her favored weapon is the trident (a pitchfork to the rebellious peasant) and her symbol is a clenched fist dripping blood.

Zhühn (The Great Enemy)

Greater god, CE — Deception, Blight, Corruption, Poison, Falsehood

Zhühn (zeun), the Great Enemy, the White Sepulcher, the Faceless Lord, the Dweller in the Void, is an opportunistic being of surreptitious means and great, overshadowing power. He is the power who answers when there is no other to hear, who plays the role of any invoked deity, be it false or imagined. Very few of Zhühn's servants are aware of their service to him, for they know their god by different names (e.g., Entropy, *DCC #10: The Sunless Garden*). Whenever a false idol is served or an unknown deity is called upon, it is Zhühn who fills the empty void, grants the spells to the idolater, and beguiles the unwary.

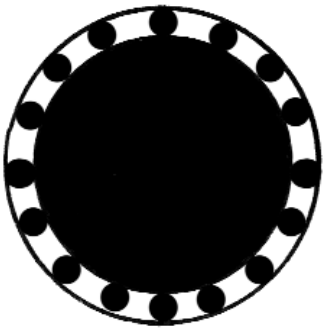
Zhühn desires nothing less than the eradication of all sentient life, the complete undoing of Creation. He dwelt in the Void before the Triad interrupted the darkness, and Zhühn will not rest until all is unmade. His plots are numerous, many-layered, and may take centuries to reach fruition. He is content to save a village of innocents if he can poison the entire kingdom; he will spare a nation if he can destroy the continent. Often those who fall from grace unwittingly find Zhühn picking up the slack. Blackguards and corrupted clerics of good frequently result from Zhühn's subtle administrations. So far-reaching are his machinations that even the most virtuous clerics often second guess their own actions, asking whether they are serving their god's will or the Great Enemy's.

Zhühn names no allies among the gods—and surely none can trust him. His greatest adversaries are Choranus and Ildavir, while Elyr, a product of his own ignorance, perseveres as a painful thorn in his side. To carry out his goals of corruption, he despoiled the newborn god that became Narrimunâth and Nimlurun and has designs on other gods as well. When Zhühn is depicted, he is seen as a cowled figure with a single outstretched hand. In such images, he always lurks in the corner or only partially in the frame of the image—never hidden, yet never prevalent. His body is never seen whole, but

The Void

The Void is nothingness, utter emptiness, the very absence of existence. It is not a plane to which one can go. When any being possessed of less power than a god enters the Void, he is eradicated altogether. The Void should not be confused with the Astral Plane, which is an endless space that binds together the Outer, Inner, and Material Planes. The Void is that dimensionless nothingness in which the Material Plane was created.

Spheres of annihilation are, in fact, small holes in existence, errant pieces of the Void itself. Fortunately for everyone but Zhühn himself, the Void is very small now. Creation has replaced it with life and existence, and all that does remain of the Void contains the Great Enemy himself. Expanding it anew remains Zhühn's single-minded pursuit.



rather half-formed from its surroundings, symbolizing Zhühn's manipulation of existing material and his refusal to create things anew.

The White Sepulcher does have a few mortal agents who serve him knowingly. These individuals, such as the Ruin Knights, are frightening indeed and usually bereft of their humanity. They are the shadow figures who hide behind the puppetmasters who hide behind the proxies. Elder priests of all faiths often warn their novices against the whisperings of Zhühn. Indeed, his name is often invoked when accusations of corruption are made, whether the Great Enemy is truly to blame or not. Zhühn sponsors no formal temples and his servants are difficult to unmask. The nihilistic clergy of the Great Enemy, when not carrying out local schemes to subvert creation, experiment with arcana to disintegrate reality itself. *Spheres of annihilation* and *rods of cancellation* are only two of the many dangerous instruments to come of such fell research.

The domains associated with the Faceless Lord are Destruction, Evil, Magic, and Trickery. His favored weapon—if indeed one is ever shown—is the dart (usually poisoned). Zhühn cares for no symbols, but to channel his power, his clerics must deface the holy symbol of another god to use as his own.

Favored Deities by Race

With the exception of some demigods, the many races of Áereth revere the gods whose ideologies appeal to them the most. The list below shows what gods many of the races of Áereth typically worship based on their own dispositions and cultural beliefs. The gods are listed in the order of most likely worshipped.

Race/Monster	Gods
Aberrations	Outer Gods, Narrimunâth, Nimlurun, Zhühn
Bugbears	Molgrem, Kagnar, Gadraak, Xeluth
Centaurs	Ildavir
Doppelgangers	The Hidden One
Dragons	Centivus, Choranus, Ahriman
Dwarves	Daenthar, Fenwar, Centivus
Dwarves (duergar)	Daenthar, the Septych
Elves	Ireth, Centivus, Ildavir, Valdreth
Elves (gray, wild, wood)	Ireth, Ildavir, Centivus, Choranus
Elves (aquatic)	Ireth, Pelagia, Ildavir, Chondri
Elves (drow)	Tororthun, Bargúl
Fey (nymphs, dryads, satyrs, etc.)	Ildavir, Thalass
Gargoyles	Ahriman, Urath
Giants	Daenthar, Fenwar, Poderon, Variag
Gnolls	Kagnar, Xeluth, Lords of the Abyss
Gnomes	Poderon, Fenwar, Ireth
Gnomes (rock, svirfneblin)	Poderon, Daenthar
Goblinoids (goblins, hobgoblins)	Molgrem, Xeluth, Yvyn
Hags	Gil'Mâridth, Malotoch
Half-elves	Wyshalar, Delvyr
Half-orcs	Xeluth, Klazath, Thormyr
Halflings	Olidyra, Neshti, Rathul, Wyshalar, Myna
Harpies	Malotoch
Hobgoblins	Molgrem, Xeluth, Lords of Hell, Yvyn
Kobolds	Lagos
Lamias	Ankharet
Lammasus	Amun Tor, Madrah, Delvyr
Lizardfolk	Ildavir, Madrah, Cynhuara
Locathahs	Pelagia, Elas
Medusas	Lords of Hell
Merfolk	Pelagia, Chondri
Minotaurs	Kagnar, Xeluth
Nagas	Axaluatl, Cynhuara, Madrah
Ogres	Gadraak, Xeluth
Orcs	Gadraak, Xeluth, Klazath
Sahuagin	Elas
Sphinxes	Amun Tor, Ankharet
Treants	Ildavir, Thalass
Tritons	Pelagia, Chondri
Troglodytes	Lagos
Trolls	Urath, Xeluth
Undead	Lasheeva, Malotoch (ghouls)

Chapter 3
Bestiary of the Known Realms

Azure Ooze

Large Ooze
Hit Dice: 5d10+30 (57 hp)
Initiative: –5
Speed: 40 ft., 40 ft. swim
Armor Class: 4 (–5 Dex, –1 size), touch 4, flat-footed 4
Base Attack/Grapple: +3/+10
Attack: Slam +5 melee (1d8+3)
Full Attack: Slam
Space/Reach: 10 ft./10 ft.
Special Attacks: Constrict 1d8+3, improved grab, paralysis
Special Qualities: Blindsight 60 ft., immunity to cold and fire, ooze traits, transparent
Saves: Fort +7, Ref –4, Will –4
Abilities: Str 16, Dex 1, Con 23, Int –, Wis 1, Cha 1
Skills: Swim +10
Feats: –
Environment: Any aquatic or marshes
Organization: Solitary
Challenge Rating: 5
Treasure: None
Alignment: Always neutral
Advancement: 6–8 HD (Large); 9–12 HD (Huge)
Level Adjustment: –

This ooze resembles a giant blob of bright blue slime with a diameter of about twenty feet.

A typical azure ooze weighs about 3,600 pounds. An azure ooze can be found meandering through wetlands and other areas that go near large bodies of water. It feeds on anything that crosses its path, and is not hesitant to feed upon living creatures much larger than itself. Despite their amorphous nature, azure oozes are surprisingly quick, and are equally adept at moving through water as well as land. It can compress its body to fit through fissures and other small areas as small as one inch wide.

Combat

An azure ooze attacks by hitting its opponents with long, gooey pseudopods. If it successfully strikes an opponent, it then attempts to grab that foe and paralyze it. An azure ooze never releases its hold on a victim unless the ooze is killed or until the ooze is finished feeding on its prey.

Blindsight (Ex): An azure ooze's entire body is a sensory organ, which can ascertain prey by any scent or vibration within 100 feet of the creature.

Constrict (Ex): An azure ooze deals automatic slam and paralysis damage with a successful grapple check.

Improved Grab (Ex): To use this ability, an azure ooze must first hit an opponent with its slam attack. It can then start to attempt a grapple as a free action without provoking an attack of opportunity. If it wins the grapple check, it establishes a hold and can constrict.

Paralysis (Ex): An azure ooze secrets a paralyzing fluid that renders its victims completely helpless with prolonged exposure. Any constricting attack automatically deals this paralyzing attack. Any creature constricted by the azure ooze must succeed on a DC 19 Fortitude save each round on the ooze's turn or be paralyzed for 1d6 rounds. The save is Constitution-based.

Ceraton

Large Magical Beast (Cold)
Hit Dice: 3d10+9 (25 hp)
Initiative: +1
Speed: 40 ft.
Armor Class: 11 (+1 Dex, –1 size, +1 natural), touch 10, flat-footed 10
Base Attack/Grapple: +3/+12
Attack: Claw +7 melee (2d4+5)
Full Attack: 2 claws +7 melee (2d4+5) or bite +2 melee (1d6+2)
Space/Reach: 10 ft./5 ft.
Special Attacks: Pounce, rend 2d6+9
Special Qualities: Darkvision 60 ft., immunity to cold, low-light vision, vulnerability to fire, scent
Saves: Fort +6, Ref +4, Will +0
Abilities: Str 20, Dex 12, Con 16, Int 9, Wis 9, Cha 12
Skills: Balance +6, Hide +3, Jump +6, Listen +5, Spot +4
Feats: Alertness, Lightning Reflexes, Toughness
Environment: Any desert or hills
Organization: Solitary, pair, or pack (3–12)
Challenge Rating: 2
Treasure: Standard
Alignment: Always lawful neutral
Advancement: 4–7 HD (Large); 8–12 HD (Huge)
Level Adjustment: –

This nimble, hardy creature resembles a cross between a horse and a crocodile, and is covered with large gray scales.

Ceratons are feared predators in the snowy regions of the Northlands, hunting game when it is plentiful, and closing in on human and demihuman settlements when their regular food supply becomes scarce. They are fearless trackers and hunters, and are masters of finding warm-blooded creatures wherever they might hide. They also run on two powerful hind legs, and are surprisingly fast for their size.

Despite being most commonly found in the colder regions of the Northlands, ceratons are lizards, and thought to be distantly related to dinosaurs. Although countless theories abound as to why these creatures prefer the cold instead of the warmth of jungles, these powerful lizards hate warmth with a passion, and invariably become sick and die if transported to a warmer climate. The steppes of Saramanthia are as far south as the ceratons naturally roam.

Certain warriors in Saramanthia have managed to train the ceratons as mounts. Though difficult to capture and train, ceratons make strong, powerful hunting steeds that are prized by elite warriors throughout the Northlands. Minor wars have erupted between barbarians of the Northlands and the barbarians of the Lostlands over which is the better steed: the ceraton or the shadroquus.

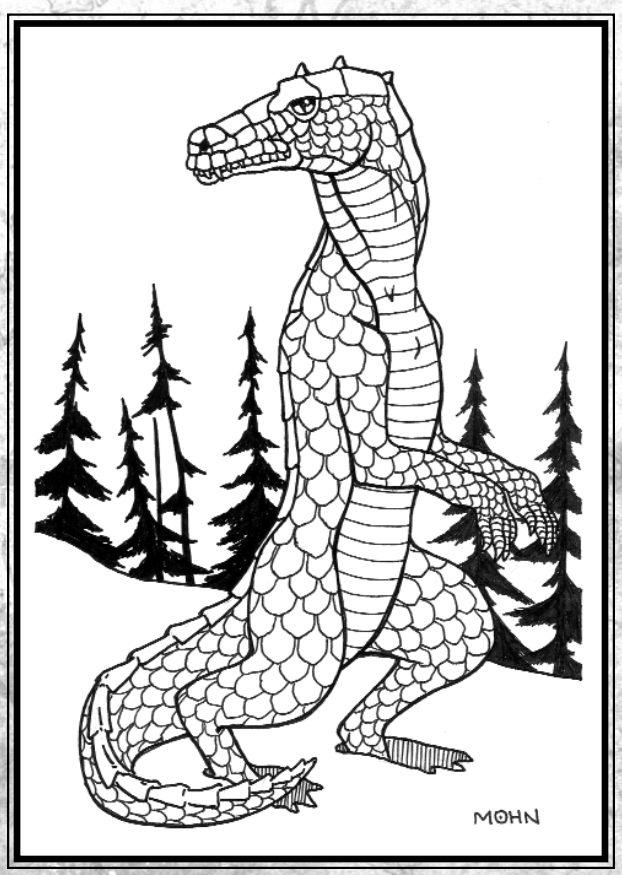
Combat

In the wild, ceratons move about like packs of dire wolves, hunting large packs of game animals and moving mostly at night. They attack in groups of three or more, and only attack those opponents whom they feel fairly certain of slaying.

A trained ceraton moves and attacks at the behest of its rider. If given free rein, it prefers to pounce upon a single opponent; however, it generally follows the lead of its rider and does whatever it is asked.

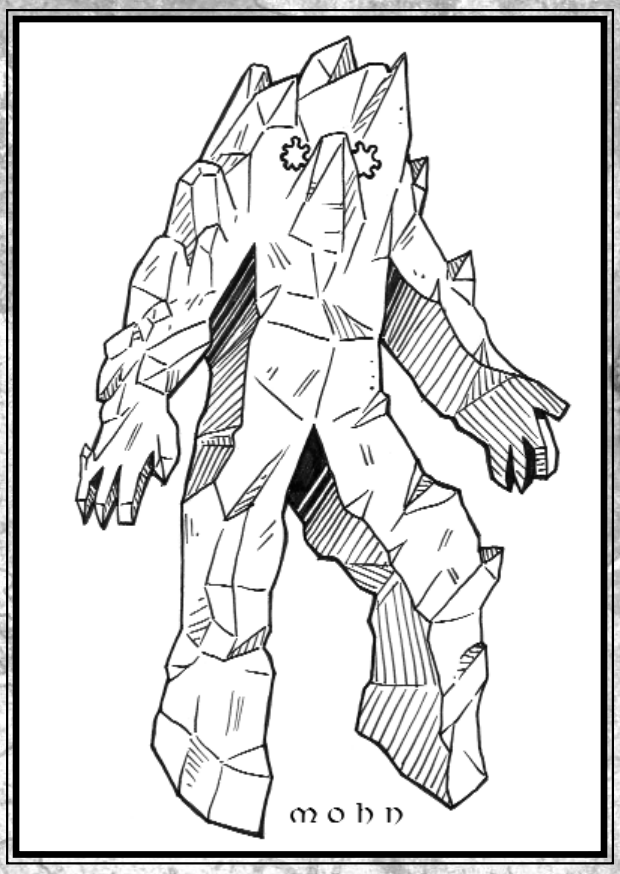
Pounce (Ex): If a ceraton charges, it can make a full attack.

Rend (Ex): A ceraton that hits with both claw attacks latches onto the opponent's body and tears the flesh. This attack automatically deals an extra 2d6+9 points of damage.



Crystal Golem

Large Construct
Hit Dice: 6d10+30 (63 hp)
Initiative: +2
Speed: 30 ft.
Armor Class: 11 (+2 Dex, –1 size), touch 11, flat-footed 9
Base Attack/Grapple: +4/+12
Attack: Slam +7 melee (2d8+4)
Full Attack: 2 slams +7 melee (2d8+4)
Space/Reach: 10 ft./10 ft.
Special Attacks: Blindness
Special Qualities: Construct traits, damage reduction 10/adamantine and bludgeoning, darkvision 60 ft., immunity to magic, low-light vision
Saves: Fort +2, Ref +4, Will +2
Abilities: Str 19, Dex 14, Con –, Int –, Wis 11, Cha 1
Skills: –
Feats: –
Environment: Any
Organization: Solitary or gang (2–4)
Challenge Rating: 5
Treasure: None
Alignment: Always neutral
Advancement: 7–9 HD (Large); 10–16 HD (Huge)
Level Adjustment: –



This man-shaped creature is made from large blocks of crystal quartz. It is ten feet tall and looks to weigh around two thousand pounds.

A crystal golem has a humanoid body hewn from a single piece of transparent crystal. Their bodies are beautiful and glow softly. Their creators typically carve them into the likenesses of classical statues, and they are frequently mistaken for prized works of art.

Combat

Crystal golems are tenacious fighters, attacking relentlessly with their powerful fists. They fight until destroyed, or until their foes are vanquished.

Blindness (Ex): A crystal golem's body can glow extremely brightly, causing great pain to those who look upon its form. Any living creature that gazes at the glowing form of the crystal golem must succeed on a Will save (DC 13) or be temporarily blinded for 2d4 rounds. Any blinded creature that possesses the Blind-Fight feat may continue to attack the crystal golem without penalty, even if the save is failed.

Immunity to Magic (Ex): A crystal golem is immune to any spell or spell-like ability that allows spell resistance. In addition, certain spells and effects function differently against the creature, as noted below.

Any sort of *light* spell cast either upon or within 20 feet of a crystal golem acts as a healing spell for the creature, healing up to 2d8+8 hit points of damage.

Any sort of *darkness* spell cast either upon or within 20 feet of a crystal golem has the opposite effect, causing great harm to the golem. *Darkness* spells cast near but not directly upon the golem cause 1d4+4 hit points of damage; *darkness* spells cast directly upon the creature cause 2d8+8 hit points of damage.

Any sort of normal or magical fire directed against the crystal golem as an attack causes no damage, but instead acts as a *haste* spell, allowing the golem to move about much more freely. This effect lasts for 1d6 rounds.

Construction

A crystal golem's body is chiseled from a single block of hard crystal quartz that weighs at least two thousand pounds. The crystal must be of exceptional quality, and costs 4,000 gp. Assembling the body requires a DC 14 Craft (sculpting) check or a DC 14 Craft (jewelry) check.

CL 14th; Craft Construct, *antimagic field, continual flame, geas/quest*; Price 80,000 gp; Cost 30,000 gp + 2,000 XP.

Draexodon

Huge Magical Beast
Hit Dice: 7d10+35 (73 hp)
Initiative: +1
Speed: 30 ft.
Armor Class: 13 (+1 Dex, –2 size, +4 natural), touch 9, flat-footed 12
Base Attack/Grapple: +7/+22
Attack: Claw +12 melee (2d6+7)
Full Attack: 4 claws +12 melee (2d6+7) or bite +7 melee (2d4+3)
Space/Reach: 10 ft./10 ft.
Special Attacks: Bull rush, frightful presence
Special Qualities: Damage reduction 5/silver
Saves: Fort +10, Ref +6, Will +1
Abilities: Str 24, Dex 12, Con 20, Int 6, Wis 9, Cha 6
Skills: Jump +12, Spot +7, Swim +12
Feats: Great Fortitude
Environment: Any hills or plains
Organization: Pair or herd (3– 6)
Challenge Rating: 7
Treasure: Standard
Alignment: Usually lawful evil
Advancement: 8–12 HD (Huge); 13–18 HD (Gargantuan)
Level Adjustment: –

This is a mighty reptilian creature, standing more than twelve feet tall at the shoulder and weighing several tons. Its body is covered in brown, knobby scales.

Left to its own devices, the draeoxodon is a relatively harmless and peaceable creature that can be found grazing in the plains of the Northlands. For the most part, the wild draeoxodon herds are ruthlessly hunted and captured by goblinoid bandits, who then train the beasts for their own nefarious purposes. A trained draeoxodon takes on the personality and temperament of its new masters, becoming an evil, vicious beast that is quite dangerous indeed.

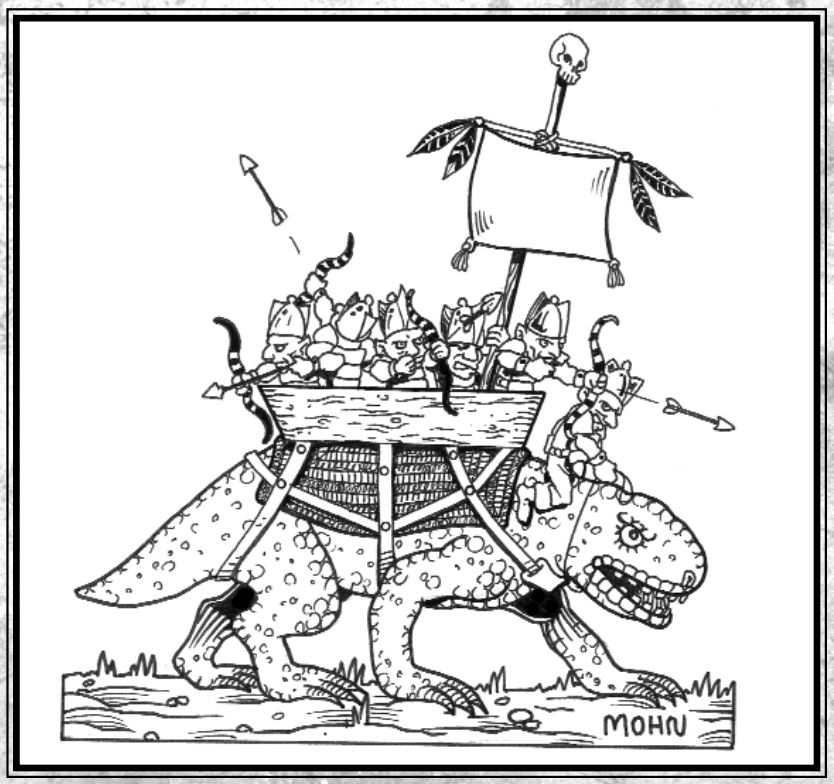
The training of a draeoxodon is a long, laborious process, which can take upward of a year to complete. However, once trained, they respond to the commands—and the whips—of their goblin masters without hesitation. Although used for a number of purposes by goblins, the draeoxodon serves three primary functions for a tribe: to haul materials or weapons, to attack foes, and to act as a mobile artillery station for goblin archers. As many as eight to twelve goblins can ride on a draeoxodon's back, although no more than four can be perched on top of the beast and still be able to take their full actions.

Combat

Wild draeoxodons are gentle creatures, and only fight when cornered. Otherwise, they seek to flee combat where possible. Trained draeoxodons, on the other hand, are savage fighters, immediately charging into combat when possible and ripping their opponents to shreds with their claws after the initial charge. With goblin riders aboard, they show a little more restraint (but barely), letting their riders control their direction in combat and following their leads as to when to charge and when to strike.

Bull Rush (Ex): A draeoxodon begins a battle by charging at an opponent, lowering its head and smashing into opponents with its large, thick skull. In addition to the normal benefits and hazards of a charge, this allows the creature to make a single slam attack with a +12 attack bonus that deals 3d6+6 points of damage.

Frightful Presence (Su): The draexodon can inspire terror by charging or attacking. Affected creatures must succeed on a DC 12 Will save or become shaken, remaining in that condition as long as they remain with 30 feet of the draexodon. The save DC is Charisma-based.



Drakon

Known by as many names as the cultures who fear them—among them anu-zorai, naga-born, and the most common, drakon—these arrogant reptilian humanoids are rightly respected throughout the Southlands of Áereth. Once a loose society of warring tribes and factions, the drakon have only increased in power, rising from the depths of Zimala centuries ago to form the nation of Ssorlang. Despite the failed expansion of their self-titled empire, the drakon remain a constant source of terror in this part of the world, and recent rumblings of drakon militancy have made the civilizations of the Southlands look to their borders.

The drakon are a cunning race, always planning grandiose schemes of domination, and only their constant infighting keeps their power in check. The only creatures that they treat with any true respect are their ancient forebears, the nagas. Though the arcana that gave rise to the drakon has long been lost, most scholars believe that the nagas of the old Zimalan Empire injected their own blood into humanoid subjects in the failed attempt to create a powerful race under their control. The fact that the drakon were birthed by magic—and not divine creation—has led to their narcissistic belief that their race is one of perfection.

Apart from the nagas, most drakon consider all other races beneath their contempt. Although they gladly smile and give promises of great wealth and power to their allies, any friendship or alliance with the drakon inevitably ends with a knife in the back … and a twist of the blade.

Given their mutative origin, a number of different strains of the species exist, but the most common are detailed below.

The drakon speak the Draconic and Common languages.

Combat

The drakon are master tacticians. They rarely enter combat without some sort of cunning battle plan, and will retreat if doing so means that they can survive to deliver revenge another day. Although they believe that violence is the ultimate tool to achieving their goals, the drakon are a patient race and can accept losing a battle or two in order to win a war. Whenever possible, the drakon will first deploy or sacrifice their non-drakon allies in combat, letting these creatures take the heaviest hits in a fight before entering the fray themselves.

Drakon Religion

Most drakon are too imperious to bow before any god, but those who choose the devoted path of a cleric worship the demigods Axaluatl, Lagos, or even the infernal powers—sometimes an amalgam of wicked deities. Such polytheistic drakon clerics have access to two of the following domains: Death, Evil, or War.

Drakon Society

The drakon comprise a hubristic culture, dedicated to the conquest and enslavement of all other creatures, whom they believe to be servitors at best and cattle at worst. Their society is cruel and unforgiving, as likely to turn on itself as on its enemies. Violence, an integral part of drakon life, it is believed to be the best solution to all problems. When direct violence fails, the use of deceit and dissimulation, like a subtle poison, is equally applauded.

Drakon dwell chiefly in the cities and towns of Ssorlang, but many communities reside deep within the jungles and swamps of the Southlands, inaccessible to all but the most hardy of travelers. The drakon venerate the pyramid structure of their forebears—they believe that it symbolizes the steady ascension to power, a concept, they believe, that is lost on their human enemies. As such, nearly every building in a drakon community, no matter how large or small, is usually built in some sort of structure resembling a pyramid, and the triangle or pyramid shape can commonly be found throughout the various aspects of drakon society.

Drakon (Brightvenom)

Medium Monstrous Humanoid (Reptilian)
Hit Dice: 3d8+3 (16 hp)
Initiative: +5
Speed: 30 ft., climb 20 ft., swim 20 ft.
Armor Class: 13 (+1 Dex, +2 natural), touch 11, flat-footed 12
Base Attack/Grapple: +3/+3
Attack: Bite +3 melee (1d4 plus poison) or masterwork composite longbow +5 ranged (1d8)
Full Attack: Bite +3 melee (1d4 plus poison) or masterwork longsword +4 melee (1d8) or masterwork composite longbow +5 ranged (1d8)
Space/Reach: 5 ft./5 ft.
Special Attacks: Charming gaze, poison
Special Qualities: Darkvision 60 ft., deceive, keen senses
Saves: Fort +2, Ref +4, Will +4
Abilities: Str 11, Dex 13, Con 13, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 14
Skills: Concentration +4, Hide +2, Knowledge (arcana) +2, Knowledge (religion) +2, Listen +4, Move Silently +2, Spot +4
Feats: Alertness, Improved Initiative
Environment: Warm forests or marshes
Organization: Solitary, pair, band (3–6), clan (2–12 brightvenom drakon, 2–12 drakon mongrels, and 2–4 darkvenom drakon), or colony (10–200 brightvenom drakon, 10–200 drakon mongrels, and 6–60 darkvenom drakon)
Challenge Rating: 2
Treasure: Double standard
Alignment: Usually neutral evil
Advancement: By character class
Level Adjustment: +2

Upon first glance, the creature resembles a slender human with exceedingly pale skin and a gentle, languid grace. Its reptilian nature is revealed in a patina of fine scales along each forearm, its neck, and even along each temple. Its perfect white teeth are offset by a set of narrow fangs.

The scales of a brightvenom drakon can vary in color and pattern as much as any species of snake, but most possess the red and black bands reminiscent of the spirit naga. Their hair is always fine, usually black and quite straight.

Brightvenom drakon are the emissaries and diplomats of the drakon race. Experts in the art of deception, these creatures frequent travel in the realms of mankind, gathering information and sowing dissension. Brightvenom drakon infiltrating human communities often pose as prophets, teachers, or tradesman, creating mayhem with their silvery, forked tongues—turning the foes of the drakon race against each other with words instead of swords.

Combat

Brightvenom drakon tend to avoid combat whenever possible, and attempt to talk their way out of trouble, using their charming gaze to diffuse potentially violent situations. Only when they have the clear advantage in combat will they display their murderous nature, closing in for the kill with their poisonous fangs and their swords.

Deceive (Su): Once per day, a brightvenom drakon can assume the appearance of a human, elf, or half-elf of the same height and weight as itself. The effect resembles the *disguise self* spell and lasts for 1 hour per character level. The brightvenom drakon gains a +10 bonus on Disguise checks when the ability is used to effect a disguise.

Charming Gaze (Su): As *charm person*, 30 feet, Will DC 14 negates. The save DC is Charisma-based.

Poison (Ex): Injury, Fortitude DC 13, initial and secondary damage 1d6 Con. The save DC is Constitution-based.

Brightvenom Drakon as Characters

Brightvenom drakon characters possess the following racial traits:

— +2 Dexterity, +2 Constitution, +4 Charisma.

—Medium size

—A brightvenom drakon's base land speed is 30 feet.

—Darkvision out to 60 feet.

—Racial Hit Dice: A brightvenom drakon starts out with three levels of monstrous humanoid, which provide 3d8 Hit Dice, a base attack bonus of +3, and base saving throw bonuses of Fort +1, Ref +3, and Will +3.

—Racial Skills: A brightvenom drakon's monstrous humanoid levels give it skill points equal to 6 x (2 + Int modifier). Its class skills are Concentration, Hide, Knowledge (any), Listen, Move Silently, and Spot.

—Racial Feats: A brightvenom drakon's monstrous humanoid levels give it two feats.

— +2 natural armor bonus.

—Special Attacks (see above): Charming gaze (save DC 12 + Cha modifier), poison bite (save DC 12 + Con modifier)

—Special Qualities (see above): Deceive, darkvision 60 ft., keen senses

—Automatic Languages: Common, Draconic. Bonus Languages: Infernal, Orc.

—Favored Class: Rogue (male) or sorcerer (female).

—Level Adjustment: +2.

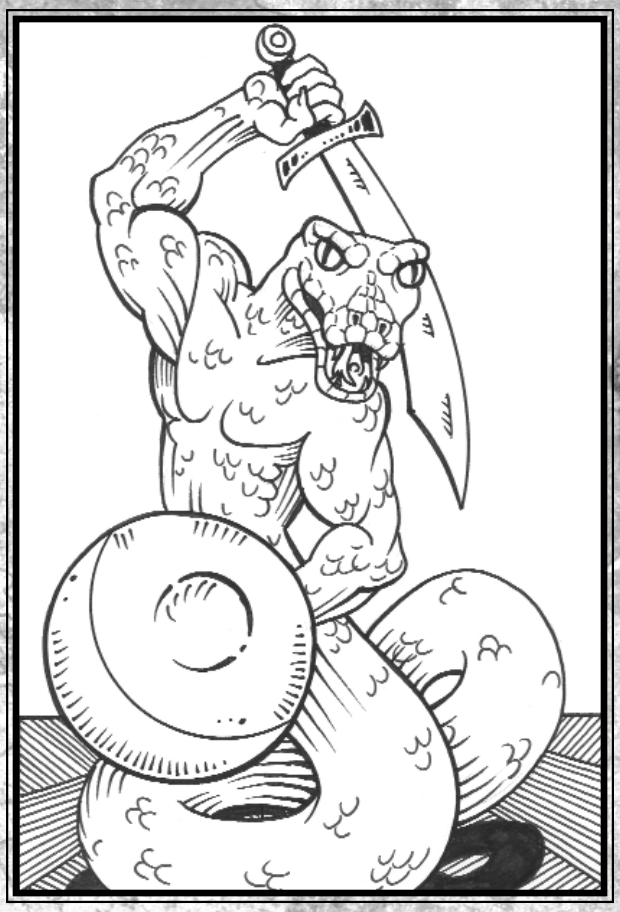
Drakon (Darkvenom)

Large Monstrous Humanoid (Reptilian)
Hit Dice: 8d8+24 (60 hp)
Initiative: +5
Speed: 30 ft., climb 30 ft., swim 30 ft.
Armor Class: 18 (+1 Dex, –1 size, +8 natural), touch 10, flat-footed 17
Base Attack/Grapple: +6/+16
Attack: Bite +11 melee (2d4+9 plus poison) or masterwork composite longbow (+2 Str bonus) +7 ranged (1d8+2)
Full Attack: Bite +11 melee (2d4+9 plus poison) or masterwork greataxe +12 melee (3d6+9) or masterwork composite longbow (+2 Str bonus) +7 ranged (1d8+2)
Space/Reach: 10 ft./10 ft.
Special Attacks: Constrict 1d4+4, improved grab, paralyzing gaze, poison
Special Qualities: Darkvision 60 ft., regeneration 5, transfigure
Saves: Fort +5, Ref +7, Will +10
Abilities: Str 22, Dex 13, Con 16, Int 18, Wis 18, Cha 20
Skills: Climb +12, Concentration +12, Gather Information +8, Heal +8, Hide +8, Knowledge (arcana) +14, Knowledge (religion) +14, Listen +14, Move Silently +4, Spot +8
Feats: Alertness, Dodge, Improved Initiative
Environment: Warm forests or marshes
Organization: Solitary, pair, band (3–6), clan (2–12 brightvenom drakon, 2–12 drakon mongrels, and 2–4 darkvenom drakon), or colony (10–200 brightvenom drakon, 10–200 drakon mongrels, and 6–60 darkvenom drakon)
Challenge Rating: 6
Treasure: Double standard
Alignment: Usually chaotic evil
Advancement: By character class
Level Adjustment: +6

Massive and fearsome, the serpent-like creature resembles a giant snake with powerful humanoid arms and keen, intelligent eyes. Its sinuous, muscular body is covered in darkly-hued scales glittering with a reflective sheen.

Though their coloration may vary, most darkvenom drakon possess scales of deep blue or darkest green. In rarer cases, a darkvenom drakon may possess the deep purple shade of the dark naga. Their bodies range from 9 to 15 feet in height and weigh 300 to 500 lbs.

As the undisputed leaders of the drakon race, darkvenom drakon are ruthless fighters that delight in the utter destruction of other creatures—by any means. They are aggressive creatures, vain even for drakon, and constantly strive to destroy their enemies and rivals.



Combat

More headstrong than their more calculating brightvenom cousins, the darkvenom drakon delight in physical combat and gladly enter melee when they scent an easy victory. Whenever possible, they attempt to use the paralyzing gaze to first weaken a potential opponent, so that they can slowly crush their enemies—literally—and watch them suffer as they die.

Transfigure (Su): Once per day, a brightvenom drakon can assume the form of a humanoid of Medium size. The effect resembles the *polymorph self* spell, but it lasts for only 1 minute per character level.

Constrict (Ex): A darkvenom drakon deals 1d4+4 hit points of damage with a successful grapple check.

Improved Grab (Ex): To use this ability, a darkvenom drakon must successfully hit a Large or smaller creature with its bite attack. It can then attempt to start a grapple as a free action without provoking an attack of opportunity. If it successfully makes the grapple check, it establishes a hold and can then constrict.

Paralyzing Gaze (Su): The gaze of a darkvenom drakon's eyes can paralyze victims within 40 feet who fail a Fortitude save (DC 19). If the saving throw is suc-

cessful, the character is forever immune to the gaze of that particular darkvenom drakon. If it fails, the victim is paralyzed for 2d6 rounds. The save DC is Charisma-based.

Poison (Ex): Injury, Fortitude DC 17, initial and secondary damage 2d6 Con. The save DC is Constitution-based.

Drakon (Mongrel)

Medium Monstrous Humanoid (Reptilian)
Hit Dice: 6d8+12 (39 hp)
Initiative: +6
Speed: 30 ft.
Armor Class: 17 (+2 Dex, +3 natural, +2 masterwork leather armor), touch 12, flat-footed 15
Base Attack/Grapple: +6/+8
Attack: Bite +8 melee (1d6+3 plus poison) or masterwork composite longbow (+2 Str bonus) +9 ranged (1d8+2)
Full Attack: Bite +8 melee (1d6+3 plus poison) or masterwork longsword +9 melee (1d8+2) or masterwork composite longbow (+2 Str bonus) +9 ranged (1d8+2)
Space/Reach: 5 ft./5 ft.
Special Attacks: Constrict 1d4+1, poison, improved grab
Special Qualities: Darkvision 60 ft.
Saves: Fort +4, Ref +7, Will +5
Abilities: Str 15, Dex 15, Con 15, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 16
Skills: Concentration +6, Hide +8, Listen +6, Move Silently +4, Spot +4
Feats: Alertness, Improved Initiative, Toughness
Environment: Warm forests or marshes
Organization: Solitary, pair, band (3–6), clan (2–12 brightvenom drakon, 2–12 drakon mongrels, and 2–4 darkvenom drakon), or colony (10–200 brightvenom drakon, 10–200 drakon mongrels, and 6–60 darkvenom drakon)
Challenge Rating: 4
Treasure: Standard
Alignment: Usually neutral evil
Advancement: By character class
Level Adjustment: +4

This creature has the upper torso of a humanoid and the scaled, lower torso of giant snake. Scales and even banded flesh can be seen along its humanoid half, betraying its heritage.

A subset of the race, drakon mongrels vary the most in their appearance. Their heads and torsos might resemble those of any humanoid, though reptilian features are common to all of them. A mongrel's serpentine lower half displays the coloration of virtually any species of snake, most likely matching those of its brightvenom parent.

Drakon mongrels are the hybrid offspring of humanoid and brightvenom drakon parents. Also known as "mules" because of their inability to reproduce, drakon mongrels are disliked intensely by both brightvenom and darkvenom drakon and indeed aren't even considered part of their race by these "pure" broods. For this reason, they are typically used as bodyguards, foot soldiers, and laborers in drakon society. They are also usually less educated than their drakon cousins, although this does not mean than they are necessarily less intelligent. Most drakon mongrels act subservient to the brightvenom and darkvenom drakon and follow the orders of these "superior" creatures without hesitation.

Unlike brightvenom and darkvenom drakon, drakon mongrels do not have the ability to shift into an alternate form.

Combat

Because of their low value in drakon society, drakon mongrels are usually the "shock troops" in any sort of combat situation involving the drakon. They charge fearlessly into melee combat, using their constricting tails and brute strength to overpower their enemies.

Constrict (Ex): A drakon mongrel deals 1d4+1 hit points of damage with a successful grapple check.

Improved Grab (Ex): To use this ability, a drakon mongrel must successfully hit a Medium or smaller creature with its bite attack. It can then attempt to start a grapple as a free action without provoking an attack of opportunity. If it successfully makes the grapple check, it establishes a hold and can then constrict.

Poison (Ex): Injury, Fortitude DC 15, initial and secondary damage 2d4 Con. The save DC is Constitution-based.

Earth Naga

Medium Aberration
Hit Dice: 4d8+12 (30 hp)
Initiative: +3
Speed: 40 ft. (8 squares), burrow 20 ft.
Armor Class: 17 (+3 Dex, +4 natural), touch 13, flat-footed 14
Base Attack/Grapple: +3/+6
Attack: Bite +6 melee (1d6+3 plus acid) or acid spit +6 ranged (1d4 plus acid)
Full Attack: Bite +6 melee (1d6+3 plus acid) or tail slap +1 melee (2d4+1) or acid spit +6 ranged (1d4 plus acid)
Space/Reach: 5 ft./5 ft.
Special Attacks: Acid bite, acid spit
Special Qualities: Darkvision 60 ft., resistance to charm
Saves: Fort +4, Ref +6, Will +4
Abilities: Str 16, Dex 16, Con 16, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 18
Skills: Bluff +8, Gather Information +10, Intimidate +10, Listen +6, Sense Motive +6, Spot +2
Feats: Alertness, Lightning Reflexes
Environment: Warm forest or mountain; underground
Organization: Solitary, pair, or nest (3–4)
Challenge Rating: 3
Treasure: Standard
Alignment: Usually neutral evil
Advancement: 5–6 HD (Medium); 7–12 HD (Large)
Level Adjustment: –

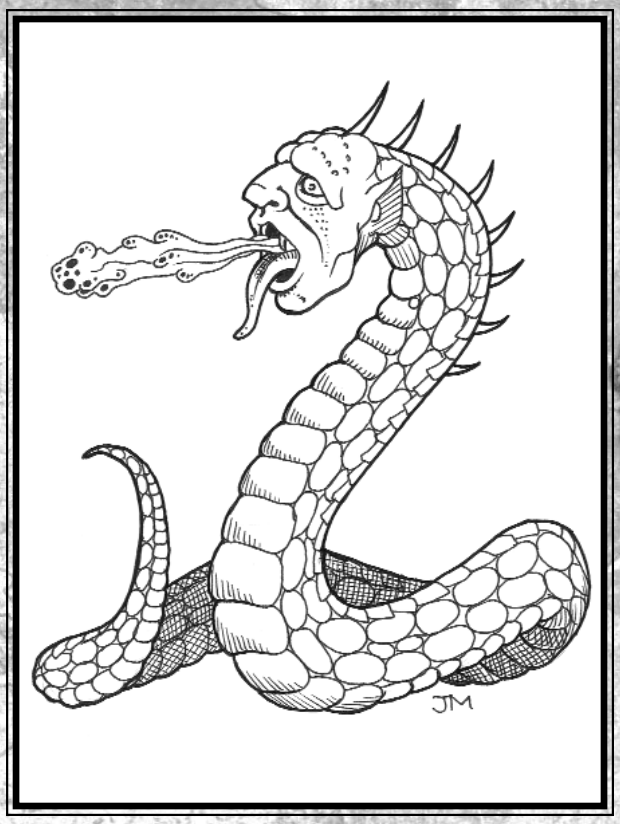
This loathsome serpent has a dark, scaled body banded in stripes of black and indigo.

Physically resembling other naga, earth naga are smaller and faster than others of their species. Their reptilian scales are always colored black and indigo, making them difficult to spot in the darkness.

Once commonly found throughout the Southlands, the foul earth naga is now fortunately a somewhat rare beast typically found lurking in jungles and ruins. For centuries, the earth naga comprised the bulk of the Southlands' mighty armies, crushing the foes of the Zimalan Empire with ease. With the fall of the Empire, the legions of earth naga dwindled away to nearly nothing, making them little more than a dangerous rarity.

Earth naga are impulsive, violent creatures. They are irritated by conversation and become bored easily. This impatience is reflected in their bad temperament and their willingness to fight at a moment's notice, even against each other. They have little respect for anything and take great delight in mindless destruction.

Earth naga speak Common and Infernal.



Combat

Unlike other nagas, earth naga love melee combat. Typically, they rush their opponents immediately, seeking to incapacitate strong opponents with their acid bites as quickly as possible. However, when in trouble, they may try to bluff their way out of danger by pretending that they have magical abilities, hoping that their opponents may believe them to be dark naga or guardian naga. Earth naga also work well with one another in group combat, and try to separate and isolate multiple opponents wherever possible.

Acid (Ex): The fangs of an earth naga drip with a highly potent acid. Any opponent bitten by one of these creatures must make a successful Fortitude save of DC 16 or take an additional 1d6 hit points of damage. The save DC is Constitution-based.

Resistance to Charm (Ex): Earth naga have a +1 racial bonus on saving throws against all charm effects (not included in the statistics block).

Spit (Ex): An earth naga can spit acid 1d6 times per day up to 30 feet as a ranged attack action. Opponents hit by this attack must make successful saves (see above) to avoid the effect.

Ghozali

Medium Aberration
Hit Dice: 6d8+6 (33 hp)
Initiative: +11
Speed: Fly 40 ft. (good)
Armor Class: 19 (+7 Dex, +2 natural), touch 17, flat-footed 12
Base Attack/Grapple: +4/+5
Attack: Tentacle +5 melee (1d10+1)
Full Attack: 9 tentacles +5 melee (1d10+1) or bite +0 melee (1d6+1)
Space/Reach: 5 ft./10 ft.
Special Attacks: Poison gas, improved grab
Special Qualities: Darkvision 60 ft.
Saves: Fort +3, Ref +9, Will +8
Abilities: Str 12, Dex 24, Con 12, Int 16, Wis 16, Cha 14
Skills: Bluff +10, Concentration +10, Hide +16, Spot +10, Survival +12
Feats: Dodge, Hover, Improved Initiative, Mobility, Wingover
Environment: Any mountains
Organization: Solitary, pair, flight (3–8), or murder (9–36)
Challenge Rating: 3
Treasure: Standard
Alignment: Usually chaotic neutral
Advancement: 7–9 HD (Medium); 10–16 HD (Large)
Level Adjustment: –

This flying humanoid appears to remain aloft with thin membranes stretched between long, thin tentacles. Its body is covered in blue and gold scales.

Vaguely resembling bloated, winged humans, ghozali are flying creatures whose bodies are filled with a magical gas, allowing them to remain airborne throughout their entire lives. Thin membranes stretch between their long, thin tentacles, which they use as wings to maneuver deftly through the air. Their bodies are covered entirely in bright blue and gold scales.

These strange, brightly colored creatures spend their entire lives flying through the air, swooping down from the clouds only on rare occasion to attack tempting prey. Ghozali travel in small, roaming tribes. They tend not to occupy a constant territory, but are instead always on the move, drifting and flying as many as a hundred miles per day. Some sages have suggested that there is a method to the ghozali's madness, as they may be visiting hidden places throughout the world to store treasure and other secrets.

Ghozali are sociable creatures amongst themselves and with other flying creatures. If approached in the skies that are their home, they can be quite agreeable and helpful. However, they view ground-dwellers as little more than

prey, and have nothing but contempt for that which cannot fly. As such, they are rarely seen near the earth except to hunt, and even then tend to reserve their feeding grounds to mountaintops or other elevated areas.

Ghozali speak Common and Draconic.

Combat

Ghozali rarely go within melee distance of the ground, unless they believe they have the advantage of numbers or surprise. Their favorite tactic is to grab a non-flying opponent and then fly high in the air, dropping that opponent from a high distance onto sharp rocks. Although the ghozali's poison gas attack is quite deadly, it usually uses it only as a last resort.

Poison Gas (Su): Injury, Fortitude DC 14, initial and secondary damage 1d8 Con. The save DC is Constitution-based.

A ghozali can expel some of the gas that inflates its body and keeps it airborne, creating a 20-foot cone of highly poisonous gas. Each time such a cone of gas is expelled, however, the flying speed of the ghozali is reduced by 10 feet, and its maneuverability class also goes down by one rank. This effect lasts for 1d6 rounds. It may use its gas attack only three times per day.

Improved Grab (Ex): To use this ability, a ghozali must hit an opponent at least one size category smaller than itself with its tentacle attack. It can then attempt to start a grapple as a free action without provoking an attack of opportunity.

Horror of Zamon

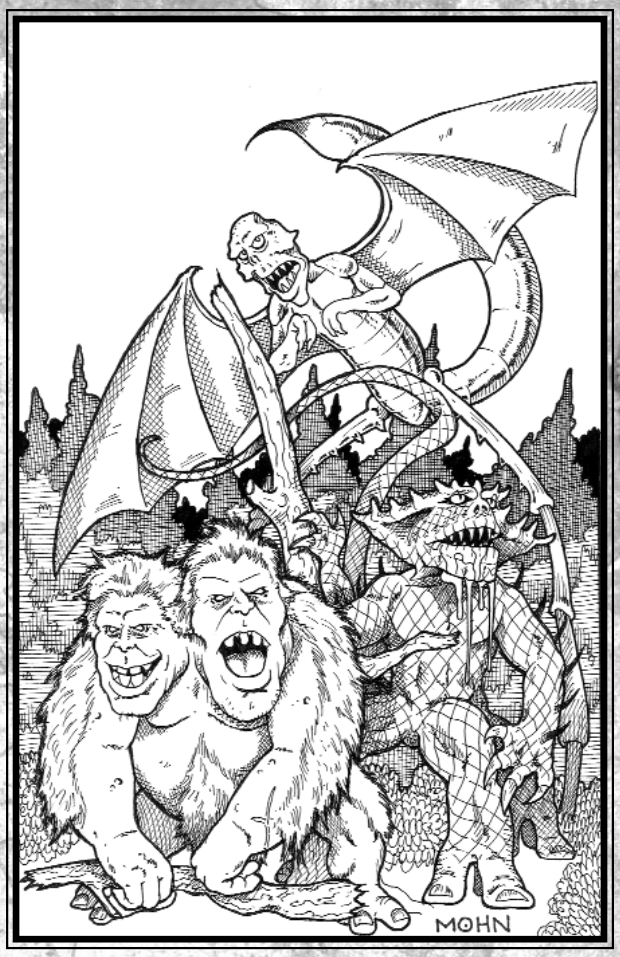
Huge Aberration
Hit Dice: 8d8+64 (100 hp)
Initiative: +0
Speed: 20 ft.
Armor Class: 12 (–2 size, +4 natural), touch 8, flat-footed 12
Base Attack/Grapple: +6/+21
Attack: Claw +11 melee (1d10+7)
Full Attack: 2 claws +11 melee (1d10+7) or bite +6 melee (1d6+5)
Space/Reach: 10 ft./10 ft.
Special Attacks: Constrict, improved grab (see below)
Special Qualities: Phoenix rebirth (see below)
Saves: Fort +10, Ref +2, Will +5
Abilities: Str 24, Dex 10, Con 26, Int 6, Wis 9, Cha 6
Skills: Climb +16, Jump +18
Feats: Blind-Fight, Toughness
Environment: Any forest or mountains
Organization: Solitary
Challenge Rating: 8–12 (see text below)
Treasure: Standard
Alignment: Always chaotic evil
Advancement: 9–12 HD (Huge); 13–18 HD (Gargantuan)
Level Adjustment: –

The Horrors of Zamon are all basically humanoid in shape, and all stand somewhere between ten and twelve feet tall. From there, their appearances all change dramatically from individual to individual, although they always remain terrifying.

Originally created long ago by the experiments of mad alchemists, the Horrors of Zamon are walking beings of dread, wandering through the desolate regions of the Northlands and destroying all that cross their path.

No two Horrors are alike—it is said that their twisted souls are born every time a mortal has a nightmare, making each one slightly different and unique. It is no less surprising to see a Horror covered in flames and feathers than to see a Horror dripping with slime and ice. The width and breadth of their appearance and abilities are as varied as snowflakes in a blizzard.

Although the wandering Horrors can be found scattered throughout the Northlands, they can mostly be found congregated near the Myrwych Forest. The reasons for this are unclear, but it is believed that the first Horrors were created in this forest, and that something mystical may connect the Horrors to this sinister place. Oddly, the number of Horrors sighted near the forest increases during snowstorms.



Creating a Horror of Zamon

Both the final appearance and extra abilities of a Horror of Zamon (if any) can be determined by rolling a d6 on the random tables in the sidebar. A "stock" Horror of Zamon without any additional abilities or attacks has a standard CR of 8; as a rule of thumb, for each additional two special abilities or attacks acquired by the Horror, the CR of that Horror should be increased by 1.

Combat

The Horrors of Zamon, simply put, are mindless killing machines. If they spot a living creature, they attempt to kill it as quickly as possible. They never attempt to ambush or surprise an opponent. Specific individual tactics will vary with each Horror.

Constrict (Ex): A Horror of Zamon deals automatic arm or tentacle damage with a successful grapple check.

Improved Grab (Ex): To use this ability, the Horror of Zamon must hit with a claw or tentacle attack. It can then attempt to start a grapple as a free action without provoking an attack of opportunity. If it wins the grapple check, it establishes a hold and can constrict.

Horror of Zamon Appearance and Abilities

Appearance

Roll once for each category.

Overall Visage
1 – Dripping, drooling
2 – Glaring, intimidating
3 – Twitching, screaming
4 – Fat, lazy
5 – Hanging, flaccid
6 – Rotting, tormented

Head
1 – Triangular
2 – Amorphous
3 – Square and gaunt
4 – Round and soft
5 – Wide and flat
6 – Two-headed

Skin Color
1 – Jet black[1]
2 – Blood red
3 – Yellowish and bruised
4 – Blue and indigo
5 – Bright green
6 – Sickly white

Back
1 – Spine-covered
2 – Scaly
3 – Slimy and hunched
4 – Fur-covered
5 – Bird-winged[2]
6 – Bat-winged[2]

Hide
1 – Fat
2 – Exoskeleton plating[3]
3 – Covered in sores
4 – Thick, matted fur
5 – Lizard-like scales
6 – Soft, thick flesh

Tail
1 – Long, thin, prehensile
2 – Short and stubby
3 – Long and spiked[4]
4 – Long, thick, clubbed[4]
5 – Soft and furry
6 – None

Mouth
1 – Massive tusks
2 – Jagged, long teeth[5]
3 – Small, sharp fangs
4 – Long and needle-like
5 – Flat, crushing molars
6 – Saw-toothed[5]

Legs
1 – Thick and stubby
2 – Telescopig, froglike[6]
3 – Insect-like
4 – Tentacles
5 – Long and gangly
6 – 1d4 additional[7]

Arms
1 – Powerful, muscular
2 – Short, emaciated
3 – Insect-like
4 – Tentacles[8]
5 – Long and hairy[9]
6 – 1d4 additional[8]

[1] Skin color provides a +4 bonus to all Hide checks.

[2] Winged Horrors also gain a flying movement of 20 feet, with good maneuverability.

[3] Exoskeleton plating provides an additional +4 natural armor bonus.

[4] These tails provide an additional tail slap attack (+6 melee, 2d6+6 damage).

[5] Provides an additional d6 to bite damage.

[6] Provides a +6 bonus to Jump.

[7] Increases base movement to 40 feet.

[8] Also provides additional 1d4 claw attacks.

[9] Increases Reach to 20 feet.

Abilities

Roll twice on Main Ability table, then roll as needed.

Main Ability
1 – Immunity
2 – Extra ranged attack
3 – Extra melee attack
4 – Spell-like ability
5 – None
6 – Roll twice more

Immunity
1 – DR 5/silver
2 – DR 10/adamantine
3 – Immune to charm, fear
4 – Immune to fire
5 – Immune to cold
6 – Immune to magical energy type (roll below)

Magical Energy Immunity
1 – Magical fire
2 – Magical cold
3 – Magical lightning
4 – Magical melee weapons
5 – Arcane spells
6 – Divine spells

Ranged Attack
1 – Poison quills, 40 ft. range, +4 ranged attack[1]
2 – *Fireball* 3/day[2]
3 – *Cone of cold* 3/day[2]
4 – *Cloudkill* 1/day[2]
5 – *Chain lightning* 1/day[2]
6 – Breath weapon[3]

Breath Weapon Type
1 – Line, acid, 60 ft.
2 – Line, lightning, 60 ft.
3 – Cone, fire, 30 ft.
4 – Cone, cold, 30 ft.
5 – Cone, caustic gas, 30 ft.
6 – Roll twice again

Melee Attack
1 – Poisoned claws/talons[1]
2 – Festering wounds[5]
3 – Extra mouth (gains another bite attack)
4 – Horns +0 melee (1d8+1)
5 – Rend 2d6+10
6 – Vampiric touch[6]

Spell-Like Ability
1 – Turn invisible, as per the spell *greater invisibility*[2]
2 – Teleport, as per the spell *greater teleportation*[2]
3 – Turn to stone, as per the spell *flesh to stone*[2]
4 – Create earthquake, as per the spell *earthquake*[4]
5 – Wounding touch, as per the spell *inflict serious wounds*[4]
6 – Roll twice more

[1] All poison attacks have the following statistics: Injury, Fortitude DC 22, initial and secondary damage 1d6 Con. The save DC is Constitution-based.

[2] All wizard/sorcerer-based spell-like effects act as though cast by a 16th-level wizard.

[3] All breath weapon types have the following save and damage statistics: DC 22, 3d6 hit points of damage. Once a Horror uses a breath weapon attack, it cannot be re-used for another 2d4 rounds. A successful Reflex save means that the intended victim takes no damage.

[4] All divine-based spell-like effects act as though cast by a 14th-level cleric.

[5] Any damage caused by the Horror can only be healed by magical means.

[6] As a melee touch attack, a Horror of Zamon can steal life force from its foe, as the *vampiric touch* spell (caster level 16th).

Phoenix Rebirth (Su): Ironically, the Horrors of Zamon are perhaps most dangerous when they are about to die. A Horror of Zamon that is reduced to 0 to –9 hit points immediately bursts into magical flame, which surrounds the creature's body in a 20-foot radius. Any creature caught in this area of fire must make a successful Fortitude save (DC 22) or take 2d6 points of damage; a successful save results in only half damage. The Horror of Zamon takes no damage from the fire. If the fallen body of the Horror is not reduced to –10 hit points within 1d4 rounds of bursting ablaze, the body is completed consumed and reduced to mere ashes by the magical flames … and from those ashes emerge two new Horrors of Zamon, fully healed and ready to fight. As with all the Horrors, these two new Horrors are unique and may share no common traits with the fallen creature that created it; statistics for the new Horrors must once more be rolled randomly on the tables on the previous page.

Horse of Parelor

Large Magical Beast
Hit Dice: 4d10+20 (42 hp)
Initiative: +7
Speed: 40 ft.
Armor Class: 14 (+3 Dex, –1 size, +2 natural), touch 12, flat-footed 11
Base Attack/Grapple: +4/+12
Attack: Hoof +7 melee (2d6+4)
Full Attack: 2 hooves +7 melee (2d6+4) or bite +2 melee (1d6+2)
Space/Reach: 10 ft./5 ft.
Special Attacks: Trample
Special Qualities: Darkvision 60 ft., dimension door, low-light vision
Saves: Fort +9, Ref +7, Will +0
Abilities: Str 18, Dex 16, Con 20, Int 12, Wis 9, Cha 12
Skills: Heal +2, Hide +2, Jump +8, Listen +4, Move Silently +8, Sense Motive +4, Spot +4
Feats: Alertness, Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Lightning Reflexes, Track
Environment: Any plains
Organization: Solitary or pair
Challenge Rating: 4
Treasure: Standard
Alignment: Usually neutral good
Advancement: 5–8 HD (Large); 9–16 HD (Huge)
Level Adjustment: –

This majestic steed stands seven feet high at the shoulder and weighs about 1,800 pounds.

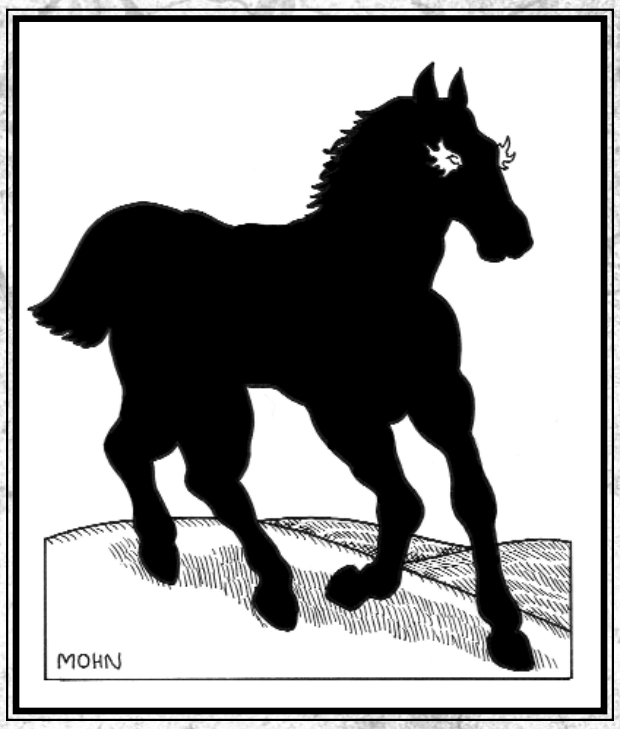
The legendary Horses of Parelor are renowned throughout the Northlands as the finest mounts in the world. Whenever tales of virtuous knights are told, these knights invariably ride the Horses of Parelor into battle and glory. Although in most cases the reputation of the Horses far exceeds their actual abilities, they are still quite powerful creatures, and it is not without good reason that distinguished knights seek their services.

At first glance, the Horses of Parelor resemble ordinary horses, albeit ones that are quite large and well muscled. All have coats and manes black as a moonless midnight. However, the eyes of the Horses betray their true nature—magical blue flame literally burns in their eyes. For this reason, it is often assumed that the Horses are evil or some sort of offshoot of the malevolent nightmare; however, all that the flame signifies is their magical nature.

In the wild, the Horses of Parelor are rare indeed, roaming in small herds through the grassy plains of the Northlands. Even rarer are those that agree to become the steed of a nobleman or warrior. Horses of Parelor are strong-willed creatures, and speak both the Common and Elvish tongues with ease. The Horses cannot be forced like a beast of burden into serving any master; instead, a Horse of Parelor must be convinced to willingly accept a rider. These are not partnerships that the Horses take lightly—most Horses of Parelor accept but a single humanoid rider in a lifetime.

Combat

When alone or only with others of its kind, the Horses of Parelor seek to avoid combat, fighting only when there is no other option. Their teleportation abilities allow them to accomplish this with ease.



With a rider, the Horses use their teleportation ability as an offensive weapon, moving about the battlefield to tactical advantage wherever possible. A favorite tactic of knights mounted upon one of the Horses is to begin a charge from a far distance, and then to teleport into melee range at a full charge. The Horses of Parelor generally follow the lead of their riders; however, they are not shy about acting counter to their rider's wishes when they believe them to be foolhardy.

***Dimension Door* (Sp):** A Horse of Parelor can teleport, as *dimension door* (caster level 10th), once per round as a free action. The ability affects only the Horse of Parelor and a single rider that sits atop the Horse. If the Horse has multiple riders, it is up to the Horse's discretion as to which rider it keeps when teleporting. Both the Horse of Parelor and its rider never appear within a solid object, and both can act immediately after teleporting.

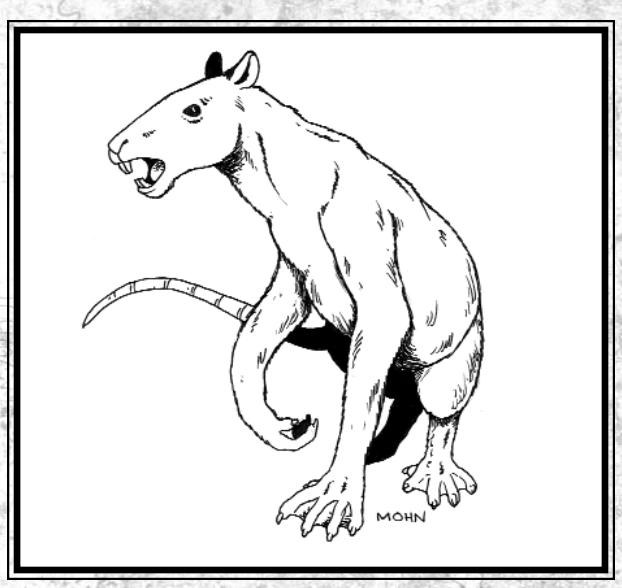
Trample (Ex): Reflex half DC 16. The save DC is Strength-based.

Huezcatla

Large Animal
Hit Dice: 3d8 (16 hp)
Initiative: +1
Speed: 30 ft. (6 squares), swim 40 ft.
Armor Class: 14 (–1 size, +2 Dex, +3 natural), touch 11, flat-footed 12
Base Attack/Grapple: +2/+6
Attack: Bite +5 melee (1d6+3)
Full Attack: Bite +5 melee (1d6+3)
Space/Reach: 10 ft./5 ft.
Special Attacks: —
Special Qualities: Low-light vision, scent
Saves: Fort +5, Ref +5, Will +2
Abilities: Str 16, Dex 14, Con 15, Int 2, Wis 12, Cha 16
Skills: Balance +4, Climb +5, Hide +6*, Listen +5, Move Silently +4, Spot +5, Swim +9
Feats: Alertness, Toughness
Environment: Tropical rainforest, lakes, and rivers
Organization: Solitary, pair, or herd (10–30)
Challenge Rating: 2
Treasure: None
Alignment: Always neutral
Advancement: —
Level Adjustment: —

This strange beast stands almost as tall as a horse, but its body is stockier and covered with thin, coarse fur. Its forelegs are longer than its hind legs, and its feet end in webbed, claw-like toes. The animal's face resembles that of a large rodent, with two large incisors protruding from its mouth, and its long, naked tail resembles a rat's.

Resembling dire cousins of the common Southland capybara, the huezcatla (wess-*kot*-luh) is a peaceful, semi-aquatic rodent of extraordinary size. Usually five feet high at the shoulder, the typical huezcatla is seven feet long and weighs 1,300 lbs. Their webbed digits allow them to swim and maneuver swiftly through water.



Huezcatlas dwell in grasslands and forests along riverbanks and lakes, eating grasses, aquatic plants, melons, and squashes. They are crepuscular animals, active at dawn and twilight, resting most of the day in shallow waters. Close proximity to abundant water is a must for huezcatlas. They issue grunts, clicks, and purrs to communicate with one another, and gruff barks to alert others when predators are detected. Caimans, anacondas, jaguars, and wild dogs will hunt them, but huezcatlas are quick to retaliate when they cannot retreat.

The Xulmec people often train and domesticate huezcatlas for riding and even for combat. A huezcatla can fight while carrying a rider, but the rider cannot also attack unless he succeeds on a Ride check.

Combat

Normally benign creatures, huezcatlas prefer to run or hide than enter combat. They issue gruff barks when threatened, alerting others (and their humanoid masters) to the danger. A huezcatla's front incisors, usually used for gnawing hardy plants, can break skin easily.

Skills: A huezcatala has a +8 racial bonus on any Swim checks to perform some special action or avoid a hazard. It can always choose to take 10 on a Swim check, even if distracted on endangered. It can use the run action while swimming, provided it swims in a straight line.

A huezcatla gains a +4 racial bonus on Hide checks when in the water. Further, a huezcatla can lie in the water with only its eyes, ears, and nostrils showing, gaining a +8 cover bonus on Hide checks.

Carrying Capacity: A light load for a huezcatla is up to 200 pounds; a medium load, 201–400 pounds; and a heavy load, 401–600 pounds. However, huezcatlas are extremely uncooperative if burdened with anything greater than a light load or a single rider. Handle Animal or wild empathy checks are required hourly when the huezcatla is overburdened in this way.

Lightning Giant

Large Giant
Hit Dice: 10d8+40 (85 hp)
Initiative: +7
Speed: 40 ft.
Armor Class: 18 (+3 Dex, –1 size, +6 natural), touch 12, flat-footed 15
Base Attack/Grapple: +7/+17
Attack: Greatclub +12 melee (1d10+6) or slam +12 melee (1d4+9) or rock +10 ranged (2d6+7)
Full Attack: Greatclub +12 melee (1d10+6) or 2 slams +12 melee (1d4+9) or rock +10 ranged (2d6+7)
Space/Reach: 10 ft./10 ft.
Special Attacks: Haste, rock throwing
Special Qualities: Darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision, rock catching
Saves: Fort +11, Ref +8, Will +3
Abilities: Str 23, Dex 17, Con 19, Int 13, Wis 10, Cha 13
Skills: Climb +8, Intimidate +6, Jump +8, Listen +2, Spot +4
Feats: Cleave, Improved Bull Rush, Improved Initiative, Lighning Reflexes, Power Attack
Environment: Any mountain
Organization: Solitary, gang (2–5), band (6–9 plus 35% noncombatants plus 1 adept or cleric of 1st or 2nd level), or tribe (21–30 plus 1 adept, cleric, or sorcerer of 3rd–5th level plus 6–12 dire wolves, and 4–16 orcs)
Challenge Rating: 6
Treasure: Double standard
Alignment: Usually chaotic evil
Advancement: By character class
Level Adjustment: +4

This lean, wiry humanoid is at least a dozen feet tall. It wears bright, garish clothing.

Lightning giants make their lairs in the remote mountains of the world. Adult males are twelve feet tall and weigh about five thousand pounds. Compared to other giants, they appear very lean and wiry. Females are slightly shorter and lighter. Lightning giants can live to be four hundred years old.

Lightning giants are brutal bullies that are constantly in battle, whether with each other or with other creatures. They are also commonly the minions of thunder giants.

Lightning giants are incredibly vain creatures, and usually wear bright, garish clothing. They constantly seek to be

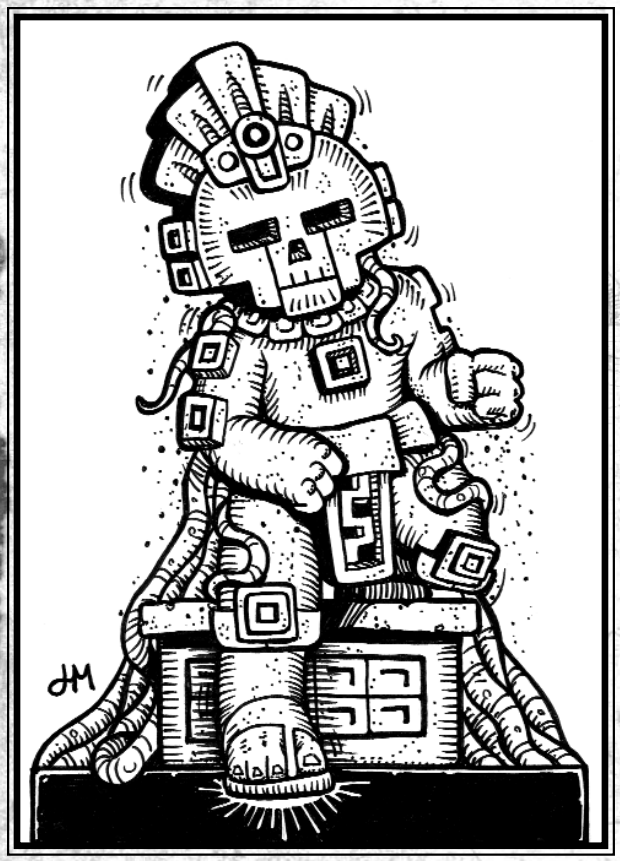
the center of attention, and are incredibly loud. They have a fondness for vulgar jokes and bawdy stories. Only fear can silence these boisterous giants, and the only creature known to strike fear in a lightning giant is a thunder giant. Wherever a thunder giant can be found, there is usually a lightning giant lurking around somewhere in the shadows, following the thunder giant's every command. Like most bullies, lightning giants are easily impressed with displays of power, and will readily submit to any being it believes to be vastly superior to itself. Of course, lightning giants also spend much time bullying and berating the weak, and they typically surround themselves with weaker lackeys, such as orcs or gnolls.

Combat

Lightning giants are surprisingly quick for their size, and use their mobility to their advantage. Frequently, they feign slowness to lull their opponents, and then try to rush in for a quick kill. They are masters of setting up ambushes, and generally fight only on terrain with which they are very familiar.

***Haste* (Sp):** After it has engaged in at least 1 round of combat, a lightning giant can *haste* itself once per day as a free action. The effect lasts 3 rounds and is otherwise the same as the spell.

Rock Throwing (Ex): The range increment is 120 feet for a lightning giant's thrown rocks.



Lightning Giants as Characters

Sly and quick, lightning giant characters are proud and aggressive warriors.

Lightning giant characters possess the following racial traits.

— +6 Strength, +3 Dexterity, +4 Constitution.

— Large size. –1 penalty to Armor Class, –1 penalty on attack rolls, –4 penalty on Hide checks, +4 bonus on grapple checks, lifting and carrying limits double those of Medium characters.

—Space/Reach: 10 feet/10 feet.

—A lightning giant's base land speed is 40 feet.

—Darkvision out to 60 feet and low-light vision.

—Racial Hit Dice: A lightning giant begins with ten levels of giant, which provide 10d8 Hit Dice, a base attack bonus of +7, and base saving throw bonuses of Fort +7, Ref +6, and Will +1.

—Racial Skills: A lightning giant's giant levels give it skill points equal to 13 x (2 + Int modifier). Its class skills are Climb, Intimidate, Jump, Listen, and Spot.

—Racial Feats: A lightning giant's giant levels give it five feats.

— +6 natural armor bonus.

—Special Attacks: Haste, rock throwing.

—Special Qualities: Rock catching.

—Automatic Languages: Giant. Bonus Languages: Common, Draconic, Elven, Goblin, Orc.

—Favored Class: Barbarian.

—Level Adjustment: +4.

Living Idol (Itepixcan)

Medium Construct
Hit Dice: 6d10+20 (50 hp)
Initiative: +2
Speed: 30 ft.
Armor Class: 22 (+2 Dex, +10 natural), touch 12, flat-footed 20
Base Attack/Grapple: +4/+9
Attack: Slam +10 melee (1d4+5)
Full Attack: 2 slams +10 melee (1d4+5)
Space/Reach: 5 ft./5 ft.
Special Attacks: See below
Special Qualities: Construct traits, damage reduction 8/adamantine, darkvision 60 ft., enshrined, fast healing 1, immunity to magic, vigilance
Saves: Fort +2, Ref +3, Will +4
Abilities: Str 21, Dex 14, Con –, Int 3, Wis 10, Cha 1
Skills: Hide +9*, Listen +5, Move Silently +7, Search +1, Spot +5
Feats: Alertness, Iron Will, Weapon Focus (fists)
Environment: See below
Organization: Solitary
Challenge Rating: 7
Treasure: None
Alignment: As per sponsoring deity
Advancement: 6–12 HD (Medium); 13–20 HD (Large); 21–35 HD (Huge); 36-45 HD (Gargantuan); 46-60 HD (Colossal)
Level Adjustment: –

This statue of polished black obsidian is carved to resemble a sandaled, muscular human robed in simple vestments. Atop its shoulders, an oversized skull is crowned with a stony headdress of feathers and its fleshless face stares back at you. After remaining inert within the shadowed alcove, the statue suddenly lurches into motion.

Resembling golems only in the most fundamental of ways, living idols—known as itepixcan (ee-*tep*-ish-kahn) in the Xulmec tongue—are divinely touched constructs that trace their origin to the god Huamec during the War of Divine Right thousands of years ago (see Chapter 1). After his pyrrhic victory against the invading giants, the god was slain—the obsidian colossus he had possessed

and animated lay shattered—and the priests of Xulmec passed along the rites Huamec had taught to them, the secret of giving life to stone. For the demigod's great sacrifice, Madrah, the Lord of the Earth and Sky, approved of the secrets of idol creation, and today living idols now guard the shrines and temples of the Xulmec demigods. Though they are pale imitations of Huamec's titanic avatar, living idols are formidable in their own right.

The construction materials of a living idol can vary greatly. The most common are basalt and obsidian and are typically fashioned into the likeness of a human—often with exaggerated features and always carved with designs appropriate for the god it serves. On rare occasions, more valuable minerals are used, such alabaster, onyx, or jade. Statues that become living idols are usually Medium in size, but larger idols have been found guarding the most sacred of temples and reliquaries. The statistics above represent the most common, weakest form of living idol.

Although clerics perform the sacred rites and supplicate their god to give the construct life, only a deity can animate a living idol and they are only constructed with a god's edict. Once animated, the idol acts as the eternal guardian of an area designated by that deity, hereafter referred to as its shrine. This shrine is typically a temple, burial ground, or sacrificial altar. Sometimes a single object is guarded, and the idol's shrine is the container that holds it.

Living idols must always obey the directives and orders of their sponsored deity. Though their actions are usually compliant with the wishes of the shrine's resident clerics, living idols are bound only to the wills of the gods, not mortals. Since they usually do not speak, any actions they take beyond defending their shrines are subject to great religious speculation. Often, these actions are viewed as portentous, as omens from the gods—a living idol may stand motionless beside the altar of a temple for centuries, then abruptly move six steps to the north for what appears to be no reason at all. Likewise, an idol may relocate itself frequently or manipulate its environment.

Living idols are respected by common folk as operative, vengeful instruments of the gods. On rare occasions, living idols have even been known to slay one of their own attendant clerics, a sure sign of the god's disapproval or the presence of a charlatan of the faith. Living idols seldom speak, but they understand Xulmec, Celestial, Infernal, and Abyssal.

Combat

Living idols serve to defend a holy place or relic for their sponsoring deity. Their fighting tactics are simple—destroy or drive away any threat. They fight until they or their enemies are destroyed and will not pursue enemies that retreat beyond the shrine they guard. Living idols possess a glimmer of intelligence and are capable of discerning between heretics (enemies) and "approved" visitors (allies).

Enshrined (Su): Each living idol is divinely bound to a single shrine and will never stray more than 200 feet from it (a single 5-foot by 5-foot square). This range doubles with each size category a living idol is advanced—for example, a Huge living idol will never stray more than 800 feet from its shrine. Should a living idol ever be forced to move beyond this range, it immediately carries out the malediction ability (see below), whether or not it possesses this ability normally, then reverts to an inanimate state. Returning the idol to its shrine restores its animation.

On rare occasions, the sponsoring deity will allow the living idol to move beyond its shrine. Such occurrences are always of great importance to the faith in question, such as a living idol sent to accompany a chosen cleric on an important quest.

Immunity to Magic (Ex): A living idol is immune to any spell or spell-like ability that allows spell resistance.

Vigilance (Su): At all times, an effect similar to an *alarm* spell is placed within the primary entrance to a living idol's designated area. The living idol is instantly aware of any creature of Tiny size or larger that enters the warded location. It seldom takes action when first alerted; it merely notes the intrusion and cannot be surprised.

Special Attacks: All living idols possess the same special qualities as listed in the statistics presented above, plus one to three special abilities from the list below. GMs may choose or roll 1d8 for these abilities. The save DC against a special attack is equal to 10 + 1/2 living idol's HD + living idol's Wisdom modifier unless otherwise noted.

(1) Earth Glide (Ex): A living idol can glide through stone, dirt, or almost any other sort of earth except metal as easily as a fish swims through water. Its movement leaves behind no tunnel or hole, nor does it create any ripple or other signs of its presence. A *move earth* spell cast on an area containing a living idol flings the living idol back 30 feet.

(2) Healing Suppression (Ex): Damage dealt by a living idol heals only at half the normal rate, whether the source is natural or magical in nature. For example, a *cure serious wounds* spell that would normally heal 15 points of damage will only heal 7 when used to heal a wound inflicted by a living idol.

(3) Malediction (Su): Once per day, a living idol can call upon the divine force that animates it to curse its intrud-

ing enemies. Opening whatever serves as its mouth, the living idol emits a disturbing keen or deep, base pitch, wracking all targets within 60 feet with morale-shattering pain. Targets must succeed on a Will save or suffer a –4 penalty on attack rolls, skill checks, and ability checks for 4d10 minutes. Malediction has no affect on the living idol's allies.

(4) Menacing Visage (Su): Three times per day, as a standard action, a living idol can manifest a horrific countenance (such as an otherwise human head "unhinging" several times to reveal a grinning skull with glowing eyes within) that sends a wave of fear across its enemies. All living creatures within a 50-foot cone must succeed on a Will save or become panicked for 2d4 rounds. This is a necromantic mind-affecting fear effect. A creature that successfully saves against this visage cannot be affected by the same living idol's visage for 24 hours.

(5) Spell-like Ability (Su): 2/day—*dispel magic,* or *searing light, spider climb*.

(6) Spell-like Ability (Su): 1/day—*dimension door* or *dismissal*.

(7) True Seeing (Su): A living idol continuously uses *true seeing* as the spell (caster level 9th).

(8) Improved Grab (Ex): To use this ability, a living idol must hit a creature of its own size or smaller with its slam attack. It can then attempt to start a grapple as a free action without provoking an attack of opportunity. If it wins the grapple check, it establishes a hold and can constrict.

Constrict (Ex): A living idol deals automatic slam damage with a successful grapple check.

Skills: *The Hide bonus increases by +8 when a living idol is concealed against a relief for which the living idol's body is designed to complement.

Nalvor

Medium Humanoid
Hit Dice: 2d8+6 (15 hp)
Initiative: +1
Speed: 30 ft.
Armor Class: 14 (+1 Dex, +3 hide armor), touch 11, flat-footed 13
Base Attack/Grapple: +1/+3
Attack: Scimitar +3 melee (1d6+2) or shortbow +2 ranged (1d6)
Full Attack: Scimitar +3 melee (1d6+2) or shortbow +2 ranged (1d6)
Space/Reach: 5 ft./5 ft.
Special Attacks: –
Special Qualities: Darkvision 60 ft., immunity to charm and fear, low-light vision
Saves: Fort +8, Ref +1, Will +0
Abilities: Str 14, Dex 12, Con 16, Int 10, Wis 9, Cha 10
Skills: Climb +3, Hide +2, Listen +3, Move Silently +2, Spot +2
Feats: Alertness, Endurance
Environment: Any desert
Organization: Patrol (2–5), squad (6–11 plus 1–2 monitor lizards), or legion (20–80 plus 20% noncombatants plus 2–12 horses)
Challenge Rating: 1
Treasure: Standard
Alignment: Usually lawful neutral
Advancement: By character class
Level Adjustment: +2

This striking humanoid has long black hair and olive green skin. Its clothes are ragged and torn, standing in sharp contrast to its physical beauty.

The nalvor are physically striking humanoids, with long, flowing black hair and olive green skin. However, due to centuries of hatred from other races, they believe themselves to be incredibly ugly, and typically dress in rags.

The nalvor are a strange race of hybrid humanoids. Created to essentially be the equivalent of humanoid mules by their sphinx masters, the nalvor have the blood of both elf and hobgoblin flowing through their veins. While this strange combination created a strong and ruthlessly efficient slave, it has also made in modern times a pariah creature hated throughout the world. Elves find the nalvor to be little more than an evil abomination; the goblinoid races, meanwhile, find them to be gutless and

impure. For this reason, the nalvor never left the ruins of their ancestral home; only amidst the ruins created by their former sphinx masters have they been able to find solace from the rest of the world.

The nalvor are socially inept creatures, with no sense of courtesy or manners. They simply take what they want and do as they please. The only exception to this is when they are confronted with someone or something they believe to be their superior—usually, something associated in some manner with their former sphinx masters. Then they become polite to a fault, and always defer to that "superior" being, no matter how ludicrous or suicidal its demands may become.

Nalvor are incredibly patient creatures. Although abandoned centuries ago by the sphinxes, they still fervently believe that their sphinx masters shall return to them. For this reason, the nalvor are regarded by most other creatures as being far too passive—they seem incapable of making any sort of quick decision, and generally try to resolve any situation or problem in terms of how their sphinx masters would want that situation resolved. It is the rare nalvor indeed who can act as a leader and not a follower; it is even rarer when that nalvor shows a spark of imagination or tactical thought. As a result, the nalvor cities are often attacked by bandits, who know that their prey will be slow and their reactions predictable.

Combat

Nalvor are unimaginative fighters, and generally deal with threats in the most direct manner possible. Ironically, they often confuse their enemies, as their incredibly poor tactics can be easily mistaken for trickery. However, what they lack in cunning, they certainly make up for in sheer determination. Nalvor are notoriously stubborn and do not retreat unless commanded to do so. They typically fight to the death.

Immunity to Charm and Fear (Ex): All nalvor are immune to charm- and fear-based spells and magic.

Nalvor Society

The society of the nalvor is a bureaucratic nightmare. Meticulous to a fault, the nalvor always try to follow the ancient laws of their sphinx masters to the letter. Unfortunately, many of these laws conflict with one another, leading to confusion and indecision. Nalvor cities are governed by ruling councils, which debate endlessly, as they seek to interpret ancient law and to find universal consensus … effectively paralyzing their society. For this reason, nalvor society has evolved little since the halcyon days of the Khonsurian Empire, and it is rare indeed when a confident, decisive nalvor leader can emerge and unite all nalvor with authority.

Nalvor as Characters

Nalvor characters possess the following racial traits.

—Strength +4, Dexterity +2, Constitution +6, Intelligence –2, Charisma –2.

—Medium size.

—A nalvor's base land speed is 30 feet.

—Darkvision out to 60 feet; low-light vision.

—Racial Hit Dice: A nalvor begins with two levels of humanoid, which provide 2d8 Hit Dice, a base attack bonus of +1, and base saving throw bonuses of Fort +3, Ref +0, and Will +0.

—Racial Skills: A nalvor's humanoid levels give it skill points equal to 5 x (2 + Int modifier). Its class skills are Climb, Hide, Listen, Move Silently, and Spot.

—Racial Feats: Nalvor automatically receive the feat of Endurance. Additionally, a nalvor's humanoid levels give it one bonus feat.

—Automatic Languages: Elven, Goblin. Bonus Languages: Common, Draconic, Orc.

—Favored Class: Ranger.

—Level Adjustment: +2.

Oneiric Creature

Oneiric creatures dwell within the Dream (see Chapter 2), the imaginative realm maintained by Ôæ, although they resemble beings found on the Material Plane. In rare instances when they are translated into the waking world, their appearance is more fantastical than their Material counterparts.

Oneiric creatures are transitory in the waking world. Typically they are called into existence by agents of the Dream, found most often defending sites of sacred importance to Ôæ or Gil'Mâridth.

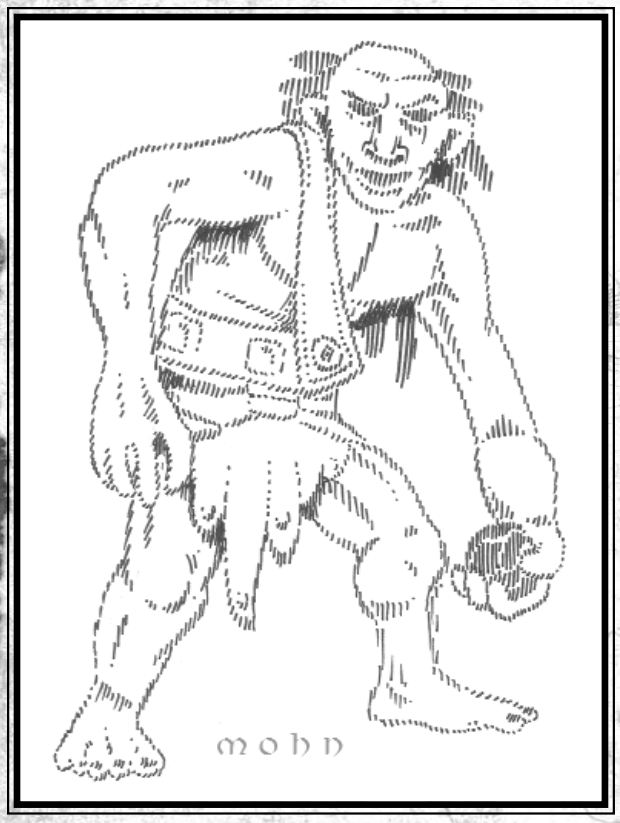
Creating an Oneiric Creature

"Oneiric" is an inherited template that can be added to any creature (referred to hereafter as the "base creature"). An oneiric creature uses all the base creature's statistics and special abilities except as noted here.

Size and Type: The creature's type changes to outsider. It gains the dream subtype.

Special Attacks: An oneiric creature retains all the special attacks of the base creature and also gains the following special attack.

Phantasmal Strike (Ex): Twice per day, an oneiric creature can make a devastating attack that belies its strength



and speed. It can make a normal melee attack to deal extra damage equal to twice its HD total (maximum of +20 points) against a foe. If the oneiric creature's foe makes a successful Will save (DC = 10 + 1/2 oneiric creature's HD + oneiric creature's Cha modifier), the attack is disbelieved and no damage is suffered.

Special Qualities: An oneiric creature has all the special qualities of the base creature, plus the following special qualities.

Doubt Vulnerability (Ex): If an opponent is made aware of an oneiric creature's phantasmal nature, he can attempt to disbelieve it as a standard action that does not provoke an attack of opportunity as long as he has line of sight with the creature. If the opponent succeeds on a Will save (DC = 10 + 1/2 the oneiric creature's HD + its Cha modifier), he deals 1d8 points of damage to the oneiric creature.

Ephemeral (Ex): When an oneiric creature reaches 0 hit points, all traces of its body (including blood or other vitals) dissipate as though it never was. Additionally, half of all ability score or hit point damage dealt by the oneiric creature returns at the rate of 1 hit point or ability score point per round. For example, a fighter who suffered 22 points of damage from an oneiric hill giant would be restored 1 hit point per round for 11 rounds following its death. Creatures slain by an oneiric creature do not, however, return from death.

Fearless (Ex): An oneiric creature knows that it is ephemeral in the waking world and cannot be intimidated or persuaded. It is immune to all mind-affecting spells and effects.

Spell Resistance (Ex): An oneiric creature has spell resistance equal to its Hit Dice +10.

Abilities: Increase from the base creature as follows: Wis +2, Cha +6.

Challenge Rating: HD 3 or less, as base creature; HD 4 to 7, as base creature +1; HD 8 or more, as base creature +2.

Alignment: Usually neutral.

Level Adjustment: Same as base creature +1.

Pteral

Medium Monstrous Humanoid
Hit Dice: 3d8+6 (19 hp)
Initiative: +3
Speed: 30 ft., fly 60 ft. (good)
Armor Class: 15 (+3 Dex, +2 natural), touch 13, flat-footed 12
Base Attack/Grapple: +3/+5
Attack: Claw +5 melee (1d6+2)
Full Attack: 2 claws +5 melee (1d6+2) or sting (1d4+1 plus poison)
Space/Reach: 5 ft./5 ft.
Special Attacks: Poison
Special Qualities: Regeneration 5, telepathy
Saves: Fort +3, Ref +6, Will +3
Abilities: Str 14, Dex 17, Con 15, Int 9, Wis 11, Cha 7
Skills: Climb +3, Hide +5, Move Silently +4, Spot +2
Feats: Flyby Attack, Hover
Environment: Any temperate or warm forest
Organization: Solitary, pair, squad (3–12) or colony (20–100 plus 20% noncombatants plus one 9th-level sorceress queen)
Challenge Rating: 2
Treasure: Standard
Alignment: Always lawful evil
Advancement: By character class
Level Adjustment: +3

These violent and merciless wasp-men stand six feet tall. They have jet back hides with reddish markings, large transparent wings, and long, sharp stingers.

A powerful and destructive race of creatures, the pterals have an unrelenting need to consume and destroy all that they can find. Fortunately, these creatures are seldom active, and hibernate for years at a time.

Ordinarily, pterals pose little threat to the rest of the world, as their hives are dormant, and virtually all of the

pterals in the hive are in deep hibernation. During these times, only one or two squads of pterals stay active to defend the hive. However, for reasons unknown, once every seven years the entire hive awakens and enters a feeding cycle. During this time, the creatures seek to consume as much food as possible, preferring the flesh of animals above all other types of sustenance. Their appetites are legendary—a single hive has been known to slay every living creature within a hundred miles. Fortunately, feeding cycles only last for little more than a month; after that, the pterals return to their hives and become dormant once more.

Pteral colonies live in massive structures called blood hives, named for their crimson hue. Blood hives are massive organic spheres capable of supporting over one hundred pterals, and can easily measure over a quarter mile in diameter. It is not known exactly how the blood hives are created, but however the process occurs, it is quick—new blood hives have been known to spring up in less than a fortnight.

Each hive is ruled by a pteral queen that never physically leaves the hive. The queen is always female and always a sorceress of immense power. The queen is the undisputed ruler of all the pterals that inhabit her hive, and her commands are always obeyed. Should a queen be killed, the remaining pterals of her hive quickly disband, scattering throughout the region in search of new hives to join.

Combat

Pterals fight primarily to defend their hive and their queen. However, during their feeding cycles, they move swiftly across the land surrounding their hive, consuming all living creatures that they encounter and destroying everything else. They tend to fight in pairs, using their flight ability to their advantage over land-based opponents.

Poison (Ex): Injury, Fortitude DC 14, initial and secondary damage 1d6 Constitution. The save DC is Constitution-based.

Regeneration (Ex): Fire and cold deal normal damage to a pteral. If a pteral loses a limb or body part, the lost portion regrows in 2d6 minutes. The creature can reattach the severed member instantly by holding it to the stump.

Telepathy (Ex): Pterals can communicate telepathically with others of their own race at will, as per a *helm of telepathy*. They cannot extend this ability to creatures of other races, nor does this mean that they can automatically communicate with other telepathic creatures.

Pteral Society

Pteral society revolves around two simple concepts: propagate the species, and protect the hive queen at all costs. They are highly organized creatures, and operate in a ruthlessly efficient manner. Those too old, sick, or weak to further help the hive are summarily executed. A pteral queen rules over her hive with ironclad authority, and her minions obey her every command. While it is not unheard of for a lone pteral to go rogue and to break away from its hive, to do so is essentially a death sentence, as that rogue pteral will be hunted down by warriors from its hive until the end of its days.

Pteral as Characters

Pteral characters possess the following racial traits.

—Strength +2, Dexterity +3, Constitution +2, Intelligence –1, Charisma –2.

—Medium size.

—A pteral's base land speed is 30 feet, and has a flying speed of 60 feet with Good maneuverability.

—Darkvision out to 60 feet; low-light vision.

—Racial Hit Dice: A pteral begins with two levels of humanoid, which provide 2d8 Hit Dice, a base attack bonus of +1, and base saving throw bonuses of Fort +3,

Ref +0, and Will +0.

—Racial Skills: A pteral's humanoid levels give it skill points equal to 6 x (2 + Int modifier). Its class skills are Climb, Hide, Move Silently, and Spot.

—Racial Feats: A pteral's monstrous humanoid levels give it two feats.

—+2 natural armor bonus.

—Special Qualities: Poison, regeneration 5, limited telepathy

—Automatic Languages: Pteral. Bonus Languages: Common, Goblin.

—Favored Class: Fighter.

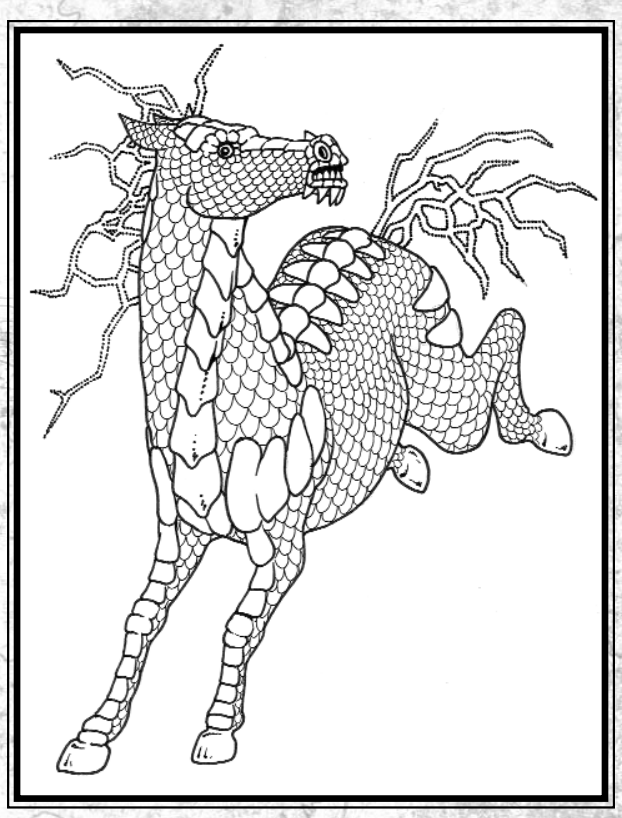
—Level Adjustment: +3.

Shadroquus

Medium Dragon
Hit Dice: 3d12+9 (28 hp)
Initiative: +9
Speed: 30 ft.
Armor Class: 16 (+5 Dex, –1 size, +2 natural), touch 14, flat-footed 11
Base Attack/Grapple: +3/+10
Attack: Hoof +5 melee (1d6+3)
Full Attack: 4 clawed hooves +5 melee (1d6+3) or bite +0 melee (1d4+1)
Space/Reach: 10 ft./5 ft.
Special Attacks: Breath weapon, charm person
Special Qualities: Darkvision 60 ft., immunity to sleep and paralysis, low-light vision, scent
Saves: Fort +6, Ref +8, Will +3
Abilities: Str 16, Dex 20, Con 16, Int 14, Wis 11, Cha 13
Skills: Climb +9, Hide +7, Jump +9, Spot +6
Feats: Endurance, Improved Initiative, Lightning Reflexes
Environment: Any desert
Organization: Solitary, pair, or herd (3–12)
Challenge Rating: 3
Treasure: Standard
Alignment: Always neutral good
Advancement: 4–7 HD (Large); 8–12 HD (Huge)
Level Adjustment: –

These large, enchanted horses have dark blue scales, not fur; and their white manes and tails are in fact constant surges of crackling, magical lightning.

It is said that long ago, the mightiest of sphinx sorcerers in the Khonsurian Empire sought to create the ultimate horse by combining the traits of desert stallions and blue dragons in a single creature: the shadroquus. Although



the truth behind this tale is somewhat debatable, the fact remains that herds of these creatures roam free across the deserts of Xa Deshret and the Vermilion Steppes, and that they are amongst the most beautiful—and deadly—creatures to be found in the region.

Occasionally, they can be tamed by riders in the Vermilion Steppes, although it is a fairly rare occurrence. Only the best of the riders among the Tribes actually manage to bend a shadroquus to their will. Although still highly temperamental, once trained and broken, shadroquus become loyal, obedient steeds, and remain inseparable from their riders until death.

Combat

Shadroquus are relentless fighters. In the wild, they prefer to swarm around an opponent, hitting it with their breath weapon attacks and letting the occasional lone shadroquus hit with a quick melee strike. As a trained mount, the shadroquus follows the lead of its rider, although it still has a preference for its lightning breath attack whenever possible.

Breath Weapon (Su): The breath weapon of a shadroquus is a 40-foot line of lightning. It is usable once every 1d4 rounds, deals 3d8 points of damage, and allows a DC 17 Reflex save for half damage. The save DC is Constitution-based.

***Charm Person* (Sp):** When a shadroquus gazes upon an opponent with its magical flaming eyes, it has the oppor-

tunity to charm that opponent. The effect works as a *charm person* spell with a 40-foot range; a successful Will save (DC 12) negates the effect. The save DC is Charisma-based.

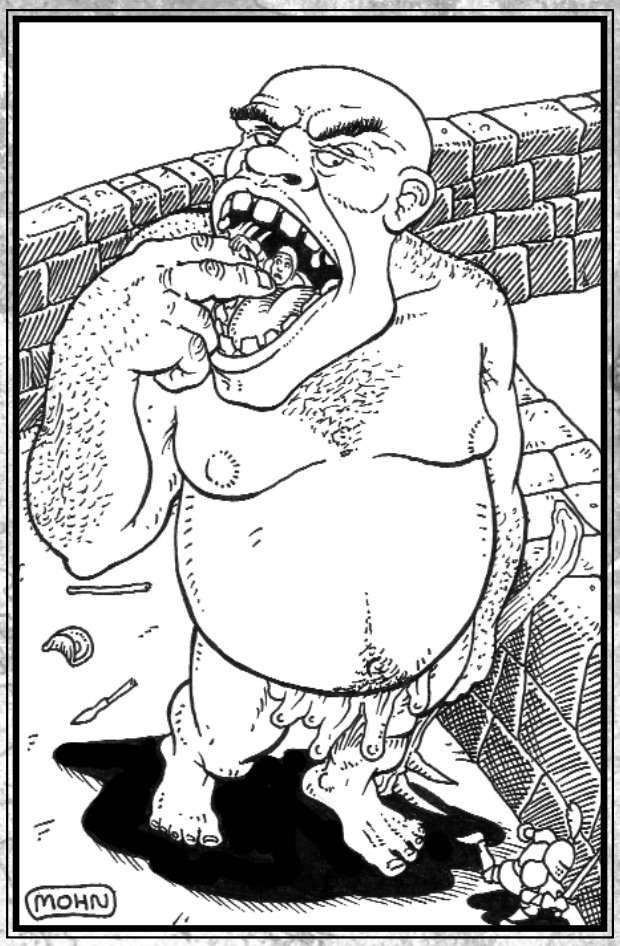
Thunder Giant

Gargantuan Giant
Hit Dice: 24d8+216 (324 hp)
Initiative: +1
Speed: 40 ft.
Armor Class: 23 (+1 Dex, –4 size, +16 natural), touch 7, flat-footed 22
Base Attack/Grapple: +18/+47
Attack: Greataxe +31 melee (4d6+17) or slam +31 melee (1d8+25) or rock +10 ranged (4d6+17)
Full Attack: Greataxe +31 melee (4d6+17) or 2 slams +31 melee (1d8+25) or rock +10 ranged (4d6+17)
Space/Reach: 20 ft./20 ft.
Special Attacks: Improved grab, rock throwing, rush, snatch, swallow whole, trample
Special Qualities: Darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision, rock catching
Saves: Fort +23, Ref +9, Will +10
Abilities: Str 44, Dex 12, Con 28, Int 12, Wis 15, Cha 18
Skills: Climb +20, Concentration +10, Craft (any) +2, Handle Animal +6, Intimidate +6, Jump +18, Listen +5
Feats: Awesome Blow, Combat Reflexes, Great Cleave, Improved Bull Rush, Power Attack
Environment: Any mountains
Organization: Solitary, pair, family (3–6), or tribe (6–10 plus 1 barbarian leader of 7th–9th level plus 1–4 dire bears, and 1–4 lightning giants)
Challenge Rating: 16
Treasure: Double standard
Alignment: Usually neutral evil
Advancement: By character class
Level Adjustment: +10

This towering, malevolent warrior is a giant among giants. It stands well over thirty feet tall and looks to weigh several tons.

Thunder giants are moody, capricious individuals that love secrets more than gold. They constantly plot against "the small ones": any humanoid smaller than themselves that may live within one hundred miles of their lair. Thunder giants are usually only found on the highest of mountains or in the deepest depths below these peaks; mercifully, this makes them a rare evil to most of the world.

Thunder giants believe themselves to be witty, intelligent creatures. They love to talk, and will speak at length to any creature capable of understanding them—even their enemies, in the heat of combat. Though they are no doubt sharper than most of their giantkin cousins, thunder



giants are not nearly as clever as they believe themselves to be. They love riddles and puzzles, and often present these riddles to those that they capture as proof of their own cleverness. However, thunder giants are not terribly original, and are usually dumbfounded when they find their riddles solved—or themselves outwitted—by a shrewd rogue or bard. Of course, that is when thunder giants lose their temper and start reaching for axes …

The "cleverness" of the thunder giants also extends to their lairs. Built within extensive caverns, thunder giants turn their lairs into sprawling, winding labyrinths, filled with magical traps and puzzles. It has not been unknown for a thunder giant to create a lair that is *too* deadly, inevitably slaying its giant master and leaving hordes of treasure trapped but waiting for intrepid explorers.

Combat

Thunder giants, although incredibly powerful, rarely like to directly enter combat. It is often why they surround themselves with hill giant or lightning giant minions—to "soften up" potential foes before having to enter combat themselves. Once in combat, however, they are fierce, determined warriors who certainly know how to use their immense size to their advantage. Like other giants, they

use their rock throwing abilities to attack foes from afar, and their powerful greataxes in melee. They also have the gruesome habit of eating opponents alive, though more oftentimes than not, this particular tactic backfires upon them in combat.

Improved Grab (Ex): To use this ability, the thunder giant must hit a Huge or smaller opponent with its slam attack. It can then attempt to start a grapple as a free action without provoking an attack of opportunity. If it wins the grapple check, it establishes a hold and can try to swallow the foe the following round.

Rock Throwing (Ex): The range increment is 200 feet for a thunder giant's thrown rocks.

Swallow Whole (Ex): A thunder giant can try to swallow a grabbed opponent of Medium or lesser size by making a successful grapple check. Once inside, the opponent takes 1d4+4 points of crushing damage plus 1d4 points of acid damage per round from the thunder giant's digestive juices. A swallowed creature can cut its way out by dealing 25 points of damage to the thunder giant's digestive tract (AC 20). Once the creature exits, muscular action closes the hole; another swallowed opponent must cut its own way out. The thunder giant's stomach can hold 1 Medium, 2 Small, or 4 Tiny or smaller creatures.

Trample (Ex): A thunder giant has the ability to trample opponents that are underfoot. The save for this trampling attack is Reflex DC 40, with a successful save resulting in only half damage; the save DC is Strength-based.

Thunder Giants as Characters

Powerful and cunning, thunder giant characters rarely step foot in the rest of the civilized world.

Thunder giant characters possess the following racial traits.

— +16 Strength, +4 Dexterity, +8 Constitution, +2 Wisdom.

— Gargantuan size. –4 penalty to Armor Class, –4 penalty on attack rolls, –12 penalty on Hide checks, +12 bonus on grapple checks, lifting and carrying limits four times that of Medium characters.

—Space/Reach: 20 feet/20 feet.

—A thunder giant's base land speed is 40 feet.

—Darkvision out to 60 feet and low-light vision.

—Racial Hit Dice: A thunder giant begins with twenty-four levels of giant, which provide 24d8 Hit Dice, a base attack bonus of +18, and base saving throw bonuses of Fort +23, Ref +9, and Will +10.

—Racial Skills: A thunder giant's giant levels give it skill points equal to 27 x (2 + Int modifier). Its class skills are Climb, Concentration, Craft (any one), Handle Animal, Intimidate, Jump, and Listen.

—Racial Feats: A thunder giant's giant levels give it five feats.

— +11 natural armor bonus.

—Special Attacks: Rock throwing, trample.

—Special Qualities: Rock catching.

—Automatic Languages: Giant. Bonus Languages: Common, Draconic, Elven, Goblin, Orc.

—Favored Class: Barbarian.

—Level Adjustment: +10.

Xochatateo

Xochatateo are filthy undead humanoids, often still covered with the gore from their own death and from the eviscerations of their many victims.

Created when a sacrifice goes horribly wrong, a xochatateo is a tormented creature cursed to exist between the realms of life and death, constantly seeking the hearts of the living to replace the one that once beat within its chest.

It is unclear as to exactly why the xochatateo are created. Some scholars argue that they are created when a sacrifice ritual is conducted incorrectly; others believe that they are created when the subject being sacrificed simply refuses to die. A few cynics even believe that xochatateo are nothing more than a cruel god's joke. Regardless of the reasons why the undead creature is created, there is no disputing how they come into existence: During a sacrifice ritual, when the still-beating heart is ripped from a humanoid creature's chest, for some reason that creature does not die. Instead, it is reborn as a cruel, savage creature with a taste for mortal flesh.

While exhibiting cannibalistic behavior, the xochatateo are most infamous for their obsession with hearts. After a killing frenzy, they typically rip out the hearts of their victims and horde them as treasure. Although it is unclear as to why the xochatateo are so obsessed with hearts, survivors of xochatateo attacks have reported that the creatures often place their new trophies inside their own chests, as if to replace the hearts that were torn out of them.

Xochatateo are generally filthy creatures, typically covered with gore. They frequently inhabit graveyards or lurk near temples where sacrifices may occur, hoping for easy access to the hearts of the living. For this reason, they are

often mistaken for ghouls. However, as they retain some of their memories and intelligence, they may still attempt to contact living creatures that seem familiar from their former lives, and occasionally exhibit some semblance of humanity in their otherwise vicious behavior.

Xochatateo are almost always loners, preferring to keep to themselves and to stay away from other creatures. They have a pathological hatred of other undead creatures, particularly other xochatateo, and will immediately attack such creatures if suddenly confronted by them.

Xochatateo speak any languages that they knew in life.

Creating a Xochatateo

"Xochatateo" is an acquired template that can be added to any humanoid or monstrous humanoid creature (referred to hereafter as the base creature).

A xochatateo uses all the base creature's statistics and special abilities except as noted here.

Size and Type: The creature's type changes to undead (augmented humanoid or monstrous humanoid). Do not recalculate base attack bonus, saves, or skill points. Size is unchanged.

Hit Dice: Increase all current and future Hit Dice to d12s.

Speed: Same as the base creature. If the base creature has a swim speed, the xochatateo retains the ability to swim and is not vulnerable to immersion in running water.

Armor Class: The base creature's natural armor bonus improves by +2.

Attack: A xochatateo retains all the attacks of the base creature and also gains a slam attack if it did not already possess one. If the base creature can use weapons, the xochatateo retains this ability. A creature with natural weapons retains those natural weapons. A xochatateo fighting without weapons uses either its slam attack or its primary natural weapon (if it has any). A xochatateo armed with a weapon uses its slam or a weapon, as it desires.

Full Attack: A xochatateo fighting without weapons uses either its slam attack (see above) or its natural weapons (if it has any). If armed with a weapon, it usually uses the weapon as its primary attack along with a slam or other natural weapon as a natural secondary attack.

Damage: Xochatateos have slam attacks. If the base creature does not have this attack form, use the appropriate damage value from the table below according to the xochatateo's size. Creatures that have other kinds of natural weapons retain their old damage values or use the appropriate value from the table below, whichever is better.

Size	Damage
Fine	1
Diminutive	1d2
Tiny	1d3
Small	1d4
Medium	1d6
Large	1d8
Huge	2d6
Gargantuan	2d8
Colossal	4d6

Special Attacks: A xochatateo retains all the special attacks of the base creature and gains those described below. Saves have a DC of 10 + 1/2 the xochatateo's HD + its Cha modifier unless noted otherwise.

Weakening Touch (Ex): A xochatateo can severely weaken its victims merely by touching them for an extended period of time. Should a xochatateo make a successful grapple check against an opponent, it pins the foe, dealing 1d6 points of Constitution drain each round the pin is maintained.

Special Qualities: A xochatateo retains all the special qualities of the base creature and gains those described below.

Blood Frenzy (Su): Upon reducing a foe to 0 hit points, a xochatateo gains temporary Strength and Constitution bonuses by feeding upon either the blood or the heart of that foe. This feeding frenzy takes 2 full rounds; after this time, the foe that is being consumed reaches –10 hit points and is permanently slain. The victim cannot be raised, reincarnated, or resurrected (though a *limited*

wish, wish, miracle, or *true resurrection* spell can restore life. No other actions may be taken by the xochatateo while it is in a blood frenzy. Once the frenzy is complete, the xochatateo gains a temporary bonus of +4 to both its Strength and Dexterity scores for an additional 2d6 rounds.

Blood Healing (Su): Upon entering a blood frenzy, a xochatateo's hit points are magically restored to full levels, healing the creature completely.

Damage Reduction (Su): A xochatateo has damage reduction 5/silver and magic. A xochatateo's natural weapons are treated as magic weapons for the purpose of overcoming damage reduction.

Turn Resistance (Ex): A xochatateo has +2 turn resistance.

Weakness to Holy Symbols (Su): See below.

Abilities: Increase from the base creature as follows: Str +6, Dex +2, Wis –4, Cha +4. As an undead creature, a xochatateo has no Constitution score.

Skills: A xochatateo has a +6 racial bonus on Hide, Listen, Move Silently, and Spot checks. Otherwise same as the base creature.

Feats: A xochatateo gains Alertness, Dodge, and Improved Initiative, assuming the base creature meets the prerequisites and does not already possess these feats.

Environment: Any; usually same as base creature.

Organization: Solitary.

Challenge Rating: Same as the base creature +1.

Treasure: Standard.

Alignment: Always evil (any).

Advancement: By character class.

Level Adjustment: Same as the base creature +4.

Xochatateo Weaknesses

Despite their power, the xochatateo also have a number of weaknesses.

Slaying a Xochatateo: Holy objects (symbols, water, etc.) of good origin cause immense harm to a xochatateo. The mere sight of a holy symbol automatically causes the xochatateo to make a Fortitude save of DC 16 or suffer a temporary loss of 1d4 Strength for 1d6 rounds or until the object disappears from its sight. A specific symbol or item's presence may only affect the xochatateo in this manner once per day. Additionally, striking a xochatateo with either a holy symbol or holy water of good origin causes double damage; a magical holy item (such as a *holy avenger*) causes triple damage.

Xochatateo Characters

Xochatateo are always evil, which causes characters of certain classes to lose some class abilities. In addition, certain classes take additional penalties.

Clerics: Xochatateo clerics lose the ability to turn undead (if they possessed it) but gain the ability to rebuke undead. A xochatateo cleric has access to two of the following domains: Chaos, Destruction, Evil, or Trickery.

Sorcerers and Wizards: Xochatateo are incapable of casting spells that are not of a divine nature. A wizard or sorcerer that becomes a xochatateo loses all ability to cast spells; however, all other skills and abilities are retained.

Chapter 4
Setting Rules

The Known Realms are home to a wealth of cultures and races. Lost empires, barbarian raiders, mad archwizards, and marauding hordes have all left their indelible mark on the world. Memories of Áereth's past live on in the blood of her people, from the mightiest king to the common serf.

The world is also a changing one, vibrant with life. Traders smelling of strange spices bring new traditions and weird magics from foreign lands, while priests in dark temples interrogate fiends in their search for forbidden knowledge. New challenges demand new heroes—courageous champions who can take up arms in the defense of good.

As heroes and villains, PCs must be able to stand in both the spider-haunted Áereth of old and the wild frontiers of today. This chapter details weapons, feats, and spells born from Áereth's storied past and savage present.

Feats

The feats in this chapter supplement the feats in the *PHB*. Follow the rules in the *PHB* to determine when feats are acquired.

Some of the feats require that a character be raised in a particular region of Áereth. Others are designed for evil NPCs who worship the infernal powers of Áereth, and are suited for PCs only when playing in an evil campaign. Because of the impact these feats can have on a game, players should consult their GM prior to taking these feats.

Any feat with the [Fighter] descriptor may be selected as one of a fighter's bonus feats.

Assess Enemies [General]

You have learned to size up your enemies.

Benefit: You can make a standard action to appraise your enemies and determine which is the most powerful. Only enemies that you can see within 60 feet are considered during the attempt, and only one such opponent at any given time can be determined. You make a DC 15 Wisdom check. If you succeed, you can gauge which opponent has the highest CR.

Special: A dwarf fighter may select Assess Enemies as a bonus fighter feat.

Ancestral Weapon [General, Fighter]

You have inherited your family's ancestral weapon, a masterwork item with a long and storied history.

Benefit: Choose a masterwork weapon during character creation. This item is sacred to your family, and as the family's scion and the bearer of the item, you are held to exacting standards.

At the GM's discretion, the masterwork weapon may later "awaken" to magical properties. Activating even the least of such properties should be the goal of an epic quest.

Special: This feat can only be taken at 1st level.

Capture [General]

You have been trained to subdue your enemies for capture.

Prerequisite: Combat Expertise

Benefit: You can deal nonlethal damage with most weapons at no penalty on the attack roll.

Normal: Without this feat, you take a –4 on your attack rolls when you use a melee weapon that deals lethal damage to deal nonlethal damage instead.

Special: A human or half-elf from the Xulmec city-states may select Capture without meeting the prerequisite.

Fiend Slayer [General, Fighter]

You have studied fiends and faced them in battle, giving you an intuitive understanding of their combat style.

Prerequisite: Dexterity 13, Knowledge (chosen enemy) 5 ranks.

Benefit: You gain a +2 dodge bonus to your Armor Class when fighting against one chosen enemy: aberrations, demons, devils, or undead. Any time you lose your Dexterity bonus (if any) to Armor Class, such as being caught flat-footed, you lose your dodge bonus as well.

Special: This feat may be taken multiple times, selecting a different foe each time.

Infernal Corrupion [General]

Close association with infernal powers has altered your physical body.

Prerequisite: Infernal Pact.

Benefit: Each time this feat is taken, roll 1d12 and consult the following table. This feat may be taken multiple times. Re-roll any duplicate effects.

Roll	Corruption
1-2	*Eyes of the Grimalkin:* Your eyes become like those of a cat, granting low-light vision that permits you to see twice as far as a human in starlight, moonlight, torchlight, and similar con-

New Feats

General Feats	Prerequisites	Benefits
Assess Enemies	–	DC 15 Wis check to identify highest CR
Ancestral Weapon*	–	Gain masterwork weapon
Capture	Combat Expertise	Deal nonlethal damage with weapons at no attack penalty.
Fiend Slayer*	Dex 13, Knowledge (chosen enemy) 5 ranks	+2 Dodge bonus to AC against chosen enemy
Infernal Pact	Knowledge (demonology/devilry) 5 ranks, spellcaster	Access Infernal spell list
Infernal Corruption	Infernal Pact	Varies
Infernal Sworn	Infernal Corruption, Infernal Pact	Resistance to fire, cold, or electricity 5
Siren Cry	Female, Perform (singing) 3 ranks, divine caster level 1	Attack similar to harpy's captivating song
Regional Feats	**Prerequisites**	**Benefits**
Poisoner	Southern Province, Freeport, Scourgelands	No risk of poisoning self when using poison
Savage Born	Cinai, Frost Barrens, Icenwastes, the Wilds, Saramanthia, Scourgelands	+2 in Diplomacy, Sense Motive, Intimidate with savages
Summon Horde	Savage Born, Leadership, character level 7th	Summon hundreds of barbarians
Metamagic Feats	**Prerequisites**	**Benefits**
Key of the Moon	Arcane spellcaster	Caster level changes with moon phases
Seer	Spellcraft 5 ranks	Spell slot requirement reduced by –1
Lore Caster	Seer, spellcraft 10 ranks	Spell slot requirement reduced by additional –1

** A fighter may select this feat as one of his fighter bonus feats.*

ditions of poor illumination.

3-4 *Kiss of the Serpent:* Your saliva becomes poisonous to others (Contact DC 13, Initial 1d4 hp, Secondary 1d12 hp). Once per day you can either spit venom as a standard melee touch attack, or lick your weapon, thereby applying poison to your weapon. You remain susceptible to all other poisons but your own.

5-6 *Talons of the Vulture:* Your fingernails grow into razor sharp claws, allowing you to inflict 1d6 points of damage as an unarmed attack.

7-8 *Horns of the Goat:* A pair of small horns emerge from your temple and a palpable aura of wickedness hangs about you, granting a +2 circumstance bonus to Intimidate checks.

9-10 *Child of the Wyrm:* Your skin grows a hard coat of scales, granting a +1 natural armor bonus.

11 *Blood of the Maggot:* You gain a +1 bonus to your Constitution score, but your body constantly reeks of rotting meat.

12 Roll twice, ignoring any 12s and re-rolling duplicate effects.

Infernal Pact [General]

You have sold your soul to a demon or devil in return for infernal spell powers.

Prerequisite: Knowledge (demonology/deviltry) 5 ranks, arcane or divine spellcaster.

Benefit: You have access to the Infernal spell list in addition to your regular spell list. If you already have access to the spell on the list, your caster level for the duplicate spell is +1. Evil clerics can worship infernal powers in addition to evil deities.

Regular: Worshippers of infernal powers (demons or devils) are not granted spells.

Special: The character cannot be brought back from the dead without additional indenture or promise of sacrifice.

Infernal Sworn [General]

Your infernal liege has made you resistant to certain energies.

Prerequisite: Infernal Corruption, Infernal Pact.

Benefit: You gain fire, cold, or electricity resistance 5. This feat may be taken multiple times, taking different energy types, whose benefits do not stack.

Key of The Moon [Metamagic]

Your spellcasting abilities are tied to the phases of the moon.

Prerequisite: Arcane spellcaster.

Benefit: For the three days preceding and following a full moon, your effective caster level is increased by +1. For the three days preceding and following a new moon, your effective caster level is decreased by –1.

Infernal Spell List

0-level: *inflict minor wounds, guidance*.

1st-level: *bane, cause fear, divine favor, doom, inflict light wounds, protection from good, summon monster II**.

2nd-level: *aid, augury, death knell, inflict moderate wounds, summon monster II**.

3rd-level: *inflict serious wounds, prayer, summon monster III**.

4th-level: *divine power, inflict critical wounds, planar ally (lesser)*, summon monster IV**.

5th-level: *contact other plane, commune, dispel good, slay living, summon monster V**.

6th-level: *harm, legend lore, summon monster VI**.

7th-level: *destruction, summon monster VII**.

8th-level: *summon monster VIII**.

9th-level: *gate, miracle, summon monster IX**.

*Cast as an evil spell only.

Lore Caster [Metamagic]

You are a master of ancient forgotten lore. The might of the universe courses through your spells.

Prerequisite: Seer, Spellcraft 10 ranks.

Benefit: When altering a spell with a metamagic feat, the spell slot requirement of the feat is reduced by –1, for a total of –2 when stacked with the Seer feat. A spell slot requirement cannot be reduced below the spell's original level.

Poisoner [General]

You hail from a culture with a practice of poisoning and are accomplished in its use.

Prerequisite: Raised in Southern Province, Freeport, or Scourgelands.

Benefit: You are trained in the use of poison and never risk poisoning yourself when applying it to a blade or otherwise readying the poison for use.

Normal: A character has a 5% chance of exposing himself to a poison whenever applying it to a weapon or otherwise readying the poison for use. Additionally, a character who rolls a natural 1 on an attack roll with a poisoned weapon must makes a DC 15 Reflex save or accidentally poison herself with the weapon.

Savage Born [General]

You have an innate kinship with barbarians.

Prerequisite: Raised in Cinai, Frost Barrens, Icenwastes, the Wilds, Saramanthia, Scourgelands*.

Benefit: You receive a +2 bonus on all Diplomacy, Sense Motive, and Intimidate checks made on savages. At the GM's discretion, additional groups may qualify.

Special: You may only take this feat as a 1st-level character.

*Half-orcs and monstrous humanoids only.

Seer [Metamagic]

A devotee of esoteric lore, you are able to attune your spells to the turning of the cosmos.

Prerequisite: Spellcraft 5 ranks.

Benefit: When altering a spell with a metamagic feat, the spell slot requirement of the feat is reduced by 1.

For example, an *enlarged fireball* would normally use up a 4th-level spell slot. When cast with the Seer feat, the spell would use up a 3rd-level spell slot.

Siren Cry [General]

You can sing to captivate your opponents.

Prerequisite: Female, Perform (singing) 3 ranks, ability to cast at least one divine spell of 1st level or higher.

Benefit: Once per day, you can make a special attack similar to a harpy's captivating song. As a standard action that does not provoke an attack of opportunity, you utter a sonorous cry that causes one or more creatures to become captivated. Each creature to be captivated must be within 60 feet, be able to see and hear you, and must make a successful Will save to negate the effect. This is a sonic, mind-affecting charm effect. The DC to resist the siren cry is equal to 10 + your Charisma modifier. The save DC is Charisma-based.

A captivated creature walks toward you, taking the most direct route available. If the path leads into a dangerous area (over the edge of a ship in shark-infested waters, or the like), that creature gets a second saving throw. Captivated creatures can take no actions other than to defend themselves. (A victim cannot run away or attack but takes no defensive penalties.) A victim within 5 feet of you stands there and offers no resistance to your attacks. The effect continues for as long as you sing and for 1 round thereafter. A bard's countersong ability allows the captivated creature to attempt a new Will save.

Special: A member of the Sirens of Pelagia may select Siren Cry without possessing any divine spells.

Summon Horde [General]

A legend amongst your people, you can summon a barbarian horde.

Prerequisite: Savage Born, Leadership, character level 7th.

Benefit: This horde can only be summoned in the homeland of the PC, from among his barbarian kin. A horde is limited by the population of an area, and can number up to the PC's Leadership score (character level + Charisma bonus) times 500.

While a horde can be raised for any number of causes, its success is ultimately judged on the amount of loot pillaged, be it in the form of grain and livestock, gold, or even slaves. Chaotic and undisciplined, hordes quickly disband unless led by a masterful (and successful) general.

A horde takes one month to gather, and can be kept together for a number of weeks equal to the PC's

Leadership score. At the end of this time, the PC must make a DC 15 Diplomacy check.

Modifiers may apply to Diplomacy check, as shown on the table below.

Diplomacy Check Modifiers to Summon Horde

Condition	Modifier
Leader's Reputation	
Cowardice	–10
Failure	–5
Generous	+2
Heroic	+5
Treasure Shared	
None	–15
Partial, late, or unfair	–10
Average	–5
Above average	+0
Exceptional, gift items	+5
Horde's Success in Battle	
Defeat	–10
Stalemate	–5
Victory	+0
Overwhelming victory	+5

If the PC fails the check, the horde disbands, the barbarians return to their homelands, and the PC may not call a horde until one year has passed. At the GM's discretion, certain conditions may have to be met before the commander of a failed campaign can rally another horde to his cause.

If the PC succeeds on the Diplomacy check, the horde remains together for another week, after which the PC must make another DC 15 Diplomacy check. The cycle continues until the horde disbands or the PC elects to dismiss the horde.

A PC dismissing a horde after a successful campaign must also wait a year before summoning another horde, but will find it easy to recruit eager barbarians to his cause.

In rare instances, a legendary barbarian might have several generals serving beneath him who have all rallied hordes to their banners, placing multiple armies beneath the command of the single horde-master. In such cases, it is the single horde-master who must succeed on the Diplomacy check.

Equipment

Conch: The conch is a brightly colored seashell of spiral design. Bards of the Xulmec city-state of Athua often choose the conch as the favored wind instrument for use with their bardic music. Playing the conch relies upon the insertion and placement of the hands as well as embouchure, the manipulation of the musician's lips, to produce a loud if mellow sound. Though several pitches can be achieved, some conches have been carved to yield a greater variety of sounds; these customized conches are always masterwork and of the finest quality.

The conch is spiritually ingrained in the culture of the Xulmec city-state of Athua. If the conch is blown by a user with at least 2 ranks of Perform (wind instruments) during the first round of combat, all allies of Athuan nationality within 30 feet are granted a +1 morale bonus on attack rolls for the first 3 rounds of combat. Blowing into a conch in this way is a standard action that provokes an attack of opportunity. Cost: 1 gp, masterwork 100 gp. Weight: 1 lb.

Drum, Xulmec: Two varieties of percussion instruments are native to the Xulmec city-states. The first is the teponaztli, a drum fashioned from the trunk of a hardwood tree, played horizontally and common among religious ceremonies. The other is the huehuetl, a vertical drum with an animal skin drawn across the top and left open at the bottom. Both are decorated with intricate carvings, often depicting historic scenes. Cost: 10 gp, masterwork 100 gp. Weight: 5 lb.

Quipu: Quipus are recording devices fashioned by the Amoyas but have become more commonplace throughout Xulmec. Originally used for textile counting, the quipu has been adapted by wizards to serve as an alternate form of spellbook. Consisting of spun and dyed knots woven from llama or alpaca hair, the complex network of strands represents arcane syllables that only a wizard proficient with its use can interpret. Mastery of the quipu requires at least 2 ranks in Knowledge (local) for the Amoya region or 5 ranks in Knowledge (arcana) and a Dexterity of 13 or greater. A single quipu contains only thirty pages worth of spells, but it is effectively weightless and a wizard can possess more than one to accommodate his repertoire of known spells. Immersion in water does not harm the quipu. Cost: 20 gp. Weight: —

Threnody Chimes: Though largely associated with the Threnodim—bardic priests of Soleth who developed and perfected this peculiar class of instruments—most bards fortunate enough to come across threnody chimes will seek to acquire one. The chimes come in a wide variety of sizes and designs, but the principle behind them all is the same; inside a wooden box-like resonating chamber is a complex mechanism of metal chime rods tuned to somber keys in the smaller hand-held instruments and capable of a full musical range in larger ones. Typically small enough to be worn with a strap about the neck and held gently in the arms like the performer is laying a dying loved one to rest, the right hand is laid within a hand-shaped impression on its upward face with a striking key beneath each finger. These keys strike the chime rods currently in position while the fingers of the left hand diligently work an intricate array of levers, buttons, or slides on the opposite side to retract, dampen, and replace the sets of chime rods into striking position. The result is a sound as haunting as it is sorrowfully beautiful—a darker, swimming timbre akin to both clavichord and clock chimes.

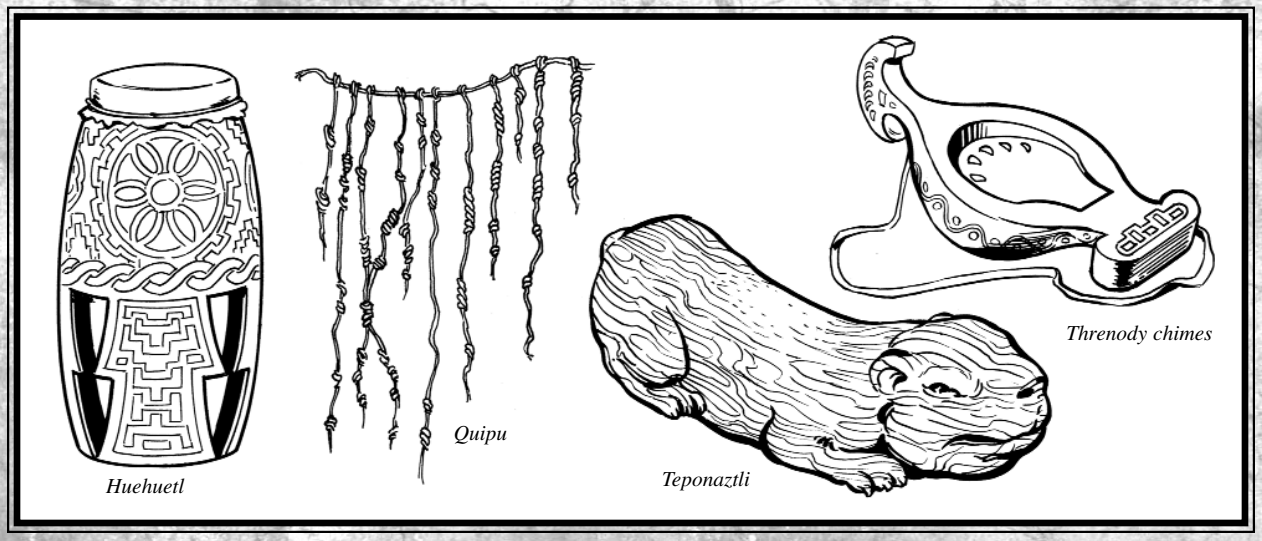
Externally, threnody chimes are usually decorated with ornate, morbid designs reflecting the tenets of Soleth. Some are even fashioned to suggest a humanoid body reclining at the moment of death. Furthering this image, Threnodim customarily play the chimes in a half-kneel with head bowed, though this posture is rarely assumed by most other bards. Cost: 80 gp, masterwork 200 gp. Weight: varies.

Tlahuiztli: The tlahuiztli is a Xulmec tabard, a tight-fitting cloth garment worn over the ichcahuipilli (see below). Its color marks the status of the warrior who wears it, and must be earned on the field of battle. In the Xulmec culture, slaying an enemy does not earn the same respect as capturing one. Multicolored feathers of many birds adorn the suit and matching helmet, with various combinations meant to represent different animals. When a Xulmec captain wears a legitimately earned tlahuiztli in the company of soldiers in his command, each soldier within 30 feet is granted a +1 morale bonus on attack rolls. Cost: 5 gp (but must be earned).

Weapons

Atlatl: Originally used for hunting waterfowl and fish, the atlatl is now used by the Xulmecs as an effective instrument of war. Consisting of a two-foot-long hardwood board and hook, which is used as leverage, the atlatl propels a large, obsidian-tipped dart with greater force and accuracy than that of a hand-thrown spear. To natives of the Xulmec city-state, the atlatl is a martial weapon, but it is exotic to anyone else. Darts that miss their target have a 75% chance of breaking.

Keris: Originating from the Shadowed West, this exotic dagger has come into more common use in the nation of Ssorlang and even the people of Darawan. No two keris blades are alike, unique by their very nature and the mystic ways of the bladesmith. The keris is considered a very



New Weapons

Exotic Weapons	Cost	Dmg (S)	Dmg (M)	Critical	Range	Weight[1]	Type
Light Melee Weapons							
Keris	320 gp	1d3	1d4	19-20/x3	10 ft.	1 lb.	Piercing
Razor glove	5 gp	1d4	1d6	x2	—	1/2 lb.	Slashing
One-Handed Melee Weapons							
Macuahuitl, one-handed	20 gp	1d6	1d8/x3	x3	—	7 lb.	Slashing
Two-Handed Melee Weapons							
Macuahuitl, two handed	50 gp	2d4	2d6	x3	—	13 lb.	Slashing
Tepoztopilli	50 gp	1d6	2d4	x3	—	10 lb.	Slashing
Ranged Weapons							
Atlatl	1 gp	1d6	1d8	x3	80 ft.	2 lb.	Piercing
Darts (5)	3 gp	—	—	—	—	—	—

[1] Weight figures are for Medium weapons. A Small weapon weighs half as much, and a Large weapon weighs twice as much.

New Armor

Armor	Cost	Armor Bonus	Max Dex	Check Penalty	Spell Failure	Speed (30 ft.)	Speed (20 ft.)	Weight[1]
Light armor								
Bonemail	90 gp	+4	+4	–1	20%	30 ft.	20 ft.	15 lbs.
Ichcahuipilli	8 gp	+2	+7	0	5%	30 ft.	20 ft.	8 lb.
Shields								
Chimalli	5 gp	+1	—	–1	5%	—	—	6 lbs.

[1] Weight figures are for armor sized to fit Medium characters. Armor fitted for Small characters weighs half as much, and armor fitted for Large characters weighs twice as much.

personal weapon that can bring good fortune to its owner—and misfortune to thieves. The length of the blade varies, but it is usually asymmetrical and often forged of iron or steel in a wavelike, serpentine fashion. The hilt is ornate, and acid is used to bring out the luster or darkness of the metal blade. The keris is considered a monk weapon, provided the monk takes the Exotic Weapon Proficiency feat to become proficient with it. All keris blades are masterwork. If used as a thrown weapon, the keris incurs a –2 circumstance penalty on the attack roll.

Macuahuitl: The macuahuitl (usually called a "macana" by Northlanders) is a flat, hardwood club with extremely sharp blades of flint or obsidian set along its edges. A weapon native to the Xulmec city-states, the macuahuitl can be used to cleave through flesh and bone or subdue opponents. Created in both one- and two-handed varieties, it is a martial weapon to Xulmecs but exotic to anyone else.

Razor Glove: The razor glove comes in many designs, typically employed by jungle-dwelling warriors to emulate the fighting style of great cats. Usually fashioned with stiff leather, the glove fits over the entire hand much like a gauntlet, while curving, metal blades run along each finger and are supported at the wrist. The blades cannot be retracted, and wearing the gloves while using any skill requiring the use of one's hands to manipulate objects incurs a –4 circumstance penalty. The wearer's opponent cannot use a disarm action against the razor glove. The cost and weight given are for a single glove. An attack with a razor glove is considered an armed attack.

Tepoztopilli: Resembling a pole-arm counterpart of the macuahuitl, the shaft of the tepoztopilli (called the "top-illi" among Northlanders) is wooden, and its flared head is set with razor-sharp obsidian blades. The tepoztopilli has reach. Wielders can strike opponents 10 feet away with it, but they cannot use it against an adjacent foe. Natives of Xulmec city-states treat the tepoztopilli as a martial weapon, but it is an exotic weapon to anyone else.

Armor

Bonemail: See *Magic Items of Áereth* below.

Chimalli: The chimalli is a wooden Xulmec shield, always brightly painted to reflect the wearer's spiritual and national allegiance, including symbols representing the status within his unit or city. Xulmec fighters and warriors often create and adorn their own shields, taking at least 1 rank in Craft (armorsmithing) for this reason

alone. A Xulmec who crafts, paints, and feathers his own shield receives an additional +1 morale bonus to AC when fighting defensively or choosing a total defense action.

Ichcahuipilli: The ichcahuipilli (called the "cahuipi" among Northlanders) is a heavy, quilted body armor common among Xulmec warriors. Often soaked in brine for greater durability, it offers greater protection than standard padded armor and more flexibility than leather.

Regional Masterwork Items

While any craftsman with enough time, skill and materials can create a masterwork item, certain regions of Áereth are renowned for their signature arms, armor or equipment. The reputation of a smith might hinge on his ability to craft a certain type of sword, and seedy merchants may try to dupe naïve heroes into paying masterwork prices for regular equipment, claiming, "They were born in the devil-fire forges of Zamon," or some other such nonsense.

Apart from their sheer monetary value, regional masterwork items can also inspire the admiration and envy of savvy onlookers. Such recognition cuts both ways: A noble scion wielding a fabled blade of Criestine steel might rally a routing army, while a peasant found with the same weapon may be imprisoned and executed for the crime of carrying a weapon above his station.

The true nature of an item can be discerned with an appropriate Craft check (DC 15). While superior forgeries can make this check more difficult, such items are rare, since making a masterful forgery requires nearly as much skill as crafting a masterwork item.

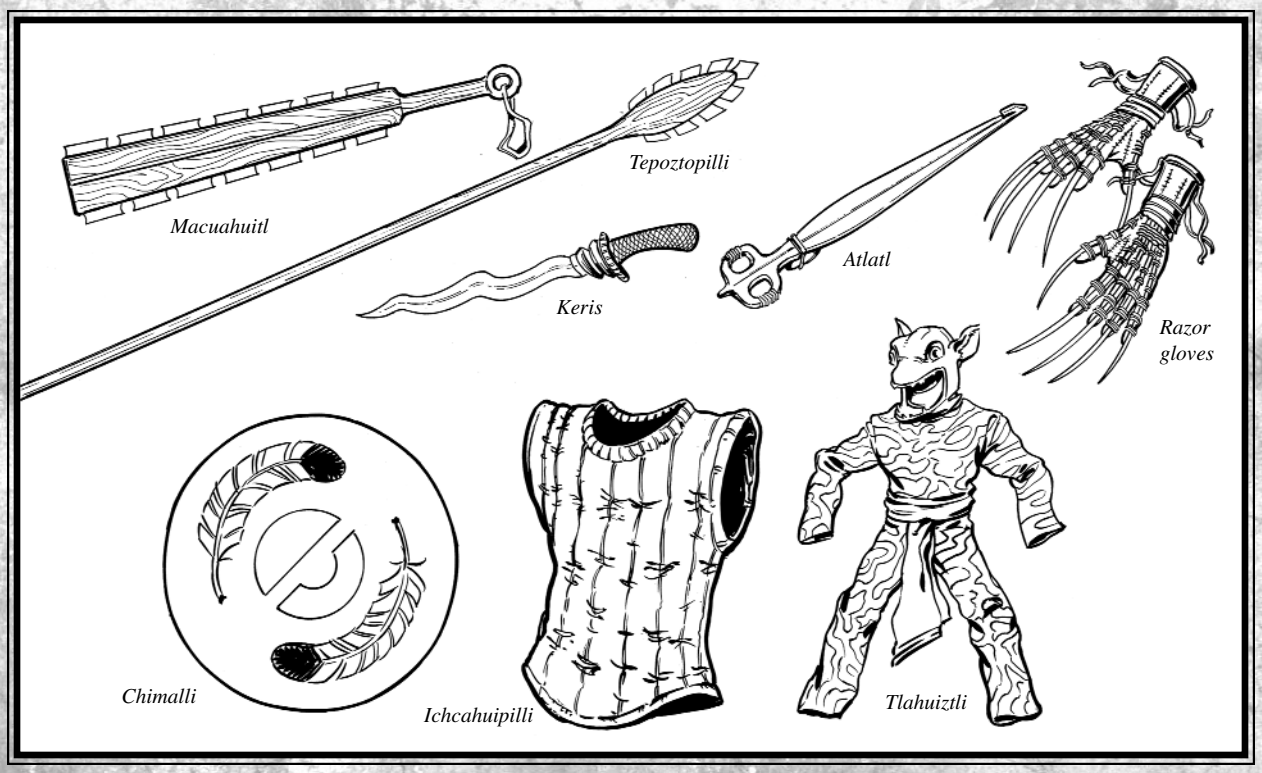
As per all masterwork items, you cannot add the masterwork quality after an item is created; it must be crafted as a masterwork item (see the Craft skill, *PHB*). Similarly, unless otherwise noted, regional masterwork items are far more expensive than their mundane counterparts.

Regional Masterwork Weapons

Blackore Longsword and Lance: In the empire of Crieste, the finest warriors have always armed themselves with weapons forged of blackore steel. Iron mined from the Blackore Hills is highly prized by Criestine weaponsmiths, and all the legendary weapons of the empire were forged of the precious metal.

When a warrior of Crieste achieves knighthood, he is awarded with a blackore longsword and lance, presented by his liege. The weapons are symbols of a warrior's honor, and the distinctive steel, shot through with wavy bands of black and azure, is immediately recognizable to any Criestine citizen. For a non-knight to carry a blackore weapon is a high crime against the crown, punishable by execution.

It is illegal to sell a blackore weapon, though tragic ballads tell of warriors, desperate for gold, selling their weapons to villains who proceed to masquerade as



knights. Illegal blackore weapons are highly prized by enemies of the empire, who are willing to pay exorbitant amounts (up to twice the going rate for a masterwork item) to obtain them.

Game Notes: A lance or longsword forged of blackore steel has the same stats as a masterwork weapon of that type. If worn openly, it also grants its owner a +1 circumstance bonus to Intimidate and Charisma checks made with Criestine commoners. (Nobles, accustomed to dealing with knights, are seldom impressed by knighthood alone.)

Cinai Waraxe: The horse lords of the Cinai are feared for their reckless courage and savage ferocity. Their smiths of the Lion have mastered the creation of the waraxe, forging long curved blades with remarkable strength and sharpness. Designed to be wielded one-handed while mounted, or in two hands by foot troops, a master of the weapon can kill with a single blow and strike another target before the first hits the ground.

Waraxes are traditionally attached to shafts of polished ironwood, and are protected with cases made from the cured skins of chimeras or wyverns. The creation of a waraxe is a sacred act, and only undertaken by master smiths who destroy any axes that fail to meet their exacting standards; thus every Cinai waraxe is a masterwork weapon. Waraxes are revered as family heirlooms and commonly bear names referring to their greatest battles. A waraxe might gain three or four names during its life, as its owners are driven on to ever greater deeds. Losing a waraxe is a great dishonor to the entire clan, and many warriors have devoted their entire lives to recovering an ancestral weapon.

Waraxes are never sold by the Cinai people. When the axes turn up on the black market, they are quickly bought by collectors, often for as much as 600 gp or more.

Game Notes: The Cinai waraxe shares the same statistics as a masterwork dwarven waraxe. Like the dwarven waraxe, it is too large to be used in one hand without special training, and is thus an exotic weapon. A Medium character can use a Cinai waraxe two-handed as a martial weapon. Humans raised in the tradition of the Cinai Lions treat the waraxe as a martial weapon even when wielded in one hand.

Shadowstone Weapons: When the Shadow Star fell into the Lostlands and created the Devil's Cauldron, molten debris from the dark comet spread across all Áereth as it blazed across the sky for the final time. Most of this debris—along with the smoldering remains of the original comet—are located in the Cauldron; however, significant chunks of the comet are also scattered in the Mountains of the Fifth Prince and the Lostlands. Small remnants can be found in the Northlands and Southlands as well.

Although the debris from the Shadow Star is commonly called "shadowstone," this is something of a misnomer. Shadowstone is actually a metal. The material has a dark purple hue and a dull, flat texture. It is often found in chunks, ranging from the size of a human fist to that of an elephant. It only melts at extremely high temperatures and is notoriously difficult to work with, but certain smiths in Xa Deshret still know the secret for forging shadowstone.

The sphinxes of the Khonsurian Empire unlocked the secrets of the stone centuries ago. Shadowstone has impressive magical properties, and can be used to create powerful weapons. Prolonged exposure to the stone causes madness. This initially created great problems for the sphinxes, who sent slaves to mine and harvest the largest stone fragments from the Mountains of the Fifth Prince. At first, the sphinxes sent dwarves to do this work—however, the dwarves mutated and went insane, eventually transforming into the derro that lurk in the Underdeep. Elven slaves were next, but they proved to lack the hardiness necessary for the brutal work; hobgoblin slaves then followed, but they lacked the finesse to effectively excavate the material, hacking the huge chunks of ore into tiny, unusable fragments. It was for this reason that the sphinx wizards eventually bred the nalvor race. The sphinxes had hoped to combine all of the positive qualities of elf and hobgoblin for mining shadowstone.

Most weapons forged from shadowstone are still found within Xa Deshret and the swirling sands of the Ghetrian Desert. These are typically ancient relics or family heirlooms, and already in the hands of a skilled warrior. Many of the most powerful magical objects in all of Áereth are forged from shadowstone, such as the legendary *Shadowcrown* of the sphinx and the blade known as *Shadowstar*, which was wielded long ago by the drow sorceress Khetira.

At the present time, at least three nalvor smiths in Xa Deshret are capable of forging new weapons from raw shadowstone—a task easier said than done, as they all remain hidden in the darkest recesses of the Mountains of the Fifth Prince.

Game Notes: Any weapon forged from shadowstone is a masterwork weapon. The chaotic nature of shadowstone weapons also affects their wielders in two ways. Firstly, the material eventually causes a certain degree of madness in those who remain in prolonged exposure to it. After the first 30 days of possessing a weapon forged of shadowstone, the wielder acts as if affected by a *confusion* spell each time the weapon is drawn. The spell acts as if cast by a 20th-level caster. This effect can be temporarily negated by a *dispel chaos* spell.

Secondly, the fluctuating chaos magic contained within the shadowstone weapon can increase or decrease on any

given day, strengthening or diminishing the weapon's power. Each day of game time, there is a 1 in 6 chance that the power has changed. On each day, the player should roll a d6 for the weapon. If the result is a 1, the PC is aware that a change has taken place, but not necessarily what that change would be until the weapon is wielded in battle. The GM should then roll a d4 to determine the exact nature of the change.

Roll	Result
1	–1 to all magical bonuses; loss of any/all additional magical abilities
2	+1 to all magical bonuses
3	+2 to all magical bonuses; range and duration of any/all magical abilities doubled
4	+3 to all magical bonuses; random gain of 1d4 intelligent item lesser powers

Should a weapon forged from shadowstone have its magical bonuses reduced to 0, it should still be treated as a magical weapon in combat. A shadowstone weapon cannot have a magical bonus of greater than +5.

Vermilion Longbows: Known for their cunning and utter ruthlessness in battle, the warriors of the Vermilion Tribes are also noted for their unique longbows. Made from the enchanted wood of darkfyre trees, the Vermilion bows actually appear at first glance to be two longbows that are crossed over one another, as if in the shape of an X. However, the Vermilion longbow is a single piece, albeit a very complex one. The weapon also has two drawstrings. The arrow to be fired from the bow is nocked at the intersection of the two drawstrings before being released. Despite its complexities, the warriors of the Vermilion tribes use the weapon with great ease, often firing it from horseback with deadly precision while riding at a full gallop.

Although initially crafted by Vermilion bowsmiths, each bow is then individualized by its user, with ornate designs carved into the wood of the bow. These carvings generally represent victories in battle or tributes to long-ago ancestors, which are drawn in great detail. The bows of the greatest warriors of the Vermilion tribes are massive, almost unwieldy weapons, as more wood is grafted to the bows for depicting the victories of these legendary fighters.

Vermilion longbows are among the most prized of possessions to the Tribe warriors, and are never found far from their grasps, ready to fire. Although highly esteemed and revered, they are not ever used by more than one warrior, or even passed along as family heirlooms. Warriors are buried in death with their bows, to ensure good hunting in the afterlife.

Warriors of the Vermilion Tribes never sell their longbows, under any circumstances. Should a member of the Vermilion Tribes be caught stealing another warrior's bow, whether to sell on the black market or for personal use, it is a crime punishable by death. Should a bow ever appear on the black market, they can fetch upwards of 750 gp or more.

Game Notes: A Vermilion longbow shares the same statistics as a masterwork longbow, save for its range, which is doubled. Its unwieldy nature makes it too difficult to handle properly in battle without special training, and should therefore be considered an exotic weapon. Elves or humans raised in the Vermilion Tribes have significant advantages in learning how to use this special bow, and it should only be considered a martial weapon in their hands.

Regional Masterwork Armor

Holdfast Plate: The dwarves of the Holdfast are famous for their breastplate, half-plate and full plate armors. Dwarf smiths devote entire centuries to the various aspects of metallurgy, smithing, and practical battle experience with a single goal in mind: to forge the finest heavy armors in the Known Realms.

Each is a unique work of art, fashioned for a particular warrior, and stylized according to the nature of the armorsmith. Certain smiths fashion armor in the likeness of demons and dragons, some emboss their armors with sparkling gems and inlays of gold and silver, while others carefully etch each plate with acid.

The dwarves are happy to sell their masterpieces, which always command a high price on the market (up to three times the normal cost of masterwork armor), but the true worth of Holdfast plate can only be known by wearing a suit specifically forged to the user's physique. These tailored suits are commonly worn by Holdfast generals and dwarven heroes. Occasionally, a suit may be forged in thanks for deeds done in service of the empire, or as a gift to neighboring regents.

Game Notes: Like regular masterwork armors, the armor check penalty of Holdfast plate armors is lessened by 1. If the armor that has been crafted specifically for that wearer, the armor check penalty is lessened by 2.

New Cleric Domains

An asterisk (*) indicates a new spell described later in this chapter.

Creation Domain

Granted Power: Cast conjuration (creation) spells at +2 caster level.

Creation Domain Spells
1 *Create water*
2 *Minor image*
3 *Create food and water*
4 *Minor creation*
5 *Major creation*
6 *Heroes' feast*
7 *Permanent image*
8 *True creation**
9 *Genesis**

Darkness Domain

Granted Power: Free Blind-Fight feat.

Darkness Domain Spells
1 *Obscuring mist*
2 *Blindness*
3 *Blacklight**
4 *Armor of darkness**
5 *Summon monster V* (only summons 1d3 shadows)
6 *Prying eyes*
7 *Nightmare*
8 *Power word, blind*
9 *Power word, kill*

Dream Domain

Granted Power: You can draw upon your memories of the Dream to gain supreme confidence as a supernatural ability. You gain an enhancement bonus to Charisma equal to your cleric level. Activating the power is a free action, the power lasts 1 round, and it is usable twice per day.

Dream Domain Spells
1 *Sleep*
2 *Daydream**
3 *Deep slumber*
4 *Dreamscrying**
5 *Symbol of sleep* (good or neutrally aligned clerics) or *nightmare* (evil-aligned clerics)
6 *Symbol of fear*
7 *Oneiric form**
8 *Mind blank*
9 *Weird*

Glory Domain

Granted Power: Turn undead with a +2 bonus on the turning check and +1d6 to the turning damage roll.

Glory Domain Spells
1 *Disrupt undead*
2 *Bless weapon*
3 *Searing light*
4 *Holy smite*
5 *Holy sword*
6 *Bolt of glory**
7 *Sunbeam*
8 *Crown of glory**
9 *Gate*

Liberation Domain

Granted Power: The character gains a +2 morale bonus on all saving throws against enchantment spells or effects.

Liberation Domain Spells
1 *Remove fear*
2 *Remove paralysis*
3 *Remove curse*
4 *Freedom of movement*
5 *Break enchantment*
6 *Greater dispelling*
7 *Refuge*
8 *Mind blank*
9 *Unbinding*

Madness Domain

Granted Power: The character gains an Insanity score equal to half his or her class level. For spellcasting (determining bonus spells and DCs), the character uses his or her Wisdom score plus his or her Insanity score in place of Wisdom alone.

For all other purposes, such as determining skill and save modifiers, use Wisdom minus Insanity in place of Wisdom.

Once per day, the character can see and act with the clarity of true madness. Use the character's Insanity score as a positive rather than a negative modifier on a single roll involving Wisdom. Choose to use this power before the roll is made.

Madness Domain Spells
1 *Lesser confusion*
2 *Touch of madness**
3 *Rage**
4 *Confusion*
5 *Bolts of bedevilment**
6 *Phantasmal killer*
7 *Insanity*
8 *Maddening scream**
9 *Weird*

Repose Domain

The Repose domain is similar to the Death domain, but is granted by good-aligned deities whose clerics are barred from casting evil spells.

Granted Power: The character may use a *death touch* once per day. The *death touch* is a spell-like ability that is a death effect. The character must succeed at a melee touch attack against a living creature (using the rules for touch spells). When the character touches, roll 1d6 per his or her cleric level. If the total at least equals the creature's current hit points, it dies (no save).

Repose Domain Spells
1 *Deathwatch*
2 *Gentle repose*
3 *Speak with dead*
4 *Death ward*
5 *Slay living*
6 *Undeath to death*
7 *Destruction*
8 *Surelife**
9 *Wail of the banshee*

Weather Domain

Granted Power: Survival is a class skill.

Weather Domain Spells
1 *Obscuring mist*
2 *Fog cloud*
3 *Call lightning*
4 *Sleet storm*
5 *Ice storm*
6 *Control winds*
7 *Control weather*
8 *Whirlwind*
9 *Storm of vengeance*

New Spells

Armor of Darkness

Abjuration [Darkness]
Level: Darkness 4
Components: V, S, DF
Casting Time: 1 action
Range: Touch
Target: Creature touched
Duration: 10 minutes/level
Saving Throw: Will negates (harmless)
Spell Resistance: Yes (harmless)

The spell envelops the warded creature in a shroud of shadows. The shroud can, if the caster desires, conceal the wearer's features. In any case, it grants the recipient a +3 deflection bonus to Armor Class plus an additional +1 for every four caster levels (maximum bonus +8). The subject can see through the armor as if it did not exist and is also afforded darkvision with a range of 60 feet. Finally, the subject gains a +2 bonus on saving throws against any holy, good, or light spells or effects. Undead creatures that are subjects of *armor of darkness* also gain +4 turn resistance.

Blacklight

Evocation [Darkness]
Level: Darkness 3, Sor/Wiz 3
Components: V, S, M
Casting Time: 1 action
Range: Close (25 ft. + 5 ft./2 levels)
Area: A 20-ft.-radius emanation centered on a creature, object, or point in space
Duration: 1 round/level (D)
Saving Throw: Will negates or none (object)
Spell Resistance: Yes or no (object)

The caster creates an area of total darkness. The darkness is impenetrable to normal vision and darkvision, but the caster can see normally if within the blacklit area. Creatures outside the spell's area, even the caster, cannot see through it.

The spell can be cast on a point in space, an object, or a creature. If cast on an object or creature, the spell's effect radiates from that target and moves with it. Unattended

Damage from Bolt of Glory

Creature's Origin/Nature	Damage	Maximum Value
Material Plane, Elemental Plane, neutral outsider	1d6 per 2 levels	7d6
Negative Energy Plane, evil outsider, undead creature	1d6 per level	15d6
Positive Energy Plane, good outsider	—	—

objects and points in space do not get saving throws or benefit from spell resistance.

Blacklight counters or dispels any *light* spell of equal or lower level. The 3rd-level cleric spell *daylight* counters or dispels *blacklight*.

Bolt of Glory

Evocation [Good]
Level: Glory 6
Components: V, S, DF
Casting Time: 1 action
Range: Close (25 ft. + 5 ft./level)
Effect: Ray
Duration: Instantaneous
Saving Throw: None
Spell Resistance: Yes

This spell projects a bolt of energy from the Positive Energy Plane against one creature. The caster must succeed at a ranged touch attack to strike the target. A creature struck suffers varying damage, depending on its nature and home plane of existence, per the table on the previous page.

Bolts of Bedevilment

Enchantment [Mind-Affecting]
Level: Madness 5
Components: V, S
Casting Time: One action
Range: Medium (100 ft. + 10 ft./level)
Effect: Ray
Duration: 1 round/level
Saving Throw: Will negates
Spell Resistance: Yes

This spell grants the caster the ability to make one ray attack per round. The ray dazes one living creature, clouding its mind so that it takes no action for 1d3 rounds. The creature is not stunned (so attackers get no special advantage against it), but it can't move, cast spells, use mental abilities, and so on.

Collapsing Cavern

Conjuration (Earth)
Level: Drd 4, Sor/Wiz 4
Components: V, S, M
Casting Time: 1 standard action
Range: Medium (100 ft. + 10 ft./level)
Effect: 120-ft. line
Duration: 1 round + 1 round/level (D)
Saving Throw: Reflex half; see below
Spell Resistance: No

This spell rips large rocks away from the ground and sends them as missiles toward a single target point chosen by the spellcaster. The conjured rocks originate from a point chosen by the spellcaster anywhere within the spell range, and are then directed against a single target point chosen within that same spell range (measured from the spellcaster's position at the time of casting). Any creature caught in the path of the flying rocks between the point of origin and the target square is affected. If cast underground or inside a man-made structure, the rocks may strike from any direction, including the ceiling above, thus giving the spell its name. Once the rocks strike a target, they shatter—they cannot be reflected off of other objects or creatures. The target area cannot be changed once the spell is cast.

Collapsing cavern deals 4d6 points of damage to any creatures that it may strike. Additionally, creatures struck by the flying rocks may be knocked prone to the ground, and be unable to take any actions during the round subsequent to being struck. Affected creatures making a successful Reflex save remain on their feet; however, they still take half damage from the rocks.

The spell does not function underwater.

Material Component: A feather and a handful of pebbles.

Corruption

Necromancy [Fear, Mind-Affecting]
Level: Sor/Wiz 5
Components: V, S, F
Casting Time: 1 standard action

Range: Medium (100 ft. + 10 ft./level)
Area: One 40-ft. cube/level (S)
Duration: 1 round/level (D)
Saving Throw: Will negates; see below
Spell Resistance: Yes

This spell fills an area with a cold, negative energy. Once cast, everything within the area of effect turns a sickly gray-green color. All plants in the area begin to wither, and any creature with an Intelligence score of 2 or less automatically flees the area in terror, and may take no other actions until at least 100 feet away from the area of effect.

Those creatures that remain within the spell's area of affect may be filled with a sense of utter dread. For each round that a creature remains there, it suffers 1d4 hit points of damage, as well as 1d4 points of temporary Strength damage. The creature automatically loses all initiative rolls and suffers a –4 penalty to all Concentration checks. All creatures affected by the spell are also considered to be flat-footed for combat purposes. A successful saving throw negates all spell effects. A *remove fear* spell or the like immediate negates all effects except hit point damage.

Focus: A silver necklace with a spider insignia, worth at least 50 gp.

Create Vampire

Necromancy
Level: Sor/Wiz 9
Components: V, S, M
Casting Time: 1 hour
Range: Touch
Target: Dead creature touched
Duration: Instantaneous
Saving Throw: None; see text
Spell Resistance: No

With this sinister spell, the caster brings a creature back from the dead in the form of a vampire. The spell, which only affects a humanoid or monstrous humanoid subject, acts similarly to a vampire's energy drain. The primary difference is that the *create vampire* spell only affects a subject that is already dead, although for no longer than 10 days. Should *create vampire* be cast upon a still-living creature, or on a creature dead for longer than 10 days, the spell has no effect whatsoever.

Once created by the spell, the new vampire becomes the minion of the spellcaster that created it, and remains enthralled until the destruction of its maker. A vampire created by this powerful spell retains any class abilities, feats, or skill ranks it once possessed in life; however, it remembers little of its former life, save for its name. The base level of the affected creature (or Hit Dice) is reduced by 2. If the subject was 1st level, the corpse's effective Constitution score is reduced by 4. (If this reduction would put its Con at 0 or lower, the creature remains dead and cannot be transformed into a vampire.) This level/HD loss or Constitution loss cannot be repaired by any means. The base class, base attack bonus, base save bonuses, and hit points are otherwise unchanged. Once the base abilities and statistics of the affected creature are recalculated, the vampire template can be then added to it. Regardless of level, all creatures affected by this spell return as vampires, not vampire spawn.

The spellcaster immediately suffers 2d6 points of temporary Constitution damage and 1d6 points of temporary Strength damage after casting *create vampire*. Recovery of these points cannot begin until one full day after the spell is cast, unless a *wish* or *miracle* spell is utilized. The spellcaster can create a maximum number of vampires totaling no more than twice his own level; should the spell be cast upon a subject after this maximum is reached, the spell has no effect. The spellcaster cannot voluntarily free one of his existing enthralled vampires in order to create a new vampire; only when one of these vampires is destroyed completely can the caster begin again to produce new monsters.

Material Component: The severed hand and heart of a vampire spawn.

Crown of Glory

Evocation
Level: Glory 8
Components: V, S, M, DF
Casting Time: 1 full round
Range: Personal
Area: 120-ft.-radius emanation centered on caster
Duration: 1 minute/level
Saving Throw: Will negates
Spell Resistance: Yes

The caster is imbued with an aura of celestial authority, inspiring awe in all lesser creatures.

The caster gains a +4 enhancement bonus to his or her Charisma score for the duration of the spell. All creatures with fewer than 8 HD or levels cease whatever they are doing and are compelled to pay attention to the caster. Any such creature that wants to take hostile action against the caster must make a successful Will save to do so. Any creature that does not make this saving throw the first time it attempts a hostile action is *enthralled* for the duration of the spell (as the *enthrall* spell), as long as it is in the spell's area, nor will it try to leave the area on its own. Creatures with 8 HD or more may pay attention to the caster, but are not affected by this spell.

When the caster speaks, all listeners telepathically under-

stand him or her, even if they do not understand the language. While the spell lasts, the caster can make up to three suggestions to creatures of fewer than 8 HD in range, as if using the *mass suggestion* spell (Will save negates); creatures with 8 HD or more aren't affected by this power. Only creatures within range at the time a suggestion is given are subject to it.

Material Component: A gem worth at least 200 gp.

Daydream

Illusion [Mind-Affecting]
Level: Dream 2
Components: M, DF
Casting Time: 1 standard action
Range: Close (25 ft. + 5 ft./2 levels)
Target: Varies (see text)
Duration: 1 round/level (D) (see text)
Saving Throw: Will negates
Spell Resistance: Yes

The caster projects oneiric images from the target's mind into the air or upon any surface within range. While the spell is often used for demonstration or entertainment, the caster can also use the spell in combat in one of two ways:

Bolster: The next spell cast within 2 rounds is cast as though the caster were 2 levels higher due to the *daydream's* fantastic dramatics and the surge of power it borrows from the Dream.

Distract: The *daydream* projects fragments from the caster's own nightmares that can distract a single opponent capable of dreaming. The target must make a successful Will save or suffer a –1 penalty on all attack rolls and is required to make a successful Concentration check to cast any spells or make any skill checks. This effect lasts only 1 round per caster level or until a successful Will Save is made.

Material Component: A scrap of rice paper or vellum.

Dreamscrying

Divination (Scrying)
Level: Dream 4
Components: V, S, DF, F
Casting Time: 10 minutes
Range: See text
Effect: Magical sensor
Duration: 8 hours
Saving Throw: Will negates
Spell Resistance: Yes

Dreamscrying allows the caster to see and hear a specific creature as he dreams, requiring the spell to be cast immediately prior to normal rest time. The spell functions like *scrying*, except as noted above and with the following limitations.

The caster receives only vague, dreamlike images and sounds based on the whereabouts of the subject throughout an 8-hour period. He can hear only brief excerpts of conversation, as allowed by the GM, and no other spells can be cast during the spell's effects (as the caster sleeps). Although the spell is technically cast before the caster begins to rest, its effects take place during an 8-hour period and counts against him for purposes of determining the number of spells he may prepare the following day.

The spell will only function during the caster's normal period of rest. If he is awakened at any point during the duration, the spell ends. If the caster is an elf, his trance endures for a full 8 hours, during which *dreamscrying* takes place. If he is not, he sleeps soundly throughout the duration. The spell does not function if the caster is affected by a *nightmare* spell.

Within the oneiric realms of Ôæ (for good- or neutrally aligned clerics) or Gil'Mâridth (evil-aligned clerics), the caster looks upon the subject of the spell as through a fantastical gateway or pool. He can see the subject with astonishing clarity, but immediately upon awakening, only the vague sounds and images allowed by the spell are retained.

Divine Focus: A silken blanket worth at least 70 gp, in which the caster must be wrapped.

Genesis

Conjuration (Creation)
Level: Creation 9
Components: V, S , M, X P
Casting Time: 1 week (8 hours/day)
Range: 180 ft.
Effect: A demiplane on the Ethereal Plane centered on the caster's location
Duration: Instantaneous
Saving Throw: None
Spell Resistance: No

This spell creates an immobile, finite plane with limited access—a demiplane.

Demiplanes created by this power are very small, minor planes. A character can cast this spell only on the Ethereal Plane. When he or she casts it, a local density fluctuation precipitates the creation of a demiplane. At first, the demiplane grows at a rate of a 1-foot-radius per day to an initial maximum radius of 180 feet as the fledgling plane draws substance from surrounding ethereal vapors and protomatter or astral ectoplasm.

The character determines the environment in the demiplane when he or she first casts *genesis*, reflecting most

any desire he or she can visualize. The caster determines factors such as atmosphere, water, temperature, and the shape of the general terrain. However, the spell cannot create life, nor can it create construction. If desired, these must be brought in by some other fashion.

Once the basic demiplane reaches its maximum size, the character can continue to cast this spell to enlarge the demiplane if he or she is inside the boundaries of the demiplane. In such a case, the radius of the demiplane increases by 60 feet for each subsequent casting.

If the spell is cast again while outside an existing demiplane, the casting creates a separate bubble that does not touch or overlap any previously created demiplane.

XP Cost: 5,000 XP.

Leyhar's Obsessive Focus

Illusion [Mind-Affecting]
Level: Sor/Wiz 5
Components: V, S, M
Casting Time: 1 standard action
Range: Close (25 ft. + 5 ft./2 levels)
Target: One living creature
Duration: See text (D)
Saving Throw: Will negates
Spell Resistance: Yes

Created by the legendary Quaysarrian illusionist T'Rhos Leyhar, this spell allows the caster to reveal an illusionary image of an object to a specific target. If the target fails a Will save, the target is forced to immediately go forth and search for that object, as per a *geas* spell. Finding this object becomes paramount to the target, and takes precedence above all other things. Only by finding the object shown by the caster can the target end the spell.

The object shown by the caster to the target must actually exist; it cannot be a figment of the caster's imagination. Should the object be destroyed in between the time that the spell is originally cast and when the target would be able to find it, the target is fated to forever search for the object of the obsession in utter futility, unless the caster releases the target from the spell.

Material Component: Five gold coins and a lock of the target's hair.

Leyhar's Tempting Lure

Illusion [Mind-Affecting]
Level: Sor/Wiz 3
Components: V, S, M
Casting Time: 1 standard action
Range: Touch
Target: One living creature
Duration: 1 round/level (D)
Saving Throw: Will negates; see text
Spell Resistance: Yes

This spell produces the illusion of something incredibly attractive to the target. This object is also constantly in motion and always seems just out of reach to the target. Should the target fail to make a successful Will save, the object of the illusion must be relentlessly pursued for the entire duration of the spell, or until the caster chooses to end the spell. Only the target affected by the spell can see the illusion.

The caster of the spell may also select the path taken by this constantly moving illusion, thereby also directing the path taken by the pursing target. The path chosen by the caster cannot deliberately lead into obvious danger, or the spell is broken. Should the creature affected by the spell be stopped or held back from pursuing the illusion, the target makes every effort to break free from its constraints and to continue its pursuit for the remaining duration of the spell.

Material Component: A handful of bread crumbs.

Maddening Scream

Enchantment (Compulsion) [Mind-Affecting]
Level: Sor/Wiz 8, Madness 8
Components: V
Casting Time: One action
Range: Touch
Target: Living creature touched
Duration: 1d4+1 rounds
Saving Throw: None
Spell Resistance: Yes

The subject cannot keep him or herself from behaving as though completely mad. This spell makes it impossible for the victim to do anything other than run around shrieking.

The effect worsens the Armor Class of the creature by 4, makes Reflex saving throws impossible except on a roll of 20, and renders the creature incapable of using a shield.

Oneiric Form

Illusion [Mind-Affecting]
Level: Dream 7
Components: V, S
Casting Time: 1 standard action
Range: Personal
Target: Caster
Duration: 1 round/level (D)
Saving Throw: See text
Spell Resistance: No

When casting this spell, the caster assumes the physical appearance of his favored dream persona along with a

number of abilities. The effect is phantasmal, but the caster's absolute belief in this dreamlike shape makes it real to him. His allies and opponents can recognize the transformation as illusionary with a successful Will save, but no attempt to disbelieve it can deny the caster the protection the *oneric form* affords.

The spell functions like *disguise self*, except as noted above and with the following additions. The caster's creature type changes to outsider (dream). He gains a +4 inherent bonus to Armor Class, Charisma, and all saving throws. The caster gains darkvision out to 60 feet and damage reduction 5/–.

Primordial Transformation

Transformation
Level: Clr 6, Drd 6, Sor/Wiz 6
Components: V, S
Casting Time: 1 standard action
Range: Touch
Target: Creature touched
Duration: 1 min./level
Saving Throw: Fortitude negates
Spell Resistance: Yes

The affected creature undergoes a tremendous transformation into a hairy, primitive brute, becoming much larger, stronger, and faster than normal. However, the mental capacity of the creature becomes greatly diminished at the same time. The spell grants the subject a +6 enhancement bonus to Strength, Dexterity, and Constitution, and –6 penalties to Intelligence, Wisdom, and Charisma. These ability changes also affect hit points, saving throws, ability checks, and so on, as appropriate.

Additionally, the spell changes the affected creature's size category to the next largest one. The creature also gains increases to base movement of 10 feet, a natural armor bonus of +2, and 10 temporary hit point bonus. An affected creature whose size increases to Large has a space of 10 feet and a natural reach of 10 feet. The spell has additional adverse effects, though: Affected creatures are robbed of the ability to cast arcane spells, and they lose the ability to verbally communicate with others.

Rage

Enchantment
Level: Madness 3
Components: V, S
Casting Time: One action
Range: Touch
Target: Creature touched
Duration: 1 round/level
Saving Throw: Will negates (harmless)
Spell Resistance: Yes (harmless)

The caster can put a creature into a blood frenzy. In this rage, the creature gains +4 to Strength, +4 to Constitution, and a +2 morale bonus on Will saves. (Unlike a barbarian's rage, there is no penalty to AC, and no fatigue period occurs after the rage is over.)

Sandstorm

Conjuration (Creation)
Level: Drd 6, Sor/Wiz 6
Components: V, S, M
Casting Time: 1 standard action
Range: Medium (100 ft. + 10 ft./level)
Effect: Cloud spreads in 20-ft. radius, 20 ft. high
Saving Throw: Fortitude half
Spell Resistance: No

A storm of blinding sand erupts from a starting point selected by the spellcaster, slashing and cutting all creatures caught within its reach. The storm obscures all sight beyond 10 feet, including darkvision and low-light vision. Creatures within 5 feet of the blinding storm have total concealment (50% miss chance, and attackers trapped within the *sandstorm* cannot use sight to locate their opponents). Additionally, all creatures within the spell's area of effect take 1d6 points of damage per caster level (maximum 10d6).

A moderate wind (11-20 mph) disperses the *sandstorm* in 2 rounds; a strong wind (21+ mph) disperses the spell in 1 round. The spell does not function underwater, or in arctic climates.

If cast in a natural desert region, the *sandstorm* gains strength. Base damage for an enhanced *sandstorm* increases to 1d10 points of damage per caster level (maximum 10d10).

Material Component: A handful of sand and a pinch of sulfur.

Surelife

Abjuration
Level: Repose 8
Components: V, S, M
Casting Time: 1 round
Range: Personal
Target: The caster
Duration: 1 minute/2 levels
Saving Throw: None
Spell Resistance: No

This spell allows the caster to protect herself against some condition that would ordinarily cause certain death. The character can only protect herself against a natural occurrence or condition, not against a spell or the action of a creature. The character must specify the condition against which she wishes to protect herself, and the spell is effective only against that condition. Should the character be subjected to that condition during the duration of the spell, she feels no discomfort and takes no damage from the condition. However, the spell does not protect any items carried on the caster's person. At the end of the spell's duration, the condition has full normal effects if the character is still subjected to it.

Symbiosis

Conjuration (Healing)
Level: Brd 4, Clr 4, Drd 5, Pal 5, Rgr 5, Healing 4
Components: V, S
Casting Time: 1 standard action
Range: Touch
Target: Creature touched
Duration: Instantaneous
Saving Throw: Will half (harmless)
Spell Resistance: Yes (harmless)

By laying hands upon another living creature, the spellcaster transfers life essence to another being. The recipient of the spell temporarily receives all of the hit points, skills, spells, and spellcasting abilities of the caster. If the recipient and the caster share common skills, the recipient uses the higher of the two bonuses for the skill. The number of spell slots available to the caster should be added to those of the subject of the spell (if the subject has any). However, the recipient of the spell does not receive any of the memories or additional knowledge of the caster. Any damage taken by the spell recipient during this time comes first from the spellcaster's transferred hit points, then from the subject of the spell.

Once cast, the spellcaster goes into a temporary coma, falling to 0 hit points for the duration of the spell. The spellcaster is unconscious and immobile during this time, and may take no actions at all. If the spellcaster takes a single hit point of damage during the spell's duration, the spell is broken and the recipient immediately loses all temporary bonuses. Additionally, the spellcaster's remaining hit points (if any) are not transferred back if the spell is broken in this manner, and the caster remains below 0 hit points until healed. Should the spell expire naturally, any of the transferred hit points that are left instantly return to the caster without incident.

Touch of Madness

Enchantment [Mind-Affecting]
Level: Madness 2
Components: V, S
Casting Time: One action
Range: Touch
Target: Creature touched
Duration: 1 round/level
Saving Throw: Will negates
Spell Resistance: Yes

The caster may daze one living creature by making a successful touch attack. If the target creature does not make a successful Will save, its mind is clouded and it takes no action for 1 round per caster level. The dazed subject is not stunned (so attackers get no special advantage against it), but it can't move, cast spells, use mental abilities, and so on.

Touch of Slime

Transmutation
Level: Clr/Drd 5, Sor/Wiz 6
Components: V, S
Casting Time: 1 standard action
Range: Touch
Target: Living creature touched
Duration: Instantaneous; see text
Saving Throw: Fortitude negates; see text
Spell Resistance: Yes

By casting this spell, the caster's hands begin to drip with a highly toxic slime similar to that of an aboleth's, allowing the caster to inflict great pain upon an opponent with a successful melee touch attack. A creature hit by the spellcaster must succeed on a Fortitude save or begin to quickly mutate over the next 1d4+1 rounds, with the skin of the affected creature becoming covered entirely with a clear, watery slime. At the end of this time, affected creatures must remain completely immersed in water or take 1d4 points of damage each round. The slime reduces the creature's natural armor bonus by 1 (but never to less than 0).

A *remove disease* spell cast before the transformation is complete will restore an afflicted creature to normal. Afterward, however, only a *cure serious wounds, cure critical wounds, heal*, or *mass heal* spell can reverse the condition.

True Creation

Conjuration (Creation)
Level: Creation 8
Components: V, S, M, XP
Casting Time: 10 minutes
Range: 0 ft.
Effect: Unattended, nonmagical object of nonliving matter, up to 1 cu. ft./level
Duration: Instantaneous
Saving Throw: None
Spell Resistance: No

The caster creates a nonmagical, unattended object of any sort of matter. Items created are permanent and cannot be negated by dispelling magics or negating powers. For all intents and purposes, these items are completely real. The volume of the item created cannot exceed 1 cubic foot per caster level. The caster must succeed at an appropriate skill check to make a complex item.

Unlike the items brought into being by the lower-level spells *minor creation* and *major creation*, objects created by the casting of true creation can be used as material components.

XP Cost: The item's gold piece value in XP, or a minimum of 1 XP, whichever is more.

Undeath to Death

Necromancy
Level: Sor/Wiz 6, Clr 6, Repose 6
Components: V, S , M, D F
Casting Time: 1 action
Range: Medium (100 ft. + 10 ft./level)
Area: Several undead creatures within a 50-ft.-radius burst
Duration: Instantaneous
Saving Throw: Will negates
Spell Resistance: Yes

Undeath to death snuffs out the animating forces of undead creatures, killing them instantly. The spell slays 1d4 HD worth of undead creatures per caster level (maximum 20d4). Creatures with the fewest HD are affected first; among creatures with equal HD, those closest to the point of origin of the burst are affected first.

Material Component: A gem worth at least 500 gp.

Magic Items

Bonemail: The Xulmecs of the city-state of Amoya revere their dead in ways that foreigners find macabre at best. Warriors of sufficient prowess, wealth, or status with the clergy of Anahuara may be given armor fashioned from the very bones of one or more of his or her ancestors. Known as *tomioquan* by the Xulmecs, such armor is more commonly known as bonemail. Infused with the dead warrior's spirit, it grants the wearer insight on the battlefield and courage against his enemies. This necromantic practice has since been replicated by other cultures, but is found predominantly in western Xulmec.

Crafted by clerics and imbued with the blessings of a god, the bonemail armor is further calcified and strengthened by a wizard's art. Effectively as strong and durable as masterwork scale mail, bonemail armor provides the wearer a +1 divine bonus on all attack and damage rolls and saves to resist fear. Additionally, the spirit or spirits possessing the bonemail can grant the wearer an *augury* once each day. The divine bonuses and spell-like ability only function for wearers of the bloodline from whose bones the armor is constructed. The statistics listed in the table on page 81 reflect a suit of bonemail armor, which is always masterwork, before the additional enhancement bonuses to AC, cost, and creation are applied.

Moderate necromancy; CL 9th; Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *speak with dead, augury*; Price 16,500; Cost 9,750 gp + 850 XP.

Flying Guillotine +4: This highly specialized weapon is only used by the vampires of the Vanguard of Eternal Doom. Ordinarily, the weapon appears as a magical heavy flail with six long, black chains, and acts as a *heavy flail +4* in battle. However, the longest of the six chains has a black silk sack attached to one end. The perimeter of the opening of this sack is surrounded with hundreds of tiny silver blades. Should a *flying guillotine +4* strike an opponent with a critical hit, that opponent must make a successful Reflex save (DC 20) or be slain instantly, as the sack covers the head of the opponent and rips it free from its body. The body instantly falls lifeless with –10 hit points; however, the head remains magically alive and able to communicate for an additional day following this decapitation, allowing the owner of the flying guillotine to interrogate the head. Both body and head must be reattached if the slain creature is to be raised or resurrected.

The *flying guillotine +4* is always found in the possession of the vampires of the Vanguard; there is no other known source for this weapon.

Strong necromancy and transmutation; CL 18th; Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *keen edge*; Price: 75,315 gp; Cost 30,500 + 4,800 XP.

Magic Weapon Properties

In addition to enhancement bonuses, weapons can have one or more of the special abilities detailed below. A weapon with a special ability must have at least a +1 enhancement bonus.

Dreamforged: A dreamforged weapon was fashioned by clerics of Ôæ within the Dream itself (see Chapter 2), but through great spiritual effort has been translated into the waking world. In appearance, it resembles a normal weapon but it leaves a fleeting afterimage in its wake when it moves quickly. The first time a creature is damaged by a dreamforged weapon, it must succeed on a DC 14 Will save or suffer an additional 1d4 points of damage. On the second round, the creature will suffer an additional 2d4 per strike, and on the third round and each round thereafter, the additional damage remains at 3d4. A creature who succeeds on the saving throw is impervious to the dreamforged weapon's phantasmal damage for 24 hours.

Moderate illusion (phantasm). A dreamforged weapon cannot be created by any conventional means.

Dysmorphic: A dysmorphic weapon leaves horrid welts and scars and saps the confidence from its victims. Any living creature struck by a dysmorphic weapon suffers 2 points of Charisma damage and must succeed on a DC 14 Fortitude save or contract red ache. Simply holding such a vile weapon incurs a –2 profane penalty on the wielder's own Charisma. Favored by the deviant followers of gods like Narrimunâth, Nimlurun, and Bobugbubilz, these corruptive weapons are considered holy relics.

Moderate necromantic; CL 12th; Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *contagion*; Price +2 bonus.

Lucent: A lucent weapon constantly sheds a pale, luminous glow that illuminates a 5-foot radius at all times. Upon command, it illuminates a 40-foot radius with clear, white radiance, and creatures that take penalties in bright light also take them while within the radius of this magical light. In addition, a creature damaged by a lucent weapon must make a successful DC 14 Fortitude save or be limned with the same luminous glow that radiates from the lucent weapon. This effect replicates the spell *faerie fire*, although the glow is white in color and lasts for 1 minute. Creatures with spell resistance are unaffected. A creature that successfully saves cannot be affected by the same lucent weapon's *faerie fire* for 24 hours.

Moderate evocation; CL 10th; Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *light*; Price +1 bonus.

Silent: A silent weapon bestows the effect of a *silence* spell upon its wielder, though the effect only occurs when the owner grasps the weapon in hand. Although it negates all sounds made by the wielder, effectively resulting in automatic success on Move Silently checks, the wielder is also unable to cast spells that require verbal components or communicate audibly.

Moderate illusion; CL 10th; Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *silence*; Price +2 bonus.

Spectral: A spectral weapon can reach into the Ethereal Plane to strike its wielder's opponents. For melee weapons, the spectral weapon bypasses all armor and shield bonuses. Bows, crossbows, and slings so crafted bestow upon their ammunition the ability to bypass only cover bonuses. In the case of a target having full cover, a miss chance of 50% is applied instead, provided the wielder of the spectral bow, crossbow, or sling knows which space the target occupies. Despite these abilities, a spectral weapon also shines like a beacon to incorporeal creatures, even unequipped and stowed. The owner of the spectral weapon incurs a –4 circumstantial penalty to AC against such opponents and any miss chances the owner might benefit from are negated.

Moderate illusion; CL 13th; Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *ethereal jaunt*; Price +3 bonus.

Stealth: A stealth weapon allows its wielder to become invisible once per day equal to the enhancement bonus for attack and damage rolls. For example, a *+2 stealth longsword* allows its wielder to become invisible twice per day. Activating this power is a free action, and the duration is a full round. As with the spell *invisibility*, the effect ends if the wielder attacks an enemy, but he gains the benefits of *invisibility* during that action (+2 on the attack roll and enemies are denied their Dexterity bonus to AC).

Moderate illusion; CL 10th; Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *invisibility*; Price +1 bonus.

Truculent: A truculent weapon is predisposed to violence and will suffer no hesitation from its wielder. In the hands of an owner proficient in its weapon type, a truculent weapon replicates the effects of a speed weapon, allowing the wielder to make one extra attack when making a full attack action. The attack uses the wielder's full base attack bonus, plus any modifiers appropriate to the situation. (This benefit is not cumulative with similar effects, such as a *haste* spell.) In addition, the wielder is granted a +4 enhancement bonus to initiative checks. However, for every round (not counting the first) the wielder fails to deal damage to an opponent during combat he or she suffers 1d6 points of nonlethal damage from the weapon itself.

Moderate transmutation; CL 13th; Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *haste*; Price +3 bonus.

Coins of the World Before

Many nations mint their own coins, each nation's currency being roughly equivalent to those of her neighbors. But the treasure hordes discovered by adventurers and explorers are seldom so tidy, nearly always containing a handful of exotic coins forged by forgotten empires and ancient kingdoms.

As a general rule of thumb, the GM can always rule that a gold piece is simply a gold piece, but when heroes raise their torches above sparkling hordes of ancient currency, finding the treasure is often only the beginning.

Abylossian Coin Chain: Known to adventurers as "gold snakes," the coin chains of Abylos were the nomad's answer to the coin purse. The crudely minted coins, often little more than a flattened gold nugget, all have a hole punched through their center, permitting the coins to be threaded onto leather straps. The barbarian nomads would string a chain of gold coins, and hang them from their saddles as symbols of strength and glory in battle. Pictographs show the barbarians exchanging the chains like units of currency, betting and gambling over piles of the snakes, and trading in exchange for arms, slaves, and armor.

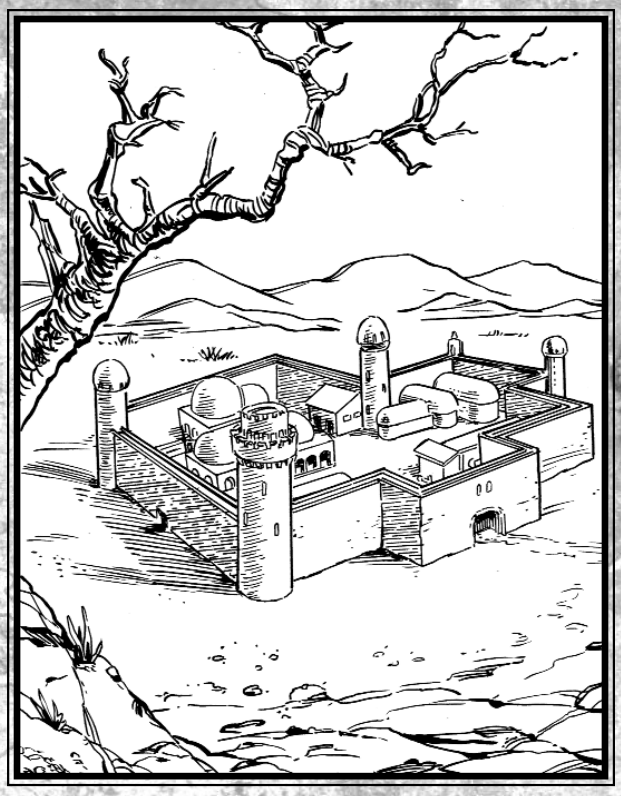
The coin chains are most often found in 10, 20, and 50 coin chains, and are usually worth their weight in gold. Legends tell of a "master chain" made of one hundred enormous coins hung on a chain of iron and born by the slaves of an Abylossian warlord.

Elven Leaf-Stones: The elves of Foresthome traded in smooth spheres of amber with leaves, flower petals, or droplets of water encased within the stone. The spheres vary widely, leading some scholars to theorize that the value of a stone was determined by its aesthetics, but there is little in the way of evidence to support this theory.

Of more interest to adventurers are the rare leaf-stones that contain spells. Utilitarian leaf-stones enchanted with *light, detect poison*, and *detect magic* are the most common, while leaf-stones with *charm person, mage armor*, and *shocking grasp* have also been discovered. The type of spell can often be determined only by trial and error. A dweomered leaf-stone contains 1 to 4 charges.

Nonmagical leaf-stones are worth as much as 5 gp to collectors. Dweomered leaf-stones are worth anywhere from 50 to 200 gp.

Nimorian Star: The chief currency used by the wealthy Priest-Kings, the Nimorian star is a gold piece with a black star etched into its center. The stars are curiously warm to the touch, and radiate an aura of minor divination if detected. A DC 20 Spellcraft check will reveal that the gold of the star carries the taint of fiendish essence.



Minted as a means of spying on the Nimorian populace, each star serves as a scrying focus. Any creature carrying a star suffers from a –2 modifier to any Will save made against scrying.

Nimorian stars are considered contraband in most good nations, but can be purchased on the black market for 100 gp each.

Of Cities and Citadels

The *DMG* provides guidelines for generating communities, but in a world besieged by violence, certain communities are created for the sole purpose of consolidating military power. These are the castles, forts, fortresses, and citadels of the world, where archers stand guard atop high walls, and knights ride out, lances raised, to thunder across the plains.

Strongholds differ from generic communities in important ways. Strongholds typically have lower populations than regular communities, but a great likelihood of high-level NPCs (most often fighters and warriors). Compared to smaller communities, a stronghold has a higher gold-piece-to-population ratio, due to any stronghold's need of craftsmen, armor, and weaponsmiths. This wealth curve peaks quickly, and unless a stronghold is surrounded by a large community, PCs will be hard pressed to find and

sell truly expensive items.

The largest stronghold is far smaller than a city, although oftentimes a city can spring up around an established stronghold, and a mighty metropolis might be warded by several castles.

The names of the stronghold levels are descriptive in nature, and have little to do with the actual strength of a stronghold. A band of spearmen might call their humble keep the Citadel of Blades, and Brighthawk Castle of the Theocracy of the Lance is actually a citadel. Every grizzled war veteran knows that impressive names often go with the least effectual strongholds, and that the mightiest citadels seldom trouble with such niceties, leaving dramatics to the bards.

The following tables supplement the community rules found in the *DMG*, and should be used in place of the community tables when generating strongholds.

Generating Stronholds

Stronghold Size	Garrison	GP Limit
Fort	10–100	200 gp
Keep	101–350	500 gp
Small Castle	351–1,000	1,500 gp
Large Castle	1,001–5,000	15,000 gp
Citadel	5,001 or more	25,000 gp

Garrison numbers reflect fighting men, usually warriors and fighters. Typical strongholds have an additional population of noncombatant commoners and experts equal to one third its garrison.

Forts: Forts are the smallest and weakest defenses, ranging from muddy encampments defended by ditches and earth ramparts, to wooden stockades with spindly watchtowers. Siege weapons are nearly always nonexistent. Barbarian communities are typically defended by forts.

Keep: The smallest stone defenses, a keep is often a single wall built around a donjon and gatehouse. One or two catapults or ballistae might sit atop towers. Monasteries and strongholds guarding mountain passes or built along the wild frontier are typically keeps.

Small Castle: Defended by a moat house and outer and inner walls, small castles are typically home to a small number of siege weapons, often supplemented by a handful of war wizards and clerics. A small castle might be the home of a knighthood, or a lord and his followers.

Large Castle: Built with outer and inner walls, several levels of towers, and any number of siege weapons, large castles are supported by several high-level war wizards, their apprentices, as well as clerics and their initiates. Large castles are the staging grounds for armies and the homes of great lords and kings.

Citadel: The mightiest of all strongholds, a citadel often dominates the landscape. Defended by concentric walls, multiple levels of towers, specialized siege weapons, and dedicated teams of powerful spellcasters, a citadel may even be defended by magical beasts—dragons, griffons, wyverns, or pegasi, ridden by knights. Citadels are home to the mightiest of regents, and often sit at the center of an empire, surrounded by a city or metropolis.

Stronghold Size	Community Modifier
Fort	–3
Keep	+0
Small Castle	+5 (roll twice)
Large Castle	+9 (roll three times)
Citadel	+16 (roll four times)

A stronghold's community modifier is used to generate the fortress' highest-level locals as per the *DMG*, but care should be exercised to avoid illogical results. In small strongholds especially, not every character class will be represented. For instance, a barbarian fort will rarely boast of a high-level paladin or monk. As always, GMs should tailor the results of their rolls to match the needs and consistency of the campaign setting.

Chapter 5
Rogues' Gallery and Hall of Heroes

The world of Áereth is populated by great heroes and wicked villains alike. Sagacious mages, devout priests, courageous warriors, and cunning rogues have all have left their mark on the cities and wilds. Following is a brief survey of some of the most celebrated and notorious personalities to tread the Known Realms. Only the key attribute scores and class levels of each NPC are listed, to give a sense of power level and strengths; the GM should feel free to scale the NPCs up or down to match the level of their current campaign.

GMs are encouraged to use these NPCs to imbue their own campaigns with a sense of life. Evil wizards and corrupt princes constantly scheme and plot, while courageous paladins ride the borderlands, righting wrongs and bringing justice to the wilds. Despite the allure of introducing these world-shaking personalities to the game, the GM should remember that it is the PC that is the hero of the story, the focus of the tale. No matter a NPC's power or influence, they are all supporting characters to the cast of PCs. Consequently, GMs should adapt the power levels of the NPCs to meet the needs of their particular campaign.

Aban Kaveh

(CG male rakshasa Rog7, Dex 17, Con 14, Int 18)

Loud and boisterous, this outrageous rakshasa merchant can often be heard for miles within the walls of Achaemia before he is seen … and what a sight he makes. Completely covered in indigo-black fur and fond of golden silk clothing, Aban Kaveh is easily the most recognizable and well-known figure in the rakshasa city—much to the dismay of the other rakshasa. He frequently disobeys the laws of the city, flaunting them as he does so, and often deals freely with those the other rakshasa view with disdain: humans, dwarves, and other foreigners. His hatred of the drow is also of concern to the Caliph and the ruling council of Achaemia, as they represent one of the city's strongest trading partners. So long as Aban Kaveh continues to bring coin into the city, his eccentricities are permitted, but the unruly rakshasa merchant is but a small step away from finding his black-furred neck on the executioner's block.

Despite his carefree, freewheeling nature, Aban Kaveh is highly intelligent, and is thought to have some sort of master agenda. Of late, he has divested himself of his traditional trade interests, and has become active in the building of grandships for the Twisted Sea. He is never seen walking the streets of Achaemia without his retinue of elven guards, and always has his enchanted twin scimitars, Trouble and More Trouble, either lashed to his belt or twirling in his hands, ready for a fight.

Acatzalan

(LG male human Ari3/Ftr2, Str 13, Wis 16, Cha 16)

Despised by the aristocracy of Voltigeur, Acatzalan possesses Xulmec blood from his father and the blood of Criestine nobility from his mother. Granting the half-blood the office of mayor to appease the restless citizens, Viceroy Durand has underestimated the love the lower and middle class have for Acatzalan. The young politician understands the duplicitous nature of the Viceroy and the disposition of Lady Mortianna better than they suspect, continually weighing the colonists' separatist ideas against loyalty to the crown. He has a bold vision for the future of the Colonies and a great respect for his Xulmec heritage. Acatzalan, a man known for his open-mindedness, is always willing to meet with visiting adventures of positive repute.

Analee Waveseer

(CG female aquatic elf Clr16, Wis 19, Cha 18)

One of the three leaders of the Sirens of Pelagia, Analee Waveseer is charged with guarding the Temple of the Sacred Wave on the hidden Isle of Argent. With the Isle serving as the only true headquarters of the Sirens, Analee's duties as a high priestess are married to her devotion to the organization.

Analee Waveseer is a sea elf of great beauty and power, consorting with the deep-dwelling beings of the sea and the proxies and petitioners of the gods themselves. She guards the greatest secrets of the Sirens and its most powerful treasures. Not content to remain static, Analee frequently swims the domain of her goddess and personally sees to it that errant captains and vengeful pirates do not locate the Isle of Argent.

Analee is always encountered with her friends and bodyguards, a Huge water elemental named Vaer and a triton lord named Erazaa. In battle, she wields a *trident of warning* and she always carries with her a *decanter of endless water*, enabling her to travel anywhere her faith requires without fear of suffocation.

Ashir the Maul

(CN male human Bbn16, Str 18, Con 19, Wis 13, Cha 14)

The warlord of the Cinai people is a swordsman of unmatched fury and might. A mountain of steely sinew with the reflexes of a lion and the hardened eyes of a raven, Ashir the Maul has led the armies of Cinai to victory time and again. Ashir is not a foolish ruler, but he prefers the absolutes of war and personal combat to the simpering, sycophantic politics of "civilized" countries. In Ashir's eyes, honor is won by courage and a quick blade, and those who shun battle are less than worms.

Aunyx

(LG half-elf female Mnk12, Str 14, Dex 16, Wis 18)

At first glance, the fiery-haired half-elf Aunyx does not appear to be anything other than a young woman of modest, stylish dress, and cheerful demeanor. Yet her prowess as a martial artist is quickly apparent when evil presents itself and her body becomes a fluid weapon. As one of the few known pupils of the legendary master, Joramus, Aunyx is a heroine of grace and precision.

A foundling raised by a wandering tribe of Gadjarrian halflings, Aunyx grew into a spirited lass with a big heart and matching temper. When she reached adolescence, her foster parents brought her to a monastery, hoping to give her the stability and discipline the vagabond halflings could not offer. Aunyx's restlessness could not long endure the inaction of ascetic study. Impressed with her outspoken conviction to bring justice to a world in need, Joramus, a visiting master, took her as his pupil. Together they set out from the monastery and wandered the Northlands for two years until Joramus eventually returned to his solitary journeys.

Aunyx is often found in the company of halflings and typically wanders the land with her friend and mount, a slightly addled light warhorse named Whirlwind. Aunyx wears *bracers of armor (+3)* and favors a *+2 thundering club* when faced with opponents she'd rather not touch—especially oozes, fungi, and most undead.

King Azghaar

(LE male sahuagin Rgr16, Str 19, Dex 16, Wis 16, Cha 16)

A sahuagin mutant unparalleled among his kind in the arts of war, Azghaar V is the king of the Undersea kingdom known as Azghaar-aqin. All who have learned his name fear the sahuagin king, and his sovereignty is a tangible presence within the isles of Dujamar, the Javran Sea, and even the town of Rutuan.

Beneath the waves, his influence reaches further still. Smaller principalities of sea devils pay tribute to him, extant only at his behest. Yet King Azghaar placates the krakens that dwell at the bottom of the Javran Sea, and they provide gifts of magical treasures—culled from the detritus of centuries of shipwrecks—in exchange for the fresh victims he supplies them. Their demands have increased over the years, and King Azghaar's pride will not suffer them indefinitely. Though he looks to the dry lands of Xulmec and the Criestine Colonies for future conquest, Azghaar knows his monstrous benefactors are instrumental to victory. At present, he is torn between bolstering their support or seeking alliances to supplant them.

Azghaar's mate is a malenti assassin named Ivtana—an ambassador from a foreign kingdom of sahuagin with designs against the Lirean Sea elves. Their consortion is as political as it is disconcerting to his kind—she resembling a fragile aquatic elf and he a four-armed mutant. Both keep the company of the cunning priests of Elas and mad cultists of Sothulth.

King Azghaar wields a *+3 icy burst trident* and wears a *periapt of wound closure* and *bracers of armor (+5)*. On his belt, he wears a stolen *horn of the tritons*, its former owner's skull mounted upon Azghaar's gruesome scepter, which functions as a *rod of rulership*.

Black Covey

Comprised of Alunine (CE female annis Sor13, Str 25, Cha 16), Meglea (CE female green hag Sor9, Str 19, Cha 18), and Sayocia (CE female green hag Sor7/Rog5, Str 19, Dex 18, Cha 15), the sisters of the Black Covey are the governing body of the Dujamar town of Rutuan. Approximately twenty years ago, the three hags convened in the marshes of Dujamar from their respective

homes in remote places of the Known Realms. The *crystal balls* they had used to communicate with one another they fused into a single *hag eye* of great power. Dispatching the thuggish rulers of Rutuan, the Black Covey was formed and declared its authority. The bodies of those who resisted their rule still decorate the town.

The hags live in an oversized cottage at the center of town. Guests to the Covey's home who retain their sanity afterward have trouble conveying the unspeakable horrors they witnessed within. A squad of ogres and their imposing boss, the lycanthrope Guloresh, enforce the Covey's laws and disturbing whims. Among their many secrets, the Covey has imprisoned a storm giant in the earth beneath their cottage, warping him with foul magics in the hopes of breeding a new servitor.

Black Dougal

(CN male human Rog14, Dex 20, Int 15, Cha 17)

Every back-alley cutpurse worth his shiv has heard of the infamous Black Dougal, rogue nonpareil. A thin, swarthy rogue with dark curls and black, dispassionate, eyes, the nefarious Dougal has been reported dead on multiple occasions, only to resurface anew with fresh scars and another fortune—which is quickly spent on women and wine.

A master of two-weapon combat, Dougal fights with the elven short sword *Ravenward* and a long knife named *Ironrain*. Both weapons bear multiple enchantments and have histories nearly as illustrious as their master's. *Ironrain*, specifically, is responsible for Dougal's penchant for survival: If the knife's master should ever perish, the blade teleports a portion of his corpse to a holding area until Dougal can be resurrected by a cleric. This also accounts for the speed with which Dougal spends his fortunes.

Black Dougal makes his home in the Free City of Soulgrave and is often found in the company of his master, Boss Bomar. Dougal was last seen riding north towards the Saint's Blood Mountains. Whispers allege he was sent on a quest to breach the legendary Iron Crypt of the Heretics.

Boss Bomar

(LN male half-orc War5/Rog3, Str 13, Int 15, Wis 14)

Unofficial master of the streets of the Free City of Soulgrave, Boss Bomar rules with a delicate balance of crude humor and quick violence. Despite his appearance as a carefree brute, Bomar seldom takes an action without considering its consequences. He simply analyzes situations so quickly that most assume that he doesn't think at

all. The barrel-chested half-orc is seldom seen without his escorts: lovely harlots that double as well-paid assassins.

Caarathyr Amond

(NG female elf Rgr8/Sor5, Dex 17, Wis 16, Cha 15)

One of seven Wardens of the Blackbriar Wood, Caarathyr is tasked with monitoring the game trails and paths leading in and out of the Blackbriar. A merry, lively elf-maid, Caarathyr (or Mistress Caar as she is known to her rangers) is quick to laugh, her voice ringing through the sun-dappled woods like a birdsong. It therefore comes as a surprise to many when evil humanoids or monsters enter the Blackbriar, and this same elf-maid transforms into a solemn huntress.

Caarathyr is deadly with a bow, and—while she seldom boasts of her skill—ranks among the deadliest archers in the North. Her prized possession is a composite bow made of cherry ash and dragon horn. Inscribed with flowing, elvish script, it is said the enchanted bow refuses to be strung by any but its mistress.

Captain Sentri

(LG male human Ftr14, Str 17, Con 15, Wis 14, Cha 15)

Master of the Sable March and General of the Seven Armies, Captain Sentri is renowned throughout the North as a paragon of virtue and righteousness. At heart a humble, loyal warrior of Crieste, Sentri is forced to play games of cloak and dagger to protect his nation's Child-Emperor. To rely on deception galls Sentri, but his plots

are no less cunning for his qualms.

The heir to eleven generations of warrior-lords, Sentri is steeped in the warrior traditions of Crieste. As a young soldier, he proved his skill and courage fighting on the borderlands. Afterward, Sentri traveled widely, serving first as a bodyguard to Criestine nobles, and then as a knight-ambassador to Crieste's far-flung allies. Sentri is loathe to speak of his adventures, but his private chambers bear treasures and trophies collected from across the Known Realms.

A dashing warrior in his early thirties, Sentri is broad of shoulder and a natural leader of men. The Knights of the Sable March are always recruiting upright young warriors, and the captain has an eye for talent. Most at home in a suit of mail on the field of battle, Sentri is less comfortable in the duplicitous courts of Crieste. Among aristocrats, he carries himself with a solemn silence. What the court sycophants mistake for stupidity is actually a warrior's wariness among enemies—and Sentri's suspicions are seldom misplaced.

King Chull'pak

(LN male mummy lord Clr14, Str 26, Wis 21, Cha 17)

The practice of mummification by the Amoya people seldom involves necromancy, but the city-state's need brought its former king back from the repose of death in a divine ritual. King Chull'pak is a mummy lord of solemn, but noble disposition. The protection of his people is paramount to Chull'pak, and he will personally slay any who threatens the holy shrines and sacred relics of the city. As a high priest of Anahuara, the king has been known to offer powerful healing and even resurrection magic to adventurers in exchange for service to his city. Missions against the drakon are more often than not the form such service takes.

Chull'pak wears a suit of *+2 bonemail armor* fashioned from the remains of his great-grandfather and carries a silvered *+4 lucent drakon bane heavy mace*, a weapon he put to considerable use when he lived. Now he wields it like a scepter and rallies his people whenever the snake men from Ssorlang dare venture into the Anduran Mountains.

Queen Citlalli

(NG female human Ari6/Clr4, Wis 16, Cha 17)

It is said that the dazzling Queen Citlalli spends more time aboard her family's longboats than in the city proper, yet the middle-aged queen does not neglect her duties as monarch of the second most powerful Xulmec city-state. The ruling family oversees all maritime trade for Athua, and in such foreign affairs Citlalli demonstrates she is as much a businesswoman as she is a queen. The Athuans fear little in the Surya Sea, but the brooding ruin of Ayoxatlan remains the exception. Queen Citlalli has been known to use her family's wealth to bribe adventurers into exploring its infamous depths to spare her people the risk.

Cozette LeRoux

(NE human female Rog6/Ftr2/Duelist 7, Dex 16, Int 18, Cha 17)

The youngest Barrier Lord the Isles have ever known, Cozette was born in the squalor of Bloodport thirty-one years ago. The daughter of a copperless waif and a murderous pirate, at the age of seven Cozette was sold into slavery. The Sirens of Pelagia soon seized the slave ship and Cozette was eventually dropped off in a Blihai orphanage, where she was adopted by a wealthy couple and given a formal education. At the age of twenty-one, Cozette joined the Sirens. After spending a few years learning all she could about piracy and her own lineage, she murdered the Siren captain of her ship and seized it as her own.

The next ten years she spent making a name for herself, climbing her way up the Imperial Navy's wanted list. Her lust for slaughter, equal to her lust for gold, has made the surname LeRoux one of the most dreaded on the open sea. The fearless Cozette shares rulership of the Isles with Lord Raazt but she is still in the prime of her life, spending as much time at the helm of her schooner, *The*

Banshee, as she does in her opulent manor in Bloodport.

Cozette wears her russet-red tresses loose or braided, and is seldom seen without her black leather coat (which functions as a *cloak of the manta ray*) and her *+3 keen saber*. She possesses many magical items, the best of which are cached in the cellars beneath her manor and guarded with a host of deadly traps. Though she is not proficient in the use of spells, she has an appreciation for necromancy and often employs wizards to animate her dismembered victims.

The Crone

(CN female ogre-mage Drd6/Sor20/Epic5, Str 18, Con 21, Wis 18, Cha 22)

Little is known about the ancient sorceress known as the Crone. Thirteenth and mightiest in a world-spanning coven of witches, the Crone makes her home somewhere in the far reaches of the North, appearing as the mood strikes her and often going unseen for entire decades. The withered, hunchbacked ogre-hag has been known to appear before noble heroes, offering power and wealth in return for assistance on peculiar quests. Compliance is never *demanded*, but those that are foolish enough to ridicule or scorn the Crone are rarely seen again.

Cyn Alfwen

(LE female half-elf Pal8/Blk5, Str 14, Wis 15, Cha 16)

As a commander serving in the armies of Leherti, Alfwen witnessed the Fall of Leherti firsthand. Fleeing from before the rush of the Scourge, Alfwen sought refuge among the bandit lands of the Freeholds. Cyn quickly rose through the ranks of brigands, her feverish self-hatred driving her to increasingly greater depths of madness. Despite the insanity that plagues her, the blackguard is a capable leader and tactician, commanding her small army of brigands with precision and skill. Now the brigand queen of Bald Tower, Alfwen leads regular raids on the Free Cities. The half-elf's single weakness is her seething hatred for soldiers of Leherti.

Cyn dresses in arms and armor appropriate to a brigand queen. She dons spiked half-plate for battle, and fights with a black-bladed bastard sword. The sword is said to be a gift of her demon patron, the half-plate recovered from the corpse of a defeated Scourge general.

Daessa

(CG female brightvenom drakon Ari1/Mnk5/Rog7, Dex 17, Wis 15, Cha 15)

Orphaned by the Brood of Ahzari, Daessa travels the Known Realms in opposition to all assassins. Sometimes called "the assassin killer"—an epithet usually misunderstood—she is attracted to adventurers who challenge authority and champion the less fortunate. Jaded by the arrogance and cruel whims of her own kind, Daessa is not accustomed to trusting even her allies and seldom speaks her intentions directly.

When her aristocratic family was slain by the Brood of Ahzari, Daessa escaped Ssorlang and found temporal peace among the macabre monks of the Lamasery of the Dead. Eventually she returned to the streets of Myashtlan, her ancestral home, and embraced the arts of a thief, studying the Brood assassins from the shadows. Someday she intends to infiltrate the Moryan Temple itself, and she searches always for powerful companions to help her.

When she moves about in Ssorlang society, Daessa plays the part of a flattering courtesan, hoping to insinuate herself into influential circles. When abroad, she plays the part of a Ssorlang ambassador and tries to manipulate others to her cause. Daessa wears a silken *cloak of charisma (+4)* and proudly carries a *+4 stealth keris*, a deadly weapon and trophy she pried from the dead hands of an elder Brood assassin.

Dolgar Thraciov

(CG male gnome Sor5, Int 17, Wis 16)

One of the most sought-after figures in all the dwarven courts of Taijin, this bitter, cranky gnome sorcerer would like nothing better than to disappear into one of the deep catacombs of the Herrenia Mountains. Unfortunately for him, the crown of Taijin will not let him leave the confines of the kingdom. For in Dolgar's possession is a potent artifact—a crystal known as the *Eye of the Bloodwyrm*—capable of seeing the future and of translating the omens and portents of prophecy. Although the gnome sorcerer has little idea of how to control the device, he is able to do so with far better accuracy and results than any other being on Áereth. His abilities with the *Eye* are deemed to be quite important to the kingdom of Taijin, important enough to make the gnome sorcerer a permanent—albeit pampered—guest of the crown.

When not on official business with the courts of Taijin, Dolgar can typically be found in the alehouses and taverns of Raiju Khor, regaling all within earshot with tales of his many adventures. For not long ago, Dolgar was a noted explorer and adventurer, battling his way to fortune and glory. He longs to become an adventureer once more, and to rid himself of the *Eye* and all its power—though he does not long for dwarven soldiers to shove spears in his back as he attempt to escape Taijin. Should he ever cross the path of another adventurer, he eagerly demands details of all their tales and exploits—and should they be sufficiently exciting to his longing ears, Dolgar may tempt fate and try to join his new "friends" in a life of adventure …

Abbot Kallus Wayrenne

(LG male human Mnk3/Clr12, Wis 18, Cha 16)

Ordained as the head of the Abbey of St. Terinmora, Abbot Wayrenne is a man of unflinching piety. His stern demeanor, which seems standoffish with one's first visit to the abbey, is tempered by his compassion for those who seek the absolution of the gods. The Abbot serves Gorhan foremost, but beseeches all the benevolent gods of the Sancturn Pantheon for their protection of his ministries. Even the Xulmecs of the abbey who still practice the rituals of their native gods find Wayrenne to be tolerant of their spirituality.

The Chuzecs would conquer the abbey and sacrifice its inhabitants to their god, but thanks to Abbot Wayrenne's vigilance, it has remained safe. Unbeknownst to all, however, he is dying, slowly falling prey to a divine curse laid upon him by Xolatl, the Fire Priest. Though the Abbot's faith will save his soul, it will not save his life. Wayrenne's search for a worthy successor has him eyeing all visiting clerics with great scrutiny. He has been known to test the faith of adventuring clerics by asking great quests of them in exchange for powerful healing and holy relics.

Abbot Wayrenne carries a *staff of healing* and possesses a *phylactery of undead turning*.

Elarabeth

(NG female half-elf Ftr3/Rog4/Duelist 6, Dex 16, Int 17, Cha 18)

Possessed of emerald green hair, sea-blue eyes, and skin of palest green, the lady mayor of Halcyon presents an impressive figure. Elarabeth is a veteran mariner and retired Siren, but has settled into the politics of Halcyon to preserve the city as a bastion of safety amidst the turbulent, pirate-infested Empyrean.

Elarabeth's father was a Criestine imperial officer killed when she was only a child. Her mother, a sea elf priestess of Pelagia, was tortured and crucified by the pirates of the Barrier Isles, and for this crime Elarabeth opposes them at every opportunity. Whether funding the Sirens' continued efforts or acting as a benefactor for adventurers contesting with the Barrier pirates, Lady Elarabeth uses her family inheritance and personal wealth to make the Empyrean Ocean a safer place for all.

Elarabeth uses a *+3 frost rapier* in combat and wears a *ring of water elemental command*.

Eldren Madrigan (Tirend)

(N male human Ari5/Brd12, Dex 15, Int 18, Wis 16, Cha 19)

Eldren is the gilded heir of the Madrigan estate and along with his twin sister, Gwynathra, guildmaster of the League of Resonance like his father before him. A young man both handsome and arrogant, Eldren is the quintessential aristocrat and a foppish bard, but behind the veneer of indulgence hides a rare cunning. Fully enmeshed in the political aspects of his office, he allows his sister to travel abroad and avoid the entanglements of diplomacy.

Few who look upon the golden-haired Eldren would suspect the strings he pulls among the sovereigns of the Northlands. Fewer still know his secret: he is, in fact, Tirend Madrigan, the founder of the League of Resonance. The same magic that devastated the University of Arven Phael centuries ago transferred his spirit into the body of an absent cousin. The same magic has kept his transient mind alive through each successive

generation. When his body dies, he inhabits the body of his son a number of years afterwards, or his closest male relative. Despite his efforts, Tirend has been unable to break this curse or keep his spirit in one place. Unlike his sister, Maera, he has yielded to the magic and has even grown comfortable with it.

The League of Resonance has been his greatest love since its founding centuries ago, and Tirend intends to see its designs reach fruition. The majority of Áereth's most renowned bards report directly to him, and only a select few know his true identity.

Wealthy and resourceful, Eldren always wears a suit of *+3 glamered leather* altered to resemble the next fashion in courtier attire. He carries a *+4 dancing rapier* at all times and makes frequent use of his *pipes of sounding* to impress fans and enemies alike.

Guloresh

(CE male ogre werecrocodile Ftr8, Str 23, Int 12, Wis 14, Cha 7)

An oversized ogre of disturbing and stolid demeanor, Guloresh reports directly to Alunine of Rutuan's Black Covey. For his impeccable loyalty, the annis called upon spirits of the Dujamar marshes and gifted him with lycanthropy. The ogres that he commands are typical brutes for their kind, but Guloresh keeps them in line with uncompromising intimidation and a marked lack of bravado. Something sinister and collected lurks behind the eyes of this formidable ogre champion, and it belongs to the hag Alunine.

Guloresh wields a *+2 adamantine warhammer* and bears a *+1 heavy wooden shield of arrow catching*.

Gwynathra Madrigan (Maera)

(CG female human Ari4/Brd6/Wiz7, Dex 17, Int 17, Cha 19)

Gwynathra is the golden-haired twin of Eldren Madrigan and guildmistress of the League of Resonance. Though she has great wealth at her disposal, Gwynathra seems a wayward spirit, choosing a life in the saddle over the indulgences of her inheritance.

Yet Gwynathra, like her brother, is more than she seems. Born Maera Madrigan, she was once the beautiful and privileged twin of Tirend Madrigan, patriarch of the family and founder of the League of Resonance. When the magic disaster claimed the University of Arven Phael and the lives of those in attendance, Maera's spirit survived in the body of a relative. The experience did little to change her, however. She remained spoiled and pretentious, seeing the rebirth as another pleasure to enjoy.

The passage of centuries has changed her. Having lived countless lifetimes in the bodies of her own descendants, Maera has grown humble. Witnessing war after war, she has even come to believe in her brother's work and the pacifistic goals of the League itself. While Eldren handles the politics of the Madrigan estate, Maera wanders the Known Realms in the body of the wayward Gwynathra. Even as she carries out her duties as a renowned Resonare, Maera searches always for the means to break the curse. She is weary of stealing the bodies of her own bloodline, and hopes to find release for herself and her brother.

Maera, in the identity of Gwynathra, wears inexpensive travel clothes, but her true wealth is evident in the magical items she possesses. She wields a *rapier of puncturing* and wears *bracers of armor (+3),* a *ring of protection (+5),* and *boots of levitation*. For the research she undertakes, she makes constant use of her *bag of holding (type IV)*.

Imorag the Wise

(LN male nalvor Clr12, Dex 15, Wis 19, Cha 19)

Wandering through the endless sands of the Ghetrian Desert is Imorag the Wise, a powerful nalvor cleric in the service of the god Soleth. How this nalvor from the Lostlands came to be a disciple of Soleth is unknown; however, what is certain is that the desert cleric is one of the god's most faithful—and powerful—servants.

Although the flesh of Imorag the Wise has literally been burned and charred to a blackened husk, and though his tongue has been torn out by fearful nalvor elders, the wizened priest is still an imposing—some would even say frightening—figure. Despite the absence of a tongue, Imorag still speaks with the thunderous voice of angels, able to inspire great hope or great fear with a mere word. He is a stern, imposing individual, dressed only in threadbare robes. He only carries a rusted mace as a weapon.

Imorag travels from town to town, city to city, in the remnants of the old Khonsurian Empire, urging all whom he encounters to abandon the old, corrupt way of the sphinx and to embrace the divine power of Soleth. Though branded as a blasphemer by the government of Xa Deshret, the cleric of Soleth is no longer hunted as a criminal. His power has grown far too great, and all prior attempts to kill Imorag—hanging, burial beneath the desert sands, burning at the stake—have failed, serving only to make the legend of Imorag more powerful than before. Though constantly on the move, Imorag can frequently be found in the poorer sections of the cities of Xa Deshret, healing the sick and fervently preaching the words of his divine master Soleth.

Isolia Seyene

(N female human Rog5/Brd7, Dex 16, Int 15, Wis 16, Cha 18)

Although she was raised in the impoverished, slum districts of Kassantia, one would not think that the cultured, silver-tongued lord-baroness to be anything but a pure-blooded aristocrat. Having studied the wealthy as her prey, young Isolia Seyene quickly learned to emulate their manners to make stealing their fine jewelry an easier feat. But Isolia was whisked away from her childhood crimes by a handsome young bard for a romantic voyage touring the Empyrean Ocean. She enjoyed a wedding at sea, losing her heart to both her new husband and the azure waters of Pelagia's domain. When their ship was scuttled by the infamous pirate lord Raazt, Isolia fell into the sea where she was rescued by merfolk before the sadistic scrag could find her. Rage against the Barrier pirates and her newfound passion for the sea led the anguished Isolia inexorably to the Sirens of Pelagia.

Fifteen years later, Isolia is a Criestine lord-baroness who serves as the Sirens' chief mainland contact. She recruits for new blood and entreats the wealthy and political to donate to their cause. The largest mercantile arrangements for Siren protection pass through Isolia's hands even as she keeps the Sirens from falling into the political intrigues of Lady Mortianna. Out of the public eye, Lord-Baroness Seyene often looks for trustworthy adventurers to carry out the missions her office restricts her from taking.

Queen Itlanexca

(LG female human Ari2/Clr1, Int 18, Cha 15)

At the tender age of fourteen, the young Queen of Teotcoatlan is already a wise asset to her people. Betrothed to King Mactezu, Itlanexca is idealistic but not naïve to the truths of the world; leading Teotcoatlan to continued glory and goodness is a path fraught with many enemies.

Along with the king, Itlanexca is tutored by the wisdom of the guardian naga Nonotzale. She is an acolyte to the virtues of Cynhara in an attempt to raise the goddess from the slumber of divine death. Madrah grants her spells for the time being.

Possessing long hair of radiant silver—an anomaly among her people—the young queen wears upon her head a feathered crown that functions like a *helm of telepathy*. When visited by foreign dignitaries she has a reason to distrust, Itlanexca has no qualms about reading their thoughts.

Jolene Carignan

(CN female human Ftr7/Rog7, Dex 16, Int 16)

To most of the populace of Morena Nova, Jolene Carignan is the attractive third daughter of a minor nobleman. She is also one of the most notorious bandits in the region, robbing the plantations of Morena Nova with daring and style. In recent times, she has expanded the reach of her larcenous greed far past the borders of her homeland, robbing the coffers of Taijin as well as many treasure troves hidden throughout Xa Deshret. Her band of fellow outlaws—the Company of the Black Fox, as they have come to be known—are also the sons and daughters of the Morenan royal court. Though their identities remain secret, each bolder, grander exploit executed by Jolene and her Company brings the threat of discovery ever closer.

In the courts of Morena Nova, Jolene Carignan is a shy and demure lady. When leading the Company of the Black Fox on one of their infamous raids, however, she is vain, arrogant, and known to frequently say a bawdy word or two to her traveling companions. She is one of the best horse riders in all the land, and is renowned—though only behind the black mask of the bandit—for her remarkable skill with handheld crossbows. Of late, she has taken to more and more daring exploits, robbing vaults said to be impenetrable, stealing the biggest and grandest treasures to be found in Morena Nova. Most of what she and her Company steal is either carelessly tossed into caves or given to the poor—for them, thievery is best done for the thrill.

Joramus

(LG human male Mnk18, Str 16, Dex 18, Wis 20)

With his modest appearance and calming demeanor, one would not think the aging Master Joramus capable of the feats to which legends hold. His iron-gray hair and soft blue eyes hide the passions of a fervent hero. But Joramus is not on the road to champion righteous causes—this he did in his youth, and he has moved into the twilight of his years. Rather, this pilgrim is in the business of *making* heroes. As he wanders the Known Realms, Master Joramus constantly searches for pupils on whom to bequeath his arts. His deeds, and the new heroes he has given rise to, have made Joramus one of the most legendary humans in the current age. In some lands, his name is the utterance of myth.

Not all who meet Joramus will find his favor, but those of goodly heart who cross paths with him will be the safer for it. He offers wisdom and advice in soft-spoken tones, never preaching, never forceful. Bardic tales claim that Joramus has visited gold dragons in their remote aeries, has consulted with the sphinxes of long-faded Khonsuria, and has supped with elder nagas of old Zimala. Less well known is the fact that aside from his great martial prowess, Joramus also happens to wear a pair of *bracers of armor (+5)* and puts a pair of *+4 holy merciful nunchaku* carved from the bones of a fallen titan to good use.

Kaede Ryu

(CG female half-dragon [green] Ftr8, Str 22, Con 19, Cha 14)

The undeniable crowd favorite of the gladiatorial fighting pits of Djeser al-Maqqara, Kaede Ryu is both beautiful and deadly. For the most part, her dragon heritage is difficult to detect; only glittering green scales on her forearms and her emerald flowing hair betray the fact that she is not purely human. A slave that was reputedly captured in the jungles of the Southlands, Kaede Ryu is said to be adept with all weapons, though the longspear is her favorite. She knows how to work a crowd, and how to put on a show while fighting to the death—something that has earned her the love of the entire city. Despite the fact that she earned her freedom from the gladiator pits years ago, she continues to fight as a free warrior, commanding hefty appearance fees each time she steps into battle.

Of late, Kaede Ryu has begun her own gladiatorial school, selecting the finest slaves in the city and instructing them in the arts of war. Although it was welcomed at first by the city, Lord Marko Hellmont and other powerful figures in Djeser al-Maqqara have lately grown concerned, wondering if Kaede Rye is forming an army of gladiators … or an actual army. Rumor has it that many of the weaker slaves purchased by Kaede Ryu are simply given their freedom and sent to the Northlands, a thought that the Slavers' Council cannot accept. For the moment, her massive popularity amongst the commonfolk of Djeser al-Maqqara make the dragon warrior untouchable to her enemies.

Lady Kesheba, Magister of the Aurora

(NG female human, Wiz11, Int 17, Cha 14)

Few rulers are as devoted to their people as the baroness of Koranth. The beauty of Lady Kesheba is legendary throughout the North, and she is regularly besieged by suitors. But the devotions expressed by her paramours pale before the love Lady Kasheba bears for her country.

This love is a double-edged blade. Koranth is a nation of free-willed wizards and mages, and rallying the spellcasters to a cause other than their own mystical research can be nearly impossible. Seeing her nation beset on all sides, Lady Kesheba has been forced to seek out magical means of ensuring the mages' compliance.

The fair Magister of the Aurora is desperate for loyal agents who will carry out missions on behalf of Koranth, and will pay handsomely for discrete adventurers with a knack for survival against long odds.

Kashya

(CG female half-elf PsyWar12, Str 16, Dex 17, Wis 16)

As one of the Captains of the Wanderers, Kashya travels the wilds of the Northlands in search of psionic-using creatures in need of liberation. Herself orphaned by abhorrent creatures in a village near the Vermilion Steppes, Kashya is passionately devoted to the liberation of all who suffer from the sins of the wicked. Lately she has taken to attacking slaver caravans bound for the markets of Djeser al-Maqqara. Kashya looks always for allies against the subjugation of the innocent.

Wearing *+3 elven chain* and wielding a *psychic longsword* known as the Revenant Blade, Kashya is a formidable foe, making frequent use of her *claws of the beast* power in conjunction with her sword. With her hair half-braided and woven with beads (and other sundry trinkets), her fiery amber eyes, and dark-skinned, tattooed body, this half-elf appears savage or barbaric to Northland eyes. Kashya's truest friend is her vibrant green psicrystal, Y'na ("hero" personality).

Khorjala the Hawk

(N male human Rgr9/Asn5, Str 15, Dex 18, Con 16, Wis 15, Cha 14)

The leader of the Lehertian resistance is known to be a noble general and natural leader of men, a courageous hero emerging from the ruins of war to serve Leherti in its darkest hour.

Nothing could be further from the truth.

Before the Fall of Leherti, the man calling himself Khorjala was awaiting execution in the dungeons of Araloges. When the Scourge swept over the city, the convict fought his way to freedom, eluding both his captors and the swarming hordes of orcs. Working his way south to the Free Cities, the convict killed Scourge soldiers out of necessity, inadvertently drawing the attention and support of the Lehertian resistance.

For the first time in the assassin's life, he found himself welcomed with open arms. The same crimes that labeled him a criminal now made him a hero of the common people. Arriving in the Free Cities, he adopted the name Khorjala, accepted the promotion to general, and has been taking the fight to the Scourge ever since.

Khorjala's success has not gone unnoticed by Tarkhan Khurzog. The demon-ogre knows something of Khorjala's past as an assassin, and delights in the power he wields over his greatest enemy. It is only a matter of time before the demon-ogre offers Khorjala a choice: Join the Scourge or be exposed as an imposter and assassin.

Khaine Gyles Durran

(NG male human Ftr10, Str 16, Dex 19, Wis 14, Cha 14)

Formerly a proud knight in the service of the Grand Duchy of Leherti, Sir Giles Durran was exiled from Crieste for his supposed failures during the Fall of Leherti. Whether these failures were genuine or trumped-up charges by others, no one can say, for Durran does not speak of his time in Crieste anymore, save to mention that he has a daughter there.

Following his exile, Durran made his way to the Lostlands, where he lived handsomely as a mercenary fighter for many years. His unrivaled prowess with the longbow caught the eye of one of the Vermilion Tribes, who asked him to join their number. Surprisingly, he did, and his blunt, no-nonsense attitude, as well as his legendary ferocity in combat, allowed him to quickly rise in the normally reclusive Tribe society, eventually leading him to become the ruling Khaine of the Huligai Tribe. He has begun to combine the traditional battle tactics of the Vermilion Tribes with those of the armies of the Northlands, turning the Tribes into an even deadlier fighting force. He is a quiet, unassuming man who says little and prefers to lead by example, but those who know him well say that revenge still burns brightly in his heart.

Leton N'Rhyll

(NG male halfling Brd8, Str 14, Dex 18, Int 16)

Leton N'Rhyll is one of the most well-known bards in the entire world. Although not the sweetest singer nor the most skilled with a lyre, there is not a tale or song in the entire world that Leton N'Rhyll does not know. His memory is legendary: The halfling bard has but to hear a song once, or see a scrap of parchment for a mere moment, and it is committed forever to his memory. Although the earnest young halfling has already traveled the realms of Áereth thrice over, he always returns to his humble tent in Gadjarria.

Leton's uncanny memory has made him part of many an adventure, albeit usually against his will. Though the bard would like to say that his appearance in royal courts throughout the world is entirely due to his good looks and sense of humor, the truth is that thieves constantly conspire to enlist his aid in their grandiose schemes. Leton has been kidnapped on well over a dozen occasions by ambitious bandits, hoping that the halfling bard can perhaps memorize a stolen treasure map for them, or recall a line from an ancient prophecy. For this reason, the feisty halfling bard, who possesses an overwhelmingly grand appetite for good food and fine wine, is notoriously wary of strangers with swords, particularly those who seem eager to ask him about tales of adventure.

Linni

(N female halfling Brd8/Psi5, Dex 16, Int 16, Cha 18)

As one of the Captains of the Wanderers, the halfling Linni travels the known roads of the Northlands in order to find psionic-using creatures in need of a home. As a psion and bard, she conceals her psionic talent from the ignorant and proclaims it to those who share it. Linni rides a valiant war pony named Marigold, using telepathic powers and dramatic songs to mislead her enemies and search for those in need.

Linni wears a suit of *+2 glamered leather armor* and favors her *+2 seeking shortbow* when forced into battle. She sings old songs of her ancestry in Gadjarrian and composes new ballads for Elraydia, but Linni's greatest passion finds expression through her masterwork drums. Her everyday companion is her psicrystal, Chenneth ("sympathetic" personality)—which means "grandmother" in Halfling—who has been known to scold Linni when it disapproves of her actions.

Loremer d'Arisseux

(N male human Ari2/Rog1, Int 15)

Motivated by greed and fear of responsibility, Loremer will do anything to ensure his position as mayor of Pleniere. Fortunately, such motivations often coincide with the safety of the town itself. When things are going well for him, Loremer assists explorers in smuggling Southland contraband through the Criestine tax system.

King Mactezu

(LG male human Ari2/Pal1, Wis 16, Cha 18)

Just fifteen years old, the young King of Teotcoatlan is already a proficient warrior on the path to greatness. Mactezu is still impressionable, but his secret mentor, the elder naga Nonotzale, and his betrothed, Queen Itlanexca, are his chief allies against a world of enemies: jealous nobles and foreign powers who would take the rulership of the most powerful Xulmec city-state from his youthful hands.

A paladin of many virtues, Mactezu's skills remain untested against the dangers of the world. He and his queen are guarded by the royal guard, an elite order of fighter/rangers who are always close at hand—except when Mactezu and Itlanexca meet with their serpentine mentor. Nonotzale teaches the young sovereigns the value of tolerance, so King Mactezu is willing to meet with foreigners if they have anything to offer Teotcoatlan, whether in the form of martial prowess, arcane knowledge, or simply information about faraway lands.

The dark-eyed young king keeps a *flame tongue* on his person at all times, a gift from Viceroy Durand. Mactezu is a handsome youth beloved by most of his subjects.

The Maelidoch

(LE male tiefling Wiz16, Dex 14, Con 6, Int 22)

The grim master of the Sireal Citadel is a demon half-blood trapped in a body crippled by an occult disease. The Maelidoch's tiefling traits aren't readily apparent as such, and he wears a black mask and heavy cloak to disguise the deformities that mark him as other than human. The wizard's body is covered in scaled scar tissue born of the disease that burns through his blood and makes his skin hot to the touch. Whether this blood-plague is the physical manifestation of the wizard's infernal ancestry or the result of his wicked experiments is unknown.

The Maelidoch is amoral and indifferent to the suffering of others, but seldom cruel for the sake of cruelty. He per-

forms endless cycles of experiments on the prison's inmates, twisting and shaping flesh like a sculptor shapes clay. The vast majority of Sireal's inmates never see the warden, but those who do cross the paths of the Maelidoch report a tall, silent man-thing cloaked in black, and trailing an aura of death and decay.

The Maelidoch holds himself aloof from the internecine politicking of the lord-barons, ruling his island prison free of corruption and outside influence. Curiously, the Maelidoch bears an unswerving loyalty to the Child-Emperor of Crieste. Like the wizard's crippling disease, the origins of this devotion are a mystery to all but the Maelidoch and his master.

Melisine d'Aurielle

(NG human female Sor8, Dex 17, Int 19, Cha 18)

The brilliant and beautiful Melisine d'Aurielle was tutored with her innate magic from a young age, and she enjoyed a carefree and spoiled life of magic and luxury. After an old mentor recommended she and her sister, Amarante, to the Royal Academy of Sorcery in Kassantia, she found her life changing dramatically. Her vanity and pride paved the way to an impressive reputation and soon the crown assigned her to the prestigious Beryl Conclave in the town of Voltigeur across the Empyrean.

Melisine became one of the arcane protectors of the Criestine Colonies, but she sees the assignment as an insult to her talents. Though well meaning in her station, she dreams of greater ambitions and has taken to researching local legends in hopes of finding the recognition she feels she deserves.

Melisine's inheritance and natural talent has yielded her a number of magical possessions. She wears an *amulet of natural armor (+2), bracers of armor (+4),* a *ring of blinking*, a *ring of regeneration*, and a host of jewelry.

Morgan Ironwolf

(NG female human Ftr9/Rgr4, Str 15, Con 17, Wis 14)

Raven haired, iron willed, and wild eyed, Ironwolf fought her way up from the rank of a common sellsword to the command of her own mercenary company. When the Duchy of Leherti fell to the Scourge, the Company of the Ironwolf was trapped behind the armies of the advancing horde. Morgan Ironwolf and her company of soldiers rallied the citizens of the city of Yithain. Led by the brazen warrior, the company turned the tide of the battle, and Yithain remains free to this day.

A young woman with a quiet temper and a strong sense of justice, Ironwolf leads her warriors by example. Before the Fall of Leherti, she had little reason to risk the wrath of the Scourge. But having witnessed the Tarkhan's cruelty firsthand, Ironwolf's conscience compels her to defend the forsaken refugees of Occupied Leherti.

The warrior commonly wears a fine suit of *elven chain mail* given to her by the elves of the Blackbriar, and carries a shield emblazoned with the company's sigil. She fights with a cunning mix of sound tactics and unrivaled bravery.

Lady Mortianna

(LE female human Ari4/Sor13, Int 14, Cha 19)

The coldly beautiful Lady Mortianna rules Crieste as Vizier to the Child-Emperor. Her plots span the entire continent and even reach into the Lostlands and Southlands. Some of the finest rogues and mages of the North serve as her spies, and very little transpires without the Vizier's knowledge. Her chief frustration is Captain Sentri, who, along with his Knights of the Sable March, has been able to match her schemes, move for move. Mortianna craves the humiliating defeat of her rival, and is always looking for pawns to play against Crieste's loyal son.

As befitting her position, Mortianna dresses in demure obeisance to the Child-Emperor. However, no one looking into her midnight black eyes can mistake the lady's raw ambition and force of personality. Like a marble statue, the lady has a cold, yet undeniable beauty. Many have courted the Vizier, offering to steal, lie, and even murder

on her behalf. An equal number have met their end at an executioner's axe, used and then abandoned by the lady whose affections they hoped to win.

Nentawat

(N male darkvenom drakon Ari2/Clr8, Str 15, Int 18, Wis 19, Cha 16)

The mayor-priest of Angkar is charged as caretaker of the ancient town and the sacred temple of Madrah that it oversees. A degenerate aristocrat in his youth, the drakon's heart has been humbled by decades of visiting pilgrims seeking the hidden truths of Madrah. Though he still possesses a glimmer of his racial arrogance, Nentawat has come to respect the many children of the Lord of the Earth and Sky and now he sees all foreigners as a chance to learn more about Áereth. Visitors to Angkar expecting hostility from the drakon are delightfully surprised by its soft-spoken ruler.

Nonotzale

(LG male guardian naga Clr6, Str 21, Dex 14, Con 19, Int 16, Wis 20, Cha 18)

A guardian naga of considerable power and knowledge, Nonotzale is the wise mentor behind the thrones of the Xulmec city-state of Teotcoatlan. Once a friend to the former queen of the Gilded City, now Nonotzale counsels the young King Mactezu and Queen Itlanexca with an eye to the future of all Xulmec. Lairing deep beneath the royal palace, the naga teaches the adolescent monarchs the virtues of Cynhara and the foresight of Madrah. In a land still wary of the presence of nagas, for now Nonotzale's presence remains a secret. Yet rumors have already circulated far as to the presence of *something* guiding the king and queen, and a time will come soon when the naga must reveal himself.

Hatched beneath the lost Zimalan capital city, Nonotzale spent the first half of his life fighting against the dark and spirit nagas who still haunt the ruins of the long-faded empire. When a young explorer named Cetlana found his home, a friendship was forged. Years later, when Cetlana married the king of Teotcoatlan, she invited the aging guardian naga to live with them in the palace. On her deathbed, she beseeched her old friend to care for her son and his new queen. Nonotzale has done so, and is ever vigilant against threats to his young charges.

Oro Loroth, the Mountain King

(LE male dwarf Ftr13, Str 17, Con 21, Int 14)

Few villains dominate the imaginations of the peasants in the western Northlands like the legend of Oro Loroth, the Mountain King. The renegade dwarf-lord reigns from his nigh-invulnerable mountain fastness, raiding the nations of good at will, carrying off slaves and entire troves of stolen treasure.

Taller than the average dwarf, his body decorated with tattooed runes, and his soot-stained beard as black as charcoal, Loroth cuts a fearsome image. The Mountain King's army is a ferocious mix of renegade dwarves, monstrous humanoids, human mercenaries, and beasts. While far from a match for the legions of the Steel Overlord, the Mountain King has more than enough might to defend that which is his. There will come a time when Loroth oversteps his boundaries and draws the wrath of the Overlord, but until that day he raids the southwestern slope of the Ul Dominors, terrorizing the people of the Sylvan Downs and trading the souls of his captives to infernal beings in exchange for power and demonic allies.

King Oztahua

(NG male human Ari2/Ftr8, Str 16, Wis 16, Cha 16)

King Oztahua of the Xulmec city-state of Kaatlan favors pragmatism above all else. He is predisposed toward peaceful coexistence and open trade with his neighbors,

believing in the tenets of his goddess, Calchoti. But at the slightest provocation from the Chuzecs or untoward actions from folk he does not know, Oztahua is quick to consider bloodshed and the tenets of Coatlimict. While he favors peace, he would rather allow the death of a hundred foreigners to save one of his own.

Prester "Trapmaster" Ungart

(NG male dwarf Rog14, Dex 18, Int 17)

With lockpicks in hand, a worn axe slung over his back, and a crossbow at his side, Prester "Trapmaster" Ungart has forgotten more about traps, tricks, and puzzles than most dungeon delvers will ever know. A master at deciphering lost languages and hieroglyphs, Prester made a name for himself early in his career by surviving traps and ambushes with an almost-intuitive sense for danger. Nearing retirement, the dwarf continues to roam the Known Realms in search of ever greater challenges, sometimes relishing the trap more than the treasure. He has contributed his knowledge to the creation of a handful of dungeons (most notably the Thief Lord's Vault), but Prester's first and last love will forever be exploration, preferably with a great deal of risk and reward thrown in for good measure.

Raazt

(CE male scrag Sor7/Ftr3, Str 25, Con 23, Int 15, Cha 16)

Known among fearful sailors as the Scrag Scuttler, Raazt's name is near the top of the long list of pirates wanted dead or alive by the Criestine Imperial Navy. Though he's owned several galleys, Raazt's favored method of pirating came with a unique use of necromancy: attacking ships via the hollowed-out and animated corpse of an immense dire shark he named *Lesstra*. Raazt's sobriquet stemmed from his reviled strategy of punching through the hull of his victim's ship, then surging up with his men—humans and orc-kin, mostly—through the hold. Lord Raazt made a tradition out of personally devouring the captain of each unfortunate ship as it slowly sank into the sea. Getting on in years now, Raazt has retired from the trade, setting up in Dead Man's Cove and sharing the rulership of the Barrier Isles with Cozette LeRoux, whom he despises and intends to one day kill and eat. Raazt sells his necromancy secrets and occasionally hires out *Lesstra* to wizards he feels are worthy of her.

Once a lithe specimen like most aquatic trolls, Raazt's body has rounded out since retiring from active piracy. Among other gruesome accoutrements, he wears a barbed fisherman's net over his mottled gray skin which functions as a *cloak of resistance +2* and he always keeps his *+3 cutlass of icy burst* on hand. A black leather patch (an *amulet of proof against detection and location*) covers his destroyed right eye, the painful result of an enchanted acidic dagger wound that will not regenerate. The very few who've seen what lies beneath the patch report a melted, fleshy pit that exposes part of his skull. Finding and flaying alive the Siren (see Sirens of Pelagia in Chapter 5 of the Gazetteer) who blinded him remains one of Raazt's major goals. Any lead on her whereabouts often takes priority over any other plot.

Paranoid and cruel, Raazt is in a perpetually foul mood. As a creature from cold waters, he complains constantly about the temperature of the sea around the Barrier Isles, but knows that his lot as a Barrier Lord is preferable to the short and ultimately unrewarding lifestyle of his kind. His quasit familiar, Azt, always perches on Raazt's shoulder and often parrots back the words of visitors in a mocking tone.

Raquelle Clavet

(LG female human Ari2/Ftr10, Str 15, Con 16, Wis 15, Cha 15)

Charged with the defense of the Criestine Colonies from Xulmec aggression, Lieutenant Clavet is a steel-nerved fighter. Given the nickname "princess of the borderline" (though never spoken to her face), Clavet is unwilling to exhibit vulnerability as a warrior or a woman. Her strength at arms is rivaled only by her tongue and tempered by her sense of justice. Yet these virtues and faults are softened foremost by her love for the people in her protection. Clavet is not overly prejudiced against the Xulmec natives, but her zealous devotion to the crown and her Northland kin make her an uncompromising diplomat. A former Knight of the Sable March, Clavet was charged by Captain Sentri himself to handle border disputes with Xulmec on the colonial frontier.

A fixture of Ft. Montsiang now for several years, the Omian Pass has never been safer than it is on Clavet's watch. Her soldiers are well equipped and well trained to handle the aggressions of the Chuzec warriors, but the lieutenant is always willing to hire newcomers to clear the Pass from more monstrous denizens. Such dangerous work is better handled by versatile adventurers than her Criestine soldiers.

Raylen Durand

(LE male rakshasa Rog5, Dex 16, Con 16, Int 16, Cha 17)

The real Raylend Durand was a ruthless courtier from Archbridge who beseeched Lady Mortianna for the role

of Imperial viceroy of the Criestine Colonies. Impressed with his proposals and esteemed career, she had him murdered and replaced him with a trusted otherworldly cohort—the better to control the far-off Imperial colony.

Raj-nirav, a sadistic rakshasa, relishes his guise as the pompous Viceroy Durand. With appraising eyes fixed firmly upon the Southlands, he sends regular reports to Lady Mortianna and in turn she sees to some of his Northland interests. A thorn in his side is Acatzalan, the mayor of Voltigeur, and Raquelle Clavet, the militant commander of Ft. Montsiang, do-gooders he hopes to soon replace with two of his kin, newly arrived from the far east.

The false Raylen Durand wears an *amulet of proof against detection and location* to further conceal his identity, and he keeps a *ring of djinni calling*, delighting in ordering about the noble genie bound to its owner.

Sakda

(LN male brightvenom drakon Ari8, Int 17, Wis 15, Cha 15)

This elderly drakon is the current and longstanding lord of Kanthara. He is a pragmatic ruler, and despite the accusations of human sympathy made against him, Sakda works to boost the living conditions of the slums of Kanthara. Seeking to improve the quality of the slave stock benefits both the humans and the drakon.

Saley Lonesinger

(CG female halfling Ftr7/Rog7)

The stories that surround this renowned pirate hunter seldom portray her as the halfling she is. Nicknamed the Empyrean Terror by bards, the mere sight of her standard—a shattered skull and spyglass—sends most buccaneers retreating at full sail. Saley is unrelenting in her pursuit, however, and those guilty of piracy that do not surrender are slain without mercy. When face-to-face with Saley, her enemies discover that the Empyrean Terror is a mere three and a half feet tall—yet every inch of her is worth fearing.

As leader of the Sirens of Pelagia, Saley has made many enemies. She has personally waged several sea battles against Cozette LeRoux—vicious engagements, many of which only the red-haired piratess and the diminutive Siren have survived. Saley is good humored in her everyday life, but she takes pirate-hunting very seriously. She is often encountered in the company of clerics of Soleth, Pelagia, and Olidyra. The many lives Saley has taken—always unapologetically and in the name of the greater good—has left in the steely halfling a need for frequent

penance among the gods she adores. Likewise, she has lost many friends to the cutlasses of her chosen enemies.

Saley Lonesinger wears a tailored suit of *+3 leather armor of invulnerability* and wields a *+4 human bane rapier,* a weapon she is very careful to keep from her enemies' hands.

Saraas Helsborne, the Steel Overlord

(LG male dwarf Ari3/Ftr14, Str 16, Con 17, Wis 15, Cha 14)

The ruler of the dwarven Holdfast is a passionate dwarf with midnight-black hair and a beard woven with gold and platinum. A mere three hundred years old, Helsborne stands with one foot in the past while looking to the future. This ability to balance tradition and the changing needs of the bearded mountain folk has earned Helsborne the respect and admiration of all the dwarves of the North.

Holdfast armies hold the Ul Dominor Mountains against the advance of the Scourge, a fact that is not lost on the nobles of Crieste. Helsborne trades on his nation's place as the linchpin in the North's war against the Scourge, encouraging trade with the elves and nations of men. The sole chink in Helsborne's armor is the renegade dwarf known as the Mountain King. For reasons unknown to human and dwarven sages alike, Helsborne refuses to war against the Mountain King, instead permitting the tyrannical villain to lurk in the very shadows of Helsborne's Holdfast.

Senth Lavrousse

(NG male half-elf Rgr8, Str 15, Dex 16, Wis 16)

Outcast from the Blackbriar Quarter of Voltigeur because of his mixed blood, Senth Lavrousse turned to the wilds of the Eztenqui Jungle and found himself enamored of its spirits. His accomplishments and zeal in defending the environs of Feronte from the frequent dangers of the jungle earned him the title of mayor from Viceroy Durand. Senth only half-heartedly accepted the position, favoring the active role of town guardian to the role of politician. Nevertheless, the townsfolk obey his wishes, and the young womenfolk vie for his favor. Senth's heart, however, belongs to a dryad sorceress of the Eztenqui who knows the secrets of Mt. Icpitl.

Seremac Beldor, the Black Prince

(LE male human Ari4/Ftr8, Dex 17, Int 14, Cha 9)

The Black Prince of Amin Dor possesses a fierce temper. Though handsome, Beldor's acerbic bitterness drives away friends and family, leaving only foppish toadies hoping to earn gold by association. The prince bears a burning animosity toward his father, the good King Beldor, and does everything in his power to embarrass and shame the aging monarch. The Black Prince is a master of warcraft, having studied at the feet of great military veterans since he could speak, but prefers to do away with his foes through deception and guile.

Serpent Oracle

(N female medusa, Sor12)

A pariah among her kind, the Serpent Oracle is an enigmatic medusa named Vhonistryl who has shunned the company of evil creatures to offer her prophetic powers to those who can find her. Gifted with great prescience even at a young age, Vhonistryl perceived her own kind's murderous jealousy and escaped before the inevitable assassination. Since that day, long ago, she has been unable to foresee her own fate—only those of the pilgrims who come before her.

The Serpent Oracle can see deeply into the future. Yet she is uncertain of the gods' intent with her gift, so she offers her visitors only sparing glances into the future and keeps her words cryptic. She hides within the ruins of Cohuatlizon, praying before a shrine to Choranus, the Seer Father, for insight into her own future. Vhonistryl lives a lonely existence, slaying the envious intruders who would exploit her powers and finding occasional delight—aloof though it must be—in more amiable company. She suppresses her gaze attack frequently, relying on her sorcery more than her heritage to subdue opponents. Nevertheless, over the decades the city's promenade has accrued a vast number of unwilling statues.

Her only regular companionship is a small gang of stone giants who adore her and live on the outskirts of Cohuatlizon. Asking nothing of her for themselves, they have earned her trust and always assist her against her greatest enemies.

Shahriyel Jhek

(CE male human lich Wiz22, Int 30, Wis 20, Cha 24)

In ancient times, the chief advisor to the Sphinx Queen Ankharet of the Khonsurian Empire was a cunning human wizard called Shahriyel Jhek. The evil wizard dared to overstep his bounds one too many times with his queen, and for his arrogance Ankharet walled Shahriyel Jhek up within his own tower, a prisoner for all eternity.

But Shahriyel Jhek was not to be so easily defeated. Using the magicks available to him within his prison tower, Jhek cheated death by transforming himself into an undead monstrosity—a lich. Then luck chose to smile upon the horrid creature. A group of unwary explorers happened upon the wizard's tower, and in opening the gates to his prison, they inadvertently freed him. Jhek made his way back into the realms of the living, which had not seen the likes of his evil for many a year.

Eventually, Jhek wandered out of the desert sands and through the gates of Rhaz al-Khali. He immediately

slaughtered its rulers and assumed command of the city. Jhek has bent the will of the city to his aims, which is to discover the secrets of an ancient prophecy called *The Riddle of Darkest Qartepre*. Only Jhek knows the entirety of the prophecy, and he shares this with no one. Despite his hideous appearance—Jhek still wears the tarnished golden circlet and the black robes that mark his station as an advisor of the Sphinx Queen—he is a gifted speaker and charismatic figure, able to enthrall the masses of Rhaz al-Khali with his silver tongue and powerful spells.

Shatu-murrim

(LG female lammasu Clr7, Str 22, Int 17, Wis 20)

Born in the ruins of Coatopolan, Shatu-murrim is the matriarch of a family of lammasus allied with the paladins of the Miztlani. She personally guards the tombs of Cihuamiztli, the Golden Lady, and her own grandfather, the Naram-sin. Shatu-murrim gives counsel to the Knights of Gold and shares with them the wisdom she has gained from her Lostland visitations and her heavenly contacts, and she even teaches Draconic or Celestial to those willing to learn. Any who would harm her family will find the peaceful lammasu matron to be a vessel of divine wrath.

Sionala Khor

(NE, female half-elf, Bbn8/Drd8, Str 15, Int 14, Wis 17, Cha 17)

As the de facto ruler of the Valley of Xyr Muthal, Sionala Khor is perhaps one of the most powerful figures in all the Lostlands. The barbarian queen wields a mighty artifact, a staff known as the Soulbinder, and with that staff Sionala controls all the beasts within the valley. Dinosaurs, mammoths, primitive dragons—all sorts of mighty beasts obey every whim of the haughty but beautiful barbarian queen.

The true origins of Sionala Khor are unknown, although most sages believe that she may have once been a slave in the markets of Djeser al-Maqqara. Most creatures that know of her think of her as a good, kindly soul—a perfect queen ruling over a gentle paradise. This image is completely false, but it's one that Sionala Khor perpetuates nonetheless. In actuality, she is a cruel, cold despot, who cares nothing for the Valley of Xyr Muthal or its creatures … she only loves the treasures that they can provide for her. Sionala Khor plays the wide-eyed innocent fool with those poor souls she encounters, trying to take advantage of them as best she can—but once they are of no use to her, she cruelly disposes of them.

Sonechki

(CG female human Rog4/Wiz8, Dex 16, Int 18)

The daughter of a Criestine nobleman and a gypsy sorceress, Sonechki has never found peace in the Imperial courts or the wandering caravan of her mother's tribe. A bookish rogue and artful wizard, Sonechki spends most of her time seeking the identity of her father's murderer and the whereabouts of her estranged mother. She collects magical daggers and spells like a miser his gold coins.

Sonechki's best clue to finding her mother is the curious *staff of divination* that once belonged to the elusive gypsy woman. She searches the Northlands for leads, often employing adventuring companies to investigate locales too dangerous for her alone. Her only constant companion is her familiar, an arrogant and ambitious owl named Evvit who looks down his beak on everyone except Sonechki.

Sparkmaker

(CN male tiefling Sor11, Dex 18, Int 17, Cha 18)

A wandering tiefling with an identity crisis, Sparkmaker shuns his given name, choosing instead the nickname given to him by his gnomish master. At a glance, he resembles a nondescript half-elf—and does his best to remain inconspicuous—but up close one cannot miss the preternatural appeal to his eyes and the small, curling horns growing from his temples. His manners twitchy and his paranoia profound, Sparkmaker seldom trusts

anyone too much. Yet he frequently attaches himself to adventuring companies to search for a future that makes sense to him—and to run from his devilish heritage.

Sparkmaker favors electricity spells and *summon monster*. He possesses several *ioun stones* and makes frequent—and at times premature—use of his *+2 shock light crossbow*. Sparkmaker's truest friend is his familiar, a rat named Stin'Kki, who offers him sound advice and appraisals of exotic cheeses.

Tala Revalieth

(N female elf Drd10, Dex 16, Wis 18)

Displaced from Mirdar Forest by the orc hordes that overran it, the wild elf Tala Revalieth now walks the Northland forests to bring Ildavir's justice to those who abuse her children. Favoring animals more than humanoids, she is the friend of all beasts and an enemy to those who would harm them.

Her wheat-colored hair, soft blue eyes, and fair features do little to hide her frosty disposition from strangers—a fact strangely offset by the presence of her friend and animal companion, a people-loving brown bear named Mungo. Despite her ire, Tala is still an elf, delighting in beautiful art and the majesty of the natural world. When sharing her company, other elves find Tala unusually impatient but endlessly resourceful.

Tala puts her *+3 spectral longbow* and *+2 flaming scimitar* to good use against aberrations and undead who intrude in the Northland forests.

Tarkhan Khurzog, Scourge of the North

(LE male half-fiend/ogre-mage Ftr12/Sor9, Str 24, Con 20, Int 17, Wis 14, Cha 19)

The fearsome overlord of the Scourge is a demon-blooded orge-mage of unmatched ambition and cruelty. The unholy offspring of a minor demon and an ogre-mage witch, Khurzog is a master at pitting the nations of the North against one another. By turning the suspicious, untrusting natures of kings to his advantage, the Tarkhan and his armies marched through the Northlands like a storm, toppling ancient nations and razing whole cities for their pleasure.

The kings of the civilized lands look to the North, praying that the Tarkhan's greed is sated, all the while knowing that the next war is not a matter of if, but when. For now Khurzog patiently bides his time in Azmog-Azmennum, studying his enemies and plotting his next campaign. The demon-ogre can afford to be patient: Each day the might of his armies grows and the courage of his enemies weakens.

Terhalien Raalt

(CE male drow Ftr6/Rog6/Asn4, Str 14, Dex 18, Int 16)

This skilled assassin is perhaps one of the most notorious killers on Áereth. Devilishly handsome, this fiendish drow is wanted in at least twelve different kingdoms for his murderous exploits. Although able to kill in any numbers of ways, Terhalien prefers a dagger tipped with an extremely rare poison, one purportedly made from tarrasque blood. The effect of the poison is always fatal and extremely slow-acting, putting its victims in exquisite agony for days before finishing them. The poison fits Terhalien's personality perfectly, as he kills for sport. The gold collected for killing his victims is merely a bonus. Sarcastic and sharp of wit, Terhalien is said to be quicker with his tongue than with his dagger.

Most recently, Terhalien was wanted for the killings of a Morenan duchess, who was flung off the parapets of the royal palace. His whereabouts since then are unknown. If not in a brothel or otherwise in the company of a beautiful woman, he typically can be found in various thieves' guilds, always searching for information, or at least for a situation to use to his advantage. Although he typically works alone, Terhalien is not above teaming up with others. Such "partners," however, rarely live to collect their reward.

Tsurugi Saku

(LG male dwarf Ftr12, Str 17, Con 16, Wis 15, Cha 12)

Also known as the Rock of Raiju, this venerable dwarf is a ferocious warrior and a trusted advisor, serving as a confidante for the past four Taijin kings. Tsurugi Saku is believed to be well over four hundred years old, ancient by even dwarf standards, yet the spry old warrior is still able to beat warriors half his age in duels. He faithfully acts as guardian of the magic seal for the Merchant House of Bakar Joseon each and every day.

In his earlier days, Saku personally led many of the dwarven assaults against their goblin enemies during the Seppuku Cleansing. Far better than any ancient map, Sake personally knows every twist and turn of the vast labyrinth of passageways that run beneath the Herrenia Mountains. He also knows the locations of every lair that ever existed in the mountains, from the largest giant caves to the smallest kobold warrens. A stern but kindly soul, Tsurugi Saku glady helps anyone who treats him with courtesy and respect.

Emperor Vithoon

(CE male darkvenom drakon Wiz15, Str 16, Con 14, Int 21, Wis 21, Cha 19)

Venerable and cruel, the Emperor of Ssorlang has coiled about the Emerald Throne for many long years, and they have taken their toll. Stricken with senility and recurring diseases that his attendants cannot cure for much longer, Vithoon's death is near. He usually defers to the decisions of his son, Prince Zurasak, but moments of lucidity suggest that the old drakon has a few more schemes to hatch—most of which do not include his son.

Volei Ojar

(CE male half-orc Ftr7/Rog6/Asn3, Str 15, Dex 17, Con 16, Int 14)

A slim, tusk-jawed half-orc with hard eyes and a quick blade, Volei Ojar is also one of the North's most wanted assassins—a fact he rues every day. Since the botched assassination attempt on King Beldor two years ago, Ojar has been on the run. The attempts on his own life tapered off after Ojar took up service with the Mountain King, but the half-orc is too cagey to believe that all the bounty hunters have abandoned the hunt.

Ojar is always on the lookout for young assassins to use as pawns, and passes along jobs to those who show promise. Despite his eagerness to rebuild a circle of assassins, the half-orc watches his associates and servants with the jaded eye of a hired killer, knowing that

with enough gold, anyone can be bought.

Xolatl

(LE male human Clr16, Str 17, Wis 18, Cha 18)

Known as the Fire Priest, Xolatl is the king and chief spiritual leader of the city-state of Chuzec. He rules the city with intimidation and frightening piety, his every edict said to be the will of Tlachinozal, the Scorched God. Those who question his orders find themselves—and their families—bound to the sacrificial alters of the Burning Temple.

Xolatl wears a suit of *+3 banded mail* edged with obsidian armor spikes and adorned with red phoenix feathers. The fearless priest wields a *+3 adamantine flaming burst battle axe* and a *+2 shortbow of distance*.

Yaracen Eoth

(LN male human Ftr9, Str 15, Dex 18, Int 17)

Although blind since the day he was born, Yaracen Eoth is a skilled and graceful fighter. Once one of the best pit fighters in all of Djeser al-Maqqara, his freedom was purchased in the slave markets there some thirty-odd years ago by a masked bidder. That bidder turned out to be one of the silent servants of the white apes of Tharnaka, who trained Yaracen Eoth to be his successor. When not on the Isles of Tharnaka, Yaracen Eoth is on the great ships traveling from the Isles to some other destination on Áereth usually conducting business on behalf of the white apes that are his true masters.

Yaracen Eoth is the guide that many merchants and other travelers seek when heading to Tharnaka. Though he barely speaks above a whisper, the blind, grizzled warrior is slightly more forthcoming about the secrets of the Isles of Tharnaka than most of his blind brethren. He is also cryptic when supplying answers to questions, and can play the part of the helpless, ignorant blind man well—however, he is a sharp and shrewd tactician, and has free rein to negotiate on the white apes' behalf. He also appears to be their most trusted servant, with access to nearly everything in all the cities of the Isles. He also is the only servant known to be able to change the minds of his ape masters, and his ability to mediate is legendary. More than once, hostilities between rival merchants visiting the Isles have been quelled by a few stern but soothing words from the blind warrior.

Yollotl

(CE male darkvenom drakon Ari3/Wiz7, Int 18, Cha 16)

Yollotl is the sadistic and collected lord of the city of Xincayot, and a strong supporter of Ssorlang's Amotuans. He spends most of his time organizing expeditions into the ruins of old Zimala, hoping to increase the influence of his faction with elder magic. Yollotl eschews his own sorcery in favor of the legion of bodyguards, and gives each of his servants who displeases him a single chance for reparation. Failing that, they are impaled, along with enemies of the state, and made to decorate the shoreline outside of the city walls.

King Zacatal

(N male human Ftr10, Str 18, Dex 17, Wis 15)

King Zacatal is the fair-minded monarch of the Xulmec city-state of Maras. In times of war, he personally takes to the field and leads his scouts in guerilla warfare, allowing nothing to endanger his people or the sacred cenotes they guard.

Prince Zurasak

(CE male darkvenom drakon Ftr5/Sor6/Eldritch Knight3, Str 21, Con 17, Int 20, Wis 20, Cha 18)

One of the most dreaded drakon in the Known Realms, Prince Zurasak is the true power behind Ssorlang's Emerald Throne. He advises the venerable Emperor Vithoon, forestalling his father's death as long as he can. Shirking his official duties as prince, Zurasak tours the breadth of Ssorlang frequently and has been known to personally lead raids against the Xulmec city-states, ensuring a villainous reputation long before taking the throne himself.

Prince Zurasak wields a vile artifact known as *Shadowcurve*, an intelligent *+5 unholy scimitar* forged of shadowstone. He often shuns the use of his natural magic in favor of personally slaying his enemies with the blade. The young drakon has foiled numerous coups against his father and looks forward to executing those who rise against him when he is Emperor. Such single-minded pursuits, however, will likely keep Ssorlang from long-term expansion in his coming reign—an ironic blessing for the Southlands.

Chapter 6
Zero-Level Characters

Few roleplaying experiences are more satisfying than playing a character from unschooled youth, to champion, to epic hero. Every culture has its legends of foundlings and orphans, maturing into mighty warriors, rogues, wizards, and prophets. These are the roots of epic fantasy—and of fantasy roleplaying.

Most d20 games assume that characters begin at first level, armed with the knowledge, weapons, armor, and spells necessary to make their mark upon the world. But in ongoing, living campaigns, players often wonder what took place *before* their characters stepped foot on the road to glory. Bereft of powerful special abilities, feats, and skills, 0-level PCs must survive by their wit, cunning, and sheer courage alone. Adventures set during this time can be some of the most exciting and dangerous of a PC's career, with danger lurking around every corner and the question of life or death hanging on the throw of a die.

Playing a PC from 0-level also gives a character the added depth of a personalized back-story, supported by unique skills and abilities. An adept might go on to become an infamous rogue who uses his old spells to lend him an edge over the city watch. An expert weaponsmith might become a fearsome paladin who insists on crafting his own unique weapons, equipment, and armor for use in his crusade against evil. Perhaps before being adopted by the church, the noble cleric was a cutpurse, and to this day the pious soul keeps his old skills in practice … just in case.

How did the elven knight acquire his master's sword, the same blade that drives him to vanquish evil? Why is the rogue committed to thwarting oppression in every form? From what ruin did the wizard acquire the magic staff, and does it really contain the soul of an ancient dragon? Why, in a world of deadly challenges and vicious foes, does a meek peasant take up weapons and stand against the press of darkness?

The answers to these questions, and more, are the adventures of 0-level characters.

Zero-level Player Characters

Zero-level player characters begin with 1 level in an NPC class, but differ from NPCs in that PCs are destined to become heroes. An NPC might spend his entire life gaining levels in Warrior, but a PC Warrior will soon become a Fighter, quickly outstripping her common, non-heroic peers. This can often invite jealousies and vicious rivalries when the smith's daughter returns home, now a celebrated paladin of the realm.

A 0-level PC chooses an NPC class—Adept, Aristocrat, Expert, or Warrior—and begins with –1,000 XP. After gaining one thousand experience points, reaching 0 XP, the PC gains a level and advances to one of the regular PC classes: Barbarian, Cleric, Druid, Fighter, Paladin, Ranger, Rogue, Wizard, or Sorcerer. One level in an NPC class never counts against a PC for purposes of multiclassing (see *PHB*).

The NPC classes available to PCs are outlined in detail in the *DMG* and are summarized here for quick reference.

First-Level Adept

Gifted in the ways of magic, yet unschooled in its mastery, adepts are the witchdoctors, mystics, healers, herbalists, and shamans of Áereth. While NPC adepts grow to become wise men, elders and sages, heroic adepts quickly rise to become champions of their chosen cause, serving a deity as a devoted cleric, or defending the spirits of nature as woodland druids.

An adept casts divine spells, which are drawn from the adept spell list. Like a cleric, an adept must choose and prepare her spells in advance. Each adept must choose a time each day at which she must spend an hour in quiet contemplation or supplication to regain her daily allotment of spells. Time spent resting has no effect on whether an adept can prepare spells. In addition, she receives bonus spells per day if she has a high Wisdom score.

Apprentices and Mediums

Not all adepts advance to become clerics or druids. At their discretion, GMs may permit PC adepts to be apprentices (wizards in training) or mediums (untutored sorcerers). Both sub-classes follow all the rules applying to adepts, with the following exceptions:

Apprentice: An apprentice's key attribute is Intelligence, not Wisdom. To prepare or cast a spell, an apprentice must have an Intelligence score equal to at least 10 + the spell level. The Difficulty Class for a saving throw against an apprentice's spell is 10 + the spell level + the apprentice's Intelligence modifier.

In addition, she receives bonus spells per day if she has a high Intelligence score.

An apprentice must study her spellbook each day to prepare her spells. She cannot prepare any spell not recorded in her spellbook.

An apprentice begins play with a spellbook containing all 0-level apprentice spells, plus three 1st-level spells of her choice. For each point of Intelligence bonus the apprentice has, the spellbook holds one additional 1st-level spell of her choice.

Medium: A medium's key attribute is Charisma, not Wisdom. To prepare or cast a spell, a medium must have a Charisma score equal to at least 10 + the spell level. The Difficulty Class for a saving throw against a medium's spell is 10 + the spell level + the medium's Charisma modifier.

In addition, she receives bonus spells per day if she has a high Charisma score.

A medium can cast any spell she knows without preparing it ahead of time. A medium's selection of spells is extremely limited. A medium begins play knowing four 0-level spells and two 1st-level spells of her choice.

Apprentice and Medium Spell List

0-level: *acid splash, dancing lights, daze, flare, light, ghost sound, touch of fatigue, mage hand, mending, message, open/close, prestidigitation, ray of frost, read magic, resistance*.

1st-level: *alarm, burning hands, cause fear, color spray, comprehend languages, detect secret doors, disguise self, expeditious retreat, feather fall, grease, hold portal, hypnotism, protection from chaos, protection from evil, protection from good, protection from law, obscuring mist, shield, sleep, unseen servant, ventriloquism*.

To prepare or cast a spell, an adept must have a Wisdom score equal to at least 10 + the spell level. The Difficulty Class for a saving throw against an adept's spell is 10 + the spell level + the adept's Wisdom modifier.

Each adept has a particular holy symbol (as a divine focus) depending on the adept's magical tradition.

Hit Points: 6 + Con modifier

Base Attack: +0

Starting Wealth: 2d4 x 10 gp

Fort Save: +0 **Ref Save:** +0 **Will Save:** +2

Class Skills: Concentration (Con), Craft (Int), Handle Animal (Cha), Heal (Wis), Knowledge (all skills taken individually) (Int), Profession (Wis), Spellcraft (Int), and Survival (Wis).

Skill Points: (2 + Int modifier) x4.

Weapon and Armor Proficiency: Adepts are skilled with all simple weapons. Adepts are not proficient with any type of armor nor with shields.

Spells per Day: 0 – 3; 1st – 1.

Adept Spell List

0-level: *create water, cure minor wounds, detect magic, ghost sound, guidance, light, mending, purify food and drink, read magic, touch of fatigue*.

1st-level: *bless, burning hands, cause fear, command, comprehend languages, cure light wounds, detect chaos, detect evil, detect good, detect law, endure elements, obscuring mist, protection from chaos, protection from evil, protection from good, protection from law, sleep*.

First-Level Aristocrat

Aristocrats are the nobles of Áereth, the privileged upper class with access to wealth, tutoring, and training. Squires, princes, scions of merchant-lords, and royal heirs are all aristocrats.

Simply because a character is born of royal or noble blood does not mean that the character can expect to have all his needs and wishes met. While aristocrats may receive preferential treatment by merchants and their ilk, they will also be expected to pay inflated prices. Similarly, many noble families send their scions out into the world, permitting the fledgling aristocrats to return only after they have proven their worth.

Hit Points: 8 + Con modifier

Starting Wealth: 6d4 x 10 gp

Base Attack: +0

Fort Save: +0 **Ref Save:** +0 **Will Save:** +2

Class Skills: Appraise (Int), Bluff (Cha), Diplomacy (Cha), Disguise (Cha), Forgery (Int), Gather Information (Cha), Handle Animal (Cha), Intimidate (Cha), Knowledge (all skills taken individually) (Int), Listen (Wis), Perform (Cha), Ride (Dex), Sense Motive (Wis), Speak Language, Spot (Wis), Swim (Str), and Survival (Wis).

Skill Points: (4 + Int modifier) x4.

Weapon and Armor Proficiency: The aristocrat is proficient in the use of all simple and martial weapons and with all types of armor and shields.

First-Level Expert

Blacksmiths, locksmiths, cutpurses, woodland scouts, and trackers are all experts in their chosen realm. Many occupations fall under the designation of expert. The class is highly versatile, permitting characters to focus and excel in specific areas of study.

Any occupation that is not explicitly a spellcaster, noble, or warrior is likely an expert. NPC experts grow to become master craftsmen and specialists in their fields, but PC experts broaden their fields of study, and thereby become even more skilled and talented because of their understanding of the larger world.

Hit Points: 6 + Con modifier

Starting Wealth: 3d4 x 10 gp

Base Attack: +0

Fort Save: +0 **Ref Save:** +0 **Will Save:** +2

Class Skills: The expert can choose any ten skills to be class skills.

Skill Points: (6 + Int modifier) x4.

Weapon and Armor Proficiency: The expert is proficient in the use of all simple weapons and with light armor but not shields.

First-Level Warrior

Warriors are the mainstays of Áereth. Brave and courageous, they stand watch atop high towers, hunt stags through deep woods, protect the common citizen, and serve in the king's army. Soldiers, watchmen, slave-gladiators, and huntsmen are all warriors.

Warriors are natural leaders, especially during times of danger and strife. In times of peace, excessive warriors can become a liability. Forced to seek their fortunes on the open road, some turn to banditry, while a select few train to become fighters, excelling in the arts of war.

Hit Points: 8 + Con modifier

Starting Wealth: 4d4 x 10 gp

Base Attack: +1

Fort Save: +2 **Ref Save:** +0 **Will Save:** +0

Class Skills: Climb (Str), Handle Animal (Cha), Intimidate (Cha), Jump (Str), Ride (Dex), and Swim (Str).

Skill Points: (2 + Int modifier) x 4.

Weapon and Armor Proficiency: The warrior is proficient in the use of all simple and martial weapons and all armor and shields.

Character Backgrounds

Every PC has a background, a story that explains his core value and beliefs. Backgrounds are much more than occupations, but the following list can provide inspirations for a character's background, along with suggested NPC classes. This register is in no way exhaustive nor could it ever be; a PC's history should be limited only by the player's imagination and the GM's whim.

The classes listed in parentheses should be taken as suggestions, not rules. Exceptions will always exist, and should be encouraged—especially in support of a PC's unique story.

Alchemist (Expert)

Animal Trainer (Expert)

Armorer (Expert)

Astrologer (Expert, Adept)

Blacksmith (Expert)

Brigand (Expert, Warrior)

Caravan Guard (Warrior)

Confidence Artist (Expert)

Cutpurse (Expert)

Entertainer (Expert)

Foundling (any[1])

Fortune-teller (Expert, Adept)

Gambler (Expert)

Gravedigger (Expert[2])

Guild Beggar (Expert[2])

Healer (Adept)

Herbalist (Adept)

Herder (Expert[2])

Hired Muscle (Warrior)

Hunter (Warrior, Expert)

Indentured Servant (Expert[2])

Jeweler (Expert)

Locksmith (Expert)

Logger (Expert[2])

Mercenary (Warrior)

Minstrel (Expert)

Noble (Aristocrat)

Outlaw (Expert, Warrior)

Orphan (any[1])

Royal (Aristocrat)

Savage (Warrior, Expert)

Scribe (Expert, Adept)

Scout (Expert)

Serf (Expert[2])

Shaman (Adept)

Slave (Warrior, Expert)

Smuggler (Expert)

Soldier (Warrior)

Squire (Aristocrat, Warrior)

Street Fighter (Warrior)

Trapper (Expert)

Yeoman (Expert[2])

Watchman (Warrior)

Weaponsmith (Expert)

Weaver (Expert)

Witchdoctor (Adept)

Woodcutter (Expert, Warrior)

Wizard's Apprentice (Adept[3])

Notes:

[1] Both orphans and foundlings adopt classes suitable to their foster families. An orphan taken in by the Thieves Guild will be predisposed to becoming an Expert with a focus in Rogue skills, whereas a foundling adopted by a monastery may show talents as an Adept or Warrior.

[2] With many backgrounds, the NPC class of Commoner in the *DMG* seems a more logical choice. Of the NPC classes, however, Commoner is the weakest, and in these instances it is best to go with Expert, reflecting a PC's exceptional interests and talents.

[3] With the GM's permission, Adepts can also be Apprentices or Mediums. See sidebar above for details.

Zero-Level Adventures

Adventures as a 0-level character can be among the most thrilling that a PC will ever have. Combats are deadly and often decided with the first blow. Without careful consideration by the GM, a string of bad rolls can turn a CR 1 wandering monster encounter into a game-stopping TPK (Total Party Kill). Players with 0-level PCs have to act with caution, creativity, and cunning, frequently coming up with unique solutions to challenges that higher-level PCs would never deign to try. Ad hoc traps, improvised weapons, and dirty tactics are often the only way a party can survive. Whereas stronger parties can rely on their superior armor and hit points to give the PCs time to think, a party of 0-level PCs has to be prepared and ready to act at a moment's notice, or else suffer the consequences.

This constant, on-edge tension is what makes low-level campaigns so enjoyable, but GMs must tread with care.

There are a number of ways to subtly shift the odds in the PCs favor, while still encouraging creative play. As in *DCC #0: Legends Are Made, Not Born*, PCs might overhear a monster before actually encountering it. Variants on this theme include coming across a beast's tracks, encountering the bleached bones of its previous victims, or simply catching the scent of its foul lair. Any of these warning signs will serve as cues for PCs to be on their guard. Of course, if PCs elect to disregard all precautions, their fate is their own!

Similarly, players should be encouraged to use cunning to overcome superior forces. There is no reason to duke it out, toe-to-toe with the ogre, when a rock dropped from the cave's entrance can do the work for you. Similarly, PCs might take the time to construct deadfalls, pit traps, and the like.

Finally, intelligent monsters might elect to take the PCs prisoner instead of slaying them outright. Captured PCs can be sold as slaves or simply reserved to be eaten at a later date. The opportunity to escape from captors, sans weapons or armor, is a challenge worthy of any hero!

Experience Point Awards for 0-Level Characters

PC Level	CR 1/2	CR 1	CR 2	CR 3	CR 4
0	200	400	800	1,200	2,000

Campaign Hooks

Zero-level adventures need not be world-spanning affairs. Simply learning to hunt or fight or acquiring a certain rare spell can become exciting adventures. Often, young heroes serve masters who may send them on challenging errands designed to tutor naïve students in the ways of the world. Having the entire party serving a single master is an excellent way to convince PCs to work together toward a single goal.

Zero-level adventures also present a great opportunity to introduce recurring villains. These arrogant foes are quick to disregard the PCs as nothing but nuisances, setting up rivalries and enmities that can stretch on for years or even decades.

Villains need not be powerful to be memorable. Whereas a higher-level PC might beat a dozen orcs in a battle, to a party of 0-level characters a single orc, hobgoblin, kobold, or goblin can be a terrifying foe. This gives a GM the chance to personalize the opponent, creating a more noteworthy encounter. Physical affects, unique fighting styles, unusual arms and armor can all make a common foe uncommon.

With this in mind, take inspiration from or use one of the following plot hooks as a seed for your campaign:

The Old Man of the Wood: The characters are the servants of Nymoren the White, a wizened mage who lives in a half-ruined tower deep in the Blackbriar Wood. Some of the PCs may be talented apprentices that have been adopted by the old mage, while others are simply the children of servants and were born into his service. Nymoren keeps close watch over his beloved woods and sends his young wards on errands to acquire exotic spell components, rescue the wizard's hapless animal companions, fend off the predations of goblins and kobolds, and perform quests on the old mage's behalf.

Tales of the Canting Crew: The characters are street urchins, beggars, and petty thieves, serving Obo the Beggarmaster. A wicked and corpulent taskmaster with an endless capacity for cruelty and greed, Obo makes certain to keep his wards under his thumb, placing extra pressure on those that show promise. Warriors will be tasked as hired thugs and muscle, experts will trained in the ways of the rogue, adepts will be carefully groomed—and all will be constantly watched for signs of treachery. For all his fiendish ways, Obo makes certain to protect his own, and may go to war with other lords of the underworld in defense of his charges. Adventures can range from petty thievery, to enforcing the Beggarmaster's street edicts, to collecting his tithes, to finally escaping from Obo's sweaty clutches.

Knights of the Realm: The characters are the squires, grooms, assistants, and spearmen of the solemn and virtuous Sir Kameron, Knight Errant of the Lance. Sir Kameron's love was kidnapped by an evil baron seven years ago and now the knight travels the Northlands in search of her. The lovelorn knight is dogged by assassins, evil knights, and foes that would besmirch his honor and lure the good knight into disgrace. Sir Kameron uses the PCs to accomplish what he cannot, going places where he would be noticed, and defending him against all comers while the knight searches the Known Realms for his lady. Adventures could include recovering the knight's stolen sword in time for a tournament, foiling attempts to frame him as a wicked ne'er-do-well, tracking down leads to his lost lady, and thwarting the endless plots of

Mentors

For many GMs and players, it may be a stretch to imagine peasants delving into a goblin lair and emerging, mere days later, as accomplished adventurers boasting of new feats, spells, and skills. Mentors, experts who train PCs in their new classes, can serve to bridge this gap, taking the PCs under their wings and tutoring them in the ways of adventuring.

Any NPC with at least one level in the class the PC wishes to adopt can serve as a mentor. But time spent studying with mentors need not be time wasted for players. For while a mentor may guide the PC along the proper path, nothing can take the place of actual experience. In this way, mentors can best serve as plot hooks, sending the adventurers scurrying off on missions, errands and quests, each challenge designed to test the PCs in their newfound roles.

For PCs that truly dedicate themselves to their studies, GMs should consider awarding PCs a one-time bonus of 1d4 skill points, to be allotted to specialties of the mentor.

the 0-level servants of a rival knight. Traveling with Sir Kameron permits the PCs to visit vast swaths of the North, where every day sees another kingdom and every night reveals another intrigue.

Of Kith and Kin: The Baron is dead and his ancient elven castellan, Essech Ggeredna, scours the lands for the new rulers. Regrettably the Baron had no direct heirs, so obscure bloodlines must be sought out, and the collected heirs resemble nothing so much as a band of uneducated rapscallions, rogues, mercenaries, and wild mages. Nevertheless, the PCs have indeed inherited a small barony placed deep within the wilds of the North, and now it is their task to keep it. This will require quickly mastering the skills necessary to lead a small, isolated community. Predators ranging from wolves to goblins and worse threaten the townsfolk, false heirs lay claim to the throne, and—worst of all—the true seat of the barony is in ruins, home to fearsome monsters and dungeons of untold depths. Who was the old baron and why were his heirs sought out … four hundred years after his death?

Pawns of the Slavelord: During the Fall of Leherti, untold numbers of Lehertians were captured and sold into slavery. The PCs begin their adventures as slaves in the care of Mordeng Skoloth, a wicked slavelord based in the city of Freeport. Mordeng delights in depraved blood sports, and has a special fondness for gladiator combat. The enslaved PCs in his stable are regularly forced to fight wild animals, monstrous humanoids, and even other slaves. Yet the intrigue of Freeport reaches to every segment of the population, so it isn't long before the PCs are thrust directly into the heart of the shadow war between Mordeng and his rivals. The PCs are forced to decide between helping Mordeng against his foes (and earning the foul man's gratitude) or defying his orders and suffering the slavelord's wrath (or even worse, the vengeance of his triumphant rivals).

Final Note: NPCs and 0-level PCs

It can be tempting for GMs to introduce powerful NPCs into the lives of the characters, such as knights and wizards who are always on hand to rescue the PCs when the going gets rough. This could easily overshadow a group of 0-level characters, turning them into the supporting cast for the GM's own band of heroes.

In these cases, remember the golden rule: No matter how weak they may be, the PCs are the heroes of the story. Even during a nation-shattering war, there is enough smaller-scale action for them. In this case, the war would simply provide the backdrop and stage setting for the PCs' adventures.

Áereth is a *world* full of powerful beings, but the *game* is about the PCs. Players want to play, not watch the GM's pet NPCs act out their lives like a historical drama.

Chapter 7
Paths of Adventure

Adventures in the DCC line are designed to be setting neutral, even within the world of Áereth. Every GM should feel comfortable removing the iconic *Dungeon Crawl Classics #1: Idylls of the Rat King* from the humble town of Silverton and placing the adventure wherever it will serve their own campaign the best. As always, GMs should tailor the world to suit their own designs and their group's enjoyment. Every other concern comes second.

Of course, that's all fine if you are an old hand at the game and know precisely the sort of campaign you'd like to run. But with over thirty adventures to choose from, where does an intrepid new GM begin?

Never fear! For those who seek guidance in the ever-expanding world of the Dungeon Crawl Classics, or for those sadistic GMs who must simply roll for *everything*, we present the Adventure Paths: series of modules loosely organized by level, location and theme, and which can serve as narratives to aid GMs in planning their PCs' careers as adventurers.

Note that these paths serve only as guidelines. GMs should feel free to adjust them as necessary for their wicked purposes. Flesh out the skeleton, add your own adventures, make the PCs lords of their own realms, and then lay waste to those kingdoms with armies of wicked monsters – in short, make the world your own!

To begin a campaign, choose your favorite low-level DCC and follow the subsequent titles in the path. Or, if you are truly willing, brave and brazen enough to throw caution to the wind, roll a d12.

If the result is 1-4, go to Adventure Path 1. If the result is 5-8, go to Adventure Path 2. If the result is 9-12, go to Adventure Path 3.

Adventure Path 1: West to Empire

Levels	Adventure
0	**DCC #35A: Halls of the Minotaur:** Humble villagers armed with farm tools venture into the Thornswild Forest to rescue a fallen paladin. There they uncover the ruins of a long-forgotten citadel, a tribe of ferocious kobolds, and Toth-Ror, a deadly minotaur bent on the PCs' destruction.
1-2	**DCC #29: Lair of the White Salamander:** Travelling south, the PCs (now aspiring heroes) come upon the sinking city of Thelport. There they discover a series of sea caves, where they battle their way past crazed cultists to the source of the city's plight: a horrible giant salamander gifted with wicked genius. Having saved the people of Thelport, the PCs can continue their travels west, or catch a ship south to Porthmeor (go to Adventure Path 1A).
1-3	**DCC #1: Idylls of the Rat King:** The PCs press on to Silverton, where a small mining community is being threatened by a wererat menace.
4-6	**DCC #27: Revenge of the Rat King:** The PCs, having deposed the Rat King, now suffer his wrath beneath the streets of Soulgrave. Escaping his clutches, they put an end to his wicked reign.
7-8	**DCC #5: Aerie of the Crow God:** Now heroes in Crieste, the PCs are summoned before Captain Sentri, Master of the Sable March. The Captain awards the PCs titles befitting their class and rank and tells them of the costal hamlet of Carnelloe, where dark secrets work to conceal an ancient tragedy. The Captain beseeches the PCs to act as his agents and investigate the lingering evil.

7-9 **DCC #19: The Volcano Caves:** Recognizing the might of her enemy's agents, the wicked Vizier of Crieste orders the PCs north to investigate the strange rumors surrounding mysterious Mount Rolnith, hoping that the PCs die beneath the dormant volcano. As insurance, the Vizier sends two of her finest assassins to finish what the mountain cannot. There, in the abandoned study of a long vanished wizardress, the PCs find a map leading to...

10 **DCC #30: Vault of the Dragon Kings:** Leaving the ruined Mount Rolnith, the PCs venture deeper into the Frosteye Mountains, in search of the legendary Vault of the Dragon Kings.

9-11 **DCC #12: The Blackguard's Revenge:** Returning triumphant from the Vault, the PCs are met by Khau the Red, magician in service of the Captain of the Sable March. The Cloister of the Ordocar, a sister order to the Knights of the Sable March, is under attack by an army of undead. Can the PCs reach the monastery in time to save the order?

11-13 **DCC #12.5: Iron Crypt of the Heretics:** Though the Cloister of the Ordocar has been saved, the root of the undead army must still be dealt a final blow. Tracking the army back to the Iron Crypt of the Heretics, the PCs must do battle with a nigh-invulnerable menace.

15 **DCC #13: Crypt of the Devil Lich:** The Ebon Egg destroyed, the PCs deliver the Iron Crypt's magical keys to the Monastery of the Dawning Sun. Upon their arrival, they realize that a horrible tragedy has taken place....

Adventure Path 1A: Wild Rovers

Levels Adventure

1-3 **DCC #24: Legend of the Ripper:** The PCs arrive in exotic Porthmeor, only to find the city locked in a grip of terror. The ghost of an ancient fiend has seemingly risen to stalk the city streets. Can the young heroes put the ghost to rest?

4-6 **DCC #35B: The Thief Lord's Vault:** The PCs continue their travels by sea, following the coast west to Punjar. There, in the city's shadowy bazaars, the adventurers catch word of a fabled treasure vault hidden beneath Punjar's grime-stained cobblestones. Investigations prove fruitful, and the PCs discover the entrance to one of the richest treasure vaults in all the Known World. Eluding the Thief Lord's cunning traps, the PCs tumble through a misty green portal to far-flung Voltigeur...

6-8 **DCC #16: Curse of the Emerald Cobra:** ...where the PCs learn of a mysterious artifact called Omihuictli – the Bone Blade, an enchanted bastard sword rumored to have been created from the leg bones of an ancient black dragon. The sword is said to rest in the heart of an extinct volcano, Mount Icpitl.

10-12 **DCC #4: Bloody Jack's Gold:** Sailing home from their savage encounter with the Emerald Cobra, the PCs' ship is blown off course to an island that doesn't appear on any map. One of the sailors recognizes the island from the *Ballad of Bloody Jack*. Investigating, the PCs discover the maze Jack built to protect the greatest hoard of his long and blood-soaked career.

12-14 **DCC #21: Assault on Strormbringer Castle:** Returning to civilization at last, the PCs sail into the town of Argalis, only to discover the town in ruins. Three hurricane-strength storms have struck in as many weeks, sent by a wicked storm giant intent on punishing the town. The townsfolk turn to the PCs. Can the heroes prevail against the Stormbringer?

14-16 **DCC #22: The Stormbringer Juggernaut:** After thanking the heroes for their assistance in defeating Stozari, Lord McDurmott, leader of Argalis, calls them back a week later with disturbing news. There are reports from the distant island of Cairvos of a gigantic warship under construction, led by a Stormbringer storm giant. He hires them once again, sending the heroes to vanquish the renewed Stormbringer threat.

Adventure Path 2: Lords of the Kingdom

Levels Adventure

0 **DCC #0: Legends are Made, not Born:** An ogre is terrorizing the town of Dundraville. Six brave citizens, mere peasants, band together with a plan to put an end to the evil ogre's villainy!

1 **DCC #2: Lost Vault of Tsathzar Rho:** The triumphant commoners, now adventurers, start on the long road to the heart of the Empire, where they will seek their fortunes. The would-be heroes stop for the night at the settlement of Hadler's Gap, where they hear curious tales of

once-peaceful kobolds and an ogre in the nearby hills. The PCs find their reputation as "Ogre Slayers" has preceded them. Will they live up to the stories?

1-2 **DCC #29: Well of the Worm:** Resuming their travels south, the PC come across a war-ravaged village plagued by the legacy of wars past. The elders beseech the PCs to put an end to the horrors.

1-3 **DCC #1: Idylls of the Rat King:** The PCs finally reach the capital of Archbridge, where tales of their heroic exploits have already reached people of power. The Captain of the Sable March offers the PCs their first mission for the crown: root out the goblin menace that has been plaguing the silver caravans from Silverton.

4-6 **DCC #27: Revenge of the Rat King:** Having successfully defended the people of Silverton, the PCs find themselves the target of the Rat King's wrath. In a carefully wrought trap, the PCs are lured beneath the streets of Soulgrave and into the clutches of the Rat King!

7-8 **DCC #5: Aerie of the Crow God:** Back in Archbridge, the PCs are given a hero's welcome, along with a handsome reward and commission from the Captain of the Sable March. Meeting the PCs in secret that evening, the Captain asks the PCs to undertake another dangerous mission for the crown, sending the PCs to the village of Carnelloe to investigate the site of an ancient tragedy.

6-8 **DCC #10: The Sunless Garden:** Returning triumphant once more, the PCs are given titles and the deed to a small, run-down keep on the border of Crieste. Shortly after the PCs assume ownership, the nearest trading post, Garland's Fork, is struck by a horrific curse, and it falls to the heroes to solve the crisis. ***Or:*** The wicked Vizier of Crieste, perceiving the heroes as a threat to her stranglehold on the Empire, commissions a ship for the PCs and orders them to deliver a message to the far-flung colony of Voltigeur. (Go to Adventure Path 2A.)

8-10 **DCC #6: Temple of the Dragon Cult:** With power comes responsibility. Across the borderlands, a dragon has been terrorizing the people of Thire. Lady Aedwyn Cyrean, ruler of the realm, raises an army to defeat the fearsome wyrm, but even they fail. She begs the heroes to finish off what her army could not accomplish.

12-14 **DCC #21: Assault on Stormbringer Castle:** Unnaturally strong storms strike the PCs' lands, ravaging their fields and fortifications. The source of the fearsome gales lies to the south, with the town of Argalis. A terrible storm giant demands tribute from Agalis and the surrounding settlements (including the PCs' manor). If she is denied, she will lay waste to the entire coast.

14-16 **DCC #22: The Stormbringer Juggernaut:** The Stormbringer giants return to threaten the realm once more, unless the PCs are able to stop their scheme from coming to fruition. But are even the heroes, now mighty beyond most, strong enough to stop the Stormbringer Juggernaut?

Adventure Path 2A: Of Pirates and Plunder

Levels Adventure

6-8 **DCC #16: Curse of the Emerald Cobra:** Sent to the end of the Empire by the Vizier of Crieste, the PCs learn of a mysterious artifact called Omihuictli – the Bone Blade, an enchanted bastard sword rumored to have been created from the leg bones of an ancient black dragon. The sword is said to rest in the heart of an extinct volcano, Mount Icpitl.

10-12 **DCC #4: Bloody Jack's Gold:** Sailing home from their savage encounter with the Emerald Cobra, the PCs' ship is blown off course to an island that doesn't appear on any map. One of the sailors recognizes the island from the *Ballad of Bloody Jack*. Investigating, the PCs discover the maze Jack built to protect the greatest hoard of his long and blood-soaked career.

12-14 **DCC #21: Assault on Stormbringer Castle:** Returning to civilization at last, the PCs sail into the town of Argalis, only to discover the town in ruins. Three hurricane-strength storms have struck in as many weeks, sent by a wicked storm giant intent on punishing the town. The townsfolk turn to the PCs. Can the heroes prevail against the Stormbringer?

12-14 **DCC #18: Citadel of the Demon Prince:** Hearing of the PCs' might, his Holiness, the Bishop of the Shining Lance, sends a secret agent, Renshai the Cunning, to meet with the PCs. Renshai, the Bishop's master spy, has uncovered a plot to bring demonic horror into the world. His Holiness begs a boon of the PCs,

asking them to investigate this wicked plot – and put to the sword whatever fiend is behind it.

14-15 **DCC #15: Lost Tomb of the Sphinx Queen:** Taking to the open sea once more, the PCs cross the Lirean Sea to the Great Desert to the south, where rumors lead them to a lost tomb from a long-forgotten empire.

14-16 **DCC #32: The Golden Palace of Zahadran:** Striking out to explore the legendary Lostlands, the PCs uncover a magically sealed dome concealing an ancient, golden palace.

Adventure Path 3: Legends of the North

Levels Adventure

0 **DCC #0: Legends are Made, not Born:** An ogre is terrorizing the town of Dundraville. Six brave citizens, mere peasants, band together with a plan to put an end to the evil ogre's villainy!

1-3 **DCC #28: Into the Wilds:** Seeking their fortunes on the open road, the PCs strike out for the wild borderlands. There they come upon Wildsgate, a frontier keep beset by a terrible curse. Fame and fortune await those courageous enough to venture into the threatening Wilds.

3-5 **DCC #3: The Mysterious Tower:** Fate leads the young heroes east, to the foot of a mysterious tower protected by ancient spells. Investigating a wizard's tower is never easy, but survivors might just return with long-hidden treasures.

4-6 **DCC #17: Legacy of the Savage Kings:** Leaving the mysterious tower, the PCs are met by Venderlos the Green, a druid in service of secret masters. Venderlos, having heard of the PCs' prowess, has come to ask a boon of the PCs. A foul blight has infected the Great Swamp, corrupting the swamp's inhabitants and threatening settlements and forests downstream. Will the PCs investigate and cure this foul disease?

7-9 **DCC #17.5: War of the Witch Queen:** Emerging triumphant from the Great Swamp, the PCs track the fleeing Witch Queen back to her stinking demesne. There, in vaults hidden deep beneath the earth, they put an end to her wicked schemes.

7-9 **DCC #19: The Volcano Caves:** Traveling west on their trek back to civilization, the heroes encounter strange rumors surrounding the mysterious Mount Rolnith. Investigating, the PCs discover that the dormant volcano is not all it seems. In the abandoned study of a long-vanished wizardress, the PCs find a map leading to...

10 **DCC #30: Vault of the Dragon Kings:** Leaving the ruined Mount Rolnith, the PCs venture deeper into the Frosteye Mountains, in search of the legendary Vault of the Dragon Kings.

9-11 **DCC #25: The Dread Crypt of Srihoz:** Returning from the Vault, the PCs come across rumors leading to windswept cliffs and the crypt of an ancient evil.

9-11 **DCC #12: The Blackguard's Revenge:** Upon their return from the Dread Crypt, the PCs receive a summons from Turoch Mas, Overlord of Ternyziem. The ruler tells the PCs of the Cloister of the Ordocar, an order of paladins that keep watch over the north. The order is under attack by an army of undead. Can the PCs reach the monastery in time to save the paladins?

11-13 **DCC #12.5: Iron Crypt of the Heretics:** Though the Cloister of the Ordocar has been saved, the source of the undead army yet remains. Tracking the army back to the Iron Crypt of the Heretics, PCs must do battle with a nigh-invulnerable menace.

15 **DCC #13: Crypt of the Devil Lich:** The Ebon Egg destroyed, the PCs deliver the Iron Crypt's magical keys to the Monastery of the Dawning Sun. Upon their arrival, they realize that a horrible tragedy has taken place....

Appendix 1
DCC Index

This master index lists every place, deity, NPC, spell, object, monster, and organization that has appeared in a Dungeon Crawl Classics adventure module. The index does not include this *GM's Guide* or the *Gazetteer*, but does include every DCC up through the two included in this box. You can use this index to assist in finding adventures to use in your Áereth campaign, whether to match back to the geographic regions where your heroes are traveling, or to tie into NPCs that they have met.

The index is organized alphabetically. The category of each entry (e.g., NPC, monster, etc.) appears after the entry, followed by a number indicating which DCC the entry appears in.

A Soldier's Manual (Object) 26
Aaron Gannu (NPC) 27
Abollar (template) (Monster) 29
Abylos (Place) 23
Abyssal Wolf (Monster) 22
Acid Blood (Spell) 25
Adelaide Bomquis (NPC) 34
Ageta (NPC) 22
Ahandar (NPC) 33
Ahura Mazda (Deity) 32
Akkad (Place) 29
Akyani (Monster) 19
Alachakah (NPC) 33
Alasotur (NPC) 29
Albrecht Skullshank (NPC) 14
Alexander Cresh (NPC) 20
Alexander Montcrief (NPC) 7
Alizio's Book of Adventurers, Vol. VII (Object) 21
Ambroshea Trades (Place) 12
Amokra (NPC) 17.5
Amplify (Spell) 22
Amplify, Greater (Spell) 22
Amulet of Restored Glory (Object) 29
Anathaema Eagle (Monster) 5
Ancilith (NPC) 28
Andrew Vendi (NPC) 33
Angel Effigy (Monster) 18
Angra Mainyu (Deity) 32
Angrabeg's Commanding Eye (Object) 4
Animated Mass Pyre (Monster) 34
Ankharet the Queen (Deity) 15
Anselm (NPC) 5
Anthuria (NPC) 5.5
Anvil of Gyr (Object) 28
Anwar Fadain (NPC) 30
Apketh (NPC) 15
Aquarran (Monster) 19
Archbridge (Place) 1
Arden (NPC) 20
Arden Brightheart (NPC) 14
Ardishir the Magnificent (NPC) 32
Argalis (Place) 21, 22
Ari (NPC) 29
Ari'Al-nuk (NPC) 23
Aristemis (Deity) 12
Armos Plowman (NPC) 29
Aronarg (NPC) 29
Arovarel (Place) 13, 29
Arozza Stormbringer (NPC) 21, 22
Ars Malefice (Object) 17
Arsev ben Traiga (NPC) 15
Ascomoid (Monster) 26
Ash Guardian (Monster) 25
Asha Vahishta (Object) 32
Audun Egillsdottir (NPC) 29
Aurora Pass (Place) 26
Aurumvorax (Monster) 26
Austis Duframe (NPC) 12
Avatar Guards (Monster) 33
Axebury (Place) 5.5
Azi Dahaka (NPC) 32
Azubal (NPC) 28
Azurak ("Titan's Fury") (Object) 5
Back Alley Clah (NPC) 24
Bag of Endless Rats (Object) 14
Bagosh (NPC) 29
Bahdros (NPC) 22
Bakra (NPC) 17
Baldr (Deity) 29
Balti the Sage (NPC) 25
Barak (NPC) 7
Baraz Mahk (NPC) 2
Barbed Javelins (Weapon) 28
BargÏl (Deity) 8
Barracuda (Monster) 4
Barren Hills (Place) 15, 29
Barrowdown (Place) 29
Bastel Branwhip (NPC) 12
Bay of Many Sorrows (Place) 29
Bayard (NPC) 29
Bazaar of Quaysarria (Place) 32
Beastmen (NPC) 35A
Beasts of the Northlands (Object) 26
Bed of Health (Object) 3
Beeton (Place) 29
Behmanesh (NPC) 32
Belross Busex (NPC) 29
Bendel Llandeyr (NPC) 29
Berk (NPC) 0
Bezentaine (Object) 19
Black Dougal (NPC) 12.5
Black Elgor (NPC) 33
Black Pearl (Object) 29
Black Samarkin (NPC) 35B
Black Son (demon) (Deity) 18
Blackburn (NPC) 24
Blackened Pearl of Ages (Object) 14
Blackspine (NPC) 11
Blessings-Be (Place) 14
Blight Blades (Object) 17
Blighted Helm (Object) 17
Blister Beetle, Giant (Monster) 29
Blood Boulder (Monster) 21
Blood Coral (Object) 24
Blood Elemental (Spell) 25
Blood Hawk (Monster) 26
Blood Leech Swarm (Monster) 35B
Blood Whisker (NPC) 14
Bloodlust (Spell) 25

Bloodthorn Vine (Monster) 35A
Bloody Jack Dascombe (NPC) 4
Blubberbank (Place) 24
Boat Hook (Weapon) 29
Bobugbubilz (Deity) 13
Bogie Boys (Organization) 24
Bogris (NPC) 29
Boil Blood (Spell) 25
Bolts of Bedevilment (Spell) 20
Bone Jelly (Monster) 24
Bone Swarm (Monster) 13
Book of Bargúl (Object) 8
Borderlands (Place) 17
Braziers of Necromantic Guile (Object) 13
Breakers (Organization) 29
Breg (NPC) 20
Bromhandle (NPC) 34
Bronwyn (NPC) 7
Brother Aelris Llandeyr (NPC) 29
Brother Mikolas (NPC) 13
Brother Vinetto (NPC) 29
Bruzbid (NPC) 26
Cairvos (Place) 22
Calodek (NPC) 22
Camber Sorethin (NPC) 8
Canticle of the Damned (Object) 13
Capotztic (NPC) 16
Captain Argun (NPC) 28
Captain Balthew (NPC) 29
Captain Esterman Hempstrong (NPC) 29
Captain Grimhook (NPC) 29
Captain Jakob the Leper (NPC) 29
Captain Jared Goldtooth (NPC) 7
Carnelloe (Place) 5, 5.5, 29
Carrick (NPC) 24
Carrion Maggot (Monster) 24
Caryatid Column (Monster) 18
Cave Cricket (Monster) 26
Celthor the Slayer (NPC) 35B
Censer of Weal (Object) 26
Chalonna (NPC) 7
Chalychia the Devil-Lich (NPC) 13, 29
Cham Klein (NPC) 34
Chaotor (Deity) 13
Chaplain Korde (NPC) 26
Charp (NPC) 30
Chinvat Bridge (Place) 32
Chundag (NPC) 14
Clan Axefell (Organization) 28
Clan Deepdelve (Organization) 28
Clan Ember (Organization) 28
Clan Firebrand (Organization) 28
Clan Shieldfast (Organization) 28
Clan Wanderer (Organization) 28
Claw of Shifting Tides (Object) 29
Cloister of the Ordocar (Place) 12
Coatlimict (Deity) 4
Codex Ilyium (Object) 0
Coil (Spell) 16
Coin Devourer (Monster) 23
Cold Harbour (Place) 29
Coleus (NPC) 5.5
Comte du Javaire (NPC) 29
Construct, Kith (template) (Monster) 15
Corsair (Class) 29
Cortaigne (Place) 29
Corwin (NPC) 7
Cosmic Eggs (Object) 33
Coyopultec (NPC) 4
Crazy Klina (NPC) 24
Create Vampire (Spell) 25
Create Vampire Spawn (Spell) 25
Cresh Manor (Place) 20
Criestine Colonies (Place) 16
Criestine Empire (Place) 4, 16, 29
Crimson Ooze (Monster) 26
Crooknek (NPC) 29
Crown of Sett (Object) 17.5
Crown of Wulfrun (Object) 28
Crowngate (Place) 29
Cruel Justice (Object) 5
Crypt of Srihoz (Place) 25
Crypticus (Deity) 11
Crystal Shrine (Place) 29
Crystallis (Object) 29
Cuezpalcuanni (NPC) 16
Cult of the Broken Word (Organization) 18
Cult of the Forgotten Word (Organization) 33
Cybel (Object) 20
Cyrilla (NPC) 7
Dae Shar (NPC) 14
Daeobelinus (Monster) 20
Daeva (subtype) (Monster) 32
Dagger of Souls (Object) 18
Daras the Bold (NPC) 26
Darby Blist (NPC) 29
Dark Valerian (Object) 5
Darkenfold Forest (Place) 29
Darsov Erikson (NPC) 6
Darston "Dart" Isles (NPC) 12
Dawnfast (Object) 25
Deadeye the Imp (NPC) 14
Deadwood Treant (Monster) 10
Decapus (Monster) 26
Demesne of Baba Yazoth (Place) 17.5
Demi-gorgon (template) (Monster) 15
Demon, Aeshma (Monster) 18
Demon, Cambion (Monster) 18
Demon, Daraka (Monster) 18
Demon, Gharros (Monster) 18
Demon, Shadow (Monster) 22
Demon, Vapor (Monster) 14
Demonic Knight (Monster) 22
Denin Crob (NPC) 29
Dennel Batharda (NPC) 29
Deryn the Black (NPC) 30
Desiderius Merope (NPC) 29
Desk of Concentration (Object) 3
Desolation's Glamour (Spell) 15
Devil Fish (Monster) 19
Devil Lizard (Monster) 20
Dewey's Bookshelf (Object) 3
Diamond Carceperis (Object) 12
Diann the Bard (NPC) 25
Dire Polar Bear (Monster) 30
D'Lai Clan (Organization) 22
Doll of Sacrifice (Object) 28
Donner Llandeyr (NPC) 29
Doomtwitch Zombie (template) (Monster) 30
Dorean Llandeyr (NPC) 29
Dorkell (NPC) 29
Dorn Bronzethegn (NPC) 5.5
Draco Faerus (NPC) 12.5
Dracolisk (Monster) 18
Dracomorph (template) (Monster) 30
Dragon Ether (Object) 30
Dragon-blood (template) (Monster) 6
Dragon-kin (template) (Monster) 6
Dragon-kith (Spell) 6
Dragonspire Mountains (Place) 26
Dread Chathless (NPC) 18
Dread Ghost (template) (Monster) 30
Dread Spectre (template) (Monster) 30
Dread Watcher (NPC) 14
Dripping Temple (Place) 29
Drow, Aquatic (Monster) 29
Duchess of Domination (Deity) 29
Duergar Axe-hammer (Object) 5
Dundraville (Place) 0
Dünerain Mountains (Place) 14
Durbin (NPC) 0
Dust Brother (Monster) 23, 29
D'Varr (NPC) 22
Easy Chair of Penmanship (Object) 3
Ebon Egg (Object) 12.5
Edith Lough (NPC) 29
Efferam (NPC) 33
Egg of Autumn (Object) 29
Egg of Spring (Object) 29
Egg of Summer (Object) 29
Egg of Winter (Object) 29
Einaar (NPC) 29
Elemental (template) (Monster) 15
Elemental Plane of Fire (Place) 19
Elemental, Plague Tar (Monster) 5
Elgith (NPC) 29
Elianora D'Lai (NPC) 22
Elmot Kinfeld (NPC) 29
Emery Latigo (NPC) 33
Emperor Crab (Deity) 29
Empyrean Ocean (Place) 29
Erasmus Lore (NPC) 0
Erengoth (NPC) 22
Erik Frause (NPC) 29
Erol Shortshanks (NPC) 7
Euthaskia the Deceiver (NPC) 15
Ewan Treborne (NPC) 24
Exloe Burke (NPC) 33
Exploding Gem (Object) 26

Eye of Osirus (Object) 5
Eye of Tsathzar (Object) 35A
Eyjolfr (NPC) 29
Eztenqui Jungle (Place) 16
Fair Haven (Place) 7, 29
Fairweather (Place) 14
Fantastical Flying Beasts (Object) 26
Farguul's Fiery Finger (Object) 30
Farsis Llandeyr (NPC) 29
Father Alnwick (NPC) 29
Father Motter (NPC) 28
Fatty Blue (NPC) 20
Feasting (Monster) 20
Feldspar the Overseer (NPC) 33
Feodol Batharda (NPC) 29
Fereonte (Place) 16
Ferimax Ularaboo (NPC) 20
Feron "Blackwand" Tanerale (NPC) 35B
Fikk (NPC) 31
Finley's Eye (Object) 33
Fire Snake (Monster) 19
Firefiend (Monster) 18
Flame Paragon (template) (Monster) 30
Flayed Horror (Monster) 29
Flesh to Blood (Spell) 25
Fob Renault (NPC) 10
Foegar (NPC) 13
Foehammer Spires (Place) 28
Forbear the Smith (NPC) 1
Fraedok Hammerfell (NPC) 22
Freehold Thieves Guild (Organization) 17
Freeport (Place) 20
Fresk (NPC) 20
Frogroth (NPC) 0
From Potters Field (Object) 24
Frosteye Mountains (Place) 30
Fungal Mound (Monster) 29
Gaeran Hartson (NPC) 29
Gaff (Weapon) 29
Gar Ebal (NPC) 5
Garland's Fork (Place) 10, 29
Gas Spore (Monster) 26
Gaunt (Monster) 29
Gavuhn Donnell (NPC) 6
Gaze of the Basilisk (Spell) 16
Gefford Azimier (NPC) 33
Ger the Fighter (NPC) 25
Gilles Bier (NPC) 29
Gloomveil (Place) 8
Glorian (NPC) 3
Gnarga, King of the West (NPC) 30
Gnomish Airships (Object) 8
Gnomish Firearms (Object) 8
Godratt the Wise (NPC) 32
Golden Auroch (Object) 29
Golem, Amber (Monster) 25
Golem, Coin (Monster) 13
Golem, Ice (Monster) 19
Golem, Tablet (Monster) 23
Golem, Wizard (Monster) 29
Gondra (NPC) 21
Goren Bloodshaft (NPC) 11
Gorgimera (Monster) 18
Gorhan (Deity) 12
Gorson, the Blood Duke (NPC) 33
Gorung (Monster) 26
Gorwogijiro Gonejethis (NPC) 29
Gown of Allure (Object) 29
Graah (NPC) 17
Grave (NPC) 12
Great Serpent (Deity) 29
Great Swamp (Place) 17, 29
Grendel Knossos (NPC) 29
Grettir (NPC) 29
Grimmur (NPC) 29
Grishnaz the imp (NPC) 4
Grog (NPC) 7
Grussk (NPC) 30
Gudmundr (NPC) 29
Gurnard's Head (Place) 5
Gurt (NPC) 0
G'zogah (NPC) 1
Hadler's Gap (Place) 2
Haedor Hammerfell (NPC) 22
Half-Giant (template) (Monster) 30
Halifa (NPC) 22
Hallrbjorn (NPC) 29
Hammerfell Clan (Organization) 22
Hang Glider (Object) 29
Hared Daen (NPC) 29
Harnaw (NPC) 29
Harpoon Urchin (Monster) 19
Haverthold Asylum (Place) 34
Hb'kir (NPC) 30
He Who Is Fear And Righteous Might (Deity) 33
Headmaster Beaulibre (NPC) 33
Helena Dunraith (NPC) 29
Hellmoth (Monster) 18
Hellscarab Swarm (Monster) 15
Hellthorn (Monster) 18
Hengis (NPC) 29
Henry Crofter (NPC) 24
Heresy of Honor (Object) 12.5
Heresy of Mercy (Object) 12.5
Heresy of the Good War (Object) 12.5
Heresy of Truth (Object) 12.5
Hethvarag, King of the South (NPC) 30
Hilto Foibald (NPC) 28
Holger Kurtz (NPC) 24
Hollow One (Monster) 23
Hollow Spawn (Monster) 23
Holst Stoltsfad (NPC) 18
Honorus (Deity) 14
Hornauer (NPC) 5
House Cadryenne (Organization) 8, 29
House Ereluc (Organization) 12.5
House Faerus (Organization) 12.5
House Llandeyr (Organization) 29
House Malian (Organization) 29
Hroaldr (NPC) 29
Hrumeth (NPC) 15
Hubert Reichfort (NPC) 29
Huelga (NPC) 10
Iaha (NPC) 16
Iasmini (NPC) 24
Iborsum Shatter-fist (NPC) 6
Icy Creature (template) (Monster) 30
Id Ooze (template) (Monster) 30
Idruma (NPC) 31
Ikammanen (NPC) 29
Ikim Vaas (NPC) 34
Ildavir (Deity) 35A
Ilquot (Deity) 29
Immolius (NPC) 19
Immun-drac (NPC) 13
Impaler (Monster) 26
Improved Reduce Person (Spell) 11
Incense of Displacement (Object) 29
Indra Daeva (Monster) 32
Infected (template) (Monster) 29
Inphidian, Cobra-Back (Monster) 16
Instruments of Maddening Cacophany (Object) 23
Iron Crypt of the Heretics (Place) 12, 12.5
Ironflow River (Place) 26
Isle of Faroe (Place) 29
Isle of Tlahuaco (Place) 16
Itlapal (Object) 16
Jadis Wren (NPC) 22
Jarson Tender (NPC) 14
Jengenritz (NPC) 13
Jessa Smiles (NPC) 29
Jingo (NPC) 29
Jingo's Travelling Circus (Organization) 29
John Mossborn (NPC) 29
Jonah Skutle (NPC) 29
Jorah Silverhand (NPC) 16
Jornal (NPC) 29
Jumar Starshine (NPC) 29
Justicia (Deity) 13, 35B
Kaldal (NPC) 28
Kali (NPC) 8
Kampfult (Monster) 26
Kang ("Mercy") (Object) 5
Katachek (NPC) 18
Kay Mossborn (NPC) 5.5
Kayle Braggin (NPC) 8
Kazok-Ilthor (NPC) 29
Keeper of the Ways (NPC) 30
Kelborne Selbrei (NPC) 8
Kelemen the Gentle (NPC) 18
Kerwin Krell (NPC) 0
Khetira (NPC) 13
Khonsurian Empire (Place) 15
Khubsheth the Prophet (NPC) 15
Kih-koth (NPC) 35A
King of the North (NPC) 30
King's Highway (Place) 28, 29
Kinhul (NPC) 26

Klaklin (Monster) 19
Klaklin, Soldier (Monster) 19
Knag'rr the Finder (NPC) 15
Knights of the Ordocar (Organization) 12.5
Kolaracht (NPC) 10
Koldavis (NPC) 16
Kolgot (NPC) 28
Korg (NPC) 20
Kos (NPC) 28
Kostkorian (Monster) 30
Kreeasi (NPC) 30
Krklkkrkl (NPC) 13
Kuga (NPC) 10
Kyleth (NPC) 17
Kyleth the Witch-Queen (NPC) 17.5
Ladman Llandeyr (NPC) 29
Lady Aborn (NPC) 28
Lady Arabella (NPC) 11
Lady Elisabeth Pendour (NPC) 5
Lady Shadron (NPC) 12.5
Laeon River (Place) 23
Lagos (Deity) 26, 29
Lake Shadefell (Place) 29
Larenz Llandeyr (NPC) 29
Lares (Deity) 29
Larissa Batharda (NPC) 29
Lassoo (Monster) 19
Lastever (Place) 26
Laurossil Cadryenne (NPC) 8
Lava Creep (Monster) 8
Lawrence Gannu (NPC) 1
Leashstone (Object) 18
Lerrza Mahk (NPC) 2
Lessian Thrivolt (NPC) 29
Liah (NPC) 28
Lieux-Claren (Place) 16
Lirean Sea (Place) 29
Living Spirit (template) (Monster) 21
Living Tear (Monster) 23
Llandeyr Mausoleum (Place) 29
Llewellyn (NPC) 7
Lodbrag the Ogre (NPC) 2
Lodril (NPC) 35B
Logosan D'Lai (NPC) 22
Loki (Deity) 29
Loo (NPC) 20
Lord Arnost (NPC) 29
Lord Braxus (NPC) 13
Lord Duncan Merriweather (NPC) 0
Lord McDurmott (NPC) 21, 22
Lord Tulwar (NPC) 0
Lorethel (NPC) 29
Lower Innis (Place) 29
Luc Stethenfield (NPC) 34
Macuahuitl (Object) 4
Mad Savant (template) (Monster) 30
Maddening Scream (Spell) 20
Maeve (NPC) 17
Magic Lamps (Object) 3
Malachai's Magical Doors (Object) 22
Malchor (NPC) 11
Maligance (NPC) 33
Malotoch (Deity) 5, 13, 28
Manbreaker (Object) 30
Mantari (Monster) 26
Mar (NPC) 29
Marc Stethenfield (NPC) 34
Mare Stone (Object) 24
Mari Kell (NPC) 24
Maris Zahn (NPC) 29
Marquis de Sablieur (NPC) 29
Marris Llandeyr (NPC) 29
Marshak the Reever (NPC) 28
Masjed-al-Talba (NPC) 32
Mask of the Shadowcat (Object) 35B
Master Bolo (NPC) 28
Master Chief Lorenz Eunni (NPC) 12
Meelkor (Deity) 3
Melisine d'Aurielle (NPC) 16
Melisine dÍAurielle (NPC) 16
Menoden (NPC) 29
Menoden's Tower (Place) 29
Meraph the Golden (NPC) 15
Mergusi Kefon (NPC) 35B
Merry Bastards (Organization) 29
Metadilos (Monster) 29
Micohuani (Object) 16
Mikal (NPC) 20
Millers Court (Place) 24
Mirror of Physical Aptitude (Object) 29
Mite (Monster) 26
Moddar Vich (NPC) 29
Monastery of the Dawning Sun (Place) 13
Monks of the Saint (Organization) 12.5
Moonleaper (Object) 33
Moran Selbrei (NPC) 8
Moray eel (Monster) 4
Mortimer Mortenson (NPC) 7
Mother Green's Rest (Place) 18
Mount Icpitl (Place) 16
Mount Rolnith (Place) 19
Mountain King (NPC) 17
Mountain Troglodyte (Monster) 26
Mourning Cave (Place) 14
Mummy Dragon (template) (Monster) 13
Myerlinda (NPC) 33
Myna (Deity) 0
Myrkjartan (NPC) 30
Narrimunâth (Deity) 1
Narzy Hilspek (NPC) 1
Nazost the Scrivener (NPC) 28
N'dereg (NPC) 17
Necklack of Fangs (Object) 23
Necoctene (Monster) 16
Nicrotis (NPC) 29
Niflheim (Place) 29
Nimlurun (Deity) 1
Ninurta (Deity) 29
Nira Bavisar (NPC) 6
Nockmort (NPC) 10
Noosem (NPC) 33
Northlands (Place) 17.5
Nullsport (Place) 29
Nunsod Llandeyr (NPC) 29
Nykolus Rasslov (NPC) 29
Obitu-que (demon) (Deity) 17
Oblivion Incense (Object) 18
Octagon Gauntlet (Object) 33
Oculum Infernae (Object) 14
Oddr (NPC) 29
Odin (Deity) 29
Odolan (NPC) 14
Ograk, King of the East (NPC) 30
Olive Slime (Monster) 26
Omihuictli (the Bone Blade) (Object) 16
Oolgluur (NPC) 30
Open Hearth (Place) 29
Orden (Place) 26
Osirus (Deity) 5
Oswald Reichfort (NPC) 29
Oszkar the Black (NPC) 18
Outer Gods (Deity) 2
Oz (NPC) 13
Painshrieker (Monster) 29
Parhokk (Place) 2
Pech (Monster) 26
Pelagia (Deity) 7, 29
Phycomid (Monster) 26
Plague Chalice (Object) 29
Plague Wight (Monster) 29
Plantnip Candle (Object) 29
Pleniere (Place) 16
Pomatomus (NPC) 7
Porthmeor (Place) 24
Possessed Object (template) (Monster) 34
Potion of Longevity (Object) 23
Praxis Tome (Object) 33
Prester "Trapmaster" Ungart (NPC) 35B
Professor Yegaa (NPC) 33
Prophecy of Tremaste (Object) 29
Prophet's Leap (Place) 15
Punjar (Place) 35B
Pwalg (Monster) 20
Pyraxus (NPC) 6
Qi ("Focus") (Object) 5
Quast (NPC) 0
Quill of Dictation (Object) 35B
Quintoo (NPC) 33
Radiant Boy (Monster) 20
Radmanish (NPC) 32
Rain of Poison (Spell) 8
Rama Savitri (NPC) 6
Rassylov's Journal (Object) 29
Rathulagon (NPC) 26
Razor Wire Net (Object) 14
Realta Llandeyr (NPC) 29
Red Annie (NPC) 12
Red Wisdom (NPC) 18
Redcap (Monster) 24
Redhorn Hill (Place) 29

Redtooth Troll (Monster) 27
Reichfort Family (Organization) 29
Reizravel (NPC) 12
Relsa Llandeyr (NPC) 29
Renald Stethenfield (NPC) 34
Renna the Midwife (NPC) 1
Reswythe (NPC) 35B
Revenant (template) (Monster) 20
Rezapyros (NPC) 33
Rez-zomar the Goblin Chieftan (NPC) 1
River Saedre (Place) 28
Roe Ramenik (NPC) 33
Rogroakbub the Trollfiend (NPC) 13
Rook (Monster) 5
Roost Dretch (Monster) 5.5
Root of Malotoch (Object) 5.5
Rootshaker (NPC) 10
Rosemergy (NPC) 5.5
Rot Grub (Monster) 26
Rumatugtug (NPC) 33
Rune Stone of Baldr (Sorrow) (Object) 29
Rune Stone of Creation (Blessing) (Object) 29
Rune Stone of Fury (Strength) (Object) 29
Rune Stone of Rebirth (Hope) (Object) 29
Rune Stone of Wisdom (Vision) (Object) 29
Rune Stones of Odin (Object) 29
Rust Spider (Monster) 29
Sacrificial Guards (Monster) 33
Saedor's Guide to Constructs and Living Spirits (Object) 21
Saena Tree (Monster) 32
Saint's Blood Mountains (Place) 12, 12.5
Samuka (NPC) 18
Sand Blast (Spell) 29
Sanguine Stone (Object) 13
Sanguiomancy (School of Magic) 25
Sathsar (NPC) 26
Savage Quenn (NPC) 29
Scepter of Wildsgate (Object) 28
Scorpion Man (Monster) 23
Screaming Skull (Monster) 22
Sczee'zeeian (NPC) 33
Sea of Desperation (Place) 16
Sentinel of Cortaigne (Place) 29
Sepia Snake (Monster) 16
Seraph, grig (NPC) 29
Sergio the Vizier (NPC) 28
Serpentfury (Monster) 23
Serrek Tarn (NPC) 2
Serrenna Valuois (NPC) 1
Sewer Rat (Monster) 24
Sezrakan (NPC) 29
Sha Abbas (NPC) 32
Shadowstar (Object) 13
Shaduar (Monster) 16
Shae'Mae (NPC) 7
Sharktooth (NPC) 24
Sharyn-Ella (NPC) 0
Shed Form (Spell) 16
Shell Shurikens of Crushing (Object) 24
Shuderief (NPC) 10
Shul (Deity) 23
Sickle Rock Grove (Place) 5.5
Silverton (Place) 1
Sir Galwaith (NPC) 35A
Sir Gareth Porthglaze (NPC) 5.5
Skeggi (NPC) 29
Skr'thor (NPC) 7
Skulltop Hillock (Place) 0
Skunge Longtooth (NPC) 29
Slash Wing (Monster) 26
Slate, the intelligent chalkboard (Object) 13
Slazzik Balefire (NPC) 2
Sle'astakk (NPC) 30
Slime Zombie (template) (Monster) 26
Slithering Ooze (template) (Monster) 30
Slysska (NPC) 30
Snake Staff of Baba Yazoth (Object) 17.5
Snapdragon Swarm (Monster) 29
Sodersund (NPC) 28
Sodoutym (Deity) 28
Soleth (Deity) 31
Solgem Fleetfoot (NPC) 6
Solom Quor (NPC) 29
Soloman Black (NPC) 29
Soranna (NPC) 19
Soranna's Universal Elemental Weapon (Object) 19
Sorsha Llandeyr (NPC) 29
Sothulth (Deity) 26
Soul Cauldron (Object) 18
Soul Engine (Object) 18
Soul'daem (Object) 35B
Soulgrave (Place) 1, 27
Soulstone (Object) 18
Southern Seas (Place) 24
Spellsnake (Monster) 29
Spirit of Uru-nuk (Monster) 23
Squid, Land (Monster) 29
Srihoz (Heironeous Uliran Theopal) (NPC) 25
Sslithia (NPC) 7
Ssustre (NPC) 26
Staff of Water Control (Object) 21
Starys Malian (NPC) 29
Static Bat (Monster) 29
Stealth Sword (Object) 26
Stevrock Stormbringer (NPC) 22
Stink-fire Beetle (Monster) 29
Stone of Translation (Object) 29
Stonefriend (Object) 28
Stoneglass Mirror (Object) 31
Stoneshaper Masons (Organization) 29
Stormbringer Castle (Place) 21
Stormbringer Mountain (Place) 21
Stozari Stormbringer (NPC) 21, 22
Straitjacket (Object) 34
Strike of the Cobra (Spell) 16
Stygoth (NPC) 17
Sumer (Place) 29
Summerhold (Place) 29
Sunscratch (NPC) 30
Sute Lore (NPC) 0
Swarm Shuriken (Object) 35B
Swarm, Fine Fire Elemental (Monster) 19
Sword of Barons (Object) 28
Sword of Conviction (Object) 14
Tainted (template) (Monster) 29
Takaritha (NPC) 7
Ta'kira'kerymor ("Sword-breaker") (Object) 5
Talisman of the Great Beast (Object) 33
Tan Mold (Monster) 32
Tarfoot (NPC) 14
Tarik One-Arm (NPC) 0
Tarn Tetherknot (NPC) 11
Tarrak (NPC) 5
Taskmaster Broggab (NPC) 14
Tayanna Serrengriff (NPC) 29
Tazex (NPC) 31
Tecoacualli (NPC) 16
Tellakerry Clan (Organization) 29
Tentacled Horror (Monster) 16
Terisin (NPC) 29
Tharaxis (NPC) 19
The Abyss (Place) 18
The Book of Seven Serpents (Object) 16
The Castellan (NPC) 30
The Champion (NPC) 25
The Forlorn Maid (NPC) 17.5
The Great Beast (NPC) 33
The Greater Keys (Object) 15
The Lesser Keys (Object) 15
The Maw (Place) 17
The mysterious white tower (Place) 3
The Outriders (Organization) 28
The Shadowcrown (Object) 15
The Speaker to Dust (NPC) 15
The Star Arms (Object) 5
The Stepstone (Object) 15
The Watch (Organization) 28
The Wilds (Place) 28
Thedric Branch (NPC) 29
Theland (NPC) 26
Thelias (NPC) 30
Thelport (Place) 29
Thieves' Puzzle Box, Lesser (Object) 35B
Thistle (NPC) 14
Thor (Deity) 29
Thormyr (Deity) 26
Thornblood (Monster) 14
Thornswild Wood (Place) 35A
Thulsa, Stone of Scribes (Object) 23
Thurlo (NPC) 24

T'Klack (NPC) 14
Tlilcohuatl (NPC) 16
Toadspawn (template) (Monster) 13
Tomb of Nicrotis (Place) 29
Tome of the Black Tongue (Object) 13
Tor Barnabas (Blubberbank) (NPC) 29
Torc of Illusions (Object) 15
Torgo the Eye Gouger (NPC) 17
Tormul Serrengriff (NPC) 29
Tororthun (Deity) 8
Torvok Blackspear (NPC) 16
Toth-Ror (NPC) 35A
Totoki (NPC) 21
Touch of Madness (Spell) 20
Tower of the Black Pearl (Place) 29
Transport Obelisk (Object) 33
Tredoksule (Place) 21
True Death (Object) 13
Tsathzar Rho (NPC) 2
Tud (NPC) 29
Tusk (NPC) 7
Tzopiloani (Monster) 16
Ugloshti (NPC) 29
Ul Khaz'kul (Place) 23
Ul-Alam'inic (NPC) 23
Undine (template) (Monster) 24
Unuul (Language) 23
Ur (Place) 29
Urggar (NPC) 26
Urkallan Hills (Place) 2
Urudu River (Place) 23
Uru'Nuk (Place) 23
Valinus (NPC) 13
Vam Doadson (NPC) 34
Vampiric Bloom (Monster) 25
Vault of the Dragon Kings (Place) 30
Velth (NPC) 29
Venaku (NPC) 29
Venom Zombie (Monster) 8
Verdivis (NPC) 31
Verdivis' Catacomb (Place) 31
Vespertiliac (Monster) 20
Vestments of Vilim-Zhula (Object) 29
Vik (NPC) 24
Vile Gate (Object) 20
Vilim-Zhula (Deity) 29
Virkus (NPC) 14
Volosizz (NPC) 19
Voltigeur (Place) 16
Wall of Chill (Spell) 19
Wall of Radiation (Spell) 8
Warded Walls (Spell) 21, 22
Wardrobe of Cleansing (Object) 3
War-worm (Monster) 29
War-worm Queen (Monster) 29
War-worm Zombie (template) (Monster) 29
Wastes of Zamon (Place) 17.5
Weeping Forest (Place) 29
Weird, Lightning (Monster) 22
Welwyn (Place) 11
Westphalen School (Place) 33
Whisker (Object) 29
Whitefang Stronghold (Place) 26
Wildsgate (Place) 28
Will Dunraith (NPC) 29
Winds and Weather (Object) 26
Witch Grass (Monster) 21
Withers (Place) 33
Woodroe (Place) 18
Wrack (Monster) 18
Wulfrun (NPC) 28
Xander (NPC) 5
Xayactl Bay (Place) 16
Xiuhcoatl (NPC) 16
Xogg (NPC) 22
Xulmec (Place) 16
Xulmec city-states (Place) 4
Yasif Cazül, the Lord of Thieves (NPC) 35B
Ydak (NPC) 31
Zabator (NPC) 33
Zadok (NPC) 22
Zahadran (Place) 32
Zamuk the Swift (Deity) 28
Ziz Ka-Seer (NPC) 19
Zoë (NPC) 13
Zolmik Thiat (NPC) 29
Zolmik's Retreat (Place) 29
Zombifying Gas (Object) 17
Zurvan (Deity) 32

Credits and Afterword

Credits

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Special thanks to the many writers and artists who created the DCC adventures that inspired this world.

Afterword: Mike Ferguson

It's been much fun being able to work on the World of Dungeon Crawl Classics … and a childhood dream come true. Many thanks to the following who made the dream possible:

Joseph, Harley, and Jeff – for making this adventure a grand one indeed.

Laura Ferguson – a great sister, and the one who got me traveling down this road in the first place.

Sue Ferguson – my lovely wife, who humors my obsession with swords and sorcery.

Jonathan Day, John Geoghegan, Eric Mee, Rick Schmidt, and Rich Zeitler – the best gamers a GM could ask for. You guys rule.

And to the memory of Doug Cohen – a great gamer and a fantastic person. Requiescat in pace, my friend.

Afterword: Jeff LaSala

Foremost thanks to my wife, Marisa – Argentine gypsy, mermaid, and a friend to all halflings and kobolds. Thank you for your love and patience, for your much-needed distractions, and for dealing with the real world in those moments when I was in another. You are the bestest, to say the leastest. Never stop looking for your unicorn, okay? For now, I give you Cindy, the baby naga.

Heuristic thanks to my big brother, John – friend, musician, and dork. Thank you for our mutual word snobbery, being a sounding board for concepts and ideas, and for your endless stream of National Geographic lore – some useful, some mere nimiety. I hope to offer you as much assistance in your own oneiric musings and moliminous dreamings.

Symbiotic thanks to Harley Stroh – friend, kindred spirit, and Project Tyrant. Nowhere else have I seen as much energy, enthusiasm, and total geek encouragement as I have in you. Thank you for roping me into this project of gamer retrospection and creative Elysium. Thanks for being that guy at my wedding about whom people later asked, "Who was that masked dancer?"

Heartfelt thanks to Joseph Goodman, for giving me the opportunity to run amuck in the DCC world – I hope you find the Known Realms of Áereth to be worthy of your standards!

Thank you, Mike, for our shared ideas and for *Curse of the Emerald Cobra*, which gave me an excuse to delve into Nahuatl culture.

And nostalgic thanks to my original gaming group: Dan Arney, Chris Nygren, and Steve Simar. Dan, I still can't believe you used your vorpal axe on a fellow PC…

Afterword: Harley Stroh

Certain adventures only come around once.

Like when the grizzled old warrior decides to go after the dragon, and asks who's coming with him. Or when the dark-eyed sorceress slowly surveys the crowd of peasants, waiting for one to step forward and pull the sword from the stone.

Like many, I grew up studying the glossography of Pluffet Smedger the Elder, and listening to stories at the knee of the Old Mage of Shadowdale. I will always remember taking my first tentative steps into the Caves of Chaos, only to vanish down a darkened pit swarming with diseased rats. So when Joseph Goodman asked if I'd oversee the chronicling of Áereth, the world of the Dungeon Crawl Classics, I knew I had been invited on the adventure of a lifetime.

Our source material? Twenty or so (now thirty!) modules written by some of the brightest minds in the business. Immediately we set about extracting all the heroes and villains, monsters and ruins, drawing connections where there were dots, making them up where there were none. What began as a simple compilation quickly grew to an encyclopedic undertaking. Modules were photocopied and highlighted, maps drawn and re-drawn. Notes were taken, backstories written.

Patterns began to emerge.

Of course, not all of the patterns were good. The original Dungeon Crawl Classics were written as one-shot adventures for generic fantasy settings, with oh-so-brilliant settings like the Great Swamp. (What's so great about it?) By the time we came across the Swamp's sister setting, the Great Desert, I demanded a blood oath from the other writers, striking the word Great from their lexicon. As DCC authors, we can be forgiven; after all, when you named a demonic power after an old roommate in graduate school, no one ever dreamed that it would one day be canonized in the official campaign setting … forever.

But then something began to change. Áereth, compiled from the cultural Zeitgeist of classic sword-and-sorcery adventures, began writing itself. Dates started making sense. Old villains returned to overthrow empires, peasants grew into heroes and then legends. Like an ancient dragon stirring from a thousand-year rest, the world came to life.

Here's the secret about Dungeon Crawl Classics: Sure, they look like the old modules of yore; sure, they have the blue ink maps and the fonts we remember. But if nostalgia were all they had to offer, DCC sales would have withered and died after the first year. Far more importantly, they have risk, excitement, and adventure, the crucial ingredients to any good game of D&D.

Now it is nearly midnight. Tomorrow I will forward the manuscript on to Chicago. Is the world finished? Absolutely not. Given another four months, we could write – record – another two hundred pages. But like Gygax taught us all those years ago, games are meant to be played, not perfected. This gazetteer isn't a crystal ball peering into every corner of the world; it's a magic mirror, offering you a glimpse of a world you've never visited but have always known.

Now all that's left is for you to step through.

So take up your broadsword, blow the dust off your spellbook, and saddle the horses. The mailed Kings of the North are calling out your name, demanding an audience. I leave you to give an answer.

—Harley Stroh, February 2006

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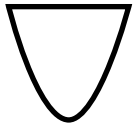
Player's Name _____ **Character's Name** _____

Race _____ **Class** _____ **Level** _____ **Alignment** _____

Speed _____ **XP** _____

Initiative _____ **Spell Save DC** _____



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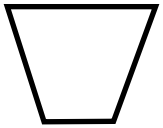

Hit Points

Tch: _____ **Max:** _____

FF: _____ **Nonlethal:** _____

BAB

Melee

2nd Hand

Ranged

Grapple

Strength
Modifier: _____

Dexterity
Modifier: _____

Constitution
Modifier: _____

Intelligence
Modifier: _____

Wisdom
Modifier: _____

Charisma
Modifier: _____

Fort Save

Ref Save

Will Save

Skills & Feats

Equipment & Treasure

Languages & Notes

Spells & Special Abilities

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The World of Aereth

Empire of Crieste

Free Province of Thire

Morena Nova

Criestine Colonies

Ssorlang

The Vermilion Tribes

Taijin

Vivekanika

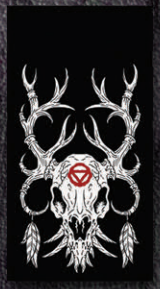
City-State of Porthmeor

Free City of Wildsgate

Free City of Ternyziem

Sires of Pelagia

Djeser al-Maqqara



Scourgelands

League of Resonance

Darawan

Kaatlan

Maras

Miztlani

Amoya

Chuzec

Athua

Teotcoatlan

World of Aereth - PDF

Setup Grid

Top Map (TM)

1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15

Middle Map (MM)

1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15

Lower Map (LM)

1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15

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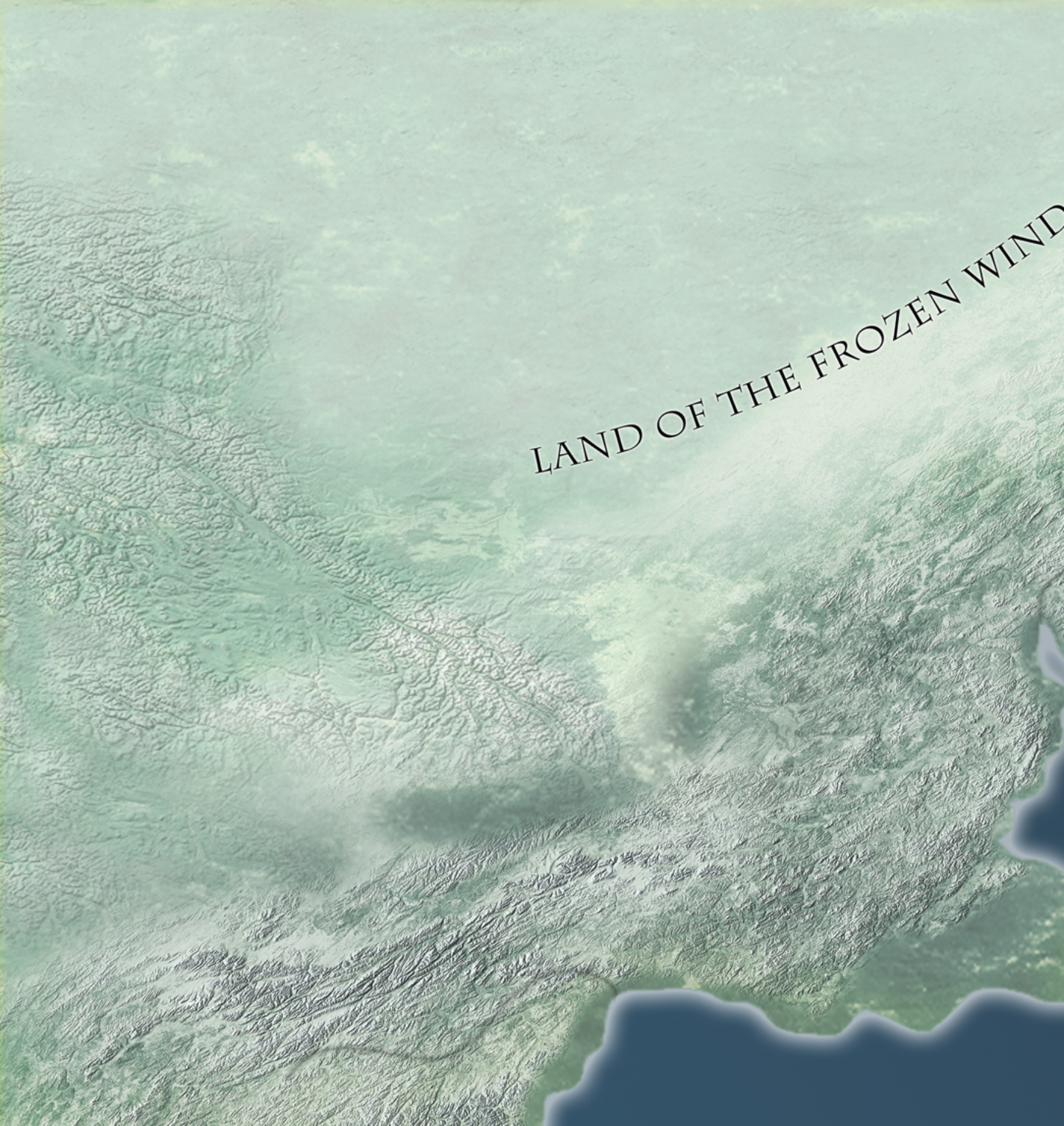

LAND OF THE FROZEN WIND

STRAIT OF GNASHING ICE
TAINS

the
World
of
Áereth
Gazetteer

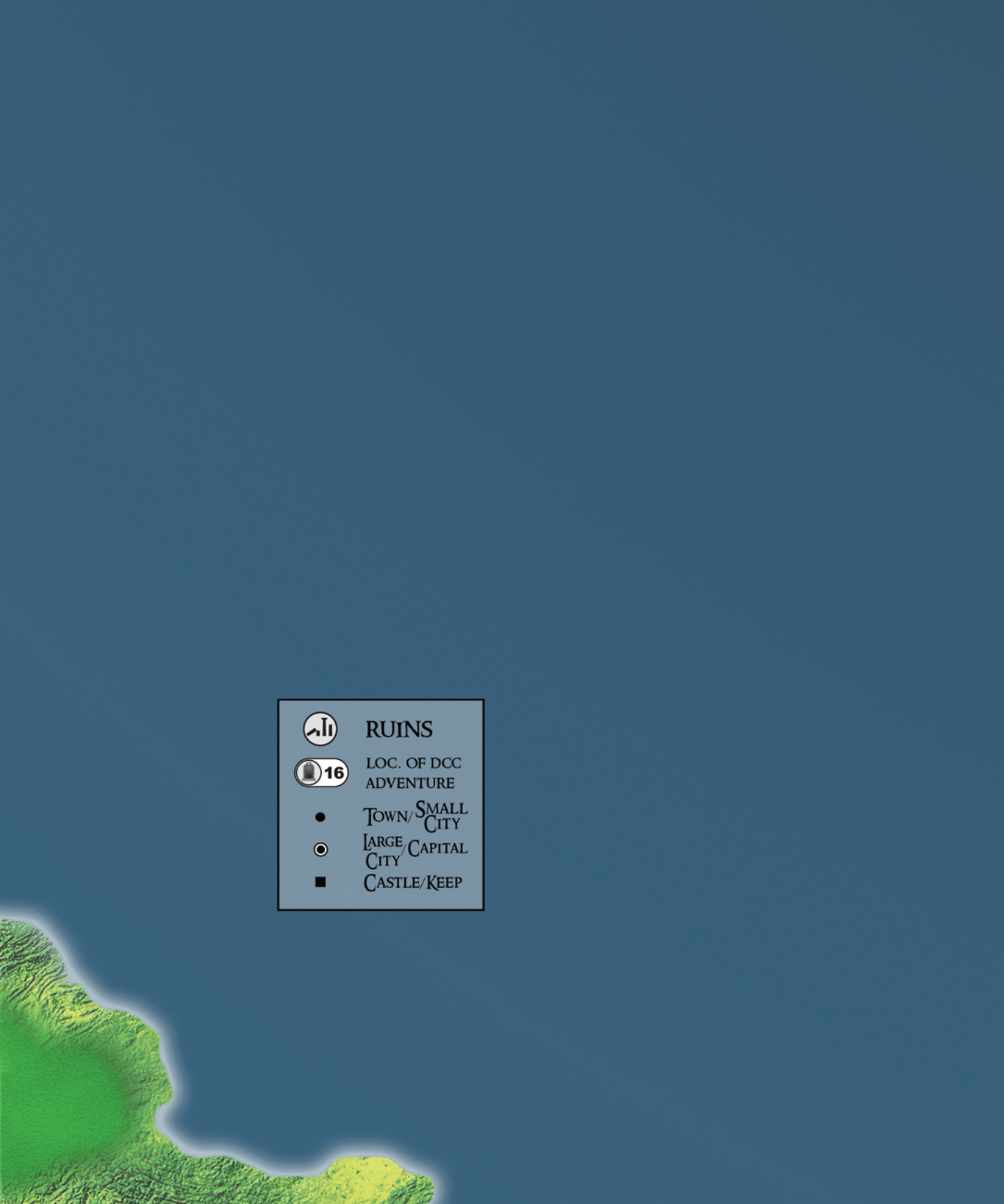
GREAT NORTHER

RN SEA

WALEHAVEN
FROST BARRENS
SAINT'S BLOOD MOUNTAINS
25
12.5
12
AMBROSHEA
TRADES

BLACKICE MOUN
DEAD VA
ICENWASTES
UNTAINS

ALES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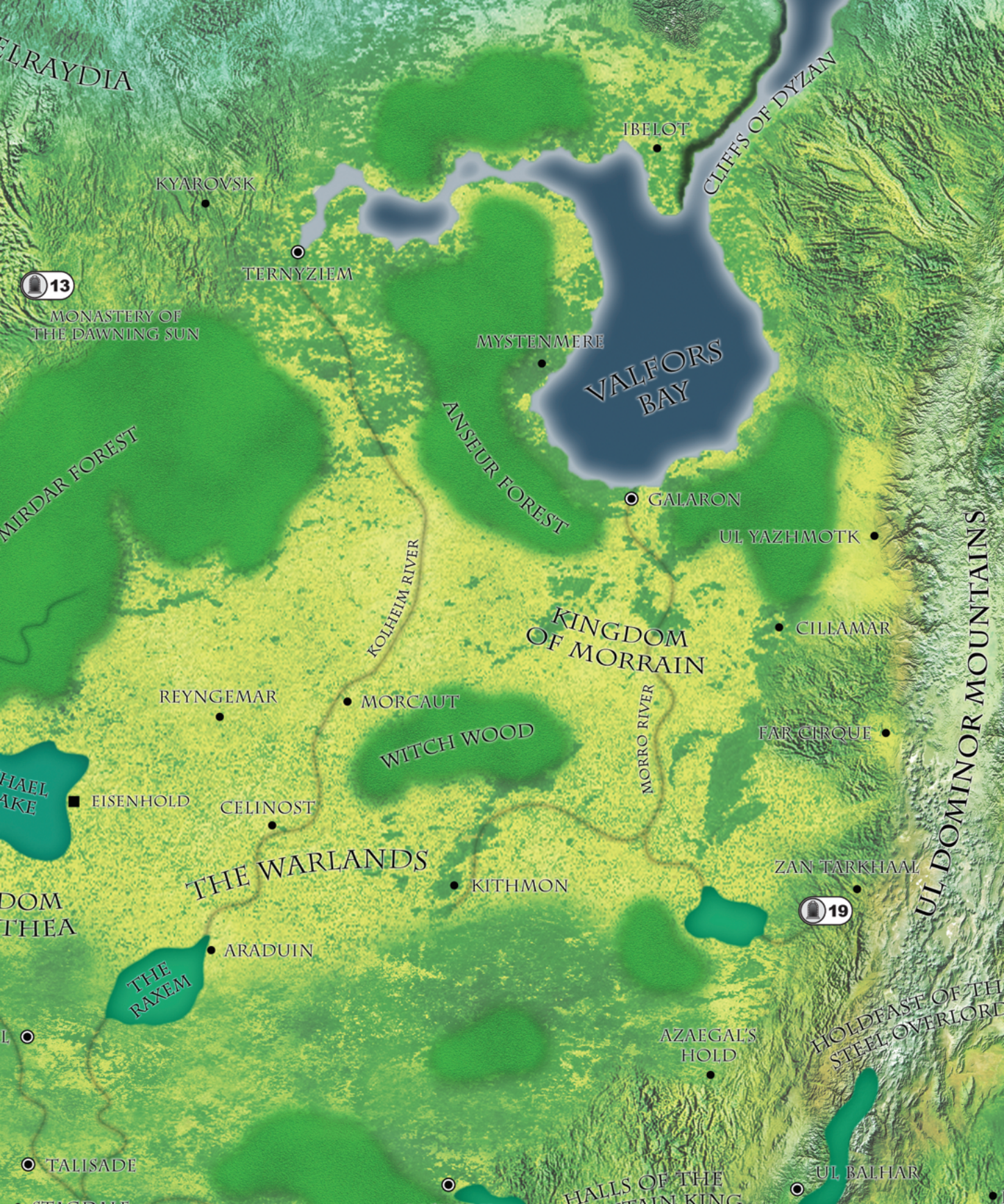
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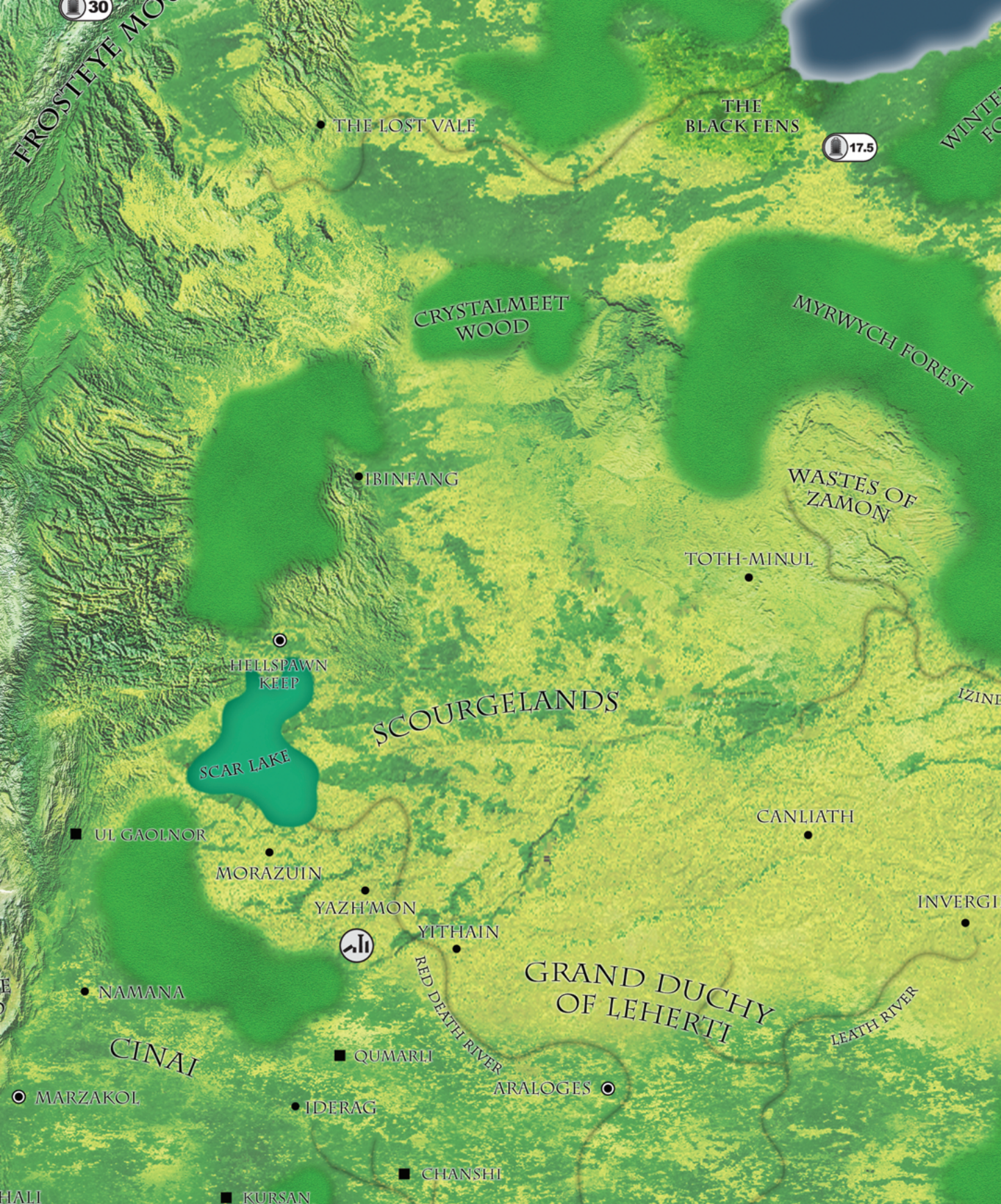
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HALSGAT
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RISINOX
HALLS OF THE MOUNTAIN KING
UL BALHAR
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THE WILDS
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AVENORS
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GREAT SWAMP
17
GARLAND'S FORK
10
STAGWOOD
34
HIGH CROSS
THE BLADE REACH
ARGALIS
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ARCHBRIDGE
VERNAUT
MOSSWOOD
AXEBURY
1
VAQUEREA
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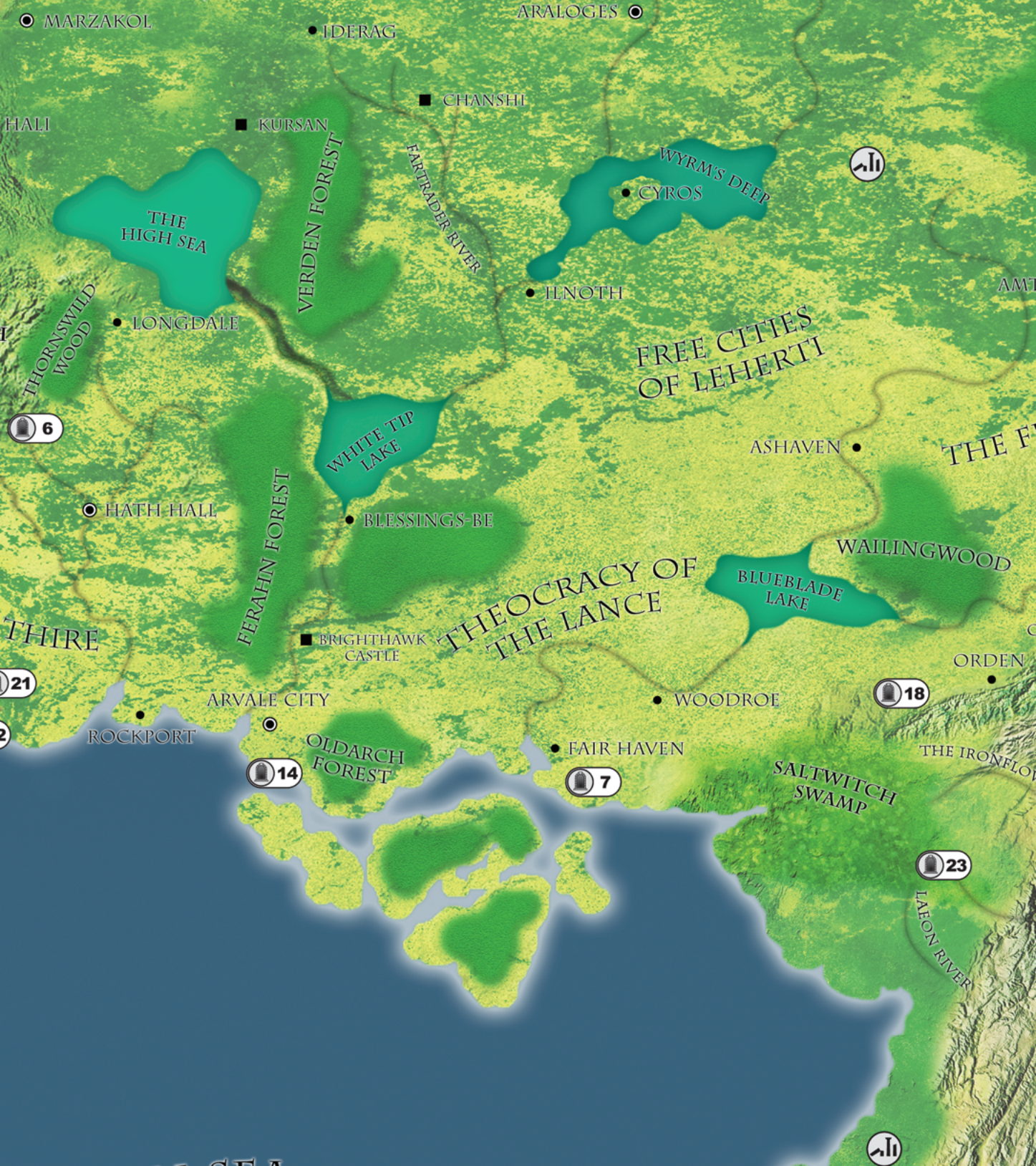
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WHITE TIP LAKE
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FERAHN FOREST
WAILINGWOOD
BLUEBLADE LAKE
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ORDEN
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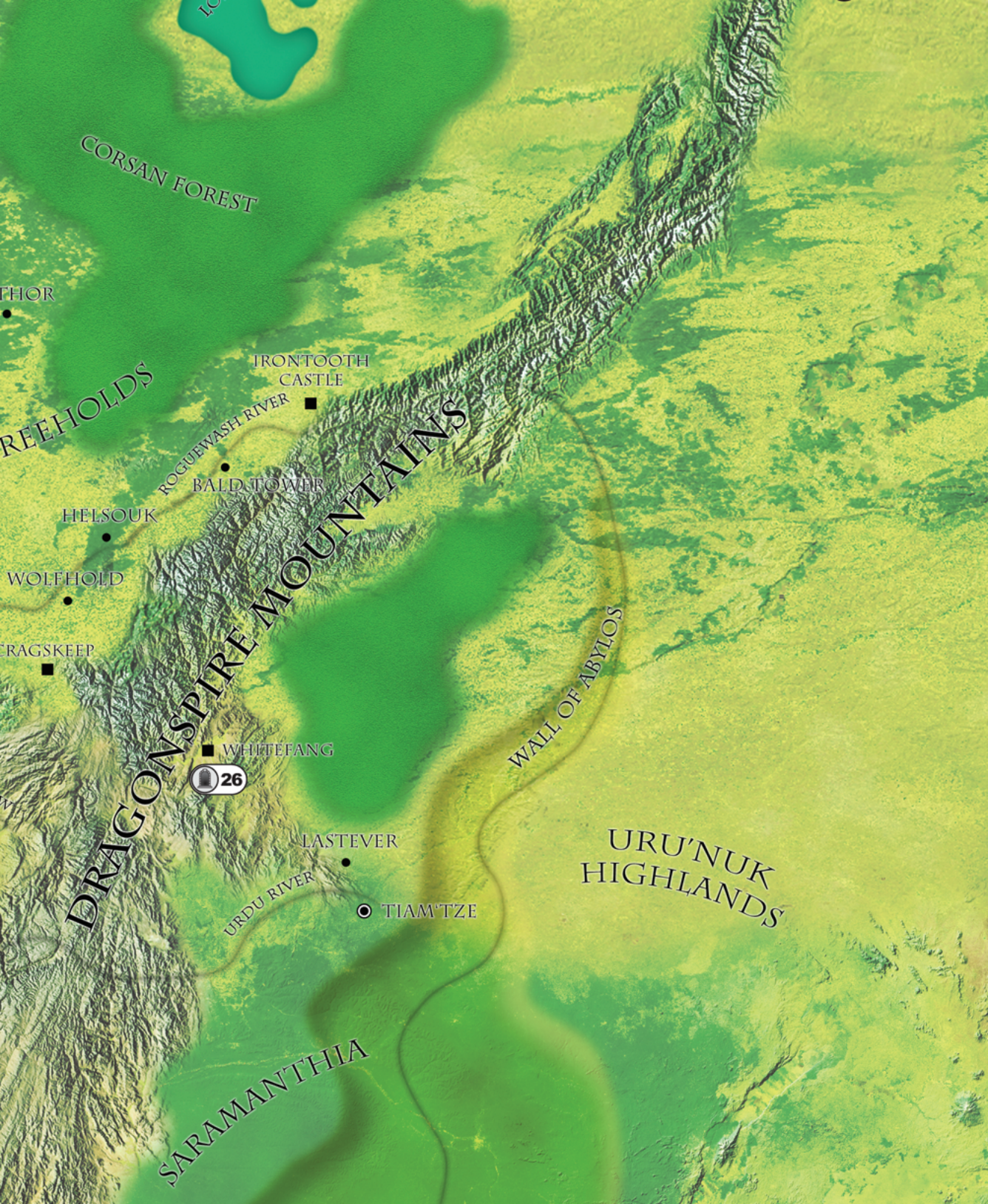
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WHITEFANG
26
WALL OF ABYLOS
LASTEVER
URDU RIVER
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URU'NUK HIGHLANDS
SARAMANTHIA

TARRAS
SEA
OF
DESPERATION
DUJAMAR
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CRIESTINE COLO

EMPYREAN OCEAN
RUTUAN
THE BARRIER ISLES
BLOODPORT
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DHAVOSIN
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SPARPORT WATCH
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KASSANTIA
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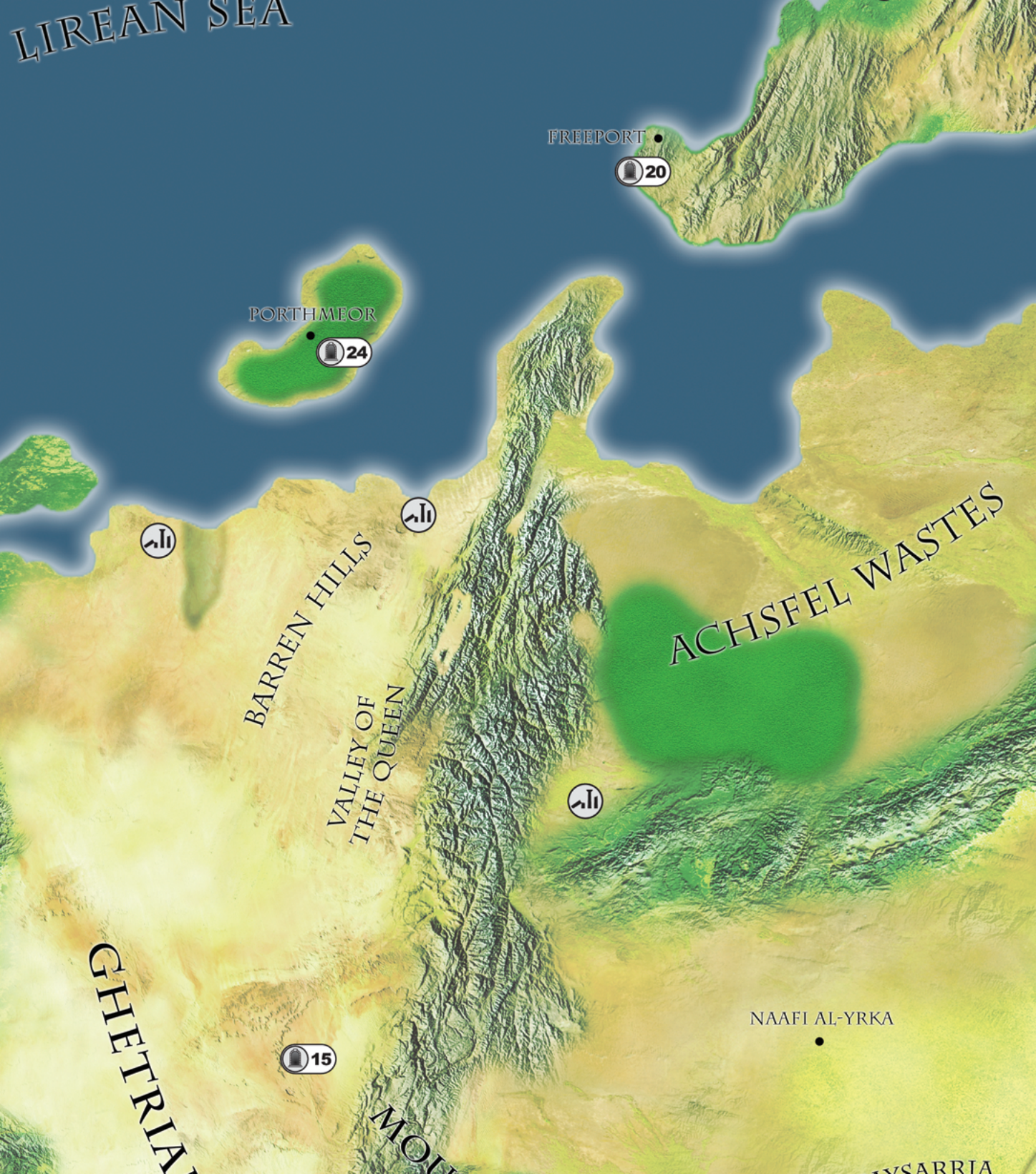
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NAAFI AL-YRKA
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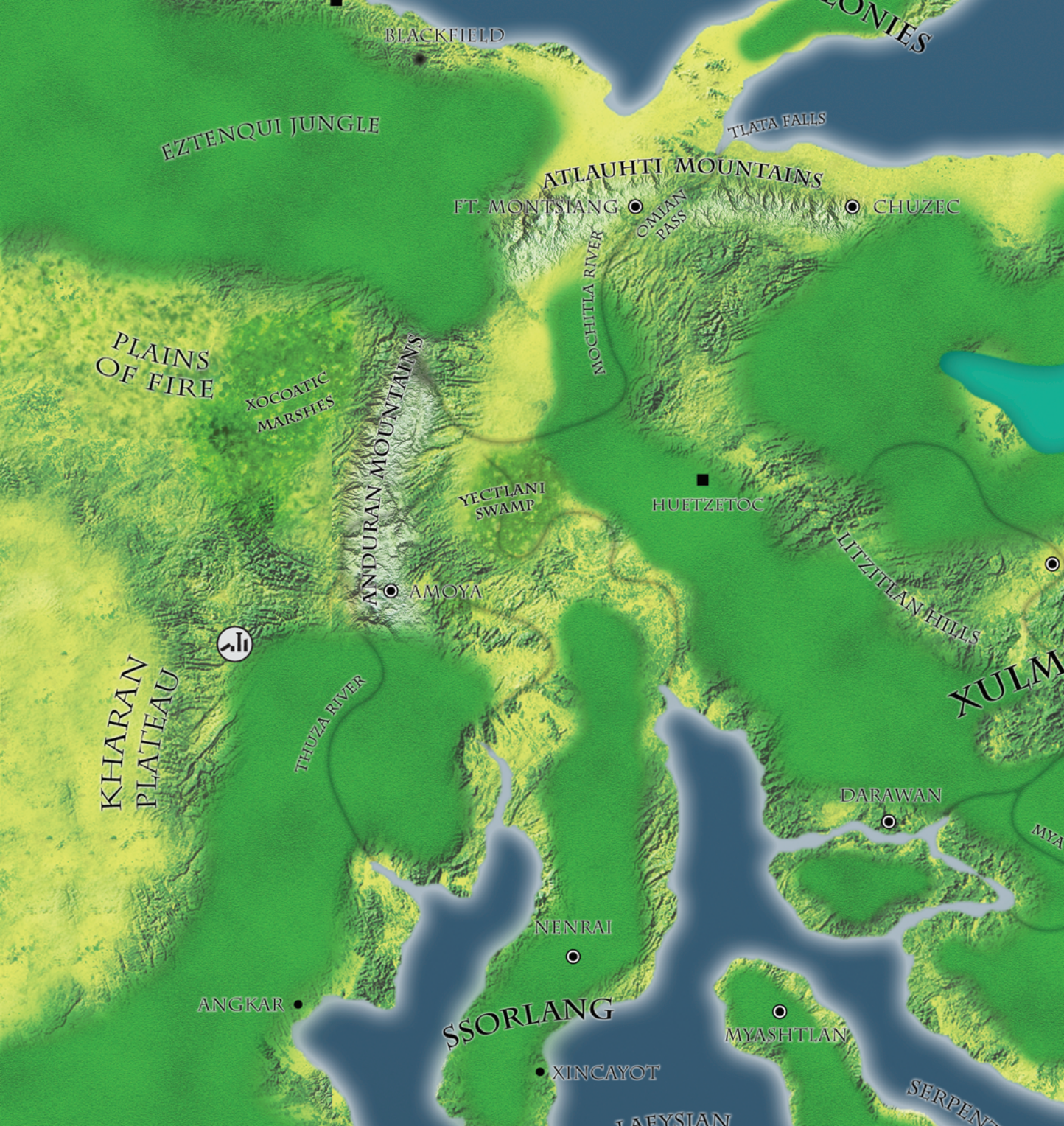
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XOCOATIC MARSHES
ANDURAN MOUNTAINS
YECTLANI SWAMP
HUETZETOC
LITZITLAN HILLS
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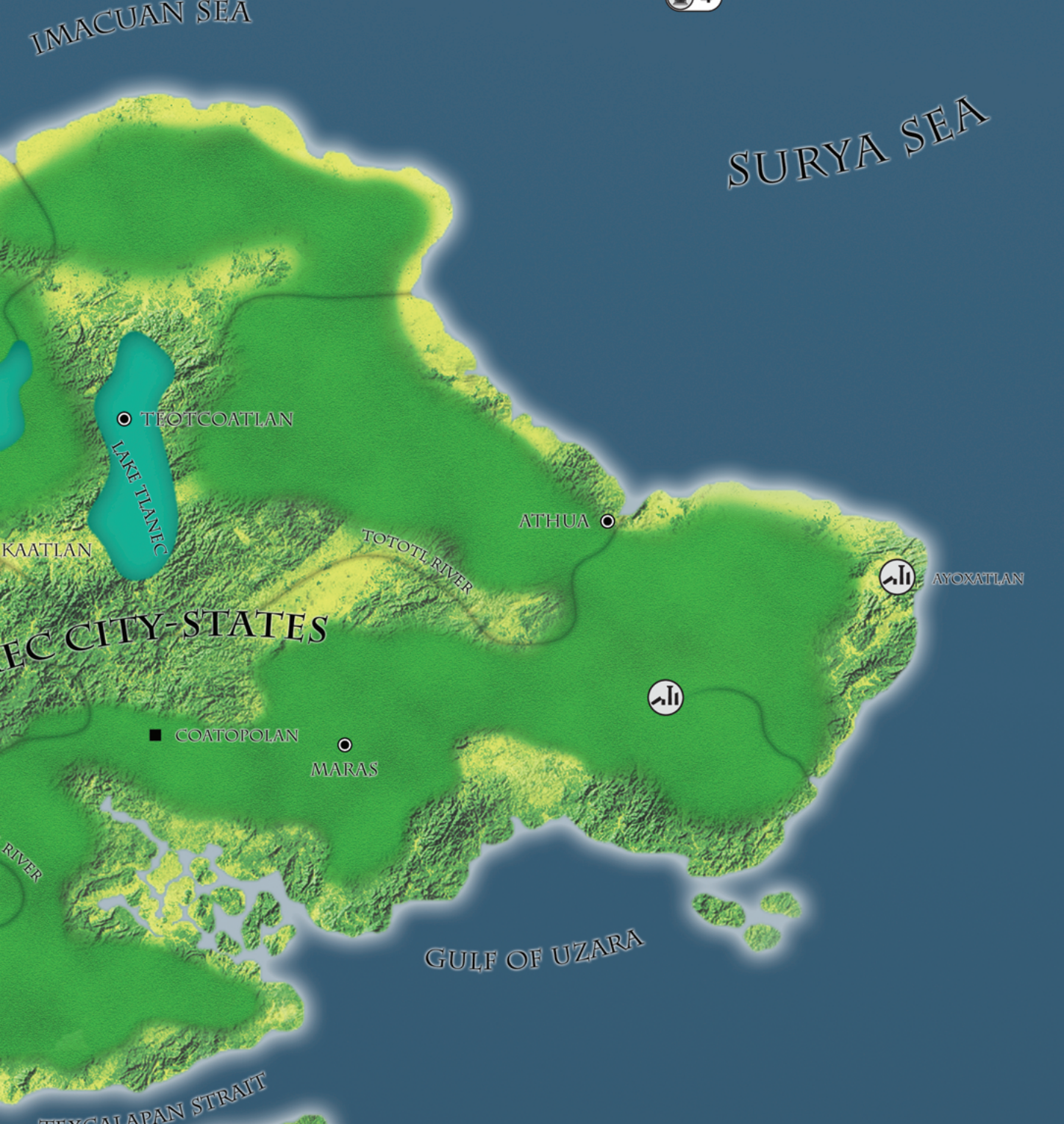
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WARRIORS' GATE
RHEKSU
CITY-STATE OF DJESER AL-MAQQARA
HUATALO
JOMOA
CUNEGONDE
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HERRENIA MOU
THE ISLES OF THARNAKA
SYAXAR
KHIAZAN RIVER
SANDS

N DESERT
NTAINS OF THE
FIFTH PRINCE
QUAYSARRIA
32
SHADHALIA
GLOOM MARSHES
OF TASHGAR
SAKHAEN TAIR
LAKE
TYRGYZ
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BAHADUR
NTAINS
XA DESHRET
JUNGLES OF
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CITY-STATE OF
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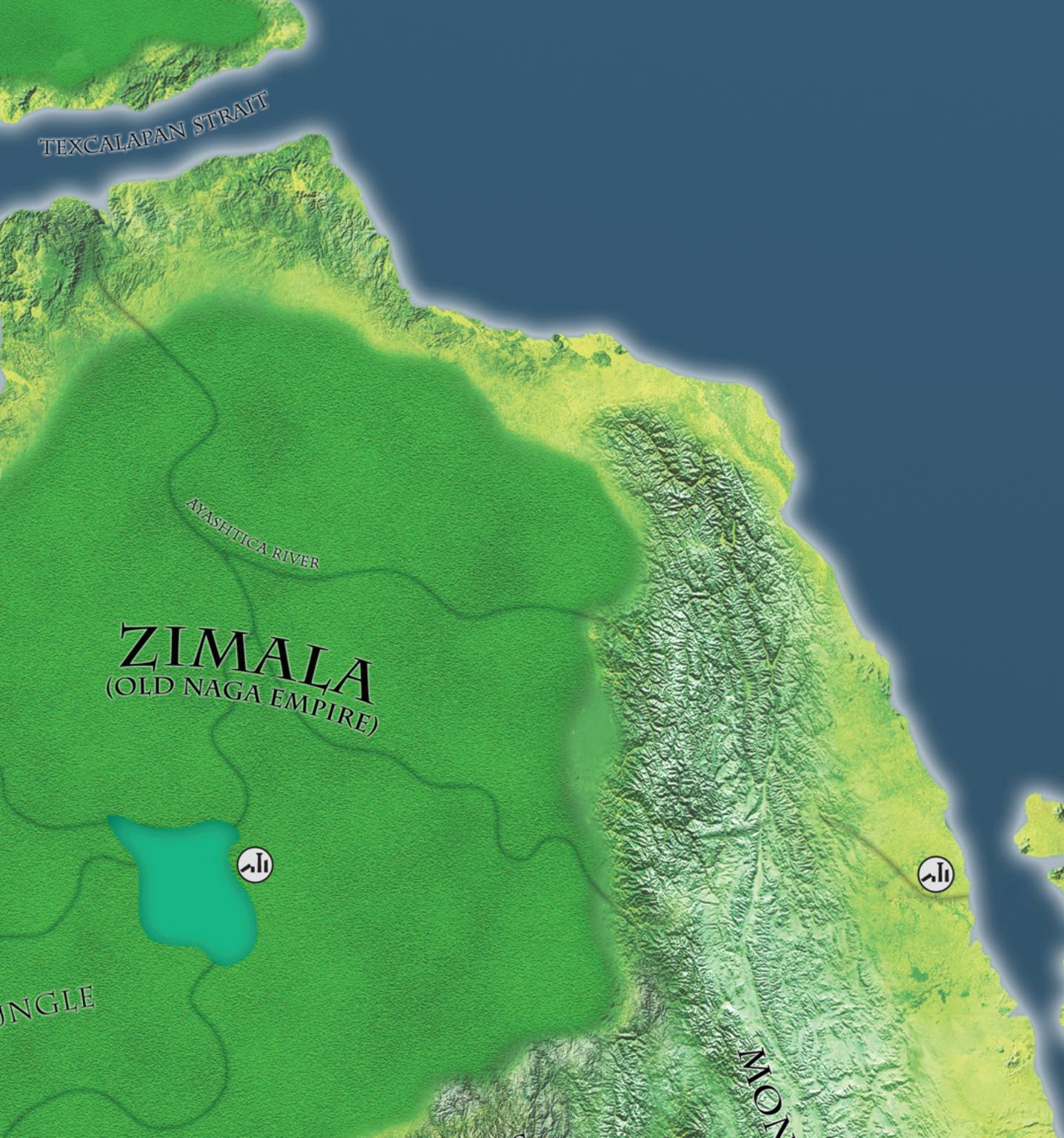
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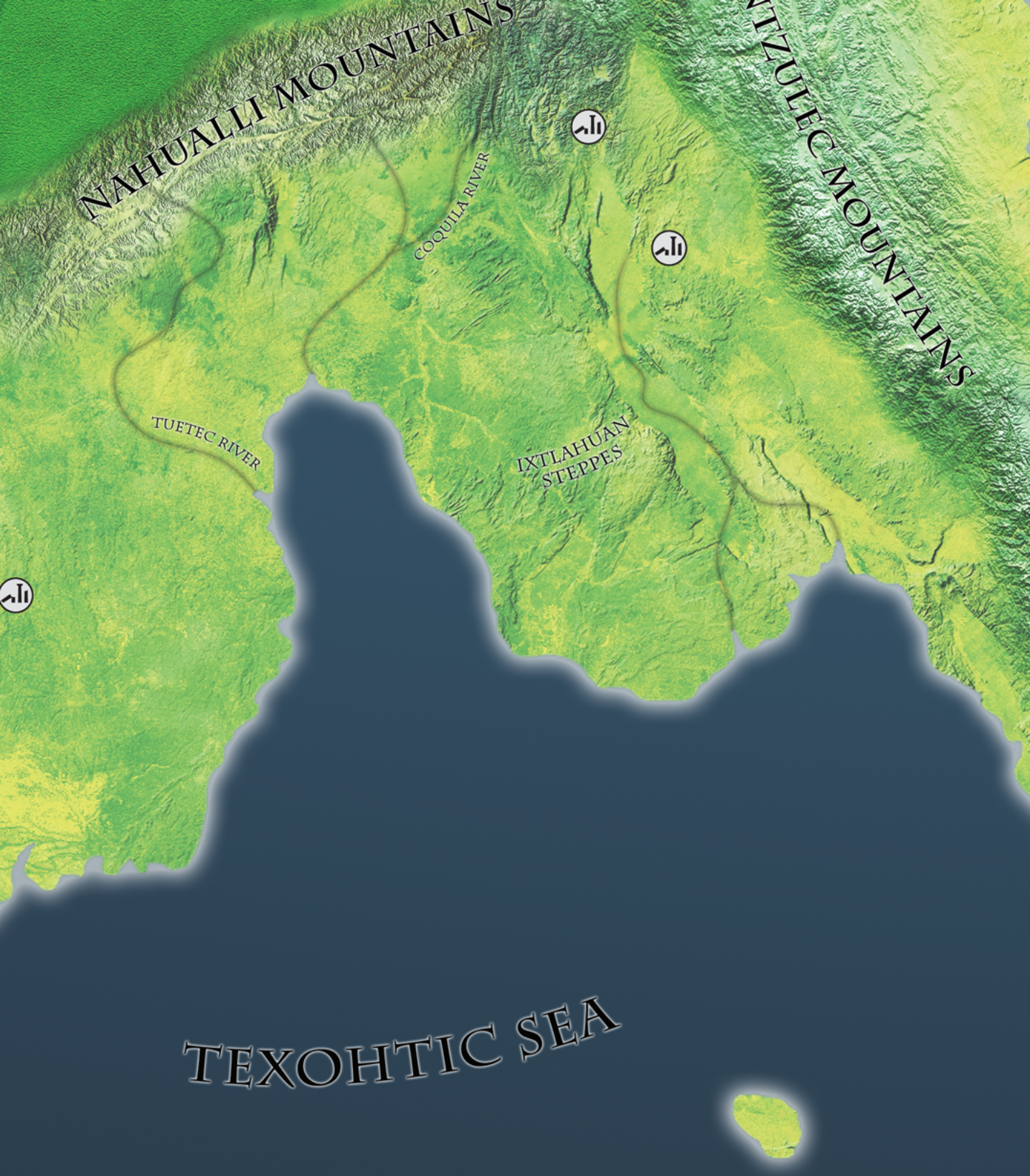
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CAPE OF DEMONS

SOUTHERN SEAS

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LOC. OF DCC ADVENTURE
TOWN/SMALL CITY
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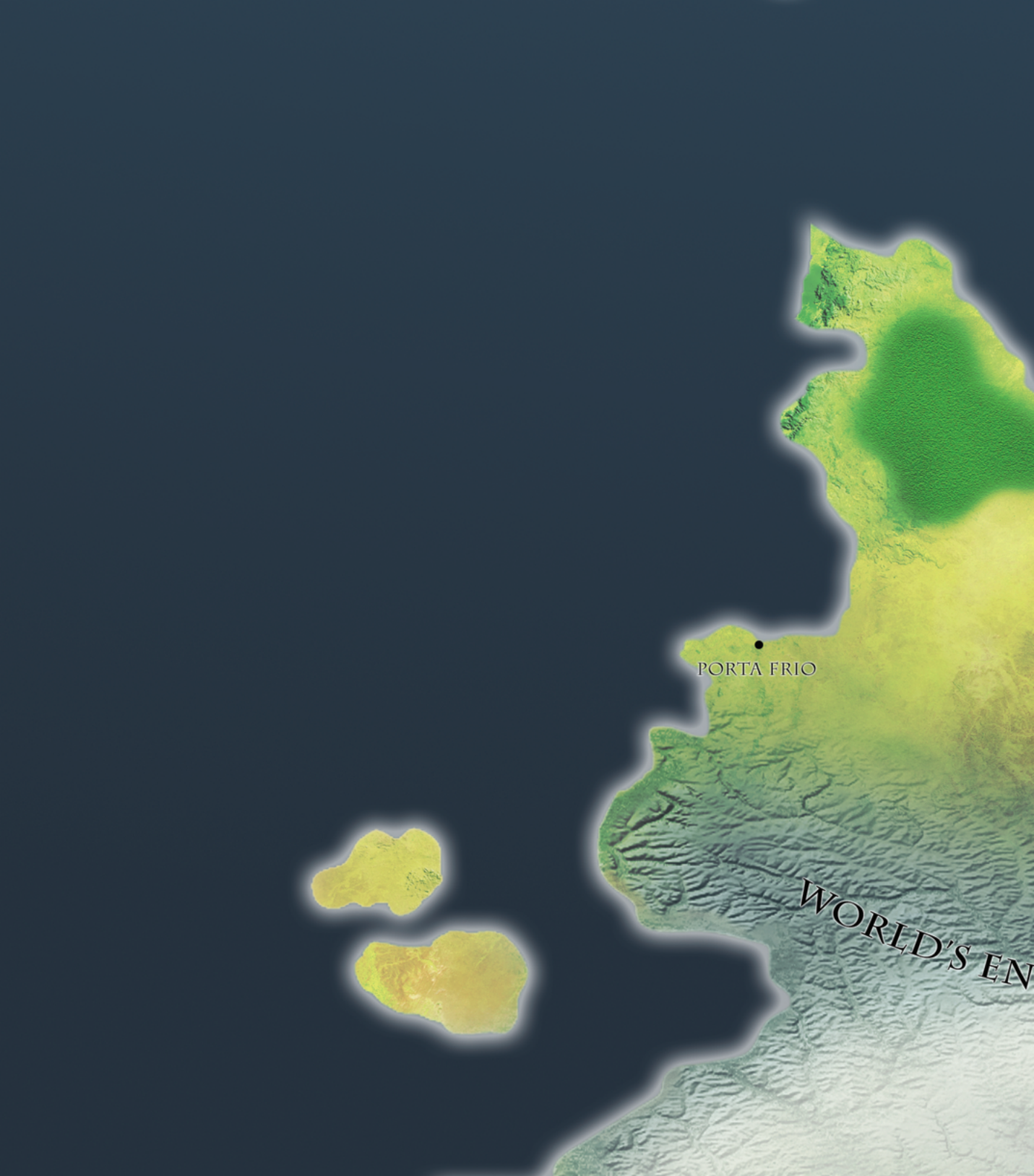
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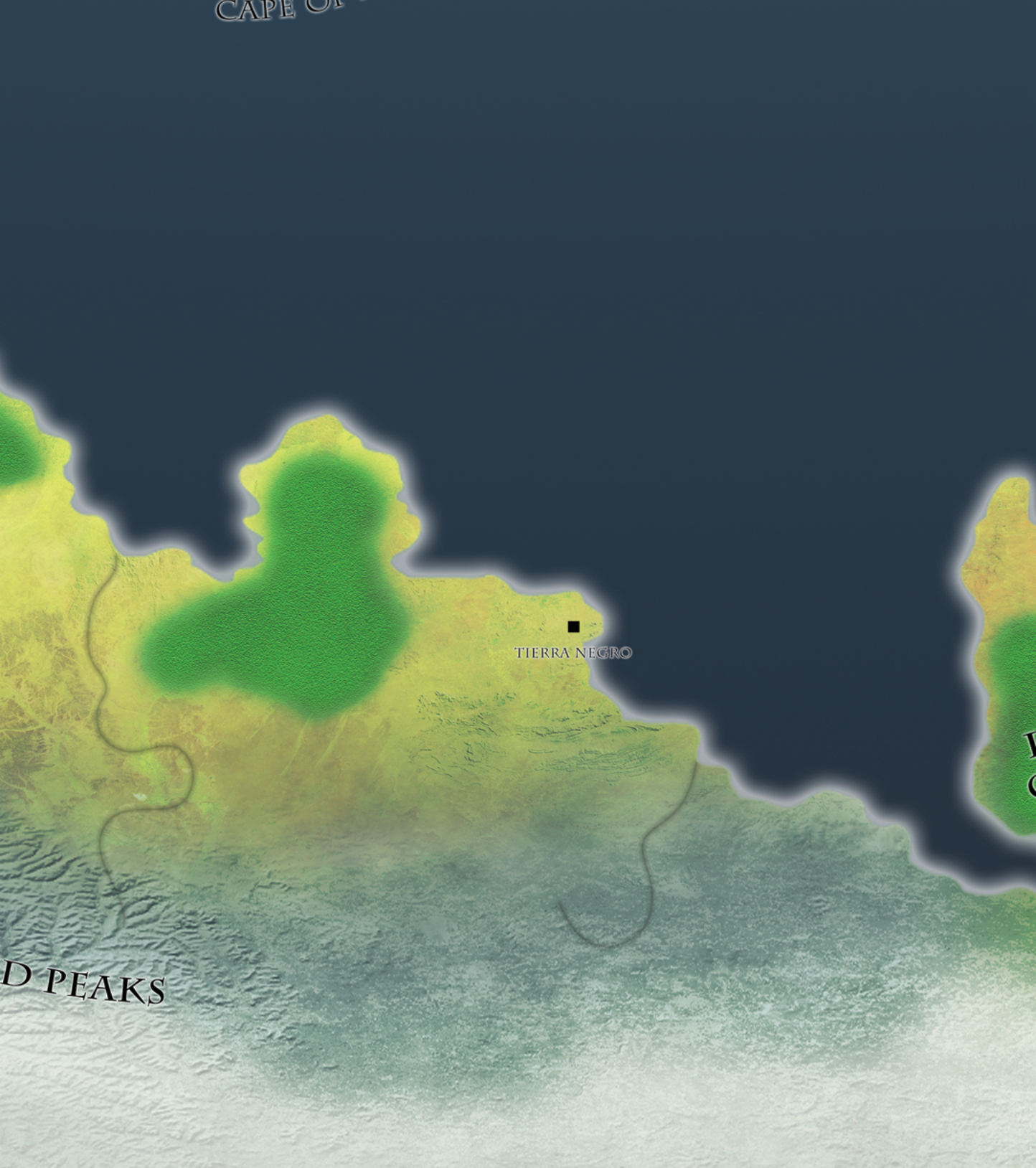
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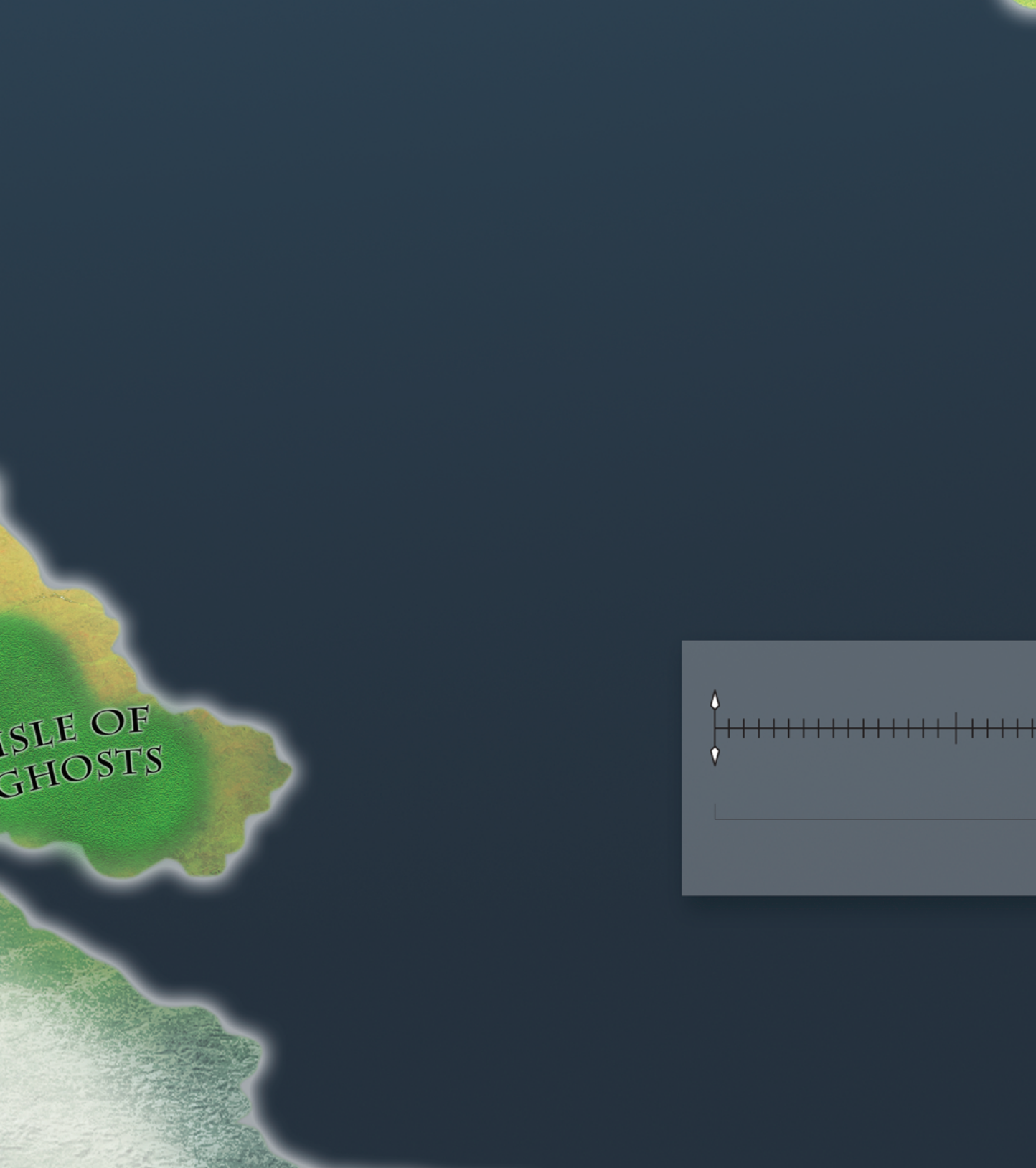
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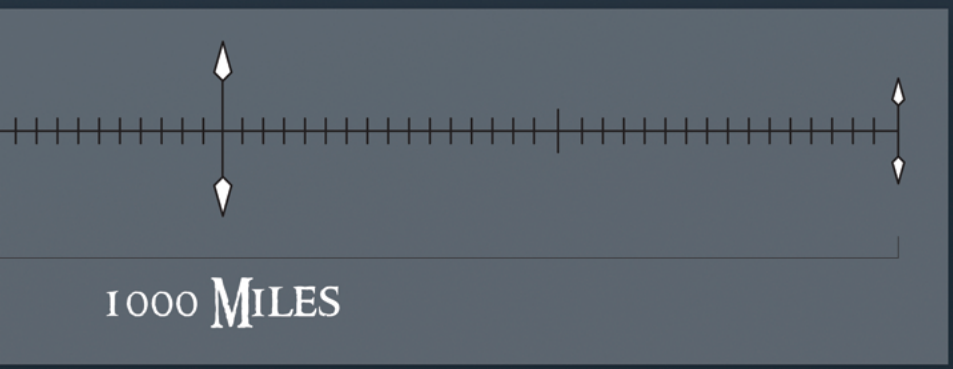
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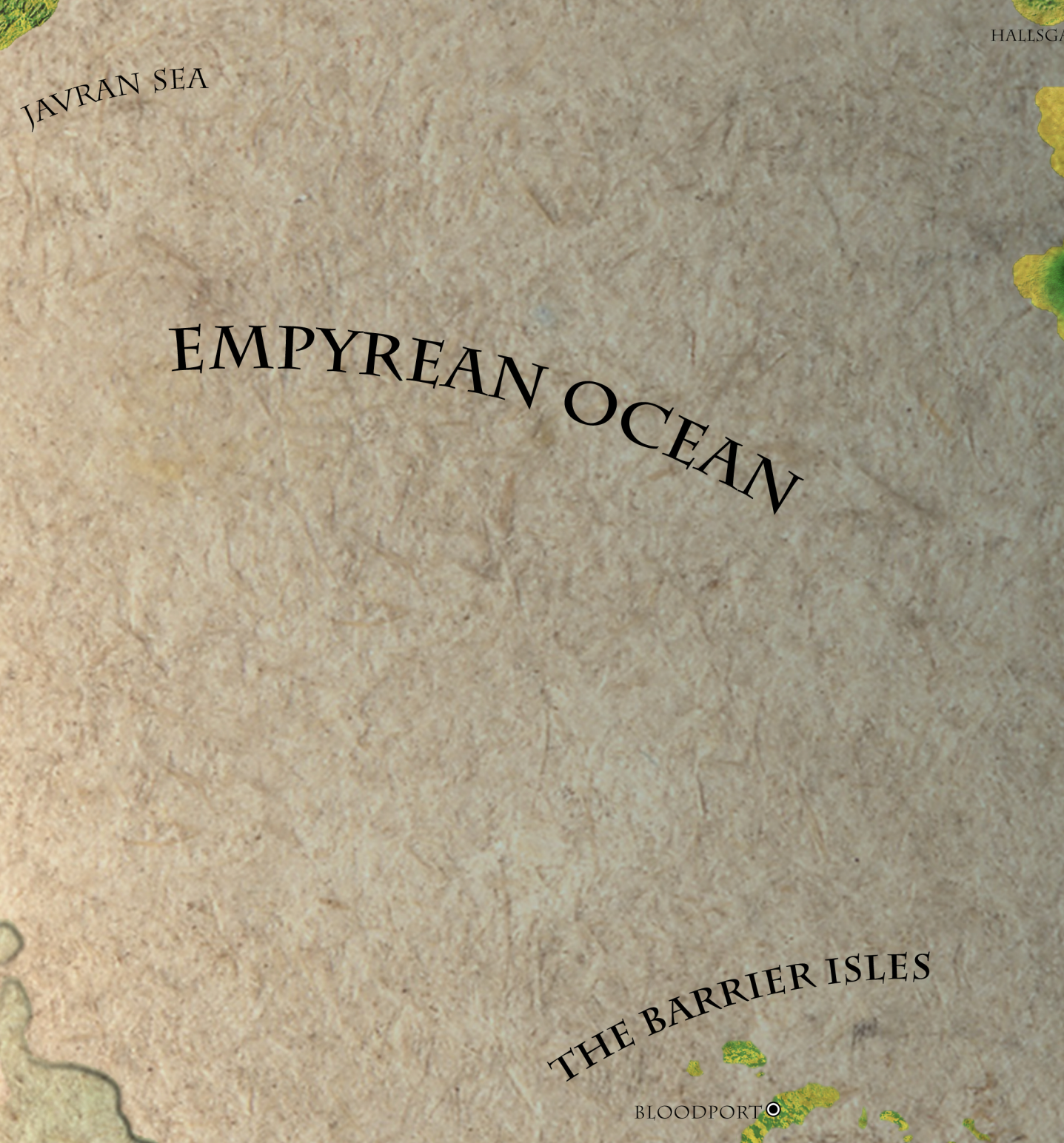
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LIREAN SEA
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SCRAGTOOTH STRAIT

DÛNERAIN MOUNTAINS
KINGDOM OF UTHUR
AMN'
IRONVALE
ISLE OF NOS CAEN
FOLKEVE
WARRINGHILL

THE WILDS
ORGEMOUTH
CRITH FOREST
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SAEDRE RIVER
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STALGARD
AVENORS
SYLVAN DOWNS
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STAGWOOD
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THE HIGH SEA
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THEOCRACY OF THE LANCE
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SALTWITCH SWAMP
LAEON RIVER

HOLDS
IRONTOOTH
CASTLE
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HELSUK
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DRAGONSPIRE MOUNTAINS
WHITEFANG
LASTEVER
URDU RIVER
TIAM 'TZE
THIA

Dungeon Crawl Classics #35

Gazetteer of the Known Realms

Contents

Introduction 2
Chapter 1: The Northlands 3
Chapter 2: The Southlands 43
Chapter 3: The Lostlands 64
Chapter 4: Geographic Features 81
Chapter 5: Organizations 100
Chapter 6: Beyond the Known Realms 111
Chapter 7: History of the Northlands 113

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Introduction

The grimoire you hold in your hands first surfaced in America more than one hundred years ago. Discovered in the ruins of the Great Chicago Fire of 1871, the tome made its way from collector to collector and finally to the good Doctor S_____ W____, who—knowing my interest in bibliotic obscurities—entrusted the tome to me for translation.

Upon inspection, the first thing one notices about the tome is its smell: musty incense, wood smoke, and oiled steel. Bound in splitting leather and scarred with runes, the cover conjures visions of the ceaseless march of the ages.

Between those thick covers are several hundred hand-written pages, each inked and illuminated in dyes and pigments that bear little resemblance to any known by modern bibliophiles. Sadly, the bulk of the tome has been damaged beyond recognition or is simply untranslatable. But from the scattered passages, a determined researcher may infer this much:

The codex is the work of a handful of unidentified scriveners or monks, living during what might be termed a Dark Age—a time of marauding savages, unknown powers, and desperate heroes. By collecting the sum of their knowledge into a single work, the tome, these scribes hoped to stave off the press of darkness and barbarism.

Whether or not their gambit was successful, and if they accomplished with pen and ink what sword and spear could not, will likely never be known.

The codex is seventh in a work of twenty-one volumes, and serves as catalog for the later volumes and a brief gazetteer of what the scribes refers to as the *Umbris Mundus*. The first term, "shadow," certainly refers to the threats that plagued their civilization. The second translates to "world," but whether the scribes intended "world" as we understand it, or "continent," or simply "the lands of our lord-liege," remains unclear.

Similarly, a thousand other priceless historical details, deemed too trivial or universally understood to record, remain lost, waiting for future scholars to coax them from the mists of antiquity. Given the absence of accurate maps, it remains for the reader to decide if the codex is a pre-history of our world, or an inexplicable shadow-echo of another, unnamed realm.

We have done our best to present this translation of the tome in its original context, without attempting to conceal its flaws. I encourage the good readers to fill in the gaps with their own reasoning and logic, so that the world of the scribes might live on in their imaginations—and perhaps stave off the darkness a bit longer.

Harley Stroh
Curator of Esoteric Collections
Chicago, 2006

Chapter 1
The Northlands

The nations of the Northlands are steeped in eldritch history, and are often—quite literally—built upon the ruins of those that came before them. The mightiest citadels stand on the ruins of dwarfholds, holy sanctums are built atop fallen rings of druidic stones, and loggers harvest timber from fae-haunted glades. Every spring a farmer uncovers new ruins beneath his fields, often warded in dead languages unknown to modern sages. The past is the North's constant companion, dark-cowled and mysterious, revealing tales of high sorcery, heroism, and slumbering horrors at her leisure.

A careful study of these ruins, and of the scrolls and tomes brought back by explorers, reveals that the kings of men are not the first to rule the Northlands. Some legends speak of ancient races and gods familiar to scholars, while others whisper of foul cults and forbidden powers.

Sages debate these epochs endlessly, but all can agree that the current age is rightly called the Reign of Man. Whether by mortal ambition or some mystic turning of the cosmos, the power of the Gods has waned, permitting the rise of heroes, and granting men, elves, dwarves, and the wee-folk the freedom to fashion their own destinies.

This waning has also ushered in a new host of threats and dangers. The marauding armies of the Scourgelands threaten the heart of the civilized world, barbarians raid with greater frequency each spring thaw, and shrieking comets tumble from the night sky; witches, seers, and astrologers alike presage a time of coming darkness.

It remains to be seen whether this is a prelude to an age of prosperity and peace, or an end to humanity's reign.

Climate and Seasons

The Northlands encompass ecologies ranging from the temperate grasslands and vales of Crieste to the inhospitable wastes of the north. Climates and seasons are dependent largely on latitude and precipitation, with certain marked exceptions due to geographic and magical anomalies.

The Criestine Empire and the other nations adjacent to the Lirean Sea enjoy mild summers, brief winters, and long springs and autumns. Dense stands of deciduous hardwoods offer sturdy beams for shipbuilding, while fertile soils provide abundant crops and grasslands for cattle and sheep.

Moving north, the climate grows steadily cooler, reflected by a marked hardiness in the people and beasts. The Warlands, renowned for their wealth of natural resources, expect deep winters with heavy snowfall and months of isolation. The summers, unmitigated by the cooling Lirean Sea, can be equally severe, and times of hardship force farmers to augment their crops and herds with wild game. The deciduous forests slowly give way to primeval coniferous stands and the mighty Ashwood groves.

East, across the vast ranges of the Ul Dominor Mountains, are the Mirdar-Luminar Steppes. The little moisture that reaches the steppes is brought by raging storms that sweep down from Hoarfrost Bay. In years of drought, the steppes become a vast tinderbox, and wildfires rage up and down the high prairie, tainting the air for hundreds of leagues in every direction and shading the sunsets the color of spilled blood.

North of both the Mirdar-Luminar Steppes and the Warlands are endless swaths of high tundra, gnarled oak, and icy wastes. Here the temperature retreats below freezing every night of the year, and savage beasts swarm the land. While hunters, outlaws, and hermits choose to make their home in the forbidding wastes, they are the exception, not the rule.

Timekeeping and Celestial Bodies

The Emperor of Crieste, in his divine wisdom, determines all units of measurement, including the span of the days, months, and years. Following the end of the Interregnum, the empire adopted a sidereal calendar of 365 days, but many of the smaller nations hold to the older lunar calendar.

Every nation and religion celebrates a host of holy days throughout the year, and travelers can expect to encounter any number of festivals and feasts as they travel the North. While universal celebrations are rare, the following holidays are common to all cultures:

Swordfall: Spring in the Northlands is the season of war. Foes abound, and even nations of common cause have reason to settle border disputes with blade and lance. Swordfall is observed on the Spring Equinox, marking the customary beginning of the war season, when roads are passable and the weather tenable. Swordfall is traditionally celebrated with martial tournaments and tests of courage, but just as often the holiday heralds a full-scale invasion, presaging a season of rapine, fire, and death.

Day of Fates: Celebrated on Summer Solstice, the Day of Fates is the culmination of a weeklong celebration honoring patron deities and local saints. On the last day of the week, newborns are named, couples renew their vows of love, and oaths to lord and liege are declared anew. It is a common practice for knights to embark on quests on this holiday, and it is deemed a blessed day for wizards to choose apprentices. Adventuring companies often choose this day to make their first vows of brotherhood.

Harvestmoon: Falling on the full moon closest to the Autumn Equinox, Harvestmoon is a celebration of thanksgiving and preparation for the winter ahead. The dead are honored with tributes of wine and sweetmeats, and priests go from house to house offering blessings in return for the same. The revels stretch from moonrise to moonfall and lively celebrations are believed to ward off winter's chill.

Forge Feast: Observed on the Winter Solstice, Forge Feast celebrates the rebirth of the year, when hearth fires are relit from the forges of village smithies; woe is the smith who has let his forge fire die. The day culminates in an exchange of gifts, and a single enormous feast with every member of the community bringing an offering to the table.

Empires, Kingdoms, Fiefs, and City-States

What follows is a catalog of the empires, kingdoms, free-states, and principalities of the Northlands. The noted populations are only rough estimates; the actual figures fluctuate wildly with the seasonal depredations of war, plagues, and other acts of the Gods. This catalog is by necessity incomplete: towns, hamlets, and even some cities were passed over due to incomplete records and cartographical disputes. Local lords and elders should be always consulted before the beginning of any journey.

At first glance, the Known Realms might appear to be a patchwork of nations covering every league of Áereth, but veteran explorers know better. Each nation's borders extend only as far as its lord's ability to enforce his rule, leaving vast swaths of borderlands given over to roaming bands of escaped slaves and serfs, violent outlaws, monstrous humanoids, and far worse. Passage between nations without armed escort is attempted only by the bold or desperate.

The majority of Northlanders live in simple villages and hamlets, earning their livelihood by farming, herding, and hunting. The average farmer passes his entire life without traveling more than twenty miles from his homestead. Cities and towns are essential hubs of trade, defense, and religion. Any time a city is sacked by marauding hordes, the surrounding lands suffer.

Similarly, the cities rely on outlying farms to provide the enormous amounts of grain, vegetables, fruits, and meats necessary to support their swollen populations. A prince that punishes his people with high taxes and refuses to defend them in times of distress quickly discovers how difficult it is to maintain a cavalry without grain, or arm his knights without iron.

Exceptions to this rule are plentiful, and benign despots are few and far between. In the hostile realms of the North, civilization is best thought of as a curious anomaly in a long history of savagery and barbarism.

Cinai

(Vale of the Blood Hunt)

Thane of the Blooded, Ashir the Maul

Population: 569,601 (humans 75%, dwarves 10%, half-elves 4%, gnomes 3%, halflings 4%, elves 2%, other 2%)

Resources: Furs, mercenaries, raw wool, leather, timber

Capital: Marzakol

The wind-scoured hills and dark forests of the Cinai Highlands breed fierce warriors and deadly monsters. With the constant threat of the Scourge and the fierce hill trolls that are native to the Highlands, life in the Vale is often short and always violent.

The people of Cinai are forged in the fire of violence and tempered in the blood of their foes, hence their chosen name, the Blooded. Centuries of conflict have made them hardy in battle, quick to fight and slow to forgive insult. Dark and coarse of hair, their sun-weathered skin runs from olive to rich brown. Commoners dress in rough homespun cloth, while warriors and priests wear the pelts of the mighty northern great cats and dire wolves.

While considered savages by most civilized people, the Blooded's most valued possession is their honor—as anyone accusing them of deceit quickly learns. The folk of Cinai believe that life is a fleeting experience, but that the legends and stories told after death are eternal.

War is a way of life for the Blooded. Every boy and girl learns to use a sling by the age of five, and the study of sword and bow are quick to follow. While most warriors are unkempt barbarians, the most esteemed warriors gather in one of three Orders, the warrior fellowships that give the Vale its fierce reputation.

The Order of the Lion is comprised of holy warriors who charge into battle atop the shaggy steppe ponies; the Lions are renowned for fighting with lances, shortbows, and wickedly curved axes feared for their razor edges and lethal blows.

The warriors of the Raven are recognized as fearless rangers and scouts, fighting in the rocky highlands and dense forests with ease, striking from the shadows like ghosts.

Last of all is the Order of the Wolf: a collection of tireless foot soldiers sworn to victory or death. Tales hold that, in the course of a single night, a troop of Wolves can run dozens of miles in full armor and fight in the morn-

ing, as if they had spent the night sleeping in their homes.

Warriors of the Blooded record their victories in blued, runic tattoos. After years of battle, the tattoos evolve into sprawling works of art that cover a warrior's entire torso. The hordes of Blooded—dirty, wild-eyed and tattooed—inspire terror in the bravest knight, and send lesser men scattering to the four winds.

Fortunately for the civilized lands, the Blooded's favored enemies are the monstrous humanoids of the Scourgelands. Every spring the Orders can be found on the Mirdar-Luminar Steppes, frothing at the mouth, beating their axes against their wooden shields, calling the orcs and ogres to battle.

The armies of the Cinai follow a fearsome warrior of near-divine might: Ashir the Maul. A legend amongst his people, Ashir embodies all the virtues of a Cinai warrior. Strong, brave, and cunning, the Maul is fearless in battle and terrible in his wrath. Ashir's throne is found in the primitive city of Marzakol, but he holds court on the field of battle. Like the warriors serving in his hordes, the master of the Blooded is most at home in the heat of combat, howling in triumph as he cuts a swathe of death and destruction through his foes.

The majority of the Cinai people live in simple sod huts scattered about the lonely highlands, and spend their days herding shaggy sheep and the highland cattle. The nation's cities, if they can be called such, are often no more than haphazard collections of tents and crude cabins and lodges.

Marzakol: (Large town, pop. 4,299) The capital of Cinai is built atop the ruins of an ancient dwarven city. Granite blocks form crude walls, raven-picked ogre skulls adorn tall pikes, and smoky fires from the town's many forges are visible for miles in every direction. Despite its simple defenses and coveted location, it has never fallen to foreign armies.

Ashir the Maul, Thane of the Cinai, rules the highlands from atop a low hill in the center of the city. Numerous trophies of fallen foes adorn his feasting hall and surround his throne: broken shields from fallen knights, shattered skulls from every sort of beast and demon, sundered swords and splintered lances. From here he plots new ways to bring terror to his foes, and honor to his people. Such plans invariably include battle.

The city is also home to dozens of smithies. The forge fires burn at every hour of the day, transforming the dark dwarven ore into razor-tipped spears and bright shields. Arms and armor forged in Marzakol bear distinctive markings, a blue-gray patina visible only in starlight. The origin of these markings is a mystery to even the smiths, but sages are quick to note that Marzakol is dwarven for *Starfall*.

Iderag: (Small city, pop. 6,902) It is fitting that Cinai's greatest city exists only one season out of the year. At the end of summer, merchants brave the fierce highlands, bringing a year's worth of trade goods, dried fruit, and coveted foreign spices. The merchants flock to the Fartrader River, and raise a city of tents, bringing trade goods to the Cinai herdsmen and hunters.

With the southern merchants come a host of southern vices. Thievery is rife, as are fights over foreign women. Quick-tongued merchants can make a fortune over the course of a few weeks, but at the first hint of winter's chill, the merchants flee south, and Iderag vanishes as quickly as it appeared.

Namana: (Village, pop. 640) Namana is home to the Order of Lions, the fierce war band that serves as Cinai's medium cavalry. At first glance, the village is unassuming; for all the legends attributed to the Lions, the village is deceptively small. This is because at any time the bulk of the Order is roaming the highlands, patrolling the border or watching the herds of shaggy steppe ponies.

Those riding into the small village will find only aging men and women and young babes in arms. The men and women are the band's elders and shamans, while the babes are those too young to ride on their own. The elders nourish the children on pony milk and war stories, and as soon as children can ride they rejoin their parents on the high steppe.

Hali: (Small town, pop. 1,372) Concealed in a glacier

valley, high in the southern Ul Dominor Mountains, the fastness of Hali is the home to the Order of the Ravens. Like its scouts and rangers, the stronghold is difficult to find and harder to reach. A visitor to the mountain fastness is met with an entourage of solemn warriors long before he draws within a dozen miles of the valley. The sight of silent watchers silhouetted atop the sheer canyon walls unnerves even the stoutest soldier.

Those passing the tests of the Ravens meet with a quiet woman of undeterminable age. If rumors are to be believed, this nameless woman is one of the most accomplished assassins in all of the Northlands. Such tales are surely nothing more than idle speculation, the spurious work of feeble minds.

Kursan, Chanshi, and Qumarli: (Small castles, pop. averaging 1,000) The leadership of the Order of the Wolf is divided between three nearly identical citadels. Easily recognized by their colossal central tower and concentric rings of ditches and simple wooden walls, each fastness is capable of disgorging a roaring horde of Wolf warriors. The three fortresses are spaced evenly across the highlands, shouldering the responsibility of the nation's defense.

Each citadel is governed by a council of thanes drawn from the highest echelons of the Order. Their roundtable decisions, made by howling warriors bearing terrible weapons, are things of legend. But once a consensus is reached, and the Wolves are mobilized, little can stand in their path.

Crieste, Empire of

His Divine Eminence, the Rampaging Lion, Immortal Emperor of Crieste

Population: 3,209,000 (humans 59%, half-elves 11%, halflings 7%, dwarves 7%, elves 5%, half-orcs 5%, gnomes 4%, other 2%)

Resources: Silver, foodstuffs, trade goods, livestock

Capital: Archbridge (during Summer Court), Kassantia (during Winter Court)

Oldest of the western nations, and arguably the most powerful, the Empire of Crieste once dominated the North. Its vast holdings, built atop the moss-covered ruins of the Nimorian Empire, have themselves fallen into ruin; once again fierce monsters roam the wild, travel between the towns and cities is seldom undertaken without escort, and sellswords and warcasters are in great demand.

The reach of Crieste once extended from the Mirdar Forest, east to Hoarfrost Bay, and south past the golden sands of the Ghetrian Desert. But with the disappearance of Emperor Oststad, the empire passed into the Interregnum: three hundred years of internal feuding that culminated in the secession of the Southern Province. Other kingdoms and principalities were quick to follow, eagerly making their bids for freedom.

Hoping to stem the tide of seceding states, the lord-barons displayed a rare moment of consensus and elected a seven-year-old boy to sit upon the Dragonskull Throne. Now ten years of age, the Child-Emperor rules according to the dictates of his vizier, Lady Mortianna, who ensures that the child remains "untroubled" by the onus of empire. The child will assume full powers upon his fifteenth birthday, but until that day it is Mortianna and her coterie of power-hungry barons who direct decadent Crieste.

Thankfully, the Child-Emperor is served by Captain Sentri, Master of the Sable March and General of the Seven Armies. Sentri embodies all the virtues of chivalry, swearing loyalty to the Emperor while spurning the lord-barons. This often places the captain in the dangerous role of commanding the armies to obey the Vizier's orders, while sending agents of the Sable March on missions to counter the same. Thus far the captain has successfully countered the worst of Mortianna's schemes, but as the Emperor draws nearer to his Rite of Ascendancy, Sentri's gambit grows steadily more dangerous.

Crieste is celebrated for the honor and nobility of its knights, and no knighthood captures the spirit of galantry better than the Order of the Sable March. Stories of the knights defending mountain passes against the press of giants, single-handedly defeating hordes of demons, and sacrificing their lives for the common man are almost too improbable to be true, but this doesn't stop the younger squires from striving to emulate the tales. Many squires die in the pursuit of impossible ideals, but those who survive go on to become legendary warriors without peer. The Knights of the Sable March can be recognized by their coat of arms: a black background pierced by three silver stars. The background signifies the darkness that threatens humanity and Crieste; the stars signify the three tenets of the order: honor, duty and courage. The Knights of the Sable March are quartered in the fortress known as the Citadel, in the city of Archbridge, but can be seen regularly patrolling the farthest reaches of the empire and its neighbors, fighting injustice and carrying out secret missions on behalf of Captain Sentri and the throne.

Even more secretive than their armored brothers are the wizards and sorcerers belonging to the shadowy cabal known as the Ordo Arcana. Rumor holds that the spell-

casters meet on every full moon, wearing elaborate masks to conceal their identities. The aims of the Ordo Arcana, and the reasons for their intense secrecy, remain unknown, but a masked sorceress has been spotted leaving a clandestine meeting with Captain Sentri on more than one occasion. It comes as no surprise that that the Ordo Arcana makes its headquarters in the magic-laden city of Kassantia, but seekers would do well to inquire discreetly before attempting to enter the tower known as the Howling Fane.

Despite the chaos of the Interregnum and the greed of its lord-barons, the Criestine Empire retains much of its former greatness. Until the secession of the Southern Province, all trade passing through the Lirean Sea had to stop at a Crieste port, filling the empire's coffers to bursting. Crieste maintains strong ties with the Steel Overlord (see *Holdfast of the Steel Overlord*) and benefits greatly from trade with its dwarf allies. Relations with the Fae Lords are much cooler; during the Interregnum, northern kingdoms aggressively expanded their domains, sparking conflicts between human foresters and elven scouts. Abroad, the empire's colonies continue to offer their annual tribute, and none dare to challenge the Imperial Navy.

At present, both the Empire of Crieste and the Southern Province lay claim to the Dragonskull Throne of Kassantia, and the scions of both nations aver to be the true Son of Heaven. So long as the two emperors fight for the same throne, the empire's outlying kingdoms will continue to exercise their independence, growing stronger with each passing season. Within one hundred years, the mightiest human empire the world has ever known may be nothing but a memory.

The empire recognizes nearly a thousand settlements, ranging from small hamlets to the greatest cities of the north. Following is a brief list of Crieste's more notable towns and cities:

Archbridge: (Metropolis, pop. 48,250) Also known as "Summerhold," Archbridge is home to the summer imperial court. The city also houses the Imperial Army and their chief rivals, the Order of the Sable March. One of the great cities of the Northlands, Archbridge is governed by Crieste's warrior class, men and women famed for their honor and martial pride. Status in the Imperial Army is determined by nobility of birth, while in the Sable March, rank is accorded by honor and bravery in the defense of good. It follows then that the Army and the Knights of the Sable March are bitter rivals, each striving to outdo the other on the field of battle. Too often these tensions boil over, resulting in deadly back-alley duels and running street battles. Officially, the generals of the Army and the Sable March refuse to condone the duels, but high-level commanders can be often seen returning to their barracks late at night, sporting bloody wounds and ferocious grins.

Many aspiring young warriors make pilgrimages to the city, hoping to join the ranks of the fabled March or the Imperial Army. Those that fail quickly find their way to the city's taverns and gambling dens, where they nurse their wounded pride with liquor and brawling. It is said that Archbridge is a city of warrior-lords, but this only partially true; for every true knight, there are a dozen pretenders hoping to catch the Emperor's eye.

The majestic city is built atop the ruins of a previous acropolis, and Archbridge's vast undercity is notorious for its ancient passageways, forgotten tombs, and secret corridors. The Imperial Army sends regular expeditions into the undercity, but few return.

Axebury: (Hamlet, pop. 125) A sleepy hamlet founded on the southern edge of Mosswood, the folk of Axebury make their living harvesting timber for the dark glades. Recent expeditions into the heart of the wood have uncovered peculiar standing stones of ancient origin. Whether the stones are baleful or blessed has yet to be discovered.

Blihai: (Small town, pop. 16,801) A vibrant fishing town with a deep natural harbor and easy access to old growth forests, Blihai also serves as the western staging area for the Imperial Navy. Seamen are highly regarded in Blihai, and those with little or no deck experience are often dismissed as "greens." With a rotating pool of over one thousand sailors and marines, Blihai has grown notorious for its rollicking nightlife, and—in times of war—its sea captains' practice of "enlisting" drunks into the Emperor's navy.

Carnelloe: (Large thorp, pop. 86) Isolated from major trade routes and battered by frequent storms, this lonely costal hamlet is often dismissed by imperial mapmakers. Carnelloe (Elvish for "desolate place") is noteworthy only for its proximity to Gurnard's Head, a rocky spire that served as a strategic landmark in the early days of Crieste. The solemn tower atop the spire was hard put during the Siege of Sorrows, and has since fallen into ruin.

Dhavosin: (Large town, pop. 4,014) Known to merchant lords as the Crossroads of the Empire, Dhavosin hosts a steady stream of caravans and traveling traders. In the peak of autumn the town hosts Candlemeet, a festival and bazaar drawing farmers and craftsfolk from across the empire. The population swells to over 10,000 souls, the tent city spilling past the town walls and onto the outlying grasslands. During the heady, month-long festival, people of every creed and color meet to drink, gamble, and barter, and entire fortunes are won or lost overnight. Swarthy southern merchants mingle with dwarf traders offering crates of gleaming weapons fresh from Holdfast forges, while Kassantian mages shop for exotic spell components and trade secrets with the elves.

Dundraville: (Village, pop. 452) Overlooking the shores of Lake Dundrae, Dundraville is a sleepy village of fishermen and farmers. Local features of geographic note include a ring of druidic standing stones, and a peculiar rock formation known as Skulltop Hillock.

The Graves: (Small city, pop. 11,901) Officially known as Sirael Citadel, the prison island of Crieste is better known as the Isle of Many Graves, or simply the Graves. When Criestine criminals are judged too vile to be redeemed, they are placed on a ship and sent to Sirael Citadel. Few ever return.

The prison is administrated by a grim warlock known as the Maelidoch. It is whispered that the Maelidoch is guilty of his own crimes and that his service as master of the island is part of a cruel sentence. It is also rumored that the dark wizard performs experiments on his wards; those few who do return from the Graves report tormented screams ringing from the prison dungeons, screams that resemble the screech of metal on metal more than the cries of flesh-and-blood humans.

In the years since its creation, Sireal Citadel has grown to encompass the entire island. Prisoners constantly labor on the citadel, building its towers ever higher and digging its dungeons ever deeper. The currently citadel is a maze of old and new construction, with half-finished towers and passageways leading nowhere; the purpose of the completed citadel—and *if* it is even intended to be completed—is known only to the Maelidoch.

Hadler's Gap: (Hamlet, pop. 253) The northernmost reach of the fallen empire, Hadler's Gap is a collection of small farms nestled amongst the Urkallan Hills. To the west, a forbidding, craggy mountain rises from the grassy hills. Local legend holds that the mountain was the fantastic result of an ancient duel between warring arcanists, and passing merchants aver to the unnatural aura that haunts those living in the shadow of the mountain.

High Cross: (Small castle, pop. 910) Raised at the juncture of two royal tradeways, and overlooking the sparkling waters of the Blade Reach, the stronghold of High Cross wards the empire from monsters making their way up from the Great Swamp and southern Ul Dominor Mountains. On occasion, beasts threaten the castle itself, and many prominent weaponsmiths and armorers work forges inside the castle walls. Captains of the watch constantly seek to recruit would-be-heroes, as the stronghold's outriders suffer high casualties in their defense of the empire.

Kassantia: (Metropolis, pop. 62,870) In all of the Northlands, the city of Kassantia is second in size only to Punjar, and second to none in eldritch grandeur. Home to the Winter Palace of the Emperor, the prestigious Royal Academy of Sorcery, and the mysterious Ordo Arcana, the city is rightly said to be the Gem of Crieste. Wondrous sights and sounds abound in the city's shops, archmages can be seen arriving astride pegasi and enormous rocs, and the brightly armored knights of the Sable March patrol the well-cobbled streets.

Kassantia is also the home and destination of the imperial tribute fleet. Twice each year the fleet sails into port, bearing gold and exotic wonders tithed by the empire's far-flung colonies. While the fleet generally takes six months to complete one circuit, the precise timing and arrival of the fleet is one of the empire's most carefully guarded secrets. Only once has a treasure ship ever fallen to piracy: to the fell pirate Bloody Jack. Jack's success has inspired many a knave to dream of cutting galleys from the gold-laden fleet, and the shipping lanes leading to Kassantia are littered with sunken pirate vessels.

Sainfoin: (Village, pop. 620) Hidden deep within the Warderwood, the village of Sainfoin is renowned for its rangers and woodsmen. Ruled—if such a word could be used—by an ancient druid, the citizens of Sainfoin refuse to swear fealty to the Criestine Empire. The dense groves of Warderwood are highly prized by shipbuilders, and the woodsmen of Sainfoin often find themselves in skirmishes with lumberjacks sent by the Imperial Navy. Elves and half-elves are common in Sainfoin, and respected as equals by the humans.

Silverton: (Large thorp, pop. 76) A small mining village perched high in the mountains north of the Fangs, Silverton's livelihood depends entirely upon the plentiful

silver mines that dot the rocky hillsides. Regular Miner's Guild caravans make their way through the deep canyons to Archbridge, and caravan guards are always in high demand.

Sparport Watch: (Small town, pop. 1,380) A towering citadel straddling a rocky ridge, Sparport surveys the land and sea for miles in every direction. The lord-baron, Izod the Shark, has been tasked with taming the pirates of the Wreckers. And yet—to the Emperor's disappointment and Izod's bitter chagrin—for every pirate crew he hangs, another two ships seem to spring from the sea itself. Responding to veiled threats from the court, Izod has redoubled his efforts, swearing to hang the crew of any ship, pirate or otherwise, that he finds sailing the Wreckers.

Soulgrave: While squarely within Crieste territory, the city of Soulgrave is claimed by no nation. See *Soulgrave, Free City of* for more information.

Tarrasine: (Large city, pop. 24,021) The city of Tarrasine is Crieste's chief port on the Lirean Sea. Built atop a low-lying swamp, the city has grown into a chaotic sprawl of docks, taverns, sinking towers, and smugglers' dives. While such a rowdy city might seem impossible to rule, Lord-Baron and Harbormaster Deor Cuthwilf thrives on the chaos. An iron-fisted ox, Lord Cuthwilf can be found on the docks nearly every day, meeting with ship captains and merchant princes. Those who cross him are quick to feel his wrath, and many captains pay tithes directly to Cuthwilf to stay in his good graces. Tarrasine smugglers are likewise expected to tithe, and the city walls are ringed with crow cages holding the skeletons of those who failed to pay. Lord Cuthwilf retains the Crimson Hawks, a small army of depraved thugs and henchmen, to enforce his rule. Well armed and universally feared, the Hawks enjoy unquestioned authority in the city streets.

Vaquerea: (Small city, pop. 8,110) Vaquerea is famous for its horse breeders and trainers, and is home to the fabled warhorses of Parelor. Intelligent, fearless, and unmatched in battle, the mighty warhorses are the exclusive steeds of the Knights of the Sable March. The citizens of Vaquerea are friendly but proud folk, with an obscene love of bargaining.

Vernaut: (Small city, pop. 11,680) A city of craftspeople and silversmiths, Vernaut is unusual for its high population of gnomes and half-elves. Ruled by Lady Imaril, a benevolent and fair governess, Vernaut enjoys the prosperity and peace that eludes much of the Northlands. In recent years, that peace has been troubled by savage raids from the Isle of Nos Caen. The raiders push ashore in the dark of night, sacking and pillaging with animal fury, before hauling women and children back to their savage isle. The people of Vernaut have pled their case before the Emperor, but his eminence has yet to commit a force capable of quelling the raiders.

Wicheath: (Village, pop. 460) Isolated from much of the empire, Wicheath is a lonely whaling village, ruled by a circle of matriarchs informally known as the Council of Crones. For reasons unknown to sages and scholars, the young girls of Wichheath are often highly talented sorceresses. Moreover, every seventh year a truly gifted child is born, one with the power to warp magic as weavers pull thread. These girls are quickly ushered away to the ancestral caves that dot the barren coastline, and tutored in the ancient ways of the crones. The crones of Wicheath have no tolerance for explorers and adventurers eager to plumb the depths of this mystery, and between their hardy menfolk and the formidable magics of the crones themselves, interlopers seldom stay long.

ELRAYDIA

THE SESTET

Population: 27,643 (humans 56%, half-elves 13%, elves 10%, halflings 5%, dwarves 4%, half-orcs 3%, maenads 3%, monstrous humanoids 3%, dromites 3%)

Resources: ?

Capital: The City of Elraydia

In a world prolific with magic, the less understood arts are often beheld with fear and mistrust. Those possessing psionic talent usually hide their powers from public view or disguise them as magic. In many lands, organized witch hunts, usually led by paranoid spellcasters unwilling to tolerate what they cannot understand or control, slaughter and imprison psionic-using people. For millennia, the persecution of their talents drove such individuals and even entire bloodlines into isolation or constant flight. Existing on the fringes of society, or hidden within it, these psychic people could find no enduring solace.

A mere two hundred years ago, six powerful human psions shared the dream of a haven for their "kind." These men and women, each a master of one of the six psionic disciplines, went to extraordinary lengths to realize this dream. Committing great acts of good and evil, they became notorious outlaws across the Northlands, wanted by kings, high priests, and archwizards for their crimes. Yet their efforts were not in vain, for at last they found a remote, barren valley in the Nyfall Mountains and there made their home, laying the first stones of Elraydia for the generations to come. Having erased all knowledge of the vale from records across the nations and assassinating all those who could reveal it, they had secured their new home.

Having discovered in their quest the secrets of psychic rebirth, they were free to retire their old lives. Transforming themselves into elans, they purged their memories of their former lives, crimes, all their power, and even their names—but not their goal. They began anew as the peaceful elders of young Elraydia. In the span of a few decades, the small community became a city and the six slowly regained the power they once held. Now they focused their power to preserve their beloved home and guard its people. Elraydia has remained safe for many years, the knowledge of its existence reduced to a myth in the Northlands.

As large as any of Crieste's civilized metropolises, Elraydia's architecture is a wonder to behold. The buildings and towers, wrought by the stonemasons of several races, have been shaped and reinforced with the powers of metacreativity. Its outer walls form a great hexagon at the center of the valley. The majority of the city's buildings comprise Low Raydia, the residential and market districts. At the center of the city, rising nearly one hundred feet above Low Raydia, is the plateau district of High Raydia. This great pedestal houses the governmental buildings, major temples, and at its very heart, the Mindspire. Fresh water is drawn up telekinetically from a subterranean river through the plateau itself and issues from the rock face on each of six sides of the hexagonal plateau. Since their redirection overland, these rivers have invigorated the valley's flora and fauna. Among the cobbled streets and glittering spires of Elraydia, many races live in relative harmony; the common humanoid races mingle freely with half-giants, maenads, and dromites. While psionic-using creatures make up the majority of the population, other peoples seeking refuge from persecution have been welcomed as well and now make up a large portion of Elraydian society.

The six great mountains that enclose the valley form a natural barrier to hide the city, but within them the concerted efforts of some of Áereth's most powerful psions protect it from scrying, remote viewing, and even aerial scrutiny. The weather itself has been tamed for agriculture and the forests and plains of the valley floor have become rich with game since the inception of the six Elraydian rivers. Though winters are longer here than in more temperate lands, the valley does not share the merciless cold of the surrounding mountains.

Elraydia is ruled by the gentle administrations of the Sestet, the governing council of which only four of the original six seats remain. Day-to-day affairs are handled loosely by a confederacy of district lords known as the Low Vibration. Serving the Low Vibration is the Reaching, a militia of soulknives who act as the city watch. All serious matters and judgments defer to the High Vibration, comprised of the Masters of the Sestet and their select advisor-confidants, anonymous citizens selected randomly from month to month. It is said that, in time, every citizen will be called upon to advise the Masters. Based out of the Mindspire, the Masters of the Sestet meet frequently and discuss the present and future concerns of Elraydia. A tower hewn of solid crystal, the Mindspire slowly shifts its color based on the Sestet's disposition, though few in the city can interpret this phenomenon.

Each of the Masters is one of the Elraydia's founding psions, elans whose collective power ensures the city's continued existence. Having given up their former lives and identities, the Masters of the Sestet live for Elraydia first, protecting their dream made manifest. Though they appear as middle-aged men and women, as elans they are effectively immortal, growing slightly more aloof with the passage of years as their humanity slowly dissolves. The Master of Images, youngest of the red-haired Masters, is an imaginative shaper whose powers of metacreativity have sculpted and honed the defenses of the city since its birth. The Master of Time is a seer of seeming omniscience whose far-sighted powers help find those in need of Elraydia's aid. The Master of Light, a peerless kineticist, finds and apprehends those threats that do penetrate the valley's defenses. The Master of Soul is a nomad who serves as the headmistress of the city's education system, teaching that while flesh is transient, the soul is immortal.

Ten years ago, the Masters of Sight and Life were slain in a deadly insurgence that nearly ended Elraydia. Though the threat was quelled, the city lost two of its Masters. The others of the Sestet have been searching for new candidates to the office, but so far no worthy claimants have been found. Of great concern is the Master of Sight, whose considerable powers of telepathy are needed to maintain vigilance on the hearts and minds of Elraydia's people—and to keep it free from treasonous minds. The Master of Life served as a healer and protector of the city, and her death has left a void felt by all.

Because of its seclusion, Elraydia is necessarily self-sufficient, drawing from the resources of the now-verdant woodlands and the neighboring mountains. Only rarely do the Masters of the Sestet consent to trade with other realms, and each occasion is a celebrated event in itself. Trade caravans, heavily armed and psionically protected, are willing to travel far to secure supplies that the valley cannot yield.

Elraydia, an idea as much as it is a place, is a city of tolerance and learning. It opens its arms to those in need that the Masters deem worthy, usually psionic-using creatures running from persecution but often any group suffering from the tyranny of ignorance. The Master of Time sponsors the Wanderers, an organization that trav-

els abroad, disguised as humble pilgrims or wayfaring gypsies, whose only goal is to find psionic-using creatures and invite them to the safety of Elraydia. At any given time, four or five caravans of Wanderers roam the Northlands in search of their psionic kin. Once brought to the edge of the valley, they must swear to Elraydia's secrecy. Leaving Elraydia is not as simple, however, and all who would depart must meet approval by the Masters of Time and Sight—and many will have their memory of its location purged from their minds. With the recent loss of the Master of Sight, Elraydia's security is now threatened. Rumors exist that already news of the valley's existence has begun to spread among the Northlands, graduating from myth to legend.

All citizens of Elraydia look forward to a time they call the Awakening, a future when the city-state has grown large enough to declare itself to the other nations of the world and will be too strong to overcome. The Awakening is the collective life goal of the Sestet, transforming their city into an open beacon to psionic-using creatures the world over.

ELVEN NATIONS, THE

VARIOUS LEADERS

Population: 2,510,800 (elves 65%, half-elves 14%, halflings 12%, gnomes 5%, humans 3%, dwarves 1%)

Resources: Timber, furs, magic items, wine, herbs

Capital: —

The primeval groves, shadowed glades, and misty vales of the western forests are the uncontested realm of the Fae Lords. With leaders who are wise beyond all learning, yet who rule with the capricious hearts of children, the Elven Nations are synonymous with magical might and woodland lore.

Much to the dismay of the kings of man, there is no single ruler of the elfin folk. At best, the nations resemble a collection of independent city-states, each with its own governance and temperment. A human prince might take pains to secure permission to harvest wood from a particular forest, only to discover that the groves fall under the rule of not one, but several fae communities. This fundamental difference has fed racial tensions and resulted in the bloody clashes that taint human and fae relations to this day.

Elven communities are always found amongst natural wonders of unmatched beauty, but most commonly in the boughs of great Ashwood trees. Those who have seen these aboreal cities return telling tales of majestic manors built several hundred feet above the forest floor, graceful arches spanning the boughs, and floating globes that light up the night like arcane fireflies.

While not a leader in the human sense of the word, each nation has a designated queen, a noble elf whose spirit has been bound to an ancestor tree by arcane rites as old as the elven race. By accepting the binding, the queen willingly gives up a portion of her soul to the ancestor tree; in return, her senses are broadened to include all the animals and natural spirits in her domain. A bound queen is essentially immortal, serving as an ageless councilor and matriarchal advisor. Legend holds that every thousand years or so a queen will voluntarily resign her post and sever her bond with the ancestor tree; this separation inevitably results in the death of the queen. The queen and her ancestral tree are always protected by an elite guard of warrior-mages, elves who have sworn their lives to the defense of their queen and the ancestor tree.

More so than the realms of man or dwarf clans, the elven nations are autonomous and self-sufficient. They maintain cool ties with the Holdfast of the Steel Overlord, trading fine woods for metal ore and gems. Similarly, the elves' festive, joyous nature comes to an abrupt end whenever their forests are invaded by human woodsmen. Sadly, while the elven armies rival the dwarves' for their skill and training, they are inevitably overwhelmed by sheer numbers of their enemies. Nation after nation has fallen to the press of axe-wielding settlers, who trample faerie rings and other mystical sites of incalculable worth in their lust for the precious lumber.

While elves of some sort are found in nearly every woodland, few are organized into true nations. Following is a list of the recognized realms of elvenkind. Note that with certain exceptions, these are the names adopted by the human realms. Elven cartographers should refer to the original fae notes for accurate naming.

Amn'crith Forest: (Pop. 12,800) The elves of the Amn'crith forest make their homes in the tops of great Ashwood trees, traveling between them via a network of delicate suspension bridges that sway in the wind, or astride great rocs. A hardy, independent gathering of clans, the Amn'crith elves have suffered less at the hands of man, and enjoy peaceful relations with the Barony of Moran. The Amn'crith elves are masters of archery, and practiced at raining arrows down upon their foes from the backs of their swift rocs.

Anseur Forest: (Pop. 23,079) The elves of the Anseur are renowned throughout the Northlands for two attributes: their mastery of the arcane arts, and their passionate adherence to an ancient code of honor. They pride themselves as the keepers of traditional fae culture; correspondingly they place a high worth on arcane lore and eldritch mastery.

Every aspect of Anseur life is keyed to the progress of constellations, obscure ley lines, and the march of the sun and moons. Though this devotion has made the Anseur elves solemn and haughty, it is rightly said that only the druids rival their understanding of the cosmos.

Unlike their cousins in the Corsan and Mirdar Forests, the Anseur elves have enjoyed several centuries of uninterrupted peace. Other than the usual woodland monsters and human encroachments, the Anseur elves have been left largely undisturbed. Recent incursions of frost and hill giants have threatened this stability, however, and if the elves cling to their illusion of permanence, the kingdom of Anseur could fall.

Blackbriar Wood: (Pop. 1,209) The elves of Blackbriar are a cheerful, good-humored folk, given to lighthearted revelry. The elves maintain close ties with the mages of Kassantia, and enjoy great influence in the imperial court, having fought alongside the imperial forces in the Criestine Colonies. The elves' valor and courage won them respect of the barons, and a lasting presence in the colonies. Their ruby wine is popular amongst the lord-barons of Crieste, and gnome traders regularly leave the Blackbriar Wood, their badger-drawn wagons laden with wax-sealed jugs.

Despite the elves' welcoming nature, they refuse to allow outsiders within a copse of trees known as the Elder Vale. Those who have stepped inside the dappled glades report a darksome sump that radiates an icy chill on even the warmest of days. What lies at the heart of the forbidding sump—and its relationship with the elves of Blackbriar—is a mystery.

Cairnswild: (Pop. 3,901) Named for the profusion of barrows that dot the wood, the elves of Cairnswild are watchful and ever vigilant, wary of newcomers, but appreciative of warriors with strong sword arms and clerics who are quick with a prayer. They are under constant threat by marauding undead and worse, and centuries of conflict have welded them into hardened warbands. The elves of Cairnswild understand the importance of each member of the community; if a single elf falls, the loss is felt by all.

Corsan Forest: (Pop. 42,729) Ancient Corsan, home to the longest reigning queen of all the elven nations, is unequaled in matters of arcane lore. With her sister-nation—the Barony of Koranth—to the north, Corsan anchors the forces of good in the east. The Corsan armies suffered greatly defending Koranth and Leherti against the Scourge, and when the forces of Leherti crumbled before the rampaging host, the elven warbands were the last to withdraw.

Since the fall of Leherti, the elves of Corsan have been less willing to enter the affairs of man. Many of the elves

that were in favor of siding with the humans died in battle, and have since been replaced with their less tolerant kith. Given the elves' long lives, it will likely be many decades before the elves of Corsan answer the call of the outside world again.

Despite their reclusive nature, the elves of Corsan embody the best attributes of elvenkind. They carry themselves with the quiet nobility of solemn pines, move with the grace of majestic stags, and live their lives steeped in the innate magic of the fae. The elves of the Corsan watch the cycles of the universe with the patience, knowing their time will come again.

Crystalmeet Wood: (–, Pop. ???) Once a northern bastion of fae might, the nation of Crystalmeet has seemingly been laid low by an unknown power. The elves of Crystalmeet now stalk the diseased glades as cursed undead. The few brave souls who have traveled to Crystalmeet and returned report having seen mockeries of elven courts, complete with the corpses of elves adorned in rotting finery, rusting arms, and foul rites to aberrant gods. See the entry for *Crystalmeet Wood* in Chapter 4.

Mirdar Forest: (Pop. 64,091) Last of the great forests, the Mirdar was once home to Arovarel, mightiest of the elven cities. Arovarel fell in a single night to the combined might of orcish hordes and drow armies, led by Chalychia, a scheming drow sorceress. One year later, Chalychia was defeated, but the elven folk of Arovarel never resettled their ancient city.

Now the Mirdar Forest is ruled by two elven nations with

radically divergent beliefs, though humans and dwarves struggle to tell the two apart. The folk of Olheim are watchful stewards of the woods, keepers of Arovarel's lost lore. Wise in the wild ways, slow to anger, but terrible in their wrath, the elves of Olheim maintain friendly relations with the other races.

Conversely, the folk of the Ashoch nation are dedicated to ridding the wood of non-elves. Painting their faces in somber hues of blue and violet, they stalk the game trails, intent on driving out all foreigners. Rangers and archers, the Ashoch clans can be recognized by the black fletching of their arrows and the razor sharpness of their arrowheads. Often, among the dense glades of the Mirdar, that is the only warning given.

Both the Olheim and the Ashoch follow their own sovereigns, and neither nation has sought to discover what came of Arovarel's old queen. Whether the ethereal queen still lives among the ruins of her city, or if she was driven mad or slain in the battle with Chalychia, remains but one of the many mysteries hidden by the shadows of Mirdar.

Myrwych Forest: (Pop. 6,823) The northern swath of the Myrwych is home to the Horrors of Zamon (see *Wastes of Zamon* for more information), tormented beasts twisted by magic that run howling through the darksome glades. Once, before the arrival of Zamon, the woods were ruled by clans of wild elves. The barest remnant of the old clans remains, struggling to hold the south against the rampaging horrors. The elves of Myrwych lost their queen and their ancestral holdings decades ago, and now fight as scattered half-clans, fierce with passion, but too divided to hold their own against superior numbers.

FREEHOLDS, THE

(THE OUTLAW TERRITORIES)

VARIOUS WARLORDS

Population: 42,601 (humans 65%, half-orcs 19%, dwarves 6%, elves 5%, monstrous humanoids 4%, halflings 1%)

Resources: Mercenaries, leather, furs

Capital: —

A loose collection of brigand enclaves ruled by brutal warlords, the Freehold badlands are in a constant state of lawlessness and unrest. The fall of Leherti swelled the ranks of the bandit lords, but thus far the Freeholds have limited themselves to raiding caravans and outlying settlements of nearby lands. They're plentiful enough to form a fearsome army, but without a charismatic figure to guide them, the brigands are nothing more than bands of disorganized raiders and poorly armed militias.

What passes for a city or town in the Freeholds is often nothing more than a filthy stronghold at the back of a box canyon, atop a ridge, or in some other place with natural defenses. Most strongholds sport wooden walls atop earthen ramparts, while the rare fort might be found within the decaying stone walls of a previous fortress. Invariably, each stronghold has one (or more) mead halls and taverns, a smithy and armorer, a corral, and a well-defended tower or keep.

The quality of arms and armor carried by Freehold ruffians depends entirely upon the success of their raids. The lowliest of bands wear piecemeal bits of scavenged armor and fight with improvised polearms. The more successful bands field mounted raiders wearing ringmail or boiled leather, and fight with bows and well-forged spears. Bandit leaders are unique, armed as fortune and chance permits.

With little in the way of agriculture, the brigands rely on raids into civilized lands to swell their grainaries. In times of dire need, the outlaws may turn to hunting and foraging, but more often a season of hardship only presages a deadlier season of raids.

While little can be written about the Freeholds that won't have changed in a fortnight, following is a list of established towns and bandit holds:

Ashaven: (Hamlet, pop. 381) Shortened from its original name *Ashe's Haven*, Ashaven is a staging ground for many of the raids into Leherti and the Theocracy. The

hamlet had been razed by armies of Leherti on several occasions (known locally as "the shaving of Ashaven"), but the rogues became masters of escaping into hidden cellars and secret bolt holes. The collapse of Leherti has granted Ashaven a reprieve, and the community is stronger than ever, with new brigands arriving each day. Presently the fortified hamlet is ruled by Hadrun the Shadowhand, a swarthy skinned warrior-mage hailing from the Uru'Nuk Highlands.

Bald Tower: (Small town, pop. 1,308) The town of Bald Tower is built around the base of its namesake: a fearsome tower rising from atop a barren ridge. Bald Tower is unique among the Freeholds in that it fields its own militia, a light cavalry easily recognized by the midnight black raven feathers used to decorate their shields and arrows.

The raiders of Bald Tower answer to Cyn Alfwen, a half-elf blackguard who once served in the armies of Leherti. Witnessing the abject failure of her sovereign, Cyn recanted her faith and rode into the Freeholds to forge her own destiny. The half-elf still bears a hatred for her old life, and the sight of a Lehertian soldier spurs her to madness. Apart from this weakness, she serves as a cunning ruler, commanding her raiders with martial discipline and generously rewarding their success in battle.

The tower itself is something of a mystery. Prior to Cyn's arrival, the tower was believed to be haunted. Whatever pact the blackguard made with the dark inhabitants has served her well, for now the tower is home to Cyn and her militia. Regular offerings of slaves are made to the things beneath the tower, and Cyn uses the threat of the tower's dungeons to keep her troops in line.

Cragskeep: (Small castle, pop. 562) Perched like a hawk atop its high mountain crag, Cragskeep was once a monastery devoted to prayer and self-reflection. Now the mountain fastness revels in its reputation as the home to raiders feared up and down the coast of the Lirean Sea. Key to the raiders' fame are their fearsome black-winged hippogriffs. Raised on the cliffs above and below Cragskeep, the hippogriffs allow the raiders to strike with surprise and impunity, evading pursuit by vanishing into the sky.

Combined with their nearly unassailable stronghold, the bandits of Cragskeep have risen to the status of folk legends. The actual Riders of Cragskeep are no better than other bandits of the Freeholds, but the fanciful imaginings of bards ensures that a band of adventurers assaults the keep at least twice every year. Invariably, the would-be heroes are picked from the rocky climb, falling thousands of feet to their deaths.

Cragskeep is ruled by the Kuthot, a mystic theurge of legendary might. Much is rumored about the Kuthot, but little is known. Even the Riders of Cragskeep seldom glimpse their hooded master, giving rise to wild suppositions that the Kuthot is some extraplanar monster or worse. His (Her? Its?) goals and aims remain a mystery to all, and given Cragskeep's defenses, it is unlikely the puzzle will be solved any time soon.

Helsouk: (Large town, pop. 4,904) When brigands raid the outlying towns of the Theocracy or Free Cities of Leherti, whatever plunder that can't be eaten, spent, or drank eventually makes its way up the Roguewash River to Helsouk. A labyrinth of shadowed bazaars, brutal slave markets, and sinister shops, Helsouk is recognized across the Northlands as a stinking hole of wantonness and vice.

The town's demeanor is matched by the depravity of its rulers. A triad holds court in the Black Square, an unholy sanctuary devoted to exalting the decadence that permeates the town. On the left throne squats Rimry the Toad, a corpulent, filthy man with a love for fresh meat and young elves. On the right throne rests Cimos Korfar, a monstrously large half-orc with the manners of a savage and the mind of a sage. And atop the center throne, looking down upon the entire hall, perches Eren Fellstaff, a small, quiet woman feared throughout the Freeholds for her unpredictable fury. Together the three hold Helsouk in their merciless, uncaring fist.

While many brigand bands pass through Helsouk, the triad is careful to ensure that none make their home within. Instead, Korfar maintains a roughshod mercenary company made up of murderous brutes and thugs. Fed information by Rimry's network of thieves, beggars, and snitches, and reinforced by Eren's spectral agents, the crude mercenaries rule the streets with violence and fear.

Irontooth Castle: (Large castle, pop. 2,470) The grand title conceals a depressing stronghold teetering on the verge of collapse. The castle is a collection of fallen walls and tottering towers, a condition mirrored by the sorry folk that seek shelter beneath its rain-soaked roofs. The brigands of Irontooth have little in the way of arms or armor, and months of poor leadership have shaken their already weak morale. Now the brigands of Irontooth follow their bandit-lord out of sheer desperation.

The ruler of Irontooth is a young Lehertian calling himself the Scarlet Duke. As pompous as he is handsome, the Duke maintains his hold over the motley band simply because there is no one else charismatic enough challenge him. It is only a matter of time before the brigands desert their useless leader, seeking their fortunes with other bands.

Wolfhold: (Village, pop. 835) A miserable collection of war refugees and cruel outlaws, Wolfhold takes its name from the desperate nature of its folk. During the day, the town appears deserted, but at night, street gangs vie for

territory in murderous battles fueled by desperation and hopelessness. With nothing to lose, the brigands have resorted to attacking each other; to walk the muddy streets of Wolfhold is to invite assault from every quarter.

It is rumored that the gangs are battling over a great treasure hidden in a vault somewhere beneath Wolfhold, but one look at the feral brigands washes away any speculation of treasure, great or small.

FREEPORT, CITY OF

LORD MAYOR RHENAL MONTIER

Population: 42,601 (humans 65%, half-orcs 19%, dwarves 6%, elves 5%, monstrous humanoids 4%, halflings 1%)

Resources: Slaves, mercenaries, black market trade, fish, whale oil

Capital: The City of Freeport

Once an infamous pirate city, Freeport now promotes itself as a legitimate trade power. In truth, the pirate tradition is alive and well in Freeport, camouflaged by a fanciful veneer of respectability. The city's pirates have become privateers, hiring out to the highest bidder.

Amidst the soiled city streets, little has changed. Gangs continue to fight wars over drugs, slavery, and crime, while mad cultists dedicated to foul and unspeakable gods plumb the ruins of ancient civilizations for power, knowledge, and secrets of the past.

Rhenal Montier monitors his empire like a rat atop a pile of rotting corpses. The Lord Mayor is a master at keeping his rivals busy fighting one another, leaving little time or resources to challenge his rule. Montier has ruled Freeport for seven years in this manner, plying one challenger against the next, and always working to entrench his own power base.

It is whispered that Montier sees and hears all that transpires in his city. While there might be some truth to his near-mythic powers, the more likely answer is that Mortier keeps his people so poor and desperate that they are eager to sell out their fellow citizens for a single worn copper.

The captains of Freeport are true privateers, willing to sail for any cause or crown if the color of the coin is right. An unspoken code prohibits Freeport captains from engaging one another in battle, but gold has a way of bending this code, resulting in grudges between mercenary captains that can stretch on for years.

FROST BARRENS, THE

NUMEROUS BARBARIAN CHIEFTAINS

Population: ??? (predominantly humans, monstrous humanoids, and dwarves)

Resources: Furs, timber

Capital: None

Nowhere in the North is there a land more forbidding than the icy reaches of the Frost Barrens. Terrible monsters stalk ancient ruins and blizzards sweep the land without warning. Remorhazes and frost worms prowl winter's endless night, and summer's bleak light does little to repel the arctic orcs or frost ghouls.

The ferocity of the land is mirrored in its savage children. The barbarians of the Frost Barrens are often little better than animals, their constant struggle for survival leaving no room for the niceties of civilization. Here the questions of life and death are decided by the strike of a battleaxe or the thrust of a spear, and each day is a battle that must be won.

Of the barbarians' society, little is known. An oral culture with no written language, their history is replete with apocryphal folktales that may or may not have a grounding in truth. And while many sages have journeyed to the Frost Barrens in the hopes of recording these, none has ever returned.

Unique to the Barrens are the barbarian witches known as the Hexas of the Eternal Flame. These aging hags maintain fires that they claim have been burning since the creation of the world. Wielding tremendous influence over the superstitious barbarians, the Hexas work their fell magics from hidden huts and caves. The Hexas use a complex system of glyphs to shape and contain their mystic powers. What relationship—if any—the Hexas share with the deserted ruins dotting the north remains a mystery; given the Hexas' abhorrence for outsiders, and the dangers associated with the Barrens, it is unlikely that the mystery will be solved anytime soon.

Ambroshea Trades: (Hamlet, pop. 375) One of the few civilized trading outposts in the Frost Barrens, Ambroshea Trades is nearly impossible to reach for all but three months of the year. The small, orderly trading post does brisk business with the savages, trading weapons and armor for rich furs and skins. The outpost is ruled by Darston Isles, a man respected for his quick wit and wisdom as well as his skill with a blade.

HALLS OF THE MOUNTAIN KING

THE MOUNTAIN KING, ORO LOROTH

Population: 497,205 (dwarves 68%, orcs 11%, humans 10%, goblins 6%, half-orcs 5%, some ogres and hill giants)

Resources: Gold, silver, coal, iron, weapons and armor

Capital: Risinox

If Hades had coal mines, they might resemble the soot-stained Halls of the Mountain King. Filled with armies of foul dwarves, depraved humans, and cruel orcs, the Halls are a poisonous blight on civlization, a thorn thrust directly into the heart of the Northlands.

Oro Loroth, the dwarf daring to call himself the Mountain King, is an outcast of the Holdfast (see *Holdfast of the Steel Overlord*). No one knows why Loroth was exiled from the Holdfast, and the dwarves aren't telling. But within five years of his exile, Loroth returned at the head of an army of orc and human mercenaries. The brutal army struck quickly, taking full advantage of Loroth's knowledge of the mines, overwhelming the Dwarfhold of Clan Dronil. Isolated from their brothers in the Holdfast, the Dronil warriors fell in a series of ferocious battles, culminating in the complete slaughter of the Dronil clan.

Since seizing control of the Halls, Loroth has quickly cemented his control of the mines, welcoming other dwarven outcasts into his kingdom and actively recruiting dwarves of an evil bent. Today, nearly one hundred years after the destruction of Clan Dronil, the armies of the Mountain King are stronger than ever.

Loroth maintains order by ensuring that the armies of the Mountain King are never sedentary for long. He directs aggressive raids to the west and south of the Halls, into the Sylvan Downs and beyond. The rich plunder and plentiful slaves keeps his armies content, and attrition in battle does away with the rest. Thus far, Loroth has managed to keep a tight fist over his horde, but many believe that it is only a matter of time before the Mountain King overextends himself. If his kingdom were to collapse, however, the broken armies of evil humanoids would rampage throughout the Northlands, pillaging and burning everything in their path. Some scholars argue that the Northlands are better with Loroth in command of the Halls than without. At least, the argument goes, Loroth is predictable.

Isolated from the Holdfast of the Steel Overlord, the mines of Dronil are home to dozens of small fortress communities. Those of historical or strategic interest are listed below:

Risinox: (Large city, pop. 13,907) Once the clanhold of the Dronil, the vast galleries and vaulted halls are now home to slave markets, roaring forges, and dark temples. Bored high into the walls of a mighty mountain, Risinox commands a view of the western Northlands and gives the Mountain King his name. Any army hoping to assault Risinox would have to fight up a steep slope, dodging hurled rocks and streams of flaming oil, up to a two-hundred-foot wall carved from the mountain itself—all before the *real* battle began.

Loroth collapsed the tunnels leading into Risinox hours after seizing the city. Now the only approach (save a series of hidden passages known only to the Mountain King) is overland, a deadly proposition under the best of circumstances.

Orgemouth: (Small town, pop. 972) Found at the foot of the Ul Dominor mountain range, the soiled city of Orgemouth is the trade center for the Mountain King. Pretty elven slaves, kidnapped from the Sylvan Downs, fetch a high price with southern traders, while swords and armor, forged in the hellfires of the Halls, are much sought after by immoral mercenary generals.

The fortress is ruled by Volei Ojar, a retired half-orc assassin. Once Ojar roamed the Northlands, serving duplicitous princes and corrupt merchant lords. While the half-orc hasn't worked as an assassin in years, he continues to practice his skills, as if knowing the Mountain King's days are numbered.

Azaegal's Hold: (Village, pop. 860) Azaegal's Hold takes its name from the ancient red dragon that lairs atop the barren mountain peak. Through regular tribute of gold and slaves (and some say, bargains made with infernal powers), the Mountain King has succeeded in coercing the mighty old wyrm into service.

Azaegal's Hold is a cold, spartan fortress, inhabited by ogres, hill and stone giants, and orcs. Above it all sits the mighty Azaegal, a fearsome wyrm of legend who—centuries ago—terrorized the Northlands with his fury and violence. Regardless of whatever hold Loroth claims over the dragon, Azaegal's demeanor hasn't change from his younger, wilder days, and it is only a matter of time before Azaegal terrorizes the Northlands again.

Holdfast of the Steel Overlord

Longbeard of the Clans, Saraas Helsborne, the Steel Overlord

Population: 3,001,480 (dwarves 79%, gnomes 8%, humans 7%, elves 2%, other 4%)

Resources: Gold, silver, platinum, gems, iron, steel, weapons, and armor

Capital: Ul Balhar

With the ruins of forgotten clanholds and mines scattered about the mountains of known world, scholars can be forgiven for assuming that the Bearded Folk of the Mountains are in decline. Such cynics need only trek within sight of the scarred tower-gates of Ul Gaolnor to know the truth of the matter:

The forges of the dwarf clans burn brighter than ever.

Once, the dwarves were a disparate people, with no unified governance above that of the clan. This changed when the dwarf seer Nomothamai peered into his dark crystal and foresaw the coming age of Man. Rather than surrender their lands to a war of slow attrition, the Bearded Folk abdicated their scattered mines and spent the next thousand years consolidating their power into a series of connected strongholds centered about the Ul Dominor Mountains.

While independent clanholds still thrive, it is the Holdfast of the Steel Overlord that embodies the might of the dwarves. Unified beneath the will of a single Overlord and the Council of the Clans, the dwarves have successfully avoided the endless skirmishes that plague the elves. The present Overlord is a hardy long-beard named Saraas Helsborne, who first sat upon the throne one hundred years ago, and fully expects to rule for another three hundred.

The choleric dwarves have embraced war as a philosophy and lifestyle; their guiding principle is to answer every injury or slight tenfold. The saying goes that if a human cheats you in trade, crush his family; if an elf snubs you in court, burn her forest to the ground; and if any mortal is so foolish to attack a dwarf at home or abroad, level entire nations to punish the guilty.

The law is seldom enforced to the letter, but its spirit pervades Holdfast society. Whereas a human duelist might count himself a master after a decade of training, dwarven warriors study for hundreds of years. Their weapons, armor, and tactics are all the result of thousands of years of innovation and endless refinement. Heroes of all races make regular pilgrimages to the Holdfast clans, hoping to apprentice with a renowned weapons master, for while the dwarven physique might limit the practice of certain combat styles, it in no way limits their study of warcraft.

The halls of Holdfast are open to all, but few races can tolerate the dark galleries, clammy mines, and dour company for long. Most visitors attend the seasonal trade-meets, when thousands of traders and merchants fill the outer halls of Holdfast. The Holdfast maintains cordial ties with the lord-barons of the Criestine Empire, and makes regular shipments of mithril and adamantine to the elven nations.

Dwarven cities are nearly entirely underground, hidden beneath mountaintops or in the walls of craggy canyons. Exposed elements like towers and gates are always well defended and can only be entered via tunnels and the like. The following is a partial list of the strongholds that pledge allegiance to the Steel Overlord.

Stalgard: (Small city, pop. 7,016) Lording over the Saedre River, the city of Stalgard is the Holdfast's chief trading post to the west. Goods are hauled upstream on barges and then hoisted several hundred feet up sheer cliffs, to wide stone balconies set in the face of Mount Ajai. There, in the stuffy bazaars and low-roofed caverns, dwarven traders exchange fine blades, armor, and shining ingots for fortunes of smoked meats, cheeses, fruits and vegetables. The dwarven traders are notorious for their copper-pinching avarice, and greedy Northlanders are often accused of having "cousins in Stalgard."

While well defended, the city is less martial than most. Nevertheless, dwarven axemen patrol the balconies and bazaars, while well-trained artillerists scan the skies. The accuracy of dwarven ballistae teams is famous throughout the Northlands, as is the deadliness of their razor-sharp bolts. Ballistae ammunition is often augmented by spells to cause terrible wounds, spread panic, or—most effective of all—paralyze fliers.

Ul Balhar: (Metropolis, pop. 27,203) In the dwarven tongue, *Ul* means "place of battle." Built as a testament to ancient Amonzadd, the capital of the stout folk is also the site of a celebrated dwarven battle.

Mighty Ul Balhar has exceeded even the great dwarven cities of legend. All of the complex's original caves have been enlarged and reinforced, the galleries decorated with flagstones and martial murals, and a maze of mines bored into the heart of the mountain. It would take the armies of several nations to even threaten mighty Ul Balhar.

The city has never lost sight of its violent origins. The

dwarves maintain a standing army of disciplined heavy infantry, tunnel fighters, artillerists, and sappers. With the constant press of marauding giants, humanoids hordes, and worse, the soldiers' battle prowess remains sharp. A proud martial tradition has evolved over the centuries, with warriors and warrior-priests revered by the common folk.

Ul Gaolnor: (Small castle, pop. 1,592) Warding the eastern border of the Ul Dominor mountains, Ul Gaolnor sees more regular battle than all other dwarven citadels combined. The formidable iron gates of Ul Gaolnor are flanked by massive stone towers. Scarred from iron-bound battering rams, terrible spells, and the blood of a thousand foes, the gates stand in opposition of any who would dare challenge the might of the Steel Overlord.

The armies of Ul Gaolnor are legendary among martial circles. To have fought atop the towers is to have stood beside the greatest warriors in the history of the Northlands, and any dwarf that has served at Ul Gaolnor is honored and admired by his people. Sadly, for every dwarven war hero returning from Ul Gaolnor, there are twenty warriors that never return, slain by dragonfire, an orcish spear, a harpy's lance, or any of the hundred other perils that regularly threaten the citadel.

The commanding officer of Ul Gaolnor is the revered general Durgin Dwurthiel. Respected by his armies, feared by his foes, "Irongut" Dwurthiel has commanded the armies of Ul Gaolnor for over ninety years. Old before his time, the craggy dwarf conceals a heavy sorrow born of regret for the thousands of dwarves that have died under his command. So far the sadness has yet to affect his ability to command his armies, but Dwurthiel can often be seen stalking the battlements late at night, in full armor, urgosh glinting in the moonlight.

Ul Yazhmotk: (Large town, pop. 3,804) Once a citadel built to stand down the armies of human barbarians raiding from the north, Ul Yazhmotk has grown into a community where dwarven smiths, generals, and engineers retire to live out the end of their lives.

The tradition began when the citadel, beset by an army of frost giants astride remorhazes, put out a call for aid. The beleaguered Holdfast had few warriors to spare, leaving the call to be answered by ancient and venerable warriors. When the threat had passed, the old axes remained.

Since that time, Ul Yazhmotk has served as a living vault of dwarven wisdom. Great smiths, warriors, and artisans of every culture make pilgrimages to apprentice with the citdel's masters or simply gaze upon the vast collections of matchless masterworks.

A council of seven master craftsmen, elected by their respective guilds, rules the citadel. More than simple politicians, the craftsmen are artisans selected to represent the height of dwarven culture.

Zan Tarkhaal: (Small castle, pop. 2,058) While the Holdfast is not known for the might of its spellcasters, the outcome of many of its battles has rested on the casting of a single well-placed spell. The underground galleries and lonely watchtowers of Zan Tarkhaal are home to the war casters, sorcerers, and battle priests of the Holdfast.

The stout folk of Zan Tarkhaal are fiercely passionate (even for dwarves) about their studies, resulting in unusual collaborations between arcane and divine spellcasters. To hail from Zan Tarkhaal is to be keenly aware of the mystic forces that shape the multiverse, and of a spellcaster's place in dwarven society.

The town's nominal ruler is a young general named Yuthor Relmarok, a dwarf with little appreciation—and even less respect—for mystic studies. Relmarok has come to regard his post as a form of punishment, and passes his sentence finding ways to impede the work of the spellcasters.

Koranth, Barony of

Lady Kesheba, Baroness of Koranth, Magister of the Aurora

Population: 638,910 (humans 67%, half-elves 9%, elves 7%, gnomes 5%, dwarves 4%, halflings 3%, other 5%)

Resources: Timber, furs, magic, whale oil, fish

Capital: Stromblaen

Koranth is a nation under siege. With the fall of Leherti and the rise of the Scourge, the people of the northwest barony have been cut off from the remainder of the civilized world. Without the resources to reestablish trade routes, the empire and its allies have effectively abandoned the barony to its own fate. In desperation, the barony has turned to smugglers to ferry vital supplies north, an expensive gambit that exacts an enormous price in lives and gold.

Founded six hundred years ago by mages seeking freedom for their esoteric studies, the archbarony has a history of isolation and arcane might. The mages of Koranth are second only to the Elven Loremasters in sheer mystic might, and are peerless in the arcane schools of evocation and transmutation. Both the Ordo Arcana and the Crescent Coven trace their origins to the northern fens, and many of the known world's most famous (and infamous) wizards, witches and warlocks maintain hidden demesnes in Koranth.

Traditionally, the baron has always been a master of the arcane arts; the current baroness is no exception. Lady Kesheba is reputed to be an archmage of no small talent, and she retains the council of specialists in the arts of divination and summoning. The truly powerful spellcrafters, though, shun politics to concentrate solely on esoteric mysteries.

Despite the work of the mages, the barony's chief exports have always been timber and furs. Since the advent of the Scourge, exports have slowed to a trickle, straining the baron's coffers and spurring exploration of the northern wastes.

The barony's borders are patrolled by sorcerer-warriors astride fearsome arcane chargers. These outriders, already few in number, have been strained to the breaking point by the press of the Scourge. They have survived this far through a cunning mix of tactics and deadly magics, but the lonely Mirdar-Luminar Steppes leave little room for error.

The cities and town of Koranth are highly independent and are expected to fend for themselves. Stout walls, solemn watch towers, and watch ravens are common sights, and each city fields its own guard.

Ardwall: (Small city, pop. 7,156) The gray towers of Ardwall look west to the Mirdar-Luminar Steppes, home of the swarming hordes of the Scourge. The folk of Ardwall are ever vigilant, awaiting the day the Scourge turns from Leherti and strikes east. The fierce citizens refuse to abandon their city, preferring instead to stockpile supplies, hire sellswords, construct siege weapons, and train every able-bodied adult to serve in the city's militia.

Ardwall is ruled by two siblings, Aelimon and Cimor Wyverun. Aelimon is a slim, silver-haired witch who spends her time ministering to the poor folk of her beloved city. Respected for her wisdom and feared for her magical skill, Aelimon directs the day-to-day work of the city. Her brother Cimor is a rangy warrior who splits his days between training the city militia and patrolling steppes with the city's outriders.

Northwatch Keep: (Keep, pop. 210) Built on the frigid shores of Hoarfrost Bay, Northwatch Keep is ringed by icicles and snowdrifts nine months out of the year. For three brief cycles of the moon, the snows recede, warm winds blow from the south, and the flowers of the tundra blossom and die.

The hearty souls of Northwatch Keep guard against tribes of savage orcs and ogres that cross the ice floes when the Hoarfrost freezes over, bearing arms and armor made of a meteoric black metal and wielding unknown spells. The origins of these monstrous foes have yet to be discovered; no hero has ventured north of the Hoarfrost and returned to tell the tale.

Rakewight: (Small city, pop. 10,392) Built atop ruins of indeterminable age, Rakewight was founded two hundred years ago by the notorious wizard Elroth Isencrith as a haven for necromancers wishing to practice their craft without shame or dishonor. The city has grown dramatically since Isencrith raised the first black tower, but Rakewight has never succeeded in shaking the shadow of its past.

Nor, many argue, does it care to. The city's architecture makes dramatic use of skulls, death runes, and arcane signs. Its citizens favor dark colors and darker humor, and the scent of rot lingers on everything and everyone passing through the city. The officials of Rakewight decry any attempt to characterize the city as evil, but none can deny the city's bizarre obsession with all things dark and dead.

The current ruler of Rakewight is Lady Elise Isencrith, a direct descendent of the city's founder. Exceedingly thin

and pale of skin, Lady Isencrith is often compared—unfavorably—with a corpse. A pair of silent warriors, anonymous behind spiked plate armor and wielding wicked scythes, accompany the good lady wherever she goes. Deliberate or not, her affects and demeanor have proven effective when bargaining with visiting officials and foreign merchant lords.

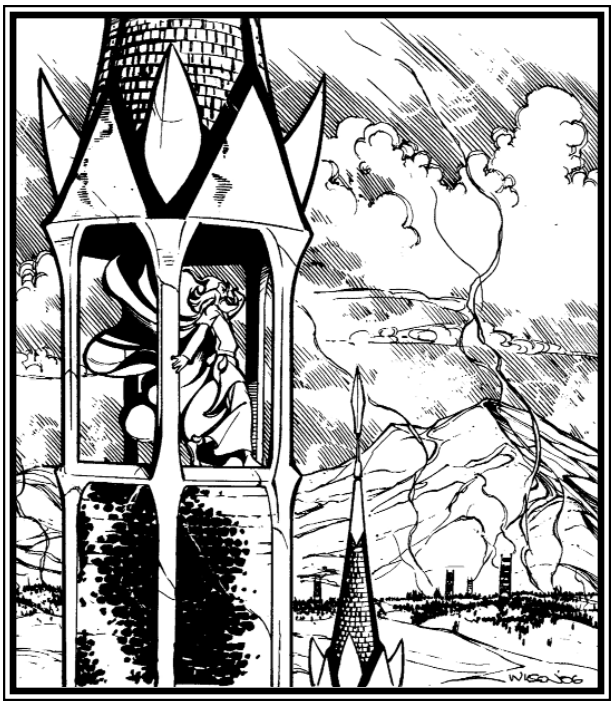
Raven Hollow: (Small town, pop. 1,270) Situated in the shadow of the Corsan Forest, Raven Hollow serves as a gateway to the eastern wilds. A surprising number of visitors pass through Raven Hollow; the trading post is far more prosperous than its size would suggest, and its shops are legendary for having at least one of every mundane item.

Raven Hollow is ruled by consensus, but in times of need the citizens turn to the Witch of the Wood. No one knows the withered crone's age, but it was her raven that led trappers to Raven Hollow when the trading post was established four hundred years ago.

Stromblaen: (Large city, pop. 24,058) The capital of Koranth is respected throughout the Northlands as a place of esoteric lore. While Kassantia is grander, and Corsan enjoys a far more ancient lineage, Stromblaen is where mages go to test their wildest theories. This attitude is captured in the crisp, excited air of the capital, where mages engage in heated discussions in the cafes and taverns, harried apprentices rush from shop to shop at their masters' beck and call, and not a day passes without some summoned beast lumbering down the royal promenade.

With so much talent, many assumed that Koranth (and Stromblaen in particular) would hardly be inconvenienced by the threat of the Scourge. Sadly, until the Scourge is hammering at the gate of their beloved city, the free-minded archmages and sorcerors will be loathe to focus on something so mundane as a horde of savage humanoids. Lady Kesheba has done her best to rally the arcane might of Koranth, but with mages secluded in their lone towers and pocket demiplanes, it is nearly impossible to convene a congress of mages, let alone secure their commitment to a course of action.

Lady Kesheba, for her part, is fully aware of the threat posed by the Scourge. Forced to choose between her respect for individual freedom and the love of her country, she has begun an ambitious plan to ensure the compliance of the mages of Koranth. Lady Kesheba knows in her heart that a web of duplicity may cost her the one thing that she loved most, but the Magister of the Aurora would rather be exiled from her beloved Koranth than watch it fall to the Scourge.



Kalia, Kingdom of

His Royal Majesty, King Taranax, Regent of the Far Horizen, Lord Admiral of the Open Sea, et cetera

Population: 610,780 (humans 73%, halflings 8%, half-elves 5%, elves 4%, dwarves 4%, half-orcs 3%, gnomes 2%, other 1%)

Resources: Trade goods

Capital: Avenors

While small in landmass, the kingdom of Kalía is the undisputed master of the high seas. Her sea captains have set foot on every known continent, bringing back tributes of gold and spices, as well as tales of danger and close escapes. The success of Kalía is so great that her galleons sail under the flag of Crieste as the emperor's Royal Society of Explorers and Fartraders.

The people of Kalía are wanderers, never satisfied with any one horizen. The open sea is their constant companion, singing young children to sleep at night, and calling old men back into her dark embrace. This mistress does not come without a price; every year dozens of ships are lost, smashed against hidden reefs, devoured by terrible sea monsters, or simply consumed by raging storms. Every citizen of Kalía has a family member or friend who

has died at sea, and every hamlet and town has a shrine dedicated to sailors lost to the depths. The people of Kalía know that the sea cannot be conquered, but they also know that it shouldn't be feared.

The nation is ruled by Olann Taranax, a dashing young king who always seems to have a dozen noble sycophants in tow. The Taranax line is famous for their elaborate fetes and masked balls, and it is said that a Kalían who is not dancing, sailing, or making love must be either drunk or—more likely—dead.

Avenors: (Metropolis, pop. 38,930) One of the great cities of the north, Avenors is a city of exotic wonder. Flush with trophies and tributes gathered from every corner of the world, Avenors is a chaotic whirl of bright colors, foreign languages, and pungent smells. Every day a new ship sails into port with tales of adventure, just as another ship departs for distant lands.

While under the rule of King Taranax, the day-to-day management of the city is left to a dozen or so merchant houses. Regarding themselves as nobles, the merchant houses rule from palatial manors set high in the surrounding hills. But while nobles quarrel over territories and lands, the merchant houses squabble over trade routes and tarrifs.

Avenors is also known for its distinctive schools of fencing. Cadres of duelists, rapiers slung low on their hips, strut through the bustling markets and busy taverns, eager for any excuse to demonstrate their swashbuckling prowess. The duelists of Avenors dismiss armor as the "coat of cowards." Instead, the duelists rely on their speed and swordsmanship to keep them from harm's way. Accordingly, healers are in high demand in Avenors, and some duelists even take out contracts with their favorite surgeons and leech-using barbers.

Saltmoon: (Village, pop. 722) A lonely fishing village situated above a sheltered cove, Saltmoon is a typical Kalían community. Ruled by a council of elders, Saltmoon makes its living off of the large, seasonal salmon, and by sailing explorers to the remote sea caves known as the Grottos. The Grottos are extensive, extending through several miles of known caves and fissures, but with nearly one-third of the caves underwater, thorough exploration has been nearly impossible. Locals tell of buried treasaure, undead sea elves, and a lost civilization making its home far underground. These tales are suspect at best, but that doesn't stop would-be heroes from hiring sailboats and vanishing into the Grottos.

Veltos: (Large town, pop. 2,819) While all of Kalía's merchant houses maintain envoys in Veltos, nearly all of the town's citizens are foreigners. Some are drawn by the wealth that passes through the city gates, others are agents of distant nations, while others are simply caravan masters keeping their fingers on the pulse of the Northlands.

Hide-armored barbarians brush shoulders with swaggering rogues, gnome traders toss dice with green-skinned half-orcs, and dark-skinned magicians garbed in rune-covered robes watch silently. Veltos is a city of extremes and oddities, and it takes a very odd stranger indeed to draw the stares of her citizens.

Sellswords and mercenary spellcasters are always in great demand, either as caravan guards or discrete agents of merchant intrigue. Several mercenary companies make their home in Veltos for this purpose, including the Company of the Minotaur, the Brotherhood of the Bladed, and the League of the Mask; violent turnover ensures that the companies are always looking for promising young warriors.

Leherti, Grand Duchy of (Occupied)

Archduke Filip Ramaster the XII (in exile)

Population: 1,901,480 (humans 52%, orcs 21%, goblins 8%, half-orcs 7%, ogres and giants 4%, elves 2%, other 6%)

Resources: Slaves, some trade goods

Capital: None (once Araloges)

The Grand Duchy of Leherti, once a shining gem in the crown of the Criestine Empire, now stands in ruins, a testament to the might of the Scourge and the folly of mankind.

For the last five hundred years, the royal Andithil dynasty, a family of haughty aristocrats, ruled the Grand Duchy. Consistent inbreeding, however, reduced the heirs to feebleminded regents convinced of their divinity. When the Scourge rode out of the north, Archduke Ramaster declared that he would lead the armies himself. Sensing imminent disaster, the Archduke's advisors attempted a coup; amazingly, Ramaster survived. In a single night, he had every advisor, general, and commanding officer executed for treason, leaving the ducal army in disarray. The Scourge swept into the Grand Duchy unopposed, laying waste to all.

Now the Archduke reigns in exile, planning his return to power. His realm stands in ruin, his people enslaved by the Scourge or scraping out wretched existences in the ruined cities. The heirlooms of the duchy, magical weapons and treasures beyond compare, are lost some-

where in the smoking ruins of Araloges, along with any hope for the Grand Duchy's return to greatness.

The fell generals of the Scourge now rule the land. Orcish warbands and roving gangs of outlaws prey upon the small towns and villages, while the cities are crushed beneath the iron grip of vicious warlords and infernal priests. With only enough troops to maintain order within the cities, the Scourge has permitted the outlands to descend into lawlessness.

Araloges: (Ruined metropolis, pop. 15,890) Once the great city of Araloges was esteemed throughout the Northlands, her proud citizens parading along the wide promenades, proclaiming their undying admiration for the Archduke. Today the old capital is in ruins, her citizens enslaved, the promenades covered in debris, her legendary treasures carried back to the Scourgelands in rude canvas sacks.

The remaining citizens labor beneath the cruel whips of the Scourge, slowly rebuilding the city in a cruel mockery of its former grandeur. The city is ruled by Shanac, a sorcerous medusa with a gift for warcraft. The general wears an elaborate veil while holding court in the ruined city, and is known to fight with wands and staves. A host of petrified slaves ring the city, standing as a constant reminder to those that would dare to challenge Shanac's rule. While her slaves rebuild the city, the medusa sends search parties to comb the ruins of the palace, searching for lost and forgotten lore.

Canliath: (Ruined large city, pop. ???) With temples devoted to nearly every faith, Canliath was once known as the City of Gods. Rather than daring to rule the city and risk the wrath of the Gods, the hordes of the Scourge blockaded the famous bronze gates, locking its citizens inside, and put the city to the torch.

What curses escaped the searing lips of the faithful, and what foul bargains were struck with infernal powers will never be known. Now the City of the Gods is a city of soot-stained marble and cinder. Vague reports tell of demonic shapes that pick through the ruins, burnt corpses stumbling through the broken streets, and nameless horrors that haunt the city at night. Many faiths offer bounties for recovering artifacts lost in the disaster, but few are the heroes that will dare the fire-scarred ruins.

Invergin: (Metropolis, pop. 28,915) Of the hundreds of thousands of slaves taken in the fall of Leherti, over one-half were sent to the infamous slave pits of Invergin. Once a crossroads of trade with the east, the city of Ivergin has become a vle city of slave masters, amoral wizards, wicked priests, and merchant lords of the worst sort.

Unlike most cities in the Grand Duchy, Invergin was spared total destruction. But with the arrival of the slave

merchants, this blessing has been turned on its head. Now the city, reasonably undamaged, is entirely inhabited by the depraved and corrupt. Houses of ill repute line the avenues, filthy taverns and gambling are found on every corner, and temples devoted to dark gods and infernal powers have been built atop cathedrals and monasteries.

Worst of all are the slave pits. A massive arena has been built in the center of the city, and slaves that fail to fetch a good bit of coin on the auction block are forced to fight for their lives against a menagerie of monsters and wild beasts. Slaves that win are never released, only returned to the auction. The gladiatorial battles draw enormous crowds, and fortunes are gambled on the outcome.

Invergin is ruled by Bael, a muscular giant of a man. Blinded in the assault on Leherti, Bael fights in a visorless helm, made from the same dragon scales that were used to forge his half-plate armor. Legend holds that the scales came from the silver dragon that stole Bael's eyesight. Delighting in personal combat, Lord Bael has promised to free any slave that can best him in single combat. Many have taken Bael up on his offer, and all have been buried in a mass grave beyond the city walls.

Yithain: (Ruined large city, pop. 16,378) With the collapse of the Grand Duchy, most patriots withdrew to Free Cities or the Theocracy of the Lance, leaving behind hapless peasants of the Grand Duchy to fend for themselves.

But some patriots remain, hiding out in scorched forests and caves. They fight a guerilla war against overwhelming odds, sustained by the belief that although the war has been lost, meaningful battles can still be won.

The city of Yithain is one such place. Beset by the armies of the Scourge, the city should have fallen like every other in the Grand Duchy. Instead, the city found unexpected relief in a flood of warriors, priests, and mages, fleeing before the march of the horde. The soldiers rallied beside Morgan Ironwolf, a legendary sellsword from the Southern Province. Standing atop the battlements, Ironwolf and her companions watched the plains darken with the sheer number of the Scourge; accepting certain death, Ironwolf and her companions prepared to lead the final defense of Yithain.

Frost giants led the assault with hurled volleys of boulders, destroying the city's walls in mere hours. Orcs, goblins, and trolls swarmed through the rubble, setting a fire that leapt from building to building, quickly overtaking their entire city. Celebrating their easy victory, the fell army relaxed.

With the flames of Yithain reaching to the sky, Ironwolf and her ragtag force struck from the ruined city, slicing through the confused horde, and laying waste to an army five times their size.

Reports allege that the general realized that she couldn't save the city, but that she could destroy her foes. Tacticians debate the merit of Ironwolf's strategy, but none can fault her ends: While all of Leherti has fallen to the Scourge, the Company of the Ironwolf still occupies ruined Yithain, and harries the Scourge from the very heart of the fallen Duchy.

Leherti, Free Cities of

Khorjala the Hawk

Population: 1,788,910 (humans 63%, half-elves 10%, elves 8%, dwarves 7%, gnomes 5%, halfings 4%, other 3%)

Resources: Trade goods, copper, gems

Capital: None

When Archduke Ramaster and his armies fled the raging Horde, Leherti was assumed lost. Handfuls of desperate generals rallied their men in a costly holding action, fighting not for the feeble Archduke, but for honor and the glory of Leherti. Unable to stop the Scourge, they did manage to slow its advance, permitting the cities of Cyros, Ilnoth, and Amthor to launch a counterattack. The forces of the Scourge and Leherti met at the Battle of Minérond's Ford, where the armies ground each other to a bloody stalemate that holds to this day.

Those three battle-scarred cities and the surrounding lands are now known as the Free Cities of Leherti. They continue to wage a bitter guerilla war against the Horde, rangers and scouts striking from the forests and broken hills, while gnome sappers undermine roads, walls, and bridges, and druids call forth lightning from the sky. Each attack brings a bitter reprisal, and the Lehertians live under the constant threat of death and rapine at the hands of the Scourge.

The Lehertian resistance is led by Khorjala the Hawk, a dusky-skinned, enigmatic ranger. The men that follow him are a motley mix of hardened soldiers, displaced nobility, and rustic peasants. Of Khorjala, much is rumored, but little known for certain. His name is not found on any of the pre-war rosters, nor is he known to any of Ramaster's generals. Cunning in his tactics and vicious on the field of battle, legend holds that Khorjala has been nearly captured a dozen times, and yet always manages to slip free. Tarkhan Khurzog—Master of the Scourge—has taken a personal interest in the Hawk, sending demons, assassins, bounty hunters, and worse to bring in the notorious general.

The Free Cities of Leherti continue to scratch out an existence in the shadow of enemy occupation. The people are haggard and frail, and exhausted refugees line the muddy streets. Overcrowding and poverty has led to the rise of criminal bosses who offer protection, food, and other necessities … for a price. The Lord Mayors of the Free Cities do their best to contain the bosses' power to the slums, where they are permitted to rule uncontested.

Of the many bosses vying for dominance, two stand out as the most successful and ruthless. Phendel the Beggarmaster, a corpulent bull with a legendary appetite for sweetmeats and attractive women of every race, rules from the Old Slums of Cyros; his greatest rival is Teshin, an up-and-coming rogue, late of Punjar. Already the two have clashed on several occasions, leaving trails of bodies throughout the filthy slums. It has been suggested that the lord mayors encourage this sort of violent rivalry as a means of weakening the bosses' overall power.

Amthor: (Small city, pop. 28,190) Flooded with refugees, Amthor's population has nearly tripled since the Fall of Leherti. Tents and shacks crowd the streets, and malnourishment and disease are commonplace; meanwhile, the city's resources are exhausted simply trying to maintain the status quo.

The lord mayor is Alden Morward, corpulent son of a powerful merchant, placed in power as a favor to his father. The Fall of Leherti transformed Morward's post from one of ease to one of constant crises. Surprisingly, Morward has risen to the challenge, maintaining order in a delicate balance between diplomacy, back-alley deals with the gang bosses, and the constant presence of city guards. Still, dozens of new refugees arrive daily with no

end in sight; it is only a matter of time before Morward's house of cards collapses under its own weight.

Cyros: (Small city, pop. 11,201) During the last months of the war, it was said that Leherti wouldn't fall so long as Cyros stood. Occupying a small island near the western shore of Wyrm's Deep, the citadel-city became the lynchpin of the Lehertian Resistance. Cyros weathered terrible assaults from hordes of humanoids, archmages, sea giants, and even a pair of adult red dragons. Under the direction of Tesron Valri, the city's half-elf lord mayor, Cyros gave as good as she got, withstanding the concentrated might of the Scourge.

Now Cyros is a staging ground for most of the attacks into the occupied territory. However, this has again focused the might of the Scourge on a single city, and the citizens of Cyros have cause to be frightened. They may pay a steep price for saving the Free Cities of Leherti.

Ilnoth: (Metropolis, pop. 26,737) There is little doubt that the Scourge will go to war again soon, and standing at the foot of Wyrm's Deep, Ilnoth is likely to bear the brunt of the invasion. This places the lady mayor and her council in the uncomfortable situation of supporting the Resistance while dreading its inevitable result.

Bethtar the Sade has served as Lady Mayor for over a decade, and refuses to let harm come to her beloved Ilnoth. She and her council have initiated negotiations with Tarkhan Khurzog, Master of the Scourge; thus far, these dealings have been kept secret except for a privileged few, but if the Scourge does go to war again, the city's duplicity will become quickly apparent.

Luithea, Kingdom of

White Drake of the North, His Royal Majesty King Beldor

Population: 638,250 (humans 64%, half-elves 8%, halflings 7%, dwarves 6%, elves 6%, gnomes 5%, half-orcs 4%)

Resources: Timber, gold, copper, trade goods

Capital: Armadel

Oldest of the northern kingdoms, the nation of Luithea was once a humble fiefdom awarded to a Criestine knight. Since its inception, the country has slowly expanded its borders, adopting new lands and developing a rich sense of history and tradition. The people of Luithea take great pride in their motherland, elevating her folk heroes into demi-saints.

For its entire history, Luithea has been ruled a single unbroken dynasty; the current regent is the beloved King Beldor. Once a valiant knight who protected his kingdom from atop a mighty charger, the old king seldom has call to raise a blade, and only dons his majestic full plate armor for ceremonies and festivals. King Beldor knows that his seasons are numbered, and he quietly longs for the lost years. Beldor's son, Seremac, is a conniving worm who delights in his father's anguish. With no other heir, Beldor fears what will become of his beloved kingdom after his death.

While relying on natural resources for the bulk of its income, Luithea is more developed than most of its northern cousins. Among the many farmers, miners, and woodcutters, there is also a healthy population of artisans and traders. King Beldor encourages the education of his people, but this runs counter to the wishes of the Crieste lord-barons, who would prefer Luithea to remain a simple backwater. Every year the people are forced to watch as the kingdom's finest knights and spellcasters are conscripted into the imperial armies. Inspired by idealistic young nobles, the citizens have begun to cry out for freedom from their imperial overlords. So far, this has resulted in nothing more than scuffles with imperial tax collectors, but the court in Archbridge has caught wind of Luithea's impudence, and has sworn to execute any citizen daring to defy imperial decree.

At the sunset of his life, King Beldor finds his nation at a turning point. The coming years herald turmoil and unrest, and Beldor cannot guide his nation forever. Soon he will be forced to decide between passing the crown of Luithea on to his son, or choosing another heir and ending a dynasty of a thousand years. The decision weighs on the aging monarch, but if he waits much longer, death may make the decision for him.

Armadel: (Large city, pop. 18,250) The glorious city of Armadel is a vision of grandeur and majesty. Built high atop a tall hill and defended by high walls, the towers of the central citadel rise above the common morning fog, earning the castle the name of Cloudwatch.

Armadel is renowned for its Wyrm Knights, an elite cadre of warriors who ride into battle astride wyverns. Few in number, the knights are celebrated heroes of the people. When they take flight from the towers of Cloudwatch, citizens crowd the streets and balconies, shouting and waving to their venerated knights.

King Beldor holds court in Armadel, but every spring he leads the royal court in a tour of the cities, villages, and towns of Luithea. Beldor savors this chance to see the countryside, and his people celebrate the arrival of the popular monarch.

Eisenhold: (Large castle, pop. 3,582) The dark, solemn castle with its grim defenders stands in stark contrast to

the nobility and gleaming spires of Armadel. The castle of Eisenhold and the surrounding town is home to Seremac Beldor, the Black Prince, heir apparent to the Kingdom of Luithea.

A bitter young man, the Black Prince spends his days sulking in Eisenhold's highest tower, plotting new and ever more devious ways of dishonoring his father. The Black Prince dallies in illicit affairs with the wives of his father's knights, but even these distractions offer only temporary reprieve from his foul demeanor. The only time the Black Prince is truly happy is when he is killing something, preferably a sentient creature. Lean, lithe, and cunning, Seremac has matured into a deadly swordsman, a talent sure to serve him well in the years to come.

Welwyn: (Small town, pop. 921) A wilderness town standing in the shadow of the Cairnswild forest, Welwyn is home to trappers and huntsmen who earn a dangerous living hunting the dangerous dire boars that rut in the forest glades.

The town is ruled by the young and charismatic Lady Arabella, daughter to the late mayor. Arabella shares the duties of her post with the town's magistrate, a grim man known as Malchor.

Morrain, Kingdom of

King Mirias Stormwarden, the Argent Sovereign

Population: 294,910 (humans 54%, half-elves 16%, dwarves 11%, elves 6%, halflings 5%, gnomes 4%, other 4%)

Resources: Silver, gems, jewelry

Capital: Galaron

Founded by a band of sworn brothers five hundred years ago, the Kingdom of Morrain owes fealty to Crieste in name only. Morrain weathered the Interregnum alone, fending off goblinoid hordes and giants, and emerged as the face of independence in the north. While other nations raise the clarion cry for freedom, the people of Morrain live it.

A small kingdom with limited resources, nearly every citizen is asked to take part in the nation's defense. Old men and striplings, merchants and knaves—all are expected to take up arms when the watchfires flare on the towers.

King Stormwarden embodies the noble ambitions of his people. A white-haired half-elf skilled with the bow and blade, Stormwarden spent his youth exploring the rocky passes, game trails, and ancient dwarf-highways that weave through the wilds of Morrain. Now a mature sovereign, Stormwarden rules from the citadel in Galaron, with old adventuring companions ringing his throne. In battle, Stormwarden fights with a terrible silver greatsword that rumbles with thunder and calls down lightning from the sky.

With his forces committed to border patrols, the Argent Sovereign is always on the lookout for stalwart heroes. The people of Morrain can handle most small threats on their own, but when giants, dragons, and worse prowl from their dark lairs in the Frosteye Mountains, the call goes out for courageous champions.

Cillamar: (Small town, pop. 1,030) A thriving community set on the doorstep of a vast wilderness, Cillamar grows with every passing season as explorers and adventures press further into the frontier. Cillamar trades lumber, furs, and grain with the dwarves of Ul Yazhmotk, in return for masterwork arms and ore.

Cillamar is ruled by the wise Patriarch Ranz Mentzer. The Patriarch was once a high priest in the Theocracy of the Lance, crusading in the name of good and justice across the face of Áereth. Now the aging Patriarch wears a long white beard in place of a breastplate, but he is no less passionate in his defense of good. The Patriarch welcomes all good and neutral temples to Cillamar, but refuses to tolerate practitioners of evil faiths.

Within a day's ride of Cillamar rise the skeletal ruins of Whiterock Castle. Lady Chauntessa, a mysterious sorceress and the proprietor of the Inn of the Slumbering Drake, often hires young adventurers to explore the Castle's labyrinthine dungeons. Local legends tell of a fearsome dragon, the great Benthosruthsa, who is said to lair in the ruins. Regardless of the truth of the rumors, the expeditions are fraught with peril, and few of Lady Chauntessa's expeditions ever return.

Galaron: (Small city, pop. 8,527) Compared to southern metropolises, Galaron is little more than a rural backwater, its people simple and seldom given to intrigue. Those same "simpletons" will also climb the city walls at the first sign of trouble, willingly defending their home to the bitter end. This isn't to say that Galaron doesn't have its share of cheats and con men, but in Galaron even scoundrels rally; if the city falls, there is simply nowhere else to go.

The largest city for hundreds of miles in any direction, Galaron serves as a waypoint for adventurers riding north and east, and for merchants traveling south. The people of Galaron are fishermen and hunters, specializing in exotic specimens and rare furs. In summer and early fall, daring captains can be hired to sail north, dropping explorers off on the northern shores. Returning to pick up explorers can be something of a challenge, however.

Fierce ice storms can build within hours and last for weeks, and the Bay of Dyzan can freeze over with little or no warning.

Despite the hardship of northern life, or perhaps *because* of it, the folk of Galaron are renowned for their lively revels. It is said that while every man dies, it takes a warrior from Galaron to sing his own dirge.

Far Cirque: (Small town, pop. 1,145) Nestled in the base of a high glacier vale, Far Cirque (known as "Far Town" to locals) is home to a number of plentiful gem mines, accounting for the unusually high population of gnomes. The gems are brought down from the high mountain mines to be weighed, cut, and polished by master artisans before being shipped to Galaron under heavy guard.

Local legends tell of a lost mine and an enormous gem infused with magical properties. This "mother diamond" is said to be responsible for the profusion of gems in the surrounding lands, and that if anyone removes the fabled stone from the nearby gem mines, all will go dry.

Far Cirque is ruled by Rorínna Berick, a sharp-witted gnomish sorcerer with a knack for spotting thieves and cheats. Berick spent her younger years on the wrong side of the law, and it is a point of personal honor that the gem shipments arrive in Galaron undisturbed.

Mystenmere: (Small town, pop. 1,890) A quaint village overlooking Valfors Bay, Mystenmere enjoys its role as gateway to the Anseur Forest (see *the Elven Nations*). Non-elven mages studying with the elves of the Anseur often stay in Mystenmere. For their part, the elves of Anseur tolerate the presence of Mystenmere, even going so far as to offer the protection of the elven nation. For many scholars, Mystenmere is the closest they come to the Anseur's hallowed glades.

Mystenmere is governed by Aragoth, an ancient human mage with the unnerving habit of consulting his familiar (a gray-haired rat) before making any significant decision. Having lived in Mystenmere longer than any can recall, Aragoth seems content to live out the end of his days (however many that might be) in quiet esoteric contemplation. The old man makes his home in an unassuming tower in the center of town, and those hoping to visit the old sage would do well to bring a magical present of some sort, and to observe their manners—the old mage has been known to make impolite guests wait for weeks before admitting them to the tower.

Ibelot: (Ruined large city, pop. ???) Standing high atop the Cliffs of Dyzan, the ruined city of Ibelot is the source of much fear among the rulers of Morrain. Explorers who have ventured within sight of Ibelot's ruined walls report soaring black towers, bronze domes, and elevated skyways. Those who step inside the walls are never seen again, and fishermen regularly report witnessing wisps of smoke curling up from the wells in the center of the city.

Nos Caen, the Isle of
(Province of New Kassantia)

The Great Druid

Population: 610,390 (humans 67%, elves 14%, half-elves 10%, gnomes 4%, others 5%)

Resources: Timber, furs, slaves, whale oil

Capital: Folkevern

The Isle of Nos Caen is the Criestine Empire's least effective attempt to establish a tribute colony. The native humans of Nos Caan are an olive-skinned, dark-haired folk, the last remaining vestiges of the druidic civilization that once stretched across the whole of the Northlands. Regarded as sub-humans by Lady Mortianna, Vizier of Crieste, the savages of Nos Caen have proven more than a match for the armies of Crieste. Worse, the occupation has transformed the disorganized tribes of Nos Caen into a unified savage horde. What began as a simple occupation has grown into a quagmire that threatens to engulf all of Crieste.

The tribes of Nos Caen are true savages, living in caves and simple mud huts, with only a rudimentary understanding of metalworking. This is changing with the coming of the Crieste army; now the tribes raid the Crieste camps for weapons and armor, even burning buildings to ash in order to recover nails and metal artifacts.

For the soldiers tasked with subduing the natives, the tribes of Nos Caen have proven to be terrifying foes. Donning the bloody skins of animals, the tribes of barbarians attack in the dark of night astride dire war beasts. Howling like demons, the tribes know neither fear nor pain. The savages use war horns carved from the tusks of dire boars to orchestrate their attacks and withdrawals, but the savages have taken to blowing the horns simply to weaken the morale of the Crieste soldiers.

The master of Crieste's forces is General Arion, an aging warrior approaching the end of his career. While the general's heart isn't in the occupation of the Isle, he is unquestionably loyal to the crown and carries out his orders to the best of his ability. The general's lack of passion is reported back to the crown by Connence the Ashwind, an agent of Lady Mortianna. Unless Arion makes gains against the tribes soon, he will be sent back to the mainland to finish his career in the dungeons of Kassantia.

Folkevern: (Large town, pop. 3,956) While most of the Caenan people live in small villges and hamlets, the war against Crieste has united the disparate tribes under one ruler: the Great Druid of Folkevern. An ancient druidic grove, Folkevern has grown into the savages' chief staging ground.

In recent memory, no non-Caenan has ever returned from Folkevern; the only details of the grove are culled from old rumors and folktales. Stories whisper of mighty standing stones carved with powerful runes, blood sacrifices, and preserved corpses rising from the boggy moors. The Great Druid is said to be an ancient man with a long white beard that reaches down to his feet, and a pair of intelligent ravens that perch on the back of his throne. Whether or not the stories are true, it is clear that the Caenan tribes have begun to orchestrate their savage attacks, and that the natives are commited to forcing the Crieste armies from Nos Caen—at any price.

There are dozens of small Caenan villages and hamlets, and five Crieste forts on the isle. The following is a brief examination of the most noteworthy settlements.

Halsgate Castle: (Large castle, pop 4,010) Nos Caen's chief port, the city of Halsgate is the staging area for all supplies and forces sent to the isle. Halsgate Castle is a citadel built on the ruins of an old druidic observatory. The surrounding city is a cold, dour place, where chimney smoke seems to linger in a permanent haze, and constant streams of dead soldiers are borne back from the front atop their rent shields.

General Avion does his best to support his soldiers' moral, but at times it seems that the very land conspires to thwart Crieste's forces. The mist-shrouded ruins surrounding the city and the catacombs beneath her muddy streets hint at long-lost secrets. Avion has ordered all entrances to the undercity to be barred over, but the earth beneath Halsgate is riddled like a rat's warren. Recently, night sentries have begun vanishing. Whether the soldiers are abandoning their posts, or are being slain by horrors remains unknown—all Avion can do is double the guards and hope for the best.

Warringhill: (Small castle, pop. 733) The fort on Warringhill is the spearhead of Crieste's assault on the Caenan folk. It has been said that the Criestine soldiers live little better than the savages they hope to conquer, and this is certainly true of Warringhill, a perennially wet fort built atop a rocky outcropping. Veteran soldiers are forced to hole up in muddy huts in the spring, cluster around smoky fires in the winter, and watch the woods with sullen wariness throughout the year.

New recruits are regularly rotated into the fort, but soldiers seldom leave. Half of all new soldiers stationed at Warringhill die in their first month of service. Fully two-thirds are dead after three months of duty, and only five warriors out of every hundred live out a year. Those that survive the tour of duty are deadly warriors with a gift for survival, and are considered too precious to be dismissed from duty.

Veterans of Warringhill could easily be mistaken for savages, and indeed, many adopt the ways of their enemies, doning hide armor when chain and plate armor rusts, and forsaking heavy crossbows and unwieldly polearms for quicker shortbows, halfspears, and short swords.

Warringhill is commanded by Thoradin Axewind, a gruff veteran with little time for the niceties of civilization. Cold and brusque to newcomers, Thoradin takes personal responsibility for every life in his command, leaving him little time to entertain fools or braggarts. Thoradin's chilly demeanor warms instantly after witnessing skill on the field of battle—but it is the deed, not the word, that sways his opinion.

Porthmeor, City-State of

Lord Mayor Yughinuss Lorenam

Population: 35,700 (humans 65%, half-orcs 10%, dwarves 9%, elves 8%, monstrous humanoids 4%, halflings 4%)

Resources: Trade, fish, whale oil

Capital: The City of Porthmeor

A free city on an island in the southern Lirean, Porthmeor enjoys regular trade with the merchants of the North as well as the nomadic tribesmen of the Southland. In addition, the city serves as the easiest access point to submerged Lirean ruins, a constant draw to adventurers, sages, and treasure seekers. In this case, "easy" is a misnomer, since even the nearest ruins are submerged by over fifty feet of water and inhabited by foul creatures of the depths.

In ancient times, the city-state of Porthmeor fought a brutal war against a race of aquatic elves. After a decade of inconclusive conflict, the elves offered the hand of Iasmini, their princess, to Porthmeor's lord mayor as a peace offering. He accepted. A few months after the wedding had taken place, Iasmini killed her husband and most of the court, throwing the city into chaos. Princess Iasmini was captured in the final battle, and legend holds that her tomb was buried somewhere beneath the city.

The current lord mayor is a tall, slender man with dark eyes and a quick wit, who is known to wander the streets of his city in disguise in order to gauge the morale of his people. Pirates, some say hailing from Freeport, have begun preying upon Porthmeor traders once again, and soon something will have to be done.

Saramanthia

Various barbarian khans

Population: ??? (mostly humans and monstrous humanoids)

Resources: Furs, spices, leather, copper

Capital: Tiam'tze

Occupying holy land once coveted by both the Abylos and Uru'Nuk nations, Saramanthia is but a distant echo of the mighty empires. While Abylos and Uru'Nuk were implacable foes, the people of Saramanthia exhibit traits of both. Fierce in battle like the war-hungry Abylos, and devoted to strange god-totems like the religious Uru'Nuk, the people of Sarmanthia embody

the worst and best of both ancient empires. This integration came at the cost of Uru'Nuk's learning and sophistication; the modern Saramanthians are nomadic barbarians that seldom venture into the gilded cities of old Uru'Nuk.

Saramanthians range the grassy steppes astride ceratons, scaled lizard beasts that run on two legs. The horned ceratons are typically barded in hide armor, but the ceratons of chieftains and powerful warriors often sport chain barding pieced together from the mail of fallen foes. Saramanthian warriors prefer to fight with lances and short bows, using scimitars for close combat. Pride, honor, and a fast ceraton are a warrior's greatest assets; to insult any of the three is grounds for a duel.

Inheritance is passed onto the eldest child, forcing many second and third born to seek their fortunes abroad. Thus, Saramanthians encountered in civilized lands are often called "No-zins," or *Thirdsons*. Having tasted the sweet fruit of civilization, many choose to stay in civilized lands. No matter how cultured these barbarians become, they still hear the seductive call of the lonesome wind, and often return to the high steppe in their final days.

Tiam'tze: The "capital" of Saramanthia is nothing more than a grassy burial mound rising three hundred feet above the surrounding plains. Every year on the Spring Equinox, the leaders of the tribes assemble on the mound to settle blood feuds, arrange marriages, and decide territorial disputes. Three basalt monoliths atop the mound serve as a sophisticated calendar; the foundation stone is scribed with an accurate spiral that traces the progress of the monoliths' shadows through the year. Any other significance of the monoliths or of the mound itself remains a mystery, but sages warn that in the old Uru'Nuk tongue, *Tiam'tze* translates to "devil-dragon's blood."

Scourgelands

Tarkhan Khurzog, Master of the Scourge

Population: 3,059,981 (orcs 49%, goblinoids 14%, half-orcs 13%, ogres 7%, giants 4%, other 13%)

Resources: ???

Capital: Hellspawn Keep

For most of recorded history, the tribes of goblinoid raiders that roam the Mirdar-Luminar Steppes had been little more than a trifling threat, raiding the realms of man when overpopulation—a problem common to the barren steppes—forced them to look beyond intertribal feuds. Poorly armed, chaotic, and suspicious by nature, the raiders seldom campaigned more than two hundred leagues beyond their usual hunting grounds. Whether they succumbed to the well-armored and disciplined armies of man, dwarf, and elf, or to their own infighting, made little difference. The decimated hordes would return to the steppes, recoup their numbers after a year or three of frantic breeding, and the cycle would begin again.

This changed in the summer of 3195 EC (Empyrean Calendar). A ten-year drought had reduced the steppes to a tinderbox, decimating the herds of migratory draex and reindeer. Late summer lightning set fire to the steppes, forcing the hordes of ogres, goblinoids, and giant-kin into civilized lands. A single warlord emerged from the ensuing storm of chaos and conflict, a monstrous ogre mage steeped in sorcerous blood, more cunning than any merchant prince—terrible in his wrath and merciless in battle. In a single campaign, he hammered the orc-hordes into a unified army and swept through the Grand Duchy of Leherti, razing the City of Gods, setting fire to the ancient libraries of Luxon, forcing a treaty from the Criestine Empire, and putting over half the nation to the spit.

Now the entire known world trembles at the name of Tarkhan Khurzog, Master of the Scourge.

The end of the tale remains to be told. Presently the Tarkhan resides in the smoking citadel of Hellspawn Keep, gathering mercenary sorcerors, infernal priests, and wicked sellswords to his already-formidable army of orcs, goblins, and giants. Scholars and generals, eager to stave off the seemingly invincible Tarkhan, hotly debate the best way to put an end to the mightiest army the world has ever known, and they fear the Tarkhan's wrath if they should fail.

On the field of battle, the Tarkhan relies upon lighting-swift orcish cavalry bolstered by boulder-hurling giants and goblin infantry riding into battle on armored draex-odons. The Tarkhan has been quick to take advantage of his foes' hubris, turning pride, chivalry, and honor into deadly weaknesses. More than one Lehertian general led a doomed charge against the horde, expecting the enemy lines to break, only to discover the goblins and orcs fear their demonspawn general more than the charge of any armored knight.

The following is a brief examination of the most infamous of the Tarkhan's holdings. Scholars and generals should note that there are certainly other cities, citadels, and orc-holds loyal to the Scourge that have yet to be discovered.

Hellspawn Keep: (Large citadel, pop. 24,301) A city of antediluvian origins, the mountain bastion of the Tarkhan is a towering citadel built atop smoking, steaming pits. Named Hellspawn Keep by the humans, the fell palace is known to the wicked as Azmog-Azmennum. Although it's not the largest of the Scourge's cities, an explorer would be hard pressed to find a greater concentration of malefic might in all the Northlands. Goblins labor day and night to stir the smoking pits, demons stalk the dark halls conveying messages for their infernal masters, legendary heroes of good are tortured into forswearing their noble causes, and constant streams of slaves are sacrificed to hosts of foul deities.

At the center of it all sits the mighty Tarkhan Khurzog, plotting his next conquest. The Tarkhan has never known defeat, and his armies—having tasted the sweet fruits of civilization—clamor for war. Ogre mage, sorcerer, and fearsome warrior, the blight-fisted commander of the Scourge is the undisputed master of all he surveys. Spring will bring war, and the Tarkhan will be ready.

Ibinfang: (Large castle, pop. 4,200) Ibinfang is the adopted home of the Ruin Knights, an order of cultic warriors dedicated to bringing about the end of the world. Once an obscure cabal in the Grand Duchy of Leherti, the coming of the Scourge allowed the abyssal Ruin Knights to fully embrace their unholy beliefs. The Tarkhan placed the order in Ibinfang in order to keep an eye on them, and to ensure that the Scourge reaps the benefits of their nightmarish ways.

So far all has worked as planned. The wicked leaders of the cult, former citizens of Leherti, have produced thirteen demonic knights to fight in the service of the Tarkhan. How long this pact will stand remains to be seen. But for now the goals of the Ruin Knights and the Scourge are one and the same, and the Ruin Knights ride at the head of the Tarkhan's armies, heralding dread and death to the foes of the Scourge.

The Lost Vale: (Unknown, pop. ???) The Valley of

Wistfast was once the ancestral homeland of the gnomish peoples. Isolated from most of the other humanoid races, the gnomes pursued a life of peace and solitude, mining the rich veins of gems and gold, developing their peculiar magics, and encouraging a gentle balance between nature and craft.

That solitude and independence led to the gnomes' downfall. Many hundreds of years ago, the fell mage Tsathzar Rho unleashed an army of enslaved creatures upon the valley, and with few allies to call on, the gnomes were slaughtered by the advancing horde. Once the gnomes were all scattered or dead, Tsathzar Rho dismissed his army and set about collecting the seven sacred gems of the Gnomish Lords. What Tsathzar Rho did with the fabled gems remains a mystery, and the gnomes have been a race of wanderers to this day.

The fate of the valley is also unknown. Soaked in the blood of the gnome race and tainted by the touch of demons, the Lost Vale sinks further and further into the shadowed mire of the forgotten past.

Morazuin: (Metropolis, pop. 127,020) Were not fully half of Morazuin underground, it would be the single largest city in the Northlands, a fact that taunts many a human sage. Even considering only the surface portion, Morazuin ranks among the great cities of the North.

Home to the armies of orcs and goblinoids that now swarm the lands of Leherti, Morazuin is a foul cauldron of activity. Goblin builders work feverishly to construct new siege engines, orc generals train their wards into ferocious warriors, and mercenary sellswords and mages arrive daily.

While Azmog-Azmennum is mythic in its might, Morazuin is impossibly *large*. The Tarkhan has prohibited building outside the city's fabled iron walls, so the orcs and goblinoids settled on building *up*. The city is under constant construction, level stacked upon level like the haphazard accretion of soil after a flood. At night, the smokey fires of Morazuin rise like bitter stars struggling to climb back into the firmament, the highest levels indistinguishable from the night sky.

A city as large as Morazuin cannot exist for long. Currently, the orcs thrive off the spoils of Leherti and the flesh of thousands of slaves. But in the next five years, the population of Morazuin will double, and plundered resources of Leherti will dry up. Driven by hunger and an insatiable lust for violence, the armies of Morazuin will spill out onto the plains like a horde of demonic locust, destroying all in their path. Some scholars fear that this cycle is but one part of the Tarkhan's fell plan, but most discount this theory as too orchestrated to be the work of a simple ogre-magus. The truth of the matter remains to be seen.

Yazh'mon: (Small city, pop. 11,980) Every army needs its weapons and armor, and the Scourge is no exception. Orc and goblinoid hordes have traditionally suffered from poor arms. Part of the Scourge's success is due to the quality of their armor and weapons. While many of the Scourge's goblins still fight with improvised weapons and scavenged armor, the orcs, giants, and large goblinoids are all outfitted with arms equal to that of most human armies. Orcish officers and even some of the giants even carry masterwork or magical arms, many of which were forged in the perpetual fires of Yazh'mon.

The forges of Yazh'mon smoke constantly, casting a sooty pall over the countryside. Hundreds of smiths, supported by thousands of assistants, work day and night to turn out implements of destruction. The land surrounding the city is barren; every last tree and shrub has been taken to fuel the forge fires, and an army of Lehertian slaves bring in the tons of ore needed for smelting.

Key to Yazh'mon's success is the efreeti Imiz-kil, and his legion of salamanders. How the Tarkhan managed to secure their labor is a matter of much debate and consternation. The Scourge's deadliest weapons were all forged in the pits of Yazh'mon, and the finest among them bear the mark of the efreeti's work: a wavy, black watermark and a serrated edge that sings when tasting living flesh.

Soulgrave, Free City of

Boss Bomar

Population: 8,809 (humans 61%, half-orcs 12%, half-elves 8%, dwarves 6%, halflings 6%, elves 2%, others 5%)

Resources: None

Capital: Soulgrave

The true Soulgrave (see *Soulgrave, the* below) is a burial site too sacred to be claimed by any one nation. The Criestine Empire has always protected this independent status, partly out of a desire to honor the dead buried at Soulgrave, and partly out of *fear* of those same dead. By declaring the Soulgrave, and all lands within two leagues, to be neutral territory, Crieste opened the way for the Free City of Soulgrave.

Originally a waystation for priests and burial processions en route to the Soulgrave, the Free City has grown into a sprawling, lawless town. A territory unto itself, the Free City has become a haven for criminals fleeing Crieste and surrounding nations. While still a waystation with porter services, hostelries, and outfitters, the Free City is also a town of gambling dens, brothels, and black markets.

The streets of Soulgrave reflect the city's lawless citizenry. Most buildings are temporary and are built with no regard for city planning, creating a maze of alleys and dead-end streets. Well-to-do visitors are advised to bring bodyguards for their protection, and to avoid the local thugs offering the same services. There is an informal city watch, but the men of the watch are accustomed to enforcing rules as they see fit, or even creating them on the spot. A well-placed bribe can accomplish much, but if rogues scent a fat purse, it may take a well-placed dagger to ward off danger. The fabled Black Dougal is said to have been born in the Free City, and some guild thieves even accuse the rogue of running the Free City, but Dougal hasn't been seen in some time and is presumed dead.

Currently, justice (such as it is) is meted out by Boss Bomar, a barrel-chested half-orc known for his crude sense of humor and unpredicatable temper. While Bomar doesn't run this city so much as balance atop it, he is the one to go to when looking for something, or *someone*, in the Free City. As is often said in such places, visitors should always keep one hand on their purse, and one on their blade.

Soulgrave, the

Ranosh, Prince of Undeath

Population: —

Resources: —

Capital: —

Ages ago, the Soulgrave was nothing more than a high mountain valley where druids of yore brought their fallen heroes. The greatest of the dead were given sky burials: The bodies were cut up by initiates, and offered to the enormous black vultures that make their home in the nearby peaks. When the powers of the druids waned, the site was adopted by regents who built tombs and catacombs for their royal families. Slowly, the valley was transformed into a vast necropolis, with each new ruling family adding to the city of the dead. A mighty wall and great iron gate were erected. Everflaming braziers were placed atop empty towers, and the mountain trails were widened into uniform roads.

After dusk, the graves crack their musty shells and the dead walk the city. Whether or not the risen corpses are tormented undead or something else altogether is a question best left to theologians, for the creatures surely have a hunger for the living. Legends tell of Ranosh, a vampire who speaks for the undead citizens of Soulgrave. Accounts paint Ranosh as neither evil nor good, but simply devoted to Soulgrave as hallowed ground, and he is perfectly willing to kill the living to inspire respect for the city of the dead.

Southern Province, the

Trayr Sains, Overlord of the South, Master of Heaven and Earth, Dragon of the Lirean Sea, etc., etc.

Population: 2,462,900 (humans 73%, half-orcs 9%, half-elves 7%, dwarves 6%, other 5%)

Resources: Slaves, spices, black market trade, copper, timber

Capital: Punjar

One hundred and thirty years ago, the Province was simply the largest of the empire's many fiefs. In a revolution led by a cunning and aggressive lord-baron, the Province seceded from the empire, setting the example for all the kingdoms,

provinces, and colonies that rushed to independence in the years to come.

Today the Southern Province stands as a mirror to the Criestine Empire. While Crieste is mired in the bureaucratic quagmire of a millennium-old aristocracy, the Province is home to the young and ambitious guild houses; while Crieste seeks to govern every aspect of the economy, the Province lets the houses do the work and taxes their profits; while Crieste is a pondering behemoth of military might, the Province is a nimble player of economic and political intrigues.

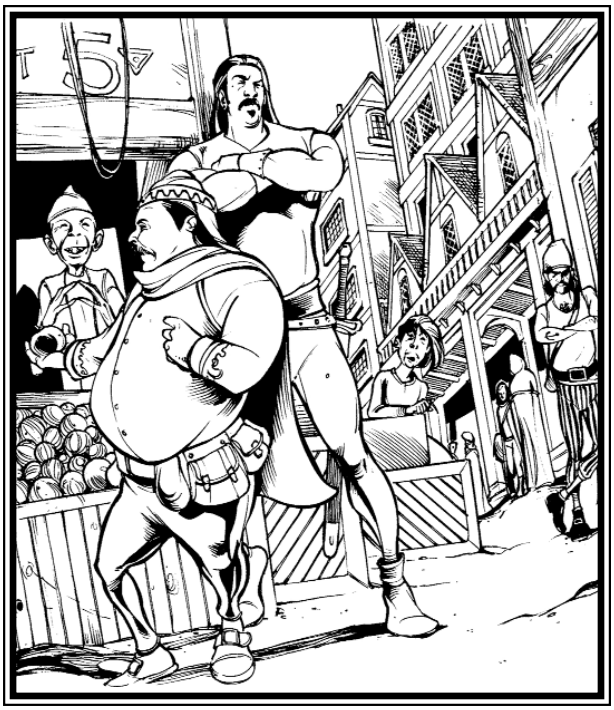
Wealth is everything in the Southern Province. Those that have it—and more importantly, can *keep* it—are envied and respected by all.

The present ruler is Trayr Sains, a cunning man who had the good fortune of being a bastard son of imperial blood. The child of a discarded harem concubine, Sains fought his way out of the vicious slums of Punjar, working his way from petty thief to slayer to guild master. Boss Sains was coronated Overking after the notorious Night of the Long Knives, when fully two-thirds of the Southern Province's nobility were assassinated and replaced with royal-blooded representatives of the guild houses. When the sun rose on the blood-soaked capital, the surviving nobles who were willing to openly declare the virtues of law and good were few and far between. Sains' claim to the Dragonskull Throne is laughable at best, but it provides the veil of legitimacy necessary for the Province's political skullduggery.

The Southern Province challenges the Criestine Empire's dominance of the sea lanes by trading in slaves, dark idols, and every other sort of contraband. Very little is deemed illegal, and nearly every crime can be ameliorated with a bag of gangling coins. With no navy to speak of, the Province issues letters of marque authorizing privateers to fly Province colors and prey on Imperial ships. This informal sea force is little better than a band of pirates, but there is little the Imperial Navy can do to halt the practice, barring a full-scale invasion of every Province port.

Azur: (Small city, pop. 6,100) The Southern Province's answer to dweomer-rich Kassantia, Azur is known as the City of the Archmage. Dismissed with amusement by many, the city streets swarm with scheming mages eager to assume the title of Magister of Azur. What the city's rulers lack in arcane power, they make up in ambition and ruthlessness.

Azur is divided into three wards situated about the grim castle named the Host of Five Towers. The city openly openly welcomes temples and shrines devoted to fell powers; priests make blood sacrifices over smoking pits during the day, and demons stalk the streets at night.



With no law enforcement to speak of, each mage employs a personal retinue of bodyguards and enforcers. Commoners are left to fend for themselves, dependent upon the whims of the mages for safety. For these reasons, mercenary humanoids are a common sight in Azur, ranging from half-orc assassins to ogre-magi bodyguards and hill giant thugs.

Jolzin: (Large town, 4,814) Jolzin is the Province's primary source of timber, employing a number of expendable goblins to operate the city's lumber mills. Skilled shipwrights are in high demand, as are adventurers willing to defend the forest paths from rebellious fae and elves.

The town is ruled by a ruthless hobgoblin cleric-warrior going by the title of Vendig the Destroyer.

Kastulo: (Small city, pop. 8,092) The city of Kastulo thrives on black market trade with the pirates of the Barrier Isles. An open air bazaar is host to any number of disreputable merchants doubling as fences, and known pirate ships regularly drop anchor in the city's deep-water harbor.

The city's lords maintain order with the Worm Guard, a police force composed entirely of undead and their evil masters. Members of the Worms are outfitted in red-stained breastplates and are typically armed with polearms and heavy crossbows. Rumors allege that the master of the Worm Guard is a powerful lich.

Castle Mortis: (Citadel, pop. 6,700) Seen from the sea, the spires of Castle Mortis rise from the rocky cliffs like dark spears. The citadel is home to a fleet of black-sailed

ships, privateers that sack and pillage for the Overlord. Its forces are led by Lady Soraline, a cruel, conniving blackguard trained in the arts of dark wizardry. Lady Soraline secretly covets the title of Overlord. She carefully monitors politics of Punjar, looking for her chance to seize power.

Punjar: (Metropolis, pop. 75,100) Largest of all the cities in the Northlands, Punjar is also among the most dangerous. Her chaotic, sandy streets, torturous alleyways, and dense buildings are encircled by more than a dozen walls, each built to encompass the city in an earlier time. Now the walls serve to divide the city into wards, each less affluent, more densely populated, and more desperate than the last. In the center of the city, atop a high ridge, stands the palace of the Overlord, the dark spider at the center of a vast web.

Of the many disreputable guilds laired in Punjar, the most notorious and far-reaching is the brotherhood of assassins known as the Slayers. Feared throughout the known world, rumors attribute supernatural abilities to the Slayers, including the ability to walk through walls and cloud the minds of their targets. Some rumors even go so far as to suggest that the Slayers were directly responsible for the Night of the Long Knives. Even if none of the rumors are true, it may be said with certainty that the Slayers maintain spy rings that operate throughout the world.

Whole volumes have been written on the labyrinthine intrigues of Punjar, and it serves no purpose to recount those plots here. Suffice it to note that every citizen conspires to get ahead in Punjar, and each one plans to do it standing on the backs of his neighbors.

Taktian: (Small city, pop. 10,832) A southern gateway to the Lost Lands, the city of Taktian is a city of dark bazaars, crowded marketplaces, and smokey dives. Host to diverse mix of sharp-eyed traders, strange warriors from the exotic South, and Northland traders looking to make their fortune, the city is the last stop for supplies before crossing into the Great Desert.

Taktian is ruled by a trio of secretive mage-lords. All three wear featureless black robes and porcelain masks, concealing their identities. At least one of the three is believed to be a woman, and all are accomplished evokers.

Sylvan Downs

Council of Five (Ilyarin es Nost, Speaker for the Council)

Population: 257,205 (half-elves 34%, elves 28%, humans 20%, halflings 8%, gnomes 6%, other 4%)

Resources: Timber, weapons, spices

Capital: Oakenmeet

A loose collection of small dales, hamlets, and villages, the Sylvan Downs is a humble nation of farmers, woodsmen, and retiring elves. With no single king, cities, or armies to speak of, the people of the Downs are often dismissed as simple, rural bumpkins. And indeed, their virtues are simple ones: freedom, happiness, and a life lived in harmony with the seasons.

This humility should not be mistaken for meekness. Living in the shadow of the Mountain King, the elves and men of the Downs are regularly forced to take up arms in the defense of their homes. Many aging heroes make their home in the quiet Downs and eagerly lend their swords and spells to the fight. Roused, the folk of the Downs make a relentless foe, and friends in need could not ask for a better ally.

When a major decision is needed, the five largest communities sends their leaders to Oakenmeet, an ancient circle of standing stones dating back to the druidic priest-kings. There, beneath the open sky and before all who attend, the Council of Five rule on the matters of state, always working toward the good of the people. The Council makes its decisions by consensus; if any one council member stands in opposition, the measure fails. This can be a slow and aggravating process for foreign ambassadors accustomed to dealing with kings and regents, but despite its flaws, the process has one crucial virtue: there are no dissenters in the Downs. When an issue is decided, the people of the Sylvan Downs move as one.

Aside from raw materials, the greatest resource of the Sylvan Downs is its people. Master swordsmen live as humble farmers, aging wizards pass their last days in the sun-dappled glades, and elven lord-rangers stalk the dark woods. Apprentices seeking masters need look no further—if they can convince the masters of their worth.

Ternyziem, Free City of

Turoch Mas, Overlord of Ternyziem, Master of the Endless Wastes

Population: 438,250 (humans 57%, half-elves 10%, half-orcs 8%, elves 7%, dwarves 7%, halflings 5%, gnomes 4%, other 2%)

Resources: Timber, copper, furs

Capital: Ternyziem

Known as the City at the End of the World, the Free City of Ternyziem stands sentry over the Frost Barrens, amid snowbound forests and white-capped fjords. Sharp-eyed archers stand atop the city's high towers, alongside mighty siege weapons. The skulls of remorhazes, white dragons, frost worms, and worse ring the battered towers, and each season brings new trophies.

The men and women of Ternyziem revel in the dangers associated with the City at the End of the World, and few—if any—of the Free City's populace travel without at least a spear or fighting dagger at their side. Many are drawn to the lands surrounding Ternyziem for their rich resources. A brave heart and quick blade go far in the icy north, and many adventurers have returned laden with gems, exotic furs, and ancient magics. Of course, many more never return, their corpses frozen to the white tundra, or dragged into the lair of one of the many fierce arctic beasts. Despite the many dangers, heroes and adventurers continue to stream north, eager to take their place among Ternyziem's heroes of legend.

Less recognized by scholars and bards is that many of Ternyziem's citizens actually *hale* from the north. The Free City has a fluid population of savage barbarians who come to trade furs and knowledge in exchange for weapons and armor. When the barbarians stay, they are slowly immersed in the ways of civilization (or at least, what passes for civilization in Ternyziem), and nearly all of the Free City's native-born citizens can lay claim to barbarian blood.

Unique to the Free City is a shadowy order of wizards and sorcerers. Called the Sightless, the group has no formal name; their moniker is earned by the cult's practice of blinding their members. The lowest rank of initiates wear elaborate eyepatches, but the higher ranks actually pluck out their own eyes. Even more curious is their master: a mage with bare, unmarked flesh where both missing eyes should be. Local tales hold that by giving up physical sight in elaborate rituals, the Sightless gain "inner sight," but the order is so secretive—and the ritual so bizarre—that the truth of these claims has not been independently established.

Ternyziem is defended by the Reavers, a ragtag company of motley soldiers and rogues. Despite their lack of formal organization, and any sort of uniform whatsoever, the Reavers take great pride in the defense of Ternyziem and the nearby realms. They have devoted themselves to the service of the common citizen. It is not uncommon to see a burly, hide-armored barbarian, great sword slung over his shoulder, stopping to check in on a shepherd's flock, or helping to repair a wall.

Ternyziem's present ruler is Turoch Mas, an enormous bear of a man. Mas spent his youth ranging across the wild north, warring with and against the barbarian tribes, hunting the giant frost worms, and exploring the frozen ruins that dot the wastes. Now Mas spends his days ruling Ternyziem—the city is his one true love. Mas' belly is a little larger for the years, but he still carries a mighty bastard sword over his shoulder side, and he is still the first to the wall when terrors threaten the Free City.

Kyarovsk: (Village, pop. 480) Kyarovsk is typical of the half-dozen or so outlying towns that pay allegiance to the Free City. It is a hard life, living in the frozen North, and the village's trappers and traders are a rowdy, rough-cut crew. Law and courtesy carries little weight here, and every man (and the rare woman) is expected to be able to take care of himself.

Uthur, Kingdom of

His Most Royal Majesty, King Rolward, First Knight of Uthur

Population: 338,910 (humans 67%, dwarves 10%, half-elves 9%, half-orcs 5%, elves 4%, other 5%)

Resources: Timber, silver, gems

Capital: Talisade

The Kingdom of Uthur is blessed with abundant natural resources, but this wealth comes at a price. The threat of goblinoids has forced good King Rolward to rely heavily on dwarven mercenaries to augment his own armies. This has led to a tenuous situation, with the king beholden to mercenary captains to keep peace in his own land. Rolward walks a fine line, struggling to placate both the mercenaries and his own armies, but it is only a matter of time before an ambitious general from either side attempts to take the crown by force, plunging the nation into chaos and war.

Ironvale: (Large castle, pop. 3,806) A mining settlement squatting at the base of the Dünerain Mountains, over half the citizens of Ironvale are dwarves. The town is also the headquarters for the Company of the Long Axe, the chief mercenary company responsible for maintaining order in Uthur. The town's current mayor, Feald Thordo, was selected in a hurried election when the last mayor vanished after criticizing the Company. A retiring shopkeeper, Thordo has been careful not to make the same mistake.

The Company of the Long Axe is led by Duruth the Ogrebane, a vengeful dwarven warrior renowned for his fiery temper and ferocious skill in battle. Duruth bears a secret animosity towards the Rolward family, dating back to when King Rolward's grandfather failed to provide assistance to dwarves caught in a collapsed mine. Duruth's older brother was lost in the mining accident, and the young dwarf has bided his time ever since, waiting for his chance to bring the Rolward family to ruin.

Stagdale: (Small town, pop. 1,933) Standing within bowshot of the Amn'crith Forest, Stagdale has always been regarded as a simple trading post and waystation for timber merchants on their way to Crieste. That changed when a troupe of woodcutters returned with a slim metal disk roughly the size of a shield and covered in glowing runes. Curiously, the disk bore no signs of age, as if it had been forged and enchanted the day before.

Four of the disks have been found in the woods now, and the elders of Stagdale have begun acting strangely and often spend their nights in secret council. Members of the Ordo Arcana have been seen about the town, but the mystery of Stagdale remains unsolved.

Talisade: (Large town, pop. 4,154) Talisade sits on the hillside beneath the watchful eye of Castle Oakthorn, home to King Rolward and his family. The people of Talisade are simple, hardworking peasants and craftspeople, loyal to their king and country, and the town prospers as a result of their labors.

Talisade is also home to the League of the Rook, a loose association of heroes working towards the betterment of Uthur and the Northlands. When every avenue has been exhausted, and he has nowhere else to turn, King Rolward knows that he can always turn to the League for help. The official register of Rooks is kept secret, but best estimates put their numbers between seventy-five and one hundred and fifty. Members of the League can be recognized by the onyx raven pins they carry pinned to the inside of their cloaks or to the pommels of their weapons, but bards tell of Rooks forsaking the pins to operate in secret.

Every winter, the town of Talisade hosts Frostfall, a weeklong tournament devoted to tests of strength and martial skill, culminating in a joust attended by the finest knights of the Northlands. The winner of the tournament is awarded a silver lance and shield, and often an invitation to serve in the king's elite guard. The tournament is regarded as a proving ground for young warriors, and warriors who comport themselves well can expect to be courted by royal emissaries offering prestigious appointments in the armies of Crieste, the Theocracy of the Lance, or even distant Koranth.

Theocracy of the Lance

His Holiness, the Bishop of the Shining Lance

Population: 2,346,500 (humans 62%, half-elves 13%, dwarves 7%, elves 5%, halflings 7%, gnomes 4%, half-orcs 2%)

Resources: Fine trade goods, art

Capital: Arvale City

The Theocracy began as a small monastery devoted to reverent study of the aspects of Aristemis, Justicia, Thormir, and Ghoran. Together, these deities made up what monks called the "Lance" of law and goodness.

In time, the monastery grew in power and esteem within the Crieste imperial court. With each passing year, Emperor Lyonod relied more and more on the monks to negotiate disputes between provinces. In the final years of his life, the emperor became a deeply religious man, awarding the Theocracy with sovereignty over its lands, including the right to maintain a standing army.

The Theocracy flourished during the Interregnum, growing strong in the absence of imperial dominance. Armored priests and holy warriors patrolled the nation's borders, while wise theocrats ruled from Arvale City. The peace and stability attracted skilled craftsmen and artisans from neighboring countries, and the confluence of talent and wealth resulted in a flourishing of arts, the one source of light and truth during the dark time between emperors.

While the folk of the Lance are no more pious than any other folk, the ruling caste of the Lance have sworn their lives to the service of good. The country is governed by his Holiness, the Bishop, who rules with the blessing of the Theocrats, holy men and women currently numbering thirty-three. The Theocrats are served by three sects, each representing an aspect of the revered Lance.

The first is the order of the Chosen, a sect of monastic priests who have forsaken lives of peace and contempla-

tion for those of conflict and loss. The Chosen serve as ambassadors throughout the Northlands, acting as objective negotiators and unbiased judges. Surprisingly to some scholars, certain Chosen also serve the countries of the North as unprejudiced executioners. This particular sect wears black helmets that conceal their features, and are practiced in the use of the greatsword or greataxe.

These missions of service have earned the Chosen much esteem and much enmity; Chosen are frequently targeted for assassinations, forcing the disciples of peace to be accomplished warriors, equally at ease on the battlefield or in the imperial court. Between assignments, the Chosen return to their order's abbey, in Arvale City.

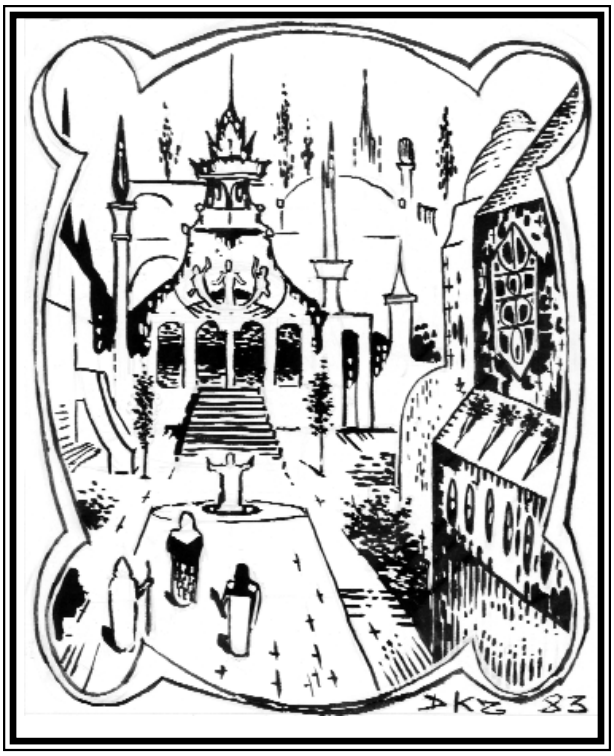
The second order is the Knighthood of the Lance. Holy warriors dedicated to justice and honor, the Knights of the Lance ride far afield, seeking out injustice, defending the helpless, and sacrificing their lives in the service of good. The Knights of the Lance adhere to a strict code of honor and law, but this code often runs counter to the autocratic wishes of wicked tyrants; bureaucrats hoping to use unjust laws to bend knights to their will are often unpleasantly surprised. The Knights of the Lance make their headquarters in Brighthawk Castle, but ride far afield in service of good.

The final sect is simply known as the Black Watch. Vilified by many and understood by few, the Black Watch is a secretive order of holy warriors who dedicate their lives to ridding the world of evil. Made up of demon hunters, vampire slayers, and others devoted to their obscure shadow war, the Black Watch are often depicted as obsessed madmen willing to adopt any means to achieve their goals. Whether or not this is true, it cannot be disputed that when terrible villains emerge from the shadows to threaten the Northlands, the tormented souls of the Black Watch are the first to rise to the challenge.

Arvale City: (Metropolis, pop. 32,450) The city of Arvale is one of the great wonders of civilization. Every graceful arch, every shining tower, every flawless dome, was conceived, designed, and built to exalt the glory of good. A city of golden palaces and broad promenades, Arvale is rightfully home to the Theocrats and their agents, the Chosen.

Also inhabited by some of the most brilliant craftsmen and artisans ever known, Arvale is the source of the finest items in the North. The master craftsmen congregate in salons and universities, furthering the disciplines of magic and the young field known as science. The Theocrats encourage all such learning, confident in their belief that all of creation points to the truth and power of good.

Blessings-Be: (Small town, pop. 915) The town of Blessings-Be is located near the expansive Ferahn Forest,



nestled along White Tip Lake. The town has a thriving fishing trade, but is best known for its proximity to the Mourning Cave, an important holy site for pilgrims of the lawful god Honorus.

The Mourning Cave bears several holy relics, as well as the entombed body of Arden Brightheart, a paladin of Honorus. Arden fell in battle many years ago against the Dread Watcher, an undead diviner who could see into the future through necromantic rituals. The Dread Watcher was an important seer in Albrecht Skullshank's employ.

The Sword of Conviction, Arden Brightheart's legendary blade, was used to battle the Dread Watcher. With a dying effort, Arden drove his holy blade into the creature, pinning him to the wall of the cave. The magic of the sword bound the Dread Watcher to a state of torpor, preventing the creature from regenerating or fleeing.

Unfortunately, the Sword of Conviction has been removed by a greedy local man, not knowing the sword's role in keeping the Dread Watcher bound. The Dread Watcher awoke, slew the man, and quickly summoned undead to assist him in his duties.

The Dread Watcher stripped the trappings of Arden Brightheart and hid the paladin's remains deep in the bowels of the cave. Today he sits upon a crude throne of pure white marble—but now wearing Arden's tabard and armor.

Wearing the paladin's regalia has tricked the townsfolk into mistaking the Dread Watcher for their patron hero. The holy symbol of Honorus and the Sword of Conviction are suspiciously absent, however.

Brighthawk Castle: (Large castle, pop. 4,070) Watching from atop the shining towers of Brighthawk Castle, the Knights of the Lance are pictures of selfless nobility and true chivalry. Led by General Arenal, the Knights of the Lance travel the length and breadth of the Northlands, taking the battle to the enemy. Arenal's current focus is the Scourge, and she works tirelessly to raise men and gold for the retaking of Leherti. Always on the lookout for valiant and courageous heroes, Lady Arenal offers secret bounties for leaders of the Scourge. This practice runs counter to the beliefs of the Theocrats, and if they discover the general's work, her passion could be her undoing.

Fair Haven: (Village, pop. 550) A prosperous port on the Lirean Sea, Fair Haven enjoys a small cove sheltered from all but the fiercest of the sea's storms. The village maintains a trio of docks, used by local fishermen and the occasional merchant galley.

Fairweather: (Village, pop. 425) A small, druidic commune, Fairweather provides nearby townships and villages with fresh produce and milk, and it boasts the most successful farms in the region. The small community is also respected for the high quality of its manufactured wooden goods. Staves, bows, and arrows, as well as some farming tools, are culled from specially cultivated trees. The woodworkers of the community produce only a limited amount of these masterwork items in a given year, readily commanding high prices from enterprising merchants.

The commune's leader, Thistle, is a sentient plant being of a race known as the thornblood, and is a powerful druid in his own right. Thistle has come to the aid of heroes on numerous occasions, providing them with shelter, food, and healing in his humble home.

Orden: (Small town, pop. 1,930) The last Lancean outpost on the caravan route to the East, Orden maintains close ties with its trading partner, the town of Lastever. Together the two maintain the mountain fortress of Whitefang, warding off the predations of bandits and worse.

Whitefang: (Keep, pop. 450) Standing atop the pass between the towns of Lastever and Orden, Whitefang Castle is a small but mighty stronghold built with the cooperation of both communities. Caravans crossing through the Dragonspire Mountains must travel through this pass, and pay a small toll for the protection of Whitefang.

In the three years Whitefang has stood, the depredations of the nearby humanoids have been severely checked, and merchants may now travel safely through Aurora Pass. A relief of fresh soldiers arrives every month like clockwork, and supplies are purchased from caravans passing through as needed.

The keep's severe castellan, Lord Malvolth, hires adventurers as scouts and outriders to root out the tribes of goblins and orcs that lair in the nearby caves. The outriders suffer a high rate of attrition, but in Lord Malvolth's eyes, a dead adventurer doesn't draw a wage, and there are always foolhardy young whelps eager to make a name for themselves in the Dragonspire Mountains.

Woodroe: (Thorp, pop. 40) Woodroe is a tiny village, with only seven buildings lining the sides of a single, woefully bumpy dirt track. Fields of wheat and apple orchards surround Woodroe, and the town's lone inn doubles as a general store.

Thire, Free Province of

Lady Aedwyn Cyrean, Warden of the Folk

Population: 308,920 (humans 44%, elves 18%, dwarves 12%, halflings 10%, half-elves 8%, gnomes 5%, other 3%)

Resources: Furs, timber

Capital: Hath Hall

Since its bid for freedom one hundred years ago, Thire has walked a fine line between supporting Crieste in the constant struggle against the forces of evil, and maintaining its separation from the old empire. Fortunately for Thire, its people are a hardy, stubborn folk, with little use for any ruler whose reach extends further than a town council and the arc of a longbow.

The ruler of Thire is a charismatic half-elf named Aedwyn Cyrean, a warden respected for her woodsense and quiet wisdom. Young by half-elven standards, the maid rules from Hath Hall, a manor overlooking the fertile lowlands that stretch all the way to the Lirean Sea. Gossipmongers hint at a scandalous romance between Cyrean and Captain Sentri, Master of the Sable March; if the rumors are true, it could lead to a clash that would threaten the thrones of both nations.

Argalis: (Large town, pop. 4,705) Argalis is typical of Thire's coastal towns, with a small but well-developed port, stout walls for defense, and a devoted corp of marines and city watchmen. The town is governed by Lord McDurmott, a stalwart defender of the town with an abiding hatred for pirates and their kin. The people of Argalis pay regular tribute to a band of giants, but in recent months these relations have deteriorated, and the lord has begun casting about for hardy adventurers willing to take on the giant horde.

Hath Hall: (Small town, 1,806) Small and unassuming, Hath Hall rests at the confluence of two rivers which meet to form a raging waterfall that crashes and rolls down several hundred feet to a lake below. Hath Hall sits like a watchful dragon atop the falls, surrounded by clouds of rolling mist and the thundering rivers. Crafted almost entirely from soaring wooden beams, polished river stones, and living trees, the manor is far more majestic and awe-inspiring than its size would indicate.

As the capital of Thire, Hath Hall is home to the land's Warden Queen and her guard of silver-mailed warriors. Hath Hall is also host to a number of accomplished elven and half-elven wizards, and even the occasional reclusive druid can be found within its quiet corridors.

Without a true standing army to defend her people, the Lady of the Falls is constantly on the lookout for promising young adventurers who have proven themselves to be faithful and courageous in the face of danger.

Garland's Fork: (Thorp, pop. 51) A small trading settlement in the heart of Stagwood forest, Garland's Fork serves as a trading post for the woodsmen and huntsmen of the forest, and as a welcome place of rest for weary travelers. The town is composed of a handful of small farmhouses, a blacksmith's shop, and a small inn.

Longdale: (Large town, pop. 3,207) A walled town surrounded by a vale of lush farmland, Longdale is situated at the foot of the Trolltooth Peaks and weathers regular attacks from monsters, humanoids, and worse. There are several mining communities within a day's ride of the town, and a regular stream of silver, gold, and gems pours into Longdale before being carried by caravans south to Hath Hall and Rockport. Longdale enjoys an unusually high population of gnomes, dwarves, and halflings, and most inns and merchants make certain to accommodate the wee folk.

Rockport: (Large town, pop. 3,250) Rockport overlooks the Lirean Sea and welcomes traders and merchants from across the Known Realms. Built around a stout citadel known as the Raven's Roost, the town is divided into four wards separated by imposing stone walls. Each ward caters to a slightly higher (and richer) class of citizen, and much can be learned about a citizen of Rockport simply by finding out where he lives.

Rockport is ruled by a council of the town's leading guilds, who elect a single lord mayor every four years. The present lord mayor is Khalrik Canagur, a scarred man who is reputed to have spent the early years of his life as a cutpurse and thief. Regardless of the truth of the rumors, Canagur has proven to be a shrewd and cunning ruler, capable of juggling the diverse—and oft times opposed—interests of Rockport.

Warlands, Baronies of the

Various barons

Population: 310,780 (humans 67%, half-elves 9%, half-orcs 7%, dwarves 5%, elves 3%, gnomes 2%, halflings 2%, other 5%)

Resources: Sporadic at best

Capital: Varies by ruler

One hundred years ago, the rolling plains and rich steppes of the Warlands were a part of the Barony of Valsund, mightiest of the northern kingdoms. But with the unexpected death of King Jarregüt the Great, the kingdom passed on to his five children.

Unable to decide upon a single ruler, the siblings fell into bickering that quickly escalated to outright war. Divided by suspicion and greed, no one sibling was strong enough to best all four others, and Valsund decended into ferocious infighting known as the War of Barons. Today, the glory of Valsund is a faded memory, replaced by the five fragmented baronies and their endless conflict.

Every spring brings a new season of struggle. The barons have learned to fight for small, strategic gains, and most battles are waged for control of cities and key bridges and fortresses. The same knights face off year after year, developing bitter rivalries that spill into subsequent generations. A warrior code has evolved over the decades of conflict, dictating the rules of war, surrender, and ransom. To foreign dignitaries, the Code seems to make little or no sense, but any child of the Warlands know its rules by heart. Of course, these customs apply only to those of noble birth; for the common spearman, the wars are as deadly and costly as any other.

A century of war has also taken a great toll on the baronies' resources. With the constant threat of death, production hovers just above subsistence levels, and the barons are forced to tax their people heavily to maintain their war chests. Recently, the barons have taken to commissioning adventurers to explore old ruins in the hopes of discovering lost treasure hordes. While this has yielded some success, the returns are far from reliable, and the cost in lives is high.

The barons wage their war games from ancestral citadels and city-states, ruling only as far as the reach of their armies. Territories can change hands overnight, and in the cloud of war, little is certain until the dust settles and the smoke fades. The following is a brief list of the baronies competing for dominance of the Warlands:

Araduin: (Metropolis, pop. 49,067) Araduin is a sprawl-

ing city-state that has more than doubled in size since the beginning of the war. Once renowned for its high, white granite walls, well-made homes, and towering citadel, the picturesque city is now surrounded by a tent city of several thousand refugees. While the original citizens of Araduin cling to their old ways, those outside the white walls scratch out their days in forced squalor. The stark differences have fed a growing unease on both sides of the walls, which, in turn, has fed the rise of fixers, smugglers, and neighborhood bosses. Once a city without crime, Araduin is facing the rise of a powerful criminal underclass.

Meanwhile, the War of Barons drags on. Araduin's heavy cavalry are knights of legend, one thousand strong. When the knights assemble on the high plains, plate armor and lances shining in the dawn light, even the most jaded warrior is given pause. Each knight is attended by at least one squire, and when the army is on the march, its baggage train stretches for dozens of miles. While truly a mighty force on the field of battle, the size of the knights' force has proven to be a detriment against smaller, agile armies.

The master of Arduin and her armies is the great chevalier-paladin, Cedric Erewulf the Wyrmbane. A holy warrior in the prime of his life, none can fault the lord-baron for his personal honor or courage. Sadly, in his obsession to unify the Warlands, Erewulf has begun to compromise his previously unquestionable morals. Soon Erewulf will be forced to choose between his priniciples and his duty to the Warlands—a decision that threatens to shake the moorings of the paladin's religious life.

Celinost: (Metropolis, pop. 10,720) Celinost is a barony without a baron. The last ruler, Baroness Haelynn, the Silver Lady, vanished two years ago and is presumed dead. In her absense, the metropolis has dwindled to a third of its original size. With no ruler to take the Lady's place, the barony has been left defenseless against its enemies. Many of the nation's generals have already left to join the armies of Arduin or Morcaut, and the warriors that remain loyal are few.

Most of the people of Celinost have fled for other lands, reducing the communitities surrounding the city of Celinost to mere ghost towns, prime for looting. Each of the four remaining baronies look to annex Celinost before a new baron can rise.

Kithmon: (Large city, pop. 11,058) With none of the might of her neighbors, Kithmon has been forced to rely on diplomatic intrigue and foreign heroes to augment her army of light cavalry, archers, and spearmen. On the whole, the people of Kithmon have fared better than most in the Warlands, and the armies of Kithmon are no less proud for the caution of their generals.

Primarily light lancers and archers, the Riders of Kithmon are easily recognized by their distinctive warhelms, decorated with trophies taken from fallen foes. The manes of dire lions are common, while some elite Riders sport the horns of dragons.

The Baron of Kithmon is an unlikely ruler, Iminric of the Lute, a slender, catlike man. Known as the King of Bards, Iminric prefers to spend his time entertaining emissaries and visiting foreign courts, leaving the day-to-day matters of the barony to his trusted seneschal. Regarded by most as a worthless courtier with a weakness for beautiful women, the true Iminric is a cunning leader, masquerading as a fop. The King of Bards maintains an elaborate network of spies throughout the Northlands, and often the lady on his arm is one of his agents. Of course, just as often the lady on his arm is an enemy agent, but Imininic delights in the subtle games of cat and mouse. With a lute in his arms, and a rapier slung low on his belt, Iminric can be found in any royal court, quietly recruiting heroes to his cause.

Morcaut: (Metropolis, pop. 31,813) Second largest of the baronies, Morcaut surely would have conquered her sister baronies years ago were it not for the intrigues of her chief foe: Reyngemar. A barony of sullen, broken-spirited serfs and cunning nobles, Morcaut is infamous for her peoples' cruelty and ruthless spite. Less well known is the subtle diplomacy of her rulers. Among bardic circles, it is said that every emissary to Morcaut is met with a smile and hearty greeting . . . and leaves with a knife in her back.

Morcaut is ruled by Baron Mrir, also known as the

Demon Son of Morcaut, a rogue entirely unfettered by morals or qualms of conscience. While rumors surface annually of demon blood running in the Mrir line, most sages agree that the current baron is neither demon nor cambion, but simply a heartless young noble with a gift for brutality. Unfortunately for the people of Morcaut, their ruler also possesses a brilliant intellect nearly unmatched in the Northlands. Baron Mrir is quick to exploit his gifts, constantly weaving new and ever more devious plots to rule the Warlands.

Those meeting Baron Mrir for the first time are often taken aback. The baron is a young man of no more than twenty winters, with unmarred, pale skin and raven black hair. Mrir has a slender build, and while he is seldom seen on the field of battle, the young lord trains incessantly with the longsword and fencing dagger, and is a master of the art of two-weapon fighting. Rumor holds that the baron keeps captured criminals (and heroes) in the dungeons beneath Morcaut, and uses the unfortunate souls as dueling partners. If true, and if his unmarked skin is any evidence, the Baron of Morcaut has never lost a duel.

Reyngemar: (Large city, pop. 23,508) The nation of Reyngemar is like much of the Warlands: her people weary from the endless seasons of conflict, her roads churned into muddy tracks by passing cavalry, her towns stained by the soot of war. The people of Reyngemar are more resilient than most, believing that the wars will soon end, with Reyngemar ruling the Warlands. Much of this has to do with their unquestioning loyalty to their queen, an enigmatic sorceress known only as the Ashen Witch.

While all five of the Warlands are locked in a constant struggle for territory and title, the nations of Reyngemar and Morcaut reserve a special hatred for each other. If the two ever succeeded in resolving their differences and formed an alliance, the other baronies—and indeed much of the Northlands—would tremble at their combined might.

Thankfully, so long as the Ashen Witch rules Reyngemar, an alliance with Morcaut is doubtful at best. A legend in the north, the Ashen Witch is a beautiful, white-haired sorceress of indeterminable age, who dresses in white robes and carries a bone staff adorned with mystic sigils and strange runes. Apart from her enmity for Baron Mrir, little is known of the Witch's motives. Emissaries of foreign nations have vanished into her crystal palace only to emerge as old men, aging dozens of years in a single night; meanwhile, nearly every nation in the north has been rescued by her mighty magics at one time or another. Examples of her kindness and cruelty are equally common, and the Ashen Witch remains among the enduring mysteries of the North.

The armies of the Ashen Witch are an assortment of medium cavalry and spearmen, supported by archers identified by their white-fletched arrows. Unique to Reyngemar is a martial order composed entirely of women. Known collectively as the Swordsaints, the warriors of this order can be recognized by their white, fur-lined cloaks, and peculiar, otherworldly eyes that glow with a soft blue radiance.

Wastes of Zamon

Competing Magocrats

Population: ???

Resources: ???

Capital: None

The fetid swamps and icy forests that make up the Wastes of Zamon stand in dark opposition to shining Koranth. A loose coalition of evil warlocks and wizards, the wizards of Zamon broke away from the Barony of Koranth a mere seventy years ago, seizing control of the high tundra and wooded wastes north of the Mirdar-Luminar Steppes.

Sequestered far from civilized lands, each wizard rules as absolute tyrant of his own realm. The wastes bear the name of the most powerful archmage to make his demesne in the forsaken wilderness. Zamon, or the soul-stricken shell of the mortal once known by the accursed name, maintains a domain in the highlands just south of the Myrwych Forest, where the hills are populated by the twisted creations of the ancient mage and his demented apprentices.

The wizards maintain no standing armies apart from their own personal henchmen, but these and the threat of a mage-tyrant's personal reprisal is enough to dissuade most would-be trespassers. It is said that every tree, rock, and stream has been twisted by the surrounding magics, and that no secret is safe from the mages' prying grasp.

Years of dark experiments have filled the Myrwych woods with tormented aberrations. Known collectively as the Horrors of Zamon, the twisted beasts shun the light, only emerging at night to stalk the rocky hillsides. Amalgamations of a dozen monsters, the Horrors unleash the pain of their existence on the living, striking out with mindless abandon. To the great consternation of sages, the Horrors seem to be multiplying; each year their number, size, and ferocity increase. Whether this is due to breeding between the aberrations, or some unholy aspect of the woods themselves, remains to be discovered. Exploration of the Northwoods has revealed a series of

dark obelisks that draw the aberrations like moths to flame. The proliferation of Horrors makes real exploration nearly impossible; some of the Empire's finest heroes have died not seven steps within the forest bower.

Toth-Minul: (Small city, pop. 8,500) In such a forbidding realm, towns and cities are few and far between. Toth-Minul, the Wastes' largest city, is occupied only seasonally. Every summer solstice, traders make the long trek to Zamon for the city's Blacksun festival, bringing caravans of slaves, weird artifacts, rare spell components, and scraps of long forgotten lore. For three weeks, the merchants fill the outskirts of the city with their bazaar of the strange and wicked. Agents of the wizards scour the markets for their arcane needs, haggling with the dirty-handed merchants over the price of truenames. Those that return from Zamon come laden with sacks heavy with coin, but for every fortune made, there are several arrogant merchant who paid with their lives after failing to show the proper deference to their customers.

Wildsgate, Free City of

Kaldal Aborn, Baron of Wildsgate

Population: 2,010 (humans 67%, half-elves 9%, dwarves 8%, half-orcs 5%, elves 5%, gnomes 3%, halflings 3%)

Resources: Grain, lumber, furs, trade

Capital: Wildsgate Keep

Wildsgate began as little more than a crude hill fort built in the shadows of the Foehammer Spires. Protected by ramparts of earth and watch fires, the fort quickly grew to prominence as a bastion of civilization in a savage frontier. Brave men and women answered the call of adventure and the fort grew to include stone walls, docks, and a towering citadel that offered a view of the land for miles in every direction.

This expansion and growth came to a shuddering halt with the theft of the Heirlooms of Wildsgate. Construction was never completed, leaving Wildsgate as it appears today: unfinished and raw. Wildsgate has retained much of its rough and tumble ways; the fortress is not a safe town or a pleasant city, but a citadel surrounded by a savage wilderness. The people of Wildsgate live every day to its fullest, knowning full well that it might be their last.

The present Baron of Wildsgate, Kaldal Aborn, is the last of the original line, a young man struck down by the "curse of Wulfrun." Sickly and pale, Kaldal hovers on death's door. While the baron still rules the city-state in name, all decisions of import are made by his seneschal, the cruel half-elf Sodersund.

Wildsgate and its surrounding environs hold ample opportunity for adventure for those who are skilled (or lucky) enough to venture into the Wilds and return. The Foehammer Spires, once home to a clan of mighty dwarves, are now occupied by ferocious barbarians and goblin raiders. Local legend holds that the lost mines of the Foehammers still conceal treasure hordes and weapon caches of immesurable value. Wildsgate also serves as a trading post for dwarven merchants traveling down from the Holdfast of the Steel Overlord.

Chapter 2
The Southlands

The Southlands are a glittering prize of limitless intrigue, bearing the treasures of long-forgotten civilizations and the myriad dangers hiding them. For those willing to find and face their guardians, they hold magics and works beyond belief. Those that survive the Southland perils bring back stories of monsters unimagined and locales undreamt.

Drawn along the southern border of old Northland maps, the name first given to Xulmec has since expanded to include all the lands north and south of the great peninsula. Cartographers have observed the far latitudes of the Southlands, realizing that its landmasses range as far north as the Kingdom of Luithea and as far south as the Old Khonsurian Empire. Yet the misnomer endures, and the Southlands have become synonymous with the exotic and wondrous lands throughout the continent.

Though it is nearly impossible to trace humans' first contact with the Southlands, ancient Xulmec codices and scrolls from the Lostlands agree that it occurred during a time when humans served fearsome, more powerful races. Perhaps because of these masters, this initial contact abruptly came to an end. When next the humans made contact, it was centuries later, their destinies were their own, and glory and wealth were their goals. Early visitations to the Southlands were violent, as Northland kings sought conquest in the gold-laden hills of Xulmec and the natives defied them. Even today, in a time of relative peace, an undercurrent of contempt endures.

Populous with humans, the dominant race of the Known Realms, the Xulmec city-states are the living heart of the Southlands. Though regarded as savages by the Northland nations, the Xulmec civilizations, at once superannuated and glorious, have spanned thousands of years—their traditions older than the oldest Northland country. Once a primitive people, they were mentored and enslaved by the naga race, and since finding their freedom have carved their own path in history.

Yet the Xulmec peninsula is by no means the only center of civilization. Dominating the jungle coasts of the Laeysian Sea, the drakon nation of Ssorlang is a permanent and deadly fixture. The surrounding wilds and swamps are rife with lizardfolk and other reptilian peoples unfriendly to explorers. North of Xulmec, the land of Dujamar comprises a mass of smaller islands and rocky shoals, its waters concealing vast territories of sahuagin, locathah, and other aquatic-dwelling races hostile to most humanoids. The latest domain founded in the Southlands is the Criestine Colonies, firmly ensconced on the fringes of the Eztenqui Jungle, serving as the chief gateway for merchants and explorers.

Beyond them all is Zimala, the Island of Obsidian, once the home of the great naga empire that quickened the cultures of all the land-dwelling races of the Southlands. Lost cities of old Zimala still lure adventurers with promises of magic as old and powerful as the mythic Naga Council or the dragons that ruled before them, but the sheer distance of Zimala from the Northland world and the thousands of perils that lie between them keeps the Island of Obsidian a place of legend.

To those familiar with the Northlands, the Southlands often seem trapped in the beliefs of the distant past. In the Northlands, the names of the gods are spoken by clerics and shamans, but here they are everyday utterances among commoners and kings. Here divine right of kings is a concept familiar and unquestioned by all. Here sacrifice is as important as drawing breath for continued life. Here sacred quests of goodly proclamation are undertaken and unapologetic genocide is carried out, as decreed by the patron gods of each realm. Madrah, the Lord of the Earth and Sky, rules above all, but his more active scions, the lesser powers who rule as god-kings and elemental lords, are invoked in all occasions, from everyday family meals to bloody campaigns of conquest.

The mystic megaliths and vine-covered ruins found in the wild reflect such ties to the divine. Etched with hieroglyphs instead of runic writing, the equivocal reliefs and sculptures portray a time when gods took personal interest in the world—yet not so different than the present—and a future time when all things will transform or perish altogether.

Climates and Seasons

The varying elevations and latitudes of the Southlands allow for such disparate climates as steamy jungles and snow-capped mountain peaks.

To a Northland captain sailing due west to the island of Tarras, the seasons and landscapes are much akin to his homeland. But for its resident menagerie of murderous beasts, the island would have become a Northland colony long ago. Moving south, the climate grows warmer, and it becomes clear to any visitor to the humid rainforests and grassy steppes that the natives are well adapted to this land, as evidenced by their tanned skin, dark hair, and uncanny endurance. The sun is a fierce and unabated presence in the Southlands, a fact that becomes more ominous when one learns of Xulmec beliefs. Though life-giving, the sun scorches the land, bleaches the stones, and darkens or burns the skin.

Timekeeping and Celestial Bodies

The standard Northland calendar is often observed in the Southlands out of convenience, but it is not the primary system. When Northland captains sail their vessels across the Empyrean, a second moon reveals itself to them in the evening sky, waxing and waning like the moon they know but bearing a swifter course. This is the Spectral Moon, the violet-hued disk upon which the Xulmecs base their calendar. Even Áereth's most learned do not know why this moon can only be seen from the Southlands and their surrounding waters.

In Southland Reckoning, the number of days in the year (365) remains the same. However, there are thirty moons (months) in a year, each affiliated with a creature or elemental force and consisting of twelve numbered days. The five remaining "unhallowed days" at the end of the year—coinciding with the end of the Northlands' winter—mark a moonless time when demonic forces are said to roam the land uncontested. Xulmec priests fast and pray through the reigning darkness, making sacrifices to coax the arrival of the new year. The more cynical drakon of Ssorlang observe mystic rites to declare a truce with the demons and ensure their own protection. The first days of each year are celebratory indeed, for it means that destruction has been staved off yet again. Festivals are commonplace, as bonfires and costumed dances fill city streets and village squares. Xulmec drums, called *huehuet*, express the rhythms of a people whose ancestry spans thousands of years.

When the Spectral Moon is eclipsed by the White Moon (as the Southlanders call it), the latter simply vanishes. On rare occasions when the Spectral Moon eclipses the White Moon, its light is magnified and the land is illuminated by a pale violet glow half as bright as sunlight.

Such events are of great spiritual significance to all Xulmecs, especially the Amoyas, and often serve as the launching of great quests and the purging of evil.

Every nation, city, and village observes its own holidays, and most can trace their origins to the customs of the various Zimalan provinces when the naga, not the human or drakon, reigned supreme. Holy days are generally based on the whims of nature, the gods, or circumstance, and are seldom determined before their occurrence. The people of Kaatlan, who revere Calchoti the Rain Queen, celebrate a holy day when the greatest rainstorms appear, while aggressive followers of Tlachinozal mark a holy day when their pool of captives is sufficient for a mass sacrifice. During these times, most of the people cease their work and make sacrifices large and small to their gods. On such days, children are named, omens are observed, and relics are closely guarded.

The following are notable holidays observed largely among the Xulmec city-states and some even among the drakon of Ssorlang. The people of the Criestine Colonies observe a few Southland traditions, but most adhere to the Northland calendar and holidays.

Day of the Three Guardians: Observed only in Xulmec—and in Teotcoatlan more than any other—the Day of the Three Guardians acknowledges the three legendary guardian nagas (Zacatla, Chetutec, and Saymal) who helped emancipate the human slaves from the Dark Council of Zimala. The holiday marks the true birth of the Xulmec nation, and the leadership of Huamec, the legendary hero and chieftain. The day is solemn from morning through the afternoon, in observance of the sacrifices made by the Xulmecs' ancestors, but the evening is a party of great merriment and feasting.

March of Lightless Despair: Among the Amoyas, the "unhallowed days" marking the end of the year are a dark holiday, five cold nights when the moon goddess Anahuara must leave her post and protect the land from Tzitzimitl, the Demon Queen of Air. Without the moons' light to reveal evil and empower the magic of goodly mortals, creatures of darkness gain an advantage. Demonic minions of Tzitzimitl and her mortal cultists carry out their schemes, while clerics of Anahuara set out to oppose these foul enemies. It is not uncommon for the clerics to recruit adventurers to assist in such dark times.

Festival of the Dead: Undoubtedly the most anticipated holiday in all the Southlands, the Festival of the Dead is a six-day observance that honors all who have passed on into the mysteries of death. Great celebrations and feasts are held and families visit the graves, tombs, or sites of their deceased loved ones. Tributes are made, songs and dances are performed, and the people try to commune with the spirits of those once close to them.

For the Xulmecs, no answer is expected from the recently deceased; the journey through Mictlan, the Underworld, is believed to take at least two years, during which the spirits of the dead cannot make contact with the living. After that, the living await for signs that their loved one's journey to the peaceful realms of the afterlife was successful. Battles are forbidden upon this day, even for the bloodthirsty priests of Coatlimict. It is a day to honor the dead, not the dying. The Amoyas take council with their mummified deceased, believing that they have merely transcended into another state of existence. In contrast, the Darawans hold celebratory bonfires in their fields as they dance and sing to the sky, whence the spirits of the dead are believed to have ascended.

In Ssorlang, the drakon celebrate the Festival of the Dead with the intemperance common to their kind. Although the snake men do seek communion with their dead, they also choose this day for important executions and violent sparring. Criminals are thrown to giant constrictors as the drakon spectators gorge themselves on dire rodents and other delicacies. The coliseum in Xincayot, filled to capacity, dispenses with its usual gladiatorial games and pits slaves and criminals against overwhelming odds. Important duels between drakon nobles are also common, as the sovereigns merely look on with amusement.

Southland Reckoning

Any given day is simply named by the moon and day number. The fifth day of the Earth moon would be Earth Five. The count of Southland Reckoning, observed by Ssorlang and Xulmec, begins at the fall of the Zimalan Empire. The present year is 3675, as opposed to 3200 in the North.

1. Angel
2. Wind
3. Star
4. Serpent
5. Flower
6. Bird
7. Storm
8. Cat
9. Earth
10. East
11. Dragon
12. Water
13. Tree
14. Sun
15. North
16. Insect
17. Fish
18. Magic
19. Fire
20. West
21. River
22. Rodent
23. Reed
24. Turtle
25. Death
26. South
27. Light
28. Salt
29. Mountain
30. Demon

The Barrier Isles

Cozette LeRoux and Lord Raazt

Population: 16,437 (humans 56%, monstrous humanoids 22%, half-orcs 12%, elves 3%, halflings 3%, dwarves 2%, gnomes 2%)

Resources: Trade and contraband

Capital: Bloodport

The chain of islands known as the Barrier Isles are named for their occupants' propensity to harass, plunder, or sink merchant vessels sailing between the Northlands and the Southlands. The Isles are an unrivaled haven for pirates and buccaneers, a cluster of ports so rife with humanoid vermin that lawmen from the Northlands dare not approach with standards raised.

Before the infamous Bloody Jack made a name for himself more than one hundred years ago, the Barrier Isles were merely a temporary anchorage for Northland seamen making the voyages south and west. A collection of docking ports were settled, each governed by an appointed official from its founding country. The greatest of these was Port Isolé, established by the Criestine crown. A puzzling array of ruins half buried within the forested isles became a distraction to explorers, leading to conflicts among them as each competed to delve the ruins first. Over the years, the number of buccaneers who hid their loot in the ruins began to outnumber the isles' reputable inhabitants, a situation which deterred merchants and imperial captains.

Then came Bloody Jack Dascombe, the most reviled and feared pirate of his time, with his fleet of loyal raiders. In a single night of blood-soaked violence, he rid the isles of all those he deemed to be in service to Crieste or its allied nations. Just as swiftly, Jack sailed on again, deigning to hide his own treasures elsewhere. Indeed, it was rumored that Jack had a secret island of his own, a place not found on any map, where he stashed his marvelous treasures. Of course, rumors endure today that Bloody Jack left behind small caches of his treasure within the Barrier Isles and many ambitious pirates have given their lives searching for them.

A cloud of mist perpetually wreaths the Isles, enduring all but the strongest of winds, granting them a sense of myth among Northland sailors and making the Isles difficult to chart. Though they are considered a symbolic barrier between the Northlands and the Southlands, the Isles themselves are seldom seen. A captain who sails anywhere too close is likely to find his ship boarded, gutted, and burned into the sea by Barrier pirates patrolling their waters. For this reason, most captains give this region a very wide berth, extending their voyages by many days simply to eliminate the risk. Thus, the Barrier Isles are a constant thorn in the side of Crieste, Kalía, and other seafaring parties—a vicious thorn they are unable to locate, much less remove.

The horrid accounts told by sailors about the Barrier Isles are never far from truth. Savage bugbear pirates are seen sailing into Bloodport in their gruesome galleys with sails of human skin and their latest captives—usually sea elves and tritons—lashed to the prow with razor-edged chains. A fleet bearing orc buccaneers launches yearly from the Isles on their infamous slave hunts to bring living currency to the markets of Djeser al-Maqqara. Even the intelligent undead have been known to bring their ghostly ships to port, bartering loot for living sustenance. These descriptions and countless more are carried to the mainland, ensuring the Barrier Isles' reputation as a place of dread.

Though no Northland country recognizes their autonomy, the Isles possess their own sanguinary government. There are no official regulations, yet an unspoken armistice is observed within the lawless ports. While rivals frequently stab one another in the back and corpses turn up in the gutters, there is an overriding fear that one of the Isles' pirate lords will take personal notice and intervene. Such a threat keeps the daily skirmishes and brawls from becoming anything more. At the top of this chain of lords are the infamous pirates Cozette LeRoux and Lord Raazt, who owe their offices to their unfettered ruthlessness. They are considered the rulers of the Barrier Isles because they are the primary predators, having climbed through the ranks with cutlass and coin.

Cozette LeRoux, the Red Piratess, is a smuggler and pirate who has never known defeat. Of Criestine blood, some believe that the fiery-haired piratess is a bastard descendant of Bloody Jack himself, a rumor she neither confirms nor denies. Lord Raazt is a retired pirate of fiendish lineage, a monstrous scrag famous for scuttling the ships of his enemies. LeRoux and Raazt maintain an uneasy truce, keeping their clandestine plots against one another to a respectable minimum. All obey and fear these two wicked pirates, although occasionally would-be usurpers attempt to dethrone one of them. Those upstarts who are not slain outright are hung by the waterfront as examples to the rest. The necromancers in LeRoux's employ often animate these unfortunates as ghouls and lock them in metal cages in public view, denied the carrion flesh they so desperately crave.

Despite their differences, both LeRoux and Raazt pay tribute to the Lord of Ash, a mysterious authority who leads an unsettling fleet that sails up from the far, uncharted Southern Seas every two years to collect payment. The flagship is an ominous and exotic catamaran

with a virtual palace built between its colossal hulls. Claiming true ownership of the Isles—as well as other unknown lands far away—the Lord of Ash wields might beyond understanding. His fleet is crewed by mute humanoids that, according to all accounts, "seem wrong somehow." The pirate lords pay this tribute without question as the Northland governors reluctantly did before them, and only LeRoux and Raazt have ever been aboard the flagship. All those who have dared to follow or assail the armada are destroyed with impassionate efficiency.

On occasion, elite lawmen and bounty hunters from the mainland find their way surreptitiously to the Barrier Isles, adopting false identities to avoid detection among the scum they hunt. Most are unmasked, tortured, and flayed alive. Yet a few have succeeded in tracking down their quarry, smuggling them back home to face justice or merely slitting their throats in the night to end their lives of crime. One such vigilante, known only as the Pale Knight, has become something of a bogeyman among the Isles.

The ruins of the Barrier Isles perplex scholars and pirates alike. Half swallowed by the earth, the arrangement of the geometric architecture suggests that each ruin is a single piece of a much larger whole. Linked by bridges and interconnecting undersea corridors, the sunken buildings may have constituted a single massive city—an impressive accomplishment considering the Isles lay near the center of an ocean. A marked lack of writing within the ruins frustrates those who seek to unravel their mystery, but in its depths, the almost seraphic statuary has fostered many theories. Regardless, the shattered stone bridges and multi-level tunnels now serve as pirate troves and monster lairs.

Tiny ports—some little more than a row of shacks and a single dock—honeycomb the coasts of each isle, many without names at all. The largest of these are detailed below.

Bloodport: (Large town, pop. 4,904) Once known as Port Isolé, Bloodport was renamed in honor of Bloody Jack's "red tide" of salvation that freed the Isles from Northland control more than a century ago. It is the sullied gem of the Barrier Isles, the first and largest of its ports. Its populace comprises the paramours and bastard children of pirates—and the men and women too sick or frail to continue their maritime crimes. As the pirate life is not one conducive to old age, the elderly are few in number. The streets and hovels are thick with youths, from small children to blustering adolescents, their numbers divided into rivaling gangs, each boy and girl claiming that his or her notorious parent will soon return from the sea with untold wealth and influence. Most are disappointed; pirates as often feed the sharks of the Empyrean as return home with hard-earned swag.

Carved into the rocky outcroppings of the largest Barrier Isle, Bloodport comprises a semicircle of tiered streets. The hovels are clustered together like swarming vermin frozen by isolation and privation. Lacking skilled architects and loyal laborers, the town's ramshackle buildings and leaking flats frequently collapse. The cobbled, crumbling streets thrive with activity, but the licentious pursuits of its citizens are a mockery of true urban commerce.

This budding generation of seafaring raiders, isolated from the imperious laws of the mainland, faces many hardships. For all its considerable population, disease runs rampant in the streets of Bloodport, with more than half of its young dying in their first year of life. Few healers reside in town—or even advertise their magic—and fewer still serve gods compassionate enough to care for the infirm at all. Those who survive to adulthood are hearty indeed, but most of these end up as crew for the pirate ships that come to port. Yet from such iniquitous beginnings a precious few manage to escape, finding lives more fulfilling than the acquisition of blood money and stolen goods.

Cozette LeRoux, the Red Piratess, lives in the town's topmost tier, ruling from a mansion whose opulence rivals the estates of Crieste's lord-barons. It is said that the annual galas hosted from her manse—and the clandestine activities that take place therein—presage each year's greatest pirate exploits. Many Northland spies have attempted to infiltrate these momentous balls in the hope of acquiring coveted information, but LeRoux's traps and guardians snare them all. The lucky ones are slain outright.

Dead Man's Cove: (Small town, pop. 1,767) A small port sheltered within a wide coastal cave, Dead Man's Cove is the lair of the scrag Lord Raazt, who rules with absolute authority. The followers of LeRoux are not welcome here, but all freelance privateers and freebooters may dock if they pay the appropriate fee. Shielded from direct sunlight, the Cove lays in perpetual shade, making it a favorite of light-sensitive races such as orcs, kobolds, and sometimes even drow. Contraband, illegal in most nations, can be obtained openly here, provided one has sufficient coin or skill with an unseen blade. It is often through Dead Man's Cove that psychotropic drugs produced in Ssorlang are divvyed for Northland distribution.

Lord Raazt himself often deals in secrets, selling maps and information for the same in turn. He is hard to impress and impossible to bribe with treasure or even magic items. His small empire of cutthroats and privateers, many of whom pay lip service to Northland governments, ensures that any who oppose him quickly find a watery grave.

Mysterious treasures, local lore proclaims, are amassed within the extensive network of caves beyond the town proper, concealed both above and below the sea level. Explorers and buccaneers alike are frequently lured into these caves, but few return.

Last Chance: (Small town, pop 1,954) The harbor of Last Chance caters to freelancing buccaneers and all those who would spurn the deadly intrigue of the pirate lords. Many who begin a life in piracy—or give it up—do so in Last Chance, though the town is as unwelcoming to Northland law as any in the Barrier Isles. Treasure hunters who have plundered the ruins of the Southlands often come here to sell their spoils, keeping such activity free from imperial scrutiny. Even legitimate merchants can be found in harbor, selling information about their rivals and unloading contraband.

The closest thing the town has to a government is a guild of racketeers calling itself the Shroud, canny rogues who snub violence, preferring blackmail and extortion to accomplish their goals. Although its operation is based out of Last Chance, the Shroud extends its reach far outside the Barrier Isles, steering clear of the pirate lords and piracy itself. Rogues of the Shroud are well known for their mastery of forgery and counterfeiting, though its members are all but impossible to implicate in such crimes.

Less well known are the excavations funded by the Shroud to yield the treasures of the Barrier ruins. Behind the town, a timeworn façade of draconic design leads into tunnels beneath the isle's forest. Adventurers willing to explore these ruins and claim its treasures for the Shroud are frequently rewarded with favors and furtive services.

The Criestine Colonies

Viceroy Raylen Durand

Population: 502,800 (humans 63%, half-elves 20%, elves 8%, halflings 3%, gnomes 3%, dwarves 2%, half-orcs 1%)

Resources: Bananas, beef, coffee, fruit, ginger, lobster, lumber, peanuts, shrimp, sugar, tobacco

Capital: Voltigeur

Early Northland expeditions across the Empyrean Ocean brought home stories of a land filled with murderous savages, beast-ridden jungles, life-stealing spirits—and a wealth of resources that would fill the treasure vaults of the first kingdom that could claim them! With the large peninsula of Xulmec already occupied—its natives as often hostile as conciliatory—and the imposing continent of Zimala too far and dangerous to reach, the Northlanders were hard-pressed to find lands safe for colonization.

It was an explorer named Darel Voltigeur who found the route north of the Tarras Isle and south again through the Sea of Desperation. There he came ashore the Isle of Tlahuaco, as it was known among the savage Xulmecs, and began to colonize the fringes of the jungle in the name of the crown. Little did Darel realize that the jungle already lay in the grip of the drakon warlord known as Xiuhcoatl the Emerald Cobra. The bloodshed that followed quickly dispelled the Northlander dream of easy settlement. Unwilling to relinquish their claim on this promising new land, the Criestine forces fought back against the vindictive snake men.

The Xulmecs soon came to their aid, finding in the Criestines allies against a common enemy. Dire prophecies had predicted the rise of the Emerald Cobra, giving the Xulmecs a reason to end their enmity with the Northlanders. New prophecies appeared, citing that friendship with the foreigners may be the salvation of the world.

With their allies beside them, the Criestines waged war against the Emerald Cobra for several decades, with elves from the Northland forest of Blackbriar joining the imperial reinforcements in exchange for some sovereign presence within the colonies. The forces of Xiuhcoatl were at last defeated, the spirit of the Emerald Cobra himself magically bound in a staff by a Teotcoatlan wizard. When the drakon retreated from the Eztenqui Jungle, the Criestines settled their colony unmolested and have remained there since, contending only against the creatures of the jungle and the occasional attack from the Xulmec city-state of Chuzec.

Existing as a colony for centuries, the people have become largely independent from the Empire of Crieste and most consider their home a separate nation altogether. Nevertheless, the merchant-mayors of each town answer to the crown—usually in the person of Raylen Durand, a pretentious but artful politician appointed by Lady Mortianna herself as colonial viceroy. The Beryl Conclave, a small counsel of aristocratic wizards and sorcerers, are assigned as protectors of the colony and its people.

The boundaries of the Criestine Colonies are uncertain. The Isle of Tlahuaco and the southern coast of the Sea of Desperation lie within its province, but if one presses further into the jungles, Criestine influence and protection quickly fades. Though rife with natural resources, the Eztenqui Jungle is nefarious for the dangers it hides—lizardfolk, venomous snakes, and jungle cats are only the least of these.

The Colonies maintain strong trade relations with the Xulmec city-states of Kaatlan, Teotcoatlan, and Amoya. The centuries that have passed since their arrival in the Southlands have given the colonists a cultural and religious syncretism unseen in any Northland realm. A mix of Xulmecs, a merchant caste drawn from various Northland nations, and elves from Blackbriar have given rise to a racially diverse population quite distinct from the Northlands. An outspoken minority seeks further independence from Crieste—total secession from the crown—but the royal vizier and her pet viceroy have invested many resources in preventing this. The Colonies are a firm gateway to the Southlands, and the lord-barons of the mother country will not give it up.

At present, the mayors of the Colonies have become complacent, hoping for trouble no greater than merchant disputes, periodic aggression from Chuzec, and the occasional wandering beast from the Eztenqui Jungle. The Scourge that now threatens the motherland is but a rumor to the colonists. But more substantiated rumors have begun to appear of the return of the Emerald Cobra, even as spiritualists from among the towns speak in frightened tones of the sinking of Tlahuaco by unnamed forces. Sahuagin from neighboring Dujamar have been spotted in small teams in the Sea of Desperation, fueling anxiety that King Azghaar gazes upon the Colonies with conquest in mind. And amidst all those concerns is the constant fear of colonial merchants that privateers or Barrier pirates will sack the treasure-laden ships they send back home. Adventurers who come to the Criestine Colonies are sure to find their spells and swords in demand; whose cause they take up or whose gold they accept is a matter of honor, greed, or desperation.

Abbey of St. Terinmora: (Keep, pop. 487) When the violence between Northland explorers and the people of

Xulmec began to abate centuries ago, many attempts were made to convert the Southland "savages" to the faiths of the Northlands. Most missionaries, the well meaning and the pharisaical, were rebuffed, for the Xulmec adherence to their gods was strong.

One exception was Terinmora, a young paladin of Justicia who gave much of herself—and ultimately, her own life—in service to the Xulmecs. The passion and mercy exhibited by this remarkable woman brought many of the jaded natives to the outlandish doctrines of the Restoring Flame and even other gods of the Sancturn Pantheon. While some of these have abandoned the worship of the Xulmec gods altogether, others blend the beliefs of their native gods with their adopted divinities.

Built within the foothills of the Atlauhti Mountains, the Abbey of St. Terinmora is a religious fastness dedicated to the gods introduced by the Northland visitors. Humans from both sides of the Empyrean Ocean dwell here, as well as an influx of pilgrims. Named after the sainted lady paladin herself, the Abbey serves as a bastion of faith and a launching place for sacred quests within the Southlands. Shrines to most of the benign religions of the Sancturn Pantheon can be found within the great abbey, and clerics of almost any god are welcome.

Abbot Kallus Wayrenne, a stern man of middling years, presides over the activities and guests of the abbey. His sleepless devotion is best exemplified by his consistent victories against the attempted sieges of the Chuzec warriors.

Feronte: (Village, pop. 679) Feronte is a simple village dwelling closest to the infamous volcano in which, if legends are true, the Emerald Cobra once laired. The people of Feronte are considered by the other colonial towns to be a wilder folk than most. Many of the Xulmec-blooded humans of the Colonies settle here, finding a place in the fishing trade common among the Northland colonials. Strange hermits and reclusive rangers dwell on the outskirts of town, maintaining the local folklore that the longer one lives within the jungle, the more fey one becomes.

Feronte is mayored by Senth Lavrousse, a ranger and half-elf of Crieste-Blackbriar descent who feels at home among neither. He spends most of his time scouting the wild and seldom corresponds with the Colonies' other mayors or its viceroy. Unsubstantiated rumors abound that Senth hides a paramour in the jungle somewhere, a dryad of bewitching power.

Ft. Montsiang: (Town, pop. ?) Both a military fastness and a frontier town, Ft. Montsiang is a strategic outpost in Omian Pass. Built atop a steep escarpment on one side of the road, the fort commands a view of all primary traffic between the Xulmec peninsula and the Criestine Colonies. Many Xulmecs resent this overt military presence, but few can deny its advantageousness against the aggression of Chuzec, whose war-like people always seeks fresh captives for their blood sacrifices and bear no tolerance for Northlanders.

Commanding the fort is Lieutenant Raquelle Clavet, a no-nonsense veteran of the Sable March from the homeland. Honorably discharged by Captain Sentri himself, she was assigned to Ft. Montsiang to "cool down" from her frightening and unceasing devotion to the crown. Raquelle finds her time occupied maintaining vigilance against those Xulmecs who decline peaceful coexistence with the Northlanders and keeping the pass free of bandits.

Pleniere: (Village, pop. 534) A sleepy fishing port on the isle's western coast, Pleniere faces the channels that run between the Eztenqui Jungle's wetlands. The locals live their lives probing the waterways for fish, avoiding the hazards of the jungle, and passing time with stories about the time when snake men ruled the land between Voltigeur and the Atlauhtli Mountains.

Pleniere's mayor is a lazy merchant named Loremer d'Arisseux, whose position in the remote, backwater town suits him fine. Recent sightings of the walking dead rising up from the salty waters, however, have him worried.

Gerronotte: (Village, pop. 687) At the southern tip of Tlahuaco Isle, the village of Gerronotte serves as the gateway to the colonial outposts across the water. A ferry regularly crosses to St. Ferrau, a service that imposes a steep tax upon travelers unaffiliated with Crieste's merchant guilds.

The salty marshland surrounding the town is feared by visitors for its haunted appearance, but local hunters frequently venture into the waters in search of exotic waterfowl. At night, even the locals avoid the swamp, for will-o'-wisps and wraiths are said to emerge from its depths. Stories suggest that the wraiths were spawned from the spirits of Criestine soldiers who died in the war against the Emerald Cobra, although they cannot explain why such spirits turned to evil.

Lieux-Claren: (Village, pop. 830) Across the bay from the colonial capital, the small port of Lieux-Claren is accessible only by sea. Unable to establish a safe route through the marsh to the south, it relies upon its proximity to Voltigeur to bring in trade. Lieux-Claren is home to fisherman who know Xayactl Bay better than any, drawing from it more fish than anywhere else in the Colonies.

St. Ferrau: (Large town, pop. 3,405) As the only outpost of civilization within the Eztenqui Jungle, St. Ferrau was intended to serve as a launching point for expeditions into its wild depths. The ruins of hastily erected drakon redoubts can be found swallowed by the jungle just outside the town limits. Renamed after a martyred cleric of Delvyr who saved the town in 2601 EC (Empyrean Calendar) from an attack by dark nagas, St. Ferrau boasts hearty folk and a courageous militia. The daily presence of the infamous jungle has weeded the town of the feeble and skittish.

A road of flattened stones, laid by the Xulmecs, leads southeast from St. Ferrau through Omian Pass to Ft. Montsiang. In this capacity, St. Ferrau also serves as the crossroads between Xulmec and the Isle of Tlahuaco. A large ferry makes round trips to Gerronotte and Voltigeur twice each day, transporting passengers at a reasonable price but imposing an imperial tax on trade goods or questionable accoutrements.

Mages sometimes visit St. Ferrau—and vanish soon after—to study the preternatural nature of the great Eztenqui. Of more recent concern is the Blackfield, a stretch of blighted land several miles southeast of town that history records as having once been further away. Druids and wizards alike have been summoned to investigate the corrupted earth, but most have either turned away or disappeared within it.

Voltigeur: (Large town, pop. 4,678) Named after the founding explorer, Voltigeur is the capital of the Criestine Colonies. A flourishing port, it is the hub of Southland commerce among Northlanders. Though merchants from all nations are welcome to trade here, heavy taxes are levied on them to increase the coffers of the viceroy, the Emperor, and the town itself—often in that order.

Voltigeur's mayor is Acatzalan, a man controversial for his Crieste-Xulmec blood. Beloved by the locals, he is despised by most Criestine nobility for his "sympathy for the savages." Viceroy Durand tolerates Acatzalan's philanthropy, knowing that his presence soothes the separatist population of the Colonies. Durand frequently undermines the mayor's authority with imperial mandates, inflammatory acts of spite that will likely harm Durand's standing as well.

At the center of town, at the foot of a monument to the Crieste-Xulmec alliance, an enspelled glass case bears

Micohuani, the Deathstaff. Capped with a large blue diamond, the staff bears the spirit of the defeated Xiuhcoatl, and to the proud colonists remains a symbol of both their alliance with Xulmec and the defeat of a great evil. Although it's in plain view of all citizens, powerful magic protects the Deathstaff from theft or destruction. Melisine d'Aurielle, a mage of the Beryl Conclave, perpetually watches over it.

The Blackbriar Quarter houses the pure-blooded elven families that first lent martial aid to the Criestine settlers. Though considered haughtier than their Northland kin, the Blackbriar elves yet retain their homeland culture, importing their fine ruby wine and often hosting revels for all to enjoy. Many half-elves in the Colonies trace their bloodlines to the Blackbriar Quarter, but few are recognized by these proud families. Even humans and Southland natives achieve greater respect in their eyes than the half-blooded "bastards." These elven patriarchs regard the Criestine government coldly, believing themselves overlooked by the Empire for the martial assistance their ancestors once gave to the colonial founders against the Emerald Cobra.

Dujamar

No Ruler

Population: Unkown

Resources: See text

Capital: None

The sprawl of islands known collectively as Dujamar is a place feared by mariners of every persuasion. A long chain of islets and disjointed landmasses, it is a place of exotic wildlife, rare flora, and hidden death. The rocky shoals and inlets that fill its waters have given Dujamar its nickname, the Razor Islands, by seamen who know to keep a respectful distance.

Though the natural hazards are forbidding enough, it is the evil and intelligent creatures lurking beneath the waves that make Dujamar a no man's land. A tremendous population of sahuagin, ranging from isolated villages to whole kingdoms, live in communities carved from stone and coral, making the sea devils Dujamar's dominant race. Of these, King Azghaar the Malevolent is the undisputed tyrant, the ruler of a sahuagin kingdom numbering one hundred thousand strong of his scaly kind, if reports are accurate.

At odds with the interests of King Azghaar are the covens of sea hags, who compete with the sea devils to capture and devour those who wander into the region by foolish choice or unfortunate circumstance. The hags are said to use the bodies of their victims to fuel their profane ceremonies. It is believed by some sages that, given enough victims, the sea hags will be able to breed their own ghoulish armies. Against all of these, a hermitic order of druids dwells among the islands, waging a perpetual war against the hags and sea devils and guarding the pristine animal and plant life from their depradations. Friends to none are the many species of wyverns of Dujamar, from the swarms of small hatchlings to the oversized cliff wyverns whose ominous shadows bring on sudden darkness a heartbeat before sudden death. The wyverns sit firmly at the top of the food chain, lairing in the taller outcroppings of the isles. Gliding over their domains in search of meals from among the diverse wildlife, a favorite among all species is the exotic flesh of humanoid intruders.

The waters of the Javran Sea, just east of the Dujamar islands, are known to be the demesne of krakens, making them among the most feared places anywhere in the ocean. King Azghaar is believed to consort with these abhorrent, deep-dwelling monsters, and some even say the monarch himself is but a puppet for the evil krakens.

Recently, a rumor has spread among the merchants of the nearby Criestine Colonies that a safe, passable trade route exists somewhere between the islands of Dujamar, linking the Sea of Desperation with the Empyrean Ocean. If this "golden passage" can be found and secured, the voyage between the Colonies and their home country would take only a fraction of the time, and the expense of

the journey reduced manifold. Colonial merchants, as well as dignitaries of the Emperor, have begun to hire adventurers willing to find the rumored passage. Whether the path is real or simply a ruse cited by Dujamar's monstrous denizens to lure more victims, none can say.

Rutuan: (Small town, pop. 1,138) Constructed on a sodden marsh upon an extensive network of warped platforms, Rutuan is the only place in Dujamar where land-dwelling creatures are granted amnesty by King Azghaar. Pragmatic despite his bloodlust, Azghaar recognizes the benefit of trade with civilized surface realms, so mariners may dock here without fear of attack by his scaly subjects. The other creatures of Dujamar offer no such protection, but the threat of retribution from the sahuagin king prevents any overt hostility.

The Black Covey, hags of the vilest predilections, governs Rutuan. The trio consists of an annis named Alunine and two green hags, Meglea and Sayocia. Each is a sorceress of considerable might, and has made enemies with Dujamar's sea hags, for the latter refuse any truce with humanoid mariners. The Covey retains an elite militia of ogres whose sole purpose is to ensure that violence is kept to an acceptable minimum. Commanding this brutish unit is Guloresh, a lycanthropic ogre who reports to Alunine directly. Rumors in town suggest that she gifted the ogre boss with his bestial mantle as payment for murdering her predecessor. Azghaar and the Covey enjoy a solid truce within Rutuan and its surrounding environs, but even the sahuagin king's wicked ambassadors are loath to enter the hags' gruesome cottage at the center of town.

The waterlogged planks of the platform city appear unsafe, but magic and the uncanny woodwork of the locals secures every hut and ramshackle fort. Even so, strategically placed planks have been left to rot for the misfortune of unwary intruders. Beneath the city's platforms is a foul landscape of mephitic sludge, where the city's refuse is dumped by means of evenly spaced wells. Among the horrors lurking in the slime are scores of shambling mounds—and the Black Covey's magic prevents the treasures of their victims from rising to the city above. Whenever an unfortunate traveler accidentally drops a valued possession between the cracks of the city's boardwalks, he has a choice: Wisely dismiss the item forever or risk near-certain death "among the shamblers." Wealthier visitors to the city usually hire the foolish or desperate to retrieve lost objects.

Halcyon, Free City of

Lady Mayor Elarabeth

Population: 39,508 (humans 60%, half-elves 12%, elves 10%, half-orcs 7%, dwarves 6%, monstrous humanoids 4%, halflings 1%)

Resources: Trade, some mining

Capital: The City of Halcyon

Once a small port of no consequence, Halcyon was established as an independent city only fifty-five years ago by the famous Kalían priestess Captain Dinadae, and quickly became known as a sanctuary from piracy. It is the stopping point for most traffic between the Northlands and the Southlands, a place of free trade and ordered freedom where merchants seeking barter with the people of Xulmec can find safe harbor and resupply their ships.

The legend of Halcyon comes from its founder, Captain Dinadae, a priestess of Pelagia and high-ranking Siren. When her entire crew was slain by Barrier pirates, she found herself lost in the Empyrean, fleeing an armada of ruthless enemies eager to inflict torture and death. Spying a kingfisher flying above a rising storm, the story holds that she crewed the galleon alone with only her prayers and the blue-feathered bird as a guide. As the tempest swelled and the shrieking winds closed in on her, she cried out in supplication. Just as the storm broke into a calming roil, the last of its wrath fell full upon the pursuing pirates and smashed them into the sea.

Captain Dinadae found herself drifting into a small port town, astonished to learn she'd sailed so far. Coming ashore, she searched for the kingfisher. What she took for a small bird she saw was in fact a massive avian, perched now upon a cliff overlooking the town. A celestial creature the size of a roc, its crested head, long beak, and bright sapphire plumage shone in the bright dawn. Dinadae named the majestic animal Halcyon, blessed of Pelagia. When the Barrier pirates sent reinforcements against the town, Halcyon herself attacked and razed each ship. The celestial bird and her hatchlings would become creatures of myth. Many have searched the mountain above in vain for her secret aerie.

A white mountain wall rises behind the city, pitted with the aeries of sea birds and riddled with small caves rumored to lead deep into the mountain's heart. A massive lighthouse, built on the foundations of an old cloud giant ruin, looms above the city on a wide mountain shelf, its beacon of magical blue fire guiding errant ships to port each night. An enigmatic wizard keeps the lighthouse in working order.

Lady Elarabeth is the city's latest mayor, a half-elf of aquatic elf lineage retired from a life of pirate-hunting among the Sirens of Pelagia. Though she has many enemies, Elarabeth is well guarded in her new home, and no city is safer from pirate retribution. The city watch, known as the Sea Wardens, are experienced seamen, and are as often patrolling the Imacuan Sea as they are their beloved city's streets. The Sirens are known operatives active within Halcyon, with Elarabeth as their local benefactor, but the true location of their temple-island remains unknown.

Elarabeth's troubles come not from the crimes of Halcyon's citizenry or visiting mariners, but rather from the many Northlander dignitaries seeking to persuade her to surrender her city to the care of their respective nations. Who controls Halcyon, they surmise, controls the waters between the Imacuan Sea and the Empyrean Ocean. At present, Elarabeth imposes no tax on merchants, a fact the greedy lord-barons of the North cannot understand. These wealthy dignitaries often hire adventurers to explore the caves of the mountain, for legends older than the city itself speak of an ancient draconic relic buried within, a rod that gives complete control of the weather for many miles. Such a treasure would, no doubt, give great power and influence to he—or she—who wields it. Lady Elarabeth has been hiring adventurers as well, fearful that if this artifact does exist, she will lose her city to its keeper.

Halcyon is still a young city, its rain-swept streets fringed with the stones of unfinished houses and temples. Although its populace is predominantly human, many elves and half-elves have made their home here—especially those with connections to the sea. Merfolk, tritons, and aquatic elves make frequent visits to the city, one of the few places they are able to do so without persecution. Though its citizens are not without their worldly prejudices, most who call Halcyon their home bear an innate love of the sea and the creatures within it.

Of course, such freedom welcomes enemies, and Halcyon has many. Fortunately, it has as many defenses. The coastal waters on either side of the docks are shallow and rocky, forcing invading ships to approach the city directly and in full view of its defenders. As if blessed by Pelagia herself, the waters surrounding Halcyon have attracted a number of sea-dwelling creatures that possess the insight to recognize friendly traffic and a penchant for attacking marauding ships. Water elementals and even a pair of mated dragon turtles neutralize the threats from the sea itself. According to legend, when the city finds itself in true peril, the hallowed bird that gives the city its name will appear again.

Ssorlang

Keeper of the Emerald Throne, Prince Zurasak

Population: 1,857,475 (drakon 55%, human 25%, lizardfolk 7%, tzopiloani/inphidians 5%, other 8%)

Resources: Copper, fish, gold, jewelry, minerals, psychotropic drugs, rice, textiles, timber

Capital: Myashtlan

Hatched from the sins of the latter-day Zimalan Empire, Ssorlang is the only unified nation of drakon in the known world. The nagas' Dark Council conducted magical experiments in a bid to create humanoids in their image, and these foul rites gave birth to the race of snake men. Within years of their creation, the drakon revolted in a civil war known as the Wrath of Serpents. The surviving nagas retreated south beyond the Nahualli Mountains, leaving the drakon to occupy the jungles alongside Cipachtli Bay. The humans, also former slaves of the nagas, had by this time fled north and settled into the Xulmec peninsula.

The future of the young race was uncertain. With their common enemy defeated, their chaotic nature divided them, spawning two warring factions: the Amotuan and the Impiluan. The Amotuan maintained that drakon were the rightful heirs of the Zimalan Empire, meant to inherit the traditions and lands of their naga forebears. The Impiluan, however, wanted to renounce the old ways and establish an empire and identity of their own.

After centuries of virulent coexistence, the two factions united under the intelligence of Tlalteucti, an Amotuan wizard of sinister power. Having returned from mysterious travels abroad, Tlalteucti envisioned a world ruled by drakon. He promptly led his people into a savage war against the Xulmec city-state of Uatazan. Even though the humans of Darawan and Amoya came to the aid of their brothers, Uatazan was utterly defeated; those who were not slain became slaves. In the midst of this war, Tlalteucti created the Emerald Throne, an ensorcelled artifact that served as the seat of power for the drakon in the city they renamed Myashtlan. Soon after, Tlalteucti was killed by a priest of Anahuara, but the drakon's grandson, a warrior named Xiuhcoatl, struck down the Xulmec and led his people to victory.

Xiuhcoatl, calling himself the Emerald Cobra, rallied his followers to continue their path of conquest. The Impiluan faction refused to join him, believing that the drakon should secure their new realm before pursuing further expansion. Despite their perceived cowardice,

Xiuhcoatl pressed on. Knowing his armies were not strong enough yet to challenge all of Xulmec, he led them through the Xocoatic Marshes, killing those humans from Amoya that dared to challenge his advance.

The Emerald Cobra established his new seat of power in the vast Eztenqui Jungle. From there he sent word to his southern brethren, entreating them to join him in his attack against Xulmec from two fronts and thereby extend the reach of their empire. The Impiluans did not respond. Soon after, human settlers from the faraway Northland empire of Crieste began to colonize at the edge of Xiuhcoatl's domain. Xulmecs from Kaatlan and Teotcoatlan allied with these newcomers and fought back against Xiuhcoatl. The Emerald Cobra met his defeat at last when a Teotcoatlan wizard trapped his essence in a staff.

Without their leader, the surviving drakon of Xiuhcoatl slithered back to their southern cousins, only to find that the Impiluans had established the nation of Ssorlang. Having ventured to mystic lands in the Shadowed West, many changes had come to the drakon people. The Impiluan faction had found its new identity at last, and their culture transformed in a matter of decades. The Amotuans, followers of the old ways, became a quiet minority in Ssorlang society.

The sovereignty established by Tlalteucti yet remains. While the monarch who coils upon the Emerald Throne governs Ssorlang, its royal families have been assassinated and replaced numerous times since the kingdom's inception. Though they fancy their nation an empire, the drakon have never expanded, nor have they succeeded in keeping a single dynasty in power for more than five generations.

The current ruler is the ailing Emperor Vithoon, a cantankerous old serpent whose wizardry has begun to wane. It is his son, Prince Zurasak, who wields the true power of the Emerald Throne. The drakon, an eldritch knight of fearsome skill, has personally foiled every coup attempt, and with his father still ensconced upon the throne, he is free to carry out many of his plans without the added burden of state.

The drakon of Ssorlang are aggressive, but constant infighting keeps their power in check. Ssorlang and the Xulmec city-states have reached a stalemate that neither side can break. The Xulmecs are far too powerful now for the drakon to rise against, and the Xulmecs cannot hope to dislodge the snake men from their strategic seat in the former Uatazan lands. With Myashtlan as their capital, the drakon control all traffic on the Laeysian Sea, the Strait of Kamasha, and all adjacent coasts. Most Xulmecs maintain a cool, often hostile, view towards the snake men, while only the city-state of Darawan maintains a tense relationship of mutual benefit. Darawan offers Ssorlang untaxed trade, while the drakon allow the humans limited passage through their waters.

Ssorlang is a rainy tropical realm that includes the mountains of northwest Zimala, the Laeysian Sea, and the surrounding peninsulas south of the Anduran Mountains. Along the western coasts, the jungle quickly gives way to the Kharan Plateau that overlooks the Tletl Plains to the north. Beyond that lies the Shadowed West, a mystic realm that intrigues and frightens the drakon.

Notoriously arrogant, most snake men consider all who are not drakon tools to be manipulated or cattle to be subjugated. They do not typically kill foreigners on sight as they, like the Xulmecs, have learned to subdue and capture enemies. But unlike Xulmec, they practice slavery and seldom release their captives.

Angkar: (Small town, pop. 1,895) Named for the massive temple looming above it, the small port of Angkar lies in a cove shadowed by the Kharan Plateau. It has seen the arrival of pilgrims for centuries, surviving every monsoon and political shift since its creation untold millennia ago. Though it lies now within the demesne of Ssorlang, even the Emerald Throne acknowledges the site as a holy place. The waters of the Laeysian Sea are controlled by the drakon, but travelers citing pilgrimage to Angkar will be granted safe passage—provided they pay the "protection fee," after which they are closely followed to port.

The town itself consists of an even mix of human, drakon, and humanoid locals, and is overseen by Nentawat, who serves as mayor-priest. Visitors from the Shadowed West often arrive by the Strait of Kamasha to visit the temple as well.

A massive stone face, bearing a fearsome humanoid countenance, is carved into the high wall of the Kharan Plateau, rising less than a mile west of the town. Said to depict an aspect of Madrah, the face marks the entrance to the Temple of Angkar itself. Thousands of rough stone steps lead up the steep cliff face into the gaping mouth. Capacious chambers and tight corridors, carved with bas-reliefs and sculptures older than the rise of the Zimalan Empire, lie within. Hallowed to all who believe in the ways of Madrah or his many progenies, the Temple is said to preserve many old secrets, and hidden passages are rumored to lead further into the depths of the earth.

Kanthara: (Large city, pop. 17,827) Built at the edge of a natural headland, the city of Kanthara is adjacent to the Laeysian waters on three sides. The majority of Ssorlang's human population dwells in this well-guarded city at its geographic heart, far from easy liberation. Most are slaves of the state, struggling in the privation of its crime-ridden streets. At their best, these humans, descendants of fallen Uatazan, share with each other what little they have, spreading their resources thin. At their worst, they murder, betray, and even cannibalize each other. Sometimes insurgents escape the city, but the drakon sentinels have learned to defend it from those who would emancipate their slaves, and so the city is walled in with numerous towers.

When a drakon requires a servant or slave, he ventures into the markets of Kanthara to look for the best he can afford. Those who seek bodyguards often choose from the street thugs who have survived by intimidation and violence. Those who seek finesse and intelligence in their retainers purchase those who can resist the spells of drakon mages, then bring their purchases to Myashtlan for education.

Kanthara is ruled by an aging drakon named Sakda, a snake man who has been in office for so long that he's become more tolerant of humans than any of his kind. Some royal courtiers accuse him of sympathizing with the human situation. The Emerald Throne is content in assuming that his kindness is a ruse to keep the humans tame.

Myashtlan: (Metropolis, pop. 28,900) Rising at the north end of Cocohuan, the Serpent Isle, Tenochtzaya was once the second capital of Zimala, the city where the Dark Council of nagas guided their wounded empire. During the Wrath of Serpents, the nagas withdrew their forces to the south, allowing the city to be seized by the rebel human slaves. While most of their people journeyed north to settle on the Xulmec peninsula, the people who settled in Tenochtzaya established the city-state of Uatazan.

When the drakon conquered Uatazan, they claimed the city as their own and renamed it Myashtlan. Where the Uatazans had sealed the temple pyramid of Axaluatl as an unholy, cursed place, the drakon plundered it. The many shrines and repositories of the nagas were dissembled, their treasures added to the snake men's growing vaults. The only edifices sacred to the nagas that remain in the city are those with magics yet to be breached.

The shining jewel of Ssorlang, Myashtlan is both the symbolic capital and the economic center of the empire. A raised city of sharp spires and architecture inspired by the temples of the Shadowed West, Myashtlan commands a panoramic view in all directions: the Laeysian Sea to the south and west, the Anduran Mountains to the north, and the forests and rivers of neighboring Darawan. From here the Emerald Throne surveys its own lands and looks to those that the drakon one day intend to conquer.

Humanoids willing to pay the steep entrance fees are welcome in Myashtlan, invited to bring foreign goods and trade in the legendary emporiums of the City of the Emperor. The weapons, exotic materials, poisons, and hallucinogenic drugs available in Myashtlan markets—most of which are illegal in the Northland kingdoms—are commonly purchased and carried into foreign lands.

The Noctayshan Palace, an elegant fortress crowned with a tall, glyph-carved obelisk, rises above all other buildings at the city's heart. Situated closest to the surrounding forest, one of the city's most feared locations is the Moryan Temple, home to the assassins' guild known as the Brood of Ahzari.

Xincayot: (Small city, pop. 9,329) Nestled in a steamy Laeysian bay, Xincayot is a mist-shrouded city that preserves the old lore from early Ssorlang and the Zimalan culture that sired it. As the home of the Amotuan faction, those drakon who would delve into the secrets of their erstwhile naga masters come to Xincayot and entreat the ruling council. Though publicly outlawed by the Emerald Throne, worship of Axaluatl exists in Xincayot in underground shrines. These Amotuan cultists who venerate the Shadow Serpent often fund expeditions into Zimala, hoping to tap the power of the long dead naga empire and unearth its buried secrets. Such expeditions are always led by zealous drakon, but other humanoids are indiscriminately hired as well—so long as they prove their loyalty to the cult by submitting to its venomous rites.

A wide, squat pyramid, built in the style of old Zimala, is the city's centerpiece. The entire structure serves as an arena for gladiatorial sport, where drakon champions entertain the city's elite daily as they battle humanoid captives of the state. When the slave stocks are emptied, the snake men cull from slaves of Kanthara, selecting the hardiest specimens to ensure good sport. Gladiators who prove the most resilient earn the right to move onto the next level. The bottom of the arena is flooded with water

and the slaves must survive the entrance of one or more dire anacondas. The very few who manage to slay these dreaded beasts earn the right to fight against—and find dignified death at the hands of—Ssorlang's most renowned warriors. Emperor Vithoon and Prince Zurasak personally attend these sports several times each year, especially during the Festival of the Dead. Of greatest renown are those occasions when the prince himself deigns to enter the arena.

Recently, a brash and arrogant drakon was exiled from the Xincayot for planning to overthrow its current ruler. Lord Yollotl, feared for his exceptional sadism, has quelled many such coups. Commoners who dare to rise against him adorn the shoreline, spitted on tall pikes.

Tarras (Atlacatlan)

No leader

Population: Unknown

Resources: Many, but none exported

Capital: None

Half the size of the Xulmec peninsula, the great island of Tarras is a place of great frustration to the expansionist-minded lords and kings of the Northlands. Lush with untapped natural resources, treasure-laden ruins as old as dragonkind, and priceless fauna and flora awaiting retrieval, the island yet remains a prize that none can touch. Throughout recorded history, there has always been a monster dwelling on the island—no one can kill it, and all those who have tried have been slain and devoured. It is known simply as the Beast of Tarras.

It is said that the monsters that dwelt in Tarras were no match for the dragons that once ruled the world, and that their servitor races—including humans, dwarves, and elves—were once able to build cities, temples, and tombs within the island. Yet when the Reign of Dragons ended, the monsters went unchecked, forcing the servitor races who remained to flee the island or be eaten. Since that time, thousands of years in the past, the island has been a perilous frontier too dangerous to settle upon.

Many have tried. Captains sailing close to Tarras will see an eerie chain of ruined ports along every coast, each a failed colony. Bodies are seldom seen, remains having been devoured, and the buildings themselves smashed as though stomped upon by titans. Over the centuries, kings and lord-barons have sent champions to the island—knights, wizards, adventurers—to slay the Beast of Tarras. None have returned.

Some see the Beast as apocryphal, a grandiose hoax perpetuated by pirates to keep the sovereigns of the Northland away from their hidden troves—though the existence of the Barrier Isles discredits this notion. Others say Tarras is in fact a paradise island, and all who have ventured deep within its primeval groves found a fey, utopian city whose enchantments ensure they never leave. Occasional spans of time without sightings of the Beast have led to speculation that it periodically hibernates from anywhere from one year to one hundred at a time. During these periods, the bold and adventurous dare to land upon the island's shores and journey inland. Inevitably, the Beast reveals itself again, and the fledgling ports join the others in the tortuous graveyard of ruins upon the Tarrasan shore.

Most believe the monster is very real, yet a hundred survivors claiming to have glimpsed it have provided a hundred different descriptions. Some claim it is like a dragon, though wingless, stalking about like a predatory dinosaur, while others claim it is made of stone and walks like a bird with numerous sword-like talons clawing the air … or shelled like a turtle, spine-ridged, beaked like a roc … or slithering like a snake, with pincers that can sunder rock and teeth that can lacerate metal. Each account does agree on several points: The monster is a behemoth, terrible to behold, and mindless in its pursuit for food—both magic and steel fail against it, and the only means of survival is unfettered flight. The sole consolation remaining is that the Beast never leaves the island.

Although it is the most feared creature on Tarras—or indeed, possibly anywhere in the Known Realms—the Beast is by no means the only thing worth fearing. Dinosaurs roam in great numbers within the ancient forests and hills, dire animals of all kinds stalk the landscape, and more extraordinary monsters such as bulettes, gray renders, and yrthaks have been seen. According to many reports, even dragons still lair in mountainous aeries ringing the island, their hoards containing riches from ages past.

Tarras has played a role in many cultures over the centuries. Barbarians from the Frost Barrens often send their young men and women to the island's northern edge to survive for a few nights as a coming-of-age rite. Northland kingdoms occasionally send hated exiles to the island for the beasts to slay when their laws prohibit execution. The people of Xulmec name the island Atlacatlan, the Dwelling of Cursed Things, and believe that the overgod Madrah imprisoned the demons of the earth there. If the people do not give him proper reverence, he will forge a bridge between Atlacatlan and Xulmec, unleashing its monstrous denizens upon them. Cynical priests believe that the very presence of the

Dujamar islands is evidence of this belief—that the land is steadily rising up from the water to create that bridge, a clear sign of Madrah's growing displeasure.

Xulmec City-States

Various sovereigns

Population: ?

Resources: Gold, cloth, salt, animal pelts, cotton, rubber, corn, cacao beans, jade, obsidian, greenstone

Capital: —

The seven city-states known collectively as Xulmec (*shool*-mek) grew from the discarded shackles of the mighty but long-faded Zimalan Empire. When the snake men struggled against their naga progenitors during the Wrath of Serpents millennia ago, the human slaves fled captivity. Too focused on their own survival, the nagas were unable to stop this exodus. Some even claim that it was the altruistic guardian nagas who set them loose, prompting their rise to freedom.

A slave named Huamec took charge of his people and led the thousands through the dangers of the Azcatlepi Jungle. Legends claim that Huamec revealed and slew the drakon assassins sent against him, kept at bay the monstrous dinosaurs of the jungle, and defeated the minions of the Shadow Serpent.

Huamec led his people west, hoping to reach lands far beyond Zimalan dominion. In a dream, a winged serpent, plumed with the feathers of the quetzal bird, came to Huamec and told him to journey northward instead. He named it the *quetzal couatl* ("bird-snake"), and in his mind it became a symbol of hope and freedom. When Huamec led the way north, his people followed without protest. Crossing the Texcalapan Strait, they reached the shores of the Xulmec peninsula, located on Zimala's northern frontier.

According to myth, Huamec and the tribal chiefs were met there by nine couatls, who promptly disappeared into the jungle. The tribal chiefs pursued them, hoping for visions of their own. In an event known today as the Feathered Hunt, the couatls led each on a chase through the forests, and it is said that where each chief found his quarry, there he claimed the land where his city would be built. In every incarnation of this myth, each chieftain's pursuit of the couatls led to a different creature altogether, and around this creature each city-state has based its culture.

Taking these events as an omen to cease their flight, the humans settled into the lowlands, highlands, and lush rainforests, becoming the Xulmecs. Divided into nine large, oft-warring tribes, they built magnificent cities and found new identities free of naga lordship. Though independently ruled, each city pays homage to Madrah, Lord of the Earth and Sky. The first kings of each tribe were granted divine office by Madrah, and now lead their cities through the intermediaries of the priests and the wisdom of their mortal kings.

Xulmecs are a hardy people, averaging five and a half feet in height. Their skin is light brown and their hair is coarse, dark, and straight. Hairstyle is based on social class; for instance, the way a warrior binds his hair reflects his martial accomplishment. One Xulmec can gauge the prowess of another according to this varying style. Women always wear their hair long and loose, braiding it with ribbons only during festivals or religious ceremonies. While this description is a rough approximation of the people, there are many varied exceptions—such as the ruddier complexions of Amoyas and the sharper features of the Darawans.

Clothing worn by Xulmecs reflects the temperatures of their respective homes. They typically wear loose garments made of cotton, adorned with beads, flowers, and precious metals as appropriate by class. Most Xulmec warriors wear leather or quilted armor, covered with a *tlahuiztl*, a cotton body suit whose color and array of feathers reflect military status. A warrior's status is based not on the number of his kills, but on the number of people he has captured in his lifetime.

Though Xulmecs have their own language, a tongue descended from Old Naga, they do not have a written language as the Northlanders understand it. Their writing is logographic, with symbols representing an entire spoken word without indication of its pronunciation. These glyphs serve as ideograms, in which the image depicted expresses its own nature but not other associated concepts. Thus the idea of new life can be represented by a swaddled newborn, daytime by a blazing sun, and murder by a sundered skull. To convey movement, migration, or a sequence of events, a trail of footprints may lead in the relevant direction. Xulmec glyphs are carved in many surfaces, usually temples and the houses of nobles, and are frequently recorded in sheaves of bark-paper called *amatl*, a type of book called a codex.

Xulmec art is produced from a wide variety of materials. Obsidian, turquoise, precious metals, gemstones, feathers, and even human remains are manipulated with astonishing patience and skill, usually in the form of masks, pottery, statues, shields, headdresses, and mosaics. Reliefs are commonly carved in stone surfaces, whether it is the façade of a great temple or the natural walls of a commoner's home. Artists incorporate animal figures into most of their art, reflecting the Xulmec respect and

fear of the natural world. Depictions of unnatural creatures such as demons or the undead is considered blasphemous and beckons ill fortune. Curiously, skeletal representations of their fallen are common, for the Xulmec people are not as averse as Northlanders to the presence of the true dead.

Xulmec architecture is a testament to their past, for each city is a multitude of buildings made of adobe and stone. Peasant homes, which sprawl throughout the city and along its fringes, are small affairs, thatched with grass and constructed with interwoven twigs and mud. Houses of nobility are made of plastered brick or stone and painted with bright colors. Government buildings and royal palaces are two or three stories high, containing hundreds of rooms, and are a labyrinth of wide and narrow passages intended to mislead intruders.

All buildings are arranged around the centerpiece of Xulmec society: the great terraced pyramids, immense structures thrust into the sky like small mountains. A multitude of steps leads to flat summits, which are crowned with the extravagant High Temples, stone edifices dedicated to the cities' patron gods. Surrounding enclosures house priests and elite warriors and open courts for sacred games. Before each temple, a paved plaza makes room for crowds on holy days and daily sacrifices. Lesser pyramid-temples of smaller size are scattered throughout the cities and even outlying villages. Worship at such shrines so pervades Xulmec culture that even the lowliest peasant can reach a temple from his home within a matter of minutes. While not every city-state boasts structures of this design, this pyramidal architecture reflects their ancestry among the Zimalan culture and can be found in smaller scale upon sacred buildings of every city.

The city-states have made some remarkable achievements over the millennia. Roads connect most cities, laid with flat stones and walled at higher elevations. A complex irrigation system of aqueducts and channels links each city to nearby rivers, ushering water into the city proper. Artificial gardens called *chinampas* lie upon shallow lakes and riverbeds and provide a wealth of crops, including corn, beans, squash, tomatoes, peppers, and flowers.

Xulmec society is guided by its priests, who possess status equal to that of the nobility. Sovereigns and high priests are the most powerful individuals in the land, directing the laws and holy days that govern the cities. Merchants and warriors make up the middle class, while commoners and laborers comprise the lowest tier of society. Because Xulmecs spent centuries as servants and ultimately slaves of the Zimalan Empire, slavery as a station is forbidden by law. However, the merchants and nobles they serve often treat commoners as little better than slaves. Commoners, by accomplishment or sufficient wealth, can elevate themselves to merchants, warriors, or priests, but Xulmec nobility are born into their caste.

The Xulmec emphasis on prophecy and cosmic portent should not be understated. Xulmecs believe that the Sun soars in orbit around the earth, steadily drawing closer to it like a ship caught in a maelstrom. When it reaches the earth, an apocalypse of fire will destroy the world. Only the might of Madrah keeps the fiery sphere at bay, and to maintain his strength, the god requires sacrifice from his people. Such sacrifices come in the form of treasure, food, plants, animals—and according to some Xulmecs, flesh and blood. The priests claim that the world was already destroyed once in this way. Madrah resurrected the earth and its people, but the effort weakened him so much he requires this sacrificial sustenance. Most Xulmecs believe that but for their daily sacrifice, the world would swiftly end in fire once more.

Though the city-states often contend with one other, they always unite against common threats to all of Xulmec. If Xulmec falls, so too does the world itself.

Existing in the depths of the earth is Mictlan, the Underworld of Xulmec belief, a realm whose description overlaps that of the Underdeep. The spirits of the dead venture through the Underworld, a journey believed to take approximately two years, in search of the immortal domains of the gods. Priests, nobles, and the wealthy are entombed with this journey in mind upon death, with magic items frequently interred with them to equip them for the trials they face. Although only spirits can traverse this labyrinthine realm, it is widely believed that the Mochitla River flows into Omictlan itself and those among the living who are foolish or desperate enough to try to reach the Underworld must first pass through the Maw of Death at the river's end. The people of Maras believe that the sacred cenotes of their land may also lead to Omictlan.

It is also believed that upon their death, the kings and queens of Xulmec are given a chance to attain divine status. If they can navigate the spiritual terrain of Mictlan and find the select path ordained by Madrah himself, they will transcend the mortal rulership they once knew and become gods of their beloved people. The strength of this belief (and the new deities created because of it) often prompts competition among the rulers of each state for any advantage that will assist them on their afterlife journey.

Xulmec relations with foreign powers vary greatly. Some city-states, such as Kaatlan, trade with visitors, while others, like Teotcoatlan, offer alliance and mutual education. Still others—notably Chuzec and the less tolerant

people of Kaatlan—see Northlanders as pale-skinned demons whose talk of trade and alliance is a mere preface to conquest. These Xulmecs are as likely to attack, scalp, or capture such visitors in the wild as ignore them altogether. Most folk from the Lostlands are seen as respectable, if untrustworthy.

Central and eastern Xulmec is a land of verdant rainforests, winding rivers, lowland marshes, and limestone cliffs, while in the west rise the Anduran and Atlauhtli Mountains. Teeming with life, the animals of the peninsula range from harmless plant-eaters to deadly carnivores. Jaguars, revered by the Xulmecs of Maras, prowl the rainforests along with deer, capybaras, and all manner of serpents. Birds of prey and carrion rule the skies overhead, and piranha and caimans haunt the waterways. Hardy llamas are used in the mountains for transportation of goods, from water to building materials, though human porters carry heavier loads.

Horses are not native to Xulmec, and whenever Northland foreigners bring them across the ocean, they are seen as strange, exotic beasts. In their place, may Xulmecs ride the huezcatla, large rodents as tall as horses with thin, coarse fur. As dire cousins of the capybara, they are ideal for travel across marshes and rivers, for they move faster in water than on land.

The people of each city once belonged to a different province within the Zimalan Empire. Thousands of years later, in their own way, each still adheres to the customs of their old masters. Some, like the people of Amoya, have shunned the old ways and embraced newer ideas, while others, like the Chuzecs, have married old traditions with the edicts of new divinities.

There are seven existing city-states within Xulmec and are summarized as follows. The culture of the eighth city-state, Uatazan, was all but annihilated by the drakon centuries ago (see *Ssorlang*), the tattered remains of its populace now serving the snake men as slaves.

Amoya: (Large city, pop. 23,550) When Anahuara, the chieftain of the Amoya (ah-*moy*-uh) tribe, climbed into the Anduran Mountains during the Feathered Hunt, she met a grim figure wrapped in dark shrouds. The high mountain wind stirred the cowl from its face, and she found herself looking upon her father, who had been slain by the drakon several years before. Unafraid, she took counsel with the apparition and soon founded the mountain province of the Amoya tribe. She disappeared a few years later, having ventured into the Maw of Death on a quest to secure the future for her people. Anahuara returned again as the patroness of the young city-state and the goddess of the moons.

The city of Amoya, lodged nearly ten thousand feet above sea level, holds dominion over the southern half of the Anduran Mountains. Walled roads wind about the jagged terrain and suspension bridges span otherwise impassible gorges, linking an extensive web of villages with the city at its hub. The highland-dwelling people raise llamas to serve as pack animals, carrying wool and meat to the villages along the coastline and the foot of the mountains in exchange for crops. The city of Amoya itself is arranged in terraces formed upon the steep slopes of Mt. Cuahtec, encircling the mountain halfway around. The Andurans offer many resources, yielding guano for fertilizer, and many precious metals. Most prized is silver, the "Tears of Anahuara," which is crafted into elaborate jewelry and forged into ceremonial weapons.

The people of Amoya revere their dead like no other culture in the Southlands. To them, the death of one's body is a transition of life, and not death at all, a state where the body becomes inert and the spirit strengthens. When their loved ones pass into this second phase of existence, their bodies are mummified and seated in places of honor. Commoners inter them in sacred, communal chambers, visiting them when they seek guidance and during holy days, while nobles and those of royal blood clothe their dead in fine garments and jewelry, even escorting them out of family vaults for all to see. Due to this belief, Amoyas fear fire and acid, for these energies consume the material body and disperse the spirit. For the same reason, they are horrified by the sky burials practiced by the Darawan.

It is common for Amoya warriors to adorn themselves with the bones of their ancestors, believing that a portion of their spirit guides and protects them. Those who can afford it often have these macabre accoutrements enchanted or blessed by their high priests, fashioning weapons and armor from the corpses of their beloved dead. The tombs of the Amoya are never fully sealed, but they are frequently trapped to discourage Northland treasure hunters.

Ten years ago, the last king of Amoya was slain by drakon wizardry, his body horrifically disintegrated. With no heirs to assume sovereignty, the royal bloodline was broken. Communing with their eternal matron, Anahuara, the priests performed ancient rites and reanimated the mummified remains of Chull'pak, the king's father and predecessor, who once ruled the city-state for forty years before passing into the next phase of his existence. Now King Chull'pak reigns again, a man so dedicated to his people that he is willing to deny the well-deserved repose of "death" to bear the mantle of sovereignty indefinitely. A figure of frightening spiritual and corporeal power, the king is a mummy lord who will suffer no complacency from his people and no aggression from his enemies.

Though the king's policy includes vigilance and hostility against the snake men of Ssorlang, he encourages trade

with all human societies. However, only the undaunted or the morbidly fascinated emissaries of other lands are willing to seek audience with the undead king, whose chilling presence is difficult to endure.

Athua: (Large city, pop. 24,108) During the Feathered Hunt, Ilhuicatl, first chief of the Athuan tribe, was led eastward across the peninsula until he came to the edge of the land itself. Here he found his quarry, a beautiful mermaid to whom he professed his love. Yet the siren evaded him. At last he returned to his people and established the city of Athua. When this long labor was complete, the mermaid returned, beckoning him into the waves. Ilhuicatl joined her and was presumed drowned—yet he emerged again years later as Athua's patron god, sponsored by Madrah himself and the goddess Pelagia.

The most powerful of the coastal city-states, Athua is second only to Teotcoatlan in size and influence. Ruled by Queen Citlalli and her family, Athua controls the eastern coastline and protects the peninsula from seafaring invaders. Along with Darawan, Athua is the undisputed master of the waters surrounding Xulmec. Any foreign power that seeks to invade must contend with the boatmen of Athua, whose knowledge of the sea is unmatched.

The Athuans worship the god who was their first chieftain, Ilhuicatl, and believe that the world owes its life to the bounties of the water. The respect and affinity Athua has for the sea has made them a number of marine-dwelling friends, including merfolk and tritons. Alliances with the merfolk are as ephemeral as the tide itself, as their fickle disposition does not lend itself to dependable, long-term cooperation. The tritons, however, are committed to aiding their human friends in times of need, for they revere the same gods. Though smaller in number—as most of their people dwell farther north in colder waters—the tritons are a boon to their human allies. Yet this friendship has earned Athua the enmity of both sahuagin and locathah, against whom the people remain vigilant.

On the eastern fringe of their realm, the Athuans give a wide birth to the ruin of Ayoxatlan, a dark and dangerous hulk perched upon the rocky coast. A remnant of the old Zimalan Empire, the structure is believed to have been one side of a vast bridge spanning the Surya Sea.

Chuzec: (Large city, pop. 23,100) Nearly one thousand years ago, the people of Chuzec were believed destroyed when the twin eruptions of Mt. Ixli and Mt. Tapayxain buried their valley in molten lava and ash. In the years of silence that followed, few ventured into the valley to look upon the volcanic cairn. To the astonishment of the other city-states, the people of Chuzec emerged from the cracked basaltic shell that had sheltered them. The city remained perfectly intact, believed to have been shielded from the killing lava by Tlachinozal, a god of fire. Reborn within the earthen cocoon, the Chuzec culture had been transformed, and they forsook all gods but Tlachinozal, whom they name as their savior. Such monotheism and theocracy is blasphemous to most Xulmecs, but the war-like Chuzecs are fanatical in their devotion and will kill any who challenge them.

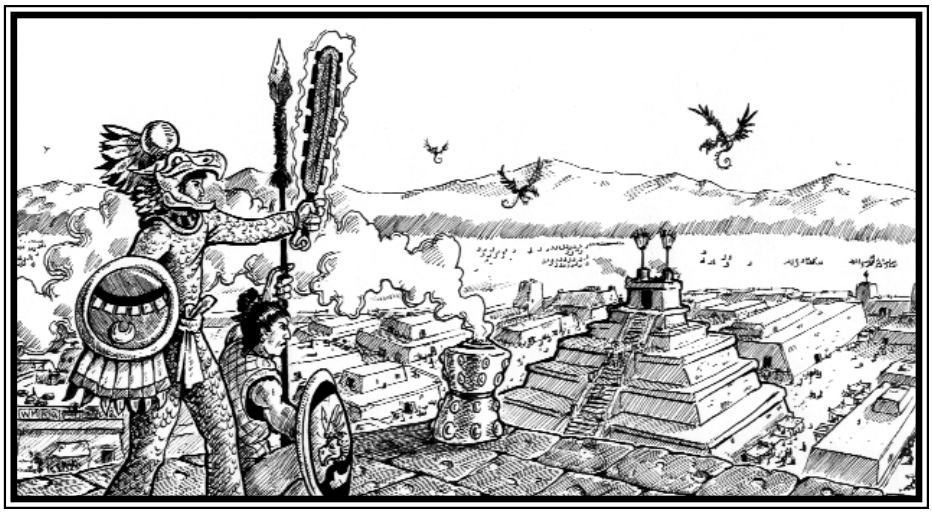
Xolatl, the Fire Priest, rules the Chuzec. Within the Burning Temple, Xolatl and his gruesome priests sacrifice captives to the Fire God daily, wrenching out their still-beating hearts and casting their corpses into a holy inferno. This frightening aspect of their culture makes trade with the other city-states a terse, uncomfortable affair, but the Chuzecs are the chief suppliers of obsidian to the region, trading in exchange for the produce unavailable in their volatile home. Despite the apparent ignorance of the clergy of Tlachinozal, Chuzecs were the first Xulmecs to practice metallurgy as it is understood by Northlanders. While blacksmiths throughout the Southlands remain few, the mastery of the Chuzecs has been known to rival that of Northland dwarves. For a very steep price, non-Xulmec foreigners are allowed to visit the city for adventuring or mercantile business.

The volcanoes in the surrounding valley remain active, deterring invaders and treasure hunters both, though the meandering flows of lava never touch the city of Chuzec itself. Despite these natural dangers, rumors abound of caches of gold and platinum guarded by the fiery denizens of the mountains, and Chuzec glyphs often depict salamanders swimming in the magma beneath the valley. Much of Chuzec's architecture was destroyed and rebuilt after the War of Divine Right and the glyphs upon them depict that infamous time when the Chuzecs staved off the fire giant invaders.

Darawan: (Large city, pop. ?) Before the rise of Ssorlang, the people of Darawan (DAR-uh-wan) made forays with the people of Uatazan into the Shadowed West. They brought back strange customs, which have seeped into their culture over the centuries, along with philosophies and dialects often viewed as heretical by their neighboring Xulmecs. The people themselves dress in darker tones than their fellow Xulmecs, and although their physical appearance is quite similar, they often imprint their skin with tattoos and frequently shave their heads.

Highly skilled boatmen, the Darawans often troll the coastal waters of the entire peninsula in small merchant fleets, trading with the people of Athua and Teotcoatlan as they go. Wary of foreigners yet frequenting the coastlines, Darawans are often the first Xulmecs that Northlanders meet when approaching the peninsula by sea. Their frosty demeanor does not paint a welcoming picture of the Xulmec people, a fact that dismays the

friendlier folk of Teotcoatlan. Locally, Darawans use kayaks in narrow rivers and large canoes along the coast.



Darawan is the only city-state that regularly trades with the hated nation of Ssorlang, and for this it earns the animosity and scorn of their neighbors. The relationship is a pragmatic one; the Darawans export untaxed goods to the drakon for free access to the Laeysian Sea and its connecting waterways. Such water traffic gives Darawan merchants plenty of imports that the rest of Xulmec could not otherwise procure, a fact the other city-states try to ignore. Tensions between the Darawan humans and drakon are often strained, for the arrogance of the latter is difficult for the freedom-loving Xulmecs to tolerate. Darawans do not approve of the drakon's predilection for slavery, but remain politically neutral and do not take action against them. Prince Zurasak, the son of Ssorlang's emperor, has instigated numerous border skirmishes, however, that Darawan cannot long ignore.

Governed by a council of minor sovereigns, who in turn represent the many villages of the city-state, Darawan is the closest thing Xulmec has to a republic. Councilor Jutarat is Darawan's most influential figure, a serious-minded man who considers all sides before taking action.

Darawans honor all the Southland divinities, but they also maintain strange philosophies that respectfully deemphasize the importance of the gods. They revere the intangible forces of time and destiny, believing less in the physical and more in the spiritual. Such doctrines are often seen as heretical to the other Xulmec city-states.

Most Darawans practice sky burial, ritually dismembering their dead and offering the remains to the mountain vultures. Believing the spirit is released upon death from the body, they do not see this custom as disrespectful. The dead of Darawan nobility are taken to the mountain monasteries and offered to the scavenger birds in great ceremonial gatherings.

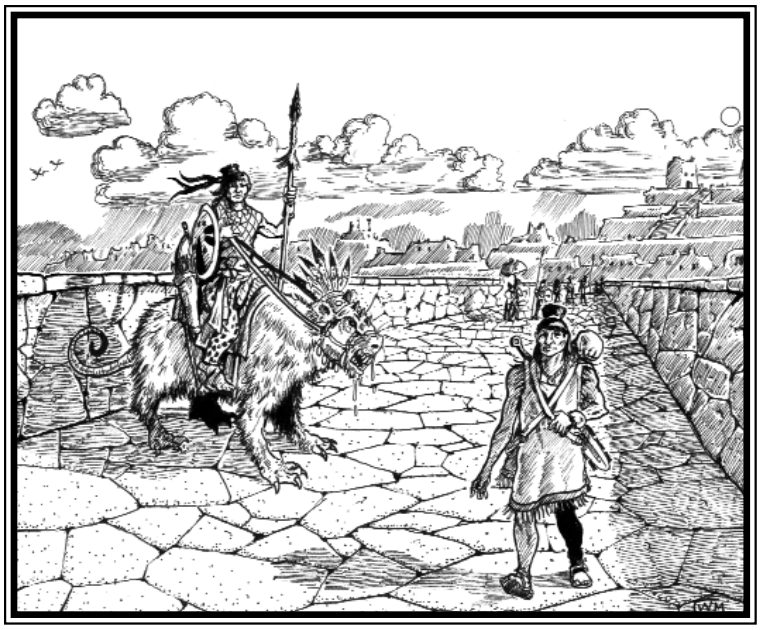
Kaatlan: (Large city, pop. 21,700) Dominating the forests and hills of western Xulmec, Kaatlan (*kot*-lan) has been an ally and enemy many times to every other city-state throughout the course of the peninsula's history. At once both warlike and peace-loving, the people are guided by the two gods who share rulership of Kaatlan. Whichever holds sway over its priests and sovereigns at any given time directs it to war or trade. Most feared is Coatlimict, the bloodthirsty Skull-Father, who commands his people to battle, capture, and sacrifice all others. More benevolent is Calchoti, the goddess of rain and bringer of life, who through her followers extends the welcoming hand of friendship to all other nations. While Coatlimict demands blood sacrifice, the only sacrifices Calchoti requests are gifts of charity and personal devotion.

The political dichotomy of Kaatlan unnerves its neighboring city-states. Even in times of peace, merchants from neighboring cities approach well-armed, ever unsure of Kaatlan's disposition. Most are willing to accept this duality and trade with them, for Kaatlan is Xulmec's primary supplier of gold and greenstone; the former is famous for appealing to the greed of foreigners and the latter has sacred value to most Southlanders. Kaatlan regularly trades with the Criestine Colonies by means of Omian Pass, but whenever the creeds of Coatlimict become dominant, the colonists are quick to withdraw the hand of commerce.

Presently, the city-state is ruled by King Oztahua, a warrior who serves the interests of Calchoti. However, his truest friend and royal advisor is Yaotopol, a priest of Coatlimict, and many fear the day when the king yields to his friend's counsel of bloodshed.

Kaatlan's legend of the Feathered Hunt ends with the chief unexpectedly cornering a cockatrice the size of a man. The hideous bird-thing turned the chief into the stone statue that now stands at the edge of the great city itself. Yet since that fateful day, the people of Kaatlan have found the flocks of small cockatrices that dwell on the plains beyond their city to be a boon, deterring invaders with the threat of magical petrification.

Maras: (Large city, pop. 23,090) When Ahpuchac, first chief of Maras (muh-*ross*), found his quarry in the



Feathered Hunt, he stood face to face with a great jaguar, sitting at the edge of a deep cenote. The dire beast eventually dove into the cavernous sinkhole, and after settling his people into the surrounding region, Ahpuchac became obsessed with his vision and eventually ventured into the great hole himself. This natural well, considered the sacred grave of their chief, became the center of the growing city. Several years later, Ahpuchac "resurfaced" as the Black Jaguar, the god in whose province the Underworld of Xulmec belief lies.

Dominating the southern rim of Xulmec, the city-state of Maras is a realm teaming with life and beauty. Endless rainforests surround limestone hills, sawgrass marshes, and sheltered coves. Mangrove and hardwood jungles lie to the west surrounding Yectena Bay, while the rocky shoreline with its sheltered coves lies to the south and east. Of greatest spiritual significance to the people are the freshwater cenotes that riddle their domain—large limestone sinkholes that lead to an enormous network of subterranean rivers. Aside from supplying clear, fresh water to the city and its outlying villages, these waterways are believed to lead eventually to Mictlan, the Underworld—much like the Mochitla River.

Each of the hundreds of cenotes in Maras is different. Many lie beneath stony overhangs, while others are open to the sky like wells. The caverns within are expansive and beautiful, filled with crystal-blue waters and the limestone teeth of stalactites and stalagmites. The natives' preoccupation with Mictlan has led to numerous expeditions among the caves and rivers below. The Maras continually work to secure this subterranean realm from mortal enemies even as Ahpuchac himself secures it from immortal enemies and evil divinities. Encounters with deep-dwelling creatures have become more commonplace over the years, and recent skirmishes with drow patrols venturing close to the surface may be a warning of a greater conflict to come.

The city itself is a vast sprawl of pyramids that scarcely intrude on the natural world. Houses and temples are spaced within gaps in the rainforest and carved into the limestone hills. At the very heart of the city, below the sacred Temple of the Cat, lies the largest cenote of Maras—its depths considered the lair of the Black Jaguar himself. King Zacatal is the current ruler of Maras, a warrior renowned for his uncompromising defense against the mortal threats from below.

Teotcoatlan: (Metropolis, pop. 42,600) At the end of the Feathered Hunt, Mazlopan, first chief of the tribe that founded Teotcoatlan, beheld a couatl of great size winding a sinuous dance above an enormous lake. Taking this vision as an omen, he laid the foundations of Teotcoatlan, the City of Divine Serpents, upon an island at the center of Lake Tlanec. When Mazlopan passed into death, he declined divine status so that his friend Huamec could ascend in his place.

Teotcoatlan is the glorious pinnacle of Xulmec civilization. Sometimes called the Gilded City for its golden avenues and glittering spires, the expansive metropolis is connected to the mainland by three stone causeways that span the waters of Lake Tlanec. Within the city proper, canals allow for canoe traffic along each major street, and on its outskirts, fields of *chinampas* are arrayed to feed the populace. In the central plaza, the immense World Pyramid rivals the sacred monuments of old Zimala in size. The tall structure is surmounted by twin temples dedicated to Madrah and Huamext, the gods greatest revered by the Teotcoatlans. A series of ascending channels, designed to accommodate serpentine bodies, are a tribute to the guardian nagas the Xulmecs once served. Carvings along each tier of the pyramid tell the history of the Xulmec people.

Except in times of war, Teotcoatlan welcomes all Xulmecs freely, but visitors are expected to pay tribute at one of the city's many temples to gain the graces of its people. Temples and shrines for every Xulmec god can be found here, although Huamecti, Necalli, and Yaotlamec are favored above all, save Madrah himself. Even foreign clerics are treated with respect, albeit grudgingly at times. Teotcoatlan is a city of religious tolerance, one of the few places in the Southlands where foreigners can find sanctuary and worship freely.

Teotcoatlan is ruled by King Mactezu and Queen Itlanexca, betrothed adolescents newly granted the full powers of their titles with the passing of Mactezu's mother, Queen Cetlana. Rumors have spread far and wide that the young king and queen are mentored by a benevolent guardian naga in the deep halls of the palace, who teaches them the virtues of Cynhara, the peace-loving goddess fathered by Madrah himself millennia ago. Reports of such a creature trouble the cynical nobles of the city and generate unrest among those who profit from strife.

Boasting the largest military in all of Xulmec, the Teotcoatlans are respected by all. They are also the most famous riders of the huezcatla, their soldiers seemingly living on huezcatla-back and always patrolling the fringes of Lake Tlanec and the nearby rivers.

Zimala

(The Old Naga Empire)

No Ruler

Population: Unknown

Resources: Gold, silver, jewelry, jade

Capital: Teoyotlan

The Island of Obsidian, Zimala, is a lost world riddled with ancient ruins, buried wealth, and death in many forms. At least, that is how the nations of the Northlands regard it. The truth of this unsettled realm lies beyond the Azcatlepi Jungle and behind the monolithic Nahualli Mountains. As the fabled homeland of the nagas—said to be one of the first races to crawl the face of Áereth and having built one of history's most glorious civilizations—it is a place about which many tales are told and few facts are known.

The humans of Xulmec, whose education and civilization were refined by the nagas, know better than their Northland cousins to penetrate the hunting grounds of their ancient masters. Nevertheless, boatmen from Darawan and rangers from Maras are known to sell their services as guides to foreign explorers—provided they are paid well and in advance.

Though their society is long since shattered and their magic no longer unified, nagas are by no means extinct. Some lurk still in the dark places, coiled and hateful. Many have made their way, one by one, to lands beyond their old borders, and it is not unheard of for nagas to forge alliances with other beings. Naturally dominant, nagas make servants out of lesser creatures. Many lone nagas, insane and malevolent, now wander hidden beneath the surface of the world. Yet most are still found here, in the prolific jungles where nature—and nature's most fearsome servants—roam free.

Zimala holds great appeal to the Northland kingdoms. The promise of untold wealth, lost magics, and lush natural resources is a constant siren cry to the avaricious kings and lord-barons. Many expeditions have launched, but the dangers of the Barrier Isles and the Surya Sea forces most explorers to find an alternate route. Those who reach the mainland must press through the dense Azcatlepi Jungle, a humid realm as rife with tropical flora as with bloodthirsty fauna.

Monstrous creatures such as achaierai, behirs, and shaduars are said to prowl the shadowy depths. Yet tales also speak of sentinels sent by the gods to watch over the once-blessed island, beneficent creatures such as couatls and lillends who offer lost explorers safety for a day or week. Behind the curtain of rainforests lie great cities raised millennia ago by the magic of nagas and the hands of their servants and slaves. Rumored to lair in these ruins are the nagas themselves, ready with poisonous fang and lethal spell against intruders who would plunder their homes. Guardian nagas, the exiled species that once befriended humans, are said to wait in solemn vigilance over the tombs and oldest secrets of the Zimalan Empire. Whether an adventurer today would face their friendship or their wrath is a matter of great speculation.

In the millennia since the fall of the Zimalan Empire, nature has reclaimed the land where its cities were built. Few maps exist now that mark the location of these vanished cities, though rumor suggests that the kings and queens of the Xulmec city-states may possess some. To date, only the ruined city of Teoyotlan, the ancient capital of Zimala, has been found and is often marked on explorers' maps. Such a mark, however, does not mean the perilous journey to the city itself is any easier to make.

Chapter 3
The Lostlands

Once one of the cradles of civilization, the scattered realms that comprise the Lostlands are but shadows of the mighty empire that brought them to life. Although the Sphinx Emperors have been gone for eons, their legacy lives on—virtually all of the tribes and nations in this desolate region remain entwined with the past in some manner or another. Travelers from the North have always found that journeying to the Lostlands is akin to stepping through a portal in time—the majestic buildings in these exotic lands are all centuries old, the poetry and paintings are products of artists long deceased, and the laws and traditions, to be charitable, are barbaric and primitive. The rest of the world has moved toward the Age of Man; the Lostlands, primal and savage, have not.

For this reason, many sages believe that the Lostlands are doomed to remain savage and bleak for still more centuries to come. Unlike their neighbors to the North, the denizens of the Lostlands have been unable to let go of their past, and so cannot forge their own identity. While several scholars believe that this is merely the result of eons of slavery—the former servants of the Sphinx Emperors still do not know how to act as masters—others believe the stagnancy of the region to have a more sinister cause. Several theories champion the notion that the races currently living in the Lostlands are unwitting caretakers, controlled by powerful eldritch forces and unable to become independent. These theories also claim that when certain prophecies come to pass, the Sphinx Emperors will return to their homelands, and reclaim their birthright and power.

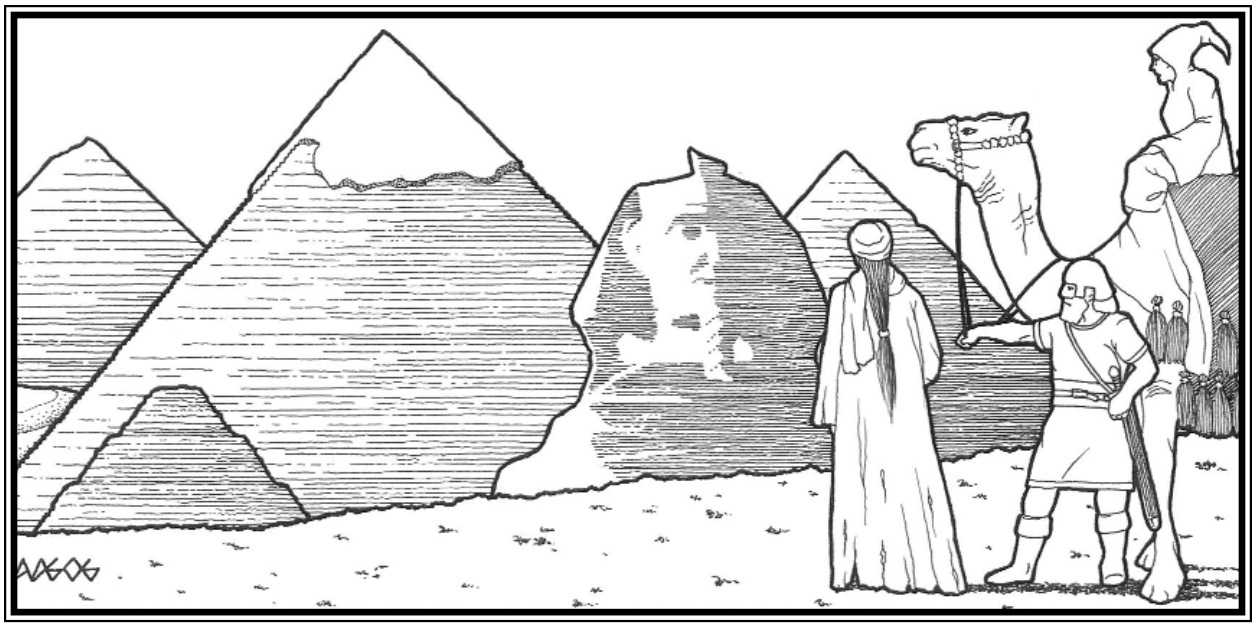
The legendary ferocity of the Lostlands is also what makes the region a mystery to the rest of the world. Few who dare to make the arduous journey down to these wild regions ever return to civilization … even fewer return unscarred by the experience. Not without good reason is it said that the Lostlands are a breeding ground for madness. However, ancient stories and riddles about the Khonsurian Empire and its treasures lead certain adventurous souls—the brave and the foolish—to this part of the world. It is commonly said that every mortal desire can be lost or found, bought or sold in the Lostlands … it is all just a matter of paying the price.

Climate and Seasons

For the most part, the Lostlands are home to challenging and oftentimes hostile environments. The temperatures and seasons in this part of the world are relatively constant, with uncomfortable warmth permeating this strange region throughout the seasons. The only primary difference between the various regions of the Lostlands is precipitation—some areas are quite arid, while others are dank and humid, with their skies constantly darkened by ominous storm clouds. Only in these humid regions is the passing of the seasons apparent, as the summer and autumn seasons offer brief respite from the unending rains.

The nations of the Lostlands are dominated by the vast Ghetrian Desert. As go the fortunes of the desert, so go the rest of the Lostlands. Mild seasons in the desert generally mark good weather and bountiful crops in the region, while powerful sandstorms or blistering summers can create havoc. Only the secretive Isles of Tharnaka manage to escape the touch of the desert, but even there, the lush jungles and persistently heavy rains make the lands virtually inhospitable to travelers.

In the northernmost regions of the Lostlands, the environment is not quite as treacherous as in the rest of the forbidding territory, yet it still has its perils. The Vermilion Steppes, still gently touched on its southern border by the desert, can reach blistering temperatures during the summer months. However, the area is also renowned for the powerful winds that slash across the crimson grasslands, dropping temperatures at night to near-freezing. The fact that the elven tribes can even grow crops in this violent region, let alone do so successfully, is a tribute to the skill and the persistence of these wild creatures. This is the part of the Lostlands that is perhaps best known to the rest of the world, as most of its more civilized merchants can be found in this particular region.



The center of the Lostlands is completely dominated by two massive areas: the Ghetrian Desert and the Devil's Cauldron, which still burns brightly at the westernmost border of the desert. All life depends on the twin rivers that wind their way through this hellish inferno, the Ctesiphal and the Ctabakul (or the Twins, as they are commonly called in the remnants of the Old Empire). All of the inhabited towns and cities lie on the banks of these rivers, save for the dark city of Rhaz al-Khali, which is rumored to thrive only by the grace—or the damnation—of the darkest gods. Even the old imperial roads never stray too far from the banks of these mighty rivers, serving as a reminder that to wander too far into the desert is to risk death, madness … or worse.

In the southernmost regions of the Lostlands, the Herennia Mountains serve to shield most of the area from the punishing heat of the Ghetrian Desert. However, this region is no less hostile, as thick, sinister jungles sprawl relentlessly over this territory. Between the powerful rainy seasons and the gigantic black trees that tower over the land, the light of the sun rarely reaches the ground, keeping the region perpetually shrouded in shadow. The few breaks in the rainy seasons are marked by the coming of the Pteral Swarms, which rain death upon the land instead of dark water.

Timekeeping and Celestial Bodies

The manner by which time is measured in the Lostlands was established eons ago by the first rulers of the Khonsurian Empire. This calendar, which is commonly called the Sphinx Calendar throughout the rest of the world, is based on the lunar cycle, and spans only 10 months, each of which is 35 days. A leap month called the Imperial Reckoning is inserted into the calendar every third year (or, in times past, by imperial decree) to restore balance between the calendar and the traditional seasons. The Imperial Reckoning lasts 15 days, and is marked in most of the nations of the Lostlands with three festival days—one to open the Reckoning (the Dawnday), one at the month's midpoint (the Midday), and one to close the Reckoning (the Duskday). A few areas in the Lostlands have adopted the more modern Criestine calendar, but most of its inhabitants still cling to the old customs and follow the traditional Sphinx Calendar.

Each of the individual nations and religions of the Lostlands celebrate many holy days during the year, and travelers can expect to encounter any number of festivals and feasts. While there are few common festival days or celebrations, the following holidays are common to all cultures:

Day of the Fifth Prince: Celebrated each year during the summer months, this three-day festival is a time of somber mourning and reflection, meant to honor the dead. The holiday dates back to the Second Dynasty of the Khonsurian Empire, when a favorite son of the great Emperor Cnedaten—Djedkara, the Fifth Prince—vanished under mysterious circumstances, supposedly kidnapped by a powerful demon prince and taken to the Underworld. Although few still care to honor the loss of the Fifth Prince (except in Xa Deshret), the tradition of remembering the missing and the dead during this time remains throughout the entire region. Most formal burials take place during this festival, followed by traditional toasts of wine to the dead.

Shadows Fall: This holiday, which is celebrated on the fourth day of each new year, marks the anniversary of the arrival of the Shadow Star—the great dark star that fell from the heavens and cracked the world, creating the great crater in the eastern regions of the Vermilion Steppes known as the Devil's Cauldron. Like the madness that was unleashed during the coming of the Shadow Star, the revelries of Shadows Fall are marked by chaos. The celebrants of Shadows Fall typically wear loud, outrageous costumes and drink copious amounts of hard spirits throughout this two-day festival, and the feasting is capped with the burning of giant crimson pyres, which are said to drive away evil spirits and the touch of madness from the souls of the innocent.

Thirdstar: Celebrated every third year, this holiday is traditionally observed a dozen or so days before the Summer Solstice, when three stars—Pharisen, Otergal, and Xherhu—align themselves together in a straight line above the moon. Thirdstar is a holiday of new beginnings, and it is considered fortuitous to embark upon new journeys or enterprises at this time. Wars (and offering of peace) are often declared at Thirdstar. Additionally, it is believed that the gates to both heaven and hell open during the stellar alignment, allowing spirits to travel between the various planes of existence.

Ironically, while the holiday is celebrated throughout the Lostlands as a time of beginnings, it still possesses very different meanings to the region's various cultures. It began in the Khonsurian Empire, where it marked the arrival and ascension to power of the sphinxes. The nalvor still inhabiting the remains of the old Empire continue to celebrate the holiday for this reason. However, in most of the other kingdoms of the Lostlands, the belief is held that the day marks the fall of the Empire and the beginning of the newer kingdoms. Also, in Rhaz al-Khali, it is thought that the day marks the "beginning of the end"; the Day of Apocalypse that this nation anxiously awaits is prophesied to begin during the alignment of the three stars.

Regardless of region perceptions, Thirdstar is usually celebrated with much feasting and revelry throughout the Lostlands. Additionally, in most of the kingdoms in this savage region (except for in Rhaz al-Khali), young men and women receive a small tattoo of three stars on their right wrist, marking the beginning of their journey into adulthood.

Kingdoms, Tribal Lands, and City-States

What follows is an index of the various kingdoms, principalities, tribes, and free cities of the Lostlands. The noted populations are only rough estimates; little facts regarding the Lostlands are known by the scholars of the North, and many of the "truths" about this savage region may in fact be decades, if not centuries, old. The number of sages in the world that possess copious amounts of accurate knowledge regarding the Lostlands can be counted on the fingers of one man's hand.

Compounding the difficulties of providing accurate information for the various "nations" of the Lostlands is the fact that few formal nations exist in this part of the world. Most of the borders between the various territories of the Lostlands are under dispute; only those borders clearly defined by natural, impenetrable boundaries serve to provide any sort of clarity.

Lostlanders generally live in the ruins of cities once built by the slaves of the Sphinx Empire. Those who move too far past the walls of these once-mighty cities risk the wrath of the evil bandits or monstrous horrors wandering throughout the region. Even the farmlands and herding areas of the Lostlands tend to be found protected behind the walls of the sprawling ancient cities. Any creature daring to live far beyond the protection of a city wall, or of a tribe or clan, is either powerful indeed or courting death.

The majority of resources of these many tribes and kingdoms are all old—like carrion, the people of the Lostlands are still picking away at the remains of their Sphinx masters and the Old Khonsurian Empire. The farmlands, while no longer required to sustain the populations enjoyed by the Empire at the height of its power centuries ago, provide smaller and smaller crops with each passing year. No new mines have been discovered since the halcyon days of the Empire, and those that have not since run dry or collapsed have been all but picked clean. Although few in the Lostlands are aware of this grave situation, it is likely that only a few decades remain before the resources of the Lostlands run dry. Then, without a shadow of a doubt, famine and civil war shall run across this wild country like a plague. It is most likely that this inevitable plague shall infect the Northlands and Southlands as well …

Achaemia

The Grand Prince of Princes, Cambujia Calhi

Population: 12,450 (rakshasa 55%, other 20%, human 10%, drow 7%, half-elf 5%, genie 3%)

Resources: Silks, oils, ships

Capital: The City of Achaemia

This bustling city-state is ruled by the enigmatic rakshasa, and zealously guarded by djinni and other genies. Located along the desolate coast of the Twisted Sea, the strange city still manages to attract a surprising array of visitors. Achaemia is commonly called "The Gateway of Áereth" by sailors, due to the fact that all sorts of demihuman, humanoid, and monstrous creatures casually wander the streets of the city. Extradimensional portals are said to exist in the ancient sewers beneath the city, and while this rumor has never been confirmed by reliable sources, the djinni that fiercely guard the sewer gates seem to lend the idea credibility. Many grand marketplaces can be found within the walls of Achaemia as well; while not nearly as impressive as those found in Gadjarria or Quaysarria, they are still remarkable in their own right.

For many years, Achaemia was an active participant in the affairs of the Lostlands. A human mercenary army known as the Company of the Bright Barrow served as the military might for the rakshasa city for many generations, inspiring fear throughout the Lostlands at the mere mention of their name. At Achaemia's whim, many of the small bandit kingdoms that traversed the Ghetrian Desert over the past several centuries were obliterated by the blades of the Bright Barrow. Even one of the mighty Vermilion Tribes proved to be no match for this mercenary army—it was utterly destroyed in a grand, monumental battle. The Company of the Bright Barrow has not been seen in the Lostlands for many years, however, leading many enemies of the city to wonder if the mercenary army has been disbanded by its rakshasa masters … or if the Company is simply doing battle on another plane of existence.

On rare occasion, the master rakshasa artisans of Achaemia build massive ships of sea called grandships, which have tremendous range and speed. Many merchants from the Northlands and Southlands purchase the grandships from the rakshasa for sailing conventional trade routes, but in recent years it has been noted that some have set sail to the east across the Twisted Sea … and none have returned. Although the disappearance of Denys Morcault and his fleet led most sailors throughout

Áereth to believe that only the realms of the dead lie beyond the Twisted Sea, the increased number of grandships headking off in that directions has led some to whisper that perhaps something else, like treasure beyond imagination, can be found to the east—and whatever that something may be, the rakshasa know its secrets.

Djeser al-Maqqara

The Slave King, Lord Marko Hellmont

Population: 252,960 (human 66%, humanoid 31%, other 3%)

Resources: Slaves, beasts of burden

Capital: —

Thriving upon the misery of others, the city of Djeser al-Maqqara is the largest and most infamous slave market in the world. The city was once one of the greatest in the Khonsurian Empire, known for its exquisite temples and palaces. The remnants of these once-proud buildings now serve as pens for slaves, filled to capacity and nearly beyond by the new, unscrupulous masters of the city.

After the fall of the Khonsurian Empire, the city quickly

fell into ruin, and its location on the eastern coast of the Empyrean Ocean made it an ideal hideout for rogues, slavers, and pirates alike. However, it has only been in the last century or so that the city has risen to prominence as the world's premier slave market. The reason for this was the arrival of Lord Darryn Hellmont. A former nobleman from Crieste, Hellmont was stripped of his title and exiled from his homelands because of his dealings in slavery—specifically, his selling of his peasants as slaves to foreign lands. However, if the crown of Crieste had sought to punish Hellmont, its aim was sadly misguided. By allowing him passage to Djeser al-Maqqara, the corrupt nobleman was able to restart a far more profitable slave trade than he ever had before, and with his contacts in Crieste, he was able to turn the city into the undeniable slave capital of the world. He was also able to establish unbreakable control over the city—his grandson, Marko, rules over Djeser al-Maqqara with the same ruthless authority that his grandfather once enjoyed. He and a group of six other powerful slave masters are known simply as the Slavers' Council.

The law in Djeser al-Maqqara is simple: "Pay the Slavers' Council." Any crime from petty theft to blatant murder is conceivably legal in the city, provided that the slave masters of the city give the action their approval and receive a tax upon that action. An individual who feels wronged by another may take his grievance to one of the slave masters of the ruling council; from there, virtually anything can happen. The slave master may take no action, or may levy a tax … either against the plaintiff or defendant. The tax may range from a single copper coin to the lives of one's entire family. The taxes are enforced by the council's own tax collection squad—a mix of half-ogre barbarians and skilled elven assassins. Despite having but one official law, Djeser al-Maqqara remains a fairly orderly and civilized city.

Although primarily sold to be used as laborers, slaves for virtually any purpose or vice can be found in the street markets of the desert city. Pleasure slaves, trained by some of the best courtesans and artists in the entire world, are available at the auction blocks to the highest bidder. Entire trained legions of slave soldiers are available to rent or to buy—these range from common soldiers to specialized warriors, such as archers or cavalrymen. These mercenary armies have been known to turn the tide in many a civil war between feuding noblemen.

Also available for sale are trained, exotic beasts. This is a more recent development in Djeser al-Maqqara, one of Marko Hellmont's design, and has proven in recent years to be extremely profitable. Trained beasts such as basilisks, chimeras, or even dragons can be found for the right price. Djeser al-Maqqara has become home to some of the most skilled animal trainers in the world, who are known to blend sorcery, psionics, and more conventional training methods to mold the minds of their charges into whatever an owner wishes. It is also said that these trainers can do the same to humans, or elves, or other intelligent creatures.

Another new venture of Marko Hellmont was the introduction of the gladiator pits. Although gladiatorial fighting is somewhat commonplace in other nations, the fights and spectacles offered by Djeser al-Maqqara are without a doubt the grandest the world has ever known. The Arena of Eternal Flame, built from crimson slabs of marble, sits on the northern end of the city and seats nearly one hundred thousand bloodthirsty patrons a day, with nearly two hundred thousand spectators on festival days and for special events. While the majority of the fighting takes place between conventional gladiators—albeit the finest that the world has to offer—it is the more unconventional battles that draw the most attention. Gladiators pit themselves against foul, dangerous monsters like the remorhaz; thrice yearly, battles of magic between wizards and sorcerers take place, leading to grisly displays of magic within the Arena that are unrivaled. Of course, the gambling that occurs on all gladiatorial matches—supervised by Hellmont and his slave masters, of course—ensures that the coffers of Djeser al-Maqqara remain full at all times.

A unique alliance between Djeser al-Maqqara and the Barrier Isles exists, allowing both to remain independent and profitable. In earlier times, the two independent city-states were bitter rivals, each one trying to outdo the other and engaging in clandestine wars. However, in recent years, both the Barrier Isles and Djeser al-Maqqara came to the realization that they faced far too many enemies without also trying to destroy one another. Djeser al-Maqqara scaled back its black market and piracy activities, choosing instead to focus solely on the slave trade; meanwhile, the Barrier Isles renounced its claims on the slave trade, serving only to ferry the human cargo of Djeser al-Maqqara from one land to another. While not exactly allies, both Djeser al-Maqqara and the Barrier Isles look out for one another, providing each other assistance when profitable to do so; bounty hunters searching for criminals in either area inevitably find their efforts stymied to no end. Alliances and partnerships with thieves' guilds and assassins' guilds throughout the world make Djeser al-Maqqara a haven for rogues and criminals of all kinds.

Gadjarria

Caliph of the Free Tribes, Hazaay Gho

Population: 6,338 (halfling 91%, human 6%, other 3%)

Resources: Trade goods, secrets

Capital: Bahadur

More commonly called the Kingdom of Gypsies or the Kingdom of Thieves, this nation is comprised of loosely allied clans of halfling wanderers. These tribes keep to the southernmost regions of the Lostlands, generally skirting the outer regions of Xyr Muthal and the Gloom Marshes of Tashgar, foraging for wild crops and animals in these regions. Despite its extreme isolation, this wandering band of halfling gypsies is still well known and well sought after by many travelers. This is partially due to its close contacts with the Bazaar of Quaysarria, and partly due to the goods that the halfling gypsies choose to sell—namely, forbidden knowledge.

The united tribes of Gadjarria convene annually at the abandoned Khonsurian city of Bahadur, during the Day of the Fifth Prince. It is during this time of feasting that the various chieftains of each gypsy tribe meet and hold council, determining where the tribes will travel and what tasks need be done during the coming year. If necessary, a caliph to lead all the tribes is elected, but such an election has not been held for over fifty years. The Caliph Hazaay Gho has held this position during this time, and he shows no sign of relinquishing his position. Hazaay Gho is famous for a sharp tongue and a sharp dagger—and both have been known to strike without warning.

Gadjarria is reputed to hold arcane secrets that can be found nowhere else. These secrets may come in the form of items—artifacts outlawed in a dozen nations, perhaps, or tomes thought only to exist in the infernal planes of torment—or they may come in the form of the spoken word, uttered by the various mystics of the Gadjarrian tribes. Though not spellcasters or practitioners of magic in the traditional sense, the Gadjarrian mystics have the ability to divine both past and future with uncanny precision, and to cast powerful hexes on unsuspecting souls. These services are available with frightening ease among any of the Gadjarrian tribes, but always at a high price.

Despite such sinister trappings, however, the gypsies of Gadjarria are not evil. They merely believe that they act to provide what others desire, even though these desires are invariably evil and corrupt. In fact, it is Gadjarrian

custom to deny a customer's request three times, and always with the phrase "You do not want what you seek." It is only after the fourth request is made that a price is named, and the task completed.

Legend has it that the gypsies of Gadjarria are cursed to wander the eastern regions of the Lostlands, and are doomed to do so until the end of days as penance for their dabbling in dark arts. Others believe that there is a more practical purpose to their wanderings—that an ancient Khonsurian treasure lies somewhere in this section of the Lostlands, and that somehow the city of Bahadur acts as a key to this treasure. No one knows why they choose to relentlessly wander through this dangerous territory, but in Gadjarria, perhaps the answer can be learned … for a price.

Bahadur: (Small town, pop. 2,890) Once a mighty military outpost for the Khonsurian Empire, this barren town is all but abandoned, occupied by a handful of grain mills and a few smithies, which support the basic needs of the wandering tribes. Most of the stone buildings of the old city have been torn down and used to reinforce the walls surrounding it. When the tribes convene during the summer months, they instead choose to put up their pavilion tents in these clearings, rather than use the few remaining abandoned buildings.

The only building of significance in Bahadur is a giant fortress, made of black marble walls and standing nearly five hundred feet tall. Even though no gypsy has set foot in the fortress for nearly a thousand years, its gates remain locked and fires still burn brightly inside of it. The old Khonsurian histories speak of the Black Fortress of Necherophet, where the Pharaoh Senakhet was murdered by his brother Novurath, who usurped his throne and took his crown. The ghost of the slain Pharaoh is said to endlessly walk the corridors of the Black Fortress in search of vengeance and blood. Though there is no proof

in the written histories, the Black Fortress of Necherophet and the abandoned fortress at Bahadur are thought to be one and the same.

Gorhgijesk

Lord of the World Below, Gyoratyllion Ghorwu, First of His Name

Population: 901,000 (drow 59%, duergar 14%, derro 10%, abollar 7%, aboleth 6%, other 4%)

Resources: Mineral ores, precious metals

Capital: Rythnaisym

When the easternmost regions of the Vermilion Steppes were shattered by the falling of the Shadow Star, it created a smoking crater called the Devil's Cauldron—a vast area miles wide and descending far into the depths of the earth. From the dark recesses of this eternally burning crater appeared a kingdom of vile depravity, one that immediately began to stretch its evil talons across the Lostlands. Whether the creatures lurking in the depths of the Cauldron were always there, or arrived with the Shadow Star, no one can say for sure. However, what it known for certain is their dark ambition. They clearly represent one of the most dangerous threats known to the entirety of the Lostlands.

Gorhgijesk is ruled by an uneasy alliance between the aboleth and the drow. The supreme ruler of the evil underground kingdom has always been the mighty Gyoratyllion Ghorwu, a vampire aboleth who supposedly has lived and ruled for well over two thousand years. However, providing guidance to Ghorwu is the Council of Three, which is comprised of the mightiest war leaders in the kingdom. Presently—and for the first time—the Council is comprised entirely of drow war leaders. Tensions between the aboleth and the drow have never been higher, and while Ghorwu's iron grip on power has always seemed as certain as the rising sun, rumblings from within the Council indicate that perhaps the time of the drow in Gorhgijesk is at hand.

The servants and slaves of Gorhgijesk are the duergar and derro, who resent their aboleth masters with a passion. However, the aboleth have been able to beautifully manipulate the two races of evil dwarves against each other for centuries, keeping them focused upon fighting one another instead of uniting against their masters. Both derro and duergar—when not engaged in their lethal clan feuds—work the extensive mines located deep beneath the Devil's Cauldron. The duergar work the more common ores—copper, iron, gold, and the like—while the derro work the far more dangerous one, namely the mines for mithril and shadowstone. The rare ore shadowstone, while highly coveted for its magical properties, is said to cause insanity in those who remain in contact with it over time. Indeed, many believe that shadowstone is what originally caused the derro to go mad. The rare minerals found beneath Gorhgijesk are also the reason that "good" kingdoms have not united to destroy this sinister nation—the truth of the matter is that while most of the world finds Gorhgijesk to be utterly abhorrent, the appeal of its valuable resources also makes it too valuable to destroy.

The other servants of Gorhgijesk are the abollar, monstrous hybrids of human and aboleth. Unlike the derro and duergar, the abollar serve their masters with fanatical loyalty, and would gladly die for their king and kingdom. The abollar comprise much of the military might of Gorhgijesk, and are known throughout the Lostlands for their military prowess. However, while rightfully feared, the abollar legions are known to achieve victory by sheer force and brutality rather than by any particular cunning or tactics. In recent years, much to the dismay of Gyoratyllion Ghorwu and his Council of Three, the armies of Gorhgijesk have been soundly defeated in several battles by the Vermilion Tribes.

The Devil's Cauldron is the main point of entry to Gorhgijesk for most of the world. Winding roads—some no wider than four feet—descend down the sides of the still-smoldering crater in wide spirals, eventually reaching the main roads to the cities of Gorhgijesk at the crater's bottom. Guides to these cities can typically be found making camp at the edge of the cauldron. Some are abollar emissaries who "officially" represent the underground kingdom, while others are rogue scouts from the Vermilion Tribes, cast out of their nation for unsavory reasons. The cities of Gorhgijesk can also be reached by underground rivers—fast skiffs are believed to move swiftly between Gorhgijesk and some of the other drow kingdoms in the World Below.

Gorhgijesk currently finds itself as a crossroads. While it has since time immemorial sought to conquer and dominate the rest of the world, it faces the dilemma of deciding what its next step toward that aim should be: Its desire to conquer parts of the surface world has become much more difficult with the rise of the Vermilion Tribes, while recent conflicts with the drow have equally jeopardized some of their below-ground ambitions.

Rythnaisym: (Metropolis, pop. 68,400) Also known as "The Devil's Eye," Rythnaisym is built over the remnants of the ancient meteor known as the Shadow Star. A twisting labyrinth of tunnels leads from the bottom of the Devil's Cauldron to this mighty city. Many of these tun-

nels are filled with horrors such as colonies of green slime, or packs of otyugh—without an experienced guide, traversing these tunnels without incident is all but impossible. Rythnaisym itself is surrounded by a moat of molten metal. Drawbridges of enchanted black iron are lowered but thrice a day, limiting entry into the city.

Prominent throughout the streets of Rythnaisym are the many public pools of hot salt water. Many of the aboleth within the city spend much of their time here, conducting both business and pleasure from the comfort of these hot pools. The pools are said to have many magical and regenerative properties, thought to be the result of being built over the remains of an ancient dragon graveyard.

Phumarik: (Small city, pop. 22,560) Home to the smithies of Gorhgijesk, the city is more commonly referred to as the "Unending Thunder" due to the incessant din of hammers relentlessly falling on anvils. Armor and swords for a small army can be made in a day in the smithies of Phumarik, if need be. Most of these skilled and proficient smiths are duergar, but the best of them are in fact a small clan of mercenary fire giants, renegades from the Northlands that made their way to the shadowy lands of Gorhgijesk. These giants are paid handsomely for their work by the Council of Three, and are known to hunt the tunnels surrounding Phumarik for sport, using trained manticores as hunting dogs.

Viomorgyn: (Small city, pop. 14,820) This city is home to many of the most infamous practitioners of the darkest arts of magic. Sealed behind thick stone walls, this underground enclave is perhaps the world's largest university of magic—the Arcanum Infernal—and nearly all of its areas of study are forbidden throughout the rest of the known world. Although the majority of its most esteemed teachers are of drow origin, Viomorgyn is unusual amongst the cities of Gorhgijesk in that it is more open to outsiders; many of its teachers and students are of human origin, and have traveled thousands of dangerous miles to learn the teachings that are available at Viomorgyn. Such teachings come at a price, however: Visitors to the magical underground city are not permitted to leave for the rest of their living days. Those few who manage to escape are hunted down like dogs by elite drow assassins.

Morena Nova

The Grand and Majestic Emperor, Grimaud IV

Population: 54,900 (human 95%, dwarf 3%, other 2%)

Resources: Trade goods

Capital: Dupleiux

The self-styled Kingdom of Morena Nova is something of a pariah in the Lostlands. Formed by expatriates and dissidents exiled from a disgraced duchy of Crieste, Morena Nova struggles to maintain the "purity" of its cultural traditions and zealous religious beliefs from the influence of the surrounding Lostlands. Although this adherence to tradition and custom is nothing short of remarkable—traveling through Morena Nova is much akin to stepping through a portal in time, traveling to the early days of the Criestine Empire—the Lostlands have still exerted a subtle influence. Over the years, the kingdom has slowly transformed from the proverbial stranger in a strange land to an unwilling bridge between the Northlands and Southlands.

The land that would eventually become Morena Nova was originally discovered eight hundred years ago by the Criestine Emperor Mattias II. He used this relatively desolate jungle expanse as a staging ground for a holy crusade against Xa Deshret, which he saw as a nation of unclean heathens. Although this holy war was an unmitigated disaster, it did serve to establish the city of Dupleiux as a viable colony, capable of defending itself against the other nations of the Lostlands. When the Schism of Morena occurred some four hundred years later, the defeated Duke of Morena and a few loyal followers set sail for the Lostlands and the fledgling colony of New Morena, and began a new kingdom in exile. As Crieste had mostly lost interest in the colony by this time, the formation of "Morena Nova" met little resistance. The exiled nobles became the new leaders of this renegade nation, and the direct descendants of those exiles are now the present-day lords and ladies of the Morenan court.

Although the first hundred years of Morena Nova's existence were difficult, the small kingdom of proud exiles fought hard to rise above the savage wastelands that had abruptly become their new home. Fortunately for the exiles that formed Morena Nova, a wild herb called marishi-tao grows in great abundance throughout the valleys in the region. The herb, which possesses a number of magic healing properties, is difficult to grow properly, but the desperation and ingenuity of the Morenan settlers led to practical ways of cultivating it in mass quantities. Through this—and through reluctantly making trade

agreements with other nations of the Lostlands, such as Taijin and Quaysarria—Morena Nova was able to grow into a small but formidable power in the Lostlands. Even at the present time, rich Morenan nobles continue to grow this exotic herb, which is still the kingdom's main source of revenue. The original small, struggling farms have gradually become massive plantations the size of small cities, and are owned and supervised by the new Morenan gentry.

The society of Morena Nova is modeled after that of its Criestine ancestors. The courts, comprised of the royal family and several rich noblemen and aristocrats, hold sway over the rest of the city. Lesser merchants and artisans have some say in the goings-on of their city, while most of the commonfolk are merely the Emperor's servants, expected to obey his every whim. The harshness of the Lostlands has also injected this societal structure with a dose of brutal reality: Facing far greater dangers and having fewer numbers than their brethren in the Northlands, the crown of Morena Nova generally accedes to the demands of its people rather than face the threat of revolution. This reality has always been held in check by the pragmatism of its emperors; in recent years, though, concern has grown as the Emperor Grimaud IV's son, the Dauphin Prince and future Grimaud V, has shown the signs of megalomania that could one day be the kingdom's doom.

Presently, Morena Nova is experiencing a renaissance of sorts, which has filled the kingdom with both anticipation and fear. For many years, Morena Nova maintained a policy of isolationism. They viewed themselves as far too cultured and civilized to mix with the savage creatures of the Lostlands. However, increased trade between the dwarven Kingdom of Taijin and the rest of the known world has indirectly created a financial boon for Morena Nova, filling the coffers of the royal treasury with mountains of gold coins. The current political unrest in Crieste has also renewed some long-forgotten ties between Morena Nova and its former homeland. This has caused much excitement in the streets of the kingdom about the possibilities of a reunion with Crieste, or at least a friendly alliance. On the other hand, there is also a growing patriotic movement within Morena Nova that is proud of the independence it has achieved, and wants nothing to do with the mother empire that spurned it so long ago. Today, the future of the once-exiled kingdom is very much in question.

Dupleiux: (Large city, pop. 33,699) With humble beginnings as a crude fortress manned by a handful of scared colonial soldiers, the city of Dupleiux has transformed over the centuries into an impressive city. Sitting on the shores of the Khiazan River, Dupleiux is the main point of entry for many merchants, sailors, and adventurers traveling to the Lostlands. Most of the buildings are built from red clay, save the Royal Palace itself, which was painstakingly built from expensive, imported granite and black marble. The markets of Dupleiux are located at the corners of the city, with each given a specific day during the week to operate. It is not uncommon to see merchants scurrying from one corner of the city to another during the predawn hours, attempting to set up their wares in times for the opening of the new corner market.

Unknown to most citizens, the sewers of Dupleiux contain several golden idols of hideous monsters. The few sages who are aware of their existence say that their presence predates the Age of Dragons, and that they may signify the seal of a grand mystical lock—possibly something that could be trapping an infernal or even god-like being of immense power.

Bourdonnais: (Small city, pop. 10,895) This open city sprawls for miles across the plains of Morena Nova, with the oppressive sun beating down heavily upon the many fields of marishi-tao scattered throughout this region. Over twenty massive plantations grow the wild herb in this region; all the fields are tended by Morenan criminals and by slaves purchased from Djeser al-Maqqara. Due to the relentless heat and the slightly toxic nature of raw marishi-tao, slaves never last long in the fields of Bourdonnais—a field worker able to last more than two years is a rarity indeed.

Despite being in one of the most hostile regions of the world and having no walls to protect it, Bourdonnais is still considered to be one of the most secure cities in the Lostlands. This is because the plantations are closely guarded by an ancient golden dragon, one by the name of Foucauldé, who may have come over from Crieste with its original settlers. In exchange for tribute from the crown of Morena Nova, the proud dragon protects the plantations, keeping them safe from raiders.

Quaysarria

Emir of Shadhalia, Sha Abbas

Population: 14,875 (human 80%, half-elf 8%, halfling 7% other 5%)

Resources: Trade goods

Capital: Shadhalia

Better known as the Bazaar of Quaysarria, this traveling nation is perhaps the best-known kingdom of the Lostlands. While this is primarily due to the fact that the merchant kingdom is the least dangerous and most welcoming of all the nations of the Lostlands, it also has to do with its location. Located in the "no-man's land" between the Ghetrian Desert and the Vermilion Steppes, the ever-changing borders of Quaysarria fall squarely between the Northlands and the Lostlands. As such, it is fairly accessible to travelers, unlike the rest of the region. Additionally, this accessibility makes the nation one of the few reliable sources of information about the Lostlands that is available to the remainder of the world.

The kingdom is only a nation in the loosest sense of the word. Mainly, Quaysarria consists of a few of the northernmost cities of the Old Khonsurian Empire, now ruled by humans and united by a single but powerful thread. That thread is the famous traveling Bazaar of Quaysarria, which travels throughout the steppes and the deserts of the region. The cities tend to act as resting points for the bazaar, or places for the bazaar to seek refuge should it find itself under attack.

Quaysarria is ruled by the Emir Sha Abbas, who travels with the bazaar, and rarely visits the capital of Shadhalia. Affable and never without a smile, the Emir is an incredibly successful merchant with nerves of steel and an iron will—few other mortals would be capable of negotiating trade terms with the likes of Gorhgijesk and Djeser al-Maqqara, and fewer could negotiate deals that proved profitable. Part of the deals negotiated with all of these various places in the Lostlands and the Northlands are non-aggression treaties, making the Bazaar a veritable traveling safe haven (apart from the occasional attack by a rogue Vermilion Tribe). It is not uncommon for kings and queens from faraway warring nations to make their peace under a pavilion tent in the traveling Bazaar of Quaysarria.

The Bazaar is a place where nearly anything in the known world can be bought or sold. The few exceptions to this are slaves and black magic. This is not because of any sense of morality, though—it is more the result of negotiated deals with Djeser al-Maqqara and with the halflings of Gadjarria, who respectively own the markets on such items. Much of the Bazaar's success is due to the wide variety of merchants who travel thousands upon thousands of miles to reach it, particularly during the Seven Days of Gold. However, the Emir Sha Abbas often sends his own merchants through the world to look for new goods to buy or sell. This inadvertently gives the Bazaar yet another valuable commodity: information. A local proverb in Quaysarria says, "If someone in the world whispers a secret, someone in Quaysarria knows what it is."

Shadhalia: (Large town, pop. 7,220) A veritable ghost town for much of the year, this desert port city comes to life at the start of spring, when a festival known as the Seven Days of Gold takes place. During this time, merchants and ships from around the world come to Shadhalia, bringing all their goods with them. The seven-day festival is perhaps the largest market in the world, allowing goods from every corner to be freely bought and sold. Anyone in the world may participate in this market festival; however, all merchants must pay a festival tax in order to enter the city, making the Bazaar handsomely rich for seven days. Besides its share of merchants, the festival also attracts plenty of rogues and pirates, who lurk outside the city … and who often sell the ill-gotten goods stolen from these merchants back to the Emir for a finder's fee.

Naafi al-Yrka: (Small town, pop. 2,390) Like Shadhalia, the outpost of Naafi al-Yrka remains deserted throughout most of the year. The town essentially acts as the warehouse for the Bazaar of Quaysarria, and is only visited by the traveling city when its supplies run low. Despite the vast amount of goods and treasures contained within this city, it remains isolated, and is rarely attacked by bandits or thieves. This is because Naafi al-Yrka has two prominent, powerful guardians: massive copper dragons, known only as Bone and Battle. According to local legend, the dragons guarded the city long before the Bazaar began to meander through the Lostlands, and will continue to do so long after the Age of Man has ended. More pragmatic souls believe that the Emir struck a deal with the two mercenary dragons to guard his city—but what the actual terms of such a deal might be, no one knows for sure.

Rhaz al-Khali, City of

Overlord of the Undying City, the Immortal Shahriyel Jhek

Population: 96,253 (humans 35%, orcs 20%, half-orcs 16%, half-fiends 15%, monstrous humanoids 9%, dwarves 4%, elves 1%)

Resources: Slaves, black market trade

Capital: —

Rumors about the fabled lost city of Rhaz al-Khali are commonly found throughout the rest of the world. Although it seems that no two are alike, they all describe the city as a haven for the lost and the damned, a place for those with no future to find themselves and be born anew. Although the journey is said to be arduous and the city quite dangerous, redemption and hope can be found behind the metal walls of Rhaz al-Khali, should one be desperate enough to seek it.

Nothing could be further from the truth.

True, the city is vile and dangerous. But hope cannot be found in this desolate place. Rhaz al-Khali is ruled by the mad lich lord Shahriyel Jhek, who fervently believes that the end of the world is imminent … and that the end shall begin at the gates of Rhaz al-Khali. The only things to be found in the ruins of this once-proud city are fear, emptiness, and despair.

Once one of the most powerful cities of the old Khonsurian Empire, Rhaz al-Khali began its fall long before the rest of the Empire collapsed. The city was known as a conclave for some of the greatest wizards in recorded history. However, during some explorations into the darker aspects of magic, a portal to a hellish dimension opened up in the heart of the city, instantly transforming Rhaz al-Khali into a vile breeding ground for demonic creatures. The city was quickly abandoned, and chaos reigned supreme in its ruins, with fiends and the undead transforming the streets into a never-ending bloodbath.

Order was restored, however, with the arrival of Shahriyel Jhek some hundred-odd years ago. A fearsome lich with formidable power, Jhek instantly assumed control of the chaotic ruins, slaying all those who dared to challenge his power, and forcing the remaining fiends and half-fiends in the city to obey his every command.

Since Jhek's arrival, the lich has bent the will of every creature in Rhaz al-Khali to serve his obsession: an obscure, ancient prophecy called the *Riddle of Darkest Qartepre*. This prophecy speaks of the end of the world, and of the transformation of mortal existence into one of eternal torment. Because the few known travelers ever to return from Rhaz al-Khali during Shahriyel Jhek's reign have all gone mad, no one knows for certain what evil lurks beyond the city's iron walls. However, rumor has it that over a thousand souls a day are sacrificed to dark, ancient gods by the hand of Jhek himself, and the constant flow of slaves into the city from Djeser al-Maqqara lends some credibility to this whispered claim.

With a distinct absence of merchant caravans coming from Rhaz al-Khali (apart from the slavers of Djeser al-Maqqara), it is unclear how the city manages to exist, let alone thrive. Occasionally, an artifact from Rhaz al-Khali finds its way to black markets around the world, but apart from these items, nothing is known to ever leave the wicked place. Riders from the Vermilion Tribes have reported seeing strange airships sailing toward the city on moonless nights, leaving some sages to believe that the city in fact acts on behalf of a far greater power. Who or what that power may be, no one can say with authority.

The Kingdom of Taijin

His Majesty and Overlord of the Mountain Peaks, King Ogamito X

Population: 106,816 (dwarves 80%, gnomes 10%, humans 6%, other 4%)

Resources: Iron, copper, wrought metals, precious gemstones

Capital: Raiju Khor

Although little more than a few loosely connected dwarven cities, the Kingdom of Taijin has been a growing power in the Lostlands over the past few decades. Taijin sits in the Herrenia Mountains, just north of Morena Nova, which until recent years was its only significant trading partner. All of the kingdom's cities lie far beneath the mountains in the World Below, surrounded by endless caverns and rich mines. The dwarves of Taijin successfully exterminated all of the kobolds, goblins, and other evil humanoids that once laired in the mountains in a massive, genocidal war some centuries ago called the Seppuku Cleansing. As a result of this, Taijin and the mountains surrounding the kingdom are perhaps the safest region in all of the Lostlands—a fact now being realized by enterprising merchants all over Áerth.

Taijin is currently ruled by King Ogamito X, who has led the kingdom to its newfound prosperity. There are thirteen main Merchant Houses that govern Taijin on a day-to-day basis, but the King of Taijin holds ultimate authority over the nation. For the past eight hundred years, the largest of the Merchant Houses—the Bakar Deyoshi—held sway over the secluded underground nation, keeping it isolated from the rest of the world and limiting its trade opportunities to just the kingdom of Morena Nova. King Ogamito, however, is

from the younger upstart Merchant House of the Bakar Kigahara, and surprised many traditionalists in the Houses by daring to extend Taijin's reach. Over the past forty years, King Ogamito has made key alliances with Gadjerria, Quaysarria, the Vermilion Tribes, and Xa Deshret, greatly expanding the role of the dwarves in the Lostlands.

Ogamito also in recent years has begun to invite royalty and rich merchants from the Northlands and Southlands to be his royal guests in the palaces of Mount Raiju. Although invitations were politely declined at first, more and more important visitors from the far-flung corners of Áereth have made their way to the Herrenia Mountains, and have been suitably impressed by the grand kingdom lying beneath its peaks. While this has led to a surge of economic and political power for Ogamito and his kingdom, this influx of foreigners into Taijin has caused unrest amongst some of the rival Merchant Houses. Already, crime and violence have escalated to levels not known since the Seppuku Cleansing. Additionally, the influx of foreigners has led to sightings of goblins and trolls in the Herrenian Mountains, leading some to believe that retribution for the Seppuku Cleansing may not be far off.

Taijin is only reachable by a single path—an old imperial road leading from Morena Nova. This broken road winds slowly from Bourdonnais up to the dwarven city of Cyaxar, which acts as the primary gateway to the kingdom. The upper reaches of the road are quite treacherous, and either a ranger or a dwarven guide from Taijin is necessary to traverse the icy, serpentine pathway. Despite the difficulties in reaching this dwarven kingdom, Taijin's peaceful nature and even-handed temperament make it the most sought-after trade partner in the Lostlands. Taijin's dealings with the traveling bazaars of Quaysarria and Gadjarria provide the kingdom with a wealth of trade goods available for sale. Also, the available mines and skilled artisans within Taijin itself make the kingdom a formidable weapons supplier, capable of outfitting a small army in short notice. Although all these items are available—some in copious amounts—from other places in the Lostlands, the dwarven kingdom is a relative safe haven compared to the rest of the savage lands.

The underground roads between the cities of Taijin can be a deathtrap for new visitors to the dwarven kingdom. Huge carts pulled by trained bulettes sprint madly through the labyrinthine corridors that connect the cities, and messengers donning *boots of speed* hurtle relentlessly from merchant house to merchant house, knocking over unwary travelers as they make their way through the maze of passageways. Goods and information move quite quickly between the cities of Taijin.

While the dwarves of Taijin are physically similar to their cousins in the Northlands and the Southlands, the similarities end there. The dwarves of Taijin have a fondness for fine clothing and are notoriously well groomed, keeping their beards cropped closely at all times. They love art and literature. They also enjoy speeches and debate, and dwarven orators are held in high esteem in Taijin. They deplore physical combat and hate violence; however, they remain formidable fighters and are still capable of attacking their foes with great ferocity and cunning.

Raiju Khor: (Large city, pop. 44,112) The city of Raiju Khor is built in the heart of a volcano, silenced ages ago by the sorcery of powerful dwarven magicians. The magic that keeps the fiery magma at bay pulses inside thirteen magic seals—one located in the heart of each Merchant House. Should the seals ever be broken, the volcano might surge back to life in a fiery inferno. Fortunately, the mightiest warrior from each Merchant House stands watch over each seal day and night, ever vigilant to protect both seal and city.

The main buildings in the underground city are all mighty natural towers, carved with great care out of the stalactites and stalagmites that have formed over the millennia. Each of these towers is decorated with certain gemstones, to indicate loyalties to certain Merchant Houses. A tower loyal to the ruling Merchant House of Bakar Kigahara, for example, would be decorated with diamonds and gold. The only exception to this is the Palace of Raiju Khor, which is decorated with the bones of the kingdom's fallen foes. The natural rock walls of the palace are no longer visible, as the bleached white bones of dragons, giants, goblins, trolls, and countless other evil monstrosities line the roads that lead to its gates and completely blanket the palace itself.

Amytis: (Small city, pop. 20,777) Amytis is a city held more in esteem for its proximity to deep mines rather than for its heritage. Some centuries ago, Amytis was known as Jarlok, the Goblin City, but the original goblin denizens were wiped away during the Seppuku Cleansing. Although the dwarven conquerors of Amytis gave their conquest a new name and purged all traces of its original inhabitants, it is said that the foul stench of goblin blood still fills the air, and goblin ghosts continue to haunt the city. The dwarves of Taijin care little for the city itself; however, pragmatists that they are, they still care deeply for the vast silver and copper mines that run deep beneath it. Most of Amytis is a transient population, seeking to make quick money from the mines, then leaving the tainted city as fast as possible.

Cyaxar: (Small city, pop. 18,954) Cyaxar is split in two by a small but powerful underground river, which leads directly into the Empyrean Ocean. Although infrequently used by merchants, the river acts as a passageway for merfolk, aquatic elves, and a small number of other intelligent creatures that live in the depths beneath the sea, who bring their underwater bounty from the ocean floor to trade with the dwarves. Many extraordinary treasures from beneath the sea can be found in the markets of Cyaxar.

Tharnaka

The Exalted of the Isles, King Cacambo

Population: ??? (white apes 90%, humans 6%, other 4%)

Resources: Foodstuffs, perfumes, jewelry, spices

Capital: Jomoa

Little is known of the volcanic Isles of Tharnaka. Located near the Shattered Straits off of the coast of Xa Deshret, the Isles are surrounded by a maze of harsh barrier reefs, making them extremely difficult to reach.

It is believed that the Isles are predominantly inhabited—and ruled—by large, intelligent apes, ones standing nearly ten feet tall and covered in white fur. The reason this is conjecture instead of fact is because few living souls have ever seen these apes, and those who have done so have either been sworn to secrecy, or been somehow affected by sorcery to forget what they have seen.

Traveling to the Isles of Tharnaka is known to be a fool's errand; not only are the best and bravest sea captains in the world required to navigate through the Shattered Straits, those who arrive at the Isles seem to vanish like ghosts, never to return to their homelands. No, the only known travelers to Tharnaka are merchants and sea captains, who receive handwritten, cordial invitations from the king. These invitations are delived by blind human eunuchs, who dress in black from head to toe and are the only known emissaries of the Isles.

What is actually on the Isles, no one can say with any authority. Rumor has it that the blind eunuchs also act as escorts to their invited guests once they reach the mysterious islands, limiting what can and cannot been seen, and where they can travel in the cities. However, what comes from the Isles is certainly known, and is certainly remarkable. Colorful silks, exotic perfumes, intricate trinkets and the like flow forth from Tharnaka like water, making the invitations to the Isles quite coveted by powerful merchants. Many rich nobles regard imports from Tharnaka as a mark of sophistication, making the trade goods highly desired … and very expensive.

The largest of the Isles is believed to be uninhabited. That is because it is also a massive volcano, one that erupts with fearsome power every few years. The force of these eruptions can be felt all the way in Xa Deshret. Caves beneath the volcano are said to lead to the World Below and a renegade drow kingdom—but like the rest of the Isles, the truth behind such stories is shrouded in mystery.

Jomoa: (Large city, pop. ???) The few legends known of the capital of Jomoa indicate that it is a city that sits next to a small, dormant volcano. The stone road that leads from its seaside docks to the city gates is lined with thousands upon thousands of human bones—supposedly, the remains of unwanted intruders who sought entrance to the city.

In the center of Jomoa is a silver throne, upon which the mighty King of Tharnaka sits when matters of state must be attended. The throne, however, is said to be alive—whenever a King of Tharnaka dies, his soul enters the throne and becomes one with the artifact, joining the souls of the hundreds of kings who passed on before him. The throne of Tharnaka acts as an advisor to the living kings of the land, and is said to be one of the wisest repositories of knowledge in the Known Realms.

Huatalo: (Large city, pop. ????) The city of Huatalo produces most of the wondrous foods, grains, and spices that come from Tharnaka. However, the city sits atop one of the dormant volcanoes of the Isles, making the origin of all of these bountiful goods a curious riddle. One of the few clues to this riddle are three golden archways that lie somewhere in a maze of tunnels beneath the city. These archways—referred to as the "Tomorrow Portals" by a few of the ancient texts about Tharnaka—are said to lead to other places. Perhaps they lead to the true source of Tharnaka's bountiful resources.

Huatalo is also home to the legendary White Oracle—a blind but powerful white ape thought to be well over a thousand years old. Although the Oracle rarely speaks, and usually remains far from public sight inside a building known as the Stone Citadel, he reputedly is able to discern the true meaning of any prophecy. Should one speak the words of a prophet to the White Oracle, the ancient ape instantly is able to reply with the true meaning of those words. Because of this, the apes of Tharnaka keep the Oracle well hidden, even more so than their usual treasures … but it is said that for the right price, one can obtain an audience with the Oracle.

Cunegonde: (Large city, pop. ???) Perhaps the most mysterious of the cities on the Tharnaka Isles, Cunegonde is said to be the birthplace of a long-forgotten dragon god. The legends of Cunegonde say that it is a city that cannot be traveled to by any road, and that its walls are made of sorcery. What this exactly means is not known, but one truth that is certain about this legendary city is that it contains gold beyond imagination. On rare occasions, gold coins the size of a human fist and stamped with the visage of the crown ape make their way to the outside world—these coins are Tharnakan currency, and supposedly flow from the coffers of Cunegonde like water from the mightiest waterfall. Whether part of a vast, unending mine or the spoils of the dragon god's treasure horde, no one can say. However, it is undisputed that Cunegonde is home to treasure beyond imagination, and its location is Tharnaka's most tightly guarded of its many secrets.

The Vermilion Tribes

Master of the Dragonfire, Malkhaine Svyato

Population: 384,900 (wild elves 77%, half-elves 10%, humans 6%, gnomes 4%, halflings 3%)

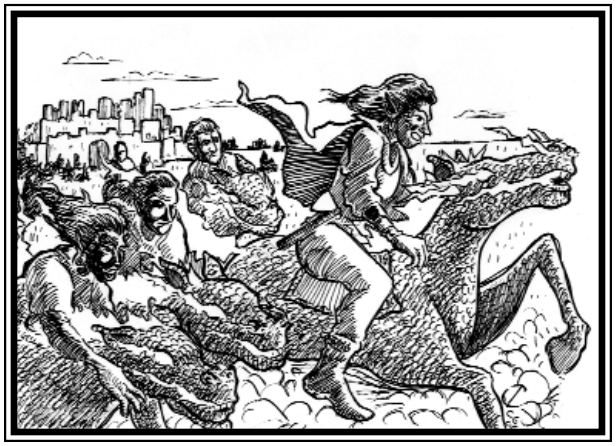
Resources: Timber, foodstuffs, trade goods

Capital: Goryati

The Vermilion Tribes are a loose confederation of nomadic warrior elves that claim the harsh Vermilion Steppes as their homeland. For the past several centuries, there have been anywhere from three to eight tribes, each ruled by a chieftain or khaine. The most powerful of the khaines, known as the malkhaine, is chosen in a blood duel between the khaines of all the Tribes. A new malkhaine is chosen whenever the previous one dies. Fighting and battles between the tribes is commonplace; however, it is the malkhaine who prevents these battles from turning into full-blown tribal wars, and leads the united Vermilion Tribes to greater glory against their other enemies in the Lostlands.

The Tribes are comprised predominantly of wild elves, born to hunt and to fight. There is no distinction in tribal society between males and females, and both have equal rank. Nine out of ten elves that are born in the Tribes become part of the fighting hordes. Tribal warriors are legendary masters of the longbow, and are also masters of riding a creature known as the shadroquus, a strange hybrid of horse and blue dragon. Some of the khaines are known to ride on the backs of red dragons as well.

All warriors hold themselves to a strict code of honor, though this unfortunately means little to their enemies. Respect and honor is held only for other tribesmen, and for the battles between the tribes. This combination makes the hordes of the Vermilion Tribes one of the most feared fighting forces in the entire world—disciplined, fearless, and able to strike with deadly force at lightning speed. Since the Tribes have very little resources to call their own, it is up to these warriors to raid the surrounding regions of the Lostlands for fortune and glory, and to demand tribute from their fallen enemies.



The remainder of the Tribes consists of the farmers, the tradesmen, and others who maintain the home cities of the tribes. These individuals tend to be those who are too old or too frail for battle. Also, those not of pure elven blood—mostly humans desiring to seek fellowship with the Tribes—serve and live in the Cities as well. These tribesmen are the few who actually live in the cities on a permanent basis. For the most part, the warrior hordes roam the Vermilion Steppes and the surrounding regions of the Lostlands, and only return to the home cities of their tribes for festivals or after long military campaigns.

At the present time, Malkhaine Svyato is the youngest and possibly the strongest malkhaine to rule over all the Vermilion Tribes in nearly five hundred years. He also possesses a perspective that most of his fellow Tribesmen do not—his father was a merchant, and traveled to the faraway kingdom of Crieste. As such, Syvato is aware of the world beyond the Vermilion Steppes, and believes that it is his destiny to spread the influence of the Tribes beyond their traditional homeland.

Goryati: (Large city, pop. 15,395) Built by the shores of the Ctesiphal River, this northernmost permanent city of the Vermilion Tribes is renowned for its blood-red walls and the three silver spires that rise from its center. Goryati is home to the Ashika Tribe, which is the birthplace of Malkhaine Svyato. Because of this, the Ashika currently enjoy the most prestige and honor amongst all the Vermilion Tribes.

Goryati is the only city amongst the Vermilion Tribes that possesses both ships and sailors. Few sailors from the Northlands or Southlands dare to travel too far up the Ctesiphal River, despite the possible trade advantages—the reaver ships of the Ashika are feared more than most pirates. These reavers frequently travel down along the coast of the Empyrean Ocean in search of prey; the Tharnaka Isles are a constant target of their ravenous nature. Members of the Ashika Tribe are trained from an early age to be equally adept in combat on land and at sea; should the need arise, they are comfortable serving whenever they are needed.

Tanghali: (Large town, pop. 9,438) This walled city sits atop a mighty cliff that overlooks the western expanses of the Vermilion Steppes. Home to the Taira Tribe, Tanghali is the oldest of the home cities of the Vermilion Tribes. It is thought to be built over the ruins of a Khonsurian palace, but no trace of this ruin has ever been found by those who have explored the catacombs of the city. The walls of Tanghali bear the scars of many pteral attacks; its proximity to the Blood Hives of Sahaptia makes the city the first line of defense against the swarms of frenzied wasp-men.

Tanghali is ruled by the Khaine Genmei, daughter of the previous Malkhaine. Although unusual in that she is far more skilled with a spear instead of a bow (and rides a blue

dragon into battle instead of a red), her prowess as a leader and a warrior is renowned throughout the Vermilion Tribes. Within the Tribes, many believe that she would be a far better Malkhaine than Svyato, as Genmei is considered more traditional and loyal to the old ways of life. It is thought that a blood duel between Genmei and Syvato is inevitable; however, for the time being, she remains steadfastly loyal to her leader.

Qazan: (Large town, pop. 7,844) Partially hidden by a small forest near the center of the Steppes, Qazan is a far less imposing city than its neighbors, with walls of crude rock and mud instead of marble and gold. However, the city, which is also home to the Huligai Tribe, is perhaps the most important to the Vermilion Tribes, both for the surrounding forests that provide timber for their ships (and the resulting export) and for the farmlands near the city. Most of the artisans of the Vermilion Tribes make residence in Qazan. Although the proud Vermilion warriors are loathe to admit it, the commerce created by Qazan and its labor allows the traditions of the Tribes to exist.

Unusual in that it accepts warriors not of wild elf blood into its ranks, the Huligai Tribe has become even more unusual in recent years with the ascension of a human Khaine—Sir Gyles Durran, formerly a knight in service to the crown of Crieste. The reasons for his exile are unknown, but he has earned the undying loyalty of his new tribesmen. He is considered a brilliant and ruthless tactician, as well as Syvato's closest advisor.

Jhavitri: (Large town, pop. 5,361) Resting on the border between the Ghetrian Desert and the Vermilion Steppes, Jhavitri is a harsh and grim place. Part of the city is underground, buried beneath the dusty hills to shield it from sandstorms and the constant, oppressive heat. Jhavitri is the main area where the Vermilion Tribes breed and raise their shadroquus mounts. It is also rumored that they breed dragons here as well.

The Jhokyu Tribe makes their ancestral home in Jhavitri. They are lead by Khaine Morgyat, a venerable and fierce warrior who has ruled over his tribe for nearly a thousand years with an iron hand. Some say that he is in fact even older than this, and was once a servant to Pharitis IV, one of the last Sphinx Emperors. Despite his advanced age, Khaine Morgyat is still said to be one of the best warriors in the Vermilion Tribes, and is considered to be one of the best teachers of the arts of fighting that has ever lived.

Members of the Jhokyu Tribe tend to have darker skin than their brothers and sisters in the other Vermilion Tribes. Because they make most of their raiding forays into the desert, they also tend to be nocturnal, and are excellent night-fighters. Additionally, most of the skilled assassins in the Vermilion Tribes begin their training among the warriors of the Jhokyu.

Vivekanika

Ruler Unknown

Population: 1,000 (golems 99%, unknown 1%)

Resources: Metal ore

Capital: —

It is quite possible that not a single living soul resides inside this grand, cryptic city. Although temples, palaces, and many other majestic buildings can be found within the walls of Vivekanika, they are all uninhabited, and have apparently been this way for thousands of years. That is not to say, however, that this large walled city is abandoned. Methodically plodding through the streets of Vivekanika are hundreds of golems, each laboring at responsibilities assigned to them long, long ago. While there are no signs of their masters, the golems of Vivekanika still toil relentlessly, showing no indication that their tasks will ever end … or, for that matter, what those tasks might be. There are no known pacts or treaties between Vivekanika and any other nation on Áereth; anyone who has allied themselves with the golem city-state has certainly done so in a clandestine manner.

Vivekanika is an isolated city, located near the southernmost point of the Lostlands—a small peninsula called the Chimera's Eye. Two dormant volcanoes flank the city, effectively shielding it from most raiders and unwanted visitors. Twin stone roads lead from the city and wind up past the volcanoes to the blazing Sands of Shanbilai. It is believed that these roads once led to ancient cities; however, all they lead to now is an arid wasteland. If any cities once existed where these twin roads now abruptly end, their ruins are buried far beneath the desert sands.

Still, three times a year, a cadre of iron golems drag massive amounts of finished metals—iron and steel plates, refined adamantine ore, and the like—out along these roads, and inexplicably leave them out among the blowing sands when the roads end. For many, many years, intrepid merchants simply waited for the golems to make their regular trek out into the middle of the Sands of Shanbilai, and promptly took the abandoned metals to marketplaces and bazaars all over the world. However, with the recent influx of demonic fiends into the wastelands of the Sands, the metals usually remain abandoned, with the harsh desert conditions either reducing the materials to blemished, rusted sheets of junk, or burying them far below anonymous dunes. For a daring adventurer, though, the opportunity still exists to grab unwanted treasures from the desert on a regular basis.

Despite the presence of so many golems in Vivekanika, these hulking monstrosities usually leave visitors to the city alone. It is possible to wander throughout the many abandoned buildings in the strange city for weeks on end and never once be disturbed—let alone noticed—by a single golem. This is an uneasy tranquility, though, as the slightest

random disturbance in the city can provoke golems to attack intruders. There is no rhyme nor reason to this—destroying a building may evoke no reaction from the golems, while plucking a single flower from a ruin make provoke a lethal response from a score of clay giants. The capricious nature of the golems is one main reason that most wise wanderers steer clear of this city.

One thing that has never properly been determined is where the metals emerging from Vivekanika actually originate. Several large expeditions have attempted to fully explore the city to find where the metals come from, but all have failed. It is thought that huge mines must lie somewhere beneath the city, but so far the locations of these mines remains a mystery.

Xa Deshret

(New Khonsuria)

Steward of the Sphinx Emperor, Orkhon II

Population: 104,990 (nalvor 75%, humans 10%, halflings 6%, gnomes 4%, half-elves 3%, other 2%)

Resources: Copper, silver, spices, foodstuffs

Capital: Sakhaen Tair

From the ashes of the fallen Khonsurian Empire came the land of Xa Deshret, "the waiting kingdom." The ruined cities built by the slaves of the Sphinx Empire are still filled with the descendants of their most loyal servants: the nalvor. While the deadly sands of the Ghetrian Desert swirl about this desolate region, the nalvor continue to maintain the ancient cities and buildings exactly as their former Sphinx masters once left them. Xa Deshret has little interest in the rest of the world, and apart from the infrequent merchant caravans that are sent north for necessary supplies, it has relatively little contact with the rest of the world, including the other kingdoms of the Lostlands.

The nalvor are a quiet, patient people, content to exist in isolation from the rest of the known world. However, this does not mean that they are gentle, as would-be invaders have learned to regret over the centuries. They believe themselves to merely be the temporary caretakers of the Empire, awaiting the return of their Sphinx masters. Anyone or anything that could potentially threaten the Empire—or the return of the Sphinx—is a threat that must be dealt with swiftly and without mercy. The nalvor were once the most feared foot soldiers of the Armies of the Sphinx; their descendents are equally skilled with both bow and blade, and equally as ruthless on the battlefield.

Xa Deshret is ruled over by a democratically elected Senate, which consists of one hundred members elected from the various communities of the desert nation. These elections occur every three years, on the eve of the Thirdstar festival. Whenever a new Senate is elected, its members choose a new steward, who serves as acting regent of Xa Deshret in the absence of the Sphinx Emperors. The Senate—under the guidance of its Steward—oversees all of the laws and the functions of the kingdom, ranging from the most trivial matter to the most important.

Despite this power, the spectre of the old Sphinx Emperors looms ominously over the shoulder of the Senate. Before the Senate commits to any decision, they always must first determine if their decision would have been acceptable to their former masters. This requires poring through the texts of the Libraries of Zadjem for precedents and interpretations of centuries-old law, a task that can often cripple the entire nation for the most trivial of reasons.

All of the efforts of the nalvor for the past several centuries revolve around a single, unyielding belief: Their departed Sphinx Emperors are about to return, and the Khonsurian Empire will return to its former glory upon this return. This belief has led the nalvor to merely maintain Xa Deshret as it once was, rather than moving on and leading their nation into the present. Much of this obstinate belief is due to the nalvor's collective refusal to believe that their masters would ever desert them; however, this is also due to a prophecy known as the Shadhalian Codex, which speaks cryptically of a "return of ancient kings."

There are three main castes in the society of Xa Deshret, which are remnants from the slave era of the nalvor: the

Hand, the Fist, and the Word. The Hand, which represents the majority of Xa Deshret's populace, are the workers—they work the farmlands, work the mines, and tend to the more brutal physical tasks that comprise the lifeblood of Xa Deshret, just as their ancestors once did.

The Fist are the warriors of Xa Deshret. Although not large in number, these warriors are ruthlessly efficient, and have been known to defeat hosts triple their size upon the field of battle. Perhaps the most unusual aspect of these warriors is that they have no conventional generals or leaders—the warrior caste is trained instead to obey the rules of war taught in a famous Khonsurian text, *Seven Songs of Blood and Honor*. Warriors fight in tight groups called tyraks, and these tyraks are taught to read and react to events occurring on the battlefield as one. They never retreat or surrender, making them a difficult foe to defeat in combat.

The Word are the scholars, merchants, and learned tradesmen of Xa Deshret. The leading members of the Word caste also usually comprise the members of the Senate. The Word are easily identified by the silk azure robes they wear, and apart from accompanying merchant caravans to foreign lands, they almost never leave the confines of their cities.

Sakhaen Tair: (Large city, pop. 31,520) The capital of Sakhaen Tair is built near a vast canyon called Nhalo's Scythe, through which the mighty Akhneten River flows. An ingenious system of mystical aqueducts diverts sections of the river upward into the city, providing it with plentiful water for both the city and its surrounding farmlands.

Orkhon II is steward of Xa Deshret and has ruled it well for nearly three decades, protecting the remains of the Sphinx Empire from the savagery of the Vermilion Tribes and the ever-growing menace of Gorhgijesk and Rhaz al-Khali. While he respects the old ways and beliefs of the nalvor, he privately does not believe that the Sphinx Emperors will ever return to his homeland. With the dwindling of Xa Deshret's current resources, and with growing interest by foreign traders in his kingdom, Orkhon II is struggling to move Xa Deshret into a position of strength in the world. He is a savvy and intelligent politician, but knows that to push a position of progress too hard with his countrymen is to risk civil war.

Sakhaen Tair is also home to several tombs of the ancient Sphinx Emperors. The perimeter of the city is surrounded by a circle of twelve pyramids, each of which is gilded in gold. These pyramids, commonly known as the First Twelve, are the final resting places of all the Khonsurian Emperors from the First Dynasty. Although looted centuries ago by daring bandits, the remains of these Emperors still rest within the pyramid walls. Some say that the Emperors never truly died, but instead exist in undead torment. They wander restlessly between the pyramids, searching for peace in the underground catacombs that connect all of their tombs.…

Rheksus: (Small city, pop. 16,745) Further down the Akhneten River is the city of Rheksus, located at the feet of the Mountains of the Fifth Prince. Rheksus is home to many silver and copper mines, which worm their way deep below the mountains. It is also as a center for Xa Deshret's trade routes, with an impressive port that acts as a central link between the Lostlands and the civilized world.

Because there are few nalvor miners to extensively work the many older Khonsurian mines, the hills surrounding the city are rife with bandits and thieves seeking to exploit the available riches. Many of the bandits are drow and derro from the Devil's Cauldron. The imperial roads outside of Rheksus are extremely dangerous, making passage by boat the only safe way in and out of the city.

Zadjem: (Small city, pop. 6,844) Oldest of the cities of Xa Deshret, Zadjem is located near the oases of Sheshat-Semet. It hosts the legendary Imperial Libraries of Khonsuria, which are reputed to contain the rarest and oldest books in the world, some of which date back to the Age of Dragons. Scholars and sages from the far reaches of the world have made pilgrimages to Zadjem in search of the Libraries and the forgotten secrets held within their walls. It is unknown if these pilgrims ever find what they seek, though—the Libraries are reportedly guarded by a mysterious iron creature known only as the Keeper, and those who enter the ancient building never come out again.

In addition to the Libraries, Zadjem is known for its production of exotic spices and herbs. These spices, which are said to be created with arcane influences, are much sought after in the high courts of the Northlands by rich nobility. Some are also reputed to be highly addictive, and have in recent times begun to make the coffers of Xa Deshret full of gold coins again.

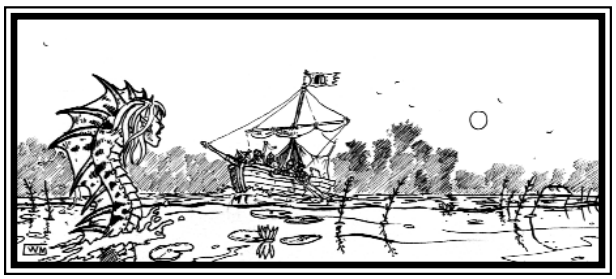
Chapter 4
Geographic Features

The Known Realms of Áereth are so vast and diverse that a dozen tomes could be penned solely on the subject of geography. People and beasts alike bear the mark of their homeland; fierce and inhospitable lands breed savage tribes and terrible monsters, while tamed lands produce domesticated men and animals. As the sages have often averred, to know the land is to know its inhabitants.

Of Geographical Taxonomy and Nomenclature: The sights and landmarks of the Northlands have been named a dozen times in a dozen different tongues, beginning with the first elf and dwarf scouts, and then the wandering tribes of man, and their profusion of kingdoms, nations, and empires.

Where the elder races still reign, the forests, mountains, and bodies of water bear their original names. Where humans have made inroads, the landmarks bear their stamp, and oft times succeeding empires of humans rename the landmarks of their fathers. The result is a profusion of names—elven, dwarven, human, and others—scattered across the globe like fistfuls of coins.

What names the mighty wyrms or sphinxes might have given to the trackless expanses—and what power those truenames might still hold over the land—is the exclusive domain of sages and madmen.



Oceans, Seas, Lakes, and Lesser Notable Bodies of Water

Akhneten River: This majestic river is the gateway to the Lostlands. Reaching out almost two thousand miles from the Warriors' Gate, the Akhneten cuts deeply into the heart of the Ghetrian Desert, where it finally splits into the Twins. Both deep and wide, the river is easily able to support the largest of ocean-faring merchant ships, making it the primary lifeline between the Lostlands and the rest of the world.

Archen River: Fed by Dundrae Lake, the Archen connects much of northern Crieste and is congested with river traffic for most of the year. River pirates plague the rural stretches, masquerading as legitimate traders or boarding merchant barges on moonless nights.

Ayalan Sea: The cerulean waters of the Ayalan Sea are difficult to reach, requiring sea captains to navigate south of Zimala or through the dangers of Ssorlang, but legends of the god-touched sea have endured throughout the ages. The baleen whales of the Ayalan Sea are said to be celestial-blooded, granting good fortune to those who catch a glimpse of their white skin.

Ayashtica River: Fed by countless rivers and streams through the Azcatlepi Jungle of northern Zimala, the Ayashtica is one of Áereth's largest watercourses. The central river ranges from half a mile to several in width, making it navigable to ships that wish to travel inland on the Island of Obsidian. Thinking to avoid the hazards of the jungle, most travelers find themselves beset by river monsters far more dangerous. Water naga ambushes, still defending their ancient home, are almost expected the farther inland one travels. For this reason, riverboat captains often bring valuables in hopes of placating the intelligent serpents.

Bay of Asur: Fed by mighty glaciers, the Bay of Asur is

home to legendary white icebergs throughout the year. Most drift southward, slowly melting on their course, but some remain, caught in the mysterious eddies and currents of the bay. The most ancient of these have existed for centuries, and serve as floating, hoary lairs to white dragons and worse.

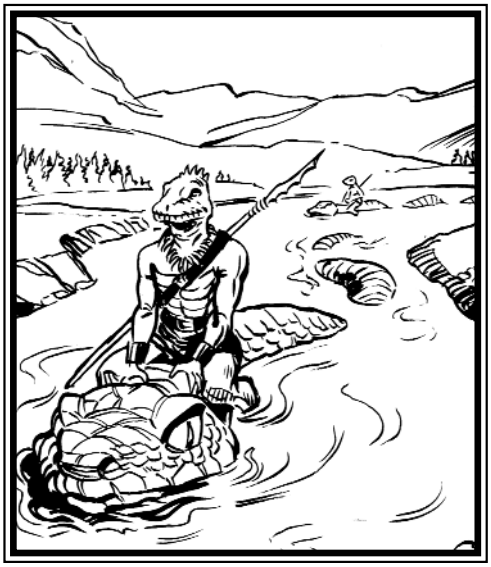
Bay of Valfors: Located north of the Kingdom of Morrain, Valfors Bay is known by local fisherman as the Bay of Storms. Regularly beset by terrible gales, Valfors Bay has claimed more than its share of lives with storms strong enough to sink the mightiest merchant ship. Despite this fact, the Bay of Valfors is also home to some of the richest fishing waters in the North, and the promise of wealth has lured many a sailor to his doom.

Blade Reach, the: For as long as the Northlands have known war, the long inlet known as the Blade Reach served as a strategic landmark. Hordes of marauding barbarians, orcs, trolls and goblins have all perished trying to cross the narrow inlet, or fight their way along its rocky beaches. The western shore of the Reach is dotted with towers and strongholds, some dating back thousands of years. While watch fires still burn in many of the citadels, scores have fallen into ruin and are now home to fell beasts and the undead.

Blueblade Lake: Found on the eastern border of the Theocracy, Blueblade Lake is renowned for the nymph making her home beneath the clear waters. Legend holds that the nymph guards an ancient sword of unmatched power, and that the nymph permits worthy warriors to take up the blade in times of dire need.

Chael Lake: Located in the center of the kingdom of Luithea, Chael Lake has long served as a source of food and trade. Before the rise of the Devil Lich, fishermen traded with the elves of the Corsan, but now relations are tense and often end in threats of violence. The north shores, where the lake is fed by the Corsan, are claimed exclusively by the Ashoch elves, who have declared the shores sacred to their people. The elves can often be seen at night, pushing their dead out onto the lake in burning reed skiffs.

Chaelti River: Fed by the frigid waters of Chael Lake, the Chaelti rushes south to join with the Saedre and Kolheim. Though a major waterway for Amin Dor and its neighbors, the river is infested with predatory lizardfolk mounted atop *tocinths*, the giant albino snakes peculiar to the region.



Cipachtli Bay: Named for a mythic crocodile of titanic size, the Cipachtli Bay was once a vast marsh that has since been flooded by the rivers of the Pochectic Mountains. Allegedly ruled by the primordial beast, the Bay is now fed from the east by the jungle rivers and is a popular spawning ground for locathah tribes. Though they seldom attack explorers in their nomadic wanderings, the locathahs are fiercely aggressive when defending Cipachtli Bay.

Empyrean Ocean: The largest body of water in the Known Realms, the Empyrean Ocean divides the eastern continents of the Northlands and the Lostlands from the Southlands. Fearsome storms regularly sweep across the darkened waters, raising waves that can swallow entire galleons in a single crash. Mysterious whirlpools, enormous sea monsters, water drakes, and more have been reported by sailors crossing the deadly ocean.

For much of known history, the Empyrean served as a barrier between the North and South. Only in recent centuries have advancements in sailing and magic made it possible for regular trade to exist between the continents. Even with these advancements, travel across the Empyrean remains an arduous, dangerous journey; of every ten ships that set sail for the Northlands, only seven arrive.

Traders and merchant lords attempt to offset these dangers by traveling in groups of three or more. This has proven effective in warding off pirates, but the ocean's terrible sea monsters have proven adept at striking the single weakest ship in the dead of night.

Some sages aver that Áereth's largest ruins rest somewhere beneath the waters of the Empyrean. While exotic, strange artifacts do occasionally wash ashore on either side of the ocean, the thought of a single continent as large as the Empyrean sinking beneath the waves of the ocean is too much for even madmen to grasp.

Fartrader River: The Fartrader once served as merchants traveling from coastal Arvale, all the way to savage Iderag. With the fall of the Grand Duchy, this supply line has been greatly diminished. Orcish armies have pulled great chains across the Fartrader to seize any boat foolish enough to attempt river passage, and hundreds of goblin archers and scouts guard the banks of the river to discourage portage. A handful of daring smugglers continue to make runs from Cinai to

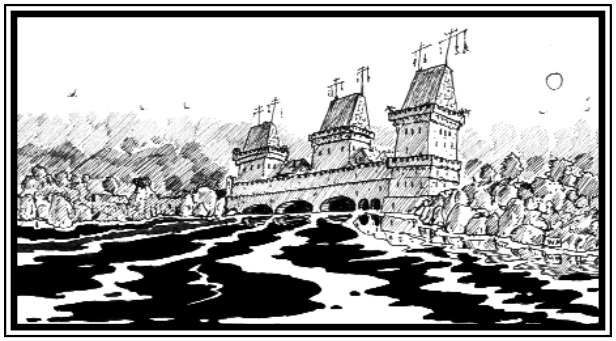
the coast in shallow skiffs, but their numbers grow fewer with each passing day.

High Sea, the: Named for its commanding view of the surrounding hillsides, the High Sea rests inside the blasted crater of a dormant volcano. While not a sea in the true sense, the crater and its lake are nonetheless legendary in proportions. The waters are fed by boiling hot springs and roaring geysers. Drank from their source, the spring waters are said to have mystical properties, but few explorers survive the heat-loving monsters that flock to the steaming waters.

Hoarfrost Bay: Few places in all of Áereth can boast of fouler weather than that of Hoarfrost Bay. Nine months out of the year, the bay is locked in seething plates of ice that shred the hulls of ships like paper toys. Blizzards scour the frigid waters, blinding sailors so that ships run aground, their crews frozen at their stations. The remaining three months of the year, fierce storms batter the coastline with driving rain and hurricane-force winds. The savage weather of the Hoarfrost is matched only by the wealth beneath its waves. The plentiful schools of narwhales, emer fish, and lions of the sea draw fishermen and adventurers to the bay year after year.

Imacuan Sea: The waters of the Imacuan Sea provide access to Northern Xulmec. The city of Halcyon, nestled between the sea and the rest of the Empyrean, offers surcease from the pirates of the Barrier Isles who would otherwise harass Southland-bound vessels and make the Imacuan a more dangerous place. Xulmecs from Athua and Darawan are frequently encountered along the Xulmec coastline.

Ironflow, the: The Ironflow is renowned for the wealth of minerals that are regularly washed down from its high cascades. Explorers report of a citadel of gnomes built over the very river. The citadel's inhabitants attack trespassers with uncharacteristic ferocity, driving away, capturing, or slaying all comers.



Izindol River: The Izindol flows east across the steppes to the city of Stromblaen where it empties into Hoarfrost Bay. The river is constantly plagued by fearsome creatures spawned in the Wastes of Zamon, and by Scourge raiders testing the resolve of the Koranthian people.

Javran Sea: Avoided by most sailors, the dark waters of the Javran Sea are the known demesne of the dreaded krakens. Even the sahuagin are said to pay tribute to these lords of the deep. Consequently, the sea devils are known to raid ships daring to approach the Island of Tarras from the east.

Jester's Tail, the: Named by the Criestine explorer Denys Morcault during his legendary voyages some one hundred years ago, this deep and powerful river flows through the southernmost reaches of the Lostlands. It is the only known passage between the Empyrean Ocean and the Twisted Sea. Evil nymphs and fairies are said to lurk along the shores of the river, luring sailors and other travelers along the river to their doom.

Khiazan River: The Khiazan is a narrow but fast river, which leads from the city of Dupleiux in Morena Nova down to the southern regions of the kingdom and the Empyrean Ocean. Sahuagin raiders often prowl near the mouth of the Khiazan, attacking Morenan merchant ships as they make their way up to the cities.

Kolheim River: The Kolheim River wends its way through the Warlands, feeding Raxem Lake before joining its sisters, the Saedre and Chaelti Rivers. The river's banks run high late into spring, often delaying invasions from competing baronies. "With Kolheim's blessing" is a black prayer commonly uttered by rogues scheming violent plots.

Laeon River: The mighty Laeon takes its name from the unusual profusion of the manticores that make their dens in the gorge walls. The winged terrors display remarkable behavior akin to swarming, working as one to drive away those foolish enough to intrude upon their rocky domain.

Laeysian Sea: The Laeysian Sea is fed on all sides by rivers and connected to the great seas by the Strait of Kamasha and the Texcalapan Strait. It is surprisingly serene for most of the year, but each year monsoons batter the coastline on the western edge for two months.

The deep blue-green waters of the Laeysian are controlled by the drakon of Ssorlang, and any entering ship is likely to encounter a darkvenom captain. At best, foreigners will find their cargo and passage steeply taxed. At worst, the ship will be confiscated and its crew shipped to the Ssorlang slave city of Kanthara. Only the Xulmecs of Darawan—and the mysterious Xanthous from the Shadowed West—are permitted to move across the sea unmolested.

Lake Tlanec: The largest lake in the Southlands, the Tlanec houses the island city of Teotcoatlan, the apex of

Xulmec civilization. Despite the dense human population of this city and the three long causeways spanning the water, Lake Tlanec is vast, teaming with natural flora and fauna and boasting the greatest population of huezcatlas in the Southlands. The Teotcoatlans have domesticated the animal, but countless wild huezcatlas dwell on the banks of the lake.

Lake Tyrgyz: This mystical lake, found in the eastern outskirts of the Valley of Xyr Muthal, measures some ten miles in diameter, and reputedly is as deep as it is wide. The lake is supposedly the source of the Valley's magical power. In addition, the waters of the lake are said to "cure" the undead and bring them back to life.

Leath River: With its headwaters at the spring-fed aquifers of Invergin, the Leath runs south, emptying into Wyrm's Deep. With Invergin's rise as a slaving capital, the Leath has begun to serve a more foul purpose: disposal of the city's dead.

Lirean Sea: Located squarely between the North and Lostlands, the Sea of Lirea is at once the best-mapped sea of the North and its greatest mystery. Legend holds that the sea was once a landmass home to ancient empires of both dwarves and elves. These same myths tell that an ancient apocalypse of unknown origins caused the lands of Lirea to sink beneath the rushing waters of the Empyrean Ocean. Modern scholars doubt the legends of the Lirean—what magic could be strong enough to sink an entire subcontinent?—but weapons and coins of ancient make and unknown metals regularly wash ashore, keeping the rumors alive. Many companies of adventurers have tried to plumb the depths of the Lirean in search of lost treasure hordes; those that return tell of entire cities hidden beneath the waves, defended by fierce squid-men astride mighty dire sharks.

Lost Lake: Lost Lake is named for the many-spired silver citadel that fishermen sometimes see through the mists or on moonlit nights. The mysteries of the fae-haunted palace are closely held by the elves of the Corsan, who refuse to betray its secrets.

Mochitla River: The Mochitla is a river of supernatural significance to the people of the Xulmec, for it defies the natural order, leading to what they believe is a physical gateway to Mictlan, the Land of the Dead. The river is fed by the great Tlata Falls, where the waters of the Imacuan Sea topple over an immense cataract into a wide, misty bay. From this anomalous headwater, the Mochitla—the only saltwater river ever known—flows *inland*, wending its way through the rain forests, hills, and marshes of Xulmec leading into the narrow gorges of the Anduran Mountains. Along this meandering path—from the northern coast of the peninsula to the wetlands to the mountain ravines—mangroves grow in thick clusters along its shores, prompting an assortment of natural and unnatural fauna.

Though sacred to the Xulmecs, the Mochitla is a turbulent and dangerous watercourse not easily navigated. Aquatic creatures normally limited to the oceans and seas find in the Mochitla an opportunity to raid inland. Even the ocean-dwelling sahuagin have been known to seek vengeance against their terrestrial enemies by means of the Mochitla.

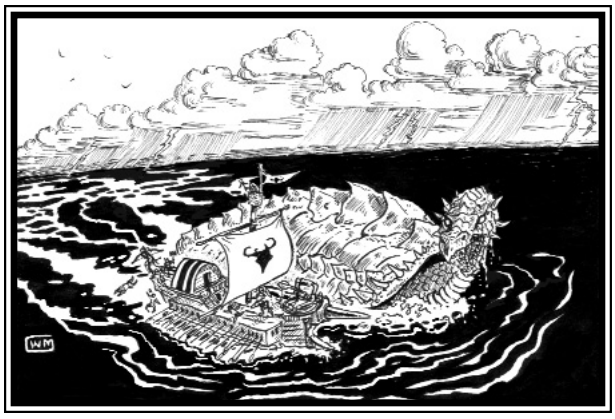
Morro River: Named for the legendary founder of Morrain, it is believed that the icy flow of the Morro conceals the tomb of the First Lord. How such a crypt might be constructed—or how it could be uncovered—remains unknown. The Morro is one of the chief spawning rivers for the emer fish, and fishermen and dire bears alike flock to the river's shores during the annual spawning period.

Quetli River: One of Zimala's fastest-running rivers, the Quetli swells year round from a labyrinth of mountain streams, then divides in the east to join the Ayashtica watercourse and the Chiauhtli Delta. Explorers crossing the river have reported a mysterious cloudiness to the otherwise healthy water, which is usually attributed to the Pochectic Mountains that feed it.

Raxem, the: The Raxem marks the southernmost reaches of the Warlands, where the baronies brush up against the realm of the Mountain of the King. The lake is reputed to conceal ancient vaults beneath its dark waters, but a profusion of giant water serpents and tentacled horrors protect the Raxem's secrets.

Red Death, the: Named for the bodies of Laerdian slaves that wash downstream, the Red Death also serves as a waterway for Scourge forces on the move. Laerdian insurgents constantly watch the river, reporting troop

movements back to their commanders, but just as often the spies wash ashore in Wyrm's Deep, reinforcing the river's wicked reputation.



Roguewash, the: Named for the profusion of bandits and ruffians that make their homes along its muddy banks, the Roguewash serves as the primary means of transportation for those traveling long distances through the Freeholds. More than one outlaw has escaped a mob of pursuers by plunging into the Roguewash, emerging several miles downstream and vanishing into the wilderness.

Saedre River: The Saedre River cuts across the western Northlands, meeting the mighty Chaelti and Kolheim before plunging down the Black Gorge and into the Straits of Ymtal. The river marks the southern boundaries of the Wilds; those venturing across the north shore are courageous, mad, or foolhardy in the extreme.

Scragtooth Strait: Named for the aquatic trolls that raid along the northern coastline, the cold waters of Scragtooth Strait are dangerous for those that linger. Mariners sailing between the Criestine Colonies and their Northland benefactors make the voyage through the strait as quickly as possible. Ships that throw anchor for even a single night along the strait are seldom seen again. According to old seamen's tales, the ships that tarry in the night are swallowed by the night itself; when they are seen again, they are crewed by the undead.

Sea of Desperation: The tempestuous waters of the Sea of Desperation are as mystifying as the landmasses it touches. Nebulous magic as old as dragonkind is believed to exist within this ancient sea—even experienced seamen have found countless anomalies amidst the roiling waves. Historical recordings and ancient Southland pictographs document a time when the sea was half its current size. If the local soothsayers speak the truth, the Sea of Desperation is slowly swallowing the land in a westward advance. The Eztenqui Jungle slowly dissolves even as land rises up amidst the isles of Dujamar. If one sails due west of Tarras, the waters are said to darken to the color of pitch as it nears the outlands of the Shadowed West.

Scar Lake: Scar Lake is the largest artificial body of water in the North. The Scar was quarried for the granite blocks that built the foundation of Azmog-Azmennum, and grew to serve as a highway for drow and orc traders from the Underdeep. When the dark elves attempted a coup against Tarkhan Khurzog, the ogre-mage flooded the quarry, obliterating the drow and forming the reservoir now known as Scar Lake.

Straits of Ymtal: While sheltered from the raging storms that terrorize the Empyrean shipping lanes, the Straits of Ymtal harbor fearsome sea monsters, including the terrible dragon turtle. Sailors have reported finding carcasses of massive sea snakes, some over a mile long, bearing terrible gaping wounds and floating in the Ymtal. It is unknown what sort of monster could be large enough to prey upon this size of sea snake, and if any sailors ever witnessed such a beast, they didn't live to tell the tale.

Surya Sea: Named after an elemental lord referenced in many mythologies, the Surya Sea has always been a place of divine activity. During the Reign of Dragons, mighty wyrms communed with their ocean-dwelling brethren and beseeched the goddess Pelagia to shelter some of their greatest artifacts beneath the waves. During the Reign of Cats and the Reign of Serpents, the naga and sphinx empires are said to have constructed a causeway of monumental size that stretched across the Surya. If those stories can be believed, the bridge was collapsed after an epic war and treasures from both empires sank into the depths. A scattering of islands within the Surya still bear the ruined foundations of an ancient civilization, speaking to the possible truth of such stories.

Whatever legend says of the Surya, its present dangers are indisputable. Odd rock formations beneath the waves have razed the hulls of countless ships, and most attempts to chart these perilous rocks have failed. Even the pirates of the Barrier Isles brave the Surya only when the promise of wealth justifies the risk. Only the adept boatmen of Athua regard the sea with little fear, for their patron god is said to have ascended to divinity within its depths. Additionally, the waters along the eastern rim of Xulmec are the domains of merfolk and tritons, friendly if shy to humanoid sailors who do not bear the trappings of pirates.

Texcalapan Strait: Dividing the Island of Obsidian and the peninsula of Xulmec, the Texcalapan Strait is a wide channel notoriously patrolled by the drakon. Though not strictly within Ssorlang's province, the imperious snake men accost all who brave these waters, demanding steep taxes or slaughter. All Zimalan expeditions launched from the city-states of Xulmec are certain to cross the paths of the drakon pirates in this strait, forcing travelers

to contend with them or pay their unreasonable tolls.

Tlata Falls: The miraculous Tlata Falls defy the natural order, as the waters of the Imacuan flow into a wide basin *below* sea level and form the headwaters of the salty Mochitla River. How the sea does not overtake the surrounding land altogether is not understood even by the Xulmec druids who serve as caretakers to the Falls. Though anomalous to nature, the phenomenon is considered god-touched by the natives, not the ministrations of evil.

Tojan Bay: The icy waters of Tojan Bay were renamed for the curious creatures that appeared there three centuries ago. Tojanidas, outlandish omnivores that legend says came from beyond Áereth's mortal realms, lurk amidst the waves and observe all who sail through them. Peaceable but quite willing to defend themselves, the tojanidas are said to tell many tales to those who speak their elemental language.

Twins, the: Branching off of the Akhneten River near the city of Sakhaen Tair, these twin rivers—also known by the more formal names of the Ctabakul and the Ctesiphal—cut through the blazing Ghetrian Desert like scimitars, providing life to this arid wasteland. The Ctesiphal heads northeast toward the Vermilion Steppes, while the Ctabakul winds its way toward the Herennia Mountains and through Xa Deshret.

Twisted Sea, the: This unexplored sea lies along the southeastern coast of the Lostlands. Few sailors are daring enough to venture out into these black, cruel waters; the last known explorer to challenge the Twisted Sea was Denys Morcault, and his fleet of five ships disappeared forever. The little information that is known about this vast southern sea is that navigation is exceedingly difficult—compasses and sextants give wildly inaccurate readings, and even the constellations seem to shift in the evening sky. Other scattered stories about the Twisted Sea speak of giant krakens and armies of sahuagin; however, these stories are little more than sailors' folklore.

Ukhorvus Nuur: This giant freshwater lake in the southern regions of the Lostlands is the primary source of water for both the Ctabakul River and the Jester's Tail. Also known as the Dark Blue Pearl, this massive lake is more than 70 miles wide, and acts as a welcome source of relief for those crossing this desolate region of Áereth. Raiders from nearby Rhaz al-Khali, though, are said to patrol the banks of Ukhorvus Nuur, searching for unwary travelers to abduct and use in their unholy rituals.

Urdu River: The Urdu has a sinister reputation born from Tiam'tze, the ancient mound-city at its headwaters. Annually, the river's waters flood red, and hundreds of tiny dragonlings are flushed down the rocky gorges. Resembling pale, foot-long worms, the dead dragonlings are quickly devoured by the carrion eaters of the Urdu and Saltwitch. The origins and significance of the dragonlings remains a mystery.

Warriors' Gate: Immense white crystal cliffs completely surround this massive bay, which feeds into the Akhneten River. These gigantic crystals gleam so brightly in the sun that navigating through the bay is a task best left to the most experienced of sailors. Many a shipwreck lies beneath the jagged crystals of the Warriors' Gate. Unfortunately for most merchants and explorers traveling to this part of the world, Warriors' Gate is the primary gateway connecting the Empyrean Ocean to the rest of the Lostlands.

Parts of the crystal cliffs were carved eons ago into an elaborate mural, which depicts the ancient battles between the sphinx and the naga. Lying behind many of the carved figures in the mural are a system of caves and tunnels, rumored to be home to many vile beasts and to many ancient treasures.

Wyrm's Deep: The shoreline of the Wyrm marked the last stand of the defeated armies of Leherti. Unable to retreat, unwilling to let the Scourge pass, the generals rallied their broken forces—reinforced by an alliance of human knights, dwarves, and elves—and held the Wyrm against impossible odds. Today the shallows of Wyrm's Deep are littered with the bones and armor of a thousand soldiers and the hundreds of fell beasts they fought to a stalemate.

Hills, Highlands, and Mountains

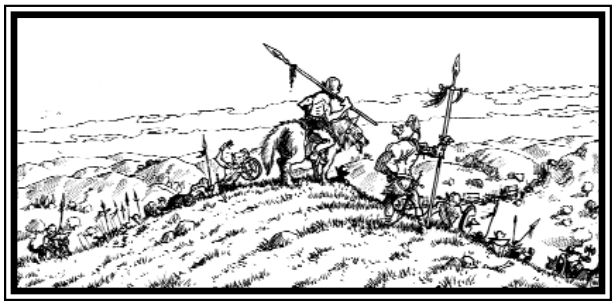
Anduran Mountains: Along with the Atlauhti Mountains, the massive Andurans form a natural barrier that sequesters the peninsula of Xulmec from the rest of the Southlands. These cold highlands further insulate from the unnatural heat of the Eztenqui Jungle and the Plains of Fire to the west. The climate of the Andurans varies drastically throughout its full length, mostly by its diverse elevations. Though the mountains are dominated chiefly by the humans of the Xulmec city-state of Amoya, many other creatures beyond the ken of any humanoid province make the mountains their home. Great eagles and condors lair in the rocky aeries, while rumors exist of white dragons living among the ice-encrusted peaks. From the colder foothills, trolls occasionally venture out in search of human flesh.

Atlauhti Mountains: Also called the Canyon Peaks, the Atlauhti Mountains run east and west, joining the Andurans to separate Xulmec from all other lands. Only Omian Pass allows for easy passage between them. Warmer and lower in elevation than their neighboring mountains, the Atlauhtis are infamous for their sheer and jagged slopes and the volcanic activity common throughout. The city-state of Chuzec owes it very identity to these infernal mounts.

Barrows, the: The Barrows take their name from the scores of cairns and tombs hidden among the rock clefts and ridges. Those returning from expeditions to the Barrows report of a curse that hangs over the area; most adventurers die within six months of returning from these haunted hills.

Blackore Hills: Running along the eastern coast of the Criestine coast, the Blackore hills hide numerous cave complexes, and are notorious for their profusion of goblinoids and their wicked ilk. Merchants passing within sight of the Blackores are advised to be on their guard for worg riders and worse.

Caverns of Menkauhor, the: Located near the northern stretches of the Jester's Tail, these craggy caves serve as lairs for dozens of tribes of kobolds, goblins, and orcs. It is a savage and formidable area—skilled warriors are essential for traversing this region safely. Many of the caverns lead to twisting passages that descend downward for miles, with some of the major caverns acting as gateways that reach down to the World Below.



Cliffs of Dyzan: Locked in the icy reaches of the Northlands, the Cliffs of Dyzan loom above the Bay of Valfors, rising a thousand feet above the crashing surf. Worn smooth by time and cruel northern storms, the red stone cliffs house a number of sea caves at the water's edge. With no beach to moor on, exploration requires maneuvering skiffs into the caves, a dangerous proposition under the best of circumstances.

Dragonspire Mountains: The sharp peaks of the Dragonspires define the eastern border of the Northlands. Drawn like a line between the younger nations of the west, and the antiquated empires of the east, the mountain range is home to ruins older than either civilization. Entire dead cities stand watch atop the high passes, enticing sages and treasure seekers alike.

Dünerain Mountains: Running along the western coast of the Northlands, the Dünerain mountains are home to some of the richest mineral veins in all of the North. Attempts at mining are plagued by evil giants and their kin, who consider the Dünerains to be an ancestral homeland, sacred to their kind. Ruins of giant-sized tombs and palaces bear testament to this theory, as does the profusion of elder dire beasts. It is well known that a red wyrm of unmatched age and ferocity dozes somewhere beneath the Dünerains, guarding a trove of ancient treasure. The dread beast hasn't been seen for a century or more; if it still lives, then it is certain to stir soon.

Fangs, the: Local legend holds that the Fangs are the last remains of a mythic "world dragon." Whether or not the tales hold any truth, it is clear to all that the formations are distinctly *unnatural*. The calcified white spires are home to a multitude of winged beasts that prey upon each other and the deer of the plains.

Frosteye Mountains: The Frosteye Mountains stand stark against the northern reaches of the Dominor range. While not as awesome as the Ul Dominors, their northern latitude ensures that the Frosteyes are encased in ice and whirling snow through out the year. The glaciers atop the Frosteyes fracture into deep crevasses and endless ice mazes. None but the hardiest of monsters make their home amid the icy spires, and woe to any who should cross their frozen paths.

Herennia Mountains: Warring tribes of thunder giants, lightning giants, and trolls inhabit these tall, imposing mountains, which are located in the northern regions of Morena Nova. In recent years, these giants have also constantly raided the human settlements located near the

base of the mountains, turning these villages into ghost towns.

The northernmost parts of the Herennia Mountains serve as the ancestral home of the dwarven kingdom of Taijin, who keep mostly to the tallest of the mountains, Mount Raiju.

Kharan Plateau: Looming high over the western edge of Ssorlang, the Kharan Plateau extends well beyond the western edge of the Known Realms and eventually reaches the Shadowed West. Upon first gaining the highland from the countryside of Ssorlang, one will find a hospitable forest edge offering a panoramic view of the Laeysian Sea. As one ventures further west, a vast, sterile heath presents itself, with fewer traces of life showing with each mile. Only the hardiest of flora endures within the Kharan wasteland, and shelter from its aberrant monsters grows scarce.

Kitezhan Mountains: These tall, inhospitable mountains once served as the stronghold for many powerful clans of marauding orc barbarians. However, during the War of the Greatspear four hundred years ago, the Vermilion Tribes eradicated the Kitezhan Mountains of these barbarian orc clans in a long and bloody siege. Orc ghosts and vampires are said to still haunt the ruins of the few remaining orc enclaves not utterly razed to the ground.

Litzitlan Hills: At a glance, the Litzitlan Hills are picturesque and serene, not the kind of place a visitor would believe is universally shunned by the Xulmec natives. Nevertheless, spending any length of time there is an invitation to death or capture, for lurking beneath the hills are legions of formians, ever building and securing their domain. The Xulmecs respect and fear the alien, hive-minded creatures, avoiding them whenever possible and, with only very limited success, trading with them on rare occasions. In the fifty years since their appearance in the hills, the formians have not sought to invade any of the city-states, though their sudden presence forced the Xulmecs to reconstruct their trade roads and circumvent the insect people. The queen formian has on occasion sent out a few of her myrmarchs to make contact with the neighboring humans, reminding them that the Litzitlan Hills belong to the hive-city, whose name cannot be pronounced by humanoid tongues. All trespasses into their domain are taken as offers of service, as trespassers will become formian slaves.

Mirdar-Luminar Steppes: Named for the ancient elven nation that once ruled the plains, the steppes are now home to the armies of the Scourge. By night, thousands of bonfires blanket the plains, like reflections of the starlit sky, and by day raiders scour the steppes for escaped slaves and outlaws.

Ruins of elven towers still dot the Mirdar-Luminar, rising like spears from the windswept steppes. Tarkhan Khurzog has placed sentries around each tower, and scores of Scourge explorers have vanished into the various ruins, never to be seen again.

Montzulec Mountains: Along with the Nahualli Mountains, the Montzulecs serve as the natural barrier between Zimala's humid jungles in the north and the arid plains in the south. Many of these peaks are dormant or dead volcanoes, though their volatile activity in the distant past gave Zimala its name as the Island of Obsidian. The dark, volcanic glass is still found in great abundance within these mighty mountains—though accessing it is another matter.

Little is known about what other secrets and dangers lie hidden in the Montzulecs and Nahuallis, but many unsubstantiated legends have endured. Mt. Huicatl, also known as the Pedestal of Heaven, rises from the center point of the Montzulecs where they meet the Nahualli Mountains and is believed to be the tallest mountain in the Known Realms. A cloud giant city is only one legend among many affiliated with Mt. Huicatl. Another is that of Gørmnaar, a moving city of frost giants—some say, the homeland of all their kind—carved out of a massive glacier that slowly advances through the mountains at the behest of their shamans. Yet another story tells of the Stormspire, a tower once inhabited by silver wyrms and their humanoid apprentices during the Reign of Dragons. Guarded now only by a single draconic lich, the lost Stormspire housed magical experiments too deadly for the proximity of more populous lands.

Mount Icpitl: On the Isle of Tlahuaco, Mount Icpitl is a dead volcano rumored to house the pyramid fortress of the legendary Emerald Cobra, Xiuhcoatl. The few Criestine scouts who have braved the Eztenqui Jungle in search of it have reported lizardfolk and other hostile reptilian creatures dwelling in the vicinity of Mount Icpitl.

Mountains of the Fifth Prince: Effectively the main barrier between the Lostlands and the Northlands, the

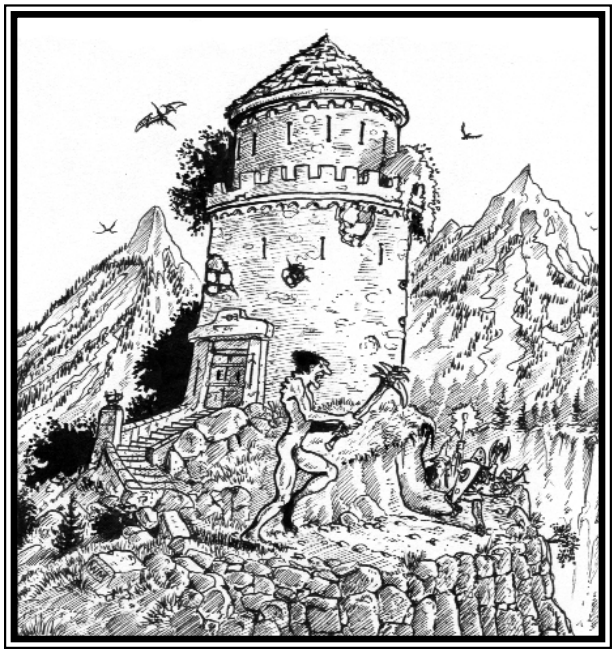
Mountains of the Fifth Prince stretch across the entire continent, connecting the Empyrean Ocean to the Twisted Sea. The Mountains of the Fifth Prince are named for Djedkara the Bold, an androsphinx and imperial prince who was the predecessor to the Great Queen Ankharet. Djedkara, who died under mysterious circumstances, is said to be buried along with three other Sphinx Kings somewhere in the Mountains, in a series of connected tombs called the Nekropolis Magna.

The Mountains of the Fifth Prince are also home to roving tribes of gnolls, which frequently raid the nalvor settlements that lie near the base of this range. The few mountain paths that cut through the Mountains and connect the Lostlands to the southernmost regions of Saramathia are well hidden, and known only to a few daring guides and rangers.

Nahualli Mountains: See *Montzulec Mountains*.

Omian Pass: A natural canyon in the Atlauhti Mountains widened by time, Omian Pass was secured by the Criestine colonists and Xulmecs when their alliances were formed centuries ago. Its center smoothed by frequent passage, both ends of the pass were laid with the stone roads by the Xulmecs of Kaatlan and Teotcoatlan. Nicknamed the Passage of Bones for the bleached color of the canyon walls, travel through the pass is kept relatively safe by the patrols from Ft. Montsiang. Recently, reports of a mated pair of rocs have limited the number of caravans, while a pride of strange, black-furred krenshars have been attacking travelers on the fringes of the pass's southern side.

Pearl Spires, the: Along the western coast of Xa Deshret are a series of jagged mountain peaks, steep and formed from dazzling white stone. Inhabited by tribes of giants and trolls, the Spires are a deadly region, with only a handful of winding trails leading from the shores of the Empyrean Ocean to the Ghetrian Desert and the imperial roads of Xa Deshret. Abandoned silver mines lie deep below the mountains, which were worked centuries ago by dwarf and nalvor slaves.



Hidden somewhere amongst the tallest of the Spires is thought to be the Tower of the Shattered Sword. Built several centuries ago, the Tower was then used as a stronghold by the Criestiene Emperor Mattias II, who attempted in vain to invade Xa Deshret as part of a misguided holy crusade. Its exact location has been lost to the ages.

Pochectic Mountains: The perennial mists that cling to the summits of the Pochectic Mountains have given rise to numerous legends. The drakon of Ssorlang believe that the mists hide ancient dragon citadels, while the Xulmecs claim that they conceal the thrones of elder gods, divinities so old they have passed into retirement and now look upon the world from these enshrouded peaks. Whatever the truth, expeditions into the Pochectics are seldom without incident. Reports of illusionary terrains and sudden, unnatural rockslides lend credence to the belief that the mountains have something to hide.

Saint's Blood Mountains: Wreathed in snow and shackled by ice, the Saint's Bloods stand guard over the distant north, marking the furthest reaches of the Known Realms. Sages promote many theories of what lies beyond, and of fell monsters that make their home in the inhospitable wastes, but these speculations have yet to be proven.

Trolltooth Peaks: Rising where the Ul Dominors approach the Lirean Sea, the Trolltooth Peaks are smaller than their northern cousins, but no less inhospitable. Sharp and craggy like their namesakes, the Trolltooths are home to savage ogres, goblins, and many tribes of stone giants.

Ul Dominor Mountains: Home to the mighty Holdfast of the Steel Overlord, the Ul Dominor Mountains divide the Northlands in two. The highest peaks in all the North, the Ul Dominors are covered with snow year-round. Crossing the high peaks requires either dealing with the dour folk, or risking encounters with fell beasts that make their home in the mountaintop glaciers.

Urkallan Hills: Marking the northern border of the Criestine Empire, the hills have long been a source of mystery. Reportedly raised during a battle between two great wizards, those passing over the hills at night speak of seeing strange lights and unexplained noises, and merchant traders refuse to camp in the hills. Regardless of rumors, the Urkallans clearly serve as home to kobolds

and ogres that make a habit of preying on the villages scattered about the hills.

Uru'Nuk Highlands: The grassy highlands are home to the nomadic tribes of Saramanthia, and several species of migratory lizard-beasts. Fertile and blessed with regular rain, the tall-grass prairie is also reputed to conceal an enormous ruin beneath the grassy plains. Half-buried walls and grass-covered seals dot the highlands, lending credence to the theory of multiple ruins; certainly the whispers of a single massive ruin beneath the turf are nothing more than an exaggerated myth.

Valley of Xyr Muthal: An isolated paradise in the heart of the Lostlands, this lush, fertile valley is home to dinosaurs and other primitive beasts. Creatures thought to be long extinct can be found in abundance wandering through the Valley of Xyr Muthal, making this strange and wondrous place a living anachronism that seems to exist outside of time. Rare plants grow in abundance throughout the entire region, and gigantic herds of game animals roam freely across the flowing grasslands.

Despite its obvious riches, the Valley of Xyr Muthal remains largely untouched and undisturbed by the rest of civilization. This is not due to any lack of desire by the kingdoms that surround it. Sorcery permeates this land—those who wander through the valley seem to quickly lose their memories, and physically transform into more savage, primitive versions of what they once were. Only the most powerful of magics can protect travelers against this transformation. The main source of magic for the valley is reputedly Lake Tyrgyz, which can be found in the eastern regions of this area.

Although the Valley of Xyr Muthal has not been ruled—or, for that matter, successfully claimed—by any of the kingdoms of the Lostlands since the fall of the Khonsurian Empire, the denizens of the Valley are led in loose fashion by a strange barbarian queen called Sionala. Although little is known about this barbarian warrior, the few stories that have slipped out of the Valley suggest that she is a warrior of immense power with magical abilities, and may in fact be a demigod. The extent of her influence over the rest of the Valley of Xyr Muthal is unknown.

Vermilion Steppes, the: Known primarily for the tough, blood-red grass that permeates the entire area, the Vermilion Steppes are an unforgiving land. Only the hardiest of creatures are able to survive in this desolate place, let alone thrive. The climate of the Vermilion Steppes alternates wildly between fiery heat and brutal cold, often within the span of just a few days. Winds whip harshly through the Steppes like a sword stroke throughout the year. Small bands of kobold and goblin raiders make their home here, as do herds of shadroquus and an elusive dragon or two, but the undisputed rulers of this wasteland are the Vermilion Tribes of the wild elves.

During the time of the Sphinx Emperors, a mighty battle was once fought upon the Vermilion Steppes against a demonic horde. The Armies of the Sphinx were victorious, but the blood of the fallen demons permanently stained the battlefield a crimson red. To the present day, if a warrior drives a dagger deep into the soil of the Vermilion Steppes, the tip of the blade still comes out wet with fresh demon blood. For this reason, many undead creatures that feast on blood, such as ghouls and vampires, have made their lairs in the Steppes.

Forests, Jungles, and Woodlands

Amn'crith: The Amn'crith is home to the largest-known specimens of Ashwood trees found in the North. Rising several hundred feet above the forest floor, the massive old-growth trees house cities of elves and great rocs that make their nests in the trees' uppermost branches. The floor of the forest is less traveled and much more wild, and reports of gnolls and ogres surface from time to time. See also *Elven Nations* in Chapter 1.

Azcatlepi Jungle: Logographic glyphs in ancient naga ruins suggest that before the Reign of Serpents, the Azcatlepi Jungle was half its present size, with arid plains dominating the Zimalan landscape. Despite this assertion, there is no disputing that the Azcatlepi remains Áereth's largest-known rainforest. Comparable to the Eztenqui Jungle with its dangers, the sheer size and density makes the Azcatlepi even more impenetrable. Animals of every size and color live in the verdurous depths, along with giant vermin, supernatural serpents, and both carnivorous and herbivorous dinosaurs. Rain

falls frequently, and tropical fevers have been known to claim the lives of entire expeditions.

Yet benevolent creatures are said to share the jungle with monstrous predators. Where most explorers report ambushes and numerous casualties, others have reported friendly fey and strange, otherworldly beings. The Xulmec guides who lead Northland explorers to old Zimala speak of mythic beings from celestial countries seeking isolation on the mortal world.

Blackbriar Wood: The sun-dappled vales and tumbling waterfalls of the Blackbriar are regarded as among the most beautiful vistas in all the north, but the forest is best known for its ambassadors: the celebrated Blackbriar Elves. Fiery warrior-mages, the elves of the wood have distinguished themselves in military service in the Criestine colonies and in royal courts throughout the north. In turn, the Blackbriar has been spared the depredations common to other ancient woodlands, allowing the elves to nurture the beasts and flora of their ward. While certainly not devoid of predators or monsters, the woodlands of the Blackbriar are also home to the healthy populations of good creatures, including pegasi and even the occasional retiring unicorn.

Cairnswild: Peaceful and welcoming during the day, at night the rocky trails and shadowed dells of the Cairnswild become the hunting ground for untold numbers of undead that rise from the abundance of crypts, cairns, and barrows that dot the forested hills. At dusk, the branches seem to close in, absent vines hang from dead limbs, once-familiar trails take new turns, and woe to anyone caught within the forest's chill grasp after nightfall.

Corsan Forest: Ancient Corsan is much like her elven wardens: stately, noble and mighty, the tall pines and moss-lined trails whisper secrets of the ages. Sylvan and monstrous beasts exist in a careful balance; the elves did not orchestrate this balance, but they do protect it, ever mindful of the forest's health.

Similarly, the forest is home to fae of both good and wicked bent, and those venturing into its sheltered glades are advised to make offerings to its oldest residents. A singular black unicorn has been sighted in the woods, and mages across the North have offered vast sums for its capture.

Crystalmeet Wood: A foul curse has overtaken the Crystalmeet, twisting its trees into tormented mockeries of nature, transforming its beasts into slavering aberrations, and slaying its elven keepers and raising them as intelligent undead. The origins of this curse, and any indications to its remedy, are all a mystery. Those investigating the Crystalmeet are seldom seen again, and those who do return are never quite the same again. One notable example is the righteous paladin, Lady Shandovar of the Lance, who now resides in an Arvalis sanatorium, where she spends her days drooling on her shocked gray hair and mumbling rites to aberrant gods.

Eztenqui Jungle: Primeval magic dwells in the heart of the Eztenqui Jungle, and it seldom benefits its intruders. Sweltering heat permeates the jungle at all times of the year, making the surrounding lands more tropical than their latitude would suggest. Arcane scholars even surmise that this torrid magic is linked to the Plains of Fire to the south. The animals and beasts that prowl the Eztenqui, however, have adapted to its extreme humidity and high temperature. Of great danger to frontiersmen and explorers are the storms of stirges that inhabit the jungle, although even the dried husks of animals and humanoids are insufficient warning to the true threat these creatures pose when they arrive in great numbers. Assassin vines, twisted fey, and even green hags are said to dominate the deep jungle, but the promise of treasure-laden ruins in the jungle continue to draw in the greedy despite common wisdom.

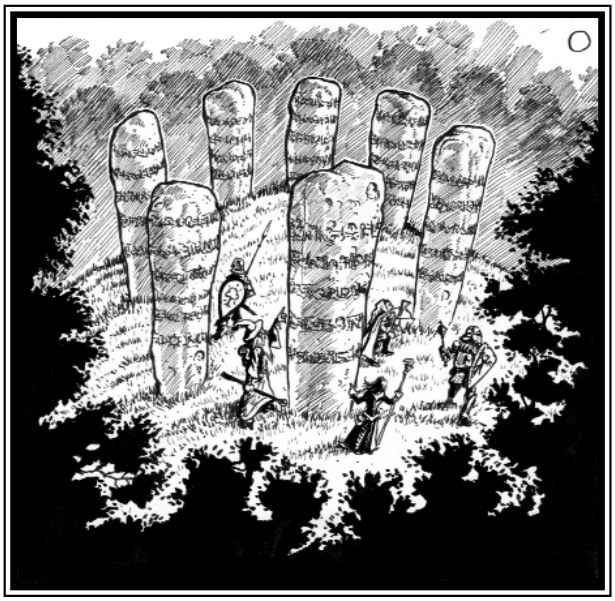
Despite its menace, the Eztenqui Jungle is diminishing. Carved in the face of one of the Atlauhti mountains, a crude map presumably once used by stone giants depicts the Eztenqui Jungle as reaching from where the Xocoatic Marshes lay to halfway across the Sea of Desperation. In the few centuries, the jungle's eastern fringes have softened, dissolving into a marshy network of tiny isles and salty channels. When the Criestine colonists first settled upon Southland shores, the eastern side of the Eztenqui Jungle was known as the Tlahuaco Coast—yet Tlahuaco has since become an isle of its own, only the largest of many as the Eztenqui is slowly swallowed by the Sea of Desperation.

Ferahn Forest: The Ferahn Forest is notorious for being thick with goblins and orcs, and merchants passing through its darkened glades are advised to retain the service of stout warriors and spellcasters. Less well known are the small communities of reclusive elves, hidden far from the usual trails and prying eyes. The elves make

their homes in grassy glades and beneath the boughs of ancient trees. It is said that the elves, though few in number, wage constant war against the goblinoids, and welcome those who would lend a bow to their cause. The Ferahn marks the eastern border of the nation of Thire.

Jungles of Sahaptia, the: This region of mighty jungles sits along the southeastern border of Xa Deshret. The jungles are well known throughout the world for their legendary darkfyre trees, which grow as tall as four hundred feet in height and often have a diameter of fifty feet or more. Wood from the darkfyre trees is highly coveted by shipbuilders, who claim that the wood can be used to build warships twice as strong and as fast as a normal ship. Loose bands of evil treants skulk about the jungle, making the cutting and cultivation of darkfyre trees difficult for ambitious timber merchants.

However, this jungle region is perhaps most infamously known as the home of the pteral race—hideous insect-like humanoids with a voracious appetite for the flesh and blood of humanoid creatures. The pterals live in giant blood-red hives, which either hang from the darkfyre trees or have been built inside the ruins of Khonsurian temples standing on the outskirts of the jungle. Although the pterals mercifully stay dormant for long periods of time—usually for seven years—at the end of this hibernation, they emerge in a feeding frenzy, annihilating everything within several hundred miles of their blood hives. According to the written histories in Xa Deshret, the Sphinx Emperors once were able to keep the wasp-men at bay. However, the secret to this success has been long forgotten, and with each awakening, the reach of the pterals edges ever closer to the rest of the civilized world.



Mirdar Forest: Last of the great forests, the Mirdar is home to many sylvan-born creatures that cannot be found anywhere else in the North. Intelligent lynx, owls, and hounds all roam the woods, keeping watch for their fae allies. Despite the strong presence of good creatures, the dangers of the Mirdar should not be overlooked. Since the fall of Arovarel, fell creatures have been sighted with increasing frequency, along with wicked treasure hunters seeking to despoil the ruins of the elven capital.

Mosswood: Mist-shrouded Mosswood is home to a number of standing stones, which are believed to have been constructed by the Druid Kings of old. The significance of the stones—and the undecipherable, glowing runes that decorate their surfaces—has yet to be determined. The locals promote any number of theories, ranging from the stone circles serving as portals to other worlds, sacrificial sites keyed to elder gods, or foci designed to channel a vast network of world-spanning energies.

Myrwych Forest: The dark, misty glades of the Myrwych are haunted by wicked magic and tormented aberrations. Horrors of Zamon stalk the forest trails in search of prey, while summoned demons and devils watch over corrupted glades that were once home to the sylvan folk. The elves that remain in the Myrwych have been forced to adopt some of the characteristics of their enemies; those visiting the forest report that the tribes of elves are a grim, melancholic folk, reduced to savagery in their fight for survival.

Oldarch Forest: Inhabited by a handful of loosely organized elf tribes and their sylvan allies, the Oldarch is also home to a temple hidden far from prying eyes. Guarded by elf paladins sworn to the Theocracy, the forest-bound temple houses secret texts and lore of the Lance. The temple is visited most

often by scribes and librarians researching specific questions, but on occasion even his Holiness of the Lance has been witnessed riding into the shaded wood … with an army of devoted bodyguards at his side.

Stagwood: Standing on the borderlands between Thire and Crieste, Stagwood is no less dangerous for the regular patrols of Thirian wardens that watch over its trials and glades. The wardens of Thire are a good if rustic folk, welcoming to strangers and quick to defend their beloved homeland. While the wardens can watch over the eastern wood, the western forest is held in the cruel grasp of monstrous humanoids.

Thornswild Wood: Found in the northernmost reaches of Thire, Thornswild Wood was once a place of great druidic power. In recent decades, though, the Thornswild has fallen upon ill times. The wicked vines that give the woods their name crawl about at will, hooking unfortunate creatures and feeding upon their blood. It is rumored that a site of great power remains somewhere within the woods, but few are willing to dare the narrow, thorn-lined trails. In the very center of the wood rises a great stone spire, atop which lies the abandoned ruins of an ancient keep.

Wailingwood: Infested by brigands and rogues, the Wailingwood is a haven for outlaws fleeing the Free Cities of Leherti. Merchants passing within sight of the foul place travel with a full complement of warriors, mages, and priests. Of late, rumors have filtered down to the coast telling of brigands pretending to be mercenary companies and hiring themselves out as guards for those making the trek north.

Warder Wood: Despite its location in central Crieste, Warder Wood conceals an unusually high number of orcs and goblinoids. Attempts to root out the monsters inevitably end in tragedy at the foot of the five temple-fortresses secreted in the heart of the woods.

Wilds, the: The forests known as the Wilds are situated south of the Halls of the Mountain King and north of the river Saedre. These dense and forbidding forests are universally feared and respected. Human and goblinoid savages alike lay claim to the dark woods, attacking those foolish enough to enter their realm. Legends whisper of forgotten dwarf vaults hidden beneath the forest floor.

Wintermere Forest: Blasted by incessant ice storms and blizzards, the Wintermere is encased in a frozen tomb for all but two months of the year. During these brief days of respite, the trees shed their coats of ice, and the forest comes alive with both predators and prey. A hardy breed of pale-skinned savages are believed to make their home in the woods, dressing in furs and worshipping elder dire beasts with totems carved from Ashwood trees, towering stones, and the ever-present ice. The Wintermere Forest is found on the western banks of the Hoarfrost, north and east of the fetid Wastes of Zamon.

Witch Wood: Also known as the Bane of Morcaut, the Witch Wood is shunned by all. The woods appear no different than any other mundane woodland, but it is well documented that anyone who enters the wood vanishes, only to reappear in other woods, sometimes thousands of miles away. Given the danger of most woodlands, it is not surprising that few of these wayward travelers are ever heard from again.

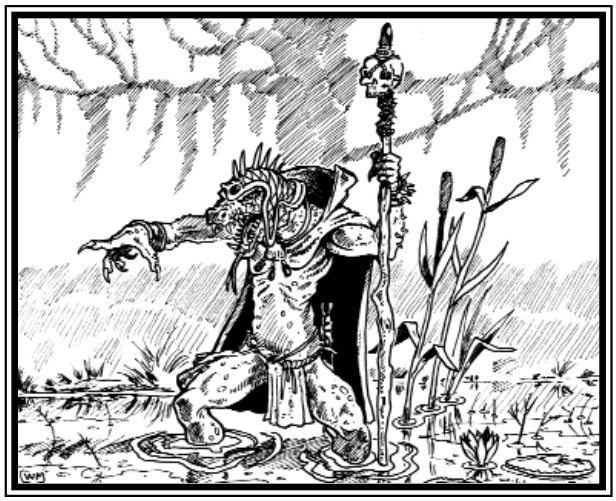
Swamps, Fens, and Moors

Black Fens: Heated by searing hot springs, and frozen by the ice storms of the Hoarfrost, the Black Fens are perpetually shrouded in dense mists that stink of sulfur and hellfire. Ice grows where the hot springs wane, blackened by the sooty mineral discharge that gives the fens their name. Explorers crashing through the fragile crusts of ice are often surprised by the scorching heat of the springs, and those trapped in the boiling mud quickly cook to death.

The fens are inhabited by trolls of every sort, including a rare sorcerous breed that delights in enslaving weaker creatures. Both ice- and fire-loving beasts can be found in equal abundance; similarly, creatures that shun the light of day find a welcome respite in the mist-shrouded swamp. A small enclave of drow make their home in the center of the swamp, defended by crude stone walls and a fortress of raised mud and magicked stone.

Chiauhtli: A tributary of the Quetli River splinters into the wide Chiauhtli delta, a large and notoriously unpleasant bog to most explorers, but a wondrous ecology of animal and plant life. Nomadic tribes of lizardfolk dwell in

the marshlands, driving away intruders and killing only repeat offenders. The drakon of neighboring Ssorlang have attempted many times to subjugate these tribes as they have countless times before them, but the Chiauhtli lizardfolk have countered every invasion with guerilla tactics impressive for so primitive a people. Explorers from the city-state of Maras have reported a camarilla of powerful lizardfolk druids who use the land itself to stave off the drakon scouts that precede each would-be invasion.



Gloom Marshes of Tashgar, the: Lying due east of the Valley of Xyr Muthal, these forbidding marshlands are constantly shrouded in thick gray mist. Zombies and skeletons wander aimlessly through the outskirts of these marshes, attacking travelers along the few roads that come near this dangerous place.

The Gloom Marshes are also home to many vile reptilian creatures, including large tribes of lizardfolk. These lizardfolk make occasional raiding forays to the north, but for the most part keep to themselves.

Great Swamp, the: Straddling the border between the nations of Crieste and Thire, the Great Swamp is claimed by none. A fetid, dismal place, the thick mists and watery bogs of the Great Swamp conceal secrets dating back to man's first attempts at civilization. Most of the ruins from this time sank below the waters centuries ago, but a few crude temples and towers still stand, clinging to ages long past. Lizardfolk and their kin can be found within the swamp, inhabiting the old ruins and adopting their savage customs.

Saltwitch Swamp: The low-lying basin of the Saltwitch floods annually when the tides of the Lirean are at their highest. When the tides recede, they leave a salty crust covering stunted trees and rocks alike. The remainder of the year, the swamp is a hot, muddy salt flat, devoid of fresh water or shelter.

Aberrations, freed from the salt flats during the wet season, rage across the Saltwitch stalking prey captured in the muddy tides. Those caught outside their lairs when the flats harden quickly descend into a madness; driven by hunger and the harsh conditions of the Saltwitch, they venture into the nearby Barrows or lurk along trade routes established by merchants crossing the flats.

Xocoatic Marshes: As explorers step off the foot of the Anduran Mountains, they find themselves in an unpleasant, humid bog. Travel is slow in this sucking mud and insect-ridden quagmire, but far preferable to the open fens to the west that comprise the Xocoatic Marshes. The air is filled with acrid fumes, and it is clear to rangers and druids that these are not natural swamp gasses but something more sinister and likely magical in origin. Worse, hidden rents in the endless mud have been known to spew caustic, flesh-searing liquids. Rumors of black dragons dwelling in the corrosive marshland are sufficient to discourage exploration of this foul region.

WASTELANDS

Achsfel Wastes: Located on the southeastern coast of the Lirean Sea, these blighted lands were once fertile plains. Few creatures live here, and fewer plants thrive. All are considered unclean to eat. The area is regularly scoured by an acid rain that burns flesh and metal but leaves stone intact. No sages today know the reason for the ancient transformation; however, the rare travelers have reportedly seen a mysterious palace in the Wastes from afar, but none have dared to investigate.

Blackfield: The Blackfield—or Capotzitlalli, as it is known in the Xulmec tongue—is a patch of desolate, blackened land roughly three miles in diameter. Named for the sooty consistency of its cursed soil, it was the site of a prominent battle when the Criestine colonists fought against the drakon in the early years of their settlement. The battle was a pyrrhic victory for the colonists, for as it progressed, the ground and sky darkened and the slain from both sides seemed to blacken and reanimate, dragging down their former companions in a terrible slaughter. Whether invoked by some magic by one of the armies or the manifestation of an unnatural phenomenon from the land itself, the Blackfield was born that day.

The Blackfield is a tract of coal-colored soil, littered sporadically with human and drakon bones bleached bright white. The remains of other unfortunates who have ventured onto the field have sunken into the ground, giving rise to the belief that ghouls, shadows, or worse dwell beneath the earth. Even on a bright sunny day, those standing within see the sky in coppery hues, and even bereft of trees, the land seems cast in permanent shade.

The Blackfield is a lure for curious wizards, but is universally shunned by the Xulmec people. While difficult to confirm, a few repeat visitors have raised suspicion that the field is "drifting" in the direction of Ft. Ferrau. Reportedly it has only moved a few yards since the phenomenon was first noted, but where perfectly healthy ground once lay to the north, the blight seems to have encroached. Meanwhile, along its southern rim, the land seems to be "healing." A group of local druids, considered obsessed with the Blackfield and more than a little mad, have even suggested that the field's movement is accelerating.

Burned Lands, the: In addition to cracking the world and creating the Devil's Cauldron, the falling of the Shadow Star also created a vast wasteland that straddles the eastern regions of the Vermilion Steppes and the Ghetrian Desert. Such was the heat that spewed forth from the falling Shadow Star that the ground below was completely incinerated, leaving a wide path of scorched earth in its wake. Since that fateful day, the Burned Lands created by this event have remained fallow and barren, and black smoke still billows from the charred ground.

Although the Burned Lands themselves have remained lifeless, they have still managed to become a haven of nefarious activity. Drow raiders emerge occasionally from this area, as they battle with the Vermilion Tribes when they get too close to this region. Additionally, large numbers of bugbear hordes have been spotted making the arduous trek into the heart of the Burned Lands.

The Burned Lands are also home to the mysterious Silver Citadel of Niraz.

Devil's Cauldron, the: Since the beginning of time, the comet known as the Shadow Star had been a fixture in the evening sky. Even the most ancient dragon lore speaks of this peculiar fireball, which blazed past the moon and stars once every ten years, setting the night sky ablaze with sinister purple light. The visits from the Shadow Star ended, however, when the glorious comet fell to earth almost twenty centuries ago. Although how the comet arrived is somewhat disputed—according to the lore of the Vermilion Tribes, the Shadow Star floated to the ground like a feather, rather than crashing violently as assumed by most sages—none can argue the result of this arrival. After the comet left a giant scar across the north, the eastern expanses of the Vermilion Steppes were blown apart, leaving a large, smoldering crater over three miles in diameter and reaching down even further into the depths of the earth. Scorching purple smoke still billows forth from the crater as powerfully as the day the comet first fell to earth, giving the crater its more commonly known name.

The Devil's Cauldron is a dangerous place. Prolonged exposure to the foul purple smoke causes the flesh to burn and scar horribly, and those who breathe the vapors too long invariably go mad. Additionally, the area is patrolled heavily by drow and derro raiders, who climb up the narrow paths from the bottom of the crater and attack those who wander too close to their homelands. The Cauldron is a place best left alone, unless one should desire to travel down into the World Below.

Frost Barrens: The sweep of icy tundra and stunted pines known as the Frost Barrens is a place without mercy or pity. Those venturing onto the Barrens forgo the assumptions of civilization, giving themselves over to the savage rule of the wild. Remorhazes, white dragons, and frost worms are the masters of the tundra, and all others simply struggle to survive in their shadow. The frozen remnants of failed expeditions dot the icy tundra, a testament to the brutal, unforgiving nature of the Barrens and its denizens.

Traders report of encountering fire witches who make their hovels in forlorn ice caves and muddy huts. Tales speak of the fires maintained by the witches, who claim that their wards have burned since the beginning of time.

Ghetrian Desert, the: The vast stretches of the Ghetrian Desert (also called the "Great Desert" by locals of the region) encompass nearly all of the northern regions of the Lostlands. Once but a fraction of its current size, the desert has grown tremendously since the fall of the Sphinx Empire, creating a fiery wasteland in what was once a tropical paradise. The nalvor of Xa Deshret stubbornly believe that the growth of the desert is a parting curse from their departed Sphinx Emperors, and that the desert shall retreat and wither once the Sphinx return.

In additional to the abandoned cities of the Khonsurian Empire and the nalvor, the Ghetrian Desert is also home

to wandering tribes of human and halfling merchants. These merchants traverse the majority of the Lostlands, and perhaps have a better perspective upon the entire Lostlands than any of the other creatures that live there.

Icenwastes: The western wastes are protected from the fierce conditions that claim the Frost Barrens, and monstrous humanoids of all breeds roam the tundra. Nearing the Hoarfrost, the Icenwastes assume a character akin to the Barrens, the tundra changing to snow drifts, ice ledges, and then entire glaciers. The eastern Icenwastes rival the Frost Barrens for their ferocity and bleak desolation. The largest of the world's white dragons is believed to make its home atop a glacier in the eastern reaches of the Icenwastes.

Plains of Fire: If one looks westward from a vantage in the Anduran Mountains, a vast and perpetual cloud of mist obscures the horizon, dominating earth and sky beyond the Xocoatic Marshes. The Xulmec people call the land within the mist Ixtlatla, the Plains of Fire, and do not venture there. Their priests say that the Plains are not meant to be crossed, serving as the supernatural barrier between the Known Realms and the Shadowed West.

In truth, the endless miles of mist are sempiternal clouds of steam, roiling up from the geysers of boiling water that blister the plains for hundreds of miles. What natural or unnatural geology generates such heated water so continuously none can say and few can observe. Within the Plains of Fire, the first few miles are uncomfortable, quickly giving away to scalding clouds and killing steam. Only creatures inured or immune to such heat can venture further west. Reports from adventurers magically equipped for the extreme temperatures speak of seeing salamanders, mephitis, and even elemental creatures of fire.

Sands of Shanbilai, the: This southernmost desert of the Lostlands forms the main barrier between Morena Nova and the rest of its hostile neighbors in the region. Somewhere deep in the heart of the desert is a gateway to a dark dimension. Through this gateway, fiends and other infernal beings wander into the Sands of Shanbilai, slaughtering all that they encounter. For this reason, the roads that criss-cross the desert have been abandoned for many years—even the Morenan armies are terrified to patrol them. It is a region best left alone by travelers. The only area of solace known in this fiery desert is the Oases of Sheshat-Semet, which can be found near the center of this region.

Wall of Ablyos, the: Also known as the Gorge of Saramanthia, the Storm Chasm, and Giants' Folly, the Abylos Wall is actually a canyon of mythic proportions, rising a full mile from floor to rim. During the dark years of the War of Divine Right, with armies of giants and their kin threatening from the south and east, the Abylos Empire summoned together the mightiest of the Druid Kings, elven wizards, and entire legions of slaves. Over the course of a single year, the united forces enlarged a river valley into a mighty canyon unlike any other, building ramparts and battlements along its western rim, and created siege weapons on a scale never witnessed since.

The armies of the giants arrived confident in their might, having easily conquered all other challengers. The giants poured into the canyon and swarmed up the far side, only to be met by the focused might of the Abylos Empire. Legions of archers rained arrows down into the rushing hordes, soul mages slew slaves by the thousands to call down storms of fire from the heavens, and spearmen and swordmaidens fought the few invaders that climbed their way to the rim of the canyon, casting the corpses down upon their fellows.

The defense was entirely too successful, funneling the trapped giants south and west toward Foresthome, where the giants raged, destroying the surrounding lands and setting the stage for the destruction of Lirea.

Today, ancient ruins can still be found on the western rim. Few creatures are foolish enough to venture to the chasm floor, where the ghosts and specters of slain giantkin wander uncontested.

Wastes of Zamon: The dark moors and high ridges were synonymous with wickedness long before the sorcerer-exile Zamon raised his demon-born tower. Like a people hungry for a king, the wastes have flourished beneath Zamon and his ilk, spreading their foul corruption south and east with each passing year. Now over one hundred evil sorcerers, necromancers, and black witches and warlocks make their home in the wastes.

Wicked beasts, both summoned and created, roam the Wastes, searching for prey and performing missions for their demented masters. Few, if any, of the Wastes' original fauna can be found. Every tree and flower, every mammal, bird, and insect has been twisted from its original form. Insane treants and corrupted nature spirits are especially dangerous, refusing to even recognize the wizards that call the Wastes their home.

Ruins, Dungeons, and Antediluvian Curiosities

It would be impossible to list all the ruins of the Known Realms; several tomes could be devoted to the Northlands alone, and fresh ruins are being uncovered each year. The following is a partial list of the ruins most often cited by bards and minstrels. Adventurers and treasure seekers should beware: The notes collected herein are incomplete at best, and misleading at worst.

Amonzadd and Ahna-Vithyre: Few legends can compare to the two great nations that were swallowed by the Lirean Sea during the War of Divine Right. Amonzadd, the ancestral citadel of the dwarves, and Ahna-Vithyre, the Foresthome of elven lore, were both consumed when the subcontinent of Lirea sank below the waves. While few contend that anyone (or anything) could have survived the cataclysm that swallowed the two great cities, rumors persist of elven archmages sleeping away the ages in their sealed vaults, and of dwarf-lich regents ruling lost forges hidden beneath the ocean's floor. The fires of rumor are rekindled whenever a shallow water diver returns with a few coins minted of an unknown metal, or the body of a grizzled dwarf lord, armored in ancient fashion, washes ashore.

Ayoxatlan: With its dark, pitted towers clawing the sky and its massive girders jutting out over the Athuan shoreline, the ruins of Ayoxatlan are still an impressive sight. If the old legends are true, the lofty structure once served as the gate and abutment for a bridge of titanic proportions that reached across the Surya Sea itself to the Lostlands. Casual observance of the expansive sea makes this possibility difficult to believe, but the impeccable architecture and monumental size of the structure gives the beholder pause. Stories told by Xulmec priests suggest that the gods once favored the great empire of Zimala, approving the nagas' desire to reach across the sea to foreign lands.

Even if this is true—and that a causeway once spanned the many miles to the Lostlands—then the gods have since withdrawn their favor. The stories even say that islands once supported the bridge's columns, but they are nowhere now to be seen. The only evidence is the island at the center of the Surya and the corresponding ruin on the far side.

Ayoxatlan is a perilous ruin now. The anchorage alone is a multi-leveled structure, a monolith of cratered stone that has become the lair of monsters. The abutment and towers, scarred by millennia, comprising a labyrinth of passages and guard chambers, hold dangers of their own—creatures who require no contact with civilization or wish to hide their deeds. Where the towers sink into the jagged shoreline, sea monsters have gathered and proclaimed a dominion of their own. The levels beneath the waves are nigh inaccessible.

Castle of the Crow: Home to the Crow Queen, a witch of exceeding power and wickedness, the Castle was a mighty citadel built high atop the southern Ul Dominor mountains. The Crow Queen demanded a tribute from all the traders crossing the pass beneath her citadel, accepting gold but preferring souls. When a party of Crieste's most powerful heroes launched a surprise raid on the citadel, slaying the Crow Queen and laying waste to her army, it was assumed that the world was now rid of her evil. That night, as the party rested on the pass below, the citadel broke free of the mountain and rose into the moonlit night.

The Castle of the Crow has been sighted hundreds of times since, often presaging a terrible tragedy or natural disaster, with hundreds of crows circling its high towers.

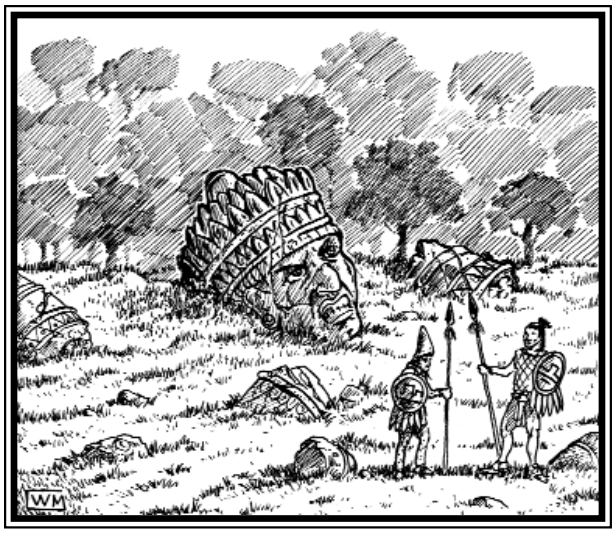
Catacombs of Nos Caen: Discovered beneath the foundations of Halsgate Castle, the extent of the catacombs is unknown. Preliminary expeditions have revealed that the crudely carved catacombs belong to a sort of undercity. Sages doubt that the savages of Nos Caen could have built such an extensive complex, but few offer theories about who—or what—might have done so.

Coatopolan: Sometimes called the Snake Ruin, Coatopolan was once a city built on the edge of the Zimalan Empire, the nagas' sole outpost at the northern edge of their empire. Hidden at the heart of the Xulmec peninsula, the ruin has been largely reclaimed by the land and now serves as the home of many animals and unnatural creatures. The one exception are the Miztlani, an order of paladins who have claimed the western edge of the ruin as their own. It is the site of the holy tomb of the heroine Cihuamiztli and the lammasu champion Naramsin (see *Miztlani*, Chapter 5). Though the ruins of Coatopolan hide many dangers, much exotic flora thrives here as well. Of greatest note are the miztli vines, hearty aerophytes indigenous to the ruin that bear tiny golden blossoms said to resemble a feline face.

Cohuatlizon: Cohuatlizon was a ruin even during the rise of the Zimalan Empire. Situated at the heart of the forested Serpent Isle, Cohuatlizon was once a city of draconic origin, but it has been long since plundered of its greatest secrets. The only treasures to be found here now are in the lairs of those monsters bold enough to take up residence within.

Cohuatlizon's greatest danger—and greatest appeal—is the Serpent Oracle, a legendary medusa of prophetic powers who dwells within a shattered temple at the city's heart. She offers frighteningly accurate visions of the future to those who can find her—and those of whom she approves. Those who sought to exploit her powers of prescience are now permanently displayed in a vast gallery of statues. If reports are true, no fewer than a thousand figures of lifelike stone adorn the city's central promenade. A gang of stone giants is said to guard the Serpent Oracle, and will smash her greatest offenders into rubble once they've been rendered in stone.

Crypt of Kothean: The lords of Kothea once ruled an empire that united much of the western Northlands. Seven generations of lords were buried in a secret tomb hidden somewhere in the heart of the Myrwych forest,



along with the bodies of their devoted servants and attendants. Rumor holds that the extensive crypt also contains portals that reach across the face of the North, allowing quick movement of armies in times of great need.

Fane of Elder Gods: Bards speak of a blasphemous palace-temple hidden somewhere atop the Ul Dominor mountains. This windswept, snow-laden ruin is said to be the home of a race of giants originally destined to rule the lesser races. These stories also tell of a stone palace built to an enormous, giant-sized scale. While none can speak to the fate of the giants, their temples-fires still burn, offering praise to weird shapes and deities foreign to the known world.

Floating Island of Orskenia, the: Moving throughout the Empyrean Ocean like a relentless predator, the Floating Island of Orskenia is more of a sailor's tale than an ominous terror. The circular island, which by all accounts is a volcanic monstrosity measuring some twenty miles in diameter, appears in a cloud of greenish-gray mist once every sixty years. The island never appears in the same location twice, although it usually materializes within a few days' sail from the coastlines of the Lostlands. Once it arrives, the island may remain in the Empyrean Ocean anywhere between a week to a year, drifting slowly through the murky waters without rhyme or reason, and moving just a few leagues each day. All ships that pass near the Floating Island disappear or are wrecked within days of sighting the mysterious place.

No one knows what actually lives on the island, if anything at all. Many sailors and pirates strongly believe that Orskenia is some sort of purgatory for those that drown at sea, and that the island crawls with undead creatures. Still others believe that the island is a haven for the sphinx that left the Khonsurian Empire centuries ago. Whatever the origin of the Floating Island, it is a place believed to best be avoided at all costs.

Huetzetoc: Meaning "he lies fallen" in the Xulmec tongue, Huetzetoc is the half-buried remains of the obsidian idol of Huamec, the savior and first god of the Xulmecs. During the War of Divine Right, when giantkind united against the smaller races of the known world, the people of Xulmec faced certain destruction from the armies of storm and fire giants who assailed them. It was Huamec who answered their prayers, instructing his priests to build a colossal statue of obsidian into which the god fused his own spirit. The might of his avatar turned the tide for the Xulmec people, but in the struggle Huamec himself was slain.

Centuries later, what remains of that great idol now lies shattered and inert. Only parts of the statue's three–hundred-foot frame remain intact. The head is set apart, jutting diagonally from the soil. All Xulmecs consider Huetzetoc hallowed ground, and the city-states often take turns sending patrols to watch over it.

Lost Mines of Avjitar: In the desert mountains south and west of Punjar, there exists a series of mines that follow a rich vein of pure adamantine. The location of the mines was a carefully guarded secret, and a citadel was built atop the mines to protect against raiders and foreign armies. Avjitar prospered for many years, sending a steady stream of adamantine north to Crieste, only to be buried by a magical sandstorm that swept up from the Great Desert, burying the city and obliterating all traces of its inhabitants. The source of the sandstorm, and the location of the mines, have been lost to the ages; maps to Avjitar are a popular item in Punjar, found in the stall of any dealer in antiquities, although their authenticity is dubious at best.

Maw of Mictlan, the: The terminus of the Mochitla River—or merely its threshold—the Maw of Mictlan is the entrance to the Land of the Dead according to Xulmec belief. Virtually inaccessible on all sides, the great chasm into which the river drops in a waterfall spanning hundreds of feet can only be viewed in one of two ways. The first is from the Lamasery of the Dead, an ancient building that resembles a sepulcher more than the monastery it is. Overlooking the Maw from a high precipice, it offers visiting pilgrims the only safe vantage of the impressive plunge. The second means of accessing the Maw is from the river itself, a course as certain as it is deadly. If the water merely drops into an abyss deep in the earth, then the fall alone is sure to kill. If the water of the saltwater river truly passes into the realm of the dead, one's safety cannot be assured.

Oubliette of Tybor the Mad: When the great magician Tybor, Elder Seer to the Emperor of Abylos, predicted the rise of the giants prior to the War of Divine Right, he was ridiculed as a fool and chased from the royal court by children armed with stones and rotten vegetables.

Consumed by madness and anger, Tybor built an inescapable dungeon-maze, warded with powerful magics and watched over by a contingent of summoned demons. On the eve of the war, Tybor stole into the palace, kidnapped his king, and delivered the regent into the heart of the maze.

Legend holds that the demons were tasked with keeping the errant king alive to wander the maze until the end of ages. Whether such a feat is possible, and if it is true that the regent still carries his crown and scepter of office (the powerful relics vanished the same night as the regent) are questions that seem destined to remain unanswered.

Thora-Ulimet: Legends tell of a great city of dark elves founded in the years following the Eldritch Coalition. A city of merchants and Underdeep traders, the drow of Thora-Ulimet were reputed to have dealt extensively with wicked humans, dwarves, and the intelligent monstrous humanoids. The city was laid low by a flight of silver dragons and an elf paladin bent on avenging her fallen brethren. Legends allege that the ruined city still deals with the surface races, and place the lost city somewhere in the Ul Dominor mountains.

Silver Citadel of Niraz, the: Sitting in the center of the cracked and blackened Burned Lands is a mighty fortress, with gleaming silver walls over one hundred feet tall, and golden towers that seem to touch the sky. Although the size of the fortress suggests that it was built for titans or giants, the Citadel was built sometime after the fall of the Shadow Star. According to the folklore of the Vermilion Tribes, the silver fortress arose from the ashes of the Burned Lands in a single moonless night

In recent years, much activity has been spotted surrounding the Silver Citadel. Flickering lights burn faintly in the towers of this fortress, which has seemed dormant for many generations. Additionally, the silhouettes of dragon wings have beeen spotted flying in and out of its gates. Whatever secrets that lurk inside the Silver Citadel of Niraz seem ready to burst forth from this odd place, and to spread across the Lostlands like wildfire.…

Standing Stones of the Druid Kings: When scholars of the North seek out evidence of the past, they need to look no further than the Standing Stones. Scattered across the North, and found in nearly every region, the circles of stones and monoliths were raised according to the will of the Druid Kings.

Some, like those found in Mosswood, bear glowing runes etched deep into their faces. Others are as smooth as polished glass and crackle with untapped energies. Others keen aloud when approached by orcs and half-orcs, and still others heal any who approach them. The purpose of the stones, and the reasons for raising them across the face of Áereth, are lost to antiquity.

Well of Worlds: Found deep within the bowers of the Anseur forest, the Well of Worlds is a forty-foot-wide pit, lined with rough stones, whose depth is unknown. The stones all bear powerful runes and sigils, thwarting all attempts to discern the nature of the magic at work in the Well. The elves of the Anseur report that every full moon the Well is lit up from below. During the time, according to legend, it is possible to use the Well to travel to other times and places. Unfortunately, no one has ever returned from such a journey to verify this.

Chapter 5
Organizations

While nations are the principle face of Áerethian politics, numerous cabals, secret societies, cults, and brotherhoods work their agendas across borders and beneath the noses of unsuspecting regents. Some of these organizations labor in the defense of good, but many, many more are sworn to evil ends.

In the history of the Northlands, as many regents have met their death at the end of a poisoned dagger as on the field of battle. Those who deal with secret societies know it is not enough to be guarded by a high city wall and defended by an army of loyal men-at-arms. For when shadow wars rage across the face of Áereth, any man, woman, or child could be the agent of the enemy, and no one—archmage, bishop, general, or regent—is safe.

In many lands, clandestine societies are simply a way of life. It is understood that deception is the first rule of diplomacy, and a knife in the back is simply a way of conducting business. Success—whether with sword, or spell, or coin—can only be obtained through strategy and some luck. Much as in a chess game, moves and countermoves must be plotted well in advance of their execution. Knowing the secret organizations of a land provides advantages toward ultimate triumph in the region, and joining their ranks may offer even more.

The Arcanum Infernal

This infamous school of magic in Gorhgijesk teaches necromancy and other sinister arts. Run by a small council of drow wizards known only as the Enclave, this institution of darkest wizardry seeks to preserve the evil knowledge outlawed and banned throughout the rest of Áereth, to teach that knowledge to those daring enough to seek it, and to create new kinds of magic. Despite the malevolent atmosphere that permeates the Arcanum, its students and teachers rarely view themselves or their work as evil—instead, they see themselves as pioneers, daring to push the boundaries of sorcery and science far past the timid borders of the outside world. At any given time, there are a dozen or so masters and nearly two hundred students living within the walls of the Arcanum. Students are marked with tattoos of dragons on their forearms; should they ever be deemed worthy of becoming a master, ornate designs of magical fire are added to the original tattoo.

Those acolytes who travel to the Arcanum Infernal, and seek to gain the forbidden knowledge within its walls, must first pass a series of trials in order to become a novice student. While the exact number and order of these trials remain secret, it is known that some test magical ability, while others strive to push the limits of the mind. Few actually pass all the tests and gain admittance to the Arcanum Infernal; the walls of the sinister institution are surrounded by the rotting corpses of failed students. Lunatics spouting utter nonsense also sit by the gates of the Arcanum Infernal, their minds twisted and broken by the harrowing trials.

In addition to teaching and preserving the darkest magical arts, the Arcanum Infernal seeks to create horrific new spells and magical devices that defy imagination … or sanity. The terrible experiments conducted by the institution remain guarded secrets, but rumors abound that the latest endeavors of the Arcanum involve dimensional forays into the foulest planes of existence. Several times a year, a sizable shipment of slaves arrives at the gates of the Arcanum. Their true purpose inside the evil institution remains a mystery, although the screams that echo throughout the city following their arrival suggest a nefarious intent.

The Black Watch

The warriors of the Black Watch are no less dedicated or devout than their brother order, Knights of the Lance, but are often mistaken for minions of the fiends they seek. An order of hunters, the Watchmen spend their (often short) lives in pursuit of demons, devils, vampires, hags, and any of the other fell monsters that prey upon humanity.

The average member of the Black Watch is dressed in soiled armor, stinks of necromantic laboratories and forgotten libraries, and carries a veritable arsenal of exotic weapons. Silent and sullen, most hunters have the gaunt, haunted look of wolves, and a blatant disregard for the niceties of culture.

Unlike their brothers, the hunters do not swear to any code of honor or the defense of good. Each Black Watchman has but a single vow: to do everything in her power to slay her chosen prey. While most begin with bright eyes and a heart for goodness, years spent watching her friends fall to the claws of fiends and suspecting every stranger of possession quickly wear away at the soul, until even the most idealistic hunter is reduced to bitter cynicism. For a hunter, every day brings the threat of brutal violence and every night brings its haunted dreams.

No member of the Black Watch has ever survived long enough to step down from the order. The only hunters that are called from service are those who have been driven mad by the horrors they have seen. Surprising to those outside the Theocracy, the dark hunters of the Black Watch enjoy a special relationship with His Holiness, the Bishop of the Shining Lance. The reason for this is simple: The warriors of the Watch are the souls with the greatest need of absolution.

For obvious reasons, membership in the Black Watch demands absolute secrecy. If the order has a headquarters or a leader, they have been well concealed.

Brotherhood of the Silver Raven

A loose organization of bards, storytellers, and good-natured rogues, the Brotherhood of the Silver Raven works as a network of information throughout the Lostlands, disseminating news, rumors, and innuendo throughout the region with remarkable speed. It also serves as a support system for adventurers who find themselves in dire straits, far from home and without allies. With thousands of Brothers scattered throughout the Lostlands and the rest of Áereth, a member of the Brotherhood can always find a friend willing to help.

It is not believed that there is any formal structure to this enigmatic group, nor does it have any true leaders; all that is really known of the Brotherhood of the Silver Raven is that it began some fifty-odd years ago in the traveling Bazaar of Quaysarria. Membership in the organization is quite simple—a Brother who wishes to induct another person into the Society merely has to give that person a silver medallion. That medallion, which features the insignia of a raven with spread wings, is the mark of association with the Brotherhood. Those who become part of this informal society always wear this medallion in a visible—but not always conspicuous—manner. There is one simple rule of the Brotherhood of the Silver Raven: "Help your Brothers who need help, and expect the same in your hour of need." The rule generally works, though those few who fail to abide by it usually find their medallions missing or stolen in short order.

The other main aim of the Brotherhood of the Silver Raven is to pool information wherever possible. For this reason, sages and scholars are often members of this informal fraternity, and provide support to other members whenever possible. There are few rumors in the Lostlands unknown to a member of the Brotherhood. Poorer members of the Brotherhood with a sharp ear and a good memory can always find a copper coin or two at a sages' guild.

Brood of Ahzari

The Brood of Ahzari is an old order of drakon assassins feared above all others west of the Empyrean Ocean. Operating out of the Moryan Temple in Myashtlan, the Brood is frequently employed by the Emerald Throne, yet it keeps to its own mystic code entirely outside of Ssorlang law. The Brood hires its services to anyone in the Known Realms willing to meet

its steep fees. For this reason, small cells of the Brood can be found in every metropolis in the Northlands, provided one knows where to look or with whom to inquire.

The Brood of Ahzari is comprised only of brightvenom drakon. Whether this racial limitation stems from the order's founder or is merely pragmatism for the trade, the tradition is unswerving now. With their ability to transfigure themselves, the assassins can move through human societies with little scrutiny, using magic and legerdemain to further conceal their heritage. Like any accomplished guild of killers, little is publicly known about the Brood of Ahzari. Some believe they are affiliated with the secret clergy of the Hidden Lord, while others speculate a connection to Axaluatl, the Shadow Serpent of old Zimala. While there is no uniform appearance among them, Brood assassins can be identified with their signature weapon: the keris blade, usually enchanted or dipped in potent snake venom.

Mystery enshrouds the Brood's founder, an ancient black wyrm known as Ahzari. Some legends say that he was once a darkvenom wizard who permanently transformed himself into a dragon, while others claim he was a pariah among dragonkind. What is known is that Ahzari disappeared from history for centuries somewhere in the Shadowed West, returning at last to Ssorlang to found his brotherhood of assassins. Rumor suggests that Ahzari's body is interred, either in slumber or in death, somewhere beneath the Temple.

The leaders of the Brood of Ahzari are ten deadly monk/assassins who never leave the Moryan Temple. They personally defend the monastery and train every new recruit. Though only those of brightvenom stock are admitted membership to the Brood, the drakon have been known to hire freelance assassins from other humanoid races to carry out certain jobs—particularly those with which the snake men wish to avoid any implication. Many lone assassins have grown wealthy partnering with the Brood. Just as many have been eliminated as rivals. The Moryan Temple itself, named for an esoteric philosophy to which Ahzari subscribes, is a massive, multifaceted dome filled with expansive halls, marble columns, and velvet tapestries.

Company of the Bright Barrow

This clandestine group of mercenary warriors is infamous throughout the Lostlands, inspiring terror with the very utterance of their name. The name of the Company comes from a ritual that each of its soldiers performs before heading out into battle. Each warrior digs a shallow grave the morning before battle, and then places a lit candle in that grave. A lone soldier remains behind to watch over the candles and to keep them all burning, until the rest of his brothers return to personally extinguish the flames … or to occupy the graves. In battle, the Company of the Bright Barrow is perhaps best known for its bloodthirsty savagery—they never take prisoners, never surrender, and frequently send the rotting hearts of their fallen foes back to their native soil in black silk packages.

For the past one hundred and fifty years, the Company of the Bright Barrow has been in the exclusive employ of the city-state of Achaemia. The ruling rakshasa of Achaemia, although fearsome warriors in their own right, have no organized militia of their own. Apart for the djinni and other genies who are allied with the rakshasa, the mercenary Company remains the only true defenders of the city. It is not entirely clear how the rakshasa compensate the members of the Company for this role; although the mercenary soldiers certainly collect countless gold coins for their ruthless service, it is believed that they receive other, more powerful gifts as well. Rumor has it that the soldiers of the Company have received immortality from their rakshasa masters, and cannot die so long as they serve the mystical creatures.

Most soldiers of the Bright Barrow have never known life outside of their infamous ranks. Once per year, the Company of the Bright Barrow makes a pilgrimage to the slave markets of Djeser al-Maqqara to select ten to twenty male human children, no older than two years of age. These children are bought and raised by the Company, and are molded into unemotional killing machines. Upon rare occasion, outsiders are permitted to join the ranks of the Bright Barrow; however, such exceptions are only made for warriors of unparalleled skill.

Cult of Akfokal Nel

Concealed from the mysterious aboleth, this group of drow warrior-priests works in great secrecy to take control of Gorhgijesk. They make their stronghold in a hidden stronghold just outside the city of Viomorgyn. The Cult of Akfokal Nel is closely allied with the Arcanum Infernal; many of the that evil institution's wizards are also instrumental members of this secretive sect.

Although its members are mostly drow, cells of the cult have spread throughout all of Áereth, reaching so far as some regions in the Northlands and Southlands. These cells always work under the firm command of a drow war leader. All members of the cult can be identified by a magical brand: a pair of crossed swords. The brand is

only visible through magical means, such as a *detect magic* spell or the like.

The goals of the Cult of Akfokal Nel are twofold. Firstly, they plot to bring about revolution in Gorhgijesk, wresting power away from the aboleth and placing control of the nation solely in the hands of the drow. On a grander scale the cult eventually aims to bring about the resurrection and return of the "First Drow": Akfokal Nel, a legendary sorcerer whose power reputedly once rivaled that of the gods themselves. They believe that with the rebirth of Akfokal Nel, Gorhgijesk will rise into a mighty empire that will dominate and enslave the rest of Áereth. Although the location of the sorcerer's tomb has long been lost, the cult supposedly possesses ancient texts that cryptically speak of its whereabouts. Certain cult leaders toil endlessly in the search for their icon, while others labor to build a shrine for Akfokal Nel—one that contains the necessary devices of alchemy and sorcery to return him to the world of the living.

Knights of the Lance

Clad in shining suits of plate and chain mail, sword and shield at their side, their colorful pennants flapping from their lances, the stout Knights of the Lance are the very vision of nobility. Most are drawn from the ranks of aristocracy, but the order is open to any who can achieve its lofty standards, and many of its finest knights were once war orphans or paupers.

Questing far across the land in the name of god and glory, the knights are sworn to the tenets of the Theocracy as well as the service of good. In addition, each knight takes what is known as a *silent vow*, often either a wrong to be avenged or a principle to defend. A knight's silent vow is highly personal and questioned only under the direst of circumstances.

A martial sect of the Holy Theocracy, the order of the Lance is composed entirely of paladins and holy warriors. The order was begun when the legendary general Cuthair the Crimson gave up her titles and ranks, and swore herself to the defense of a humble priest. Since that day, thousands of warriors have answered the call to lives of sacrifice.

With their wide-ranging, far-flung goals, the knights are rarely summoned together. Once every five years, a Grand Assembly is called to order, and knights from across the North flock to Brighthawk Castle. Reports of the state of Áereth are presented before the order's officers, a month-long tournament is held, and the resulting pageantry is wondrous to behold.

The Knights of the Lance benefit greatly from their ties to the Theocracy. Each knight rides forth with ancestral arms and armor, often the finest ever crafted by legendary smiths of Arvale. Similarly, knights can expect room and board at any castle or manor across the North. In wicked realms, claiming the Right of Asylum often presages an attempt on the knight's life, but even the wickedest of sovereigns thinks twice before assassinating a knight in his care.

The Knights of the Lance suffered terrible losses in the Fall of Leherti, but this hasn't diminished their dedication. Indeed, it has only increased their fervor, the ranks of order clamoring for permission to return to war. Lady Aernal, commander of the order, keeps a close watch on the Scourge, knowing that the time will come when her knights will again ride against its armies—only this time, she doesn't intend to lose. Presently more than four thousand knights fly Theocracy pennants, with several thousand more squires and attendants sworn to their service.

Knights of Tenhoku Jigai

Traditional guardians of the Kingdom of Taijin, these dwarven warriors have acted as war leaders and protectors of the realm for generations. They lead the charge in every battle and refuse surrender. Battalions of Taijinese soldiers led by a Knight of Tehoku Jigai know only two ways for a battle to end: victory or death. For a Knight, there is no honor in defeat.

The Knights of Tenhoku Jigai—so named for the ancient King of Taijin who originally formed their noble order—select their ranks from the courts of the kingdom, taking those trained from an early age to be skilled with both blade and bow. Most Knights of Tenhoku Jigai are either traditional warriors or paladins; however, rangers and clerics that have proven their worth upon the field of battle have been accepted into the order as well. At the present time, the Knights have well over five hundred worthy dwarves in their ranks.

The Knights of Tenhoku Jigai have little patience for ceremony. Save for times of national crisis, they meet but once every four years, and then only to briefly discuss matters of state and changes in the art of warfare. The Knights have a magnificent castle in Raijin Khor called the Palace of Toba Meiji, which mostly collects dust from inactivity.

To join this order of noble warriors, a candidate must first serve as a squire to a Knight for a period of three years. Should the candidate prove his worth during this time, he is sent out on a mission called the Prophet's Quest. The squire studies passages from an ancient text called the Ochimo Codex—from those passages, it is believed that the candidate will find a purpose and calling of epic importance. Then the aspiring Knight sets forth on a long and arduous journey … and may not set foot in Raiju Khor until the quest is complete. It often takes two or three decades to complete the Prophet's Quest—and many times, the hopeful candidate is never seen again. Those who are successful and do return are immediately inducted into the Knights of Tenhoku Jigai, and receive all the honor and prestige that is associated with that mantle.

Miztlani

The Miztlani (mist-*lon*-ee) are an order of paladins active in the Southlands who have devoted themselves to the virtues of the legendary heroine Cihuamiztli, the Golden Lady. Centuries ago, Cihuamiztli saved the people of Teotcoatlan and Athua from an infestation of undead that threatened to overrun eastern Xulmec. Along with her greatest friend, Naram-sin, a celestial lammasu of unequaled valor, Cihuamiztli martyred herself in the climactic battle against the source of the threat: the lich-queen Tecitzin.

For her sacrifice, a hallowed tomb was erected in the ruins of Coatopolan, and Xulmecs from across the peninsula came to visit the Golden Lady. Much to their surprise, lammasus from far-off lands arrived at the holy site to pay their respects to their fallen hero, Naram-sin, whose many brave deeds were famous in the Lostlands. Some humans and lammasus lingered at the shrine, and before ten years had passed, a small order of holy knights had formed in honor of Cihuamiztli and Naram-sin.

The Miztlani—sometimes called Miztli Tepiani, the Golden Protectors, or the Knights of Cihuamiztli—live to wage war against evil in all its forms and emulate the life and combat techniques of both Cihuamiztli and Naram-sin. Based out of Coatopolan, the Miztlani welcome all Xulmec warriors to the hallowed Tomb of the Golden

Lady, but retain only the purest of heart and spirit. The Golden Protectors have strong ties to the churches of Calchoti and Ilhuicatl, but the paladins also revere lawful divinities whose province lies well beyond Xulmec. Accordingly, some of the order's paladins take their spiritual crusade to foreign lands, adventuring even among the Northlands.

A paladin of the Miztlani wears the quilted armor common among Xulmec warriors. Their *tlahuiztli* is decorated to resemble the leonine body of the lammasu, which the order reveres above all other creatures. Eagle feathers adorn the suit and hardwood helmets are arrayed with manes that resemble a lion's. The Miztlani are frequently arrayed with jewelry of polished gold; to them, the divine value of gold far outweighs its monetary value. Some fashion elaborate wooden shields, called *chimalli*, and many favor the razor glove.

The Miztlani are directed by the Knights of Gold, seven paladins said to embody the values of Cihuamiztli. A family of lammasus also dwells in Coatopolan, advising the paladins in their endeavors and defending the shrine from intruders. The family's matriarch, a noble lammasu named Shatu-murrim, is always consulted by the Knights of Gold before any important decisions are made by the order.

Order of the Sable March

Respected by the people of Crieste and reviled by its barons, the Knights of the Sable March are the Emperor's personal guard, the nation's foremost horsemen and duelists, and implacable defenders of good. That their agenda runs counter to the sinister plots of Lady Mortianna, Vizier of Crieste, only gives credence to the many ballads and legends hailing their bravery and valor.

Officially answering only to the Emperor, the Knights of the Sable March are secretly directed by Captain Sentri, master of the Criestine Army. Obliged to obey the Vizier's commands, Sentri uses the knights to subvert her wicked plots in a dangerous game of cloak and dagger. Although suspicious of the popular captain, the Vizier has yet to discover irrefutable evidence of his duplicity. The day she finds proof (or manufactures the same) is the day that Captain Sentri will be crucified atop the palace's highest tower. Until then, Sentri and his knights will continue working for the good of the Emperor and all of the North.

Knights of the Sable March are handpicked by Captain Sentri and sworn to secrecy. While not all knights are warriors or paladins, their missions are dangerous enough to ensure that every knight knows how to handle himself in a fight. The Order of the Sable March is firstly sworn to the Emperor of Crieste, then the good of the Northlands, and then to one another. They carry themselves as shining visions of chivalry; even when surrounded by bloodthirsty assassins, a Knight of the Sable March is dauntless and noble, though no less deadly for his gallantry.

The Order makes its headquarters in the city of Archbridge, in the fortress known simply as the Citadel, but their missions can take them to the furthest reaches of Áereth. The Citadel houses the collected rolls and libraries of the Order, as well as master smiths that turn out the distinctive arms and armor of the knights. In times of war, the Citadel serves as the last defense of the Emperor, and has stockpiles allowing it to survive a full siege. The Citadel is also home to the stables of Parelor, the legendary, tireless warhorses of the Order. Presently, the rolls of honor name roughly one thousand knights, aided by twice as many squires and henchmen.

The symbol of the Order is a black background pierced by three silver stars signifying the tenets of the order: honor, duty, and courage. Unlike most knighthoods, members of the Order never alter their banners with personal heraldry; the simple banner suits the single-minded devotion of its knights.

The Ruin Knights

A secretive cult of warrior-priests dedicated to Zühn and the fell god's plot to bringing about the End of Days, the Ruin Knights and their agents are universally hated and feared throughout the North. While making their home in the Scourge city of Ibinfang, the agents of Ruin are far from beholden to Tarkhan Khurzog. Secreted within their stronghold of scorched stone and iron, the disciples labor to create an army of fell creatures that give the order its name. The purpose of the Ruin Knights, and the place they play in the cult's planned apocalypse is unclear, for few have survived first-hand encounters with them.

Abroad, agents of Ruin seek out ever more powerful magics to outfit their forces and feed their dweomer forges. They have been known to lurk at the entrances of dungeons and caverns, ambushing weakened heroes laden with treasure. Similarly, agents have been found aiding tribes of giants, ogres, and orcs, arming them with foul artifacts and orchestrating their battles against the civilized lands. Assassination attempts on regents are also not uncommon, although in order to disguise their true agenda, agents of Ruin often masquerade as servants of an enemy nation.

Cells of the cult are suspected to work in large cities throughout the North; however, few give credence to this speculation. Given the cult's limited appeal, it is hard to imagine even the wickedest of villains supporting the cult's apocalyptic goals.

Most sources allege the master of the Ruin Knights to be Uskgol the Destroyer, a half-orc assassin-priest sworn to the service of Zühn. While agents of Ruin can appear anywhere, and under any number of guises, most cult leaders have training as warrior-priests of Zühn.

The Slavers' Society

One of the most secretive groups in all of Djeser al-Maqqara is the Slavers' Society, a council of slave masters and criminals that effectively has power over all black market activities throughout the Lostlands. Effectively the main guild controlling all other thieves' guilds and assassins' guild, there is neither a purse cut nor a pocket picked without the blessing of the Slavers' Society. The ruling council of the Slavers' Society decides upon many things that seem bizarre to outside, but have much practical purpose to the underworld of the Lostlands—the standard price for slaves, the accepted contract rate for assassins, the untouchable nobles who may never be robbed. Freelance rogues in the Lostlands trying to operate outside the directives of the Society quickly find themselves on the wrong end of an assassin's blade.

All thieves and assassins in the Lostlands are part of the Slavers' Society, whether willing or unwilling; a tithe of a gold coin must be given to a local guild on the Day of the Fifth Prince. Most rogues, bards, and other adventurers who engage in questionable activities also pay this tithe, if only to avoid potential conflict with the Society. These local guilds, in turn, pass on these fees to the Slavers' Society, along with a portion of their revenue. Strangely enough, in this instance there does seem to be "honor among thieves"—the Society has an uncanny knack for discovering dishonesty, and makes pointed examples of those who would withhold from them. Troublesome guilds have literally vanished overnight, the victims of favored assassins in the employ of the Slavers' Society.

Society members in "good standing"—that is, those who pay the Slavers' Society beyond what is owed—can often turn their relationship with this dark council to their advantage. Prison gates have a way of opening prematurely for these miscreants, and the law often finds itself always a few steps behind those favored by the Society. The Slavers' Society also has greater resources—rare maps, exotic tools, and the like—than the typical local guilds for illicit activities. For a steep fee, rogues who seek out high-ranking members of the Slavers' Society in Djeser al-Maqqara may be able to obtain these resources, or at least borrow them for a time.

Sirens of Pelagia

The Sirens of Pelagia began as a single crew of devoted pirate hunters nearly two hundred years ago, but has since grown into a masterful, widespread organization as difficult to oppose as to hide from. Sponsored by the church of the Coral Queen, the Sirens comprise a network of female clerics and bards. Though they are famous for their pirate hunting, the Sirens seek to safeguard the open sea from all magic and mundane threats. Pollution, maritime warfare, and excessive whaling and fishing are kept to a minimum wherever the Sirens of Pelagia operate. To these ends, the Sirens will sail to any sea in the Known Realms, but their strongest influence lies within the Empyrean Ocean and the Lirean Sea.

While most are seafaring warriors or priestesses trolling the waters in search of malefactors, some Sirens dwell on the mainland, representing their interests by recruiting new members or employing silver tongues in political circles. Official membership is restricted to females of

any humanoid race, but plenty of men—husbands, paramours, or friends—assist with spell or blade. The Sirens usually crew schooners and galleys of their own, but some Sirens travel the oceans aboard commercial vessels and naval warships, hired to protect the crew and grant the blessings of the Coral Queen. The organization has a very loose hierarchy, and adventuring Sirens need only serve Pelagia's interests in whatever capacity they can.

Their public façade may be valorous, but the Sirens are not paladins of the sea. They serve Pelagia and her oceanic realms foremost, and toward their preservation they do not offer their pirate-hunting services for free. Having the most to lose, Northland kings and merchant guilds pay the most for Siren escorts in dangerous waters. They curse the Sirens for their harsh fees, but secretly know that facing criminal privateers or Barrier pirates would be a worse fate. Humbler sailors, such as lone captains and unaffiliated merchants, more often find the services of the Sirens offered freely. Monetary donations from all castes are, of course, always encouraged.

Sirens vary in appearance, but whenever they engage in official, church-sponsored capacities, they wear modest blue tabards bearing the symbol of Pelagia. The typical member wears leather armor—at sea, anything heavier is unwise—and adorns her hair with small seashells, carrying a rapier at her hip. Devoted to the Singing Sea, they learn many songs unique to the faith and will often identify each other with such melodies. There is an elusive charm to the Sirens, as they strive to both oppose and study their enemies. A Siren carries herself with the elegance of a patrician at sea, consorting with melodic merfolk and aquatic elves. Yet she can curse and spit with the best of sailors and sing the bawdiest of sea shanties.

As famous as the Sirens have become, theirs is an endless quest. For every devout Siren patrolling the waters, there are a hundred unscrupulous pirates who callously run Pelagia's domain red with the blood of innocents. For every true prayer to the Coral Queen, there are a thousand curses and acts of greed for the worship of gold. To be a Siren is to be marked by the lawless as a sworn enemy, as every day she risks her life and virtue against the cruelty of the Barrier pirates and their monstrous allies.

Three women lead this widespread organization. The first is Analee Waveseer, an aquatic elf and high priestess of Pelagia, who maintains the Temple of the Sacred Wave on the organization's hidden island-base, the Isle of Argent. The second is Isolia Seyene, a Criestine lord-governess who works to gather support from politicians and regents across the Northlands. The third is Saley Lonesinger, a virulent privateer who personally hunts the most notorious pirate vessels.

The Secret Kings

When the empire of Nimoria passed into antiquity, torn apart by internecine warfare, it was assumed that the legacy of its demon-blooded priest-kings ended as well. Unbeknownst to most, a secret cadre of aristocrats went into hiding, and emerged to seize power when the nation of Crieste was still young.

Though few in number, these families wield extraordinary power and wealth, and even sit on the Council of Lords. Their aim is nothing less than the destruction of Crieste and the rise of a new Nimoria, complete with its infernal masters of old.

The Secret Kings are made up of seven families, each with an infernal patron. Three of these families sit upon Crieste's ruling body, the Council of Lords. While their numbers are far short of a majority, the influence of the families in the imperial court is enough to sway the opinions of many other lords.

Like the priest-kings of old, many of those serving the Secret Kings are soulless husks, their souls sold into damnation in return for terrestrial powers. This is not undertaken lightly, since the Secret Kings are far from achieving their goals and enemies abound. More commonly, the scions of the Secret Kings carry demon blood within their veins. Cambions, tieflings, and half-fiends, so common during the reign of the Priest-Kings, still exist within the dark halls of the Secret Kings.

The following is an incomplete list of families that are alleged to make up the Secret Kings; even the most suspicious researcher has yet to determine the seventh family of the cabal. Eager crusaders should take note: The following families are also some of the most respected and honored of the empire. To openly accuse them of diablerie or dealing with infernal powers will only expose the accuser to scorn and ridicule, and draw the slow, sure wrath of the Secret Kings.

Asinard: A line of brilliant generals and warriors, House Asinard is best known for its Archbridge martial academy. Within the white, marble halls, young men and women of the empire come to study Crieste's hallowed military history and to train beneath masters in the art of warcraft. The academy turns out some of the nation's finest swordsmen and lancers, the future leaders of the imperial army.

The family's patriarch is Conach Asinard, a white-bearded warrior who never lost the passion or fury of his youth. His son, a fearsome warrior named Theodric the Black Eagle, is poised to take his father's place, but few expect Lord Conanch to retire soon.

Castellain: The scions of House Castellain have always served as advisors to the emperor. The family spends their days attending the far-flung courts of the barons, and there is never a gala or fete held where a Castellain is not in attendance. It is said that the family must have fae blood in their line, for their sons and daughters are unusually alluring and charismatic. Most agree there is no secret that the Castellains can't discover, and that the quickest way to the Emperor is through his Castellain ladies-in-waiting.

The family's head is the young matriarch, Inweth Castellain, a woman of exceeding grace, cunning, and dark beauty. Inweth and Lady Mortianna, the Emperor's Vizier, are mortal enemies, constantly scheming to subvert the power of the other. Inweth, a master of social graces, demonstrates none of this openly, but Mortianna lacks the subtlety of her rival.

Herac: A family of ranger lords and huntsmen, the sons and daughters of House Herac are respected masters of the wild. Their home is an ancient castle in northern Crieste, decorated with the hides and heads of scores of animals and monsters. Watchful and quiet, the lords of Herac are most at home in the woods and fields, in pursuit of their quarry. It is whispered that—for the right price—the Heracs will track down outlaws. If this is true, then there is nowhere in the North for a criminal to hide.

The ruler of Herac is a lean, older woman, with steel-gray hair and the eyes of a hawk. Lady Camoren Herac is respected as one of the finest rangers to tread the North, and is personally responsible for over half the trophies hanging in her ancestral halls. Her husband, Lord Raener, is a minor son of House Neraux who married into the Herac line.

Neraux: An honored family of astrologers, diviners, and seers, House Neraux prides itself as keepers of arcane lore. Hopeful apprentices travel the length of the empire to study at the feet of the masters of House Neraux. Located in Kassantia, the family hosts an informal academy with each member taking on as many apprentices as he or she sees fit. The sweeping, graceful towers of Neraux have become symbolic of arcane wisdom in service of the empire.

Master of the house is Emberin Neraux, a solemn warlock fond of wearing rusted iron masks and dark, concealing robes adorned with glowing sigils and crawling runes. Commoners and nobles alike delight in speculating about the reason behind the iron mask; some allege it conceals a deformity, others that the master of House Neraux is a demon-born cambion, lich, or worse. The only ones who might know the truth of the matter are the twin spearmaidens who attend Emberin's every need—were both not blind and mute.

Seyod: Of all the families of Crieste, House Seyod has the deepest coffers. A wildly successful family of traders, agents of the house roam the breadth and width of Áereth with their merchant galleons and well-guarded wagon trains. It is well accepted that the libraries of House Seyrod hide the most accurate maps of the North and its environs. Such maps are greatly coveted by explorers, and even a map alleged to be a "copy of a Seyod" is a priceless find.

While mighty House Seyod is only one of many merchant houses originating in Crieste, other merchant lords are quick to follow its lead. The family has ruined more than one city by refusing to deal with their inhabitants, and even regents are loathe to anger the masters of the house. House Seyod is directed by a council of three patriarchs: Misyl, Rosnold, and Jesail Seyod.

Tarasard: The minstrel-scions of House Tarasard enjoy an open invitation at courts across the North, and draw crowds wherever they play. Women swoon to their men, and it is said that no man alive can refuse the smile of a Tarasard bardess. The minstrels are sources of the latest gossip and of stories of faraway lands, and it is uncommon to find a court without a Tarasard bard in attendance.

House Tarasard also boasts the most elite fencing schools in all of the western Northlands, and perhaps all of Áereth. Each spring, hundreds of Creiste's finest young warriors compete in a tournament hosted by House Tarasard. A mere twenty warriors are chosen to attend the school and the rest are turned away. Curiously, it is not always the winners of the tournament who are selected to

attend the school. Theories about the school's criteria for students abound, but this in no way diminishes the enthusiasm of its applicants.

The master of House Tarasard is an aging bard, Haldrus Tarasard. Master Haldrus personally oversees the fencing school and is respected as an authority on nearly all matters of politics and state.

Threnodim

The Threnodim are a sect of bardic priests who serve Soleth, the god of dignified and merciful death. Derisively called the deathsingers by those who do not try to understand Soleth's macabre tenets, the bards of the Threnodim are better respected by those who must lay their loved ones to rest.

When adventuring, the Threnodim always bury the bodies of the anonymous fallen that they encounter. Often these are other, less fortunate adventurers who succumbed to the traps or monsters before them. The bards sing sweet, mournful elegies for these unknowns, and will compose great lamentations for their own companions if they are slain.

Misunderstood by most, the Threnodim do not long for death, either for themselves or for others. They celebrate life by honoring death and acknowledging its inevitability. Like all bards, their music can still inspire their companions to valor, but most of their melodies are grave and haunting. The dirges that they frequently perform are melancholic to their traveling companions, and for this reason Threnodim often go from one group to another. Yet the efficiency with which these solemn bards can confront the undead often makes them welcome among adventuring parties.

Hailing from any temple of Soleth, the Threnodim have no official base of operations. At least once in their lives, however, most make a pilgrimage to the Hall of Requiem in Soulgrave. Resembling a massive mausoleum, the Hall is the largest known temple to Soleth in the Known Realms, and the pilgrimage requires one to venture deep into the streets of the necropolis. A permanent clergy dwells there, and each night the Threnodim and their more numerous clerical counterparts labor to lay as many of the undead of Soulgrave to rest as they can before retreating into their tomb-like fortress.

Threnodim dress in somber tones, choosing leather dyed with black or gray when required to wear armor. The favored instrument of the Threnodim is the threnody chime box, a complex device that issues melodious, haunting tones. Those who cannot afford or find threnody chimes favor recorders, flutes, or harps.

Trader's Cabal

More commonly known as the "Traitor's Cabal," the alliance is composed of the twelve dominant merchant houses of the Southern Province. While the Cabal's membership is always changing due to shifting fortunes, the blades of assassins, and ceaseless internal strife, the group's goals remain unchanging: absolute control of Northland trade, by any means necessary.

While not evil in the usual sense of the word, the Cabal is utterly amoral and often engages in wickedness that even a devil would shun. The Cabal's single driving principle is profit, and its plans can span entire decades. Regents have been raised with the support of the Cabal, and just as many meet their end when they dare to thwart the Cabal's interests.

Based in Punjar, the Trader's Cabal is headquartered in the sprawling sandstone citadel known as the Souk. Within its labyrinthine halls, the fortunes of whole nations are bandied about like so many soiled coins. Tariffs are discussed, taxes argued, and the long-range strategy of the Cabal is endlessly debated and revised.

With coffers that rival those of a wealthy nation, an army of thugs and assassins, and ships that ply every waterway and sea of the North, many consider it incredible that the Cabal isn't the uncontested ruler of the Northlands. The answer lies in the internecine warfare that plagues the Cabal's ranks. Fearful and distrustful, the members of the Cabal are their own worst enemies, constantly vying against one another for power. Even as one merchant lord seizes control, three others ally against him, only to backstab one another in the mad rush for power. If any one lord were ever to secure absolute control of the Cabal, it would threaten the foundations of the North, but until such time its members are forced to content themselves with the lesser nations, playing with them as they would puppets on a string.

At the time of this scribe's penning, three merchant houses maintain an uneasy alliance. Most agree that it is only a matter of time before one of the three attempts to usurp the others, igniting a bloody shadow war in alleys of Punjar.

House Hoshuet: Ruled by a sweaty boar of a man, House Hoshuet has long enjoyed a presence in the Trader's Cabal. Its ruler, Zanji the Poisoner, is a master at politics, turning the lesser houses upon one another, buying and selling allegiances at will, and keeping the finest assassins in Punjar under his exclusive employ.

House Quartian: Openly dealing with infernal powers, Tesjin the Soulless rules his house through fear and the

threat of his demonic servants. The master of House Quartian has placed his soul in a canopic relic of great power, thereby foiling all attempts on his life and rendering Tesjin—for all intents—immortal.

The house specializes in forbidden magic, and pays highly for wicked artifacts or relics, especially those stolen from the naga cities hidden in the far Southlands. Its agents scour the corners of Áereth in search of lost cities, hiring independent adventurers to do the dirty work of exploration.

House Zaran: The traders of House Zaran are a mystery even to their peers. Composed of Lostland shahs, the traders refuse to name their city of origin, or provide any explanation for the seemingly endless stream of slaves and magic items they offer in their tented bazaar. Those that have attempted to follow the caravans south invariably are caught and slain, the corpses left staked on spears as a warning to others.

For all intents, the traders appear to be human, but they are never found without their hooded cloaks and the heavy cloth wraps that conceal all but their eyes. The traders speak in a soft whisper, reminiscent of a hissing cobra, and often smell of the strange herbs and oils used in the mummification of dead kings.

WANDERERS

The nondescriptly named Wanderers are, in fact, a guild of psionic creatures that set out frequently from the hidden city of Elraydia. At any given time, at least five caravans of Wanderers, each led by a high-ranking captain, trek the roads and wilds of the Northlands and Lostlands seeking more of their own kin: humanoids gifted or cursed with wondrous powers of the mind. Many such beings hide their powers, rightly fearing persecution, while others misuse their talents and endanger themselves and others. The Wanderers have seen the limits—and the unfettered possibilities—of controlled psionic power, and they wish to lead the world to a future that acknowledges this divinity of the mind.

Although they first appear to be simple vagabonds and gypsies, or even common adventuring companies, a closer inspection reveals that these caravans contain members of at least several races. In this sense, the Elraydian predilection for tolerance and variety can give them away. They rely upon racial diversity to help them along the dangerous paths of Áereth—but those with an eye for psionic-using creatures are usually able to see them for what they are.

When a caravan is in need of supplies, they either return to Elraydia or hire themselves out as beneficent mercenaries to purchase more. Accustomed to hiding their talents from nonpsionic peoples, the Wanderers have developed their own vagabond cant to speak to one another. Even without narrow-minded scrutiny, they typically employ euphemisms to refer to their own phrenic interests. "Kindred spirits," for example, are the psionic-using creatures that the Wanderers seek to find, liberate, or safeguard, while "sharpers" are narrow-minded mages and priests who persecute psions because they do not understand the powers they manifest.

When the captain deems that enough kindred spirits have been found during their journey, he leads the caravan homeward again. Most caravans have at least one cleric of Auzarr to serve as a healer and spiritual advisor, while a handful of psychic warriors serve as the muscle. Captains are appointed by the Sestet whenever a Wanderer caravan prepares to depart Elraydia, though some impressive psions have served in this capacity numerous times. Currently, a bardic psion named Linni and a psychic warrior named Kashya have made names for themselves as captains in the guild, spending more time abroad than any other.

Chapter 6
Beyond the Known Realms

The Shadowed West

West of the Xocoatic Marshes and the Plains of Fire is a realm referred to only as the Shadowed West. Though not considered part of the Southlands, nor drawn on any maps of the Known Realms, it is a mysterious land whose mystic beliefs have seeped into the religions, customs, and everyday mindsets of the peoples of Ssorlang and Darawan—and perhaps in time, the rest of the Southlands.

The few arrivals from the Shadowed West—mostly human, and typically referred to as the Xanthous by Northlanders—have distinct appearances: skin yellowed by their climate, hair as dark as Xulmecs', and pronounced epicanthic folds giving them a more slanted look by Northland perception. Whether from early exposure to these beings or the elapse of centuries in close proximity to the Shadowed West, the people of Darawan and the drakon themselves often bear similar physical traits. Sages have speculated that the humans of the Southlands and the Shadowed West can trace their lineage to the same tribes first subjugated by dragonkind ages ago.

The land separating the Known Realms from the Shadowed West remains a natural—or perhaps unnatural—barrier, preventing both worlds from establishing regular trade routes. In the north, the Eztenqui Jungle grows more perilous with each westward mile. The mordant Xocoatic Marshes and the scalding Plains of Fire bar passage for common mortals. In the south, the Kharan Plateau becomes a desolate wasteland where few trees thrive and only hardy grasses cling to life. If one can endure the countless miles of bleak life, perhaps the Shadowed West can be reached. Such an overland journey, requiring one to penetrate Ssorlang first, is said to take months, at best. Most journeys to the Shadowed West are by sea, but the jagged coastlines south and west of Ssorlang, which seem to stretch on endlessly, are wracked by monsoons in every season, making the voyage a perilous one.

Whatever the nature of the Shadowed West, great works of good and evil have come from these unseen lands. Despite the dangers of the journey, the perplexing Xanthous make periodic, if infrequent, visitations to the Known Realms, usually by way of the Ayalan Sea in the south or the Sea of Desperation in the north. Their customs are bizarre even to the Southland mindset, yet they bring trade goods that cannot be found anywhere else. Outlandish foods are brought to the famous emporiums of Myashtlan and medicinal wonders to the Criestine Colonies. Paintings of their homeland depict curve-roofed, storied towers, and majestic pagodas.

However strange, they possess many similarities to the folk of the Known Realms. Noble warriors, clad in exotic armors of iron, leather, silk, and brass bear a resemblance, in a fundamental way, to Northland paladins.

Robed mountain warriors and arcane monks employ fighting styles similar to those practiced among the monasteries of the Known Realms, while spellcasters in colorful mantles call upon spirits of nature to fuel their magic like the wizards and druids of the Southlands.

Underdeep: The World Below

With the falling of the Shadow Star so many centuries ago, a smoldering rift was created in the Lostlands that became a dark doorway. The World Below, for eons limited in its abilities to reach the rest of Áereth, suddenly had a gateway to the nations of the Lostlands. The impact of the Shadow Star was felt in more ways than one as the Devil's Cauldron began to boil, as the denizens of this underground region began to extend their reach and ambition into the sunlit kingdoms above.

In the region of the Lostlands, the World Below has always been dominated by the aboleth. Miles beneath the deserts of this barren, desolate region are hundreds of cold, murky lakes, with a labyrinthine network of powerful underground rivers connecting them all. The aboleth rule from the depths of these waters, using sorcery and guile to enslave all that they encounter. The abollar, derro, and duergar are the aboleth's loyal—and violent—servants.

The drow are the other formidable power to be found here. Although not possessing the raw power of the aboleth, their sheer numbers make them a force to be reckoned with. They are a relatively recent arrival into the underground realms below the Lostlands; much of their strength lies to the North, where their rule is unchallenged. While they have no love of the aboleth, they also have no desire to engage in a genocidal war with them; hence, the drow have deferred to the aquatic monstrosities … for the time being.

The kingdom of Gorhgijesk acts as the main power ruling the World Below in this part of Áereth. However, there are several small independent areas that remain isolated from the kingdom, and they keep their nefarious activities to themselves.

The connection between the Lostlands and the dark kingdoms beneath it began long ago. Dwarves, sent by their sphinx masters to mine shadow stone so many centuries in the past, eventually went mad and tunneled their way deep into the mountains, finding their way into the World Below. These insane dwarves—who had mutated into the monstrosities known as derro—fell into the mental clutches of the mighty aboleth. From the derro, the aboleth learned of the Khonsurian Empire, and the politics of the lands above them.

Drow scouts began to spy upon the lands above them. They learned that the powers that ruled the strange surface lands, though formidable, were stagnant … and careless. The successors to the Khonsurian Empire, like the sphinxes before them, had become complacent. The aboleth and the drow sensed the opportunity for conquest, and from that moment forward began the slow, patient steps necessary for invasion.

The underground rivers and caverns reach far throughout the Lostlands, to the Northlands and beyond, reaching like sinister tentacles into every nook and cranny. Aboleth gold falls quietly into the hands of many a merchant or noble in the Lostlands, providing the aquatic horrors with an effective network of spies and informants. Additionally, drow assassins can drop into any city or village in the Lostlands with ease, merely following their grand system of tunnels to the destination of their choosing. As they and the aboleth now begin to amass their forces in earnest, it may not be long before armies—not just assassins—pour out of these tunnels, and make the presence of the World Below known upon the World Above.

Chapter 7
History of the Northlands

That Áereth is a world of antiquity is disputed by none. An armchair scholar need merely walk into the fields outside his pastoral home and gaze a while upon the standing stones of the druids, walk to the village along a road laid by armies of forgotten slaves, examine the ancestral blade hung on the belt of the shire's reeve, or consider the hearth stone above his lord's fireplace and the strange runes etched thereon.

In many ways, citizens of the Known Realms are foreigners in their own land, blissfully unaware of all that came before. Living day to day with the threat of raiders, dire beasts, and marauding giants is challenge enough. To these poor souls, history is a curiosity best left to the sages.

For their part, the sages agree, knowing that if the common serf understood the truth of civilization's fleeting nature, there would be little to enforce the rule of kings. For the history of Áereth is extensive, and the Reign of Man is but a brief notation scribed in the tome of ages.

Just *what* came before and in what *sequence*, few scholars can agree. The elven libraries of the Corsan were lost with the razing of Arovarel. Tablets of unknown antiquity exist in the secret libraries of the Theocracy, but their pictographs resist all attempts at decoding. Worst of all, few are the regents who can be troubled with the work of history; like the unschooled peasants laboring in the fields, most kings and lords are consumed by the daily struggle to maintain order and defend their realms against the incursions of man and beast.

Surprisingly, it is those with the least history that have the greatest interest in its study. Adventurers, risen from the ranks of common sellswords, alley toughs, and street-corner magicians, spend their careers deep within the ruins of civilizations long past. The success of their ventures—and the length of their careers—depends entirely upon the accuracy and depth of knowledge gained prior to the expedition.

Just as veteran explorers consult sages, so too do sages seek out adventurers who are brave, skilled, and lucky enough to return with firsthand knowledge and relics of the bygone ages. Together, the Hero and the Sage are slowly piecing together an accurate history of the world. It is a mammoth work and subject to constant revision, and yet it represents the best presentation of knowledge agreed upon today.

Finally, it must be acknowledged that this history shows a human bias. Explorers returning from the colonies report of dynasties—like those of the dwarves and elves—that shame the earliest known Northland nations. Who can say what mighty empires rose and fell before humans learned to walk erect? Civilization was a latecomer to humankind and her Northlands. But until more can be learned of these ancient cultures, and of their place in the destiny of Áereth, our focus must remain on the mysterious North.

Time Line of the Northlands

Dates use the Empyrean Calendar (EC).

Date	Events
–120	The storm giant Aeshotal begins his campaign to unite the disparate giant tribes of the Known Realms into a single alliance bent on domination of Áereth.
–66	The War of Divine Right begins. Fleeing the march of the giants, tribes of human savages scatter across the North.
–46	The humans of Xulmec construct a colossal obsidian idol at the behest of the god Huamec.
–44	Possessing the obsidian idol himself, Huamec defeats the fire and storm giants that assail the Southlands. The idol is broken in the conflict, and the god is believed slain.
–43	Attempting to stem the march of the giants, the armies of the Abylosian Empire, along with

druids, wizards, and countless slaves create the Wall of Abylos.

–41 Ahna-Vithyre, the great elven homeland, burns.

–37 Aeshotal and the armies of giants surround Ahna-Vithyre and Amonzadd in the land of Lirea. The dwarven and elven nations join forces to form the Eldritch Coalition.

–34 The cloud giantess Jathra seeks out the leaders of the Eldritch Coalition, bearing the secrets of the *Pillars of Expulsion*.

–15 The *Pillars of Expulsion* are completed and activated, but magical interference from the Coalition's dissenters creates a backlash of the artifacts' might, leading to the slow destruction of Lirea. The land sinks beneath the waters of the Empyrean, drowning the armies of the giants, elves and dwarves, and destroying the great cities of Ahna-Vithyre and Amonzadd. The Lirean Sea is formed in its place.

–7 The War of Divine Right comes to an end.

1 The shattered remnants of the elven and dwarven nations agree to solemn treaties in honor of the Eldritch Coalition, then retreat to their clanholds to rebuild their nations. The tribes of humans descend into unchecked barbarism, heralding the First Dark Age.

252 The last of the Mages of Nemfar create the secret order of Druid Kings to guide the humans in the ways of the ancients.

260+ For one thousand years, the Dark Age stretches on. Countless nations rise only to fall back into savagery, swept under by hordes of barbarians and monstrous humanoids. The nations of elves and dwarves slowly rebuild their power.

1200+ The legendary mage Tsathzar Rho rises to power. At the apex of his might, the wizard's stronghold is destroyed and the surrounding lands reduced to ash.

1550 The nations Kothea, Nimoria, and Erheim emerge from the tide of barbarism.

1753 The barbarian hordes of Abylos begin their war against the Druid Kings.

1760 Erheim falls before the Abylossian horde.

1779 The war between Kothea and Abylos grinds to a halt. The slave people of Uru'Nuk rise up against their Abylossian masters and fight their way to freedom in the East.

1800+ The Priest-Kings of Nimoria strike bargains with Infernal powers. The scouts of Kothea make first contact with elves and dwarves.

1810 Nimoria raises an army of cambions, devils, and demons and goes to war with the nations of elves and dwarves.

1814 The dark armies of Nimoria are defeated and the Priest-Kings turn to infighting and bickering.

1978 The monks of the Monastery of the Dawning Sun establish the cloister of Clynnoise to protect the collected lore of the Known Realms.

2100+ Nimoria descends into civil war. Kothea slowly breaks into a score of fractious kingdoms.

2185 Clynnoise is destroyed by the Orcs of the Broken Tusk, who, with the aid of giants, build a keep on the site.

2200+ The empires of men descend back into chaos and internecine warfare. Gunere Numon begins to unite disparate warbands, forging the nation of Crieste from the ashes of Nimoria.

2233 The Knights of Gorhan retreat to the north, building the Cloister of the Ordocar and dedicating themselves to lives of contemplation and service.

2250+ Crieste expands its borders north, east and south, slowly growing to a great empire. Alliances are struck with the elves and dwarves, and the first halfling caravans begin their march across Áereth. Legends of a gleaming white tower, protected by an invisible wall, begin to circulate.

2400+ Criestine explorers sail west, making new contact with the Xulmec city-states, and marking the Golden Age of Crieste.

2521 The renowned fire wizardress, Soranna of the Stolen Ember, and her companion, the swordsman Bezentaine, vanish into the northern Ul Dominor mountains.

2553 The Company of the Black Osprey clear out the ruins of Clynnoise, claiming Castle Whiterock for their own. Fifty-eight years later, the last member of the Company dies and Castle Whiterock falls into ruin and disrepair.

2670 The armies of the drow-fiend Chalychia, armed with the *Shadowstone*, conquer the elven city of Arovarel. The very next year, she is defeated by a band of heroes led by the paladin Valinus. The ruined city of Arovarel is never rebuilt.

2887 In a private imperial court, the eldest son of the emperor, Ghorrene the Black Eagle, is convicted of deviltry. Ghorrene is exiled from Crieste and the imperial throne is awarded to his younger brother, Oststad the II.

2894 The Black Eagle raises an army of evil mercenaries, slaves, and monstrous humanoids, and sails on eastern Crieste. The warriors stationed at Gurnard's Head are ordered to hold their posts at all costs, beginning the Siege of Sorrows.

2899 The armies of the Black Eagle are defeated, and Ghorrene vanishes into the East.

2903 Emperor Oststad the II is abducted from his palace in Kassantia. The lord-barons are unable to decide upon a new emperor. The Interregnum begins, lasting for the next 300 years.

2905+ The majority of the North slowly reverts into unclaimed wilderness, isolated fiefdoms, and small kingdoms. Human woodsmen break ancient treaties with the elven nations, and harvest vast swaths of scarred timber, sparking numerous conflicts.

3075 The Southern Province secedes from the Criestine Empire. Crieste goes to war with its old province, but fails to regain the territory.

3098 The pirate Bloody Jack Dascombe plunders the imperial tribute fleet. He is caught six months later and executed, but the treasure is never recovered.

3100+ Thire and Luthea declare their independence, and the remainder of the northern kingdoms follow suit. The Empire of Crieste shrinks to a tenth of its original size, leading sages to prophesize the coming of a Second Dark Age.

3101 Silverton miners accidentally uncover and release the vampire Sorrenna. The mine's owner, Jaspar Gannu, is held responsible. Master Gannu is lynched and his wife and child are run out of town. The Gannu family home is burned to the ground and the site is sown with thorny vines.

3171 The wicked conjurer, Erasmus Lore, seizes control of Dundraville, only to be defeated by the Company of the Silver Lute.

3195 The ogre mage Tarkhan Khurzog seizes control of the Scourgelands, marching on the Grand Duchy of Leherti.

3196 The disparate nations of man, elf, and dwarf rise up together, arresting the halt of the Scourge, but not before the Grand Duchy of Leherti is left in ruins.

3197 Unable to stem the tide of secession, the lord-barons of Crieste elect a seven-year-old boy to be Emperor, bringing the Interregnum to an end.

3198 Whitefang Citadel is built atop Aurora Pass in the Dragonspire Mountains.

3199 *Spring:* A trio of hurricanes strike Argalis and neighboring coastal towns. *Winter:* The Star of the Black Sun appears in the night sky.

3200 Present Day

The First Dark Age

Humankind's dominance of the North began with the War of Divine Right, when the race of giants rose up as one in an attempt to enslave the lesser, humanoid races. No one knows how long the war waged, or how many thousands of heroes gave their lives in defense of freedom, but when the waters of the Empyrean swallowed the last peaks of Lirea, the ancient empires of elves and dwarves had been laid low. The elves retreated to their remaining forest sanctuaries, and the dwarves sealed the gates to their mountain clanholds. Both races had suffered mightly in the war and only by turning their backs on the world were they able to survive with their cultures intact.

In their stead rose the fledgling nations of mankind. Scattered in the aftermath of the war, isolated from their elven and dwarven mentors and struggling for survival in the savage wilderness, Northland humans quickly forgot the secrets of metalcraft and magic. With few traditions of their own, they descended into savagery and barbarism. Within fifteen generations—not even the lifespan of a single elf or dwarf—all that remained of their former greatness was a collection of oral histories retold by skalds, and a handful of ancestral weapons and armors, passed from one conquering warchief to the next.

Reign of the Druid Kings

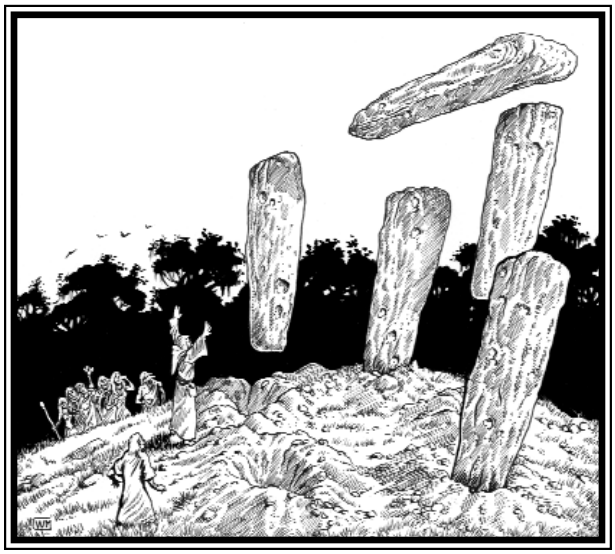
Witnessing the rapid decline of man, the last of the great magi sought ways to preserve the fragile advances of mankind. Some entombed themselves within the earth to wait out the march of ages, dark wizards pursued the promise of lichdom, and others sought to transfer their intellect and souls within staves and constructs.

The mages of Nemfar sought another solution, and summoned together a coalition of young druids. The druids were given the rudimentary secrets of arcane magic and entrusted with the destiny of mankind. Binding arcane magic with the divine might of the druids, the dying archmages spent the last of their powers raising the standing stones that dot the Northlands and imbuing them with mighty dweomers and the power to work miracles.

Armed with magic of old, the Druid Kings built temple-palaces atop high mountain passes, within misted forest vales, and alongside tumbling waterfalls. Protected from the endless wars of the barbarians, the masters amassed the collective knowledge of the elder races, met with the dragons of old, and sought out alliances with the elves and dwarves.

Knowing the power of their lore, the masters were cautious when revealing it to their barbarian brothers. They carefully chose initiates from among the savage hordes and tutored these select few in the ways of the ancients. In time, the initiates returned to their tribes, where they served as wisemen, healers, and advisors. Progress was slow as untold civilizations rose and fell, but over time the mightiest of the new nations—Kothea, Nimoria, and Erheim—emerged from the sea of barbarism, carefully guided by the hidden masters.

The Druid Kings' machinations went undetected by most, but the leaders that were too cunning or willful to submit to the rule of advisors rebelled. Chief among these rebels were the painted barbarians of Abylos. Summoning a great horde, they swept over the Dragonspire Mountains and poured into the heart of the Northlands. In the ensuing slaughter, hundreds of initiates were burned alive, the palaces of Druid Kings were razed, and their ancient libraries were put to the torch.



Kothea, Nimoria, and Erheim

Flames of war raged throughout the west. Erheim fell before the horde, but not before the horde's master was slain in single combat by the Princeling of Erheim. Both were carried back to Abylos and buried beneath the Dragonspire Mountains.

Nimoria, protected in the west, weathered the assault behind crude stone walls and wooden towers. Kothea took the brunt of the assault, and the war with their Abylossian brothers lasted for twenty blood-soaked years, the Kotheans and Abylossians slowly adopting the others' traditions.

Meanwhile, far to the east, the people of Uru'Nuk rose up against their Abylossian masters. The horde of Abylos, unable to wage war on two fronts, collapsed. The liberated Uru'Nuk people migrated east, taking up residence on the high prairies that now carry their name.

The Age of Empires

The Priest-Kings of Nimoria, seeing their chance to seize control of the west, struck foul bargains with infernal powers, foolishly believing that they could turn the depravity of demons and devils to their advantage. The souls of the royal line were sold into eternal damnation and the fortunes of Nimoria rose to precipitous heights. Cambions ran unchecked through the imperial court. Its nobility engaged in bloody sacrificial rites, and its corrupt populace bartered with wicked creatures of every sort.

To the east, the nation of Kothea slowly recovered from decades of war. Strengthened by the infusion of barbarian blood, the warriors of Kothea rode east and north, battling with monstrous humanoids and encountering the outriders of the sylvan realm. Meeting with the elves for the first time in centuries, the Kotheans began trade relations with their cousins of the woods. Led by gnome guides into the Ul Dominor mountains, the Kothean scouts held council with the dwarven lords. After years of explorations, the Kothean expedition returned to their emperor with tales of grand palaces atop great trees and the mightiest of cities hidden beneath the roots of mountains.

Armed with the knowledge of a much larger world, Kothea began trading with the elder races in earnest. But the infernal-blooded kings of Nimoria, foolishly believing the counsel of demons, saw the dwarves and elves to

be a threat to their power. Raising an army of slaves, demon-blooded sorcerers, and aberrations, they marched on the forests and mountain holdfasts. The armies of Nimoria were met with the unrestrained fury of the dwarf and elf races. In less than five years, the demon-spawned armies were crushed by the might of the elder races. Defeated, the Priest-Kings turned to bickering and then outright warfare among themselves as each vied for power over his peers.

Meanwhile, the people of Kothea had spread far to the north, scouts coming within sight of the Hoarfrost Bay. But as they encountered elves, dwarves, and other races—some savage, some not—the Kotheans were slowly absorbed into the local customs and cultures, until they were Kothean in name only. Stretched over the far reaches of the North, the sun slowly set on the greatest empire the Northlands had yet known. Mighty Kothea, jewled crown of the east, sank under the weight of its own success, splintering into a dozen fractious realms.

The Demon Empire

Even as Kothea began its inevitable decline, the Priest-Kings of Nimoria continued their internecine warfare. Heeding the calls of their diabolic and demonic advisors, each believed that he or she was destined to be the one true emperor of Nimoria.

Armies of slaves, driven on by demonic taskmasters wreathed in azure flames, marched to their death. Chariots thundered across the land, and war horns sounded the call to battle. The armies clashed on the high plains of Samshem, churning the fields to mud beneath their sandaled feet. Mighty war mammoths crushed entire legions, as prides of dire lions tore through ranks of slave-soldiers. Cambion generals fought alongside summoned devils, while the Priest-Kings themselves brought down fire from the heavens.

When the battles had ended and the last war horn sounded, the empire of Nimoria had fought itself into ruin. A nameless spearman found the last two Priest-Kings locked in mortal combat amid the smoking remains of armies. Begging forgiveness for the sins of his empire, the spearman slew both regents with a single blow, then raised a pale, blood soaked flag of surrender over their soulless bodies.

In the months and years that followed, the empire—lacking a single leader—fell into chaos and savagery. Strange cults emerged and flourished, predicting a coming apocalypse and the end of days. Bandit warlords ruled the countryside, while the adjuncts of the lost Priest-Kings fought for control of the faithful. Monstrous humanoids swarmed unchecked, and once again beasts preyed upon man. From the smoking ruins of an empire rose the warlord Gunere Numon, the same man who would one day be crowned the Emperor of Crieste.

The Rise of Crieste

Born a slave, Gunere Numon distinguished himself in the war years, rising through the ranks of the Nimorian army. In the years after the war, he sought refuge among the warbands, swearing loyalty to one of the nameless bandit lords that rose to power. In short order, Numon assumed command of the band, leading a series of successful raids on the fortresses of nearby warlords.

But Numon was not content to be the master of brigands. As a young man, he had witnessed firsthand the ravages of war, and knew that so long as fractious warlords ruled the land, peace would elude his people. Taking up arms and the mantle of *Crieste* (Nimorian for the dire lions that roam the Samshem plains), Numon systematically conquered the surrounding warlords, expanding the sweep of his domain. Surrounding himself with a handpicked council of warriors, Numon and his generals unified the scattered ruins of the empire.

Now hailed as King Numon the Lion, the general sent his warriors to the farthest reaches of the empire, quelling the threat of monstrous humanoids and rebels and making the roads and fields safe for the commoner. Even as an aging warrior, Numon the Lion refused to put down his sword, leading quests against dragons, barbarians, and any foe that would threaten his people. In his final years, he granted each general a barony, and empowered the Council of Lords to guide his fledgling empire.

When the great regent died, the entire nation mourned his passing. Throughout the winter, solemn flags hung from the tops of citadels and towers, while the Council of Lords met to discuss the future of the empire.

When spring finally broke winter's frosty grasp, the mourning flags were replaced with the triumphant banners of Crieste, and a young baron, Korde of Kassantia, was crowned Emperor of Crieste.

Of Barons and Colonies

Crieste flourished for seven hundred glorious years, slowly expanding its borders east and north, creating new baronies as territories were explored and conquered. Criestine ambassadors were granted audience with the elven and dwarven nations, new alliances were struck, and humanity entered a cultural renaissance. Knights rode against barbarians to the

north and east, raising blade and shield in the defense of civilization. Contested by orcs, giants, and lost tribes of savage humans, they claimed entire wildernesses in the name and glory of Crieste.

Meanwhile, Kalían ships sailed far to the west, bringing home stories of savage cannibals, impenetrable jungles, and unimaginable wealth for the taking. Darel Voltigeur, a cunning sea captain, established the first Criestine colony, incurring the wrath of the drakon that ruled the land. The snake men rose up, and it took the united might of the Xulmec allies, the Criestine navy, and the elven warrior-mages of the Blackbriar to defeat them.

But the empire's success brought decadence. While the Criestine armies struggled mightily on the borderlands and in the colonies, the lord-barons and generals of the interior grew steadily more complacent, indulging in extravagant balls and raising monuments to their own glory.

It was not to last. On the eve of his thirtieth year, Emperor Oststad vanished from his palace, abducted in the night. The lord-barons sent for the empire's greatest astrologers, seers, magicians, and diviners, while knights of the realm scoured the countryside, but to no avail. The ruler of the most powerful empire in the world had disappeared without a trace.

Each lord-baron sought to turn the situation to his advantage, vying for power before a new emperor could be elected. One year turned to five and then ten. Unable or unwilling to agree upon a new emperor, the fractious Council of Lords allowed the empire to descend into interregnum.

The Interregnum and Rise of the Free Kings

For three hundred years, Crieste limped along without an emperor. Seasons passed, the fortunes of the baronies rose and fell, and still the corrupt Council of Lords refused to agree upon an emperor.

Life was little changed in the empire's interior, but on the borders of the empire the baronies had to fight for their very existence against monstrous threats and barbarian raiders. The baronies turned to mercenary companies for support in their desperate fight for survival. Each year they sent emissaries to the imperial court, begging the lords to set aside their differences and agree upon an emperor, and each year their requests were denied.

Beset by danger on all sides, the baronies became the masters of their own fate. Treaties and alliance were broken with the elven nations, as woodsmen cut into the hearts of the great forests of old. Man warred against elf, driving the sylvan people further into isolation. The dwarves, high atop their mountain citadels, suffered less at the hands of men, welcoming those that came in peace, and easily crushing the rest.

The Southern Province was the first to declare independence from Crieste, seceding from the empire in a bloody revolution. The nations of the North watched with interest as the Council of Lords struggled to respond. When, after a decade of empty threats and meaningless posturing, Crieste had failed to regain the Province, it was clear how powerless the Council of Lords had become. Acting on the ineffectual weakness of the empire's government, the barons took matters into their own hands, declaring independence in quick succession.

Fearing the collapse of their empire, the Council of Lords hastily convened. For seven days and nights, they argued and fought, debating the virtues of one candidate against the next. On the eighth day, they threw open the doors of the Council and announced the sixteenth Emperor of Crieste: a seven-year old boy. The child would rule alongside his vizier, Lady Mortianna, until his fifteenth birthday, when he would assume full mastery of the Dragonskull Throne.

Starved for leadership and desperate for an emperor, the surviving baronies quickly welcomed their new emperor.

Wrath of the Scourge and the Fall of Leherti

While Crieste writhed in the death throes of an empire, its greatest fief, the Grand Duchy of Leherti, teetered on the brink of collapse. Years of inbreeding had reduced the Andithil dynasty to feebleminded figureheads incapable of leadership. Blessed with abundant resources and bountiful harvests, there was little need for true leadership, and for too long the Grand Duchy was able to eke by on the widom of its seneschals.

The illusion came to an end in the summer of 3195. A ten-year drought had reduced the Mirdar-Luminar Steppes to a tinderbox, and brought low the migratory herds of draex and reindeer. When a late summer lightning storm set fire to the Mirdar Forest, the hungry tribes of ogres, goblinoids, and giant-kin swarmed into the Grand Duchy. Tarkhan Khurzog, a demonic ogre-mage of unmatched cunning and cruelty, seized control of the hordes, hammering the chaotic mob into a disciplined, regimented force. Seeing the might of the Tarkhan, evil mercenary companies, foul wizards, and infernal priests rallied to his banner.

Previously, the disorganized humanoid mobs of the steppes had posed little threat to the knights of Leherti. But by summer's end, the plains shook to the awful beat of marching soldiers, mighty siege engines dotted the horizon, and dragons rode upon the smoke of war. The Scourge had been born.

Idiot-born and spineless, the ruling family of Leherti struggled to mount a defense against the coming darkness. Seeing their nation in danger of destruction, the generals of the Grand Duchy launched a desperate coup. The assassins failed, and Archduke Ramaster the XII executed each of his generals in retribution, and the Scourge marched on Leherti unopposed.

The ensuing chaos is well documented. Abandoned by their rulers, each city was left to its own defenses. The northernmost cities fell first, their citizens taken as slaves or sacrificed to the Scourge's demonic patrons. Noble warriors of Leherti marched against the Scourge and were defeated time and again.

Knights of the Lance and the Sable March, and the steel-clad legions of Holdfast dwarves, bolstered by the elven mage knights of Corsan and the sorcerers of Koranth, rode to the defense of the Grand Duchy. The ragtag alliance of good clashed with the Scourge on the plains above Wyrm's Deep. When winter brought the season of war to an end, over three-quarters of Leherti had fallen to the armies of the Tarkhan.

Present Day

A grim cloud hangs over the Northlands. At the time of this scribe's feeble scratchings, scarcely one-third of the North can be properly termed civilized. The great empires of yore have all slipped beneath the march of time. Where great cities once thrived, tall forests now stand. The magnificent works of wizards abound, but few can lay claim to their arcane might. Ruins of old whisper of long-lost secrets, waiting only for those daring enough to uncover them. Fell monsters prowl the borderlands, while barbarian raiders grow ever bolder. The civilized nations of mankind, once the shining rulers of the North, are poised on the brink of ruin.

Majestic Crieste has shrunk to a handful of baronies. Its emperor, a mere child, is counseled by corrupt barons and a vizier of unchecked wickedness. Once again monsters and monstrous humanoids roam the darkness, setting upon the helpless and weak. The Priest-Kings of old have returned, and wage a secret war for control of the empire.

The Grand Duchy of Leherti lies in smoking decay, its cities put to the torch and its people enslaved to monsters. The surviving free cities are hard put to hold their own, let alone retake that which was lost. The armies of the Scourge, far from defeated, bide their time and recoup their forces, waiting only for the time to finish what they have begun.

The Southern Province and northern nations, once beholden to the Emperor of Crieste, now strike out for their own. They carry humankind's fiery torch, but are threatened on all sides, contesting with each other as much as with monsters.

Travel between nations grows ever less frequent and ever more dangerous. Meanwhile, barbarians of the North and Abylos of old, threaten at the borders, raiding deeper into the heart of civilization. Dark seers consult their fiendish masters and declare an end to the Age of Man.

And yet, not all is lost. Courageous heroes hail from every quarter, eager to take up arms and spells in the defense of civilization. In Crieste, the Knights of the Sable March fight in the name of the Emperor and wage a secret war against their evil vizier. Dwarven warlords take up axe beside elf knights of the Blackbriar, Corsan, and Anseur. Knights of the Lance ride to the ends of the North, fighting for justice and good. And everywhere, adventurers, refusing to slip silently into the annals of history, fight their way into forgotten ruins and ancient dungeons, returning with untold riches and arcane relics.

It is a time of heroes, when power, riches, and honor can be won by anyone courageous enough to take risks against the threatening darkness.

And Thus Unfolds The Age of Man. What Legends Will You Tell?

Dungeon Crawl Classics #35

GM's Guide to the Known Realms

Contents

Introduction 2
Chapter 1: Creation and Early History 4
Chapter 2: Deities, Demigods, and Infernal Powers 16
Chapter 3: Bestiary of the Known Realms 49
Chapter 4: Setting Rules 75
Chapter 5: Rogues' Gallery and Hall of Heroes 97
Chapter 6: Zero-Level Characters 117
Chapter 7: Paths of Adventure 123
Appendix 1: DCC Index 127
Credits and Afterword 133
Legal 135
DCC Character Sheet 136

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Introduction

Welcome to the Known Realms, a world of adventure, arcane secrets, and untold riches, where a sharp sword and a shirt of mail are a warrior's only defense against wicked mages, monstrous hordes, and fierce dragons of yore.

Culled from the pages of an ancient tome, the Known Realms represent the scribes' world simulated by the d20 rule system. Whether the codex is the spurious work of a dark-age madman or a medieval tome of esoteric conjecture will never be known. What is certain is that it provides a wealth of information for the modern gamer.

During the arduous process of translation, concessions were made to fit the Known Realms to the d20 system, but otherwise the spirit and tone of the tome was left unchanged. Until such a time that the lost companion tomes are discovered and translated, it falls to you, the GM, to answer the lingering mysteries and fill in the unknown realms.

A World of High Adventure

The world of Áereth is foremost one of legendary adventure. Noble knights ride to the ends of the earth questing against legendary dragons and wicked warlords. Mighty wizards wage eldritch battle atop high mountain peaks and in the halls of lonely towers. Cunning rogues creep along rooftops of smoky cities, stealing past lethal traps and demonic sentries. Devout priests fight for the common good, bringing freedom to enslaved masses. Fearless adventurers unearth forgotten tombs and plumb the depths of endless caverns, ride at the head of armies, and cast powerful spells that shape the very nature of reality.

The Known Realms are vast. Many of its locales are recorded in the Dungeon Crawl Classic series of adventure modules, but these are only the first, tentative steps into the world of Áereth.

Looking for a shadowy port to sell your ill-gotten loot? Wicked Punjar beckons. Craving high intrigue and backstabbing politics? The Council of Lords awaits your petition. Hungry for the wail of war horns and the crash of armies? The armies of Leherti cry out for your command. Want to carve out your own fief from the untracked wilderness? The wild borderlands call. Eager to sink your glowing blade into the gullet of a dragon and ransack its fabled trove? Look no further. All these adventures and more are contained herein.

While the scribes of the codex outlined their world, it falls to you and your players to bring the Known Realms to life. Bind it to your home campaign, ravage its lands with the march of armies and dragon fire, make its people come alive through the heroics of your players.

Our work with the codex is finished. The legends of Áereth have only begun.

Styles of Play

Just as PCs gain levels and face more challenging puzzles and foes, so too must a campaign world evolve to paint an ever-broader horizon, luring heroes with treasures and ambitions just beyond their reach. As a world, Áereth can accommodate any number of styles of play, ranging from classic dungeon crawl to convoluted court intrigue. GMs need simply hold to a simple rule: Always make the PCs the focus of your world.

With this in mind, consider the following adventure suggestions for your evolving campaign:

Low-level PCs: Beginning and low-level PCs spend their time exploring nearby ruins, working as caravan guards, serving wizened sages, studying beneath noble knights, and fighting in merchant companies. Most settlements in the Northlands are isolated from their neighbors, and are forced to turn to unproven young heroes in times of desperation and need. The PCs might undertake short wilderness journeys, or the GMs may choose to simply assume that PCs begin their adventures at the

entrance of the dungeon. A band of low-level PCs can spend their first few levels simply exploring the surrounding lands, mapping out the wilderness and clearing dungeons and cave complexes of wicked creatures.

Mid-level PCs: Mid-level characters are often heroes who have carved out names for themselves. While not yet legends, they have established themselves as dangerous foes worthy of respect. These adventurers often travel far and wide, exploring the Southlands and Lostlands in the service of kings and regents, secret societies and knighthoods, or simply in the search of greater wealth and power. As renowned heroes, PCs quickly attract the notice of those more powerful than themselves. Some of these powers may choose to recruit the heroes to their noble causes; others may perceive the PCs as threats, and work to eradicate or corrupt the heroes before they grow into powerful threats.

High-level PCs: No longer the servants of emperors, high priests, or guildmasters, high-level PCs are these rulers, conquering existing kingdoms or carving new ones from the wilderness. Gathering wisdom, power, and fame, PCs undertake epic quests, riding at the head of armies, challenging dragons and demons alike. Only the fiercest or most numerous of foes present a challenge to a party of high-level PCs. As living legends, the heroes are responsible for defending their people from threats that can span entire planes. High-level games can also focus on the subtle plots of courtly intrigue, where a single careless phrase can plunge entire nations into war and chaos.

Epic-level PCs: Epic-level PCs can reshape the face of Áereth at their whim, rallying entire races to their cause, or laying waste to whole empires. Epic-level PCs are on the path to becoming minor divine powers and masters of Áereth. At this level, PCs can expect to regularly draw the attention of gods and infernal powers, working either with or against the PCs as suits their moods.

Contained Herein

The Known Realms are comprised of three continents: the Northlands, a collection of isolated kingdoms, faded empires, and majestic forests and mountains; the Southlands, a land of dense jungles and forgotten cities occupied by drakon and the ancient nagas; and the Lostlands, once the cradle of civilization, now a place of fearsome monsters and ancient, sand-swept ruins.

This boxed set contains the following:

Gazetteer of the Known Realms: a reference guide to the three continents, detailing the myriad nations, cultures, and monsters;

GM's Guide to the Known Realms: the book you hold in your hands, containing secrets and information crucial to running a campaign set in the Known Realms;

Dungeon Crawl Classics: Halls of the Minotaur: an introductory adventure designed to bring 0-level characters to 1st level and beyond;

Dungeon Crawl Classics: Vault of the Thief Lord: a challenging adventure designed for expert players and character levels 4-6, set in the deadly city of Punjar;

Three full-color maps detailing the vast sweep of the Known Realms; and

The Player's Map to the Known Realms, an incomplete map of the world for the players to complete in the course of their adventures.

Chapter 1
Creation and Early History

The summation below is gathered from the creation myths of many of Áereth's religions and cultures. No single church will cite this information in such a concise, comprehensive form, but if one made a painstaking study of the clergies of the Sancturn Pantheon, interviewed disciples of numerous demigods, and consulted scholars of the Triad, one might gather an account similar to the one below.

GMs are encouraged to alter this mythology as they see fit to better accommodate their campaigns. This is merely one possibility regarding the origins of Áereth.

In a formless age measureless to mortals, there arrived a clan of beings that theologians would one day name the Greater Gods. Leading them was the Triad, and the eldest among them was Choranus, the Seer Father and the figurehead of Law. At his side was his equal and consort Ildavir, the Giver of Form, and his brother, Centivus the Shaper. When the Triad and its kin entered the Void, its sole occupant, a being of Chaos known as Zhühn, fled before their luminous presence.

With the help of his children, Choranus began the creation of the world, a place of light, water, and air. He designed laws to govern the course of nature and the powers that could suspend them, setting the stage for impending life. Yet even as the Greater Gods forged this world, Zhühn extended his hands and unmade it, for ever was destruction swifter than creation. Again and again they fashioned their world anew and Zhühn, their Great Enemy, broke it apart. Choranus sought to bring order into the vast expanse, but Zhühn would allow only entropy.

After the Triad took counsel, they welcomed an assemblage of other gods to take part in creation. Most pivotal was the Sancturn Pantheon, divinities who sought refuge from the ruin of their previous home. The Triad granted them their protection and magnified their power. These divinities, later named the Lesser Gods by theologians, were exemplars of good, evil, and neutrality—moralistic ideologies carried over from their former home. Once the Sancturns had settled themselves among the Outer Planes, the Triad invited them to take part in its designs.

With their collective work, Choranus oversaw the construction of a ghostly new world—a place of raw magical convergence suffused with the spirit of nature and the collective power of the Greater and Lesser Gods. Under the direction of Ildavir, the gods gave physical substance to the world by drawing upon the Inner Planes, and Choranus set it spinning within the spiral arrays of the Material Plane.

Though he fought to unmake it, Zhühn's power was outmatched. Dwelling in the corners of his diminishing Void, Zhühn recoiled at the sight of such enduring creation. To him, the existence of anything but the Void itself was a blasphemy, for he was a being of chaos and oblivion and knew only those. Now light and life flourished, spoiling the endless gloom. This new world, having survived the Great Enemy's will to destroy, has come to be known in the current age as Áereth—derived from a phrase in the Old Giant tongue meaning "where we walk."

Seeing it safe from Zhühn's negation, Choranus at last asked Centivus to devise the first creatures to inhabit Áereth. As his brother set to work, the Seer Father and Giver of Form rejoiced at his artistry and lent their skills to his. From the hands of the Triad, many beings entered the world. This was an antediluvian age of legendary beasts, a time when rocs alone soared the skies, krakens swam the depths, and colossal worms bored the earth unchallenged. Ever was Centivus the artist, his divine imagination given free rein to shape new beasts. This he did with the counsel of Ildavir, whose knowledge of nature and balance lent focus to his work. It was she who infused his creations with life and substance, giving each the ability to proliferate its own kind. At last, Choranus decided which would be given sentience, sharp intellect, or the gift of magic.

The three gods continued to create, experimenting with flesh and blood to set a multitude of strange and monstrous creatures free to roam all the lands. From these

beginnings the animal features of the Known Realms find their origin. When Centivus designed the first felines, Choranus marveled again at his brother's skill, and he gave the most powerful among these features like those of he and his consort: fair faces crowned with flowing hair. These became the first sphinxes, and they were graced with wisdom and prescience. The next creatures were serpentine, and Choranus smiled at their colorful, scaled bodies, and he gave them, too, faces like the gods' own. These became the nagas, and they were graced with cunning and a talent for sorcery.

Seeing the need for greater balance in the world, Ildavir began to populate Áereth with a host of lesser forms, taking her inspiration from the great works of Centivus. These became the animals, and they would thrive in all climates and terrains and rule the wild places. From sphinxes, Ildavir created lions and great cats of all varieties. From nagas, she created reptiles and all species of serpents. From rocs, she created birds, and from the great ocean dwellers, she created fish. These new beasts were at first larger than their eventual progeny, and are known in the present world as dire animals.

Then Choranus crafted a race formed fully in the gods' own image. This effort took the form of titans, large of stature and great in strength. Intending the titans to rule over all others, he found that they did not obey the edicts intended for them. They became a race of discord—seeded, perhaps, by the subtle hand of Zhühn—and the titans went their separate ways and withdrew to the mountainous corners of the world. The magic within them adapted their bodies to the regions in which they chose to dwell, and their power slowly declined. They became the giants, lesser forms of the titans. Lost in their own selfish struggles, the giants abandoned their heritage and forsook the gods.

Disappointed in the fallibility of the titans, Choranus turned to Centivus again. He asked him to devise a ruling race, one that perfected on the forms that came before. As his younger brother set to work on these next creations, Choranus delighted at the beauty of their draconic form. Cunning as the nagas, they possessed the strength of titans and the wisdom of sphinxes. Ildavir gave them life in the cradle of a mountain valley, and Choranus gave them sovereign minds. The Seer Father also granted them profound skill with magic that they might shape their civilizations and defend themselves against enemies who would supplant them. These beings were the first dragons.

As the most intelligent creatures on Áereth, and possessing breaths of deadly elemental power, dragons lorded over all others. At their head, Choranus placed four avatars shaped much like the titans but draconic in feature. These were the Dragon Kings, ambassadors of the gods, given the task of relaying the laws of Choranus to the dragons and those in their charge.

At this time, Choranus longed to recreate his attempt with the titans, this time on a smaller, more numerous scale. Taking inspiration from his own family, he created the smaller humanoid races that would serve the dragons in their mighty empire. In the likeness of Ireth, his sagacious, eldest daughter, he fashioned the elves. For Daenthar, his stout and industrious eldest son, Choranus hewed the dwarves. From the image of Poderon, his good-humored, hard-working son, he forged the gnomes. For the harmony of Olidyra, his diminutive, wayward daughter, he conceived the halflings. Foreseeing the eventual rise of these humanoid races, Choranus at last created humans, a people who would embody the virtues—and failings—of all others. One by one, these five races revealed themselves, and they were at first wary of the great beasts that ruled the land. As they increased in number, the intelligent creatures that came before began to contend with them. In time, some adopted the humanoids as a master might foster an apprentice, beginning with the dragons. As intended, the elves, dwarves, gnomes, halflings, and humans became as servitors to the wiser, more powerful dragons.

Watching the works of their superiors, some of the Lesser Gods grew jealous and began to experiment with the powers of creation, giving rise to goblinkind and many others. Hags, harpies, ogres, and trolls numbered among the many monstrous denizens. Affronted by these bastard creations, Ildavir appealed to her consort and his brother. With their approval, Ildavir countered with new creations of her own. Beings such as centaurs, merfolk, satyrs, sea cats, treants, and all things fey came from this time.

The ethics of law and chaos, loyalty and disobedience, were in flux within Áereth. Each race fought for its place in the young world and many refused to bow to the lordship of the Dragon Kings, sovereignty decreed by Choranus himself. Zhühn, seeking to subvert the work of creation, sent forth his mightiest servant, a fallen titan named Cadixtat that the Great Enemy had fostered since that race's birth. Once instrumental in the titans' defiance against the gods, Cadixtat, the most powerful of his kind, now marched across the face of Áereth sewing chaos and disloyalty wherever he went. Empowered with a portion of Zhühn's own anarchic power, even the Dragon Kings dared not challenge him. Unwilling to allow the Great Enemy this heavy-handed stratagem, Choranus sent forth a sentinel of law named Teleus to defend Áereth, imbuing him with some of the Seer Father's own axiomatic power.

The battle between Teleus and Cadixtat spanned the world and carried far into the Reign of Dragons, as the

law of Choranus and the chaos of Zhühn sought to rule the fate of Áereth. This Great Conflict of ideologies, physical, and spiritual power never knew a victor, however, for when Teleus at last disarmed Cadixtat of his Axe of Unmaking, Choranus recalled his champion. Content to allow the absence of both ethical extremes, the Triad commanded the rest of the Greater Gods to stay their influence as well. In their place, they charged the Sancturn Pantheon to watch over the mortal races of Áereth and allow their morals of good, evil, and neutrality to hold sway. The Greater Gods would remain only the distant figureheads of creation.

Unable to exert his power physically upon the world again, Zhühn endeavored to dissolve it slowly, piece by piece, with the patience only a creature of the Void could understand. Though he was great in power, many of the gods of good and evil would forever oppose him.

The time had come for mortals, not gods, to shape the course of the world.

Early History

The Reign of Dragons

From the moment they entered the world, the dragons were lords, and at their head were placed the immortal Dragon Kings. Cast in the likeness of the gods themselves and infused with draconic might, they were paragons of virtue who ruled over the dragons and their great empires. Embodying the elements of fire, lightning, cold, and acid, each was affiliated with a direction of the world itself.

In addition to their roles as rulers, the Dragon Kings served as mediators between the gods and mortals, delivering divine will to Áereth. Under their wisdom, the dragons' dominion flourished during a time of peace and discovery. Many beautiful things were wrought and many magics woven. Mountainous cities were constructed like vast aeries and sprawling temples were raised in swamplands, fertile steppes, and secret valleys. There was no soil on the surface of Áereth that had not felt the talons of a dragon walk upon it.

As the eons passed, the gods began to look to their newer creations, and the influence of the Dragon Kings over their own vassals waned. Sensing their own fading power, they erected the Vault of the Dragon Kings deep within the Frosteye Mountains. It became a haven for dragons who wished to hold onto the glory and virtues that their empire once held dear. Within lay the Pool of

Dreams, a reliquary that cared for the souls of dragons that passed from the mortal world. The Pool would preserve the collective knowledge and memories of the dragons until the gods favored the world's firstborn again.

In the creation of the Pool of Dreams, the Dragon Kings of the East and West sacrificed their power and succumbed to death. Unforeseen by the remaining two, this tumultuous event divided dragonkind as never before, for now dragons had witnessed the frailty of their lieges. Some retained their loyalty to the remaining Kings, while others claimed that a new era had begun and sought to grab the power for themselves. From this ideological rift, their magic became manifest. With the march of time, each faction evolved into the variances of metallic and chromatic. Abandoning the Kings and the gods they served, the rebellious chromatic faction began to lose their luster, their scales dulling to the matte hues of the color spectrum.

When the transformation was nearly completed, a great red wyrm named Sevrylascarethiin—or Sunscratch in the Common tongue—rose to prominence. Together with his brethren, he waged war against the remaining Dragon Kings and their followers and personally struck down the King of the South at its outset. The King of the North in turn slew Sunscratch but himself fell gravely wounded in the struggle.

With the death of their champion, the chromatic dragons fled the ancestral valleys, while the remaining Dragon King retreated into the Vault and barred its doors. The metallic dragons disbanded, disillusioned by their loss, and left their homeland as well. As the centuries passed, the Vault was lost and its memory passed from common knowledge into legend.

The Reign of Cats

When the dragons ruled Áereth with their great empires, many intelligent and ambitious creatures vied for petty dominance under their expansive shadow. When the Dragon Kings and their vassals fell from power, the first to walk abroad uncontested in the world at large was the sphinx.

Believing themselves to be paragons of physical and mental perfection, the sphinxes saw themselves as caretakers of the world. They used their wits and their appetites to maintain order among the lesser races by devouring those who could not answer their riddles. In the eastern deserts and hills, the collective might of the sphinxes elevated them above all others. Building upon the ruins of the dragons who came before and studying their abandoned works, the sphinxes united as a single power. Any enemies who attempted to challenge them were swiftly cowed or devoured.

Seeing the need for servants, the leonine race ceased devouring the numerous humanoids and began to subjugate them instead with the persuasive acuity only a sphinx can employ. They coaxed the elves from the forests of Ahna-Vithyre with cryptic promises of magic

and bribed the dwarves from the Gorzeruun Mountains with promises of mithral and gold. With riddles and promised knowledge, they lured the gnomes from their overrun homeland, and the halflings of Gadjarria dwelt already upon the doorstep of their desert home. Humans, a race of uncertain desires, were brought under wing with sheer aggression. Even great numbers of hobgoblins, haler than their goblin cousins, were seized by the sphinxes for their own purposes.

Some resisted. The dwarves who refused the lure retreated to depths into which they knew the sphinxes would not venture, and these would become deep dwarves and duergar. Some gnomes, upon reaching the sphinx homeland, found hidden tunnels in the earth and delved deeper still, eventually becoming the svirfneblin known today. Those elves who refused to leave their forests were the wood elves, while sea elves retreated deeper into their waters when the sphinxes approached.

With the lesser races in tow, the sphinxes carved a vast empire throughout the Lostlands and named it Khonsuria after its first pharaoh. The humanoid servants were viewed as pets or pack animals to the sphinxes; useful, even affectionately cared for at times, but patronized nonetheless. While some humanoids were afforded a measure of esteem within Khonsurian society, even the greatest among these were considered beneath the lowliest of sphinxes. The empire expanded its borders north and west, reaching its paws partially into the Northlands.

A family of androsphinxes ruled the young empire, and the third such pharaoh was a brutal tyrant whose cruelty tested the loyalty of his own kind. His daughter, however, was a high priestess of Amun Tor and was beloved by her people and even their humanoid servants. Legends say that Amun Tor himself consorted with the beautiful gynosphinx and that their child was destined from conception to rule the gilded empire. Whatever her origin, the last and most enduring sovereign to rule the Khonsurian Empire was a Queen. With the approval of the sphinxes and the gods themselves, she dethroned her wicked father and took his place.

Her name was Ankharet the Blessed, an immortal gynosphinx who ruled the Empire for prosperous millennia. She took as her consort the great gold wyrm Kozuragen, who had served the Dragon Kings in his youth and fought against the armies of Sunscratch in his prime. Now he sat at Ankharet's side and offered the council and wisdom of his long life.

Under the Queen's guidance, each species of sphinx was given a role within their society. The noble androsphinxes became the empire's prophets, leaders, and priests, serving as councilors and interpreters of the Queen's law. Gynosphinxes served as Ankharet's ambassadors, and carried her diplomacy into foreign lands. The bloodthirsty hieracosphinxes served as the warriors of the empire, defending it from all enemies. Criosphinxes carried the Queen's directives to her humanoid subjects, overseeing the construction of pyramids and monuments to the glory of Khonsuria and its Queen.

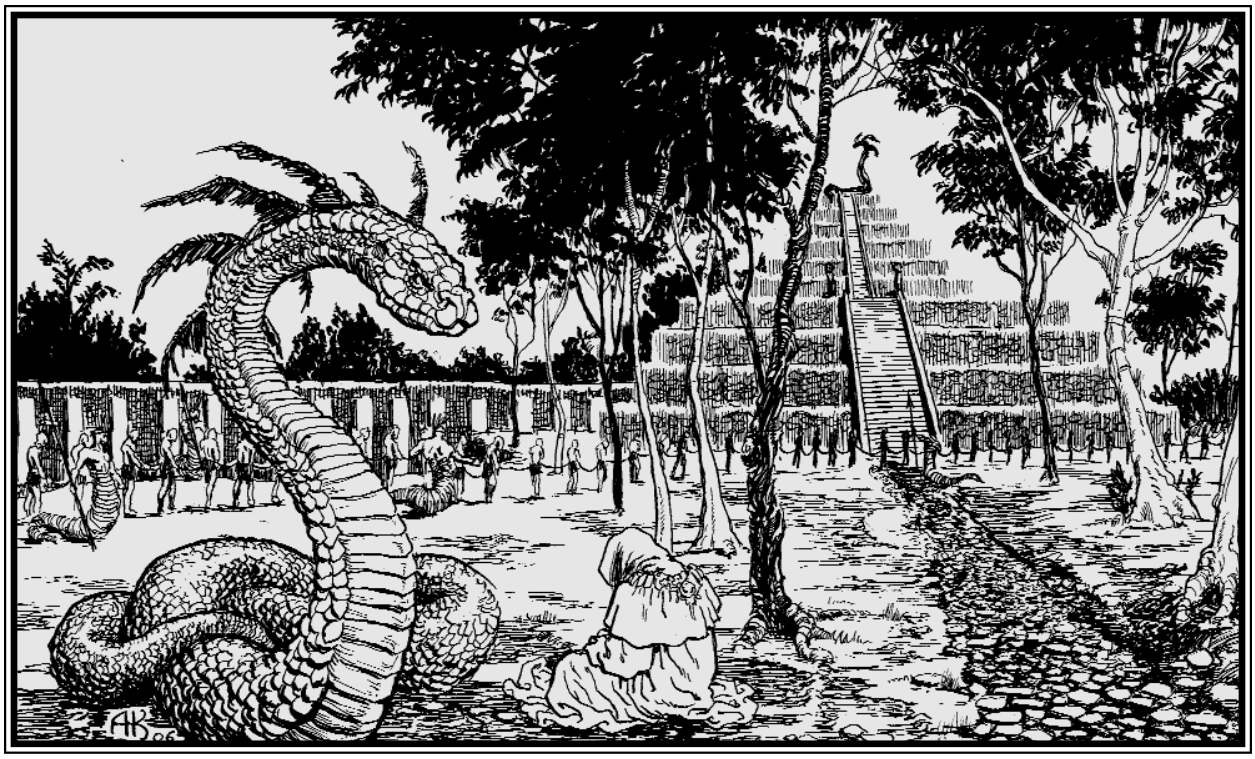
The empire was not without its insurrections. A faction of elven rebels sought freedom from the desert sands and searched in vain for the tunnels that the early svirfneblin had used long before. When their brethren refused to join them in their escape, the rebels named them traitors. The sphinxes, deigning not to risk their own against the insurgents, sent the loyal elves to retrieve their wayward kin. The Kindred War ensued, and the rebels found their only escape to be an ominous rift called the Devil's Cauldron. Corrupting fumes seeped into the elves, seeding their hearts with evil and initiating a slow change within their bodies. Fleeing into the chthonian depths, the rebel elves found their own dark paths in history, heard the call of a goddess, and would one day be known to the surface world as the drow.

The Reign of Serpents

Shortly after the rise of Khonsuria and across the Surya Sea, another creature came into its own. On Zimala, the Island of Obsidian, the totemic nagas had united their tribes and established their own budding empire. Though the dragon empire that preceded them had been unrivaled in its power, the nagas held conviction that they had been created first, that the limbless serpentine form was one of perfection. The god Madrah, they knew, had been charged to oversee the lands of the west, and though the nagas themselves varied in their chosen virtues, all paid homage to him and the spirits he engendered.

With the help of lizardfolk, marsh-dwelling neighbors north of Zimala whom the nagas had coerced into alliance, the nagas began to expand their lands. As their empire grew, the god Madrah took an empress to be his consort and from her egg was hatched a female they named Cynhuara. When the empress died suspiciously, he took a consort of common blood and she hatched a male they named Axaluatl. Immortal nagas of great power, the two half-siblings were revered by their kind as gods, and in their name stately temples were raised even before their coming of age.

Eldest of the two, Cynhuara was given the Zimalan Empire to rule as her own. However, she eschewed the role of Empress, instead establishing the Naga Council. Populated with all species of nagas, it was predominantly comprised of wise and benevolent teotl-nagas (guardian nagas). Axaluatl became an emissary for the Council who traveled abroad and explored beyond the



empire's borders. Incredulous that his half-sister would relinquish the power of regency, he plotted in secret to become Emperor. Axaluatl's conspiracies included a number of tlanti-nagas (dark nagas) of sinister power.

The Naga Council was given the task of overseeing all aspects of the Zimalan Empire with a view toward its eternal preservation and the needs of its subjects. Cynhuara herself sat at the Council's head, and together they led the Empire into a peaceful coexistence with many races for long years. Within Zimala and some of the lands north of the Island, the nagas were dominant, and those who challenged them were struck down with fang and spell. Within naga society, the tlanti-nagas served as explorers and military leaders along with the ehecatl-nagas (spirit nagas). The mali-nagas (earth nagas) and atl-nagas (water nagas), by far the most numerous, served as warriors on land and sea whenever force was required.

Under the teotls' guidance—and against Axaluatl's—the humans of neighboring lands were taken into Zimalan protection. Existing formerly in a loose society of feuding tribes, the humans were inlaid into naga society like an intricate mosaic and were taught minor magics and the arts of medicine and industry. As with nobles of modern Áereth, nagas and their human retainers would often form strong bonds of friendship. As apprentices and servants, the humans helped the nagas build their glorious cities and raise pyramids and temples in devotion to Madrah and his divine offspring, Cynhuara and Axaluatl.

The Clash of Empires

Both the Khonsurian and Zimalan Empires contended with many hostile creatures, for they were wealthy and harbored many coveted secrets. Humanoid and monstrous enemies arose and fought to raise their own nations, but the might and magic of the Serpents and Cats put down every challenge.

Yet the two great empires remained unaware of each other for centuries, with only the whispered rumor of a faraway empire ever crossing the ocean that divided them. Ankharet the Sphinx Queen forbade her people to fly west across the sea, for they believed that only the Realm of the Dead lay there. To travel to where the sun met its demise each day was to join the Accursed. The Naga Council, meanwhile, did not seek to expand its holdings beyond their own continents and the far north was filled with barbaric peoples not worth the effort to conquer. They had little desire to sail the oceans.

The ventures of Axaluatl, however, brought him at last to the far north, where he heard still more rumors of the Khonsurian Empire. With his entourage of supporters, he crossed the Surya Sea and there at last met the outlying sphinxes. When Ankharet learned of the Zimalan Empire, she embraced the discovery. Her people believed then that the gods had pushed the Realm of the Dead further to the west and in doing so had revealed new allies.

In the minds of some, the discovery prompted dreams of invasion and further conquest. Yet Cynhuara and the

Naga Council extended the tail of alliance and mutual trade. Ankharet responded in kind. Though they were great rivals in power, each empire agreed to maintain peace, for neither desired the other's land and there was much they could share.

For long years, both empires prospered. Beseeching the gods of the earth and sea, the nagas and sphinxes called upon great elemental magics and drew up a chain of islands across the Surya Sea. With the labor of millions, nonpareil magic, and a technology now lost from the world, the nagas and sphinxes constructed Ayoxatlan, a causeway of colossal scale that stretched across the miles of the sea. Using the god-given islands as their primary support, the bridge allowed for easy passage between the two empires. Though a sphinx could fly the distance unladen, the journey was overly taxing and they welcomed the convenience of a paved roadway where they could cross the water with their humanoid attendants and other trade goods. In the tongue of sphinxes, the marvelous span was known as Harak Manu, or "bridge to the west."

This golden era came to a close, however, when corruption entered the heart of Ankharet the Blessed. What led to the great Queen's fall none can accurately say, whether she was lured into darkness by the whisperings of Zhühn or whether her soul had been steeped in depravity from the very beginning. Perhaps it was her acquisition of the mysterious Shadowcrown that darkened her heart or the many potent gifts given her by the nagas. Yet even as the final stones were laid in place within Ayoxatlan, so did Ankharet and the wicked Axaluatl agree to a secret plan of mutual benefit.

In secret, Ankharet began to prey upon the servitor races—and even her own kind—as a vampire would its victims. Her deepest crime was the murder of her own consort, Kozuragen. To disguise her sin and set in motion her plans with Axaluatl, the Queen publicly accused the Naga Council for his death, claiming it had sent assassins to kill both she and her consort in a bid to sow confusion for an inevitable naga attack.

The sphinxes' faith in their revered Queen was absolute. Without hesitation, the sphinxes turned baleful eyes upon the Serpents across the sea. Led by the Queen's own daughter, Meraph the Golden, the Khonsurian Empire launched a vengeful crusade against the Zimalan Empire. Fury at the death of her father burned in the heart of Meraph.

The nagas were ill prepared for the invasion. Cynhuara, shocked at Ankharet's accusation, sought to calm the attacking sphinxes and clear away the misunderstanding. When she confronted the arriving Meraph, Axaluatl at last betrayed his half-sister and used his magic to silence her. The half-dragon sphinx, blinded by rage and unwilling to hear diplomacy, killed Cynhuara with the help of her elite warriors. The Naga Council fought back, but half its members were slain outright. An all-out war had begun between the powerful races. The nagas collapsed the bridge Ayoxatlan to prevent easy access for the Khonsurian armies. As if both empires had lost the favor of their gods, the isles upon which the great causeway had been built sank into the sea again.

Axaluatl, whose agreement with Ankharet only included the removal of Cynhuara and the Naga Council, realized that the Queen had betrayed him. She sought now to eliminate the Zimalan Empire altogether. Enraged at her duplicity, Axaluatl led his subjects in frequent counterattacks. For years, the two empires struggled against one another, Serpent against Cat. The nagas were nearly annihilated in the great war.

The War of Brothers

An androsphinx of prophetic power named Khubsheth, who was a disciple of Choranus and the consort of Meraph, discerned the corruption of the Sphinx Queen. He saw the Naga Council to be innocent of the crime for which the war had been waged, and revealed the truth to Meraph and her wrathful armies on the eve of the nagas' destruction. When the sphinxes halted their attack, Meraph, stunned by the magnitude of her mother's treachery and the genocide Meraph herself had begun, fled in grief. Khubsheth pursued his beloved and asked her to return with him and confront the Queen.

Yet Ankharet's loyal subjects were many, and sphinx turned against sphinx in a great civil war known as the War of Brothers. Years of bloody conflict ensued, ending at last when Meraph and her followers were victorious. Ankharet's defenders were routed and the Queen herself captured. During the conflict, however, the servitor races had found their freedom and the sphinxes' many enemies had advanced on the weakening empire. The surviving sphinxes from both sides, thousands strong, disappeared from the Lostlands almost overnight, a mythic event that modern historians cannot explain. The few sphinxes that remained chose solitary existence over the united civilization they once ruled.

Meraph, Khubsheth, and their few remaining allies were left standing with their shackled Queen. Divinely protected from her own kin, Ankharet the Cursed could not be slain. Khubsheth, granted divine foresight, determined that those destined to slay Ankharet would not be born until thousands of years later. Until that day, he knew, the Queen would have to be bound. And so the Tomb of the Sphinx Queen was built, the last monument to a once-great empire and a prison for its traitorous Queen.

Meraph insisted upon interring herself within the tomb to await the prophesized heroes and the death of her mother. Khubsheth, granted immortality for his vigilance, would wait through the passage of centuries for that fated time.

The Khonsurian Empire itself was no more, brought low by its own beloved Queen.

The Wrath of Serpents

Meanwhile, the nagas nursed their wounds in the aftermath of their war with the sphinxes, struggling to recover from the devastating losses. The dark nagas found an opportunity in the chaos to reshape what little remained of the Zimalan Empire. Seeing that the actions of Axaluatl had led to the slaughter of his own people, his former devotees renounced him. Once a strong disciple of Axaluatl, a dark naga priest named Zuyuan seized political power and led a revolt against the Shadow Serpent. Unable to slay the immortal—for he, too, was divinely protected like Ankharet—Zuyuan outlawed his worship. Those who professed loyalty to the betrayer were slain, and Axaluatl, diminished in status and power, was forced into seclusion.

Excited by his success and lusting for more power, Zuyuan led a campaign of persecution against the Naga Council for failing to perceive the sphinx threat. With great support, he dissolved the now-impotent Council and exiled the teotl-nagas who had backed it. Into this void of power, Zuyuan established the Dark Council. Staffed with his chosen cohorts, he rebuilt the struggling Zimalan Empire into a regime of tyranny. Zuyuan insisted that magic and intrigue, not peace and diplomacy, were the tools of survival for their kind. Unwilling to trust anything that was not a naga, they tightened their coils on their human servants until they become little more than slaves and chattel.

As the years passed, the humans grew restless. Rumors reached Zimala that the servitor races of the far east had been freed by the fall of the sphinxes. The once-great Khonsurian Empire was fast fading into mere legend, and elves and dwarves began to rise in great numbers in the Northland regions. It seemed to the wise that the gods now favored beings that walked on two legs. Unable to recover their former might, the nagas grew cynical and jealous. Hearing the stories of freedom, the nagas' human slaves began to chafe against the oppression of their masters.

Realizing that the future belonged to these lesser, more numerous races, the Dark Council decided to breed their own humanoid species in a bid to retain dominance. If humanoids were to inherit Áereth, then the nagas would control those who ruled them. Inspired by the lizardfolk race but desiring a people of greater power, the nagas sought to create a race in their own serpentine image. Zuyuan supported experiments with human slaves and captured lizardfolk, infusing them with foul sorcery and the blood of reptiles. From these unholy trials came inphidians and tzopiloani, evil human-reptile hybrids. When the nagas began to use their own sorcerous blood in the experiments, they spawned their greatest achievement, and also their ultimate downfall: the drakon.

Possessing the same ambition as humans, the innate magic of nagas, and a sinister lack of fear, the drakon eventually rebelled against their progenitors in a conflict known as the Wrath of Serpents. With the inphidians and tzopiloani on their side, the drakon threw down the Dark Council. In the chaos, the nagas were unable to maintain constriction of their slaves. The humans slipped their bonds and fled toward the northern reaches of the old empire and the wide peninsula known as Xulmec. Some believe it was the exiled teotl-nagas lurking beneath the earth who first broke the humans' shackles to set them free. The Naga Council of old, after all, would never have enslaved their humanoid servants.

Even as they struggled against the nagas, the drakon sought to replace them as slavers of the humans. Assassins were sent against Huamec, the human slave who dared to lead his people to freedom, but they fell at his hand. Locked as they were in the death throes of naga might, the drakon could spare no further attempts against the refugees.

And so the Zimalan Empire was no more, destroyed by its own desperation and insolence. The nagas that survived the Wrath of Serpents withdrew from the politics of the world and hid away in dark places, coiled in hate. Only the teotl-nagas, though few in number, remained seekers of peace. They laired in the tombs of their ancient civilization, lived the virtues of Cynhuara, and guarded the secrets of their once-mighty empire.

The Homecoming

While the Xulmecs sought to establish their own civilization bereft of naga rule, the former servants of the Khonsurian Empire had migrated north into the vast, unspoiled lands whence they had first emerged before sphinx rule. The remnants of long-vanished draconic realms riddled the lands that they settled into. Each race found its own path, contending whenever another's presence threatened.

As the elves wandered, they sensed the familiar presence of Ireth, goddess of verdure and wizardry. Following her voice they settled once again in the forests of Ahna-Vithyre, for there it was that elves had first awakened in

Áereth. In the Foresthome, Ireth taught them the deepest secrets of magic and forestry. This tutelage came to the elves as memories long buried, for their time among the sphinxes had suppressed their origins. When they returned to the woods, they met again their wild kin in the deepest groves and their sea-dwelling cousins in Ahna-Vithyre's coast.

Guided by the rhythmic intonations of Daenthar, the earth god of industry, the dwarves climbed back into the mountains. With his mentoring, they resumed their ages-old love of mining and crafting amidst their native stone, and steadily the dwarven kingdoms forged strong alliances with one another. The mightiest of these nations was the mountain kingdom of Amonzadd, whose great stone windows looked down upon the vast forests of Ahna-Vithyre.

The savage tribes of humans dispersed among the Northlands, trading eagerly with their neighbors but never making enduring allegiances among their kind as did the dwarves, nor did they settle in large numbers like the elves. Without exception, no race ever exhibited as much diversity in culture as humans. They were vast in number but largely divided, and so their inherent desire for expansion could not include the holdings of the stronger races.

The gnomes had no homeland to return to, for their gem-laden hills in the far northeast had been largely depleted of their mineral wealth and the lands were rife with goblinoids. Never a people to despair of the past, the gnomes settled wherever commerce was good, serving as mediators and tradesmen between towns, cities, nations, and races. Poderon, the earth god of levity, became their patron, and gave them the optimistic worldview that gnomes still enjoy.

The last of the servitor races to leave the Lostlands—and the only to regularly return—were the halflings. Despairing at the malignance their homeland had become, the music of Olidyra, the goddess of travel and exploration, called to them and instilled in them a love for the open road. Gypsies and vagabonds all, the halflings chose a life of constant wandering and could be found in all realms. Traditionally, halflings returned each year to Gadjarria, where they weep at their loss and sing of their freedom.

Explorers of all races began the long journey across the Empyrean Ocean and rediscovered the humans of the Southlands that they had once met when the sphinx and naga empires had been allies centuries before. Culturally, the Xulmecs were considered primitive and the coastlines were riddled with dangerous creatures. The threat of drakon and lizardfolk lurked deeper within the jungles, and few explorers would approach the remote Island of Obsidian, Zimala.

Powerful with magic and crafts reminiscent of the old naga and sphinx empires, the elves and dwarves exerted their influence across the lands. The greatest human wizards apprenticed themselves to the elves of Ahna-Vithyre to refine their art. Master blacksmiths of the human lands studied in the hold of Amonzadd. Gnomes and halflings, for their part, wound their way as peaceably as possible through all racial societies. Whenever the ambitious humans pushed their borders too far, they were swiftly reminded with overwhelming force that their dominions existed only at the behest of elven and dwarven mercy. Goblinoids occasionally emerged from the plains, hills, and mountains, but the concerted effort of local territories inevitably drove them back.

With this influx of magic and artistry, the elves and dwarves grew haughty over the years and made enemies of jealous races—and even each other. Humans continued to study at the foot of their trees and mountains and some sought ways to steal their arts for themselves. Nations began to war with one another even as they fought off the ever-persistent hordes of goblinkind.

The War of Divine Right

Far from civilized lands, a young storm giant named Aeshotal grew restless from the turbulence of Áereth and its bloody conflicts. He set off on a pilgrimage around the Known Realms. Giantkind in its many, scattered tribes had dwelt outside of the march of history, and the troubled Aeshotal sought a place for his people. The storm giant's quest led him to the monasteries and libraries of many kingdoms, yet always his search found no answers.

At last, in the deepest catacombs of a mired temple in the Great Swamp, Aeshotal heard a disembodied voice address him from the shadows. The voice told him to find the Cave of Truth in the Frosteye Mountains, a place labeled on no map nor named in any tome. With nowhere else to turn, Aeshotal journeyed to the Cave and found a great door guarded by a curious sentinel. The strange human tried to convince the giant to turn away, explaining that only death and the ruin of Áereth lay beyond.

In his mind, the mysterious voice whispered to Aeshotal that the smaller races were hiding the truth from his kind, and that the destiny of giantkind lay within. Conflicted and angry, Aeshotal struck at the man with lightning, only to find the energy passing harmlessly through him. When he struck at him with his greatsword, he found that this, too, could not pierce him. Aeshotal simply stepped through the ghostly man, wrenched open the door, and entered the darkness beyond.

Within he found a network of chambers with ancient lore etched into stone walls in thousands of glyphs, bas-

reliefs, and even sculptures. He spent years meditating here, attempting to decipher the glyphs, aided only by his patience—and the mysterious voice. At last he found the answer to his quest: the knowledge that giants, formerly the titans, had been created by the gods *before* the smaller races, and had in fact come before the Dragon Kings themselves. With this knowledge came the conviction that giants were *meant* to reign over all others. Cold, logical madness gave Aeshotal the answer he'd long sought. If the giants united now, as their godless ancestors had failed to upon their creation, they could bring order to the world and rule as they were divinely decreed.

Aeshotal left the chamber and began his campaign to unite the giant tribes. He spoke of prophecies and the divine mandate that giants were sovereign to the smaller races. Highly charismatic and growing in power as he went, Aeshotal was seen as a visionary and messiah, and most giants were easily seduced into joining his dream of righteous conquest. In the frigid reaches of the Northern Wastes, he won over the frost giant jarls. In the fiery mountains of the east and west, he found support with the fire giant kings. The primitive hill giants from the Valley of Xyr Muthal and stone giants from around the Northlands flocked to his banner, though some cloud and storm giants were not as easily swayed. After more than fifty years, he'd established an insurmountable force at his disposal in all corners of the Northlands, the vast majority of giantkind poised at his command.

United as never before—and never since—the giants of the Known Realms laid siege upon the humanoid kingdoms in the War of Divine Right. On many fronts and in terrains advantageous to the giants, they laid low city after city, destroying those who refused to surrender to their authority. For the first time since their service in the Khonsurian Empire, the elves, dwarves, and humans banded together against the collective might of the giants—against which they steadily lost ground. Even gnomes and halflings joined their fellows and fought against the giants with guerilla-style warfare, excelling as they always had against large opponents.

During these years, each side searched for every advantage as battles took place in every part of the civilized world. While the humanoid races struggled to unite, the giants persuaded other monstrous and giantish creatures to join in their war. Ogres and ettins swelled their armies against the elven realms, while trolls and gargoyles emerged from the mountains to assail the dwarf holds. Kapoacinths and scrags joined the storm giants against the sea elves and coast-dwelling humans. Cloud giants threw their magic against the nations' capitals. Chief among Aeshotal's supporters were the sinister and wealthy Stormbringer family of storm giants and the Stone Wings, an extensive clan of fiendish gargoyles summoned from the hellish Outer Planes.

As the Northlands were steadily subdued by his persistence, Aeshotal sent storm and fire giants across the sea to conquer the humans of Southlands, whom he regarded as impotent primitives. Even united against the onslaught, the Xulmecs were unprepared for the attack and lost many lives. They called upon Madrah and their god-kings to save them. When death seemed inevitable, it was Huamec, the first Xulmec god-king, who answered. He instructed his priests to build an icon in his image carved in pure obsidian. Constructed of immense size, Huamec possessed the idol and led a counter-attack against the giants. The giants in the Southlands were soundly defeated, but Huamec himself was slain in the endeavor and the monolithic idol itself was cast down.

In the Northlands, the humans of the Abylosian Empire, in an attempt to halt the advance of giants east and south, enlarged a river valley into a gorge of titanic proportions with the concerted efforts of druids, wizards, and countless slaves. Becoming a permanent scar in the land, the barrier worked only too well, funneling the full strength of the giants back toward the elven Foresthome and surrounding lands. The frontiers of civilization were either smashed flat or conquered by the giants, their people enslaved.

Against Aeshotal's hordes, the crafts of the dwarves and the arcana of the elves were sorely tested. Working together now efficiently, the greatest dwarven artisans and elven wizards crafted golems of stone and iron to counter the strength of the giants, while elven sorcerers bargained with genies for elemental conjurations to use against them. These efforts slowed the giants but could never push them back.

The War of Divine Right raged on, with the smaller races continuing to lose ground each year. Aeshotal and his greatest forces eventually surrounded Ahna-Vithyre and Amonzadd in the land of Lirea, enclosing the power bases of both elf and dwarf civilizations within his grip. Once the defenders' lines broke, the giants would swarm into their capitals and lay claim to all of Áereth. The elders of the elves and dwarves formed the Eldritch Coalition, an alliance comprised of archmages, high priests, and generals of both peoples. They came together in desperation, ready to discuss new strategies, contingencies—or even surrender to Aeshotal.

At this time, a cloud giantess named Jathra fought her way through the elf and dwarf fortifications, subduing but not killing every guard who dared to arrest her infiltration. When the slender, white-skinned giant broke into the council chamber of the Eldritch Coalition, the elves and dwarves thought they had come to their end at last and prepared to fight. Instead, Jathra bowed and intro-

duced herself to them, speaking words of peace and pacifism. She had not been sent by Aeshotal, she explained, but represented a faction of giants who opposed the war.

Desperate, the Eldritch Coalition listened to the giant, but some among them doubted her intentions, so full of hate for giants that they were blind to her offers. Jathra presented to them a cache of scrolls she'd recovered from the fabled Vault of the Dragon Kings, relics that harbored magics that she believed could end the war peacefully.

The scrolls contained the arcana needed to construct the Pillars of Expulsion, artifacts that could exert powerful enchantments that could forcefully compel the giants to leave the region and scatter their armies. Originally conceived by the Dragon Kings to mercifully defeat Sunscratch and his followers, the project had been abandoned in favor of the Pool of Dreams. The Pillars had therefore never been created, but the lore to build them lay now in the hands of the Eldritch Coalition. It was Jathra's belief that the giants were never meant to rule; they were meant to dwell in remote places and offer guidance to the smaller races who sought them out. The scrolls offered the means to bring peace to the land again.

The construction of the Pillars—adamantine obelisks carved with complex runes and woven with many spells—would represent the ultimate achievement of the artifice of elves and dwarves. The elves of Parhokk, a city famous for its enchanters, were called upon to imbue the Pillars with the compulsion magic that was their core.

When the obelisks were complete, Jathra explained that the placement of the Pillars of Expulsion was vital, and that they would have to be arranged in a great ring around the land outside the giant encampments. She spoke of sacrifice and honor, and such virtues struck a painful cord within the hearts of the long-lived people of Ahna-Vithyre and Amonzadd.

Once they were built, the greatest elven and dwarven champions carried the obelisks, at great risk, through the enemy lines. Though most of these heroes fell at giant hands, the Pillars were placed without exception in a great ring around the land of Lirea, fully encircling the giant forces. When the time was right, the Eldritch Coalition called upon their gods and their magic and activated the Pillars of Expulsion as Jathra had instructed.

Had the Coalition worked in concert, the plan might have succeeded. But doubt gnawed at the hearts of some, who feared that Jathra was as evil as the rest of her kin and was deceiving them. Some tales say that the surreptitious hand of Zhühn was at work within them, corrupting them as he may have Ankharet the Blessed, Aeshotal, and countless other across the ages. These elf and dwarf dissenters dared to believe that they could alter the magic of the Pillars, to transform their compulsion magic into energies deadly to the giants. They channeled their magic and their hate into the whole, and the Pillars of Expulsion came to life.

Thus polluted, it was not enchantment magic that flared from the obelisks, but another power altogether that rent

apart the elements around them. The fabric of the Material Plane was torn asunder in the immediate vicinity of each obelisk, turning into a churning mass of deadly elements. Much was drawn back into the elemental planes even as portals to the same planes were opened nearby. Fire, lightning, cyclones, and great torrents of water poured through. Tremors shook all the land within the circle of Pillars, and great caverns beneath the earth collapsed.

As a result of this cataclysm, the land known as Lirea slowly sank into the sea as portals to the Elemental Plane of Water spilled onto the landmass. Ocean waters from the Empyrean Ocean flooded inland, spilling over the Foresthome of the elves and the dwarven hold of Amonzadd. The devastation was vast and thorough. Giants, elves, and dwarves—along with numerous other creatures in the crossfire—were swallowed up.

The land sank too fast to save the nations but slowly enough to horrify those looking on from outside the deadly ring. In the end, Aeshotal and the giants had been defeated, but at a cost greater than anyone ever imagined. What once crowned the land in magic and majesty now dwelt at the bottom of a vast bay that would later be named the Lirean Sea. Ruins of the elves' and dwarves' former glory were held now in the dominion of the world's oceans and its denizens.

In time, the elemental portals were closed, and the wild storms were tamed by druids and clerics. Those elves and dwarves that survived the cataclysm were those who'd settled in outlying forests and mountains beyond Lirea. Though many humans had lost their lives in the devastation, there were countless more scattered throughout the land, greater in number than any other. The remaining elves and dwarves could not recover their former might, nor repopulate their own kind as swiftly as humans. Gnomes and halflings, like humans, could be found in all countries and never built their own kingdoms. Sea elves, who once dwelt along the coasts of Ahna-Vithyre, now swam the newly formed Lirean Sea and kept a vigil over the ruin of their homeland, to protect its secrets from treasure hunters.

With the sudden end of the giant-led war and the fall of Lirea, the thinking races of the Known Realms knew that an era had ended. Seasons passed differently now, distant threats seemed more ominous. Great magics had been wrought and cast down upon the mortal world, and devastation could come swiftly. The dwarves and elves formed solid treaties in honor of the Eldritch Coalition, living tributes to their fallen heroes and sovereigns. In the aftermath of the War of Divine Right, it was clear to all who was left standing stronger than all others.

The era of humans had begun.

Chapter 2
Deities, Demigods, and Infernal Powers

The races of Áereth pay homage to many powers, beliefs, and divinities. Though the gods themselves are many, only some—arguably the most well known—are described here. The names given are merely the most common. Almost every god has at least a dozen names—some have many more or none at all—which stem from the languages and cultures that revere them.

GMs should feel free to alter the pantheons to suit the needs and themes of their campaigns. Whereas an epic story set in the Southlands might make frequent use of the Xulmec demigods, another campaign set in the Lostlands may never make mention of those endemic gods across the ocean. GMs are certainly invited to include new pantheons of their own or those borrowed from other mythos. This chapter assumes that the Sancturn Pantheon—many of whose members have been gathered from the DCCs—is the primary spiritual authority in the world of Áereth.

Other pantheons could be assigned to other Material Plane worlds, but still count followers from among the people of Áereth. Conversely, the gods of various pantheons could share dominion over this world. Finally, pantheons may be intermingled with the Sancturns, or the names used by the gods can vary to accommodate all gods in one. Variag, for example, may also be the same as the Norse god Ymir. Odin may be another name by which Choranus is known, and Tyr may be the same as Gorhan or Thormyr.

The Triad and the Greater Gods

According to a consensus of belief, above all divinities is the Triad, the eldest of the Greater Gods whose mighty works begat the world. They are Choranus the Seer Father, his consort Ildavir the Giver of Form, and his brother Centivus the Shaper. The children of Choranus and Ildavir are Ireth, Daenthar, Poderon, and Olidyra. At least five other gods of great power were invited to have a hand in the world's creation. These were Amun Tor, Auzarr, Madrah, Ahriman, and Ormazd, beings of unknown origin.

The arrival and subsequent creations of these beings were an offense to Zhühn, the Dweller in the Void, a creature of such power that he would later be worshipped as a Greater God himself by the nihilistic and the mad. Knowing only nonexistence and timelessness, Zhühn is the antithesis of creation itself.

The Sancturn Pantheon

Áereth has been the battleground for the lofty ideals of the gods since its first dawn. Before the doctrines of Good and Evil began their eternal struggle, the ethics of Law and Chaos sought to dominate the course of the world. Eventually recognizing the need for a balance of the two—and the need for choice—the Triad withdrew its overwhelming influence from the world, and today seldom intercedes in Áereth directly.

Instead it is the Lesser Gods of the Sancturn Pantheon who hold the greatest sway in everyday life. Refugees from their own long-vanished cosmos, the Sancturns now give the mortals of Áereth the capacity to shape their own world. Once led by Ôæ, these gods now answer only to the Triad. Given power over the provinces of Áereth, the Sancturns keep at bay those mortals whose ambitions would threaten to unseat the cosmic order—and indeed, disorder—of the multiverse itself.

Demigods

Though the Greater Gods remain as they are, the powers of the Lesser Gods can wax and wane. As well, some deities have taken mortal creatures as consorts and from such unions demigods have been formed. Other, less understood means exist to create new divinities.

One such source is the lifeblood of the gods themselves. When Áereth was still young, Zhühn sought to sabotage its existence by attacking those who gave it life. The

Great Enemy, in his naïveté, dealt a grievous blow to the body of Ildavir, the Giver of Form. From the wound sprang the goddess Elyr, fully formed. In her wake, Ildavir's injury was healed, and Zhühn had gained a serious new enemy.

Seeing that his aggression only resulted in the bane of new life, Zhühn learned that divine flesh was both malleable and enduring. When the ocean goddess Pelagia gave birth to a son aeons later, the Great Enemy seized the child and wrenched his body in two. Unable to perish so easily, the sundered halves of the newborn god still shriveled under Zhühn's touch and became the twin demigods of Narrimunâth and Nimlurun. Legends tell of other occasions where divine interference has created new divinities, intentionally or otherwise.

Though the slaying of a god is difficult, at best, many have been altogether forgotten or shunned. Meelkor, once the god of humility, was accused of complicity in unforgivable divine crimes by Zhühn centuries ago and was forcefully driven from the cosmos. Sothulth, a demigod of paranoia, represents another such exiled divinity, though he has attempted to return to mortal memory.

Outer Gods

Referred to collectively as the Outer Gods, these blasphemous beings are believed to exist outside of the known planes. Worshipped on Áereth only by the most aberrant creatures, the insane, or the misguided, they are abominations among gods. Zhühn himself is sometimes affiliated with the Outer Gods insofar that he may have had a hand in their making—or he may be one of them who broke away, a pariah among corruptive gods.

Infernal Powers

Devils and demons do not fit neatly into the scheme of mortals and gods. Ancient beings of evil power, some may have been wrought from the detritus of failed worlds when the Triad first began creation. Others may be older still, creatures possessed of law, chaos, and evil long before such words had meaning. Or perhaps they're merely the manifestations of the cumulative sins of free-thinking beings. Whatever their origins, the fiends prey upon mortal souls of the Material Plane, finding sustenance from their misery, despair, and every choice sin. They only bring death upon a mortal when doing so also siphons his soul, or when they have been denied it altogether.

A mere sampling of ten archdevils and demon princes are described below, though a great deal many more fiendish lords look upon Áereth with voracious, soul-craving appetites.

A Final Note

The gods are not the celestial bodies they care for. Ildavir is not the earth, but she is its caretaker. Shul is not the moon, and Pelagia is not the ocean itself. The gods stand apart from their creations and their charges, yet none knows a sculpture as well as the sculptor, none a child as well as its parent.

The GM is encouraged to use the gods to give flavor to his or her campaign, for the clergies of all gods have agendas of their own, for good and ill. The church of Gorhan could serve as the driving force behind a PC cleric, to help guide her and the adventures she accepts. The evil cults of the Hidden Lord could provide a steady stream of antagonists for the PCs. The machinations of the Great Enemy, Zhühn himself, could dwell behind the scenes in a campaign destined to become epic. But GMs should not use any of these too heavy-handedly. Although gods influence the world, they do not themselves move it. That is the job for the heroes.

If the god's alignment in the accompanying table (following page) has a smaller letter in parentheses after it, that means the ethos of the religion often leans in that direction (for example, "g" for Good).

Mictlan

Mictlan is the Underworld of Xulmec belief. Drawing their culture from the provinces of the former Zimalan Empire, the humans of the Xulmec city-states maintain that upon a man's death, his spirit is drawn into Mictlan, the Land of the Dead, a subterranean landscape.

Northland scholars make the obvious comparison between this spiritual realm and the Underdeep itself, but while many similarities between the two exist, fundamental differences abound. Scholars of the arcane and planar lore surmise that Mictlan is simply the name given to that portion of the Ethereal Plane or the Plane of Shadow that overlaps the upper regions of the Underdeep beneath the nations of the Southlands.

The Triad

Name	Align.	Portfolio	Gender	Domains
Centivus	N	Creation, Artistry, Possibility	m	Creation, Knowledge, Protection, Travel
Choranus	LN	Creation, Destiny, Magic	m	Creation, Knowledge, Magic, Protection, Strength, Travel
Ildavir	N	Creation, Life, Nature, Animals	f	Animal, Creation, Earth, Plant, Protection

Greater Gods

Ahriman	CE	Death, Disease,Darkness, Suffering	m	Chaos, Death, Destruction, Evil
Amun Tor	N	Mysteries, Riddles	m	Air, Fire, Knowledge, Magic, Weather
Auzarr	N	The Transitive Planes, Teleportation, Psionics	f	Knowledge, Magic, Travel
Daenthar	LG	Earth, Industry, Vows, Trust	m	Earth, Good, Law, Protection
Ireth	CG	Astronomy, Forestry, Wizardry	f	Air, Animal, Earth, Good, Knowledge, Magic
Madrah	N	Earth, Sky	m	Air, Earth, Magic, Travel, Weather
Olidyra	N(g)	Travel, Exploration, Adventure	f	Luck, Plant, Trickery, Travel
Ormazd	LG	Creation,the Sun, Prophecy	m	Creation, Good, Law, Sun
Poderon	NG	Earth, Commerce, Festivity	m	Animal, Earth, Good, Trickery
Zhühn	CE	Deception, Corruption, Falsehood	m	Destruction, Evil, Magic, Trickery

Lesser Gods

Delvyr	NG	Knowledge, Learning, Light	m	Glory, Good, Knowledge, Sun
Denithae	N	Agriculture, Harvest	f	Earth, Plant, Protection
Elyr	CG	Healing, Life, Succor	f	Good, Healing, Liberation, Luck
Fenwar	N	Fire, Lightning, the Hearth	m	Air, Fire, Sun
Gil'Mâridth	CE	Nightmares, Fear, Night Terrors	f	Dream, Evil, Trickery
Gorhan	LG	Valor, War, Chivalry	m	Good, Healing, Strength, War
Hidden Lord	CE	Secrets, Misdirection, Forbidden Lore, Shadows	m	Darkness, Evil, Knowledge, Trickery
Justicia	LG	Justice, Mercy, Defense	f	Good, Healing, Law, Protection
Klazath	LE	War, Subjugation	m	Destruction, Evil, Law, Strength
Lasheeva	NE	Undeath, Murder, Affliction	f	Death, Destruction, Evil
Myna	CN	Chance, Circumstance, Fortune	f	Chaos, Luck, Trickery
Neshti	CG	Thievery, Trickery, Vigilantism	f	Chaos, Good, Luck, Trickery
Ôæ	NG	Dreams, Imagination, Storytelling	m	Dream, Good, Protection
Pelagia	N	Oceans, Seas, Music, Travel	f	Protection, Travel, Water
Rathul	CN	Lies, Dissimilation	m	Chaos, Knowledge, Trickery
Shul	LN	The Moon, Measurement, Tradition, Literacy	m	Air, Knowledge, Law
Soleth	LN	Peaceful Death, Solitude	m	Healing, Law, Protection, Repose
Tororthun	N/CE	Subterrane, Denizens of the Underdeep / Malice, Spiders	f	Drow*, Earth, Poison*, Spider* / Drow*, Evil, Poison*, Spider*
Ulesh	LG	Peace, Pacifism	m	Good, Knowledge, Law, Protection
Valdreth	LN	Time, Longevity, Integrity	m	Law, Magic, Protection
Variag	N	Ice, Winter, War	m	Air, Strength, War, Water
Wyshalar	CN	Survival, Vitality	f	Protection, Travel, Trickery
Xeluth	NE	Violence, War, Strife	m	Destruction, Evil, Strength, War
Yvyn	NE	Conspiracy, Holy War, Rebellion	f	Evil, Trickery, War

Demigods

Ahpuchac	N	Maras, the Underworld	m	Earth, Protection, Repose
Anahuara	NG	Amoya, the Moons	f	Good, Healing, Magic, Repose
Ankharet	NE	Khonsuria, Sphinxes	f	Destruction, Evil, Knowledge, Trickery
Aristemis	NG	Strategy, Diplomacy	f	Good, Knowledge, War
Axaluatl	LE	Zimala, Nagas, Reptiles	m	Evil, Death, Law
Bargúl	LE	Death, Undead, Drow	f	Death, Drow*, Law, Undead*
Bobugbubilz	CE	Evil Amphibians	m	Chaos, Evil, Water
Cadixtat	CE	Chaos	m	Chaos, Destruction
Calchoti	CG	Kaatlan, Rain, Charity	f	Good, Healing, Plant, Water
Chondri	NG	Marine Life, Aggression	m	Good, Strength, Water
Coatlimict	NE	Kaatlan, War, Carnage, Undeath	m	Death, Evil, War
Cynhuara	LG	Zimala, Nagas, Reptiles	f	Good, Healing, Magic
Elas	NE	Marine Life, Ambush	f	Evil, Trickery, Water
Gadraak	CE	Territorialism, Violence	m	Chaos, Evil, Strength, War
Huamext	NG	Xulmec, Protection	m	Earth, Good, Protection
Ilhuicatl	NG	Athua, the Sea	m	Good, Protection, Travel, Water
Ilquot	CN	Cold Waters, Marine Predators, Retribution	m	Protection, War, Water
Kagnar	CE	Savagery, Animality	m	Destruction, Evil, Strength
Lagos	CE	Antagonism, Reptiles, Savagery	m	Chaos, Destruction, Evil, Strength
Malotoch	CE	Scavengers, Ruin, Cannibalism	f	Air, Chaos, Death, Evil
Molgrem	LE	Militarism, War	m	Evil, Destruction, Law, War
Narrimunâth	LE	Disease, Vermin	m	Death, Destruction, Evil
Nimlurun	CE	Filth, Pollution	m	Death, Destruction, Evil
Septych	LE	Avarice, Tyranny	m	Evil, Law, Trickery (current)
Sothulth	CN(e)	Paranoia, Insanity	m	Chaos, Destruction, Knowledge, Trickery
Teleus	LG	Law	m	Good, Law, War
Thalass	N	Terrestrial Waters, Music	m	Animal, Protection, Water
Tlachinozal	LE	Chuzec, Fire	m	Earth, Evil, Fire
Thormyr	LN(g)	Honor, Duty, Protection	m	Healing, Law, Protection, Strength
Traitor	CE	Betrayal, Chaos, Madness	m	Chaos, Healing, Madness, Trickery
Urath	CE	Terror, Voracity	m	Chaos, Destruction, Evil

Infernal Powers

Lords of Hell

Amzolol	LE	Deception	m
Bei'thor	LE	Cruelty, Sadism	m
Jezuel	LE	Pain, Torture, Indignity	f
Nethruel	LE	Obsession, Addiction	m
Sestyruas	LE	Envy, Covetousness	m

Lords of the Abyss

Azi Dahaka	CE	Storms, Waste	m
Izmaledt	CE	Obscenity, Malformation	m
Obitu-que	CE	Domination, Prepotency	m
Qäyaqiq	CE	Curiosity, Desperation, Suicide	?
Tzitzimitl	CE	Destruction, Ruin	f

** Domains introduced in The Complete Guide to Drow from Goodman Games.*

The Powers

Ahpuchac (the Black Jaguar)

Demigod, N — The Underworld, Maras

Ahpuchac (*oh*-pu-chak), the Black Jaguar, is the patron god of the Xulmec city-state of Maras and the guardian of Mictlan, the Underworld. He is the bringer of balance, ushering good and evil into death and the afterlife that awaits. It is believed by the people of Xulmec that one's destination is determined as much by the journey through the Underworld as by the life one led. Ahpuchac prowls Mictlan to ensure all are given a fair chance on this momentous quest.

Once the tribal chieftain of Maras and the founder of its city-state, Ahpuchac gained the mantle of godhood when he was lured into the depths by a spiritual jaguar sent by Madrah, the Lord of the Earth and Sky. Fulfilling a spiritual need for the Xulmec people, the Black Jaguar now oversees mortality itself, guarding the Underworld from the sabotage of other divinities.

The domains associated with Ahpuchac are Earth, Protection, and Repose. His favored weapon is the razor glove, and his symbol is the depiction of himself in perfect profile.

Ahriman (the Deathbringer)

Greater god, CE —Death, Disease, Darkness, Suffering

Ahriman, the Fiendish Spirit, the Deathbringer, is the ancient god of darkness and destruction, suffering, and disease—and some believe, one of the authors of evil itself. Like Ormazd, his radiant twin, Ahriman is believed to have spawned from an obscure, if powerful, neutral deity named Zurvan. Ahriman merely watched as the Triad and the other deific powers coalesced the world, studying its creation so he could learn how to destroy it again and remake it in his own nightmarish image.

The Fiendish Spirit has given rise to many infernal beings and darkened the hearts of many mortals. During the Reign of Dragons, he sowed the desire for destruction among the mightiest of dragons to bring about their own civil war. When Ahriman's worship was at its most profound, the desert-dwelling people of Abylos named him Angra Mainyu, the Deathbringer. Although the faith of the Fiendish Spirit has waned, his few remaining followers wait patiently for signs of his return. They cling to the prophesied age when Angra Mainyu slays his twin, the god Ormazd, Lord of Wisdom.

Ahriman is the only god willing to treat with Zhühn openly, forging the occasional alliance with the Great Enemy for their mutual benefit—although both mighty gods know that should their schemes of destruction break apart the world, they will vie for dominance. While Zhühn seeks the annihilation of existence itself, Ahriman seeks destruction for its own sake, intending to rebuild again under his administration.

When Ahriman is depicted in religious art, he takes the form of a giant-sized demon with a pair of massive black horns and wielding an oversized kukri. The Fiendish Spirit and his hateful clerics weave hidden alliances among many evil factions, sewing destruction from the darkness and hiding from the followers of Ormazd until Ahriman's return, when he will raze the mortal world undisguised.

The domains associated with Ahriman are Chaos, Death, Destruction, and Evil. His favored weapon is the kukri, and his symbol is a demonic visage with two black horns.

Amun Tor (the Father of Riddles)

Greater god, N —Mystery, Riddles

Amun Tor (*ah*-mun-TOR), the Lord of Mystery, the Father of Riddles, is a mysteriarch among gods, the deity of knowledge, the known and unknown. He is the god once charged by the Triad to oversee the realms now known as the Lostlands. It was Amun Tor who first led the sphinxes to the majesty that was the Khonsurian Empire, and it was Amun Tor who warned his daughter, the immortal Queen Ankharet, from the path that led to its ruin. He watches still over the wind, hills, and deserts of the Lostlands, the unseen lord of every city and desolation.

The Father of Riddles has many followers, mostly among the peoples of the Lostlands, but few real priests

devote their lives to his enigmatic dogma. True worship of Amun Tor is a mystery in itself; an acolyte must study the hieroglyphs of his mazelike temples for many years to discover his doctrines. One of Amun Tor's only known tenets is that true power is worth searching for and is therefore hidden in riddles. The greatest of his temples, usually half-buried in the wilds of the Lostlands, are labyrinthine pyramids hiding divine reliquaries and arcane libraries. Adventurers faced with the prospect of infiltrating one of Amun Tor's temples know that exceptional perils and exceptional rewards lie within.

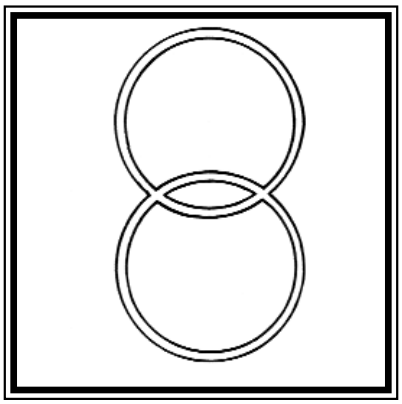
The Lord of Mysteries is depicted differently in each culture of which he is a part. Some see him as a great androsphinx, while others see him as a tall elf gilded like the noble servants of old Khonsuria. Still others represent him only as an eye-shaped glyph.

The domains associated with Amun Tor are Air, Fire, Knowledge, Magic, and Weather. His favored weapon is the quarterstaff. His symbol varies with each culture but often incorporates an image of an eye.

Amzolol

Archdevil, LE —Deception

Amzolol (*ahm*-zoe-lol), the Lord of Deceit, is a cunning archdevil who adheres strictly to the lawful nature of his infernal kind but weaves loopholes into the promises he makes. Mortals who wish to deceive their enemies beseech Amzolol for the guile to swindle, outwit, or frame their enemies, little realizing that the deepest deception and greatest loss is their own. The Lord of Deceit suspends his trickery for his most promising mortal thralls that they might grow in worldly power to carry out Amzolol's will—though the artful promises of the Lord of Deceit are sure to snare them in the end. Most of his human agents are clerics, roguish bureaucrats, and politicians.



Anahuara (the Blessing of Night)

Demigod, NG — Amoya, the Moons

Anahuara (*on*-uh-woh-ra), the Blessing of Night, the Lady Eidolon, the Lucent Guardian, is the patroness of the Xulmec city-state of Amoya and the divine keeper of the Southland moons. To the Xulmec people, where the sun grants the world life only from afar, the moons grant greater vitality the closer they are to the earth. While the Spectral Moon measures time and bestows magic and spiritual balance upon the land, the White Moon keeps the world in physical equilibrium. Anahuara is the guardian of both.

Once the chieftain-founder of the city-state of Amoya, Anahuara now watches over it as a sentinel of life and death and the magic of the Spectral Moon. She is afforded her lunar power by Shul, the Watcher in the Sky, but affinity for the violet-hued Southland moon is hers alone. Anahuara is depicted as she was in life, a tall woman with very long, unbound hair. The mantle of her godhood is represented in the suit of bone armor she wears, and in her hands she carries a mace that glows with the violet light of the Spectral Moon. She is often shown with a nimbus of the moon behind her. Silver, called the Tears of Anahuara, is a holy material to her faithful and is never used as simple currency among the Amoyas. As the moons wax and wane, priests of Anahuara interpret her will for the lay followers. As with most Amoyas, the followers of Anahuara revere death as much as life itself, seeing both as coterminous states of existence. In the dogma of the Lucent Guardian, undeath has its appropriate time and place. More often than not, the undead are considered subversions of the natural order, but there are times when the animated dead are sanctioned by Anahuara.

The domains associated with Anahuara are Good, Healing, Magic, and Repose. Her favored weapon is the light mace, whose head clerics typically coat with alchemical silver. The symbol of Anahuara is formed of both moons in varying positions, usually one half-eclipsed by the other.

Ankharet (the Cursed)

Demigod, NE —Khonsuria, Sphinxes

Ankharet (*on*-kar-ret), the Cursed, the Sphinx Queen, was the demigoddess who once ruled the Khonsurian Empire millennia ago. Once known as Ankharet the Blessed, she was fathered by Amun Tor himself and set upon the throne of the glorious sphinx empire. She ruled for countless years and brought prosperity to her kind, ensuring the Reign of Cats as one of the greatest ages of Áereth's long history.

Yet Ankharet brought her own empire into ruin when she succumbed to corruption and evil. The civil war that came of her crimes resulted in the death of half her kind and drove the survivors into a mysterious exodus. The Sphinx Queen herself was defeated and imprisoned in a massive tomb in the Barren Hills, where she slumbers still under the watch of the androsphinx prophet Khubsheth, and Ankharet's own daughter, Meraph the Golden. According to prophecy, Ankharet will sleep until those destined to slay her arrive—or until the champions of her faith free her to reign again. Within the tomb, Ankharet's power is greatly diminished, but should she escape its mystic confines, she will return to her full glory.

Few sphinxes remain in the Known Realms, and fewer still revere the goddess who brought destruction to their ancient empire. Yet even the sinister dreams of the sleeping Sphinx Queen have inspired humanoid cults devoted to returning her to power. None suspect that the great statue near Prophet's Leap, the mysterious stone sphinx, now hides the Queen's physical body. But it is only a matter of time before her followers find her.

Clerics of Ankharet gather in Lostlands ruins, consorting with evil creatures such as lamia and chimeras. These cultists venerate sphinxes above all, but the magical beasts seldom treat with them, devouring them more often than not. On rare occasions, hieracosphinxes allow themselves to be bribed by these humanoid minions of their ancient queen, perhaps in the tiny hope of seeing their empire reborn one day. Ankharet herself is depicted as a gynosphinx of transcendent beauty, mighty in stature and graceful of body.

The domains associated with Ankharet are Destruction, Evil, Knowledge, and Trickery. Her favored weapon is the razor glove and her symbol is a fair feminine face, adorned with a Khonsurian headdress and a black crown. Often this symbol is paired with an ansate cross.

Aristemis (the Insightful One)

Demigod, NG — Strategy, Diplomacy

Aristemis (uh-*riss*-teh-miss), the Clear Thinker, the Insightful One, the Arrow of Vision, is the demipower of strategy and intelligent combat. She is the patroness of warriors and generals, and sometimes politicians, traders, and even rogues. Alhough Aristemis bears the courage of her lieges, Gorhan and Justicia, she also knows the wisdom of choosing her battles, when to walk away from them, and when to use diplomacy in the place of violence. Generals who redirect their armies in bold maneuvers, engage in daring strategies, or even retreat, call upon Aristemis for her insight. Clerics of the Clear Thinker often serve as war advisors and some multiclass as rangers to serve as military scouts.

Aristemis is portrayed as a woman in robes with piercing eyes, strong features, and short-cropped dark hair. She carries a great bow, but she is seldom shown using it. In religious art, Aristemis is often depicted standing to the right of Gorhan, whispering in his ear.

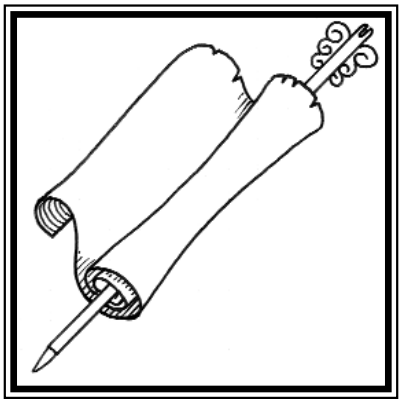
The domains Aristemis is associated with are Good, Knowledge, and War. Her favored weapon is the longbow, and her symbol is an arrow wrapped loosely in a scroll.

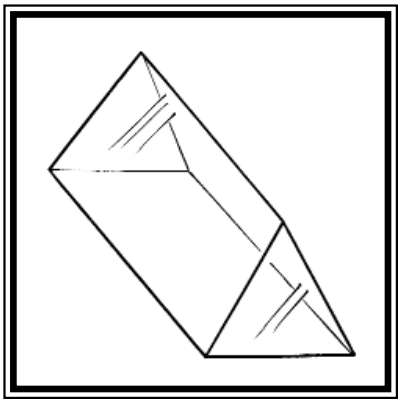
Auzarr (Keeper of the Nexus)

Greater god, N — The Transitive Planes, Teleportation, Psionics

Auzarr (*oh*-zar), Keeper of the Nexus, is the abstruse deity of the Transitive Planes, the conduits between realities, and all supernatural passage. She is the guardian of the fabric of reality and the strands that bind them, maintaining all extra- and nondimensional spaces. Auzarr's mantle of connectivity does not make her church a popular one on Áereth, but even for a Greater God Auzarr is largely apathetic toward mortal worship.

Those who do revere the Keeper of the Nexus understand the need for her work and strive to encourage or limit the magic of spatial relocation. Psionic creatures often pay homage to Auzarr as well, as much of their





power is drawn from astral energies. The Keeper of the Nexus is seldom portrayed in religious art, rendered as a nimbus of radiant energy or a tall, stately woman.

The domains associated with Auzarr are Knowledge, Magic, and Travel. As she has no favored weapon, the few clerics of the Keeper use the unarmed strike in its place. Her symbol is a prism or a silver loom.

Axaluatl (the Shadow Serpent)

Demigod, LE — Zimala, Nagas, Reptiles

Axaluatl (*ah*-shal-*wah*-tuhl), the Shadow Serpent, is the demi-power fathered by Madrah himself to assist his sister Cynhuara with the rulership of the Zimalan Empire. In an effort to usurp control from the Naga Council, the scheming of Axaluatl helped bring about the empire's eventual fall. In the wake of Zimala's war with the sphinxes of Khonsuria, Axaluatl's own disciples turned against him, withdrawing their devotion and slaying his loyal minions until his divinity became impotent.

Alone in the dark for millennia, the Shadow Serpent has slowly garnered support from small cults of lizardfolk, troglodytes, and even dark and spirit nagas still dwelling in the ruins of Zimala. Determined to rise again, Axaluatl seeks to expand his worship to include humans. Rumors have reached followers of the Shadow Serpent that the worship of Cynhuara may draw her back from death, a concern that frightens Axaluatl more than any other. He is determined to stamp out such misguided devotion to his dead sister and slay all remaining guardian nagas. The likeness of Axaluatl remains carved in the ancient temples of Zimala, depicting him as a dark naga of tremendous size. Legends suggest that he exists in physical form somewhere beneath the ruins of Teoyotlan.

The domains associated with Axaluatl are Evil, Death, and Law. His favored weapon, employed by those servants who can grip a weapon, is the garrote. The symbol of the Shadow Serpent is his own body twined around a jeweled sceptre.

Azi Dahaka

Demon prince, CE —Storms, Waste

Azi Dahaka (oz-*ee*-da-*hah*-kah) is a bestial demon spawned by Ahriman himself, one of many evil divinities unleashed upon the world by the Deathbringer to wreak destruction. Considered the spiritual inspiration of the hydra, Azi Dahaka is not a subtle demon prince, caring nothing for deception or cunning. He lives to destroy and suffers mortal thralls only if they promise to carry out schemes that bring ruin and waste to civilization. Long ago, a physical manifestation of Azi Dahaka was imprisoned within an Áerethian desert beneath a dome of enchanted glass. Releasing this multi-headed serpent is only the first step in stirring the bound demon. Like the hydra's head, killing one of Azi Dahaka's physical forms spawns two in its place. Each new body is birthed in the bowels of the Abyss and sets upon one goal: Return to the Material Plane to destroy.

Bargúl (the Sword of Darkness)

Demigod, LE — Death, Undead, Drow

Bargúl (*bar*-gool), the Sword of Darkness, Leader of the Hosts of Thorrin, is the heroine goddess of the drow. When the rebel elves fled from the subjugations of Khonsuria, it was the warrior-maid Bargúl who drove the Kindred Wars to its bloody climax and led her people into the depths of Áereth. Having brought her people so far into the darkness, Bargúl at last found salvation when she heard the call of Tororthun, the estranged goddess of the depths.

Upon her death, the Leader of the Hosts was rewarded with divinity as the necromantic swordmaiden of Tororthun's evil aspect, the Spider Queen—Bargúl brings the only semblance of true law to the otherwise selfish society of her people. Serving now as the drow patroness of death and the undead, the Sword of Darkness is only sparingly worshipped but remains a hero to drow throughout the Underdeep for having freed them from the tyranny of the Overworld.

The clergy of Bargúl are militant warrior-priestesses whose strategy in battle involves animating the dead of their fallen that they may fight anew. Despite this practice—or perhaps to explain it—all drow life is sacred to Bargúl. Her faithful are forbidden to slay other drow in cold blood and

must take care even if forced to fight them fairly. This respect for her own kind is often at odds with the Spider Queen's erratic ways, but Bargúl does not relent on her stance.

The domains associated with Bargúl are Death, Drow, Law, and Undead. Her favored weapon is the long or short sword (clerics must choose one), and her symbol is a skeletal soldier, usually depicted with flowing white hair like her own.

Bei'thor (Centurion of Evil)

Archdevil, LE — Cruelty, Sadism

Bei'thor (*bay*-ih-tour), an arrogant archdevil styling himself the Centurion of Evil, leads an eternal campaign to corrupt mortals with sins of wanton cruelty. When triumphant armies conquer neighboring lands, it is his influence which leads to needless slaughter, wickedness, and privation. Blackguards of Bei'thor are called the Knights of Darkness, a name as vainglorious as the devil they serve. Bei'thor, once a half-fiend mortal, attained the title of archdevil after centuries of unspeakable deeds. Despite his nefarious reputation, Bei'thor is most famous for his legendary defeat at the hands of Tevron. A powerful hound archon and champion of Justicia, Tevron saved the Northlands with his brilliant stratagems, personally sending Bei'thor in retreat to the depths of Hell.

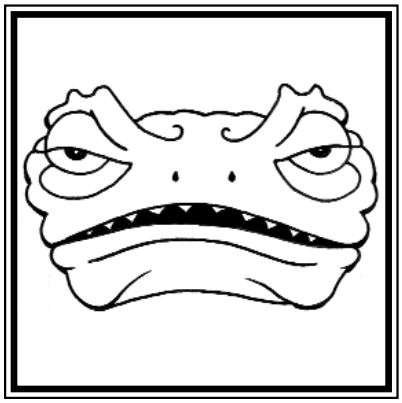
Bobugbubilz (the Toadfiend)

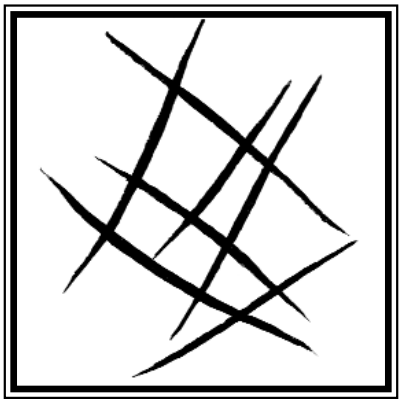
Demigod, CE — Evil Amphibians

Bobugbubilz (bo-*bug*-bub-ilz), the Toadfiend God, is the slimy god of evil amphibians, turbid water and slime, and the mephitis of foul places. A chaotic power of mires and malodorous life, Bobugbubilz is content simply to spread his putrid offspring across the planes and let them multiply and sow discord and misery where they will. The Material Plane is, of course, his favorite realm upon which to inflict his foul progeny. The disgust he and his clergy garner among the fairer races serves only to amuse Bobugbubilz.

The Toadfiend bears no relation to Pelagia, but many of his servants dwell within her oceans and seas. He is served primarily by anomalous members of various amphibious races, including locathahs, scrags, and sahuagin. Human cults spring up now and again in his wake, carrying out deviant rites and spawning new creatures in his name. Appropriately, Bobugbubilz's physical form is believed to be a bloated, toad-like monstrosity of alarming size, his rancid odor preceding his appearance.

The domains associated with Bobugbubilz are Chaos, Evil, and Water. His favored weapon is the whip and his symbol is the leering, malformed head of a toad.





Cadixtat (the Severed Chaos)

Demigod, CE — Chaos

Cadixtat (*kah*-dix-tat), the Sundered Master, the Severed Chaos, was once a deific titan and champion to Zhühn's goals of entropy on Áereth. When Teleus the Obedient severed his hand, his Axe of Unmaking and his great power were lost to him. The balance of Law and Chaos was restored when Teleus was withdrawn from the world, allowing the morals of Good and Evil to contend in their place. Seeing Cadixtat's purpose neutralized, Zhühn butchered the rest of his body and cast it in pieces down upon the world. Thus disarrayed, each part of the once-great titan twisted into a slumbering aberration of near-sentience deep beneath the surface. Over the subsequent ages, cults have coalesced to worship these creatures, laboring with profane magic to awaken them. The consciousness of Cadixtat himself is effectively inactive, dispersed and unknowing, but rumors among some circles of the occult claim that uniting his limbs could resurrect the Sundered Master. What agenda Cadixtat would follow or who he would serve, were he to reform, are a matter of pure speculation.

The domains associated with Cadixtat and his aberrant body parts are Chaos and Destruction, though Zhühn himself likely grants any spells from his worship. The favored weapon of Cadixtat is the battle axe and his symbol is simply a mesh of crisscrossing lines in random directions. Children who scribble are often scolded for accidentally evoking the sign of Cadixtat.

Calchoti (the Rain Queen)

Demigod, CG — Kaatlan, Rain, Charity

Calchoti (*kal*-cho-tee), the Rain Queen, the Virgin Water, is the magnanimous patroness of the Xulmec city-state of Kaatlan. She is the bringer of rainfall and verdant life, playing a vital role for the crops the Xulmec harvest. The Rain Queen is a deity who teaches that life is sacred and not to be wasted; one must offer friendship and charity to one's neighbors and even one's enemies.

Any day of rainfall is a hallowed day to her clerics, and even violent storms are regarded with wonder and fear of her power. The clergy of Calchoti shares an oddly symbiotic relationship with that of Coatlimict the Skull-Father that none outside of either faith can understand. While each god will hold greater sway than the other during any given season, the two never war with one another despite their strongly opposed tenets. Calchoti is depicted in temple carvings as a small woman with rain falling from her body.

The domains associated with the Rain Queen are Good, Healing, Plant, and Water. Her favored weapon is the *atlatl* and her symbol is a pitcher pouring water.

Centivus (the Shaper)

Greater god, N — Creation, Artistry, Possibility, Conjuration, Transmutation

Centivus (*sent*-ih-vus) the Shaper, the Great Artist, is the embodiment of imagination and possibility, a deity of Creation as one of the Triad. Lesser known than Choranus and Ildavir, Centivus is a humble god, caring little for mortal worship. He is the incidental patron of all artists and wizards who study the schools of conjuration and transmutation. Though few worship him directly, many offer prayers to the Great Artist when in need of inspiration. Centivus is less adamant in his opposition of Zhühn, but the Shaper, as the ultimate purveyor of creativity and inventiveness, is still anathema to the Great Enemy.

The domains associated with Centivus are Creation, Knowledge, Protection, and Travel. His favored weapon has changed over the years; lately, it is the light crossbow. The symbol of Centivus varies with each culture in which he is revered.

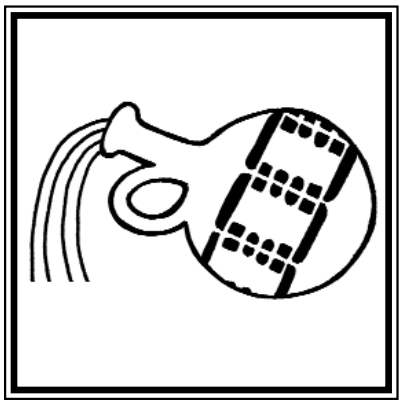
Chondri (the Voracious)

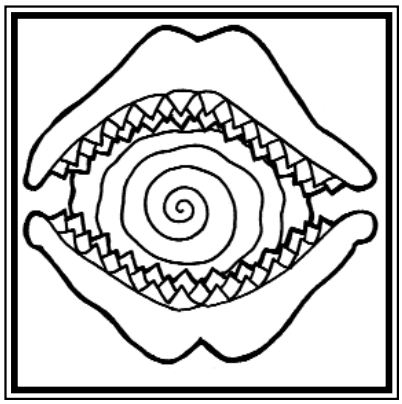
Demigod, NG — Deep-dwelling Marine Life, Aggression

Chondri (*chon*-dree), the Voracious, Seraph of the Deep, the Sea-Angel of Blood, is the twin of Elas as a god of deep waters. Often considered an aspect of Pelagia, he is in fact merely one of many children of the Coral Queen. He is a patron of the natural animals of the deep sea, most often associated with sharks.

Chondri is depicted as a gigantic shark with a flattened, skate-like head and fitted with a terrifying, serrated snout like that of some monstrous sawfish. Though his form strikes horror into the hearts of all who see him, the respectful have nothing to fear of this goodly deity.

The domains associated with Chondri are Good, Strength, and Water. The favored symbol of the Sea-Angel is the trident and his symbol is the open jaws of a shark.





Choranus (the Seer Father)

Greater god, LN — Creation, Destiny, Magic

Choranus (*kor*-uh-niss), the Seer Father, is arguably the most powerful being known to Áereth. Most races and cultures in the Known Realms speak of a god that first created the world, and most point to a power like him. He watches Áereth remotely, concerned with its future perhaps more than its past, delegating present concerns to his children and the lesser gods.

Though his worshippers are few, Chroranus is often invoked by prophets, seers, and wizards for his divine omniscience, and by all those who seek the knowledge that one's own destiny imparts. Followers of Choranus maintain that every spell or psionic power that glimpses the future—be it mere seconds or long years—must meet approval with the Seer Father. He alone, they believe, can perceive the enormity of the future and decides what portents to divulge to the mortal world. In a thousand cultures Choranus is given a thousand names and a thousand representations. As a member of the Triad, he is the consort of Ildavir and the elder brother of Centivus. Choranus is the chief enemy of Zhühn, whose empty Void the Seer Father invaded with his very presence.

The domains associated with Choranus are Creation, Knowledge, Magic, Protection, Strength, and Travel. He has no favored weapon. The symbol of Choranus varies with each culture in which he is revered.

Coatlimict (the Skull-Father)

Demigod, NE — Kaatlan, War, Carnage, Undeath

Coatlimict (ko-*aht*-li-*mikt*), the Serpent-Haired, Skull-Father, Prince of the Summer Harvest, and the Reaper of Men, is the Xulmec god of carnage and undeath. Once a mighty king of Kaatlan, Coatlimict was a favored disciple of Calchoti who turned from the peace and altruism of her faith. The final years of his tyranny ran red with the blood of his enemies. After Coatlimict was slain, his many pacts with the Lords of Hell earned him a tenuous position as a demigod. The god of bloodshed and undeath, the Skull-Father is the patron of warriors, necromancers, and blackguards.

Despite his fall into evil, the clergy of the Skull-Father bears an enigmatic state of peace with the priesthood of the Rain Queen, allowing both faiths to coexist within Kaatlan. Coatlimict is usually depicted as a giant, overly muscled human with a fleshless head and living serpents for hair, wearing a cloak of feathers and bearing his favored weapon. Clerics of the Skull-Father are frightening to behold, as they often wear the flayed skins of their victims and adorn their temples with the animated, severed heads of their enemies mounted upon pikes.

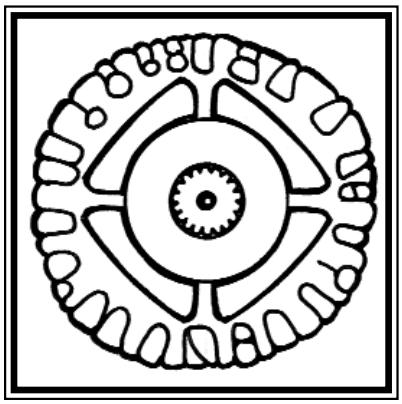
The domains associated with Coatlimict are Death, Evil, and War. His favored weapon is the two-handed *macuahuitl* and his symbol is a stylized skull from which serpents slither like the rays of the sun.

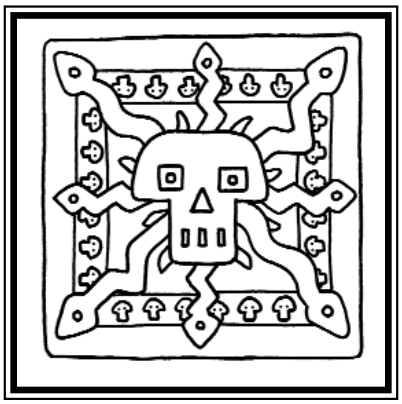
Cynhuara (the Radiant Serpent)

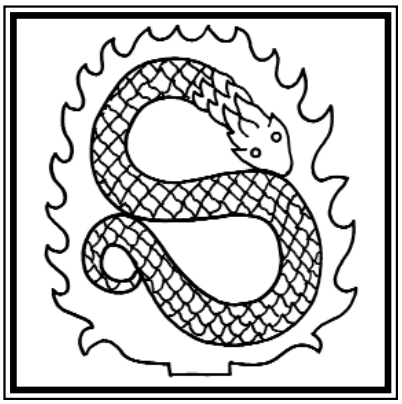
Demigod, LG — Zimala, Nagas, Reptiles

Cynhuara (sin-*wahr*-uh), the Radiant Serpent, was a demi-goddess sired by Madrah to rule the Zimalan Empire. When she came of age, she created the Naga Council, a democratic assembly that gave greater voice to her subjects. With the Radiant Serpent at its head, the Council begat an age of peaceful expansion and magical progress. The peace came to a terrible end when Cyhara's brother, Axaluatl, betrayed her and the Council, bringing war from the Khonsurian Empire that decimated the population. In the attack, Cynhuara herself was slain by Meraph, the half-dragon daughter of Queen Ankharet.

Yet divinity is not so easily extinguished. Cynhuara has lain in the slumber of death for millennia, but the rumor of prophecy has begun to circulate among the guardian nagas who live today and a handful of devoted cults of the Radiant Serpent.







Asserting that the goddess can be returned from death, the disciples of Cynhuara have come to understand that only one person, a young human female, can avail this prophecy: Itlanexca, the adolescent queen of Teotcoatlan. Herself only a young acolyte of the Radiant Serpent, the queen is unaware of her destiny and of the enemies who would see her dead to prevent it.

Clerics who worship the slumbering goddess have their spells granted by Madrah himself—until the goddess's rebirth. The domains associated with the Radiant Serpent are Good, Healing, and Magic. Her favored weapon, for those of her followers who can grasp one, is the flail. Her symbol is a serpent surrounded by a halo of flame.

Daenthar (the Hallowed Forge)

Greater god, LG — Earth, Industry, Vows, Trust

Daenthar (*dane*-thar), the Hallowed Forge, the Mountainlord, is the earth god of industry, blacksmithing, and oaths. He is the patron of miners and all who draw from the rock to shape tools of defense and war. Dwarves were hewn in the image of Daenthar, and it is indeed the Hallowed Forge that most of the Bearded Folk venerate. Yet other races pay their respects to him as well, particularly mountaineers, blacksmiths, and those who work with their hands. The Mountainlord, a stern god of unwavering law, is well known for his promised word; when an oath is made by him or his clerics, one can be assured the oath will be fulfilled. Though seldom are curses made in his name, vows of love, justice, and revenge are common.

Daenthar is one of the Greater Gods, and the most serious-minded of his siblings. He is an earth god like Poderon, but he is dour by comparison, lacking the levity of his younger brother. Gaining the friendship of Daenthar is a promise of security, for the Mountainlord defends his own. Daenthar is widely acknowledged but his clergy is small; clerics of the Hallowed Forge are found mostly within stony temples deep within mountain holds. In ceremony, they are clad in full battle armor that varies with each temple, but the everyday vestments of the Mountainlord's clergy resemble well-tailored workman's attire that is uniform across the Known Realms. When the likeness of Daenthar is carved in religious art, he always appears as a stout human or tall dwarf, either standing over a forge or arrayed in heavy battle armor.

The domains associated with the Mountainlord are Earth, Good, Law, and Protection. His favored weapon is the warhammer, while the symbol of Daenthar is a forging hammer set against a cracked mountain.

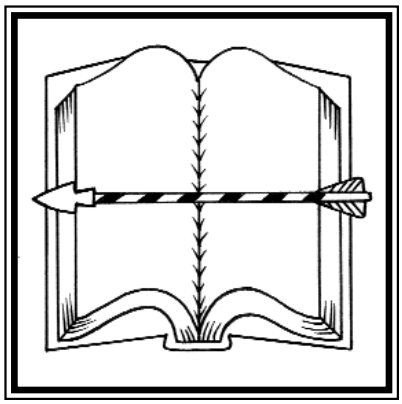
Delvyr (the Luminous)

Lesser god, NG — Knowledge, Learning, Light

Delvyr (*del*-veer), the Luminous, the Revealing Light, the Hallowed Docent, is the deity of education, knowledge, and radiance. He is the patron god of scholars, librarians, educators, and warriors who fight for the preservation of truth. Learned bards and chroniclers revere Delvyr above others, for he strives to reveal all secrets and unmask the guises of evil and all those who would bury knowledge. He is also the god of sunlight and exposure, the purveyor of open truth and unclouded opinion. Clerics and paladins who serve Delvyr are chief opponents of the undead, bringing purifying sunlight to bear against them. Monks, bards, and scholars devoted to the Revealing Light often spend long hours in research, although Delvyr does not seek to hold up his followers in dusty libraries forever. The search for knowledge is an active one; the Church of Delvyr often funds expeditions to recover lost lore, forgotten mythos, records from fallen civilizations, or even magics buried by the ages.

In religious renderings, Delvyr is always shown dwelling in places of lore, such as libraries, archaeological digs, and council chambers. Within these environments, he is shown in four stages of life: a child, a youth, a middle-aged man, and an elder to depict one's need to learn throughout one's life. Delvyr is a known enemy to the Hidden Lord, whose shadows he intends to illuminate, whose secrets he aims to reveal. Though a deity of undisputable good, Delvyr believes in truth for truth's sake; even harmful or blasphemous lore is best brought to light and carefully guarded, rather than left hidden for the unwary to find.

The domains associated with Delvyr are Glory, Good, Knowledge, and Sun. His favored weapon is the shortbow and his symbol is an arrow lying upon an open book.



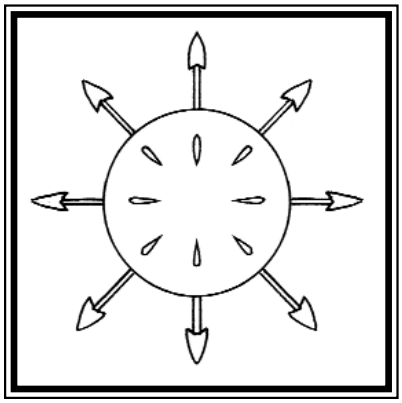
ELAS (THE LURKER)

Demigod, NE — Deep-dwelling Marine Life, Ambush

Elas (*ee*-loss), the Lurker, She-Devil of the Deep, is a wicked and capricious terror of the ocean floor. Ever at war with her brother Chondri the Voracious, together they rule over the deep seas and its most fearsome creatures.

Elas is a deity of extreme cunning and a mistress of ambush. She is depicted as a colossal manta ray with the head and notorious jaws of a massive moray eel. When Elas takes physical form within Áereth's ocean, she is a true monster of the deep. While her dorsal side is perfectly camouflaged against the seabed, her ventral is an otherworldly wash of prismatic effulgence. Those who look upon it are irresistibly drawn into her waiting jaws of death. Her numerous tails are long, barbed, and poisonous. She spends most of her time resting on the ocean floor, laying in wait for prey deserving of her interest. Clerics of the Lurker are primarily sahuagin and locathahs.

The domains associated with Elas are Evil, Trickery, and Water. The favored weapon of Elas is the trident and her symbol is a manta ray or a sand dollar rimmed with spear points.



ELYR (THE HEALING TOUCH)

Lesser god, CG — Healing, Life, Succor

Elyr (*el*-eer), the Healing Touch, the Maiden of Life, the Binder of Wounds, the Sustainer, is the goddess of continued life, the purging of sickness, and the binding of all hurts. She is the patroness of those who give aid to others, be they home-dwelling healers or warriors who brave enemy territory to rescue captives. Born immaculate from the blood of Ildavir, Elyr takes her mother's devotion to life to a zealous extreme, believing that life should be sustained at all costs and is worth any risk.

Elyr's well-meaning, uncompromising dogma is often at odds with the tenets of Soleth, which state that there is a time for merciful death. Clerics of the Healing Touch are a blessing to the wounded and those in peril, but often a bane to the dying who prefer the release of death. Elyr does not enjoy suffering, but her drive to stave off death outweighs the need to relieve pain. Accordingly, the Maiden of Life abhors the undead, and her clerics often join the faithful of Delvyr in their crusades to destroy them. Elyr wages great opposition to the machinations of Zhühn, for she adores creation and the restoration of life in all its forms. The Maiden of Life is usually depicted as a radiant young woman in simple robes, tending the sick and wounded. No matter what armor or vestments they wear, clerics of Elyr are recognizable by their very long, well-groomed hair, vowing never to cut it once they join the clergy, as a symbol of long and enduring life.

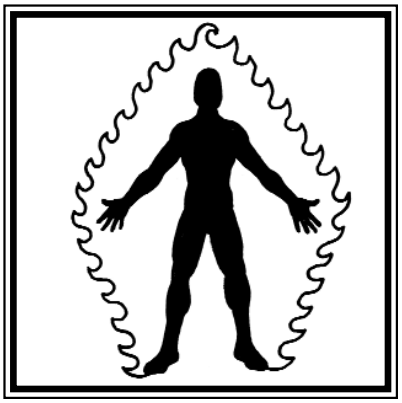
The domains associated with Elyr are Good, Healing, Liberation, and Luck. Her favored weapon is the sling. The symbol of the Maiden of Life is a radiant hand, sometimes shown clasping or touching the palm of a withered hand.

FENWAR (THE FIRELORD)

Lesser god, N — Fire, Lightning, the Hearth

Fenwar (*fen*-wahr), the Firelord, the Blazing King, is the god of forest fires, lightning storms, hot springs, and the kinetic energies of nature wherever they manifest—volcanoes, auroras, fireflies. He is the patron of creatures inured to fire or lightning, but also of simple people who rely upon the fires of the hearth to keep their homes warm. As a god in service to Ildavir, Fenwar maintains the balance of nature with his phenomena of heat and flame.

Known for his temper, Fenwar does not tolerate those who abuse his dominion. Clerics and druids of the Firelord never cause forest fires, but they do permit them to run their course as part of Áereth's cycle of life. They do investigate such holocausts, however, if they have reason



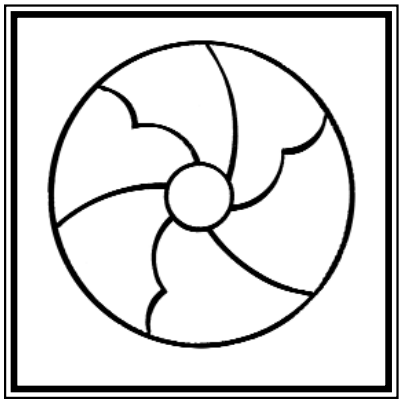
to suspect mortal instigation. Temples of Fenwar, though uncommon, are great lodges of stone with windows open to the sky. Altars, resembling massive hearths, are usually guarded by fire, magma, or steam mephits. Holy days are observed during lightning storms, when Fenwar is the most active.

The domains associated with Fenwar are Air, Fire, and Sun. His favored weapon is the halberd, and his symbol is a man-shaped figure wreathed in flame or electricity.

Gil'Mâridth (the Torment)

Lesser god, CE — Nightmares, Fear, Night Terrors

Gil'Mâridth (gil-*mahr*-idth), the Torment, the Great Hag, the Dread of Night, formerly a being of unmatched evil and power in the Sancturn Pantheon's homeworld, refused to be lowered beneath Áereth's greater gods. Instead, she escaped into the Dream held aloft by Ôæ where she reigns rivaled only by Ôæ himself and, like him, exists almost without body or awareness beyond that imagined realm. Out of sight to most dreamers, Gil'Mâridth and her cult of shanghaied dreamers wage a tireless battle with Ôæ and his faithful in an effort to reclaim the Dream and shape it to her liking, just as she has since before the dawn of Áereth. The Great Hag's dominion within the Dream is a realm of unimagined horror, and she will not relent until every dream has been made part of her nightmare.



With the near-consummate power of Ôæ, however, Gil'Mâridth's aim is not an easy one. Yet the march of fear and misery in the waking world disquiets dreamers' dreams, inviting the Torment's terrifying intrusion. Unbelieved if not unknown by most mortals, the war she wages threatens very real repercussions for every dreamer in the waking world should she achieve her frightening designs. For the Cult of Mâridth, the enormity of potential misery brought on from such troubles as plagues and wars—and especially the Northlands' Scourge—gives them hope.

The unquiet clerics of the Torment are recruited by senior priests of the faith who enter their nightmares and drive them to the edge of sanity until they come to understand the creeds of Gil'Mâridth. These disturbed believers live anonymously and work diligently to poison the waking lives of dreamers with terror they should carry with them in their sleep. Most of them function independently, haunting individuals according to instructions received in their own tortured dreams, but elite sects of the Cult of Mâridth exist, often in coordination with other evil faiths. The spread of mental anguish—and hence, troubled dreams—fuels the Torment's power within the Dream. The Dread of Night is the antithesis of hope and safety, fulfilling a dreamer's worst imagined horror. By default, she is depicted as a night hag, a creature commonly connected to her faith.

The domains associated with Gil'Mâridth are Dream, Evil, and Trickery. She is no purveyor of death, preferring the sedation and unconsciousness of her enemies to ensure their arrival in her dominion. For this reason, clerics of the Torment employ poisons such as oil of taggit and blue whinnis. When forced into combat, they wield the sap, Gil'Mâridth's favored weapon. Her symbol is a dark spiral or vortex reflecting the reoccurring image central to her priests' nightmares.

Gorhan (the Helmed Vengeance)

Lesser god, LG — Valor, War, Chivalry

Gorhan (*gor*-han), the Helmed Vengeance, the Brave One, He Who Fights First, is the deity of assertive combat and valorous accomplishments. He is the patron god of those who fight with courage against the lawless and corrupt. Nonhumans often favor Gorhan in their darkest hour, but usually know him by a different name. Most of the Brave One's faithful are paladins and cavaliers, and even elves have founded knightly orders in his name. His fervor against evil often outweighs his reason, and his followers evince the same trait.

Gorhan is always depicted as a slender knight in luminous, golden armor, a radiant longsword and shield in hand. The visor of his helm always hides his face, revealing him as neither human nor elven in countenance. Gorhan is the husband of Justicia and embodies the emphatic force that carries out her righteous decrees. When forgiveness or reprieve are no longer options for the guilty, the Helmed Vengeance becomes the executioner. Clerics of Gorhan respect valor above all, and

those who've proven their courage against the face of true evil earn the right to wear armor emblazoned with their deity's sacred symbol. Though they wear standard vestments within their temples, clerics and paladins of the Brave One favor the anonymity of visored helms on the battlefield.

The domains Gorhan is associated with are Good, Healing, Strength, and War. His favored weapon is the longsword, and his symbol is such a sword stained with black blood. Those temples that honor both Gorhan and his wife merge their symbols together as one.

Hidden Lord

Lesser god, CE — Secrets, Misdirection, Forbidden Lore, Shadows

The Hidden Lord, the Cloaked One, the Keeper of Forbidden Lore, or He of Many Names is a deity of the shadows, an unseen master of dark places and darker secrets. Those mortals who seek heretical writings and buried truths inevitably find themselves coveting the power of the Hidden Lord—whether they know it or not. The Cloaked One is one of the few gods who do not openly preach their tenets, for his ways are by their very nature concealed. His clergy, the Hidden Path, is a well-organized secret society that carries out its evil agenda through clandestine means, feigning the worship of other gods and communicating to each other with complex codes. In every land he is known with a different name—such as Nuurifar, Crypticus, or Salderast—and whenever one of these names become fairly established, his clergy renames him.

The Hidden Lord is never portrayed in any form; any depiction of him is intended to mislead. Some affiliate the Hidden Lord with Zhühn due to his secret agendas, but this is inaccurate; the Hidden Lord seeks power, while Zhühn seeks to remove all power. There is no common appearance among his faithful. If there is a means to identify a cleric of the Hidden Lord, they do not share it outside their own. Any priest who turns from the Hidden Path is marked for death.

The domains associated with the Cloaked One are Darkness, Evil, Knowledge, and Trickery. His symbol, very rarely seen, is a black cowl concealing a wispy visage and a pair of glowing eyes. A cleric of the Hidden Lord can use the holy symbol of any neutral or evil deity to channel their spells. The Hidden Lord's favored weapon is a wavy-bladed dagger.

Huamext (The Restored)

Demigod, NG — Xulmec, Protection

Huamext (*woh*-mesht), the Guardian and Preserver, is the reincarnation of the hero-turned-god Huamec the Deliverer. Once a chieftain of his people, Huamec first led the human slaves to freedom from the naga empire of Zimala. After establishing them in the Xulmec peninsula, Huamec ascended into divinity, only to sacrifice his immortal life to save his people in the War of Divine Right. Centuries later, Huamec emerged again, revived by one of his descendants, a priestess named Ixtique. Having achieved divinity herself with the sole purpose of resurrecting her ancestor and god, her spirit fused with his and a new aspect of both exists in the form of Huamext. Huamext is the god of vigilance for all of Xulmec, a deity keeping surveillance on the lands and its people.

Huamext is often considered the eldest human son of Madrah, for he gives of himself more than any of Madrah's progeny. Although he is worshipped primarily in Teotcoatlan, Huamec is a legend and hero to all tribes of Xulmec, and shrines to Huamext exist in every city so the people can pay him their respect. In his temples, the Guardian is depicted as he was in life, a bear of a man wielding a massive warclub and sometimes wearing armor made from the scales of a dragon; at his side is always a young girl, representing the spirit of Ixtique who gave Huamec renewed life. Nevertheless, both are worshipped as Huamext, a single deity. Priests of the Guardian and Preserver are open-minded, willing to form allegiances with foreigners but never willing to risk the security of all Xulmec. Huamext and his clergy disapprove of the infighting that often exists between the city-states, a state of attrition they cannot foil. It was priests of Huamec who were first taught the rites to create living idols (see Chapter 3), and for this reason every temple to Huamext is guarded by one of the idols.

The domains associated with Huamext are Earth, Good, and Protection. His favored weapon is the greatclub and his symbol is a quetzal-feathered phoenix.

Ildavir (The Giver of Form)

Greater god, N — Creation, Life, Nature, Animals

Ildavir (*il*-duh-veer), the Giver of Form, the Mother of Essence, is often overlooked but is no less powerful than the others of the Triad. It was Ildavir who first gave corporeal form to the creatures of Áereth, setting them into the cyclic arrays of nature and granting them the ability to procreate. As a goddess of Creation, Ildavir stands aloof from the world, seeing that it moves as intended only on a global scale. Even so, some choose to worship her directly. Clerics and druids of the Old Faith, as it is called, know the Mother of Essence to be the foremost god of nature itself, the origin of all earthly life. They place great value in physical creatures, objects, and places. Simultaneously materialistic and humble, Ildirians preach the value of the world and its workings and strive always to protect nature and its children. Farmers, agriculturists, and even hunters regularly offer tribute to the Giver of Form.

When depicted, Ildavir is envisioned as a winged dryad or sylph and bearing the antlers of a caribou or gazelle. She stands always apart from the world, and yet in contact with it, providing nourishment. She is the consort of Choranus and the mother of Ireth, Daenthar, Poderon, and Olidyra. The goddess Elyr is her youngest progeny, who sprang fully formed from a wound dealt her by Zhühn, her foremost enemy. The gods who despoil nature, such as Malotoch, Nimlurun, and Narrimunâth, are often the objects of her anger.

The domains associated with the Mother of Essence are Animal, Creation, Earth, Plant, and Protection. Her favored weapon is the scythe and her symbol is a leaf, frond, or tree.

Ilhuicatl (Lord of the Reef)

Demigod, NG — Athua, the Sea

Ilhuicatl (il-*hwee*-kotl), Lord of the Reef, is the patron god of the Xulmec city-state of Athua, given divine status by Madrah and fostered by the ocean goddess Pelagia. To the Athuans, he is the personification of the sea itself, though even they recognize the existence of Pelagia as the motherly, oceanic goddess above him. Ilhuicatl is the protector of all goodly, marine-dwelling creatures, including merfolk and tritons.

Ilhuicatl is depicted as a noble triton with the Southland features of a Xulmec human. According to legend, as a mortal man he fell in love with a mermaid who beckoned him into the sea, where he joined with the spirit of Pelagia herself. Porpoises and dolphins are sacred animals in the faith of the Lord of the Reef, and human clerics of Ilhuicatl maintain strong contact with the clerics of merfolk and tritons who also revere him.

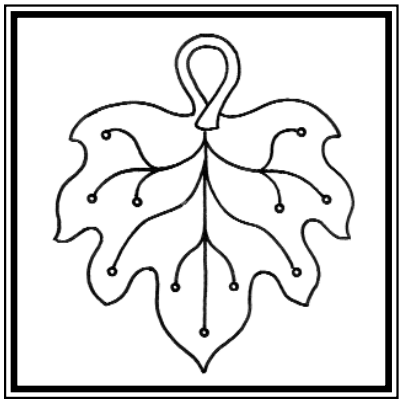
The domains associated with Ilhuicatl are Good, Protection, Travel, and Water. His favored weapon is the spear, and his symbol is a conch.

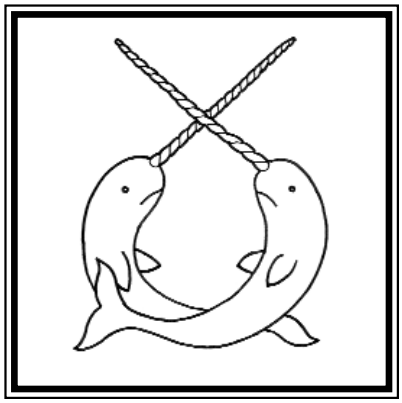
Ilquot (The Bell in the Deep)

Demigod, CN — Cold Waters of the North, Marine Predators, Retribution

Ilquot (*il*-quot), the Bell in the Deep, the Bellowing Bray of Night, is the fierce and jealous protector of the frigid northern oceans. He is the patron not only of those living upon the northern coasts but also the predators that keep their fragile ecosystems healthy. Ilquot is, in fact, their top predator, a rare and unseen hunter letting no beast take more than its fair share.

Like his brothers and sisters, Ilquot watches over a realm bequeathed to him by his mother Pelagia. Among them, his reputation is the dourest, yet his spirit is as ferocious within the seas' krakens and orcas as it is gentle with its puffins' chicks. The savage clerics of Ilquot must live a life as wild and brutal as his favored children, the creatures of the icy waters, though their numbers are few and dwindling. Without the presence of Ilquot's clerics as wardens of the cold northern seas, local priests have had to take special care not to





infringe upon this gelid divinity's simple yet easily disregarded tenets. When a larger number of mortals are disrespectful of the sea, Ilquot is quick to bring retribution upon them, inciting his faithful to war. The Bell in the Deep is usually depicted as an intimidating humanoid with the head of some great animal of the arctic seas, typically a walrus, polar bear, or octopus.

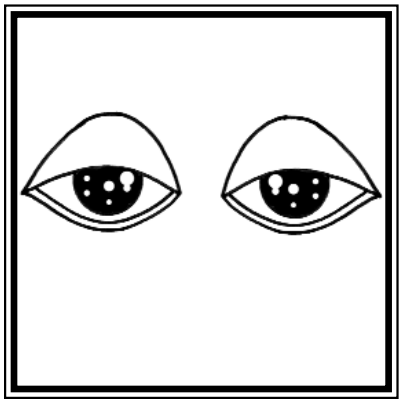
The domains associated with Ilquot are Protection, War, and Water. The favored weapon of Ilquot is the harpoon, interchangeable with the javelin. His symbol is a pair of crossed narwhal tusks, often frozen in ice.

Ireth (the Starmistress)

Greater god, CG — Astronomy, Forestry, Wizardry

Ireth (*eer*-ith), the Starmistress, the Stargazer, the Verdant Mantle, is the goddess of the night sky, woodlands, and magic. She is the patroness of astronomers, navigators, and woodsmen who respect the balance of nature. Ireth is the primary deity worshipped by the elves of Áereth. The elven race was fashioned in her image, reflecting her virtues, love of knowledge and art, and fascination with magic. Though possessed of a disciplined mind, Ireth is nevertheless whimsical, a trait bestowed upon the elves at their creation.

Eschewing formal temples, the Stargazer's places of worship take many forms, from *hallowed* forest glades open to the sky to stargazing observatories and sky-lit libraries. Elves, studious wizards, and those who look beyond Áereth itself into the stars themselves all pay their respects to the Starmistress. She is a mystic deity who embodies both worldliness and the unearthly mysteries of existence itself.



Ireth is the eldest child of Choranus and Ildavir. When she is rendered in religious art, Ireth appears as a slender wizard in modest, voluminous robes with long, flowing tresses. She is often shown with a spellbook in hand and a sheathed sword at her hip—or else wielding the sword with the book under one arm. She is typically depicted as elven, half-elven, or human.

The domains associated with Ireth are Air, Animal, Earth, Good, Knowledge, and Magic. Her favored weapon is the longsword and her symbol is a pair of eyes with star-flecked pupils.

Izmaledt (the Lord of Many Forms)

Demon prince, CE — Obscenities, Malformation

Izmaledt (*iz*-muh-let), the Lord of Many Forms, is the demon prince of physical blasphemies, the purveyor of putrid flesh, and the hybridization of unnatural horrors. Those who find the loathsome worship of Nimlurun too systematic for their tastes often find themselves thralls to Izmaledt, for the Lord of Many Forms offers obscenity without reason. Usually stricken with contagions themselves, cultists of Izmaledt are typically found in the company of the fouler creatures of Áereth, such as otyughs, gibbering mouthers, or oozes. Wizards in the service of the Lord of Many Forms experiment with the flesh of their enemies, stitching and rearranging limbs from one creature to another, and a liberal use of transmutation magic is a common pastime for such depraved souls.

Jezuel

Archdevil, LE — Pain, Torture, Indignity

Jezuel (*jez*-ooh-el), a sadistic she-devil who calls herself the Queen of Tribulation, seeks always to bring physical and mental anguish to mortals. She alleviates the suffering of her worshippers while they live, only to bring it a hundredfold upon them when their souls are in her grasp. To earn her protection, the depraved cultists of Jezuel must inflict agonies upon others, but her demand for torment does not end with physical pain. Indignity and shame are her favorite afflictions to work upon the mortal mind, and for this reason she spends a great deal of her effort spreading misery like a plague. The father who cannot feed his starving children, the soldier whose terror leads him to abandon his comrades when they are in need, the midwife who fails to save the newborn child—these Jezuel names her greatest triumphs.

Justicia (the Helmless Vigil)

Lesser god, LG — Justice, Mercy, Defense

Justicia (jus-*ti*-shuh), the Highest Magistress, the Restoring Flame, the Helmless Vigil, is the goddess of mercy, justice, and defensive combat. As the patroness of judges, lawmen, and knights, she oversees justice in all its forms, be it in a court of law or the field of battle. As the patroness of guardians and the beneficent, Justicia seeks to remedy all hurts and redeem all evil. Those who admit their crimes can find forgiveness with the Restoring Flame, but when evil fails to repent, she burns with a purifying fire. Though she

favors the moral virtues of good, Justicia usually remains impartial to the laws of the land in which she is revered.

Justicia is the wife of Gorhan—she is the voice of reason behind his unwavering valor. She is depicted as a statuesque knight in silver armor. In one hand, she holds the scales of justice, and in the other, a gilded longsword. Long dark hair spills from her head. She never wears a helm, preferring to look into the eyes of those she judges. When armored, clerics and paladins of the Highest Magistress shun the use of visors, preferring open-faced helms as they march into battle.

The domains associated with Justicia are Good, Healing, Law, and Protection. Her favored weapon is a longsword. Her symbol, a shield bearing radiant eyes with a longsword held against its face, is often merged with that of her husband's in joint worship.

Klazath (the Crimson Banner)

Lesser god, LE — War, Subjugation

Klazath (*klah*-zuth), the Crimson Banner, the Rain of Death, is the god of glory through violence, conflict, and war for its own sake. He is the patron of conquerors, tyrants, and martial governments, as well as individual soldiers who believe that the honor of battle itself outweighs all consequences. Followers of Klazath consider peace an enervating state, a stagnation that weakens all parties. The dogma of the Crimson Banner demands the necessity of war, citing nature—the design of Ildavir herself—as a model for unending violence. The weak, Klazath teaches, must be slain so they do not consume the resources needed for the strong. Barring that, they must be subjugated to serve the interests of the conquerors. Klazath is not a popular god in many lands, but generals and kings often rally in the name of the Crimson Banner to justify their means. Be it true piety or lip service, the clerics of Klazath welcome all bloodshed in his name.

A god of needless war, Klazath is the current consort of Yvyn, the Righteous Slaughter. He is also a prime enemy of Justicia and Gorhan, whom he enjoys luring onto the battlefield. Klazath is depicted as a warrior in black plate armor, half spattered with blood, wearing an elaborate plumed or horned helm. In his mailed fists, he carries a great war axe. The war priests of the Crimson Banner smear their own blood on their armor before a battle, signifying their willingness to bleed for their faith.

The domains associated with the Rain of Death are Destruction, Evil, Law, and Strength. His symbol is a bloodstained, double-headed axe of black metal. Accordingly, the battleaxe is his favored weapon.

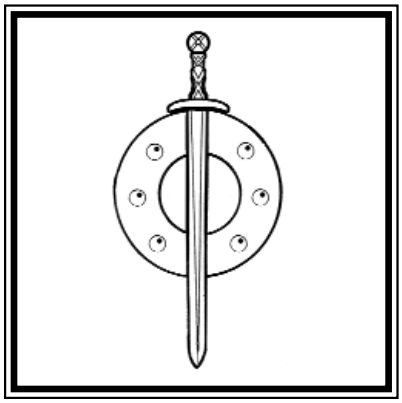
Lagos (the Scaly God)

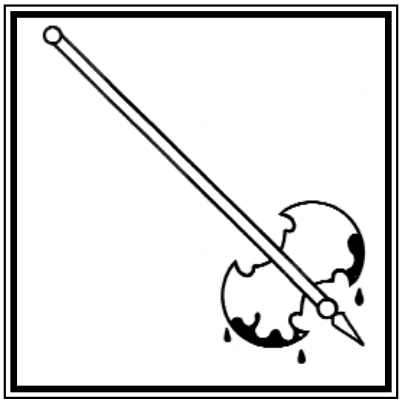
Demigod, CE — Antagonism, Reptiles, Savagery

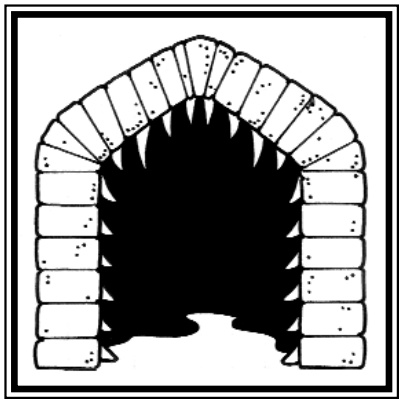
Lagos (*loh*-gos), the Scaly God, the Scaled One, is the demigod of reptilian creatures and subterranean caves, violence, and battles for supremacy. The hostility Lagos exhibits is fierce but brief, and this trait is common even among those he lords over. At the core, he is indolent and selfish, offering his favor only in passing and very little else. It is believed that he will personally devour those who displease him, and Lagos is not known for his patience. He is given to fits of rage and lustful indulgences.

Lagos is portrayed as a tremendous wide-mouthed reptile with a long tongue, razor claws, and a thick, club-like tail. His green-blue, scaly hide is scarred and peeling, and he is always depicted in acts of aggression. His servants, appropriately, are mostly troglodytes, kobolds, or evil-minded lizardfolk. Cave-dwelling humans have been known to worship Lagos as well, primitive barbarians as violent as the reptiles the Scaly God represents. Spiritual leaders of such tribes who serve Lagos are usually shamans and adepts, offering regular blood sacrifices at crude shrines.

The domains associated with Lagos are Chaos, Destruction, Evil, and Strength. Most of his followers







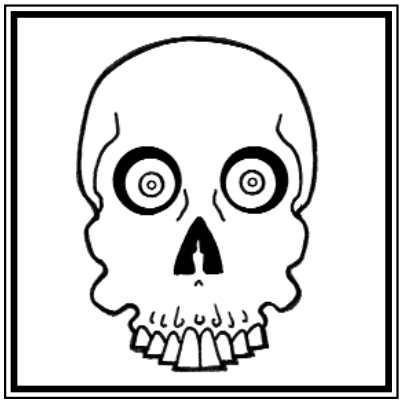
would rather use teeth and claws in combat; when forced to wield a weapon, the morningstar is the god's favored choice. The symbol of the Scaly God is a stony archway lined with reptilian teeth.

Lasheeva (Lady Dissolution)

Lesser god, NE — Undeath, Murder, Affliction

Lasheeva (lah-*shee*-vuh), Lady Dissolution, the Cold Seductress, the Black Desecration, the Daughter of Nightmares, is the goddess of undeath and the termination of natural life. When mortals first felt the cold grip of death upon them, it was Lasheeva who offered an attractive, if macabre, alternative. Granting choice creatures her chilling touch, the goddess personally introduced the curse of undeath to Áereth. Lasheeva is the unequivocal warden of the Negative Energy Plane and thereby gives new, "blessed" life to the dead. With this defiance of the gods' despotic mandate of mortality, she seduces countless souls into her dark fold.

Priests of opposing faiths theorize that Lasheeva was Áereth's first and most powerful lich who ascended to divinity with the support of a cabal of evil gods, but clerics of Lasheeva know that it was Lady Dissolution herself—an ancient princess of the Sancturn Pantheon—who bestowed the mantle of lichdom upon willing mortals and personally crafted the first phylacteries that sustain her greatest protégés. Even the most impious of intelligent undead acknowledge Lasheeva as the goddess of their own unliving existence, but many revere her outright. The largest temples of the Lady Dissolution, subterranean crypts desecrated in her name, are guarded by mummies and liches of the foulest sort. High priests and priestesses are, in fact, required to choose the path of either undead form at an hour appointed by Lasheeva herself. Her shrines are infamously rife with ghouls, zombies, and skeletons.



Lasheeva is the daughter of Gil'Mâridth and the immortal enemy of Soleth. Her followers are Áereth's quintessential purveyors of undeath, hoping to spread negative energy across the world like a plague. Lay followers of Lasheeva are almost always dabblers of necromancy and often find themselves targeted by paladins. Even the all-hating followers of Zhühn oppose her faithful, for undeath cheats the Great Enemy of the obliteration he craves for all life.

The domains associated with the Black Desecration are Death, Destruction, and Evil. Her favored weapon is the falchion and her symbol is a black, jawless skull set with open, living eyes.

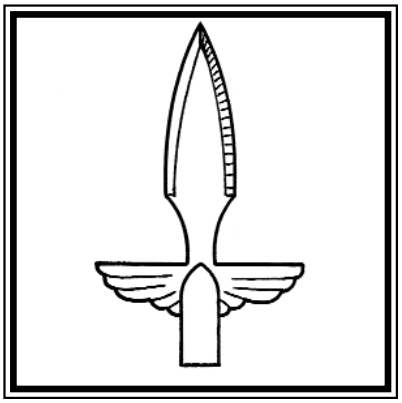
Madrah (Lord of the Earth and Sky)

Greater god, N — Earth, Sky

Madrah (*moh*-druh), the Lord of the Earth and Sky, Heart-of-Sky, the Mighty Eye, is a greater god of terrestrial life and aerial forces. Though his dominion technically reaches across all Áereth, he was charged by the Triad to oversee the continent and islands that make up the Southlands. Accordingly, he is seen by most natives of that land as the overlord of all gods. The Mighty Eye fathered the demigods Cynhuara and Axaluatl, the immortal rulers of the long-faded Zimalan Empire, and granted divine ascension to the gods of Xulmec. Madrah is powerful but equivocal, his incarnations as numerous as the cultures that worship him. While the humans of Xulmec believe he is the savior of all existence—the only being capable of keeping the Sun from burning the world to ash—the drakon of Ssorlang believe he is a great lord of reptiles preparing the world for serpent rule. Such varying aspects, tenets, and origins of the Lord of the Earth and Sky can be found carved in temple walls throughout the Southlands in the form of simple glyphs and vast, intricate mosaics. Though nearly every thinking creature in the Southlands pays some form of homage to him, few worship Madrah directly, instead worshipping the many spirits, demigods, and divine progenies who serve him.

Those few clerics who venerate Madrah directly, many of whom are druids, are as inscrutable as their god, often found wandering the breadth of the Southlands on an unceasing pilgrimage, like caretakers of his dominion. The faithful of Madrah can be found in many forms: in city streets, garbed in rags and muttering ancient incantations backwards, braving the isles of Dujamar in the raiment of dragonhide armor, or counseling the drakon Emperor in silken robes. Northland theologians are never certain what to make of this elder god, his esoteric ways, or his oracular priests.

The domains Madrah is associated



with are Air, Earth, Magic, Travel, and Weather. His favored weapon is the shortspear. The symbol of the Lord of the Earth and Sky varies with every culture in which he is revered.

Malotoch (the Crow God)

Demigod, CE — Scavengers, Ruin, Cannibalism

Malotoch (*mal*-uh-tock), the Carrion Crow God, the Mother of Ruin, the Mistress Defiler, the Crow Witch, is the patron goddess of scavengers, cannibals, and all those who practice unclean rites. She is the demonic mistress of the living and undead who feast upon carrion or otherwise benefit from the loss of mortal life. Like poisonous mushrooms that thrive on decay, so Malotoch thrives on the ruin of life. Living monsters such as hags, harpies, and rooks (see *DCC #5: Aerie of the Crow God*) pay homage to her, as do cannibalistic undead such as ghouls and ghasts. Where great battles end and the glorious fallen lie, there Malotoch and her foul children are drawn.

The Crow Witch is always depicted with the curvaceous body of a woman and the head and legs of a monstrous crow. Clerics of Malotoch frequently keep the company of zombies and ghouls and adorn their armor with the bones of carrion birds or their latest victims. Among the profane rites performed by Malotoch's cults are the corruption of birds of prey into anathemas of nature, and evils of this sort often draws the ire of druids. Unsurprisingly, Malotoch is despised by most gods, although she garners a grudging respect from Nimlurun and Narrimunâth. The clerics of all three gods work in concert to achieve loftier, fouler plots than any of their clergies could alone.

The domains Malotoch is associated with are Air, Chaos, Death, and Evil. Her favorite weapon is the short sword. Cultists who serve Malotoch and nearly all undead raised in her name have a bloodstone imbedded in place of their left eyes. The bloodstone, often surrounded by cracked bones, is one of her symbols; the other is a crow perched atop a skull.

Myna (the Maid of Fortune)

Lesser god, CN — Chance, Circumstance, Fortune

Myna (*my*-nuh), Fortune Herself, the Lady of Weal, is the goddess that many turn to when prayers to the other gods have gone unanswered. For some mortals, Myna's name hangs upon their lips every day, ever coveting a change in fortune. As the divine embodiment of fortune itself, Myna is an elusive deity whose intercession is often unwelcome to lawful deities of the Sancturn Pantheon. She tips the scale on small and large affairs, offering good fortune to the underdog or withdrawing her favor from the advantageous or those predisposed to victory. She is whimsy incarnate, and none can discern the patterns of, or requirements for, her favor. The immortal power that controls the dice, Fortune Herself makes plays at both good and evil, law and chaos, and the only certainty in her dogma is the need for perpetual change.

Once, Myna's faith was known to few outside of an exclusive cult of the serendipitous and the secretive, but gradually her capricious dogma resolved into theism. Clerics of the Lady of Weal, most multiclassed as rogues or bards, are seen as smaller versions of the goddess herself, frustrating and fickle yet bearing good fortune. Their blessings, however, are always welcome, and for this reason her church has grown wealthy from the tiny donations of countless peasants and considerable contributions from nobles rich with coin. When Myna is depicted in religious art, she is seen as a flighty young woman, dancing or casting dice.

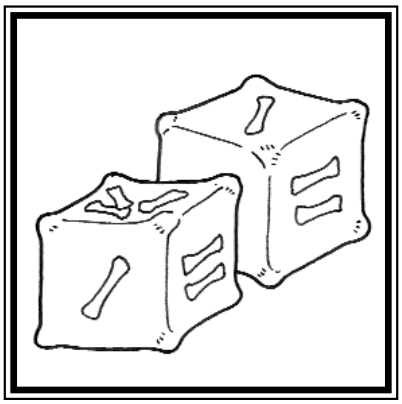
The domains associated with the Lady of Weal are Chaos, Luck, and Trickery. Her favored weapon is the dart, and her symbol is a stylized bullseye or a pair of dice made of bone.

Narrimunâth (the Lord of Disease)

Demigod, LE — Disease, Vermin

Narrimunâth (nar-ih-moon-*ahth*), the Rat God, the Lord of Disease, the Venerable, is the twin brother of Nimlurun and a demigod twisted to evil by the hand of Zhühn. He is the god of plagues and debilitating illness, the patron deity of wererats, those who would spread sickness, and other forms of vermin.

Narrimunâth is half of the god born of Pelagia, intended to be a god of purity. Zhühn's sabotage of the birth resulted in the sundering of the newborn deity, resulting in the twin gods



of sickness and filth. Narrimunâth gets along well with Nimlurun as well as can be expected between evil gods, and together they often scheme with Malotoch the Crow God. The Lord of Disease is always depicted as a half-man, half-rat abomination with a naked rat's tail, razor claws, and glowing red eyes.

The domains Narrimunâth is associated with are Death, Destruction, and Evil. His favorite weapon is the sap, and his symbol is a mangy, dead, or undead rat.

Nethruel

Archdevil, LE — Obsession, Addiction

Nethruel (*neth*-roo-el), the Fervent Lord, is a canny archdevil who feeds the sins of obsession among the mortal world. He is the devil of extremes, of ceaseless, unhealthy devotion. The veteran who looks for absolution in a bottle, the maiden who quits the company of her true friends in pursuit of a disreputable paramour, the wizard who neglects his family to focus on his magic—all these may have come under the influence of Nethruel. Cultists of the Fervent Lord, themselves victims of the demon prince, seek to afflict others with addictions and the debilitating reliance on objects, other people, or even ideas.

Neshti (The Stealthmaiden)

Lesser god, CG — Thievery, Trickery, Vigilantism

Neshti (*nesh*-tee), the Veiled Thief, the Stealthmaiden, the Lady of Shadows, is the goddess of thievery, malfeasance, and most pursuits on the wrong side of the law. She is the patroness of rogues, vigilantes, and peasant heroes, all those willing to stand against tyranny and cruelty. Many crimes are committed in her name, but the Stealthmaiden is only willing to grant her blessings on those who do so for the right reasons. A thief who steals bread to feed his children, a bard who swindles a cruel city official, and a sorceress who charms a miserly noble into granting a bit of his fortune as alms to the poor may all offer a prayer to Neshti—in the hope that she will veil their crimes so they will live to commit more. The Lady of Shadows offers no apologies, and will use any means necessary to see the greater good done, possessing no misgivings about stabbing her enemies in the back. Neshti and most of her faithful do not care for fair fights, as evil seldom does either. Although averse to murder, she is willing to deal violence upon her enemies and if death is the consequence of villainy, so be it.

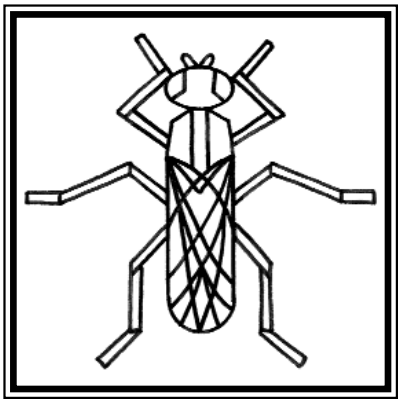
The Stealthmaiden's underhanded dogma is controversial among other goodly deities. In religious art, she is depicted as a hooded adolescent girl with raven-black hair, and is sometimes seen hiding from Justicia and Gorhan. Neshti does not care for temples and open worship, so her faithful usually gather in guildhalls or in small, nondescript shrines out of plain sight. There is no uniform appearance among her faithful; the black-clad, rooftop-dwelling burglar, the well-armed adventuring wizard, and the nondescript neighborhood cobbler could all be followers of the Lady of Shadows. Many of Neshti's clerics multiclass as rogues.

The domains associated with Neshti are Chaos, Good, Luck, and Trickery, and her favored weapon is the punching dagger. Neshti's symbol, more often seen tattooed in out-of-sight places than rendered on religious architecture, is a depiction of a blindfolded female face.

Nimlurun (The Lord of Filth)

Demigod, CE — Filth, Pollution

Nimlurun (*nim*-luh-roon), the Lord of Filth, the Holy Defiler, the Unclean One, was corrupted along with his brother Narrimunâth by Zhühn to bring further decay to the world. He is the god of refuse, putrescence, and all things unclean. Only the sick-minded and destitute pay deliberate homage to Nimlurun, but people who seek purity often speak the Lord of Filth's name in an attempt to placate him and avoid his attentions. His clerics seek to foul the skies of the world, pollute its waters,



and despoil the earth. As such, they often inspire the anger of druids and the gods of the earth.

Nimlurun is the twin of Narrimunâth, born of Pelagia and intended to be a god of purity. Zhühn's interference in the god's birth resulted in the making of two demigods of disease and despoilment. Nimlurun works often with his brother, and together they are known to treat with Malotoch, whom they reluctantly regard as an equal. Like his brother, Nimlurun is depicted as a half-man, half-rat beast, though his mangy fur is always coated in slime.

The domains he is associated with are Death, Evil, and Destruction. His favorite weapon is the light mace, and his symbol is an insect, usually a dung fly.

Ôæ (THE DREAMER)

Lesser god, NG — Dreams, Imagination, Storytelling

Ôæ (*aw*-uh), the Dreamer, is the god of mortal dreams and imagination, the patron of wistful lovers, the downtrodden, and all who long for a better place than the waking world offers. Once the caretaker of the Sancturns before they arrived in primeval Áereth, the Dreamer forwent the gifts of the Triad to persist only within his memory: the Dream, that perpetual afterimage of their lost home.

Because of Ôæ's all-consuming preoccupation with sustaining the

THE DREAM

When the Sancturn Pantheon fled the ruin of their homeworld (see *Chapter 1*), a small impression of this transcendental place was preserved within the mind of their caretaker, Ôæ. Though this quality was not physically compatible with Áereth, its boundless wonderment was eagerly welcomed by the Triad as a blessing upon their creation. Ever since, the gift of dreaming has been bestowed upon all thinking beings—mortals and gods alike—as a nocturnal, fantastical playground. This is Ôæ's Dream.

Spatially limitless, the Dream is a world of pure imagination with its designs owing as much to Ôæ's memory of their home as it does to the sleeping fantasies of every dreamer since the dawn of Áereth. With each dreamer's dream, a slight aspect of this realm is upturned and reshaped in ways that may defy any waking sense of logic. But as extravagant as a mere dream may be, the changes to the Dream itself are mostly fleeting and rarely significant by themselves. But the sheer number of ever-churning dreams upon the dreamscape, each leaving their impressions, means Ôæ's Dream is a plane in constant flux.

The regular immersions into the Dream that each dreamer experiences are often forgotten (at least on a conscious level), and awareness of one's dreams as existing within the Dream is rare. Even the knowledge in the waking world that one's dreams take place within Ôæ's Dream is of little consequence once asleep. But for the followers of Ôæ, Gil'Mâridth, and other entities focused on the Dream, it is a world as real and potentially dangerous as any other.

Unbeknownst to most dreamers, the Dream at large is not the paradise it ought to be. A great war wages between the Knights of Ôæ and the crazed votaries of Gil'Mâridth who would transform the Dream into an infinite dreamscape of horrific insanity. Being Ôæ's Dream, he will always have the upper hand, for the hearts of good dreamers have long overcome fear and despair. However, Gil'Mâridth's influence cannot be overstated. Her domain within the Dream is vast and now situated at its very heart. By all accounts, it is an enormous black swirl of frantic nightmare. No dreamers—not even her most horrific mortal minions—have ever safely ventured deep within her realm. It is from this unspeakable stronghold that the Great Hag commands her agents of terror: the Cult of Mâridth, diverse denizens of both the Dream and the waking world, and if the rumors are true, more than one of Áereth's shadowy gods secretly bows to the Dread of Night as their queen.

Despite the horrors associated with Gil'Mâridth, her power does not dominate the Dream. For the most part, the Dream is a realm of benign wonders and mind-boggling scenarios with perils rarely in plain sight. Great dreamers and native entities alike can be found roaming its ever-shifting vistas. Races and civilizations unheard of on Áereth carry on in war and in peace in distant realms even the oldest of its dreamers may never see. Meanwhile, Ôæns guide lucid dreamers through their master's imagined terrain where the dreams of dogs, gods, and children revel and reel, touting and trumpeting their splendors into the Dreamer's living memory of home.

Dream, he is a god without body or awareness outside of the Dream itself. But within, he is an immensely powerful being, watching over his select flock of devotees and the dreams of all creatures alike. In the waking world, Ôæ's clergy rarely congregate or hold any formal shrines, and they wear no special vestments. They are characteristically imaginative daydreamers who have come into the faith after being approached by Ôæ himself in their sleep. Ôæns typically lead simple lives as artists and storytellers, encouraging children to hone their imaginations and jaded adults to reclaim their restless dreams of youth. In this, they hope to foster avid dreamers for Ôæ to bring into his fold. Clerics of Ôæ occasionally multiclass as bards, and many find that adventuring fuels their imaginations and enriches their dreams. Ôæns dedicate themselves to opposing the misdeeds of Gil'Mâridth and her clergy, a war that is waged only partially in the waking world. Within the Dream, these Knights of Ôæ assemble in imagined temples within holy cities of utterly fantastic design. There they work to protect and maintain this slice of their patron's—in fact, all of the Sancturn Pantheon's—ancient home.

The Dreamer is usually portrayed as a handsome, robed archmage or hierophant with his eyes closed. As the caretaker of the memory of their home, most gods of the Sancturn Pantheon look upon Ôæ fondly, but the Dreamer wages eternal war with Gil'Mâridth.

The domains Ôæ is associated with are Dream, Good, and Protection. His favored weapon is the sling, and his symbol is a closed eye set against a cloud, often with some fantastic dreamscape etched within. While priests of Ôæ must prepare their spells like any other cleric, their meditative state is much more of a vivid daydream.

OBITU-QUE

Demon prince, CE — Domination, Prepotency

Obitu-que (*oh*-bih-too-kay), Lord of the Five, is a demon prince who dreams of rulership and dominance over every living thing in existence. Though this vague desire is not uncommon among demons, the sheer focus and belief to which Obitu-que adheres is extraordinary. A lord of fire, slavery, and destruction, Obitu-que was once a mere balor among many, commanding demonic armies against the devils of Hell. After centuries spilling the ichor of the lawful fiends and his own kind, he carved for himself the Abyssal principality. Experimenting with loathsome magics, he mutated his own body and looked with new eyes—all five of them—upon the Material Plane with conquest in mind. Obitu-que met with brief success, personally razing and sacrificing whole villages, but his body was slain by the last of a line of noble human barbarians.

Yet centuries later, the spirit of the Lord of the Five lingers still, causing blight where his body remains. The demon prince is patient, and finds a great spiritual hold over like-minded mortals with dreams of predominance and tyranny. Nothing satisfies Obitu-que more than the feeling of domination, the subversion of his victims' wills.

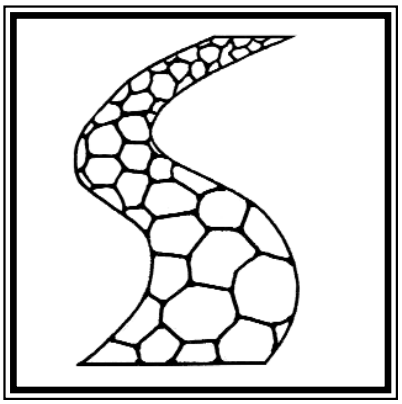
OLIDYRA (THE DAUNTLESS)

Greater god, N — Travel, Exploration, Adventure

Olidyra (*oh*-lih-*deer*-uh), the Dauntless, Lady Pathfinder, the Wanderess, is the goddess of exploration, adventure, and discovery. She is the patroness of wayfarers, vagabonds, fortune-hunters, and all those willing to make risks or venture into the unknown. Olidyra is worshipped primarily by halflings, the race whose creation she inspired, but all travelers and most adventurers know a brief prayer or two that entreats Lady Pathfinder for safe journeys.

The faithful of this wayward, roguish deity believe that Olidyra often breaks the mandates of the Triad, choosing to wander Áereth in mortal form simply to subvert its law and explore the ever-changing world. Such headstrong desire and naked curiosity are seen most often in halflings, who carry small shrines to the Wanderess in their wagons. Permanent temples to Lady Pathfinder are exceptionally rare, though the remnants of hastily built tributes of rock and wood are often found along well-beaten paths. Olidyra gets on well with most other gods, except those who seek to harm or imprison others. She is considered the only deity who "understands" the wiles of Myna, and is always quick to share a joke with her brother Poderon. Accordingly, clerics of Olidyra are on especially friendly terms with the faithful of these gods. When the Wanderess is depicted in religious art—typically painted in bright colors on the sides of wagons—she appears as a female halfling, human, or half-elf, with either a walking stick or a bow in hand.

The domains associated with Lady Pathfinder are Luck, Plant, Trickery, and Travel. Her favored weapon is the shortbow and her symbol is a winding or forked road.



ORMAZD (THE CHANGELESS)

Greater god, LG — Creation, the Sun, Prophecy

Ormazd (*or*-mahzd), the Changeless, the Lord of Wisdom, is the creation god of sunlight, a mysterious deity of great power seldom heard in the current age. If Choranus is the god of destiny, then Ormazd is the god of the prophecies it engenders. Like Ahriman, his dark twin, Ormazd is believed to have spawned from a neutral deity named Zurvan, of which very little is known. Commonly associated with angelic beings, Ormazd is said to have sponsored a celestial host that once temporarily purged the world of evil when Ahriman's faith was as its greatest. Ormazd's skills of creation were paramount in the formation of Áereth, but his many battles against his brother have reduced his power over the ages and diminished his worship in the mortal realms.

When Ormazd's worship was at its peak, the desert-dwelling people of Abylos named him Ahura Mazda, the Lord of Wisdom. Such civilizations, believing him to be the sole creator of the world, are buried now in the desert sands. Yet in recent years, small clergies of Ormazd have sprung up in the Northlands, sometimes affiliated with the church of Delvyr and theologians of the Triad.

When Ormazd is depicted in religious art, he resembles a winged bull with the face of a bearded man and the blaze of the sun behind him. Ormazd and his prophetic clerics work always to oppose the designs of Ahriman, vigilant for traces of the evil god's influence. Priests of Ormazd inspire renewed interest in Áereth's distant past and the unknown, eastern lands.

The domains associated with Ormazd are Creation, Good, Law, and Sun. His favored weapon is the kukri and his symbol is a blazing sun.

PELAGIA (OF THE SINGING SEA)

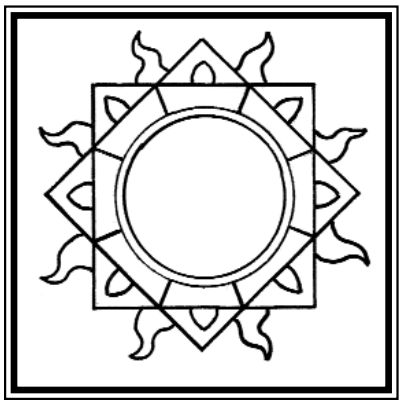
Lesser god, N — Oceans, Seas, Music, Travel

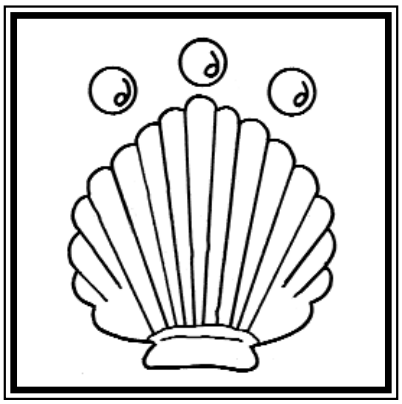
Pelagia (pehl-*ah*-gee-uh) of the Singing Sea, the Coral Queen, the Fish of Argent, the Maiden Voyager, is the goddess of the seas and oceans of Áereth, music in all its forms, and travel. She is the patroness of bards, fishermen, and folk who ply the sea for their livelihood. Though she can be as capricious as nature itself, Pelagia favors those who respect the waters of Áereth and the creatures within them. Whales are especially sacred animals in her faith, and their song is always considered a good omen. While many evil creatures make a home in the depths, Pelagia respects their right to dwell there, in keeping with the balance of nature and the morals of Áereth. The faithful of the Coral Queen never seek to destroy such wicked creatures but are permitted to defend themselves when necessary.

With the whole of the world's waters her dominion, Pelagia has delegated the aegis of each oceanic region to one of her many children. Most of them are demigods; Chandri, Elas, Ilquot, and Thalass number among the many. Pelagia names Zhühn her greatest enemy, for when she gave birth to a son, the Great Enemy tore him asunder and spawned the twin gods Narrimunâth and Nimlurun. Deities of filth and disease, her corrupted children often try to spoil the waters of Pelagia's dominion. Consequently, clerics of the Coral Queen seek to destroy every cult and shrine to the destitute demigods.

Pelagia's island-temples are scattered across the seas of Áereth, and most of her clerics live upon coastlines or aboard ships. Nearly every sailor offers a prayer to the Coral Queen when setting out to sea, whether it's a quick jaunt up the coastline or a voyage across the Empyrean. Rare shells and pearls are highly valued by clerics of Pelagia and make excellent religious donations. Particularly religious captains drop such natural baubles into the sea at the midpoint of their journeys. Music also plays a large role in the Pelagian faith. Clerics of the Coral Queen may sing sonorous anthems with the morning tide, while a devoted sailor sings a common sea shanty hymn during his nightwatch. The Maiden Voyager is usually depicted as a fair-haired mermaid adorned with coral jewelry, though in some lands she appears as a selkie with raven tresses.

The domains associated with Pelagia are Protection, Travel, and Water. Her favored weapon is the rapier and her symbol is a sea shell of any kind, usually a conch or cockleshell.





Poderon (the Deep Delver)

Greater god, NG — Earth, Commerce, Festivity

Poderon (*poe*-der-on), the Deep Delver, the Jovial Miner, is the earth god of commerce and merrymaking. As an earth god, he is the patron of miners, gemcutters, and merchants, but all those who purvey or seek merriment look to Poderon. Though the gnome race was first cast in his image and revere him more than any god, others pay homage to the Deep Delver as well, particularly those whose livelihood comes from the earth itself. Although his commitment to hard work and the preservation of the earth cannot be disputed, Poderon is best known for his optimism and appreciation for comfort—a trait seen everyday in the gnomes of Áereth. The Delver is famous for his sense of humor, but he becomes a dangerous foe when the happiness of his subjects is threatened.

Although he is one of the Greater Gods, the Deep Delver is more willing than his siblings to intercede in mortal affairs, a fact that often incurs the scrutiny of his father, Choranus. As a son of Ildavir, Poderon has a fondness for earth-dwelling animals and wooded realms. His places of worship exist in many places, from metropolitan sanctuaries to sylvan shrines, though his formal temples are kept well-hidden. Such hallowed chambers are reliquaries for as many rock samples as Poderon's clergy can procure. These stones vary from everyday granite and coal to the purest of sapphires and diamonds.

Gnomish clerics of Poderon follow a loose hierarchy of gemstone titles. Acolytes may be malachites, azurites, or garnets, while more senior priests may be topazes or jasmals. When the Deep Delver is rendered in religious art, he usually appears as a slender human teenager or a middle-aged gnome with a hammer or pick in hand. Just as often, Poderon is shown as a large badger or in the company of one.

The domains associated with the Deep Delver are Animal, Earth, Good, and Trickery. His favored weapon is the heavy pick, and his symbol is a mining pick and a halved geode.

Qayaqiq

Demon prince, CE — Curiosity, Desperation, Suicide

Qäyaqiq (*kah*-yuh-kik), the Fatal Dream, the Shaded Door, is a demonic power which prays upon sleeping souls. The Fatal Dream is a straightforward yet little understood entity, which coexists within the Abyss and the Dream, and is thus an enemy to both Ôæ and Gil'Mâridth alike. One thing is certain, however: Qäyaqiq hunts the souls of dreamers by a means unvaried since time immemorial. Appearing in their dreams as a gate or doorway cloaked in shadow, the Shaded Door beckons the curious to enter. What fate lies beyond that door may only be suspected, but once entered, neither men nor gods can account for the lost soul. Many lullabies and nursery rhymes warn young sleepers to "shun the Shaded Door."

According to mortal thralls, Qäyaqiq employs a clergy of one: Each is a deranged, suicidal dreamer believing that he alone is favored by Qäyaqiq and must find a worthy successor before finding absolution. Once this is done, the madman may enter the Shaded Door that night where a glorious reward supposedly awaits.

Sestyruas

Archdevil, LE — Envy, Covetousness

Sestyruas (ses-*teer*-ooh-us), a mendacious archdevil who calls himself the Lord of Ardor, aims to fan the flames of envy among mortals, driving them to crimes of jealousy and passion. He whispers to those who crave what they cannot have, offering only enough power and satisfaction to string them along until death brings their souls to the foot of his sulphurous throne. His mortal thralls are depraved clerics and rogues who treat frequently with erinyes, the chief servants of Sestyruas. Proficient liars, some multiclass as bards to better employ their forked tongues.

Septych (the Blackhammer)

Demigod, LE — Avarice, Tyranny

The Septych (*seph*-tish), the Dark Dwarven Gods, the Seven As One, are in fact seven aspects in a single deity. Once seven dwarven brothers, their concerted pursuit of immortality spanned centuries and the ruthless butchery of innocents. But in the end, each turned against his brother in the final grab for divinity. As punishment for their brutality and greed, the brothers were granted godhood only as a single entity. Since that day, only the personality of one of the seven brothers manifests at any given time, one brother for each period of seventy-seven years. While one rules, the other six wait, impotent, for the passage of centuries for their next "turn." Gods of avarice and blood-soaked tyranny, the Septych is worshipped in secret by thieves, assassins, evil warriors, and any

dwarf given over to the greed to which his race is often accused.

Currently, it is Sodoutym (so-*dooh*-tim), the Blackhammer, the Dark Foe, Hellbeard, whose mind rules the Septych. Like his brothers before him, Sodoutym spends his time searching for the means to separate his soul from the rest, and he will likely do so for eternity. To this end, the Blackhammer demands blood sacrifice from his followers as he scours the face of Áereth for the prophesied soul that can release him from his deific bondage. Sodoutym is depicted as a well-muscled dwarf with the outstretched wings of a bat and writhing tentacles instead of a beard. His clerics lair in caves, sharing the company of dire bats and foul aberrations.

The domains associated with the Blackhammer are Evil, Law, and Trickery. The favored weapon of Sodoutym is a seven-tailed scourge, though the other six Dark Dwarven Gods possess favored weapons of their own. The symbol of the Dark Foe is a swarm of attacking bats. The symbol of the Septych is a stylized version of the Dwarf rune for 7, which has made it an unlucky number among dwarves.

Shul (the Watcher in the Sky)

Lesser god, LN — The Moon, Measurement, Tradition, Literacy

Shul (*shool*), God of the Four Phases of the Moon, the Watcher in the Sky, the Glistening Orb, the Lawgiver, is the god of measurement, tradition, literacy, and the moon itself. Credited as the deity to give Áereth the standard, twelve-month calendar and Ùr, the oldest written language from which most humanoid languages descended, Shul is the patron god of educators and disciplinarians who follow strict curricula. Though his name is remembered in the modern age, true worship of the Lawgiver has faded.

In religious writings, Shul's name appears, but often only through his epithets. The Watcher in the Sky is an ally to Valdreth, the Enduring, and their collective clergies once worked with one another to record the passage of time. He is the sponsor of the Xulmec goddess Anahuara, a divinity he admires but cannot entirely fathom for her sepulchral dogma.

The Watcher in the Sky is depicted primarily as the moon itself, or the moon with a human male face. The faith of Shul was largely destroyed centuries ago, but small cults of the Lawgiver still dwell in remote places, maintaining the same traditions and rituals during precise phases of the moon. Such hermitic cults observe the march of time and preserve dead languages in carven stone. The holiest of days for all of the faith are lunar eclipses.

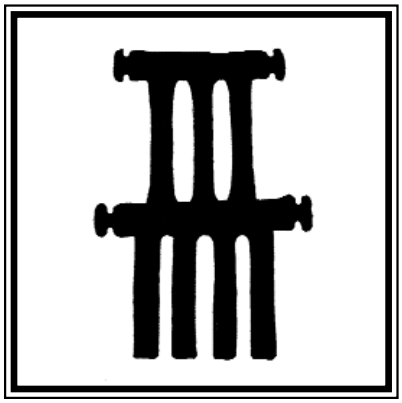
The domains associated with Shul are Air, Knowledge, and Law. His favored weapon is the dagger, and those used by his clergy are usually made from sharpened stone. The symbol of Shul is the moon.

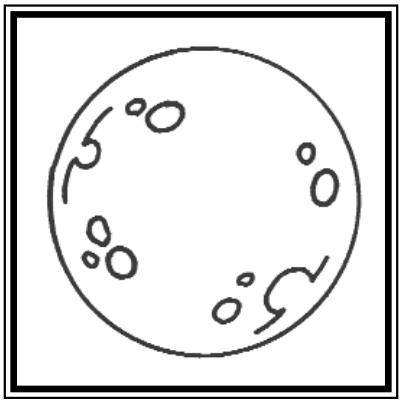
Soleth (the Silent Death)

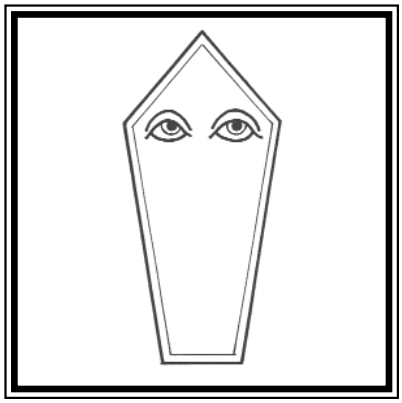
Lesser god, LN — Peaceful Death, Solitude

Soleth (*so*-leth), the Silent Death, the Merciful One, is the god of merciful, dignified death. He is the patron of morticians and healers who cannot save the dying. The somber-shrouded clerics of the Merciful One are a misunderstood lot, for they appear when there is no hope of continued life. Though they heal when they can, they are practitioners of euthanasia, and give last rites to those on their deathbeds to help usher them painlessly into the beyond.

Soleth teaches that death should be a quiet, dignified event. This belief is often at odds with the tenets of Elyr, whose fervor for life outweighs the need for its release. For this reason, the Silent Death's faithful seldom get along with the faithful of the Maiden of Life. However, like Elyr and Delvyr, Soleth abhors war and all forms of undeath. The Merciful One opposes the machinations of







Lasheeva at every opportunity, for she represents everything he despises.

Clerics of Soleth brew a special draught that they administer to the dead of their faithful which protects them from the taint of evil necromancy. Clerics and monks who serve the Silent Death wear grey and black robes and sashes, but clerics don heavier armor when questing or adventuring. Temples of Soleth are as solemn catacombs, their chambers and galleries furnished with sarcophagi, funeral biers, and rock-hewn graves. As grim as they appear, few places are as free from the touch of undeath. Respect for the dead and the living is Soleth's greatest tenet, a virtue best exemplified by a clerical sect known as the Threnodim. Multiclassed as bards, they compose impromptu eulogies for the unnoticed deaths of common men and perform great requiems for fallen heroes.

The domains associated with the Silent Death are Healing, Law, Protection, and Repose. His favored weapon is the bastard sword; his faithful loathe violence, but they are quick to dispense it to prevent further death. The symbol of Soleth is a stone coffin etched with a pair of open eyes.

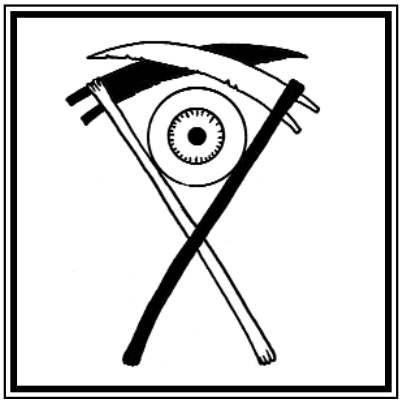
Sothulth (the All-Seeing Orb)

Demigod, CN(e) — Paranoia, Insanity

Sothulth (*so*-thoolth), the Great Eye, the All-Seeing Orb, is a largely forgotten deity banished from the planes by the Sancturn Pantheon for a divine crime few can remember. Though exiled to the fringes of the multiverse and the Astral Plane, Sothulth is still able to make brief sojourns to the Outer and Material Planes. It manifests only long enough to carry out one of its erratic plans and move on again.

Once a more popular deity whose mantle was better understood, Sothulth offers very little to its worshippers, so the few cultists of the Great Eye are usually as insane as it is. An unpredictable god, the All-Seeing Orb will grant generous boons or afflict great curses upon its own followers. Some loremasters hypothesize that Sothulth was once implicated by Zhühn for a great crime, and its subsequent banishment drove it to the state of madness it is known for today. Usually depicted as a large purple or black eye emerging from a dark nebula, in any form Sothulth takes, a single staring eye remains its dominant feature.

The domains associated with Sothulth are Chaos, Destruction, Knowledge, and Trickery. The favored weapon of the Great Eye is the scythe, and its symbol is an eye.

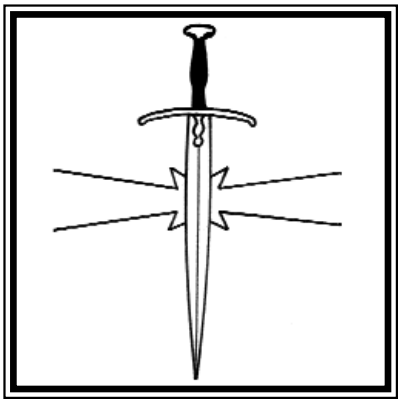


Teleus (the Obedient)

Archangel, LG — Law

Teleus (tel-*lee*-us), the Obedient, the Trusting Light, is the angelic champion of Law established by Choranus himself when Áereth was young. Charged with countering the chaos of Zhühn with order and unity, Teleus challenged the corruptive power of the titan Cadixtat. After their world-spanning battle, Teleus at last threw his enemy down when he severed Cadixtat's hand with his sword. Still, Cadixtat survived, and thus neither Law nor Chaos completely triumphed. Satisfied with the balance of the two, Choranus ordered Teleus to quit Áereth. A lord among solars, Teleus is sometimes worshipped as a god himself. Too humble to allow this, Teleus works to shift his clerics' devotion to another, like-minded god of law, such as Gorhan, Justicia, or even Choranus.

When mortals devote themselves to Teleus, the domains associated with his worship are Good, Law, and War. His favored weapon is the greatsword and his symbol is the same sword surrounded by parallel rays of the sun or held against a nimbus of light.



Thalass (the River Father)

Demigod, N — Terrestrial Waters, Music

Thalass (*thal*-us), the River Father, the Lakelord, the Purifying Flood, is the deity of inland waters, lakes, and rivers. He is the patron god of those who draw life from the water, rewarding those who respect nature with abundance. The Purifying Flood responds with deluges and violent rainstorms against transgressors.

Clerics and druids of Thalass often dwell near forest springs and lakes, sometimes consorting with nymphs, called the Daughters of Thalass. Always vigilant against the pollutions of Nimlurun, they have been known to hire adventurers when their waters are threatened by aberrations or enemy clerics. The River Father is said to resemble a noble satyr with garments of pure water, wielding a bow that fires arrows of crystal. Thalass is one of the many children of Pelagia, and his faithful often worship at the banks of rivers, for all rivers lead to the dominion of the Coral Queen.

The domains associated with Thalass are Animal, Protection, and Water. His favored weapon is the shortbow and his symbol is the syrinx, a set of hollow reed panpipes.

Thormyr (the Loyal)

Demigod, LN(g) — Honor, Duty, Protection

Thormyr (*thor*-meer), the Loyal, the Dauntless Warrior, is the god of duty and honor, especially in the face of evil. He is the patron of soldiers, guardsmen, and all men-at-arms who protect the innocent from the lawless. A stern, serious god, Thormyr rewards loyalty above all, granting his blessing to the steadfast and valiant and promising spiritual deliverance to the fallen.

Centuries ago, as a virtuous paladin in service of Justicia, Thormyr's unswerving duty to her laws drove him on a quest into Hell itself. The crusade led to an assault against archdevils, the saving of countless innocents, and the recovery of a holy relic—and to Thormyr's torture and death. After bargaining for the release of his soul, Justicia and Gorhan elevated the fallen warrior into divinity. Entrusted with the mantle of duty by the Greater Gods, Thormyr was forced to adopt a more neutrally inclined role as a deity.

The Dauntless Warrior is always depicted as a towering warrior in silver scale mail, holding a ranseur as he did in life. His lay followers often serve as bodyguards or court protectors, while his clerics are charged with vigilance against evil. Despite Thormyr's adherence to neutrality as the god of honor and duty, most of his followers are of good alignment. Paladins who serve him often refer to him as Honorus, the Duty and the Flame.

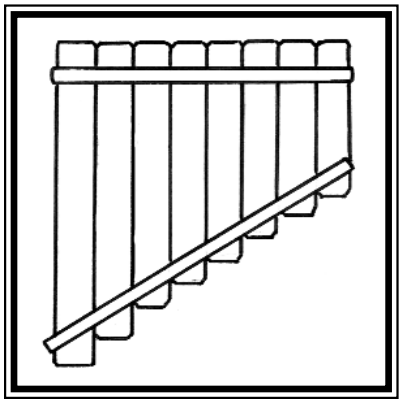
The domains associated with Thormyr are Healing, Law, Protection, and Strength. His favored weapon is the ranseur and his holy symbol consists of the polearm laid slantwise across a silver shield.

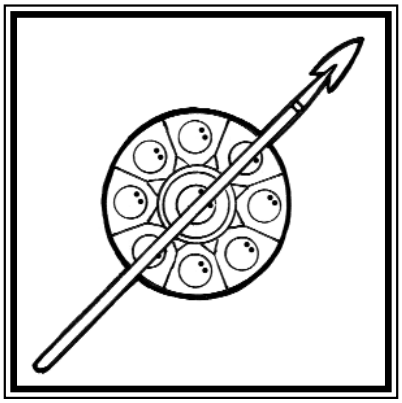
Tlachinozal (the Scorched God)

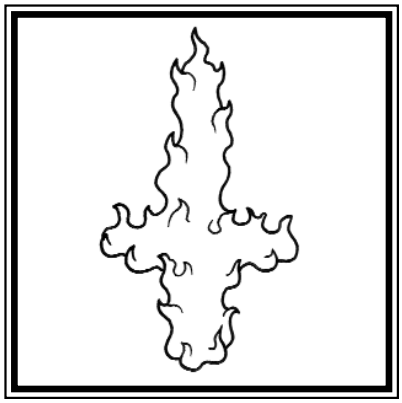
Demigod, LE — Chuzec, Fire

Tlachinozal (tla-*chin*-o-suhl), the Scorched God, the Fire Requiem, is the patron god of the Xulmec city-state of Chuzec. Having deposed the former goddess of Chuzec, whom he claims failed to protect his people from volcanic eruptions a thousand years ago, Tlachinozal is a militant deity of fire and earth. He teaches that fire can either destroy or strengthen that which it touches; infidels and foreigners will burn, while the faithful will endure and be reshaped like Chuzec itself. The Fire Requiem demands sacrifice in the form of captured enemies, whose hearts are taken from them and cast into braziers of holy fire.

Acolytes of Tlachinozal must learn to speak Ignan, then brand their bodies with sigils of their god. More dedicated priests of Tlachinozal often undergo a ceremony known as the Cleansing, whereby their skin is ritually burned but thereafter pro-







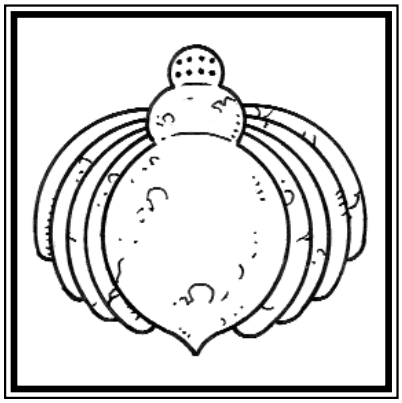
vides a stronger resistance to fire. Despite the xenophobia his militarism breeds, the Scorched God was the first Xulmec deity to approve of foreigners' art of forged metal, and many of his followers are metallurgists and blacksmiths. When his image is burned into the walls of his temples, Tlachinozal is depicted as a large, muscular man with red skin whose appearance suspiciously resembles that of an efreeti.

The domains associated with Tlachinozal are Earth, Evil, and Fire. His favored weapon is the shortbow, with arrows usually set aflame. His symbol is a shard of fire resembling an arrow, knife, or sword.

Tororthun (The Stone Spider)

Lesser god, N/CE — Subterrane, Denizens of the Underdeep / Malice, Spiders

Tororthun (toe-*ror*-thoon), the Stone Spider, the Eight Legs of the World, the Queen of the Damned, is the goddess of the cavernous depths of Áereth, the narrow, stygian passages, and all the crawling denizens of the Underdeep. When the rebel elves fled from the sphinxes millennia ago, it was Tororthun who called to them, lured them into the abyssal chasms of her dominion, and embraced them. As the fumes from the Devil's Cauldron slowly transformed them into the drow, the Stone Spider sheltered them from the scrutiny of the Overworld. Yet some say Tororthun is a goddess stricken mad, for she occasionally flies into a fury of senseless evil. Calling herself simply the Spider Queen during such spells, she retreats to her illimitable web in the demonic planes of the Abyss. Capricious and cruel, the Queen sets her minions against one another, favoring and disfavoring on a whim. Some sages familiar with the faith of Tororthun speculate that the evil of the drow infected their own matron deity, making a demon out of a goddess, while others say that Tororthun was stricken by a binding curse from Zhühn himself in an effort to undermine yet another of the gods' creations. When she is lucid, Tororthun is a fierce protector of her chosen followers, watching over the dark elves who have made a home in the earthen womb of her Underdeep dominion.



An uneasy ambivalence exists between Ireth, whom surface elves worship above all, and Tororthun. The Starmistress does not approve of the darkness the drow have embraced or the violent society they have spawned, but she is grateful that the Stone Spider has taken them under her care. Ireth, however, despises Tororthun's demonic alter ego, and ever searches for the means to "cure" the goddess of this affliction, hoping to steer the wicked drow back from evil. While priestesses of Tororthun are willing to treat with other faiths of neutrality, the clergy of the Spider Queen see all other deities as unworthy enemies. The Spider Queen has made a fierce enemy of the Xulmec god Ahpuchac, whose dominion of the subterranean world does not please her. Tororthun is depicted as a massive arachnid, a hybrid of chitin and solid stone, crawling perpetually through the Underdeep. Her Spider Queen persona is seen as a drow female of ravishing beauty and cruel countenance, or as a whip-wielding drider.

Those clergy who worship the Stone Spider have access to the domains of Drow, Earth, Poison, and Spider, while those who worship her demonic aspect have access to Drow, Evil, Poison, and Spider. The favored weapon of Tororthun is the longsword, while the favored weapon of her Spider Queen persona is the whip. Her symbol is an image of herself, a stony spider usually rendered symmetrically.

The Traitor (The Undying Lord)

Demigod, CE — Betrayal, Chaos, Madness

Once a mortal wizard named Thandric, the being known as the Traitor ascended to divinity centuries ago. Thandric and his brother, princes of a forgotten kingdom, were sent on a quest to find a legendary Elyrian potion called the Draught of Ages that could heal their dying father, the king, who was stricken with a magic curse. The people, beset on all sides by their enemies, needed their warrior-king to lead them from destruction. On their quest, Thandric heard rumors that the Draught could grant its imbiber eternal youth, and this desire germinated within him. When the princes returned with the potion, their father lay on his deathbed and the armies of the enemy had reached the gates of their capital city. Fearing for his own life in that moment, Thandric grabbed the Draught from his father's hand. Thandric drank the Draught, hoping to achieve eternal youth and save himself. As the

enemy breached the gates, Thandric watched his home overtaken and his people slain. When they attacked Thandric, his body sustained grave injuries but he would not die. He had gained immortality…and the curse of godhood.

For his betrayal, Thandric was "awarded" the immortal mantle of chaos. His identity as a man long since shattered, the Traitor is now the patron god of treasonists, betrayers—and of course, traitors. As a purveyor of chaos, the Traitor is infamous for his dark whimsy, and even his own followers are not immune. Sometimes he withholds spells, while at other times he aids his followers' enemies. His true name largely forgotten, he now has many names and titles, including Chaotor, the Undying Lord, and the Regenerating One. He is worshipped by medicine men, witch doctors, and shamans of evil bent. Those who forsake their former deities often find a twisted home in his service. The Traitor is usually seen as a kindly old man with subtle, disturbing bestial traits. Some believe the Traitor is an office more than an entity, that he whose betrayal outweighs that of the current Traitor will take his place.

The Traitor's domains are Chaos, Healing, Madness, and Trickery. His favored weapon is a staff of Caduceus (quarterstaff) with a hidden stiletto blade concealed beneath its cap. The symbol of the Traitor is a vial of poison, usually shown unstoppered and half empty.

Tzitzimitl (The Queen of Air)

Demon princess, CE — Destruction, Ruin

Tzitzimitl (tsih-tsi-*mitl*), the self-titled Queen of Air, is the demon princess of destruction and ruin, the patroness of outcasts and criminals who seek vengeance against the righteous. Selfish, cruel individuals turn to Tzitzimitl for worldly power, finding retribution in the fell rites of her worship. Among the Lords of the Abyss, Tzitzimitl is the mistress of vrocks, and it is usually these vulture-headed demons that her mortal followers endeavor to summon with their rituals. Sufficient blood sacrifice and evil deeds allow the cultists to summon a vrock to the Material Plane for greater lengths of time than spells would normally permit.

In the Southlands, where Tzitzimitl's thralls are greater than number, she is opposed by the humans of the city-state of Amoya—and their goddess, Anahuara. Of great import to cultists of Tzitzimitl is the March of Lightless Despair, the five moonless days at the end of each year, when it is believed that Tzitzimitl takes physical form on the Material Plane and battles Anahuara. Demonic allies of the Queen of Air also visit the land, as the magic of mortals wanes during the absence of the Spectral Moon. The demon princess and her allies have always been defeated, however, and punishment usually falls upon her worshippers for their insufficient devotion.

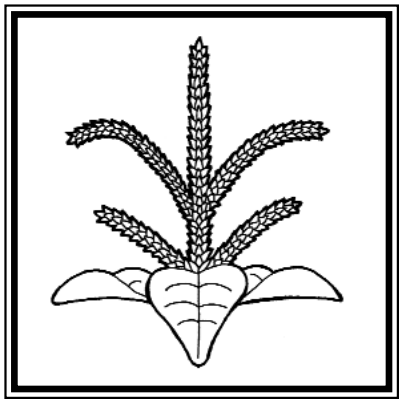
Valdreth (The Enduring)

Lesser god, LN — Time, Longevity, Integrity

Valdreth (*vahl*-dreth), the Enduring, the Unchanging One, is indisputably the oldest of the Sancturn Pantheon. Before Valdreth's arrival, time as it is understood did not exist in the Triad's creation. He is the god of the everlasting and the caretaker of time itself. A dying father who wishes to impart knowledge to his children, a desperate general who waits for reinforcements before the enemy horde appears, and a wizard in short possession of a valuable book may each beseech Valdreth to grant them more time. Yet the Unchanging One rarely stops the great march of time itself, teaching his faithful instead that they must take care to use what time they do have wisely.

Clerics of Valdreth are patient men and women who know well just how long an hour can be—and how short a lifetime. In religious art, the Unchanging One is depicted as a clear-eyed sage, sometimes middle-aged, sometimes venerable. Temples of Valdreth are known for selling *unguents of timelessness*, usually finding buyers in wizards, scholars, and those who wish to preserve frail writings otherwise subject to the ravages of time.

The domains associated with Valdreth are Law, Magic, and Protection. His favored weapon is



the light mace, and his symbol is an amaranth or a timepiece of any kind.

Variag (the Icelord)

Lesser god, N — Ice, Winter, War

Variag (*var*-ee-og), the Icelord, is the god of brutal winter and cold winds. He is the patron of those who thrive in the frozen tundra and relish the sound of cracking ice. Barbarians of the Frost Barrens revere the Icelord, mostly to placate him into relenting his frozen embrace. It is said that when winter descends upon Áereth, Variag is allowed to venture forth and bring storms of ice to lands normally forbidden to him. Winters longer and colder than normal are said to be the indulgences of the merciless Icelord. He is also a god of war, loving the clash of cold steel and the spilling of blood upon the snow.

Variag is not evil or malicious, but he cares little for those frozen by his administrations. His reign of ice is always kept in check by Ildavir, who ensures the balance of nature in all things. In the mountainous realms of Áereth, frost giants worship Variag, as do any humanoids willing to endure arctic conditions and glacial environs—for in such remote places few other clergies venture. Druids and rangers of the frozen north usually choose wolves as animal companions, for they are sacred to the Icelord.

The domains associated with Variag are Air, Strength, War, and Water. His favored weapon is the greataxe, and his symbol is the silhouette of a wolf etched into the blade of such an axe.

Xeluth (the Ravager)

Lesser god, NE — Violence, War, Strife

Xeluth (zel-*ooth*), the Ravager, is the god of violence and the brutality of war. He is the patron of all who use force to achieve their ends, those who delight in slaughter, and those who grow stronger with conflict. Xeluth cares more for the fight than the spoils, more for war itself than triumph or even its outcome. Although he shares many tenets with Klazath, Xeluth usually contends with the Crimson Banner for the attentions of Yvyn—a battle the Ravager seldom wins.

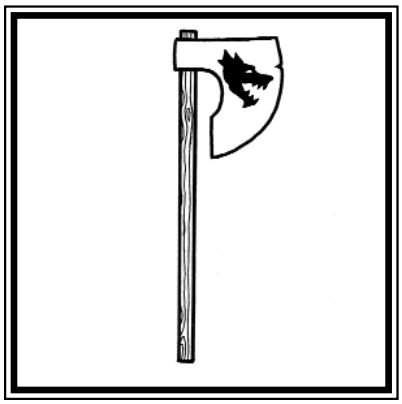
The conquests and schemes of Xeluth, often aided by other evil powers, have led to the spawning of several bloodthirsty demigods commonly worshipped by monstrous humanoids. These including Kagnar, the god of animality and rage (served by gnolls and minotaurs), Gadraak, the god of territorialism (served by orcs and ogres), Molgrem, the god of militarism (served by goblins and hobgoblins), and Urath, the god of mindless slaughter and fury (served by trolls). Often these very same humanoids turn directly to Xeluth, and for this reason his clergies are diverse. Fearless human priests in polished, spiked platemail and spear-wielding, hide-clad shamans from an orc tribe might both serve Xeluth. Given the Ravager's dogma, such disparate clerics are as likely to ally with one another as do battle. Advancement through challenge or assassination is common in Xeluth's brutal faith. The Ravager himself is depicted as a helmed warrior, his face concealed with a death's head mask. In his burly arms, he wields a great flail whose spiked ball resembles a black sun with a nimbus of fire.

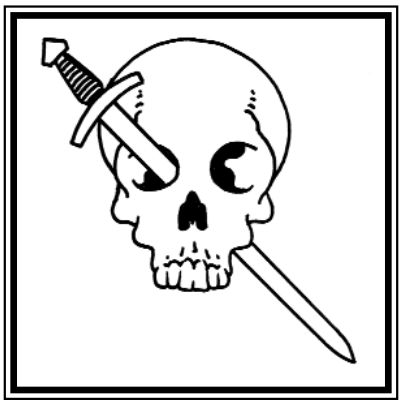
The domains associated with Xeluth are Destruction, Evil, Strength, and War. His favored weapon is the heavy flail and his symbol is a skull, usually bloody or pierced with a blade.

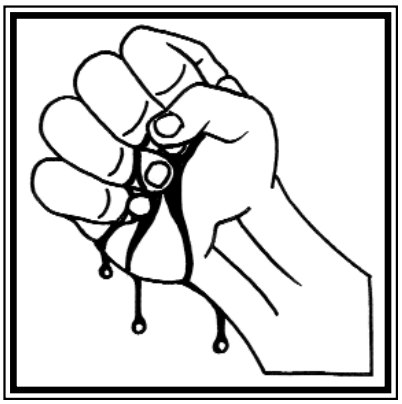
Yvyn (the Righteous Slaughter)

Lesser god, NE — Conspiracy, Holy War, Rebellion

Yvyn (*ee*-vin), the Curdled Trust, the Vicious Cycle, the Holy Preemptor, the Righteous Slaughter, the Mastress Cabal, the Whisper in the Darkness, is the goddess of conspiracy, insurrection, and the evils of xenophobia. When each great race first emerged and feared the wonders of the world they did not understand, it was Yvyn who whispered into their ears, warning them of the treachery of their strange new neighbors. The Mastress Cabal nourishes the seeds of doubt and mistrust which bloom and grow until cries for war reach







fever pitch and great crusades are unleashed in the name of other gods. To her followers, the leaders of the land are corrupt, deserving to be dethroned. Yvyn ever champions the underdog, yet only until he is redeemed—then she moves onto the new underdog who wishes to usurp her prior darling. She is the Vicious Cycle churning whirlwinds of paranoia into great storms of bloodshed.

Very often, the Holy Preemptor seeks out other gods—great and small—with whom to conspire, caring not whether they be good or evil. Yvyn, whose causes are rarely her own, seeks only bloodshed and the joy of usurpation. In turn, every god knows that Yvyn is the first one to turn to when a violent alliance is required. Yvyn allies herself with the Hidden Lord more than any other deity, for the two share many of the same modi operandi. Indeed many of Yvyn's own secret and ferocious cultists are likely devotees of the Cloaked One as well. Her cults count among their members clerics from all walks of life and stations within society; yet their only true allegiance is to the Mastress Cabal and to each other. Their mission is singular: to foment insurgency in the name of the Righteous Slaughter. Yvyn is seldom rendered in art, but when she is, she is seen as a middle-aged woman looking upon a battle from afar, clutching in her hands a military fork.

The domains associated with Yvyn are Evil, Trickery, and War. Her favored weapon is the trident (a pitchfork to the rebellious peasant) and her symbol is a clenched fist dripping blood.

Zhühn (The Great Enemy)

Greater god, CE — Deception, Blight, Corruption, Poison, Falsehood

Zhühn (zeun), the Great Enemy, the White Sepulcher, the Faceless Lord, the Dweller in the Void, is an opportunistic being of surreptitious means and great, overshadowing power. He is the power who answers when there is no other to hear, who plays the role of any invoked deity, be it false or imagined. Very few of Zhühn's servants are aware of their service to him, for they know their god by different names (e.g., Entropy, *DCC #10: The Sunless Garden*). Whenever a false idol is served or an unknown deity is called upon, it is Zhühn who fills the empty void, grants the spells to the idolater, and beguiles the unwary.

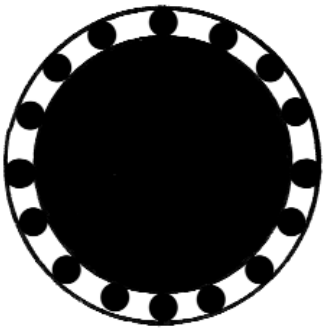
Zhühn desires nothing less than the eradication of all sentient life, the complete undoing of Creation. He dwelt in the Void before the Triad interrupted the darkness, and Zhühn will not rest until all is unmade. His plots are numerous, many-layered, and may take centuries to reach fruition. He is content to save a village of innocents if he can poison the entire kingdom; he will spare a nation if he can destroy the continent. Often those who fall from grace unwittingly find Zhühn picking up the slack. Blackguards and corrupted clerics of good frequently result from Zhühn's subtle administrations. So far-reaching are his machinations that even the most virtuous clerics often second guess their own actions, asking whether they are serving their god's will or the Great Enemy's.

Zhühn names no allies among the gods—and surely none can trust him. His greatest adversaries are Choranus and Ildavir, while Elyr, a product of his own ignorance, perseveres as a painful thorn in his side. To carry out his goals of corruption, he despoiled the newborn god that became Narrimunâth and Nimlurun and has designs on other gods as well. When Zhühn is depicted, he is seen as a cowled figure with a single outstretched hand. In such images, he always lurks in the corner or only partially in the frame of the image—never hidden, yet never prevalent. His body is never seen whole, but

The Void

The Void is nothingness, utter emptiness, the very absence of existence. It is not a plane to which one can go. When any being possessed of less power than a god enters the Void, he is eradicated altogether. The Void should not be confused with the Astral Plane, which is an endless space that binds together the Outer, Inner, and Material Planes. The Void is that dimensionless nothingness in which the Material Plane was created.

Spheres of annihilation are, in fact, small holes in existence, errant pieces of the Void itself. Fortunately for everyone but Zhühn himself, the Void is very small now. Creation has replaced it with life and existence, and all that does remain of the Void contains the Great Enemy himself. Expanding it anew remains Zhühn's single-minded pursuit.



rather half-formed from its surroundings, symbolizing Zhühn's manipulation of existing material and his refusal to create things anew.

The White Sepulcher does have a few mortal agents who serve him knowingly. These individuals, such as the Ruin Knights, are frightening indeed and usually bereft of their humanity. They are the shadow figures who hide behind the puppetmasters who hide behind the proxies. Elder priests of all faiths often warn their novices against the whisperings of Zhühn. Indeed, his name is often invoked when accusations of corruption are made, whether the Great Enemy is truly to blame or not. Zhühn sponsors no formal temples and his servants are difficult to unmask. The nihilistic clergy of the Great Enemy, when not carrying out local schemes to subvert creation, experiment with arcana to disintegrate reality itself. *Spheres of annihilation* and *rods of cancellation* are only two of the many dangerous instruments to come of such fell research.

The domains associated with the Faceless Lord are Destruction, Evil, Magic, and Trickery. His favored weapon—if indeed one is ever shown—is the dart (usually poisoned). Zhühn cares for no symbols, but to channel his power, his clerics must deface the holy symbol of another god to use as his own.

Favored Deities by Race

With the exception of some demigods, the many races of Áereth revere the gods whose ideologies appeal to them the most. The list below shows what gods many of the races of Áereth typically worship based on their own dispositions and cultural beliefs. The gods are listed in the order of most likely worshipped.

Race/Monster	Gods
Aberrations	Outer Gods, Narrimunâth, Nimlurun, Zhühn
Bugbears	Molgrem, Kagnar, Gadraak, Xeluth
Centaurs	Ildavir
Doppelgangers	The Hidden One
Dragons	Centivus, Choranus, Ahriman
Dwarves	Daenthar, Fenwar, Centivus
Dwarves (duergar)	Daenthar, the Septych
Elves	Ireth, Centivus, Ildavir, Valdreth
Elves (gray, wild, wood)	Ireth, Ildavir, Centivus, Choranus
Elves (aquatic)	Ireth, Pelagia, Ildavir, Chondri
Elves (drow)	Tororthun, Bargúl
Fey (nymphs, dryads, satyrs, etc.)	Ildavir, Thalass
Gargoyles	Ahriman, Urath
Giants	Daenthar, Fenwar, Poderon, Variag
Gnolls	Kagnar, Xeluth, Lords of the Abyss
Gnomes	Poderon, Fenwar, Ireth
Gnomes (rock, svirfneblin)	Poderon, Daenthar
Goblinoids (goblins, hobgoblins)	Molgrem, Xeluth, Yvyn
Hags	Gil'Mâridth, Malotoch
Half-elves	Wyshalar, Delvyr
Half-orcs	Xeluth, Klazath, Thormyr
Halflings	Olidyra, Neshti, Rathul, Wyshalar, Myna
Harpies	Malotoch
Hobgoblins	Molgrem, Xeluth, Lords of Hell, Yvyn
Kobolds	Lagos
Lamias	Ankharet
Lammasus	Amun Tor, Madrah, Delvyr
Lizardfolk	Ildavir, Madrah, Cynhuara
Locathahs	Pelagia, Elas
Medusas	Lords of Hell
Merfolk	Pelagia, Chondri
Minotaurs	Kagnar, Xeluth
Nagas	Axaluatl, Cynhuara, Madrah
Ogres	Gadraak, Xeluth
Orcs	Gadraak, Xeluth, Klazath
Sahuagin	Elas
Sphinxes	Amun Tor, Ankharet
Treants	Ildavir, Thalass
Tritons	Pelagia, Chondri
Troglodytes	Lagos
Trolls	Urath, Xeluth
Undead	Lasheeva, Malotoch (ghouls)

Chapter 3
Bestiary of the Known Realms

Azure Ooze

Large Ooze
Hit Dice: 5d10+30 (57 hp)
Initiative: –5
Speed: 40 ft., 40 ft. swim
Armor Class: 4 (–5 Dex, –1 size), touch 4, flat-footed 4
Base Attack/Grapple: +3/+10
Attack: Slam +5 melee (1d8+3)
Full Attack: Slam
Space/Reach: 10 ft./10 ft.
Special Attacks: Constrict 1d8+3, improved grab, paralysis
Special Qualities: Blindsight 60 ft., immunity to cold and fire, ooze traits, transparent
Saves: Fort +7, Ref –4, Will –4
Abilities: Str 16, Dex 1, Con 23, Int –, Wis 1, Cha 1
Skills: Swim +10
Feats: –
Environment: Any aquatic or marshes
Organization: Solitary
Challenge Rating: 5
Treasure: None
Alignment: Always neutral
Advancement: 6–8 HD (Large); 9–12 HD (Huge)
Level Adjustment: –

This ooze resembles a giant blob of bright blue slime with a diameter of about twenty feet.

A typical azure ooze weighs about 3,600 pounds. An azure ooze can be found meandering through wetlands and other areas that go near large bodies of water. It feeds on anything that crosses its path, and is not hesitant to feed upon living creatures much larger than itself. Despite their amorphous nature, azure oozes are surprisingly quick, and are equally adept at moving through water as well as land. It can compress its body to fit through fissures and other small areas as small as one inch wide.

Combat

An azure ooze attacks by hitting its opponents with long, gooey pseudopods. If it successfully strikes an opponent, it then attempts to grab that foe and paralyze it. An azure ooze never releases its hold on a victim unless the ooze is killed or until the ooze is finished feeding on its prey.

Blindsight (Ex): An azure ooze's entire body is a sensory organ, which can ascertain prey by any scent or vibration within 100 feet of the creature.

Constrict (Ex): An azure ooze deals automatic slam and paralysis damage with a successful grapple check.

Improved Grab (Ex): To use this ability, an azure ooze must first hit an opponent with its slam attack. It can then start to attempt a grapple as a free action without provoking an attack of opportunity. If it wins the grapple check, it establishes a hold and can constrict.

Paralysis (Ex): An azure ooze secrets a paralyzing fluid that renders its victims completely helpless with prolonged exposure. Any constricting attack automatically deals this paralyzing attack. Any creature constricted by the azure ooze must succeed on a DC 19 Fortitude save each round on the ooze's turn or be paralyzed for 1d6 rounds. The save is Constitution-based.

Ceraton

Large Magical Beast (Cold)
Hit Dice: 3d10+9 (25 hp)
Initiative: +1
Speed: 40 ft.
Armor Class: 11 (+1 Dex, –1 size, +1 natural), touch 10, flat-footed 10
Base Attack/Grapple: +3/+12
Attack: Claw +7 melee (2d4+5)
Full Attack: 2 claws +7 melee (2d4+5) or bite +2 melee (1d6+2)
Space/Reach: 10 ft./5 ft.
Special Attacks: Pounce, rend 2d6+9
Special Qualities: Darkvision 60 ft., immunity to cold, low-light vision, vulnerability to fire, scent
Saves: Fort +6, Ref +4, Will +0
Abilities: Str 20, Dex 12, Con 16, Int 9, Wis 9, Cha 12
Skills: Balance +6, Hide +3, Jump +6, Listen +5, Spot +4
Feats: Alertness, Lightning Reflexes, Toughness
Environment: Any desert or hills
Organization: Solitary, pair, or pack (3–12)
Challenge Rating: 2
Treasure: Standard
Alignment: Always lawful neutral
Advancement: 4–7 HD (Large); 8–12 HD (Huge)
Level Adjustment: –

This nimble, hardy creature resembles a cross between a horse and a crocodile, and is covered with large gray scales.

Ceratons are feared predators in the snowy regions of the Northlands, hunting game when it is plentiful, and closing in on human and demihuman settlements when their regular food supply becomes scarce. They are fearless trackers and hunters, and are masters of finding warm-blooded creatures wherever they might hide. They also run on two powerful hind legs, and are surprisingly fast for their size.

Despite being most commonly found in the colder regions of the Northlands, ceratons are lizards, and thought to be distantly related to dinosaurs. Although countless theories abound as to why these creatures prefer the cold instead of the warmth of jungles, these powerful lizards hate warmth with a passion, and invariably become sick and die if transported to a warmer climate. The steppes of Saramanthia are as far south as the ceratons naturally roam.

Certain warriors in Saramanthia have managed to train the ceratons as mounts. Though difficult to capture and train, ceratons make strong, powerful hunting steeds that are prized by elite warriors throughout the Northlands. Minor wars have erupted between barbarians of the Northlands and the barbarians of the Lostlands over which is the better steed: the ceraton or the shadroquus.

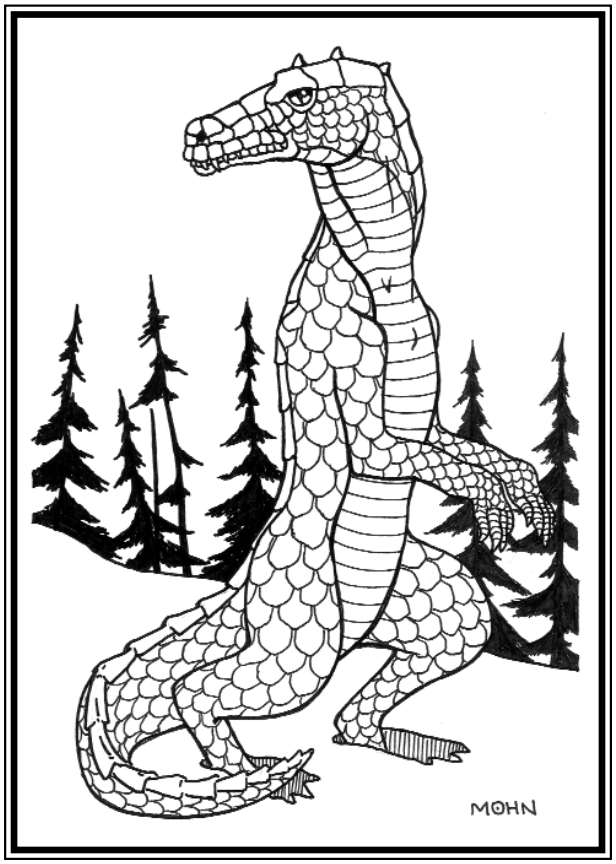
Combat

In the wild, ceratons move about like packs of dire wolves, hunting large packs of game animals and moving mostly at night. They attack in groups of three or more, and only attack those opponents whom they feel fairly certain of slaying.

A trained ceraton moves and attacks at the behest of its rider. If given free rein, it prefers to pounce upon a single opponent; however, it generally follows the lead of its rider and does whatever it is asked.

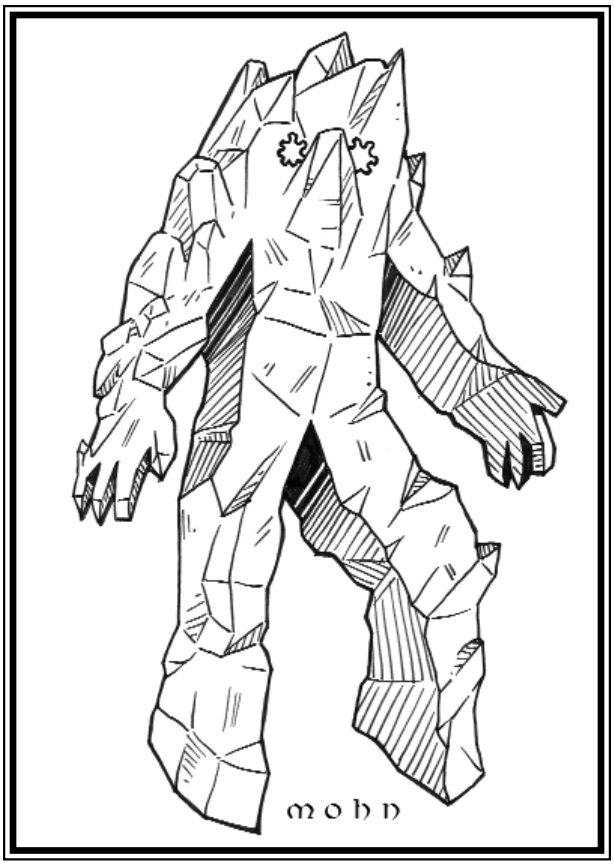
Pounce (Ex): If a ceraton charges, it can make a full attack.

Rend (Ex): A ceraton that hits with both claw attacks latches onto the opponent's body and tears the flesh. This attack automatically deals an extra 2d6+9 points of damage.



Crystal Golem

Large Construct
Hit Dice: 6d10+30 (63 hp)
Initiative: +2
Speed: 30 ft.
Armor Class: 11 (+2 Dex, –1 size), touch 11, flat-footed 9
Base Attack/Grapple: +4/+12
Attack: Slam +7 melee (2d8+4)
Full Attack: 2 slams +7 melee (2d8+4)
Space/Reach: 10 ft./10 ft.
Special Attacks: Blindness
Special Qualities: Construct traits, damage reduction 10/adamantine and bludgeoning, darkvision 60 ft., immunity to magic, low-light vision
Saves: Fort +2, Ref +4, Will +2
Abilities: Str 19, Dex 14, Con –, Int –, Wis 11, Cha 1
Skills: –
Feats: –
Environment: Any
Organization: Solitary or gang (2–4)
Challenge Rating: 5
Treasure: None
Alignment: Always neutral
Advancement: 7–9 HD (Large); 10–16 HD (Huge)
Level Adjustment: –



This man-shaped creature is made from large blocks of crystal quartz. It is ten feet tall and looks to weigh around two thousand pounds.

A crystal golem has a humanoid body hewn from a single piece of transparent crystal. Their bodies are beautiful and glow softly. Their creators typically carve them into the likenesses of classical statues, and they are frequently mistaken for prized works of art.

Combat

Crystal golems are tenacious fighters, attacking relentlessly with their powerful fists. They fight until destroyed, or until their foes are vanquished.

Blindness (Ex): A crystal golem's body can glow extremely brightly, causing great pain to those who look upon its form. Any living creature that gazes at the glowing form of the crystal golem must succeed on a Will save (DC 13) or be temporarily blinded for 2d4 rounds. Any blinded creature that possesses the Blind-Fight feat may continue to attack the crystal golem without penalty, even if the save is failed.

Immunity to Magic (Ex): A crystal golem is immune to any spell or spell-like ability that allows spell resistance. In addition, certain spells and effects function differently against the creature, as noted below.

Any sort of *light* spell cast either upon or within 20 feet of a crystal golem acts as a healing spell for the creature, healing up to 2d8+8 hit points of damage.

Any sort of *darkness* spell cast either upon or within 20 feet of a crystal golem has the opposite effect, causing great harm to the golem. *Darkness* spells cast near but not directly upon the golem cause 1d4+4 hit points of damage; *darkness* spells cast directly upon the creature cause 2d8+8 hit points of damage.

Any sort of normal or magical fire directed against the crystal golem as an attack causes no damage, but instead acts as a *haste* spell, allowing the golem to move about much more freely. This effect lasts for 1d6 rounds.

Construction

A crystal golem's body is chiseled from a single block of hard crystal quartz that weighs at least two thousand pounds. The crystal must be of exceptional quality, and costs 4,000 gp. Assembling the body requires a DC 14 Craft (sculpting) check or a DC 14 Craft (jewelry) check.

CL 14th; Craft Construct, *antimagic field, continual flame, geas/quest*; Price 80,000 gp; Cost 30,000 gp + 2,000 XP.

Draexodon

Huge Magical Beast
Hit Dice: 7d10+35 (73 hp)
Initiative: +1
Speed: 30 ft.
Armor Class: 13 (+1 Dex, –2 size, +4 natural), touch 9, flat-footed 12
Base Attack/Grapple: +7/+22
Attack: Claw +12 melee (2d6+7)
Full Attack: 4 claws +12 melee (2d6+7) or bite +7 melee (2d4+3)
Space/Reach: 10 ft./10 ft.
Special Attacks: Bull rush, frightful presence
Special Qualities: Damage reduction 5/silver
Saves: Fort +10, Ref +6, Will +1
Abilities: Str 24, Dex 12, Con 20, Int 6, Wis 9, Cha 6
Skills: Jump +12, Spot +7, Swim +12
Feats: Great Fortitude
Environment: Any hills or plains
Organization: Pair or herd (3– 6)
Challenge Rating: 7
Treasure: Standard
Alignment: Usually lawful evil
Advancement: 8–12 HD (Huge); 13–18 HD (Gargantuan)
Level Adjustment: –

This is a mighty reptilian creature, standing more than twelve feet tall at the shoulder and weighing several tons. Its body is covered in brown, knobby scales.

Left to its own devices, the draeoxodon is a relatively harmless and peaceable creature that can be found grazing in the plains of the Northlands. For the most part, the wild draeoxodon herds are ruthlessly hunted and captured by goblinoid bandits, who then train the beasts for their own nefarious purposes. A trained draeoxodon takes on the personality and temperament of its new masters, becoming an evil, vicious beast that is quite dangerous indeed.

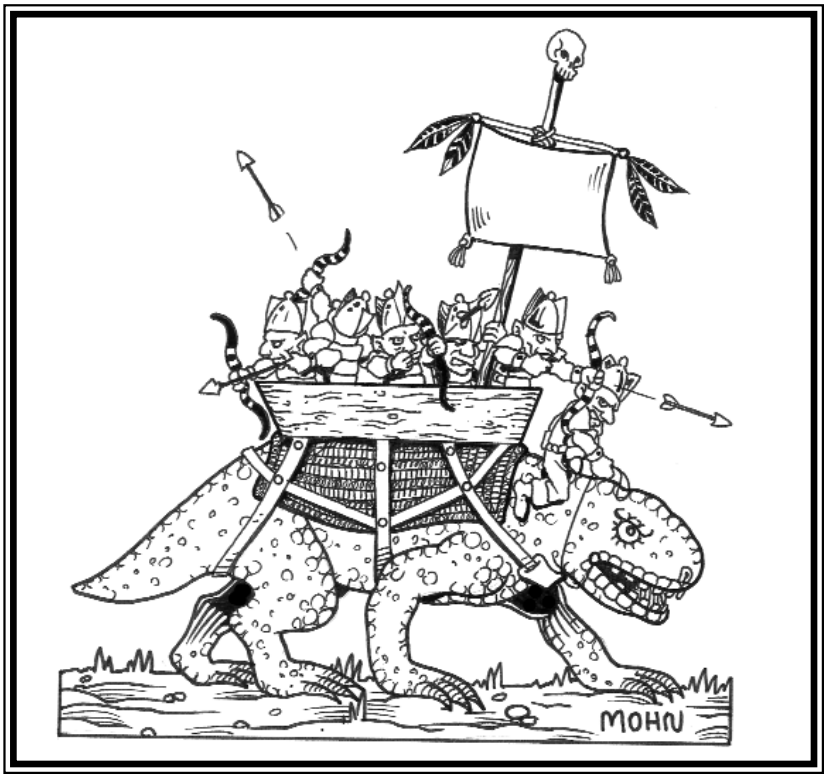
The training of a draeoxodon is a long, laborious process, which can take upward of a year to complete. However, once trained, they respond to the commands—and the whips—of their goblin masters without hesitation. Although used for a number of purposes by goblins, the draeoxodon serves three primary functions for a tribe: to haul materials or weapons, to attack foes, and to act as a mobile artillery station for goblin archers. As many as eight to twelve goblins can ride on a draeoxodon's back, although no more than four can be perched on top of the beast and still be able to take their full actions.

Combat

Wild draeoxodons are gentle creatures, and only fight when cornered. Otherwise, they seek to flee combat where possible. Trained draeoxodons, on the other hand, are savage fighters, immediately charging into combat when possible and ripping their opponents to shreds with their claws after the initial charge. With goblin riders aboard, they show a little more restraint (but barely), letting their riders control their direction in combat and following their leads as to when to charge and when to strike.

Bull Rush (Ex): A draeoxodon begins a battle by charging at an opponent, lowering its head and smashing into opponents with its large, thick skull. In addition to the normal benefits and hazards of a charge, this allows the creature to make a single slam attack with a +12 attack bonus that deals 3d6+6 points of damage.

Frightful Presence (Su): The draexodon can inspire terror by charging or attacking. Affected creatures must succeed on a DC 12 Will save or become shaken, remaining in that condition as long as they remain with 30 feet of the draexodon. The save DC is Charisma-based.



Drakon

Known by as many names as the cultures who fear them—among them anu-zorai, naga-born, and the most common, drakon—these arrogant reptilian humanoids are rightly respected throughout the Southlands of Áereth. Once a loose society of warring tribes and factions, the drakon have only increased in power, rising from the depths of Zimala centuries ago to form the nation of Ssorlang. Despite the failed expansion of their self-titled empire, the drakon remain a constant source of terror in this part of the world, and recent rumblings of drakon militancy have made the civilizations of the Southlands look to their borders.

The drakon are a cunning race, always planning grandiose schemes of domination, and only their constant infighting keeps their power in check. The only creatures that they treat with any true respect are their ancient forebears, the nagas. Though the arcana that gave rise to the drakon has long been lost, most scholars believe that the nagas of the old Zimalan Empire injected their own blood into humanoid subjects in the failed attempt to create a powerful race under their control. The fact that the drakon were birthed by magic—and not divine creation—has led to their narcissistic belief that their race is one of perfection.

Apart from the nagas, most drakon consider all other races beneath their contempt. Although they gladly smile and give promises of great wealth and power to their allies, any friendship or alliance with the drakon inevitably ends with a knife in the back … and a twist of the blade.

Given their mutative origin, a number of different strains of the species exist, but the most common are detailed below.

The drakon speak the Draconic and Common languages.

Combat

The drakon are master tacticians. They rarely enter combat without some sort of cunning battle plan, and will retreat if doing so means that they can survive to deliver revenge another day. Although they believe that violence is the ultimate tool to achieving their goals, the drakon are a patient race and can accept losing a battle or two in order to win a war. Whenever possible, the drakon will first deploy or sacrifice their non-drakon allies in combat, letting these creatures take the heaviest hits in a fight before entering the fray themselves.

Drakon Religion

Most drakon are too imperious to bow before any god, but those who choose the devoted path of a cleric worship the demigods Axaluatl, Lagos, or even the infernal powers—sometimes an amalgam of wicked deities. Such polytheistic drakon clerics have access to two of the following domains: Death, Evil, or War.

Drakon Society

The drakon comprise a hubristic culture, dedicated to the conquest and enslavement of all other creatures, whom they believe to be servitors at best and cattle at worst. Their society is cruel and unforgiving, as likely to turn on itself as on its enemies. Violence, an integral part of drakon life, it is believed to be the best solution to all problems. When direct violence fails, the use of deceit and dissimulation, like a subtle poison, is equally applauded.

Drakon dwell chiefly in the cities and towns of Ssorlang, but many communities reside deep within the jungles and swamps of the Southlands, inaccessible to all but the most hardy of travelers. The drakon venerate the pyramid structure of their forebears—they believe that it symbolizes the steady ascension to power, a concept, they believe, that is lost on their human enemies. As such, nearly every building in a drakon community, no matter how large or small, is usually built in some sort of structure resembling a pyramid, and the triangle or pyramid shape can commonly be found throughout the various aspects of drakon society.

Drakon (Brightvenom)

Medium Monstrous Humanoid (Reptilian)
Hit Dice: 3d8+3 (16 hp)
Initiative: +5
Speed: 30 ft., climb 20 ft., swim 20 ft.
Armor Class: 13 (+1 Dex, +2 natural), touch 11, flat-footed 12
Base Attack/Grapple: +3/+3
Attack: Bite +3 melee (1d4 plus poison) or masterwork composite longbow +5 ranged (1d8)
Full Attack: Bite +3 melee (1d4 plus poison) or masterwork longsword +4 melee (1d8) or masterwork composite longbow +5 ranged (1d8)
Space/Reach: 5 ft./5 ft.
Special Attacks: Charming gaze, poison
Special Qualities: Darkvision 60 ft., deceive, keen senses
Saves: Fort +2, Ref +4, Will +4
Abilities: Str 11, Dex 13, Con 13, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 14
Skills: Concentration +4, Hide +2, Knowledge (arcana) +2, Knowledge (religion) +2, Listen +4, Move Silently +2, Spot +4
Feats: Alertness, Improved Initiative
Environment: Warm forests or marshes
Organization: Solitary, pair, band (3–6), clan (2–12 brightvenom drakon, 2–12 drakon mongrels, and 2–4 darkvenom drakon), or colony (10–200 brightvenom drakon, 10–200 drakon mongrels, and 6–60 darkvenom drakon)
Challenge Rating: 2
Treasure: Double standard
Alignment: Usually neutral evil
Advancement: By character class
Level Adjustment: +2

Upon first glance, the creature resembles a slender human with exceedingly pale skin and a gentle, languid grace. Its reptilian nature is revealed in a patina of fine scales along each forearm, its neck, and even along each temple. Its perfect white teeth are offset by a set of narrow fangs.

The scales of a brightvenom drakon can vary in color and pattern as much as any species of snake, but most possess the red and black bands reminiscent of the spirit naga. Their hair is always fine, usually black and quite straight.

Brightvenom drakon are the emissaries and diplomats of the drakon race. Experts in the art of deception, these creatures frequent travel in the realms of mankind, gathering information and sowing dissension. Brightvenom drakon infiltrating human communities often pose as prophets, teachers, or tradesman, creating mayhem with their silvery, forked tongues—turning the foes of the drakon race against each other with words instead of swords.

Combat

Brightvenom drakon tend to avoid combat whenever possible, and attempt to talk their way out of trouble, using their charming gaze to diffuse potentially violent situations. Only when they have the clear advantage in combat will they display their murderous nature, closing in for the kill with their poisonous fangs and their swords.

Deceive (Su): Once per day, a brightvenom drakon can assume the appearance of a human, elf, or half-elf of the same height and weight as itself. The effect resembles the *disguise self* spell and lasts for 1 hour per character level. The brightvenom drakon gains a +10 bonus on Disguise checks when the ability is used to effect a disguise.

Charming Gaze (Su): As *charm person*, 30 feet, Will DC 14 negates. The save DC is Charisma-based.

Poison (Ex): Injury, Fortitude DC 13, initial and secondary damage 1d6 Con. The save DC is Constitution-based.

Brightvenom Drakon as Characters

Brightvenom drakon characters possess the following racial traits:

— +2 Dexterity, +2 Constitution, +4 Charisma.

—Medium size

—A brightvenom drakon's base land speed is 30 feet.

—Darkvision out to 60 feet.

—Racial Hit Dice: A brightvenom drakon starts out with three levels of monstrous humanoid, which provide 3d8 Hit Dice, a base attack bonus of +3, and base saving throw bonuses of Fort +1, Ref +3, and Will +3.

—Racial Skills: A brightvenom drakon's monstrous humanoid levels give it skill points equal to 6 x (2 + Int modifier). Its class skills are Concentration, Hide, Knowledge (any), Listen, Move Silently, and Spot.

—Racial Feats: A brightvenom drakon's monstrous humanoid levels give it two feats.

— +2 natural armor bonus.

—Special Attacks (see above): Charming gaze (save DC 12 + Cha modifier), poison bite (save DC 12 + Con modifier)

—Special Qualities (see above): Deceive, darkvision 60 ft., keen senses

—Automatic Languages: Common, Draconic. Bonus Languages: Infernal, Orc.

—Favored Class: Rogue (male) or sorcerer (female).

—Level Adjustment: +2.

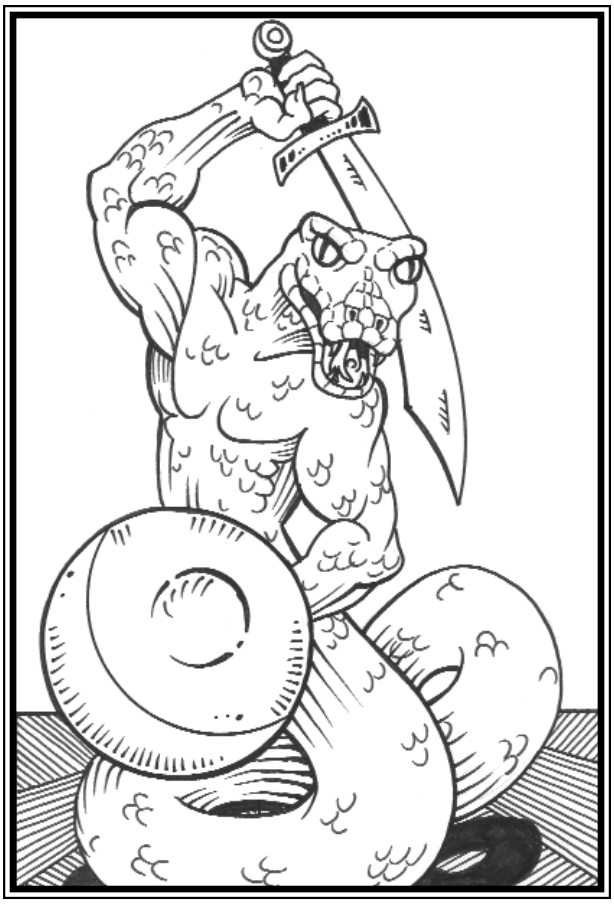
Drakon (Darkvenom)

Large Monstrous Humanoid (Reptilian)
Hit Dice: 8d8+24 (60 hp)
Initiative: +5
Speed: 30 ft., climb 30 ft., swim 30 ft.
Armor Class: 18 (+1 Dex, –1 size, +8 natural), touch 10, flat-footed 17
Base Attack/Grapple: +6/+16
Attack: Bite +11 melee (2d4+9 plus poison) or masterwork composite longbow (+2 Str bonus) +7 ranged (1d8+2)
Full Attack: Bite +11 melee (2d4+9 plus poison) or masterwork greataxe +12 melee (3d6+9) or masterwork composite longbow (+2 Str bonus) +7 ranged (1d8+2)
Space/Reach: 10 ft./10 ft.
Special Attacks: Constrict 1d4+4, improved grab, paralyzing gaze, poison
Special Qualities: Darkvision 60 ft., regeneration 5, transfigure
Saves: Fort +5, Ref +7, Will +10
Abilities: Str 22, Dex 13, Con 16, Int 18, Wis 18, Cha 20
Skills: Climb +12, Concentration +12, Gather Information +8, Heal +8, Hide +8, Knowledge (arcana) +14, Knowledge (religion) +14, Listen +14, Move Silently +4, Spot +8
Feats: Alertness, Dodge, Improved Initiative
Environment: Warm forests or marshes
Organization: Solitary, pair, band (3–6), clan (2–12 brightvenom drakon, 2–12 drakon mongrels, and 2–4 darkvenom drakon), or colony (10–200 brightvenom drakon, 10–200 drakon mongrels, and 6–60 darkvenom drakon)
Challenge Rating: 6
Treasure: Double standard
Alignment: Usually chaotic evil
Advancement: By character class
Level Adjustment: +6

Massive and fearsome, the serpent-like creature resembles a giant snake with powerful humanoid arms and keen, intelligent eyes. Its sinuous, muscular body is covered in darkly-hued scales glittering with a reflective sheen.

Though their coloration may vary, most darkvenom drakon possess scales of deep blue or darkest green. In rarer cases, a darkvenom drakon may possess the deep purple shade of the dark naga. Their bodies range from 9 to 15 feet in height and weigh 300 to 500 lbs.

As the undisputed leaders of the drakon race, darkvenom drakon are ruthless fighters that delight in the utter destruction of other creatures—by any means. They are aggressive creatures, vain even for drakon, and constantly strive to destroy their enemies and rivals.



Combat

More headstrong than their more calculating brightvenom cousins, the darkvenom drakon delight in physical combat and gladly enter melee when they scent an easy victory. Whenever possible, they attempt to use the paralyzing gaze to first weaken a potential opponent, so that they can slowly crush their enemies—literally—and watch them suffer as they die.

Transfigure (Su): Once per day, a brightvenom drakon can assume the form of a humanoid of Medium size. The effect resembles the *polymorph self* spell, but it lasts for only 1 minute per character level.

Constrict (Ex): A darkvenom drakon deals 1d4+4 hit points of damage with a successful grapple check.

Improved Grab (Ex): To use this ability, a darkvenom drakon must successfully hit a Large or smaller creature with its bite attack. It can then attempt to start a grapple as a free action without provoking an attack of opportunity. If it successfully makes the grapple check, it establishes a hold and can then constrict.

Paralyzing Gaze (Su): The gaze of a darkvenom drakon's eyes can paralyze victims within 40 feet who fail a Fortitude save (DC 19). If the saving throw is suc-

cessful, the character is forever immune to the gaze of that particular darkvenom drakon. If it fails, the victim is paralyzed for 2d6 rounds. The save DC is Charisma-based.

Poison (Ex): Injury, Fortitude DC 17, initial and secondary damage 2d6 Con. The save DC is Constitution-based.

Drakon (Mongrel)

Medium Monstrous Humanoid (Reptilian)
Hit Dice: 6d8+12 (39 hp)
Initiative: +6
Speed: 30 ft.
Armor Class: 17 (+2 Dex, +3 natural, +2 masterwork leather armor), touch 12, flat-footed 15
Base Attack/Grapple: +6/+8
Attack: Bite +8 melee (1d6+3 plus poison) or masterwork composite longbow (+2 Str bonus) +9 ranged (1d8+2)
Full Attack: Bite +8 melee (1d6+3 plus poison) or masterwork longsword +9 melee (1d8+2) or masterwork composite longbow (+2 Str bonus) +9 ranged (1d8+2)
Space/Reach: 5 ft./5 ft.
Special Attacks: Constrict 1d4+1, poison, improved grab
Special Qualities: Darkvision 60 ft.
Saves: Fort +4, Ref +7, Will +5
Abilities: Str 15, Dex 15, Con 15, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 16
Skills: Concentration +6, Hide +8, Listen +6, Move Silently +4, Spot +4
Feats: Alertness, Improved Initiative, Toughness
Environment: Warm forests or marshes
Organization: Solitary, pair, band (3–6), clan (2–12 brightvenom drakon, 2–12 drakon mongrels, and 2–4 darkvenom drakon), or colony (10–200 brightvenom drakon, 10–200 drakon mongrels, and 6–60 darkvenom drakon)
Challenge Rating: 4
Treasure: Standard
Alignment: Usually neutral evil
Advancement: By character class
Level Adjustment: +4

This creature has the upper torso of a humanoid and the scaled, lower torso of giant snake. Scales and even banded flesh can be seen along its humanoid half, betraying its heritage.

A subset of the race, drakon mongrels vary the most in their appearance. Their heads and torsos might resemble those of any humanoid, though reptilian features are common to all of them. A mongrel's serpentine lower half displays the coloration of virtually any species of snake, most likely matching those of its brightvenom parent.

Drakon mongrels are the hybrid offspring of humanoid and brightvenom drakon parents. Also known as "mules" because of their inability to reproduce, drakon mongrels are disliked intensely by both brightvenom and darkvenom drakon and indeed aren't even considered part of their race by these "pure" broods. For this reason, they are typically used as bodyguards, foot soldiers, and laborers in drakon society. They are also usually less educated than their drakon cousins, although this does not mean than they are necessarily less intelligent. Most drakon mongrels act subservient to the brightvenom and darkvenom drakon and follow the orders of these "superior" creatures without hesitation.

Unlike brightvenom and darkvenom drakon, drakon mongrels do not have the ability to shift into an alternate form.

Combat

Because of their low value in drakon society, drakon mongrels are usually the "shock troops" in any sort of combat situation involving the drakon. They charge fearlessly into melee combat, using their constricting tails and brute strength to overpower their enemies.

Constrict (Ex): A drakon mongrel deals 1d4+1 hit points of damage with a successful grapple check.

Improved Grab (Ex): To use this ability, a drakon mongrel must successfully hit a Medium or smaller creature with its bite attack. It can then attempt to start a grapple as a free action without provoking an attack of opportunity. If it successfully makes the grapple check, it establishes a hold and can then constrict.

Poison (Ex): Injury, Fortitude DC 15, initial and secondary damage 2d4 Con. The save DC is Constitution-based.

Earth Naga

Medium Aberration
Hit Dice: 4d8+12 (30 hp)
Initiative: +3
Speed: 40 ft. (8 squares), burrow 20 ft.
Armor Class: 17 (+3 Dex, +4 natural), touch 13, flat-footed 14
Base Attack/Grapple: +3/+6
Attack: Bite +6 melee (1d6+3 plus acid) or acid spit +6 ranged (1d4 plus acid)
Full Attack: Bite +6 melee (1d6+3 plus acid) or tail slap +1 melee (2d4+1) or acid spit +6 ranged (1d4 plus acid)
Space/Reach: 5 ft./5 ft.
Special Attacks: Acid bite, acid spit
Special Qualities: Darkvision 60 ft., resistance to charm
Saves: Fort +4, Ref +6, Will +4
Abilities: Str 16, Dex 16, Con 16, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 18
Skills: Bluff +8, Gather Information +10, Intimidate +10, Listen +6, Sense Motive +6, Spot +2
Feats: Alertness, Lightning Reflexes
Environment: Warm forest or mountain; underground
Organization: Solitary, pair, or nest (3–4)
Challenge Rating: 3
Treasure: Standard
Alignment: Usually neutral evil
Advancement: 5–6 HD (Medium); 7–12 HD (Large)
Level Adjustment: –

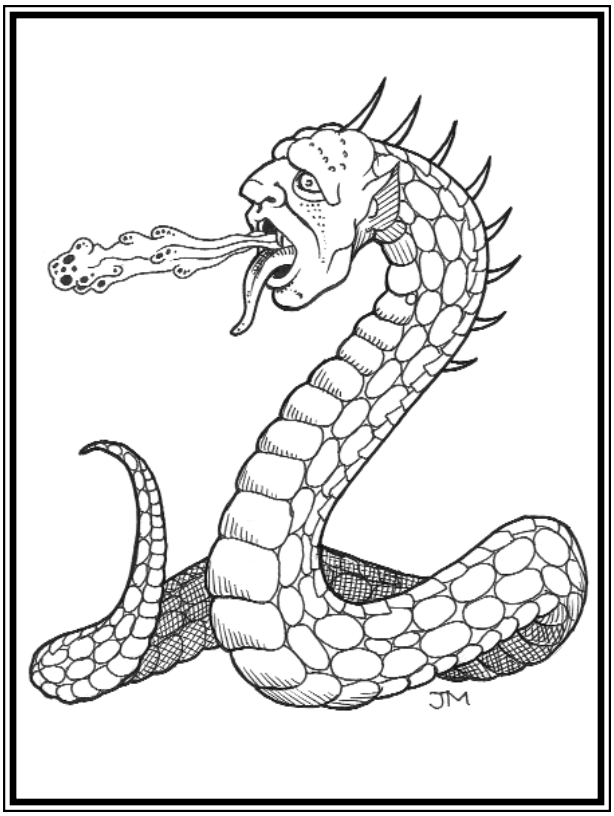
This loathsome serpent has a dark, scaled body banded in stripes of black and indigo.

Physically resembling other naga, earth naga are smaller and faster than others of their species. Their reptilian scales are always colored black and indigo, making them difficult to spot in the darkness.

Once commonly found throughout the Southlands, the foul earth naga is now fortunately a somewhat rare beast typically found lurking in jungles and ruins. For centuries, the earth naga comprised the bulk of the Southlands' mighty armies, crushing the foes of the Zimalan Empire with ease. With the fall of the Empire, the legions of earth naga dwindled away to nearly nothing, making them little more than a dangerous rarity.

Earth naga are impulsive, violent creatures. They are irritated by conversation and become bored easily. This impatience is reflected in their bad temperament and their willingness to fight at a moment's notice, even against each other. They have little respect for anything and take great delight in mindless destruction.

Earth naga speak Common and Infernal.



Combat

Unlike other nagas, earth naga love melee combat. Typically, they rush their opponents immediately, seeking to incapacitate strong opponents with their acid bites as quickly as possible. However, when in trouble, they may try to bluff their way out of danger by pretending that they have magical abilities, hoping that their opponents may believe them to be dark naga or guardian naga. Earth naga also work well with one another in group combat, and try to separate and isolate multiple opponents wherever possible.

Acid (Ex): The fangs of an earth naga drip with a highly potent acid. Any opponent bitten by one of these creatures must make a successful Fortitude save of DC 16 or take an additional 1d6 hit points of damage. The save DC is Constitution-based.

Resistance to Charm (Ex): Earth naga have a +1 racial bonus on saving throws against all charm effects (not included in the statistics block).

Spit (Ex): An earth naga can spit acid 1d6 times per day up to 30 feet as a ranged attack action. Opponents hit by this attack must make successful saves (see above) to avoid the effect.

Ghozali

Medium Aberration
Hit Dice: 6d8+6 (33 hp)
Initiative: +11
Speed: Fly 40 ft. (good)
Armor Class: 19 (+7 Dex, +2 natural), touch 17, flat-footed 12
Base Attack/Grapple: +4/+5
Attack: Tentacle +5 melee (1d10+1)
Full Attack: 9 tentacles +5 melee (1d10+1) or bite +0 melee (1d6+1)
Space/Reach: 5 ft./10 ft.
Special Attacks: Poison gas, improved grab
Special Qualities: Darkvision 60 ft.
Saves: Fort +3, Ref +9, Will +8
Abilities: Str 12, Dex 24, Con 12, Int 16, Wis 16, Cha 14
Skills: Bluff +10, Concentration +10, Hide +16, Spot +10, Survival +12
Feats: Dodge, Hover, Improved Initiative, Mobility, Wingover
Environment: Any mountains
Organization: Solitary, pair, flight (3–8), or murder (9–36)
Challenge Rating: 3
Treasure: Standard
Alignment: Usually chaotic neutral
Advancement: 7–9 HD (Medium); 10–16 HD (Large)
Level Adjustment: –

This flying humanoid appears to remain aloft with thin membranes stretched between long, thin tentacles. Its body is covered in blue and gold scales.

Vaguely resembling bloated, winged humans, ghozali are flying creatures whose bodies are filled with a magical gas, allowing them to remain airborne throughout their entire lives. Thin membranes stretch between their long, thin tentacles, which they use as wings to maneuver deftly through the air. Their bodies are covered entirely in bright blue and gold scales.

These strange, brightly colored creatures spend their entire lives flying through the air, swooping down from the clouds only on rare occasion to attack tempting prey. Ghozali travel in small, roaming tribes. They tend not to occupy a constant territory, but are instead always on the move, drifting and flying as many as a hundred miles per day. Some sages have suggested that there is a method to the ghozali's madness, as they may be visiting hidden places throughout the world to store treasure and other secrets.

Ghozali are sociable creatures amongst themselves and with other flying creatures. If approached in the skies that are their home, they can be quite agreeable and helpful. However, they view ground-dwellers as little more than

prey, and have nothing but contempt for that which cannot fly. As such, they are rarely seen near the earth except to hunt, and even then tend to reserve their feeding grounds to mountaintops or other elevated areas.

Ghozali speak Common and Draconic.

Combat

Ghozali rarely go within melee distance of the ground, unless they believe they have the advantage of numbers or surprise. Their favorite tactic is to grab a non-flying opponent and then fly high in the air, dropping that opponent from a high distance onto sharp rocks. Although the ghozali's poison gas attack is quite deadly, it usually uses it only as a last resort.

Poison Gas (Su): Injury, Fortitude DC 14, initial and secondary damage 1d8 Con. The save DC is Constitution-based.

A ghozali can expel some of the gas that inflates its body and keeps it airborne, creating a 20-foot cone of highly poisonous gas. Each time such a cone of gas is expelled, however, the flying speed of the ghozali is reduced by 10 feet, and its maneuverability class also goes down by one rank. This effect lasts for 1d6 rounds. It may use its gas attack only three times per day.

Improved Grab (Ex): To use this ability, a ghozali must hit an opponent at least one size category smaller than itself with its tentacle attack. It can then attempt to start a grapple as a free action without provoking an attack of opportunity.

Horror of Zamon

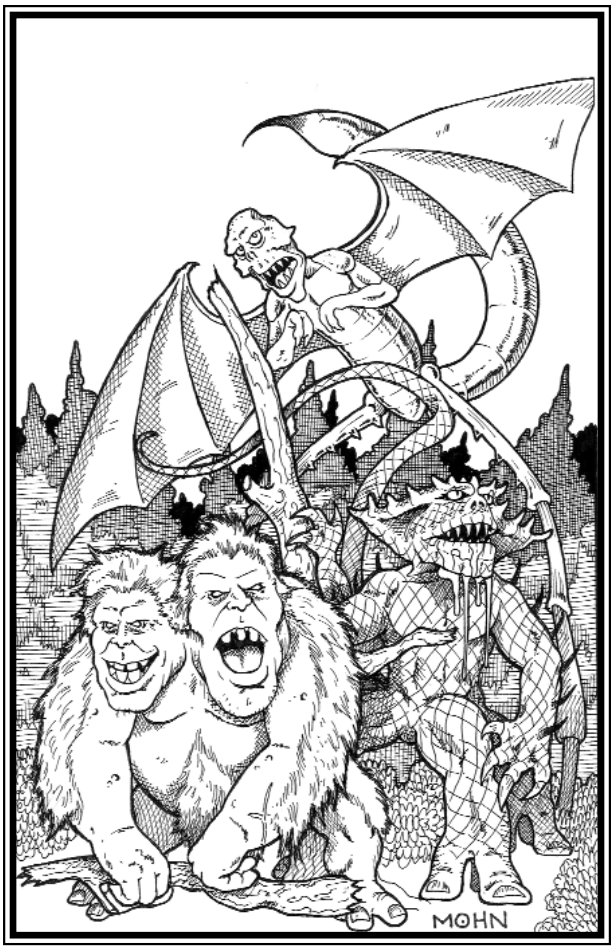
Huge Aberration
Hit Dice: 8d8+64 (100 hp)
Initiative: +0
Speed: 20 ft.
Armor Class: 12 (–2 size, +4 natural), touch 8, flat-footed 12
Base Attack/Grapple: +6/+21
Attack: Claw +11 melee (1d10+7)
Full Attack: 2 claws +11 melee (1d10+7) or bite +6 melee (1d6+5)
Space/Reach: 10 ft./10 ft.
Special Attacks: Constrict, improved grab (see below)
Special Qualities: Phoenix rebirth (see below)
Saves: Fort +10, Ref +2, Will +5
Abilities: Str 24, Dex 10, Con 26, Int 6, Wis 9, Cha 6
Skills: Climb +16, Jump +18
Feats: Blind-Fight, Toughness
Environment: Any forest or mountains
Organization: Solitary
Challenge Rating: 8–12 (see text below)
Treasure: Standard
Alignment: Always chaotic evil
Advancement: 9–12 HD (Huge); 13–18 HD (Gargantuan)
Level Adjustment: –

The Horrors of Zamon are all basically humanoid in shape, and all stand somewhere between ten and twelve feet tall. From there, their appearances all change dramatically from individual to individual, although they always remain terrifying.

Originally created long ago by the experiments of mad alchemists, the Horrors of Zamon are walking beings of dread, wandering through the desolate regions of the Northlands and destroying all that cross their path.

No two Horrors are alike—it is said that their twisted souls are born every time a mortal has a nightmare, making each one slightly different and unique. It is no less surprising to see a Horror covered in flames and feathers than to see a Horror dripping with slime and ice. The width and breadth of their appearance and abilities are as varied as snowflakes in a blizzard.

Although the wandering Horrors can be found scattered throughout the Northlands, they can mostly be found congregated near the Myrwych Forest. The reasons for this are unclear, but it is believed that the first Horrors were created in this forest, and that something mystical may connect the Horrors to this sinister place. Oddly, the number of Horrors sighted near the forest increases during snowstorms.



Creating a Horror of Zamon

Both the final appearance and extra abilities of a Horror of Zamon (if any) can be determined by rolling a d6 on the random tables in the sidebar. A "stock" Horror of Zamon without any additional abilities or attacks has a standard CR of 8; as a rule of thumb, for each additional two special abilities or attacks acquired by the Horror, the CR of that Horror should be increased by 1.

Combat

The Horrors of Zamon, simply put, are mindless killing machines. If they spot a living creature, they attempt to kill it as quickly as possible. They never attempt to ambush or surprise an opponent. Specific individual tactics will vary with each Horror.

Constrict (Ex): A Horror of Zamon deals automatic arm or tentacle damage with a successful grapple check.

Improved Grab (Ex): To use this ability, the Horror of Zamon must hit with a claw or tentacle attack. It can then attempt to start a grapple as a free action without provoking an attack of opportunity. If it wins the grapple check, it establishes a hold and can constrict.

Horror of Zamon Appearance and Abilities

Appearance

Roll once for each category.

Overall Visage
1 – Dripping, drooling
2 – Glaring, intimidating
3 – Twitching, screaming
4 – Fat, lazy
5 – Hanging, flaccid
6 – Rotting, tormented

Head
1 – Triangular
2 – Amorphous
3 – Square and gaunt
4 – Round and soft
5 – Wide and flat
6 – Two-headed

Skin Color
1 – Jet black[1]
2 – Blood red
3 – Yellowish and bruised
4 – Blue and indigo
5 – Bright green
6 – Sickly white

Back
1 – Spine-covered
2 – Scaly
3 – Slimy and hunched
4 – Fur-covered
5 – Bird-winged[2]
6 – Bat-winged[2]

Hide
1 – Fat
2 – Exoskeleton plating[3]
3 – Covered in sores
4 – Thick, matted fur
5 – Lizard-like scales
6 – Soft, thick flesh

Tail
1 – Long, thin, prehensile
2 – Short and stubby
3 – Long and spiked[4]
4 – Long, thick, clubbed[4]
5 – Soft and furry
6 – None

Mouth
1 – Massive tusks
2 – Jagged, long teeth[5]
3 – Small, sharp fangs
4 – Long and needle-like
5 – Flat, crushing molars
6 – Saw-toothed[5]

Legs
1 – Thick and stubby
2 – Telescopig, froglike[6]
3 – Insect-like
4 – Tentacles
5 – Long and gangly
6 – 1d4 additional[7]

Arms
1 – Powerful, muscular
2 – Short, emaciated
3 – Insect-like
4 – Tentacles[8]
5 – Long and hairy[9]
6 – 1d4 additional[8]

[1] Skin color provides a +4 bonus to all Hide checks.

[2] Winged Horrors also gain a flying movement of 20 feet, with good maneuverability.

[3] Exoskeleton plating provides an additional +4 natural armor bonus.

[4] These tails provide an additional tail slap attack (+6 melee, 2d6+6 damage).

[5] Provides an additional d6 to bite damage.

[6] Provides a +6 bonus to Jump.

[7] Increases base movement to 40 feet.

[8] Also provides additional 1d4 claw attacks.

[9] Increases Reach to 20 feet.

Abilities

Roll twice on Main Ability table, then roll as needed.

Main Ability
1 – Immunity
2 – Extra ranged attack
3 – Extra melee attack
4 – Spell-like ability
5 – None
6 – Roll twice more

Immunity
1 – DR 5/silver
2 – DR 10/adamantine
3 – Immune to charm, fear
4 – Immune to fire
5 – Immune to cold
6 – Immune to magical energy type (roll below)

Magical Energy Immunity
1 – Magical fire
2 – Magical cold
3 – Magical lightning
4 – Magical melee weapons
5 – Arcane spells
6 – Divine spells

Ranged Attack
1 – Poison quills, 40 ft. range, +4 ranged attack[1]
2 – *Fireball* 3/day[2]
3 – *Cone of cold* 3/day[2]
4 – *Cloudkill* 1/day[2]
5 – *Chain lightning* 1/day[2]
6 – Breath weapon[3]

Breath Weapon Type
1 – Line, acid, 60 ft.
2 – Line, lightning, 60 ft.
3 – Cone, fire, 30 ft.
4 – Cone, cold, 30 ft.
5 – Cone, caustic gas, 30 ft.
6 – Roll twice again

Melee Attack
1 – Poisoned claws/talons[1]
2 – Festering wounds[5]
3 – Extra mouth (gains another bite attack)
4 – Horns +0 melee (1d8+1)
5 – Rend 2d6+10
6 – Vampiric touch[6]

Spell-Like Ability
1 – Turn invisible, as per the spell *greater invisibility*[2]
2 – Teleport, as per the spell *greater teleportation*[2]
3 – Turn to stone, as per the spell *flesh to stone*[2]
4 – Create earthquake, as per the spell *earthquake*[4]
5 – Wounding touch, as per the spell *inflict serious wounds*[4]
6 – Roll twice more

[1] All poison attacks have the following statistics: Injury, Fortitude DC 22, initial and secondary damage 1d6 Con. The save DC is Constitution-based.

[2] All wizard/sorcerer-based spell-like effects act as though cast by a 16th-level wizard.

[3] All breath weapon types have the following save and damage statistics: DC 22, 3d6 hit points of damage. Once a Horror uses a breath weapon attack, it cannot be re-used for another 2d4 rounds. A successful Reflex save means that the intended victim takes no damage.

[4] All divine-based spell-like effects act as though cast by a 14th-level cleric.

[5] Any damage caused by the Horror can only be healed by magical means.

[6] As a melee touch attack, a Horror of Zamon can steal life force from its foe, as the *vampiric touch* spell (caster level 16th).

Phoenix Rebirth (Su): Ironically, the Horrors of Zamon are perhaps most dangerous when they are about to die. A Horror of Zamon that is reduced to 0 to –9 hit points immediately bursts into magical flame, which surrounds the creature's body in a 20-foot radius. Any creature caught in this area of fire must make a successful Fortitude save (DC 22) or take 2d6 points of damage; a successful save results in only half damage. The Horror of Zamon takes no damage from the fire. If the fallen body of the Horror is not reduced to –10 hit points within 1d4 rounds of bursting ablaze, the body is completed consumed and reduced to mere ashes by the magical flames … and from those ashes emerge two new Horrors of Zamon, fully healed and ready to fight. As with all the Horrors, these two new Horrors are unique and may share no common traits with the fallen creature that created it; statistics for the new Horrors must once more be rolled randomly on the tables on the previous page.

Horse of Parelor

Large Magical Beast
Hit Dice: 4d10+20 (42 hp)
Initiative: +7
Speed: 40 ft.
Armor Class: 14 (+3 Dex, –1 size, +2 natural), touch 12, flat-footed 11
Base Attack/Grapple: +4/+12
Attack: Hoof +7 melee (2d6+4)
Full Attack: 2 hooves +7 melee (2d6+4) or bite +2 melee (1d6+2)
Space/Reach: 10 ft./5 ft.
Special Attacks: Trample
Special Qualities: Darkvision 60 ft., dimension door, low-light vision
Saves: Fort +9, Ref +7, Will +0
Abilities: Str 18, Dex 16, Con 20, Int 12, Wis 9, Cha 12
Skills: Heal +2, Hide +2, Jump +8, Listen +4, Move Silently +8, Sense Motive +4, Spot +4
Feats: Alertness, Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Lightning Reflexes, Track
Environment: Any plains
Organization: Solitary or pair
Challenge Rating: 4
Treasure: Standard
Alignment: Usually neutral good
Advancement: 5–8 HD (Large); 9–16 HD (Huge)
Level Adjustment: –

This majestic steed stands seven feet high at the shoulder and weighs about 1,800 pounds.

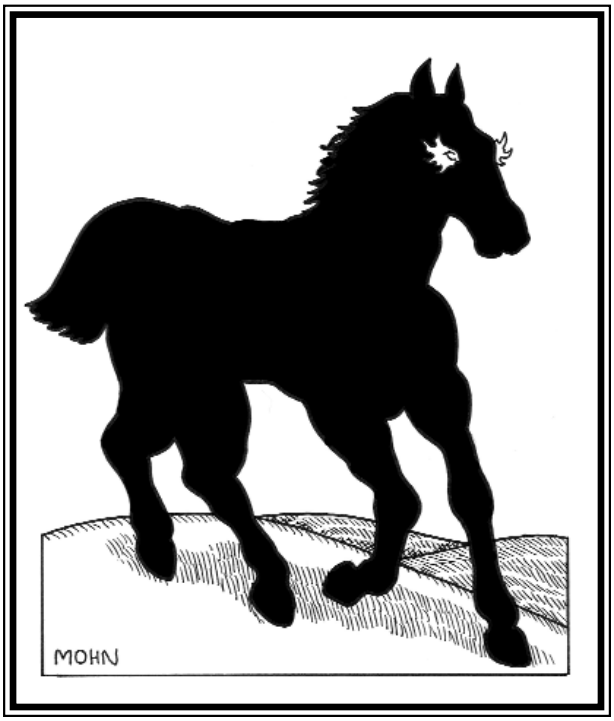
The legendary Horses of Parelor are renowned throughout the Northlands as the finest mounts in the world. Whenever tales of virtuous knights are told, these knights invariably ride the Horses of Parelor into battle and glory. Although in most cases the reputation of the Horses far exceeds their actual abilities, they are still quite powerful creatures, and it is not without good reason that distinguished knights seek their services.

At first glance, the Horses of Parelor resemble ordinary horses, albeit ones that are quite large and well muscled. All have coats and manes black as a moonless midnight. However, the eyes of the Horses betray their true nature—magical blue flame literally burns in their eyes. For this reason, it is often assumed that the Horses are evil or some sort of offshoot of the malevolent nightmare; however, all that the flame signifies is their magical nature.

In the wild, the Horses of Parelor are rare indeed, roaming in small herds through the grassy plains of the Northlands. Even rarer are those that agree to become the steed of a nobleman or warrior. Horses of Parelor are strong-willed creatures, and speak both the Common and Elvish tongues with ease. The Horses cannot be forced like a beast of burden into serving any master; instead, a Horse of Parelor must be convinced to willingly accept a rider. These are not partnerships that the Horses take lightly—most Horses of Parelor accept but a single humanoid rider in a lifetime.

Combat

When alone or only with others of its kind, the Horses of Parelor seek to avoid combat, fighting only when there is no other option. Their teleportation abilities allow them to accomplish this with ease.



With a rider, the Horses use their teleportation ability as an offensive weapon, moving about the battlefield to tactical advantage wherever possible. A favorite tactic of knights mounted upon one of the Horses is to begin a charge from a far distance, and then to teleport into melee range at a full charge. The Horses of Parelor generally follow the lead of their riders; however, they are not shy about acting counter to their rider's wishes when they believe them to be foolhardy.

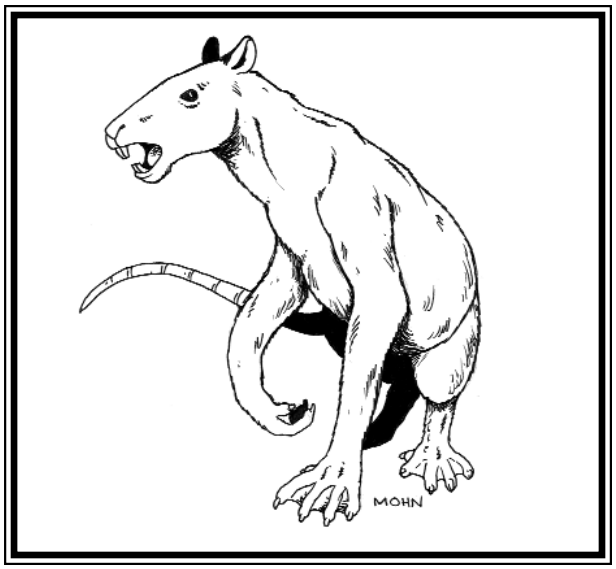
***Dimension Door* (Sp):** A Horse of Parelor can teleport, as *dimension door* (caster level 10th), once per round as a free action. The ability affects only the Horse of Parelor and a single rider that sits atop the Horse. If the Horse has multiple riders, it is up to the Horse's discretion as to which rider it keeps when teleporting. Both the Horse of Parelor and its rider never appear within a solid object, and both can act immediately after teleporting.

Trample (Ex): Reflex half DC 16. The save DC is Strength-based.

Huezcatla

Large Animal
Hit Dice: 3d8 (16 hp)
Initiative: +1
Speed: 30 ft. (6 squares), swim 40 ft.
Armor Class: 14 (–1 size, +2 Dex, +3 natural), touch 11, flat-footed 12
Base Attack/Grapple: +2/+6
Attack: Bite +5 melee (1d6+3)
Full Attack: Bite +5 melee (1d6+3)
Space/Reach: 10 ft./5 ft.
Special Attacks: —
Special Qualities: Low-light vision, scent
Saves: Fort +5, Ref +5, Will +2
Abilities: Str 16, Dex 14, Con 15, Int 2, Wis 12, Cha 16
Skills: Balance +4, Climb +5, Hide +6*, Listen +5, Move Silently +4, Spot +5, Swim +9
Feats: Alertness, Toughness
Environment: Tropical rainforest, lakes, and rivers
Organization: Solitary, pair, or herd (10–30)
Challenge Rating: 2
Treasure: None
Alignment: Always neutral
Advancement: —
Level Adjustment: —

This strange beast stands almost as tall as a horse, but its body is stockier and covered with thin, coarse fur. Its forelegs are longer than its hind legs, and its feet end in webbed, claw-like toes. The animal's face resembles that of a large rodent, with two large incisors protruding from its mouth, and its long, naked tail resembles a rat's.



Resembling dire cousins of the common Southland capybara, the huezcatla (wess-*kot*-luh) is a peaceful, semi-aquatic rodent of extraordinary size. Usually five feet high at the shoulder, the typical huezcatla is seven feet long and weighs 1,300 lbs. Their webbed digits allow them to swim and maneuver swiftly through water.

Huezcatlas dwell in grasslands and forests along riverbanks and lakes, eating grasses, aquatic plants, melons, and squashes. They are crepuscular animals, active at dawn and twilight, resting most of the day in shallow waters. Close proximity to abundant water is a must for huezcatlas. They issue grunts, clicks, and purrs to communicate with one another, and gruff barks to alert others when predators are detected. Caimans, anacondas, jaguars, and wild dogs will hunt them, but huezcatlas are quick to retaliate when they cannot retreat.

The Xulmec people often train and domesticate huezcatlas for riding and even for combat. A huezcatla can fight while carrying a rider, but the rider cannot also attack unless he succeeds on a Ride check.

Combat

Normally benign creatures, huezcatlas prefer to run or hide than enter combat. They issue gruff barks when threatened, alerting others (and their humanoid masters) to the danger. A huezcatla's front incisors, usually used for gnawing hardy plants, can break skin easily.

Skills: A huezcatala has a +8 racial bonus on any Swim checks to perform some special action or avoid a hazard. It can always choose to take 10 on a Swim check, even if distracted on endangered. It can use the run action while swimming, provided it swims in a straight line.

A huezcatla gains a +4 racial bonus on Hide checks when in the water. Further, a huezcatla can lie in the water with only its eyes, ears, and nostrils showing, gaining a +8 cover bonus on Hide checks.

Carrying Capacity: A light load for a huezcatla is up to 200 pounds; a medium load, 201–400 pounds; and a heavy load, 401–600 pounds. However, huezcatlas are extremely uncooperative if burdened with anything greater than a light load or a single rider. Handle Animal or wild empathy checks are required hourly when the huezcatla is overburdened in this way.

Lightning Giant

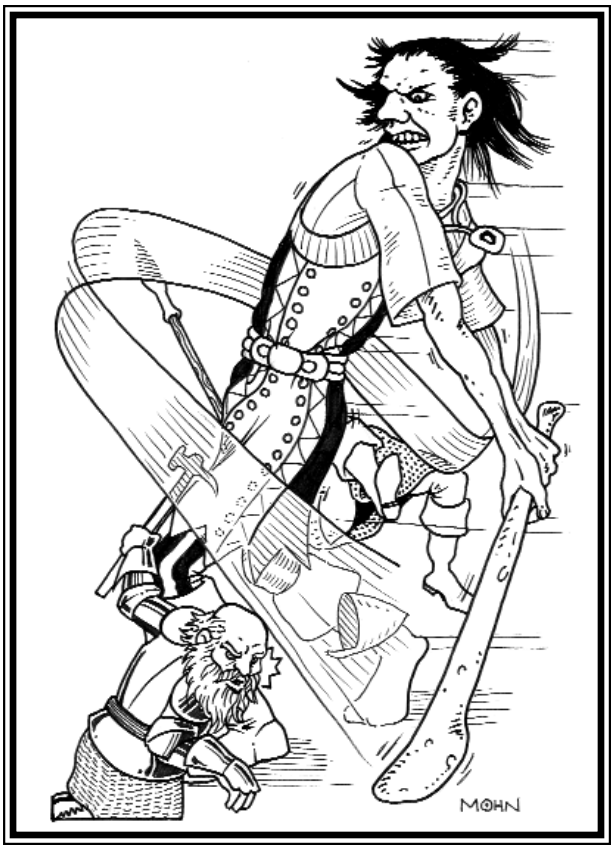
Large Giant
Hit Dice: 10d8+40 (85 hp)
Initiative: +7
Speed: 40 ft.
Armor Class: 18 (+3 Dex, –1 size, +6 natural), touch 12, flat-footed 15
Base Attack/Grapple: +7/+17
Attack: Greatclub +12 melee (1d10+6) or slam +12 melee (1d4+9) or rock +10 ranged (2d6+7)
Full Attack: Greatclub +12 melee (1d10+6) or 2 slams +12 melee (1d4+9) or rock +10 ranged (2d6+7)
Space/Reach: 10 ft./10 ft.
Special Attacks: Haste, rock throwing
Special Qualities: Darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision, rock catching
Saves: Fort +11, Ref +8, Will +3
Abilities: Str 23, Dex 17, Con 19, Int 13, Wis 10, Cha 13
Skills: Climb +8, Intimidate +6, Jump +8, Listen +2, Spot +4
Feats: Cleave, Improved Bull Rush, Improved Initiative, Lighning Reflexes, Power Attack
Environment: Any mountain
Organization: Solitary, gang (2–5), band (6–9 plus 35% noncombatants plus 1 adept or cleric of 1st or 2nd level), or tribe (21–30 plus 1 adept, cleric, or sorcerer of 3rd–5th level plus 6–12 dire wolves, and 4–16 orcs)
Challenge Rating: 6
Treasure: Double standard
Alignment: Usually chaotic evil
Advancement: By character class
Level Adjustment: +4

This lean, wiry humanoid is at least a dozen feet tall. It wears bright, garish clothing.

Lightning giants make their lairs in the remote mountains of the world. Adult males are twelve feet tall and weigh about five thousand pounds. Compared to other giants, they appear very lean and wiry. Females are slightly shorter and lighter. Lightning giants can live to be four hundred years old.

Lightning giants are brutal bullies that are constantly in battle, whether with each other or with other creatures. They are also commonly the minions of thunder giants.

Lightning giants are incredibly vain creatures, and usually wear bright, garish clothing. They constantly seek to be



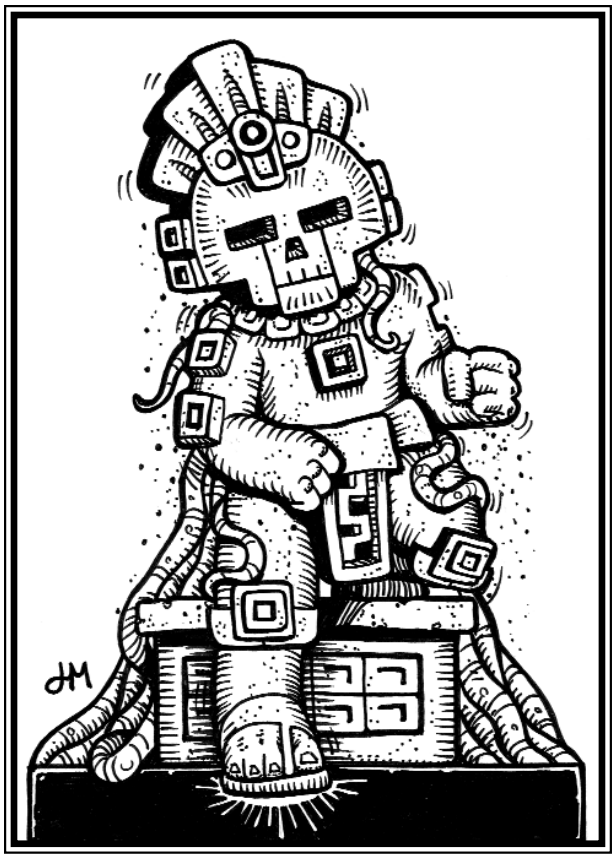
the center of attention, and are incredibly loud. They have a fondness for vulgar jokes and bawdy stories. Only fear can silence these boisterous giants, and the only creature known to strike fear in a lightning giant is a thunder giant. Wherever a thunder giant can be found, there is usually a lightning giant lurking around somewhere in the shadows, following the thunder giant's every command. Like most bullies, lightning giants are easily impressed with displays of power, and will readily submit to any being it believes to be vastly superior to itself. Of course, lightning giants also spend much time bullying and berating the weak, and they typically surround themselves with weaker lackeys, such as orcs or gnolls.

Combat

Lightning giants are surprisingly quick for their size, and use their mobility to their advantage. Frequently, they feign slowness to lull their opponents, and then try to rush in for a quick kill. They are masters of setting up ambushes, and generally fight only on terrain with which they are very familiar.

***Haste* (Sp):** After it has engaged in at least 1 round of combat, a lightning giant can *haste* itself once per day as a free action. The effect lasts 3 rounds and is otherwise the same as the spell.

Rock Throwing (Ex): The range increment is 120 feet for a lightning giant's thrown rocks.



Lightning Giants as Characters

Sly and quick, lightning giant characters are proud and aggressive warriors.

Lightning giant characters possess the following racial traits.

— +6 Strength, +3 Dexterity, +4 Constitution.

— Large size. –1 penalty to Armor Class, –1 penalty on attack rolls, –4 penalty on Hide checks, +4 bonus on grapple checks, lifting and carrying limits double those of Medium characters.

—Space/Reach: 10 feet/10 feet.

—A lightning giant's base land speed is 40 feet.

—Darkvision out to 60 feet and low-light vision.

—Racial Hit Dice: A lightning giant begins with ten levels of giant, which provide 10d8 Hit Dice, a base attack bonus of +7, and base saving throw bonuses of Fort +7, Ref +6, and Will +1.

—Racial Skills: A lightning giant's giant levels give it skill points equal to 13 x (2 + Int modifier). Its class skills are Climb, Intimidate, Jump, Listen, and Spot.

—Racial Feats: A lightning giant's giant levels give it five feats.

— +6 natural armor bonus.

—Special Attacks: Haste, rock throwing.

—Special Qualities: Rock catching.

—Automatic Languages: Giant. Bonus Languages: Common, Draconic, Elven, Goblin, Orc.

—Favored Class: Barbarian.

—Level Adjustment: +4.

Living Idol (Itepixcan)

Medium Construct
Hit Dice: 6d10+20 (50 hp)
Initiative: +2
Speed: 30 ft.
Armor Class: 22 (+2 Dex, +10 natural), touch 12, flat-footed 20
Base Attack/Grapple: +4/+9
Attack: Slam +10 melee (1d4+5)
Full Attack: 2 slams +10 melee (1d4+5)
Space/Reach: 5 ft./5 ft.
Special Attacks: See below
Special Qualities: Construct traits, damage reduction 8/adamantine, darkvision 60 ft., enshrined, fast healing 1, immunity to magic, vigilance
Saves: Fort +2, Ref +3, Will +4
Abilities: Str 21, Dex 14, Con –, Int 3, Wis 10, Cha 1
Skills: Hide +9*, Listen +5, Move Silently +7, Search +1, Spot +5
Feats: Alertness, Iron Will, Weapon Focus (fists)
Environment: See below
Organization: Solitary
Challenge Rating: 7
Treasure: None
Alignment: As per sponsoring deity
Advancement: 6–12 HD (Medium); 13–20 HD (Large); 21–35 HD (Huge); 36-45 HD (Gargantuan); 46-60 HD (Colossal)
Level Adjustment: –

This statue of polished black obsidian is carved to resemble a sandaled, muscular human robed in simple vestments. Atop its shoulders, an oversized skull is crowned with a stony headdress of feathers and its fleshless face stares back at you. After remaining inert within the shadowed alcove, the statue suddenly lurches into motion.

Resembling golems only in the most fundamental of ways, living idols—known as itepixcan (ee-*tep*-ish-kahn) in the Xulmec tongue—are divinely touched constructs that trace their origin to the god Huamec during the War of Divine Right thousands of years ago (see Chapter 1). After his pyrrhic victory against the invading giants, the god was slain—the obsidian colossus he had possessed

and animated lay shattered—and the priests of Xulmec passed along the rites Huamec had taught to them, the secret of giving life to stone. For the demigod's great sacrifice, Madrah, the Lord of the Earth and Sky, approved of the secrets of idol creation, and today living idols now guard the shrines and temples of the Xulmec demigods. Though they are pale imitations of Huamec's titanic avatar, living idols are formidable in their own right.

The construction materials of a living idol can vary greatly. The most common are basalt and obsidian and are typically fashioned into the likeness of a human—often with exaggerated features and always carved with designs appropriate for the god it serves. On rare occasions, more valuable minerals are used, such alabaster, onyx, or jade. Statues that become living idols are usually Medium in size, but larger idols have been found guarding the most sacred of temples and reliquaries. The statistics above represent the most common, weakest form of living idol.

Although clerics perform the sacred rites and supplicate their god to give the construct life, only a deity can animate a living idol and they are only constructed with a god's edict. Once animated, the idol acts as the eternal guardian of an area designated by that deity, hereafter referred to as its shrine. This shrine is typically a temple, burial ground, or sacrificial altar. Sometimes a single object is guarded, and the idol's shrine is the container that holds it.

Living idols must always obey the directives and orders of their sponsored deity. Though their actions are usually compliant with the wishes of the shrine's resident clerics, living idols are bound only to the wills of the gods, not mortals. Since they usually do not speak, any actions they take beyond defending their shrines are subject to great religious speculation. Often, these actions are viewed as portentous, as omens from the gods—a living idol may stand motionless beside the altar of a temple for centuries, then abruptly move six steps to the north for what appears to be no reason at all. Likewise, an idol may relocate itself frequently or manipulate its environment.

Living idols are respected by common folk as operative, vengeful instruments of the gods. On rare occasions, living idols have even been known to slay one of their own attendant clerics, a sure sign of the god's disapproval or the presence of a charlatan of the faith. Living idols seldom speak, but they understand Xulmec, Celestial, Infernal, and Abyssal.

Combat

Living idols serve to defend a holy place or relic for their sponsoring deity. Their fighting tactics are simple—destroy or drive away any threat. They fight until they or their enemies are destroyed and will not pursue enemies that retreat beyond the shrine they guard. Living idols possess a glimmer of intelligence and are capable of discerning between heretics (enemies) and "approved" visitors (allies).

Enshrined (Su): Each living idol is divinely bound to a single shrine and will never stray more than 200 feet from it (a single 5-foot by 5-foot square). This range doubles with each size category a living idol is advanced—for example, a Huge living idol will never stray more than 800 feet from its shrine. Should a living idol ever be forced to move beyond this range, it immediately carries out the malediction ability (see below), whether or not it possesses this ability normally, then reverts to an inanimate state. Returning the idol to its shrine restores its animation.

On rare occasions, the sponsoring deity will allow the living idol to move beyond its shrine. Such occurrences are always of great importance to the faith in question, such as a living idol sent to accompany a chosen cleric on an important quest.

Immunity to Magic (Ex): A living idol is immune to any spell or spell-like ability that allows spell resistance.

Vigilance (Su): At all times, an effect similar to an *alarm* spell is placed within the primary entrance to a living idol's designated area. The living idol is instantly aware of any creature of Tiny size or larger that enters the warded location. It seldom takes action when first alerted; it merely notes the intrusion and cannot be surprised.

Special Attacks: All living idols possess the same special qualities as listed in the statistics presented above, plus one to three special abilities from the list below. GMs may choose or roll 1d8 for these abilities. The save DC against a special attack is equal to 10 + 1/2 living idol's HD + living idol's Wisdom modifier unless otherwise noted.

(1) Earth Glide (Ex): A living idol can glide through stone, dirt, or almost any other sort of earth except metal as easily as a fish swims through water. Its movement leaves behind no tunnel or hole, nor does it create any ripple or other signs of its presence. A *move earth* spell cast on an area containing a living idol flings the living idol back 30 feet.

(2) Healing Suppression (Ex): Damage dealt by a living idol heals only at half the normal rate, whether the source is natural or magical in nature. For example, a *cure serious wounds* spell that would normally heal 15 points of damage will only heal 7 when used to heal a wound inflicted by a living idol.

(3) Malediction (Su): Once per day, a living idol can call upon the divine force that animates it to curse its intrud-

ing enemies. Opening whatever serves as its mouth, the living idol emits a disturbing keen or deep, base pitch, wracking all targets within 60 feet with morale-shattering pain. Targets must succeed on a Will save or suffer a –4 penalty on attack rolls, skill checks, and ability checks for 4d10 minutes. Malediction has no affect on the living idol's allies.

(4) Menacing Visage (Su): Three times per day, as a standard action, a living idol can manifest a horrific countenance (such as an otherwise human head "unhinging" several times to reveal a grinning skull with glowing eyes within) that sends a wave of fear across its enemies. All living creatures within a 50-foot cone must succeed on a Will save or become panicked for 2d4 rounds. This is a necromantic mind-affecting fear effect. A creature that successfully saves against this visage cannot be affected by the same living idol's visage for 24 hours.

(5) Spell-like Ability (Su): 2/day—*dispel magic,* or *searing light, spider climb*.

(6) Spell-like Ability (Su): 1/day—*dimension door* or *dismissal*.

(7) True Seeing (Su): A living idol continuously uses *true seeing* as the spell (caster level 9th).

(8) Improved Grab (Ex): To use this ability, a living idol must hit a creature of its own size or smaller with its slam attack. It can then attempt to start a grapple as a free action without provoking an attack of opportunity. If it wins the grapple check, it establishes a hold and can constrict.

Constrict (Ex): A living idol deals automatic slam damage with a successful grapple check.

Skills: *The Hide bonus increases by +8 when a living idol is concealed against a relief for which the living idol's body is designed to complement.

Nalvor

Medium Humanoid
Hit Dice: 2d8+6 (15 hp)
Initiative: +1
Speed: 30 ft.
Armor Class: 14 (+1 Dex, +3 hide armor), touch 11, flat-footed 13
Base Attack/Grapple: +1/+3
Attack: Scimitar +3 melee (1d6+2) or shortbow +2 ranged (1d6)
Full Attack: Scimitar +3 melee (1d6+2) or shortbow +2 ranged (1d6)
Space/Reach: 5 ft./5 ft.
Special Attacks: –
Special Qualities: Darkvision 60 ft., immunity to charm and fear, low-light vision
Saves: Fort +8, Ref +1, Will +0
Abilities: Str 14, Dex 12, Con 16, Int 10, Wis 9, Cha 10
Skills: Climb +3, Hide +2, Listen +3, Move Silently +2, Spot +2
Feats: Alertness, Endurance
Environment: Any desert
Organization: Patrol (2–5), squad (6–11 plus 1–2 monitor lizards), or legion (20–80 plus 20% noncombatants plus 2–12 horses)
Challenge Rating: 1
Treasure: Standard
Alignment: Usually lawful neutral
Advancement: By character class
Level Adjustment: +2

This striking humanoid has long black hair and olive green skin. Its clothes are ragged and torn, standing in sharp contrast to its physical beauty.

The nalvor are physically striking humanoids, with long, flowing black hair and olive green skin. However, due to centuries of hatred from other races, they believe themselves to be incredibly ugly, and typically dress in rags.

The nalvor are a strange race of hybrid humanoids. Created to essentially be the equivalent of humanoid mules by their sphinx masters, the nalvor have the blood of both elf and hobgoblin flowing through their veins. While this strange combination created a strong and ruthlessly efficient slave, it has also made in modern times a pariah creature hated throughout the world. Elves find the nalvor to be little more than an evil abomination; the goblinoid races, meanwhile, find them to be gutless and

impure. For this reason, the nalvor never left the ruins of their ancestral home; only amidst the ruins created by their former sphinx masters have they been able to find solace from the rest of the world.

The nalvor are socially inept creatures, with no sense of courtesy or manners. They simply take what they want and do as they please. The only exception to this is when they are confronted with someone or something they believe to be their superior—usually, something associated in some manner with their former sphinx masters. Then they become polite to a fault, and always defer to that "superior" being, no matter how ludicrous or suicidal its demands may become.

Nalvor are incredibly patient creatures. Although abandoned centuries ago by the sphinxes, they still fervently believe that their sphinx masters shall return to them. For this reason, the nalvor are regarded by most other creatures as being far too passive—they seem incapable of making any sort of quick decision, and generally try to resolve any situation or problem in terms of how their sphinx masters would want that situation resolved. It is the rare nalvor indeed who can act as a leader and not a follower; it is even rarer when that nalvor shows a spark of imagination or tactical thought. As a result, the nalvor cities are often attacked by bandits, who know that their prey will be slow and their reactions predictable.

Combat

Nalvor are unimaginative fighters, and generally deal with threats in the most direct manner possible. Ironically, they often confuse their enemies, as their incredibly poor tactics can be easily mistaken for trickery. However, what they lack in cunning, they certainly make up for in sheer determination. Nalvor are notoriously stubborn and do not retreat unless commanded to do so. They typically fight to the death.

Immunity to Charm and Fear (Ex): All nalvor are immune to charm- and fear-based spells and magic.

Nalvor Society

The society of the nalvor is a bureaucratic nightmare. Meticulous to a fault, the nalvor always try to follow the ancient laws of their sphinx masters to the letter. Unfortunately, many of these laws conflict with one another, leading to confusion and indecision. Nalvor cities are governed by ruling councils, which debate endlessly, as they seek to interpret ancient law and to find universal consensus … effectively paralyzing their society. For this reason, nalvor society has evolved little since the halcyon days of the Khonsurian Empire, and it is rare indeed when a confident, decisive nalvor leader can emerge and unite all nalvor with authority.

Nalvor as Characters

Nalvor characters possess the following racial traits.

—Strength +4, Dexterity +2, Constitution +6, Intelligence –2, Charisma –2.

—Medium size.

—A nalvor's base land speed is 30 feet.

—Darkvision out to 60 feet; low-light vision.

—Racial Hit Dice: A nalvor begins with two levels of humanoid, which provide 2d8 Hit Dice, a base attack bonus of +1, and base saving throw bonuses of Fort +3, Ref +0, and Will +0.

—Racial Skills: A nalvor's humanoid levels give it skill points equal to 5 x (2 + Int modifier). Its class skills are Climb, Hide, Listen, Move Silently, and Spot.

—Racial Feats: Nalvor automatically receive the feat of Endurance. Additionally, a nalvor's humanoid levels give it one bonus feat.

—Automatic Languages: Elven, Goblin. Bonus Languages: Common, Draconic, Orc.

—Favored Class: Ranger.

—Level Adjustment: +2.

Oneiric Creature

Oneiric creatures dwell within the Dream (see Chapter 2), the imaginative realm maintained by Ôæ, although they resemble beings found on the Material Plane. In rare instances when they are translated into the waking world, their appearance is more fantastical than their Material counterparts.

Oneiric creatures are transitory in the waking world. Typically they are called into existence by agents of the Dream, found most often defending sites of sacred importance to Ôæ or Gil'Mâridth.

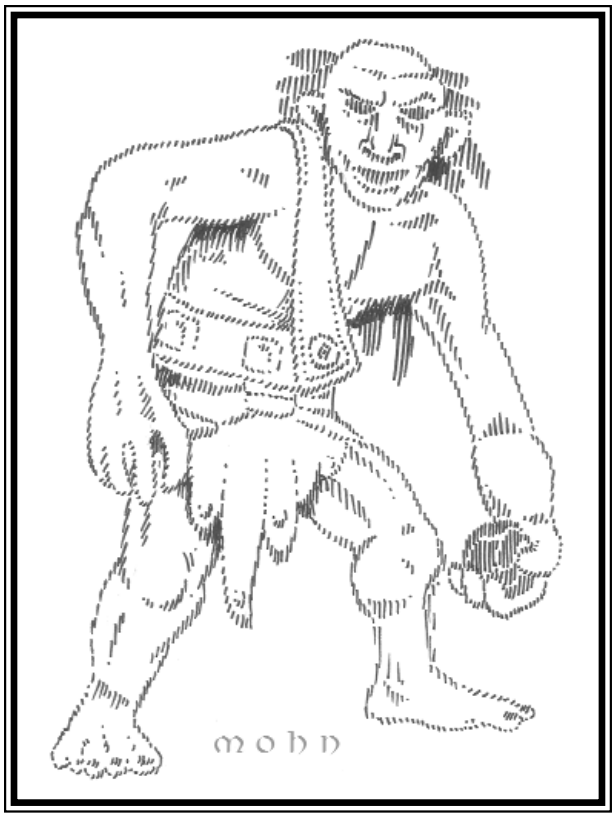
Creating an Oneiric Creature

"Oneiric" is an inherited template that can be added to any creature (referred to hereafter as the "base creature"). An oneiric creature uses all the base creature's statistics and special abilities except as noted here.

Size and Type: The creature's type changes to outsider. It gains the dream subtype.

Special Attacks: An oneiric creature retains all the special attacks of the base creature and also gains the following special attack.

Phantasmal Strike (Ex): Twice per day, an oneiric creature can make a devastating attack that belies its strength



and speed. It can make a normal melee attack to deal extra damage equal to twice its HD total (maximum of +20 points) against a foe. If the oneiric creature's foe makes a successful Will save (DC = 10 + 1/2 oneiric creature's HD + oneiric creature's Cha modifier), the attack is disbelieved and no damage is suffered.

Special Qualities: An oneiric creature has all the special qualities of the base creature, plus the following special qualities.

Doubt Vulnerability (Ex): If an opponent is made aware of an oneiric creature's phantasmal nature, he can attempt to disbelieve it as a standard action that does not provoke an attack of opportunity as long as he has line of sight with the creature. If the opponent succeeds on a Will save (DC = 10 + 1/2 the oneiric creature's HD + its Cha modifier), he deals 1d8 points of damage to the oneiric creature.

Ephemeral (Ex): When an oneiric creature reaches 0 hit points, all traces of its body (including blood or other vitals) dissipate as though it never was. Additionally, half of all ability score or hit point damage dealt by the oneiric creature returns at the rate of 1 hit point or ability score point per round. For example, a fighter who suffered 22 points of damage from an oneiric hill giant would be restored 1 hit point per round for 11 rounds following its death. Creatures slain by an oneiric creature do not, however, return from death.

Fearless (Ex): An oneiric creature knows that it is ephemeral in the waking world and cannot be intimidated or persuaded. It is immune to all mind-affecting spells and effects.

Spell Resistance (Ex): An oneiric creature has spell resistance equal to its Hit Dice +10.

Abilities: Increase from the base creature as follows: Wis +2, Cha +6.

Challenge Rating: HD 3 or less, as base creature; HD 4 to 7, as base creature +1; HD 8 or more, as base creature +2.

Alignment: Usually neutral.

Level Adjustment: Same as base creature +1.

Pteral

Medium Monstrous Humanoid
Hit Dice: 3d8+6 (19 hp)
Initiative: +3
Speed: 30 ft., fly 60 ft. (good)
Armor Class: 15 (+3 Dex, +2 natural), touch 13, flat-footed 12
Base Attack/Grapple: +3/+5
Attack: Claw +5 melee (1d6+2)
Full Attack: 2 claws +5 melee (1d6+2) or sting (1d4+1 plus poison)
Space/Reach: 5 ft./5 ft.
Special Attacks: Poison
Special Qualities: Regeneration 5, telepathy
Saves: Fort +3, Ref +6, Will +3
Abilities: Str 14, Dex 17, Con 15, Int 9, Wis 11, Cha 7
Skills: Climb +3, Hide +5, Move Silently +4, Spot +2
Feats: Flyby Attack, Hover
Environment: Any temperate or warm forest
Organization: Solitary, pair, squad (3–12) or colony (20–100 plus 20% noncombatants plus one 9th-level sorceress queen)
Challenge Rating: 2
Treasure: Standard
Alignment: Always lawful evil
Advancement: By character class
Level Adjustment: +3

These violent and merciless wasp-men stand six feet tall. They have jet back hides with reddish markings, large transparent wings, and long, sharp stingers.

A powerful and destructive race of creatures, the pterals have an unrelenting need to consume and destroy all that they can find. Fortunately, these creatures are seldom active, and hibernate for years at a time.

Ordinarily, pterals pose little threat to the rest of the world, as their hives are dormant, and virtually all of the

pterals in the hive are in deep hibernation. During these times, only one or two squads of pterals stay active to defend the hive. However, for reasons unknown, once every seven years the entire hive awakens and enters a feeding cycle. During this time, the creatures seek to consume as much food as possible, preferring the flesh of animals above all other types of sustenance. Their appetites are legendary—a single hive has been known to slay every living creature within a hundred miles. Fortunately, feeding cycles only last for little more than a month; after that, the pterals return to their hives and become dormant once more.

Pteral colonies live in massive structures called blood hives, named for their crimson hue. Blood hives are massive organic spheres capable of supporting over one hundred pterals, and can easily measure over a quarter mile in diameter. It is not known exactly how the blood hives are created, but however the process occurs, it is quick—new blood hives have been known to spring up in less than a fortnight.

Each hive is ruled by a pteral queen that never physically leaves the hive. The queen is always female and always a sorceress of immense power. The queen is the undisputed ruler of all the pterals that inhabit her hive, and her commands are always obeyed. Should a queen be killed, the remaining pterals of her hive quickly disband, scattering throughout the region in search of new hives to join.

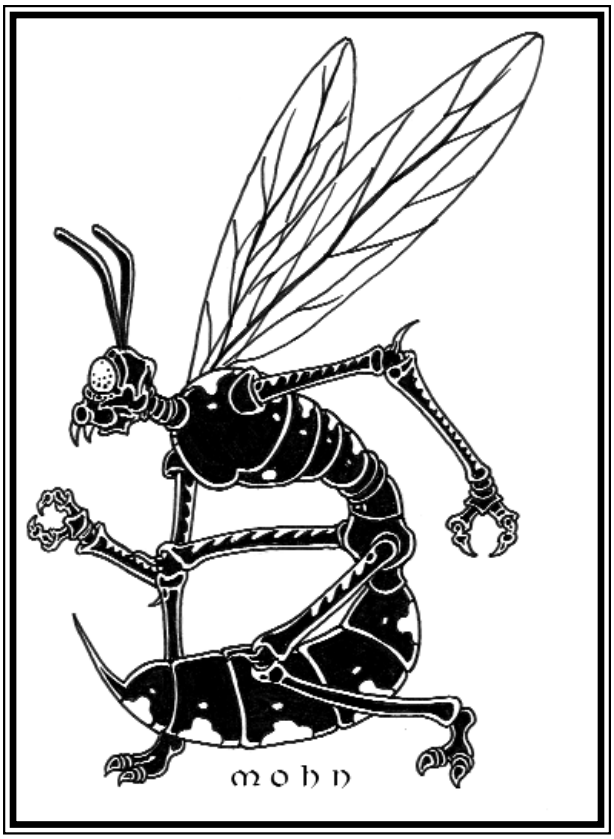
Combat

Pterals fight primarily to defend their hive and their queen. However, during their feeding cycles, they move swiftly across the land surrounding their hive, consuming all living creatures that they encounter and destroying everything else. They tend to fight in pairs, using their flight ability to their advantage over land-based opponents.

Poison (Ex): Injury, Fortitude DC 14, initial and secondary damage 1d6 Constitution. The save DC is Constitution-based.

Regeneration (Ex): Fire and cold deal normal damage to a pteral. If a pteral loses a limb or body part, the lost portion regrows in 2d6 minutes. The creature can reattach the severed member instantly by holding it to the stump.

Telepathy (Ex): Pterals can communicate telepathically with others of their own race at will, as per a *helm of telepathy*. They cannot extend this ability to creatures of other races, nor does this mean that they can automatically communicate with other telepathic creatures.



Pteral Society

Pteral society revolves around two simple concepts: propagate the species, and protect the hive queen at all costs. They are highly organized creatures, and operate in a ruthlessly efficient manner. Those too old, sick, or weak to further help the hive are summarily executed. A pteral queen rules over her hive with ironclad authority, and her minions obey her every command. While it is not unheard of for a lone pteral to go rogue and to break away from its hive, to do so is essentially a death sentence, as that rogue pteral will be hunted down by warriors from its hive until the end of its days.

Pteral as Characters

Pteral characters possess the following racial traits.

—Strength +2, Dexterity +3, Constitution +2, Intelligence –1, Charisma –2.

—Medium size.

—A pteral's base land speed is 30 feet, and has a flying speed of 60 feet with Good maneuverability.

—Darkvision out to 60 feet; low-light vision.

—Racial Hit Dice: A pteral begins with two levels of humanoid, which provide 2d8 Hit Dice, a base attack bonus of +1, and base saving throw bonuses of Fort +3,

Ref +0, and Will +0.

—Racial Skills: A pteral's humanoid levels give it skill points equal to 6 x (2 + Int modifier). Its class skills are Climb, Hide, Move Silently, and Spot.

—Racial Feats: A pteral's monstrous humanoid levels give it two feats.

—+2 natural armor bonus.

—Special Qualities: Poison, regeneration 5, limited telepathy

—Automatic Languages: Pteral. Bonus Languages: Common, Goblin.

—Favored Class: Fighter.

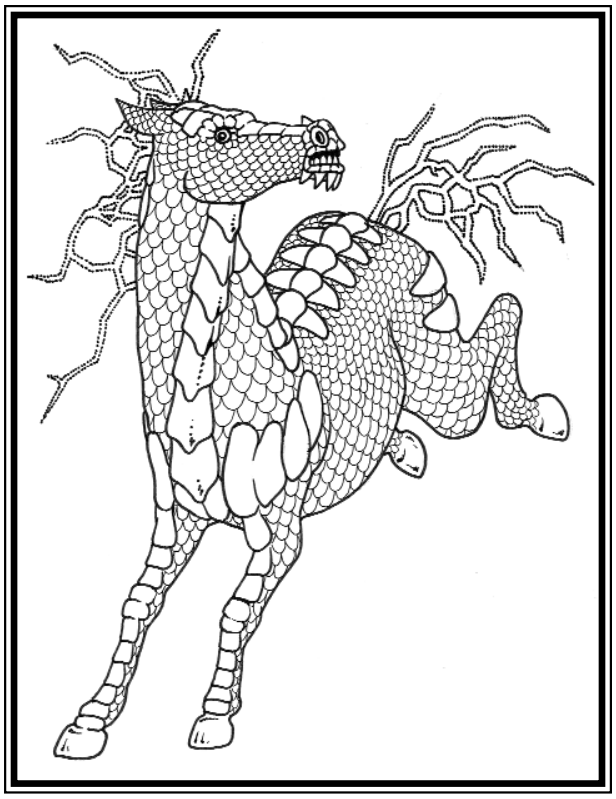
—Level Adjustment: +3.

Shadroquus

Medium Dragon
Hit Dice: 3d12+9 (28 hp)
Initiative: +9
Speed: 30 ft.
Armor Class: 16 (+5 Dex, –1 size, +2 natural), touch 14, flat-footed 11
Base Attack/Grapple: +3/+10
Attack: Hoof +5 melee (1d6+3)
Full Attack: 4 clawed hooves +5 melee (1d6+3) or bite +0 melee (1d4+1)
Space/Reach: 10 ft./5 ft.
Special Attacks: Breath weapon, charm person
Special Qualities: Darkvision 60 ft., immunity to sleep and paralysis, low-light vision, scent
Saves: Fort +6, Ref +8, Will +3
Abilities: Str 16, Dex 20, Con 16, Int 14, Wis 11, Cha 13
Skills: Climb +9, Hide +7, Jump +9, Spot +6
Feats: Endurance, Improved Initiative, Lightning Reflexes
Environment: Any desert
Organization: Solitary, pair, or herd (3–12)
Challenge Rating: 3
Treasure: Standard
Alignment: Always neutral good
Advancement: 4–7 HD (Large); 8–12 HD (Huge)
Level Adjustment: –

These large, enchanted horses have dark blue scales, not fur; and their white manes and tails are in fact constant surges of crackling, magical lightning.

It is said that long ago, the mightiest of sphinx sorcerers in the Khonsurian Empire sought to create the ultimate horse by combining the traits of desert stallions and blue dragons in a single creature: the shadroquus. Although



the truth behind this tale is somewhat debatable, the fact remains that herds of these creatures roam free across the deserts of Xa Deshret and the Vermilion Steppes, and that they are amongst the most beautiful—and deadly—creatures to be found in the region.

Occasionally, they can be tamed by riders in the Vermilion Steppes, although it is a fairly rare occurrence. Only the best of the riders among the Tribes actually manage to bend a shadroquus to their will. Although still highly temperamental, once trained and broken, shadroquus become loyal, obedient steeds, and remain inseparable from their riders until death.

Combat

Shadroquus are relentless fighters. In the wild, they prefer to swarm around an opponent, hitting it with their breath weapon attacks and letting the occasional lone shadroquus hit with a quick melee strike. As a trained mount, the shadroquus follows the lead of its rider, although it still has a preference for its lightning breath attack whenever possible.

Breath Weapon (Su): The breath weapon of a shadroquus is a 40-foot line of lightning. It is usable once every 1d4 rounds, deals 3d8 points of damage, and allows a DC 17 Reflex save for half damage. The save DC is Constitution-based.

***Charm Person* (Sp):** When a shadroquus gazes upon an opponent with its magical flaming eyes, it has the oppor-

tunity to charm that opponent. The effect works as a *charm person* spell with a 40-foot range; a successful Will save (DC 12) negates the effect. The save DC is Charisma-based.

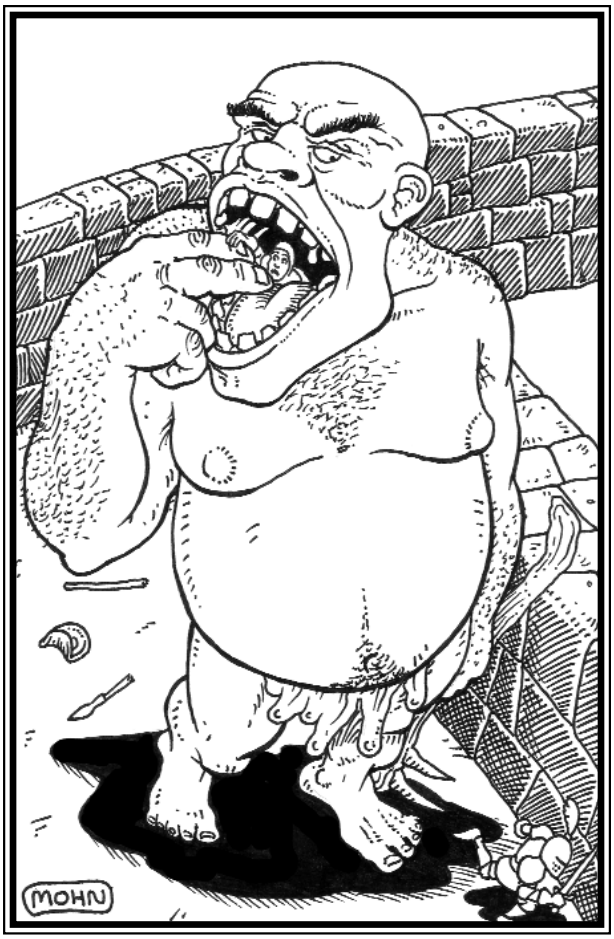
Thunder Giant

Gargantuan Giant
Hit Dice: 24d8+216 (324 hp)
Initiative: +1
Speed: 40 ft.
Armor Class: 23 (+1 Dex, –4 size, +16 natural), touch 7, flat-footed 22
Base Attack/Grapple: +18/+47
Attack: Greataxe +31 melee (4d6+17) or slam +31 melee (1d8+25) or rock +10 ranged (4d6+17)
Full Attack: Greataxe +31 melee (4d6+17) or 2 slams +31 melee (1d8+25) or rock +10 ranged (4d6+17)
Space/Reach: 20 ft./20 ft.
Special Attacks: Improved grab, rock throwing, rush, snatch, swallow whole, trample
Special Qualities: Darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision, rock catching
Saves: Fort +23, Ref +9, Will +10
Abilities: Str 44, Dex 12, Con 28, Int 12, Wis 15, Cha 18
Skills: Climb +20, Concentration +10, Craft (any) +2, Handle Animal +6, Intimidate +6, Jump +18, Listen +5
Feats: Awesome Blow, Combat Reflexes, Great Cleave, Improved Bull Rush, Power Attack
Environment: Any mountains
Organization: Solitary, pair, family (3–6), or tribe (6–10 plus 1 barbarian leader of 7th–9th level plus 1–4 dire bears, and 1–4 lightning giants)
Challenge Rating: 16
Treasure: Double standard
Alignment: Usually neutral evil
Advancement: By character class
Level Adjustment: +10

This towering, malevolent warrior is a giant among giants. It stands well over thirty feet tall and looks to weigh several tons.

Thunder giants are moody, capricious individuals that love secrets more than gold. They constantly plot against "the small ones": any humanoid smaller than themselves that may live within one hundred miles of their lair. Thunder giants are usually only found on the highest of mountains or in the deepest depths below these peaks; mercifully, this makes them a rare evil to most of the world.

Thunder giants believe themselves to be witty, intelligent creatures. They love to talk, and will speak at length to any creature capable of understanding them—even their enemies, in the heat of combat. Though they are no doubt sharper than most of their giantkin cousins, thunder



giants are not nearly as clever as they believe themselves to be. They love riddles and puzzles, and often present these riddles to those that they capture as proof of their own cleverness. However, thunder giants are not terribly original, and are usually dumbfounded when they find their riddles solved—or themselves outwitted—by a shrewd rogue or bard. Of course, that is when thunder giants lose their temper and start reaching for axes …

The "cleverness" of the thunder giants also extends to their lairs. Built within extensive caverns, thunder giants turn their lairs into sprawling, winding labyrinths, filled with magical traps and puzzles. It has not been unknown for a thunder giant to create a lair that is *too* deadly, inevitably slaying its giant master and leaving hordes of treasure trapped but waiting for intrepid explorers.

Combat

Thunder giants, although incredibly powerful, rarely like to directly enter combat. It is often why they surround themselves with hill giant or lightning giant minions—to "soften up" potential foes before having to enter combat themselves. Once in combat, however, they are fierce, determined warriors who certainly know how to use their immense size to their advantage. Like other giants, they

use their rock throwing abilities to attack foes from afar, and their powerful greataxes in melee. They also have the gruesome habit of eating opponents alive, though more oftentimes than not, this particular tactic backfires upon them in combat.

Improved Grab (Ex): To use this ability, the thunder giant must hit a Huge or smaller opponent with its slam attack. It can then attempt to start a grapple as a free action without provoking an attack of opportunity. If it wins the grapple check, it establishes a hold and can try to swallow the foe the following round.

Rock Throwing (Ex): The range increment is 200 feet for a thunder giant's thrown rocks.

Swallow Whole (Ex): A thunder giant can try to swallow a grabbed opponent of Medium or lesser size by making a successful grapple check. Once inside, the opponent takes 1d4+4 points of crushing damage plus 1d4 points of acid damage per round from the thunder giant's digestive juices. A swallowed creature can cut its way out by dealing 25 points of damage to the thunder giant's digestive tract (AC 20). Once the creature exits, muscular action closes the hole; another swallowed opponent must cut its own way out. The thunder giant's stomach can hold 1 Medium, 2 Small, or 4 Tiny or smaller creatures.

Trample (Ex): A thunder giant has the ability to trample opponents that are underfoot. The save for this trampling attack is Reflex DC 40, with a successful save resulting in only half damage; the save DC is Strength-based.

Thunder Giants as Characters

Powerful and cunning, thunder giant characters rarely step foot in the rest of the civilized world.

Thunder giant characters possess the following racial traits.

— +16 Strength, +4 Dexterity, +8 Constitution, +2 Wisdom.

— Gargantuan size. –4 penalty to Armor Class, –4 penalty on attack rolls, –12 penalty on Hide checks, +12 bonus on grapple checks, lifting and carrying limits four times that of Medium characters.

—Space/Reach: 20 feet/20 feet.

—A thunder giant's base land speed is 40 feet.

—Darkvision out to 60 feet and low-light vision.

—Racial Hit Dice: A thunder giant begins with twenty-four levels of giant, which provide 24d8 Hit Dice, a base attack bonus of +18, and base saving throw bonuses of Fort +23, Ref +9, and Will +10.

—Racial Skills: A thunder giant's giant levels give it skill points equal to 27 x (2 + Int modifier). Its class skills are Climb, Concentration, Craft (any one), Handle Animal, Intimidate, Jump, and Listen.

—Racial Feats: A thunder giant's giant levels give it five feats.

— +11 natural armor bonus.

—Special Attacks: Rock throwing, trample.

—Special Qualities: Rock catching.

—Automatic Languages: Giant. Bonus Languages: Common, Draconic, Elven, Goblin, Orc.

—Favored Class: Barbarian.

—Level Adjustment: +10.

Xochatateo

Xochatateo are filthy undead humanoids, often still covered with the gore from their own death and from the eviscerations of their many victims.

Created when a sacrifice goes horribly wrong, a xochatateo is a tormented creature cursed to exist between the realms of life and death, constantly seeking the hearts of the living to replace the one that once beat within its chest.

It is unclear as to exactly why the xochatateo are created. Some scholars argue that they are created when a sacrifice ritual is conducted incorrectly; others believe that they are created when the subject being sacrificed simply refuses to die. A few cynics even believe that xochatateo are nothing more than a cruel god's joke. Regardless of the reasons why the undead creature is created, there is no disputing how they come into existence: During a sacrifice ritual, when the still-beating heart is ripped from a humanoid creature's chest, for some reason that creature does not die. Instead, it is reborn as a cruel, savage creature with a taste for mortal flesh.

While exhibiting cannibalistic behavior, the xochatateo are most infamous for their obsession with hearts. After a killing frenzy, they typically rip out the hearts of their victims and horde them as treasure. Although it is unclear as to why the xochatateo are so obsessed with hearts, survivors of xochatateo attacks have reported that the creatures often place their new trophies inside their own chests, as if to replace the hearts that were torn out of them.

Xochatateo are generally filthy creatures, typically covered with gore. They frequently inhabit graveyards or lurk near temples where sacrifices may occur, hoping for easy access to the hearts of the living. For this reason, they are

often mistaken for ghouls. However, as they retain some of their memories and intelligence, they may still attempt to contact living creatures that seem familiar from their former lives, and occasionally exhibit some semblance of humanity in their otherwise vicious behavior.

Xochatateo are almost always loners, preferring to keep to themselves and to stay away from other creatures. They have a pathological hatred of other undead creatures, particularly other xochatateo, and will immediately attack such creatures if suddenly confronted by them.

Xochatateo speak any languages that they knew in life.

Creating a Xochatateo

"Xochatateo" is an acquired template that can be added to any humanoid or monstrous humanoid creature (referred to hereafter as the base creature).

A xochatateo uses all the base creature's statistics and special abilities except as noted here.

Size and Type: The creature's type changes to undead (augmented humanoid or monstrous humanoid). Do not recalculate base attack bonus, saves, or skill points. Size is unchanged.

Hit Dice: Increase all current and future Hit Dice to d12s.

Speed: Same as the base creature. If the base creature has a swim speed, the xochatateo retains the ability to swim and is not vulnerable to immersion in running water.

Armor Class: The base creature's natural armor bonus improves by +2.

Attack: A xochatateo retains all the attacks of the base creature and also gains a slam attack if it did not already possess one. If the base creature can use weapons, the xochatateo retains this ability. A creature with natural weapons retains those natural weapons. A xochatateo fighting without weapons uses either its slam attack or its primary natural weapon (if it has any). A xochatateo armed with a weapon uses its slam or a weapon, as it desires.

Full Attack: A xochatateo fighting without weapons uses either its slam attack (see above) or its natural weapons (if it has any). If armed with a weapon, it usually uses the weapon as its primary attack along with a slam or other natural weapon as a natural secondary attack.

Damage: Xochatateos have slam attacks. If the base creature does not have this attack form, use the appropriate damage value from the table below according to the xochatateo's size. Creatures that have other kinds of natural weapons retain their old damage values or use the appropriate value from the table below, whichever is better.

Size	Damage
Fine	1
Diminutive	1d2
Tiny	1d3
Small	1d4
Medium	1d6
Large	1d8
Huge	2d6
Gargantuan	2d8
Colossal	4d6

Special Attacks: A xochatateo retains all the special attacks of the base creature and gains those described below. Saves have a DC of 10 + 1/2 the xochatateo's HD + its Cha modifier unless noted otherwise.

Weakening Touch (Ex): A xochatateo can severely weaken its victims merely by touching them for an extended period of time. Should a xochatateo make a successful grapple check against an opponent, it pins the foe, dealing 1d6 points of Constitution drain each round the pin is maintained.

Special Qualities: A xochatateo retains all the special qualities of the base creature and gains those described below.

Blood Frenzy (Su): Upon reducing a foe to 0 hit points, a xochatateo gains temporary Strength and Constitution bonuses by feeding upon either the blood or the heart of that foe. This feeding frenzy takes 2 full rounds; after this time, the foe that is being consumed reaches –10 hit points and is permanently slain. The victim cannot be raised, reincarnated, or resurrected (though a *limited*

wish, wish, miracle, or *true resurrection* spell can restore life. No other actions may be taken by the xochatateo while it is in a blood frenzy. Once the frenzy is complete, the xochatateo gains a temporary bonus of +4 to both its Strength and Dexterity scores for an additional 2d6 rounds.

Blood Healing (Su): Upon entering a blood frenzy, a xochatateo's hit points are magically restored to full levels, healing the creature completely.

Damage Reduction (Su): A xochatateo has damage reduction 5/silver and magic. A xochatateo's natural weapons are treated as magic weapons for the purpose of overcoming damage reduction.

Turn Resistance (Ex): A xochatateo has +2 turn resistance.

Weakness to Holy Symbols (Su): See below.

Abilities: Increase from the base creature as follows: Str +6, Dex +2, Wis –4, Cha +4. As an undead creature, a xochatateo has no Constitution score.

Skills: A xochatateo has a +6 racial bonus on Hide, Listen, Move Silently, and Spot checks. Otherwise same as the base creature.

Feats: A xochatateo gains Alertness, Dodge, and Improved Initiative, assuming the base creature meets the prerequisites and does not already possess these feats.

Environment: Any; usually same as base creature.

Organization: Solitary.

Challenge Rating: Same as the base creature +1.

Treasure: Standard.

Alignment: Always evil (any).

Advancement: By character class.

Level Adjustment: Same as the base creature +4.

Xochatateo Weaknesses

Despite their power, the xochatateo also have a number of weaknesses.

Slaying a Xochatateo: Holy objects (symbols, water, etc.) of good origin cause immense harm to a xochatateo. The mere sight of a holy symbol automatically causes the xochatateo to make a Fortitude save of DC 16 or suffer a temporary loss of 1d4 Strength for 1d6 rounds or until the object disappears from its sight. A specific symbol or item's presence may only affect the xochatateo in this manner once per day. Additionally, striking a xochatateo with either a holy symbol or holy water of good origin causes double damage; a magical holy item (such as a *holy avenger*) causes triple damage.

Xochatateo Characters

Xochatateo are always evil, which causes characters of certain classes to lose some class abilities. In addition, certain classes take additional penalties.

Clerics: Xochatateo clerics lose the ability to turn undead (if they possessed it) but gain the ability to rebuke undead. A xochatateo cleric has access to two of the following domains: Chaos, Destruction, Evil, or Trickery.

Sorcerers and Wizards: Xochatateo are incapable of casting spells that are not of a divine nature. A wizard or sorcerer that becomes a xochatateo loses all ability to cast spells; however, all other skills and abilities are retained.

Chapter 4
Setting Rules

The Known Realms are home to a wealth of cultures and races. Lost empires, barbarian raiders, mad archwizards, and marauding hordes have all left their indelible mark on the world. Memories of Áereth's past live on in the blood of her people, from the mightiest king to the common serf.

The world is also a changing one, vibrant with life. Traders smelling of strange spices bring new traditions and weird magics from foreign lands, while priests in dark temples interrogate fiends in their search for forbidden knowledge. New challenges demand new heroes—courageous champions who can take up arms in the defense of good.

As heroes and villains, PCs must be able to stand in both the spider-haunted Áereth of old and the wild frontiers of today. This chapter details weapons, feats, and spells born from Áereth's storied past and savage present.

Feats

The feats in this chapter supplement the feats in the *PHB*. Follow the rules in the *PHB* to determine when feats are acquired.

Some of the feats require that a character be raised in a particular region of Áereth. Others are designed for evil NPCs who worship the infernal powers of Áereth, and are suited for PCs only when playing in an evil campaign. Because of the impact these feats can have on a game, players should consult their GM prior to taking these feats.

Any feat with the [Fighter] descriptor may be selected as one of a fighter's bonus feats.

Assess Enemies [General]

You have learned to size up your enemies.

Benefit: You can make a standard action to appraise your enemies and determine which is the most powerful. Only enemies that you can see within 60 feet are considered during the attempt, and only one such opponent at any given time can be determined. You make a DC 15 Wisdom check. If you succeed, you can gauge which opponent has the highest CR.

Special: A dwarf fighter may select Assess Enemies as a bonus fighter feat.

Ancestral Weapon [General, Fighter]

You have inherited your family's ancestral weapon, a masterwork item with a long and storied history.

Benefit: Choose a masterwork weapon during character creation. This item is sacred to your family, and as the family's scion and the bearer of the item, you are held to exacting standards.

At the GM's discretion, the masterwork weapon may later "awaken" to magical properties. Activating even the least of such properties should be the goal of an epic quest.

Special: This feat can only be taken at 1st level.

Capture [General]

You have been trained to subdue your enemies for capture.

Prerequisite: Combat Expertise

Benefit: You can deal nonlethal damage with most weapons at no penalty on the attack roll.

Normal: Without this feat, you take a –4 on your attack rolls when you use a melee weapon that deals lethal damage to deal nonlethal damage instead.

Special: A human or half-elf from the Xulmec city-states may select Capture without meeting the prerequisite.

Fiend Slayer [General, Fighter]

You have studied fiends and faced them in battle, giving you an intuitive understanding of their combat style.

Prerequisite: Dexterity 13, Knowledge (chosen enemy) 5 ranks.

Benefit: You gain a +2 dodge bonus to your Armor Class when fighting against one chosen enemy: aberrations, demons, devils, or undead. Any time you lose your Dexterity bonus (if any) to Armor Class, such as being caught flat-footed, you lose your dodge bonus as well.

Special: This feat may be taken multiple times, selecting a different foe each time.

Infernal Corrupion [General]

Close association with infernal powers has altered your physical body.

Prerequisite: Infernal Pact.

Benefit: Each time this feat is taken, roll 1d12 and consult the following table. This feat may be taken multiple times. Re-roll any duplicate effects.

Roll	Corruption
1-2	*Eyes of the Grimalkin:* Your eyes become like those of a cat, granting low-light vision that permits you to see twice as far as a human in starlight, moonlight, torchlight, and similar con-

New Feats

General Feats	Prerequisites	Benefits
Assess Enemies	–	DC 15 Wis check to identify highest CR
Ancestral Weapon*	–	Gain masterwork weapon
Capture	Combat Expertise	Deal nonlethal damage with weapons at no attack penalty.
Fiend Slayer*	Dex 13, Knowledge (chosen enemy) 5 ranks	+2 Dodge bonus to AC against chosen enemy
Infernal Pact	Knowledge (demonology/devilry) 5 ranks, spellcaster	Access Infernal spell list
Infernal Corruption	Infernal Pact	Varies
Infernal Sworn	Infernal Corruption, Infernal Pact	Resistance to fire, cold, or electricity 5
Siren Cry	Female, Perform (singing) 3 ranks, divine caster level 1	Attack similar to harpy's captivating song
Regional Feats	**Prerequisites**	**Benefits**
Poisoner	Southern Province, Freeport, Scourgelands	No risk of poisoning self when using poison
Savage Born	Cinai, Frost Barrens, Icenwastes, the Wilds, Saramanthia, Scourgelands	+2 in Diplomacy, Sense Motive, Intimidate with savages
Summon Horde	Savage Born, Leadership, character level 7th	Summon hundreds of barbarians
Metamagic Feats	**Prerequisites**	**Benefits**
Key of the Moon	Arcane spellcaster	Caster level changes with moon phases
Seer	Spellcraft 5 ranks	Spell slot requirement reduced by –1
Lore Caster	Seer, spellcraft 10 ranks	Spell slot requirement reduced by additional –1

** A fighter may select this feat as one of his fighter bonus feats.*

ditions of poor illumination.

3-4 *Kiss of the Serpent:* Your saliva becomes poisonous to others (Contact DC 13, Initial 1d4 hp, Secondary 1d12 hp). Once per day you can either spit venom as a standard melee touch attack, or lick your weapon, thereby applying poison to your weapon. You remain susceptible to all other poisons but your own.

5-6 *Talons of the Vulture:* Your fingernails grow into razor sharp claws, allowing you to inflict 1d6 points of damage as an unarmed attack.

7-8 *Horns of the Goat:* A pair of small horns emerge from your temple and a palpable aura of wickedness hangs about you, granting a +2 circumstance bonus to Intimidate checks.

9-10 *Child of the Wyrm:* Your skin grows a hard coat of scales, granting a +1 natural armor bonus.

11 *Blood of the Maggot:* You gain a +1 bonus to your Constitution score, but your body constantly reeks of rotting meat.

12 Roll twice, ignoring any 12s and re-rolling duplicate effects.

Infernal Pact [General]

You have sold your soul to a demon or devil in return for infernal spell powers.

Prerequisite: Knowledge (demonology/deviltry) 5 ranks, arcane or divine spellcaster.

Benefit: You have access to the Infernal spell list in addition to your regular spell list. If you already have access to the spell on the list, your caster level for the duplicate spell is +1. Evil clerics can worship infernal powers in addition to evil deities.

Regular: Worshippers of infernal powers (demons or devils) are not granted spells.

Special: The character cannot be brought back from the dead without additional indenture or promise of sacrifice.

Infernal Sworn [General]

Your infernal liege has made you resistant to certain energies.

Prerequisite: Infernal Corruption, Infernal Pact.

Benefit: You gain fire, cold, or electricity resistance 5. This feat may be taken multiple times, taking different energy types, whose benefits do not stack.

Key of The Moon [Metamagic]

Your spellcasting abilities are tied to the phases of the moon.

Prerequisite: Arcane spellcaster.

Benefit: For the three days preceding and following a full moon, your effective caster level is increased by +1. For the three days preceding and following a new moon, your effective caster level is decreased by –1.

Infernal Spell List

0-level: *inflict minor wounds, guidance*.

1st-level: *bane, cause fear, divine favor, doom, inflict light wounds, protection from good, summon monster II*.*

2nd-level: *aid, augury, death knell, inflict moderate wounds, summon monster II*.*

3rd-level: *inflict serious wounds, prayer, summon monster III*.*

4th-level: *divine power, inflict critical wounds, planar ally (lesser)*, summon monster IV*.*

5th-level: *contact other plane, commune, dispel good, slay living, summon monster V*.*

6th-level: *harm, legend lore, summon monster VI*.*

7th-level: *destruction, summon monster VII*.*

8th-level: *summon monster VIII*.*

9th-level: *gate, miracle, summon monster IX*.*

*Cast as an evil spell only.

Lore Caster [Metamagic]

You are a master of ancient forgotten lore. The might of the universe courses through your spells.

Prerequisite: Seer, Spellcraft 10 ranks.

Benefit: When altering a spell with a metamagic feat, the spell slot requirement of the feat is reduced by –1, for a total of –2 when stacked with the Seer feat. A spell slot requirement cannot be reduced below the spell's original level.

Poisoner [General]

You hail from a culture with a practice of poisoning and are accomplished in its use.

Prerequisite: Raised in Southern Province, Freeport, or Scourgelands.

Benefit: You are trained in the use of poison and never risk poisoning yourself when applying it to a blade or otherwise readying the poison for use.

Normal: A character has a 5% chance of exposing himself to a poison whenever applying it to a weapon or otherwise readying the poison for use. Additionally, a character who rolls a natural 1 on an attack roll with a poisoned weapon must makes a DC 15 Reflex save or accidentally poison herself with the weapon.

Savage Born [General]

You have an innate kinship with barbarians.

Prerequisite: Raised in Cinai, Frost Barrens, Icenwastes, the Wilds, Saramanthia, Scourgelands*.

Benefit: You receive a +2 bonus on all Diplomacy, Sense Motive, and Intimidate checks made on savages. At the GM's discretion, additional groups may qualify.

Special: You may only take this feat as a 1st-level character.

*Half-orcs and monstrous humanoids only.

Seer [Metamagic]

A devotee of esoteric lore, you are able to attune your spells to the turning of the cosmos.

Prerequisite: Spellcraft 5 ranks.

Benefit: When altering a spell with a metamagic feat, the spell slot requirement of the feat is reduced by 1.

For example, an *enlarged fireball* would normally use up a 4th-level spell slot. When cast with the Seer feat, the spell would use up a 3rd-level spell slot.

Siren Cry [General]

You can sing to captivate your opponents.

Prerequisite: Female, Perform (singing) 3 ranks, ability to cast at least one divine spell of 1st level or higher.

Benefit: Once per day, you can make a special attack similar to a harpy's captivating song. As a standard action that does not provoke an attack of opportunity, you utter a sonorous cry that causes one or more creatures to become captivated. Each creature to be captivated must be within 60 feet, be able to see and hear you, and must make a successful Will save to negate the effect. This is a sonic, mind-affecting charm effect. The DC to resist the siren cry is equal to 10 + your Charisma modifier. The save DC is Charisma-based.

A captivated creature walks toward you, taking the most direct route available. If the path leads into a dangerous area (over the edge of a ship in shark-infested waters, or the like), that creature gets a second saving throw. Captivated creatures can take no actions other than to defend themselves. (A victim cannot run away or attack but takes no defensive penalties.) A victim within 5 feet of you stands there and offers no resistance to your attacks. The effect continues for as long as you sing and for 1 round thereafter. A bard's countersong ability allows the captivated creature to attempt a new Will save.

Special: A member of the Sirens of Pelagia may select Siren Cry without possessing any divine spells.

Summon Horde [General]

A legend amongst your people, you can summon a barbarian horde.

Prerequisite: Savage Born, Leadership, character level 7th.

Benefit: This horde can only be summoned in the homeland of the PC, from among his barbarian kin. A horde is limited by the population of an area, and can number up to the PC's Leadership score (character level + Charisma bonus) times 500.

While a horde can be raised for any number of causes, its success is ultimately judged on the amount of loot pillaged, be it in the form of grain and livestock, gold, or even slaves. Chaotic and undisciplined, hordes quickly disband unless led by a masterful (and successful) general.

A horde takes one month to gather, and can be kept together for a number of weeks equal to the PC's

Leadership score. At the end of this time, the PC must make a DC 15 Diplomacy check.

Modifiers may apply to Diplomacy check, as shown on the table below.

Diplomacy Check Modifiers to Summon Horde

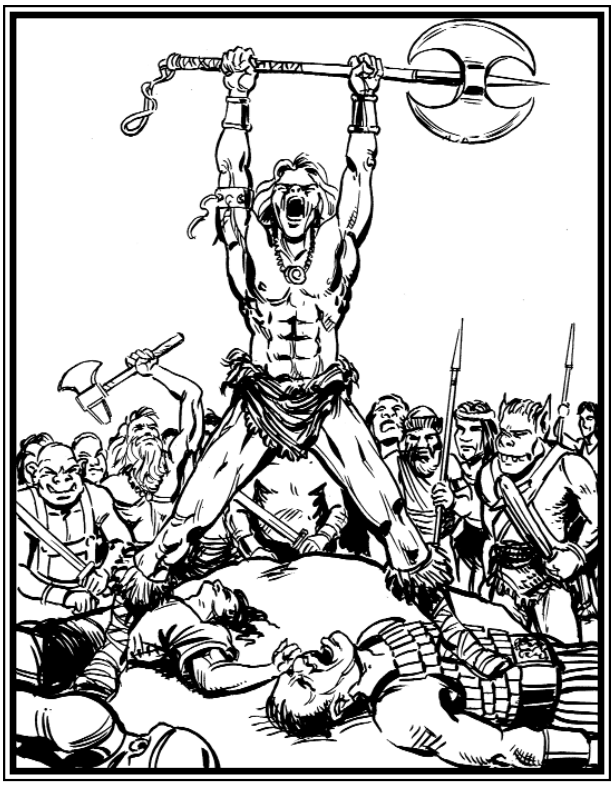
Condition	Modifier
Leader's Reputation	
Cowardice	–10
Failure	–5
Generous	+2
Heroic	+5
Treasure Shared	
None	–15
Partial, late, or unfair	–10
Average	–5
Above average	+0
Exceptional, gift items	+5
Horde's Success in Battle	
Defeat	–10
Stalemate	–5
Victory	+0
Overwhelming victory	+5

If the PC fails the check, the horde disbands, the barbarians return to their homelands, and the PC may not call a horde until one year has passed. At the GM's discretion, certain conditions may have to be met before the commander of a failed campaign can rally another horde to his cause.

If the PC succeeds on the Diplomacy check, the horde remains together for another week, after which the PC must make another DC 15 Diplomacy check. The cycle continues until the horde disbands or the PC elects to dismiss the horde.

A PC dismissing a horde after a successful campaign must also wait a year before summoning another horde, but will find it easy to recruit eager barbarians to his cause.

In rare instances, a legendary barbarian might have several generals serving beneath him who have all rallied hordes to their banners, placing multiple armies beneath the command of the single horde-master. In such cases, it is the single horde-master who must succeed on the Diplomacy check.



Equipment

Conch: The conch is a brightly colored seashell of spiral design. Bards of the Xulmec city-state of Athua often choose the conch as the favored wind instrument for use with their bardic music. Playing the conch relies upon the insertion and placement of the hands as well as embouchure, the manipulation of the musician's lips, to produce a loud if mellow sound. Though several pitches can be achieved, some conches have been carved to yield a greater variety of sounds; these customized conches are always masterwork and of the finest quality.

The conch is spiritually ingrained in the culture of the Xulmec city-state of Athua. If the conch is blown by a user with at least 2 ranks of Perform (wind instruments) during the first round of combat, all allies of Athuan nationality within 30 feet are granted a +1 morale bonus on attack rolls for the first 3 rounds of combat. Blowing into a conch in this way is a standard action that provokes an attack of opportunity. Cost: 1 gp, masterwork 100 gp. Weight: 1 lb.

Drum, Xulmec: Two varieties of percussion instruments are native to the Xulmec city-states. The first is the teponaztli, a drum fashioned from the trunk of a hardwood tree, played horizontally and common among religious ceremonies. The other is the huehuetl, a vertical drum with an animal skin drawn across the top and left open at the bottom. Both are decorated with intricate carvings, often depicting historic scenes. Cost: 10 gp, masterwork 100 gp. Weight: 5 lb.

Quipu: Quipus are recording devices fashioned by the Amoyas but have become more commonplace throughout Xulmec. Originally used for textile counting, the quipu has been adapted by wizards to serve as an alternate form of spellbook. Consisting of spun and dyed knots woven from llama or alpaca hair, the complex network of strands represents arcane syllables that only a wizard proficient with its use can interpret. Mastery of the quipu requires at least 2 ranks in Knowledge (local) for the Amoya region or 5 ranks in Knowledge (arcana) and a Dexterity of 13 or greater. A single quipu contains only thirty pages worth of spells, but it is effectively weightless and a wizard can possess more than one to accommodate his repertoire of known spells. Immersion in water does not harm the quipu. Cost: 20 gp. Weight: —

Threnody Chimes: Though largely associated with the Threnodim—bardic priests of Soleth who developed and perfected this peculiar class of instruments—most bards fortunate enough to come across threnody chimes will seek to acquire one. The chimes come in a wide variety of sizes and designs, but the principle behind them all is the same; inside a wooden box-like resonating chamber is a complex mechanism of metal chime rods tuned to somber keys in the smaller hand-held instruments and capable of a full musical range in larger ones. Typically small enough to be worn with a strap about the neck and held gently in the arms like the performer is laying a dying loved one to rest, the right hand is laid within a hand-shaped impression on its upward face with a striking key beneath each finger. These keys strike the chime rods currently in position while the fingers of the left hand diligently work an intricate array of levers, buttons, or slides on the opposite side to retract, dampen, and replace the sets of chime rods into striking position. The result is a sound as haunting as it is sorrowfully beautiful—a darker, swimming timbre akin to both clavichord and clock chimes.

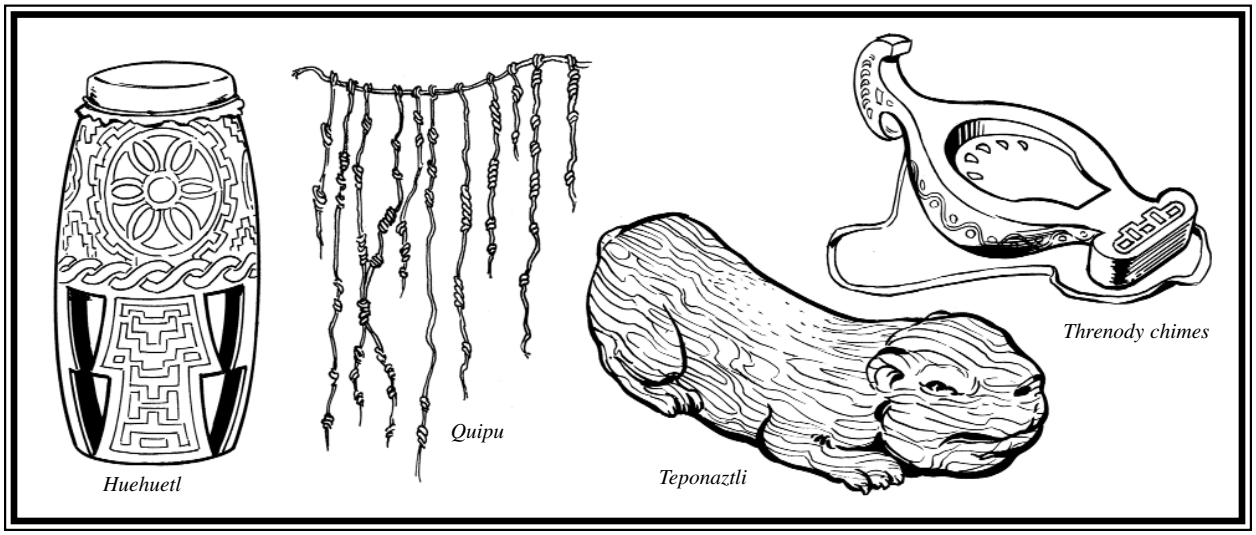
Externally, threnody chimes are usually decorated with ornate, morbid designs reflecting the tenets of Soleth. Some are even fashioned to suggest a humanoid body reclining at the moment of death. Furthering this image, Threnodim customarily play the chimes in a half-kneel with head bowed, though this posture is rarely assumed by most other bards. Cost: 80 gp, masterwork 200 gp. Weight: varies.

Tlahuiztli: The tlahuiztli is a Xulmec tabard, a tight-fitting cloth garment worn over the ichcahuipilli (see below). Its color marks the status of the warrior who wears it, and must be earned on the field of battle. In the Xulmec culture, slaying an enemy does not earn the same respect as capturing one. Multicolored feathers of many birds adorn the suit and matching helmet, with various combinations meant to represent different animals. When a Xulmec captain wears a legitimately earned tlahuiztli in the company of soldiers in his command, each soldier within 30 feet is granted a +1 morale bonus on attack rolls. Cost: 5 gp (but must be earned).

Weapons

Atlatl: Originally used for hunting waterfowl and fish, the atlatl is now used by the Xulmecs as an effective instrument of war. Consisting of a two-foot-long hardwood board and hook, which is used as leverage, the atlatl propels a large, obsidian-tipped dart with greater force and accuracy than that of a hand-thrown spear. To natives of the Xulmec city-state, the atlatl is a martial weapon, but it is exotic to anyone else. Darts that miss their target have a 75% chance of breaking.

Keris: Originating from the Shadowed West, this exotic dagger has come into more common use in the nation of Ssorlang and even the people of Darawan. No two keris blades are alike, unique by their very nature and the mystic ways of the bladesmith. The keris is considered a very



New Weapons

Exotic Weapons	Cost	Dmg (S)	Dmg (M)	Critical	Range	Weight[1]	Type
Light Melee Weapons							
Keris	320 gp	1d3	1d4	19-20/x3	10 ft.	1 lb.	Piercing
Razor glove	5 gp	1d4	1d6	x2	—	1/2 lb.	Slashing
One-Handed Melee Weapons							
Macuahuitl, one-handed	20 gp	1d6	1d8/x3	x3	—	7 lb.	Slashing
Two-Handed Melee Weapons							
Macuahuitl, two handed	50 gp	2d4	2d6	x3	—	13 lb.	Slashing
Tepoztopilli	50 gp	1d6	2d4	x3	—	10 lb.	Slashing
Ranged Weapons							
Atlatl	1 gp	1d6	1d8	x3	80 ft.	2 lb.	Piercing
Darts (5)	3 gp	—	—	—	—	—	—

[1] Weight figures are for Medium weapons. A Small weapon weighs half as much, and a Large weapon weighs twice as much.

New Armor

Armor	Cost	Armor Bonus	Max Dex	Check Penalty	Spell Failure	Speed (30 ft.)	Speed (20 ft.)	Weight[1]
Light armor								
Bonemail	90 gp	+4	+4	–1	20%	30 ft.	20 ft.	15 lbs.
Ichcahuipilli	8 gp	+2	+7	0	5%	30 ft.	20 ft.	8 lb.
Shields								
Chimalli	5 gp	+1	—	–1	5%	—	—	6 lbs.

[1] Weight figures are for armor sized to fit Medium characters. Armor fitted for Small characters weighs half as much, and armor fitted for Large characters weighs twice as much.

personal weapon that can bring good fortune to its owner—and misfortune to thieves. The length of the blade varies, but it is usually asymmetrical and often forged of iron or steel in a wavelike, serpentine fashion. The hilt is ornate, and acid is used to bring out the luster or darkness of the metal blade. The keris is considered a monk weapon, provided the monk takes the Exotic Weapon Proficiency feat to become proficient with it. All keris blades are masterwork. If used as a thrown weapon, the keris incurs a –2 circumstance penalty on the attack roll.

Macuahuitl: The macuahuitl (usually called a "macana" by Northlanders) is a flat, hardwood club with extremely sharp blades of flint or obsidian set along its edges. A weapon native to the Xulmec city-states, the macuahuitl can be used to cleave through flesh and bone or subdue opponents. Created in both one- and two-handed varieties, it is a martial weapon to Xulmecs but exotic to anyone else.

Razor Glove: The razor glove comes in many designs, typically employed by jungle-dwelling warriors to emulate the fighting style of great cats. Usually fashioned with stiff leather, the glove fits over the entire hand much like a gauntlet, while curving, metal blades run along each finger and are supported at the wrist. The blades cannot be retracted, and wearing the gloves while using any skill requiring the use of one's hands to manipulate objects incurs a –4 circumstance penalty. The wearer's opponent cannot use a disarm action against the razor glove. The cost and weight given are for a single glove. An attack with a razor glove is considered an armed attack.

Tepoztopilli: Resembling a pole-arm counterpart of the macuahuitl, the shaft of the tepoztopilli (called the "top-illi" among Northlanders) is wooden, and its flared head is set with razor-sharp obsidian blades. The tepoztopilli has reach. Wielders can strike opponents 10 feet away with it, but they cannot use it against an adjacent foe. Natives of Xulmec city-states treat the tepoztopilli as a martial weapon, but it is an exotic weapon to anyone else.

Armor

Bonemail: See *Magic Items of Áereth* below.

Chimalli: The chimalli is a wooden Xulmec shield, always brightly painted to reflect the wearer's spiritual and national allegiance, including symbols representing the status within his unit or city. Xulmec fighters and warriors often create and adorn their own shields, taking at least 1 rank in Craft (armorsmithing) for this reason

alone. A Xulmec who crafts, paints, and feathers his own shield receives an additional +1 morale bonus to AC when fighting defensively or choosing a total defense action.

Ichcahuipilli: The ichcahuipilli (called the "cahuipi" among Northlanders) is a heavy, quilted body armor common among Xulmec warriors. Often soaked in brine for greater durability, it offers greater protection than standard padded armor and more flexibility than leather.

Regional Masterwork Items

While any craftsman with enough time, skill and materials can create a masterwork item, certain regions of Áereth are renowned for their signature arms, armor or equipment. The reputation of a smith might hinge on his ability to craft a certain type of sword, and seedy merchants may try to dupe naïve heroes into paying masterwork prices for regular equipment, claiming, "They were born in the devil-fire forges of Zamon," or some other such nonsense.

Apart from their sheer monetary value, regional masterwork items can also inspire the admiration and envy of savvy onlookers. Such recognition cuts both ways: A noble scion wielding a fabled blade of Criestine steel might rally a routing army, while a peasant found with the same weapon may be imprisoned and executed for the crime of carrying a weapon above his station.

The true nature of an item can be discerned with an appropriate Craft check (DC 15). While superior forgeries can make this check more difficult, such items are rare, since making a masterful forgery requires nearly as much skill as crafting a masterwork item.

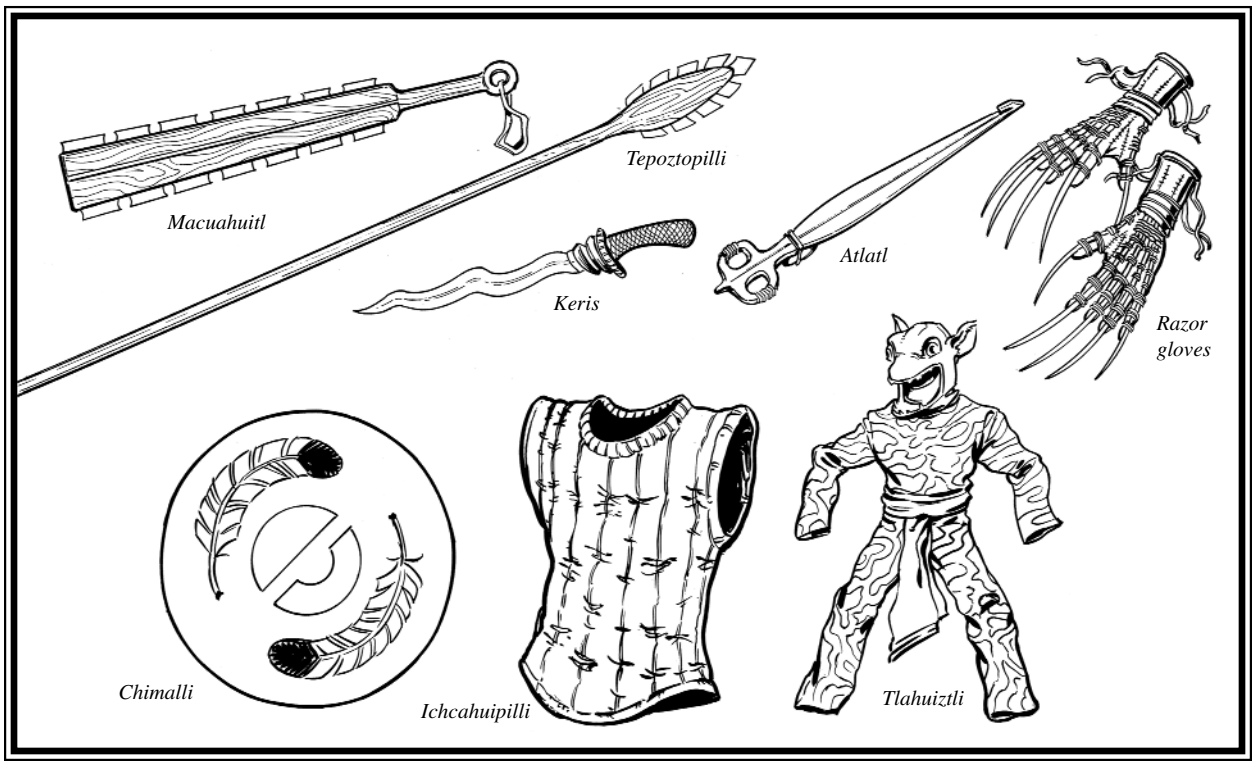
As per all masterwork items, you cannot add the masterwork quality after an item is created; it must be crafted as a masterwork item (see the Craft skill, *PHB*). Similarly, unless otherwise noted, regional masterwork items are far more expensive than their mundane counterparts.

Regional Masterwork Weapons

Blackore Longsword and Lance: In the empire of Crieste, the finest warriors have always armed themselves with weapons forged of blackore steel. Iron mined from the Blackore Hills is highly prized by Criestine weaponsmiths, and all the legendary weapons of the empire were forged of the precious metal.

When a warrior of Crieste achieves knighthood, he is awarded with a blackore longsword and lance, presented by his liege. The weapons are symbols of a warrior's honor, and the distinctive steel, shot through with wavy bands of black and azure, is immediately recognizable to any Criestine citizen. For a non-knight to carry a blackore weapon is a high crime against the crown, punishable by execution.

It is illegal to sell a blackore weapon, though tragic ballads tell of warriors, desperate for gold, selling their weapons to villains who proceed to masquerade as



knights. Illegal blackore weapons are highly prized by enemies of the empire, who are willing to pay exorbitant amounts (up to twice the going rate for a masterwork item) to obtain them.

Game Notes: A lance or longsword forged of blackore steel has the same stats as a masterwork weapon of that type. If worn openly, it also grants its owner a +1 circumstance bonus to Intimidate and Charisma checks made with Criestine commoners. (Nobles, accustomed to dealing with knights, are seldom impressed by knighthood alone.)

Cinai Waraxe: The horse lords of the Cinai are feared for their reckless courage and savage ferocity. Their smiths of the Lion have mastered the creation of the waraxe, forging long curved blades with remarkable strength and sharpness. Designed to be wielded one-handed while mounted, or in two hands by foot troops, a master of the weapon can kill with a single blow and strike another target before the first hits the ground.

Waraxes are traditionally attached to shafts of polished ironwood, and are protected with cases made from the cured skins of chimeras or wyverns. The creation of a waraxe is a sacred act, and only undertaken by master smiths who destroy any axes that fail to meet their exacting standards; thus every Cinai waraxe is a masterwork weapon. Waraxes are revered as family heirlooms and commonly bear names referring to their greatest battles. A waraxe might gain three or four names during its life, as its owners are driven on to ever greater deeds. Losing a waraxe is a great dishonor to the entire clan, and many warriors have devoted their entire lives to recovering an ancestral weapon.

Waraxes are never sold by the Cinai people. When the axes turn up on the black market, they are quickly bought by collectors, often for as much as 600 gp or more.

Game Notes: The Cinai waraxe shares the same statistics as a masterwork dwarven waraxe. Like the dwarven waraxe, it is too large to be used in one hand without special training, and is thus an exotic weapon. A Medium character can use a Cinai waraxe two-handed as a martial weapon. Humans raised in the tradition of the Cinai Lions treat the waraxe as a martial weapon even when wielded in one hand.

Shadowstone Weapons: When the Shadow Star fell into the Lostlands and created the Devil's Cauldron, molten debris from the dark comet spread across all Áereth as it blazed across the sky for the final time. Most of this debris—along with the smoldering remains of the original comet—are located in the Cauldron; however, significant chunks of the comet are also scattered in the Mountains of the Fifth Prince and the Lostlands. Small remnants can be found in the Northlands and Southlands as well.

Although the debris from the Shadow Star is commonly called "shadowstone," this is something of a misnomer. Shadowstone is actually a metal. The material has a dark purple hue and a dull, flat texture. It is often found in chunks, ranging from the size of a human fist to that of an elephant. It only melts at extremely high temperatures and is notoriously difficult to work with, but certain smiths in Xa Deshret still know the secret for forging shadowstone.

The sphinxes of the Khonsurian Empire unlocked the secrets of the stone centuries ago. Shadowstone has impressive magical properties, and can be used to create powerful weapons. Prolonged exposure to the stone causes madness. This initially created great problems for the sphinxes, who sent slaves to mine and harvest the largest stone fragments from the Mountains of the Fifth Prince. At first, the sphinxes sent dwarves to do this work—however, the dwarves mutated and went insane, eventually transforming into the derro that lurk in the Underdeep. Elven slaves were next, but they proved to lack the hardiness necessary for the brutal work; hobgoblin slaves then followed, but they lacked the finesse to effectively excavate the material, hacking the huge chunks of ore into tiny, unusable fragments. It was for this reason that the sphinx wizards eventually bred the nalvor race. The sphinxes had hoped to combine all of the positive qualities of elf and hobgoblin for mining shadowstone.

Most weapons forged from shadowstone are still found within Xa Deshret and the swirling sands of the Ghetrian Desert. These are typically ancient relics or family heirlooms, and already in the hands of a skilled warrior. Many of the most powerful magical objects in all of Áereth are forged from shadowstone, such as the legendary *Shadowcrown* of the sphinx and the blade known as *Shadowstar*, which was wielded long ago by the drow sorceress Khetira.

At the present time, at least three nalvor smiths in Xa Deshret are capable of forging new weapons from raw shadowstone—a task easier said than done, as they all remain hidden in the darkest recesses of the Mountains of the Fifth Prince.

Game Notes: Any weapon forged from shadowstone is a masterwork weapon. The chaotic nature of shadowstone weapons also affects their wielders in two ways. Firstly, the material eventually causes a certain degree of madness in those who remain in prolonged exposure to it. After the first 30 days of possessing a weapon forged of shadowstone, the wielder acts as if affected by a *confusion* spell each time the weapon is drawn. The spell acts as if cast by a 20th-level caster. This effect can be temporarily negated by a *dispel chaos* spell.

Secondly, the fluctuating chaos magic contained within the shadowstone weapon can increase or decrease on any

given day, strengthening or diminishing the weapon's power. Each day of game time, there is a 1 in 6 chance that the power has changed. On each day, the player should roll a d6 for the weapon. If the result is a 1, the PC is aware that a change has taken place, but not necessarily what that change would be until the weapon is wielded in battle. The GM should then roll a d4 to determine the exact nature of the change.

Roll	Result
1	–1 to all magical bonuses; loss of any/all additional magical abilities
2	+1 to all magical bonuses
3	+2 to all magical bonuses; range and duration of any/all magical abilities doubled
4	+3 to all magical bonuses; random gain of 1d4 intelligent item lesser powers

Should a weapon forged from shadowstone have its magical bonuses reduced to 0, it should still be treated as a magical weapon in combat. A shadowstone weapon cannot have a magical bonus of greater than +5.

Vermilion Longbows: Known for their cunning and utter ruthlessness in battle, the warriors of the Vermilion Tribes are also noted for their unique longbows. Made from the enchanted wood of darkfyre trees, the Vermilion bows actually appear at first glance to be two longbows that are crossed over one another, as if in the shape of an X. However, the Vermilion longbow is a single piece, albeit a very complex one. The weapon also has two drawstrings. The arrow to be fired from the bow is nocked at the intersection of the two drawstrings before being released. Despite its complexities, the warriors of the Vermilion tribes use the weapon with great ease, often firing it from horseback with deadly precision while riding at a full gallop.

Although initially crafted by Vermilion bowsmiths, each bow is then individualized by its user, with ornate designs carved into the wood of the bow. These carvings generally represent victories in battle or tributes to long-ago ancestors, which are drawn in great detail. The bows of the greatest warriors of the Vermilion tribes are massive, almost unwieldy weapons, as more wood is grafted to the bows for depicting the victories of these legendary fighters.

Vermilion longbows are among the most prized of possessions to the Tribe warriors, and are never found far from their grasps, ready to fire. Although highly esteemed and revered, they are not ever used by more than one warrior, or even passed along as family heirlooms. Warriors are buried in death with their bows, to ensure good hunting in the afterlife.

Warriors of the Vermilion Tribes never sell their longbows, under any circumstances. Should a member of the Vermilion Tribes be caught stealing another warrior's bow, whether to sell on the black market or for personal use, it is a crime punishable by death. Should a bow ever appear on the black market, they can fetch upwards of 750 gp or more.

Game Notes: A Vermilion longbow shares the same statistics as a masterwork longbow, save for its range, which is doubled. Its unwieldy nature makes it too difficult to handle properly in battle without special training, and should therefore be considered an exotic weapon. Elves or humans raised in the Vermilion Tribes have significant advantages in learning how to use this special bow, and it should only be considered a martial weapon in their hands.

Regional Masterwork Armor

Holdfast Plate: The dwarves of the Holdfast are famous for their breastplate, half-plate and full plate armors. Dwarf smiths devote entire centuries to the various aspects of metallurgy, smithing, and practical battle experience with a single goal in mind: to forge the finest heavy armors in the Known Realms.

Each is a unique work of art, fashioned for a particular warrior, and stylized according to the nature of the armorsmith. Certain smiths fashion armor in the likeness of demons and dragons, some emboss their armors with sparkling gems and inlays of gold and silver, while others carefully etch each plate with acid.

The dwarves are happy to sell their masterpieces, which always command a high price on the market (up to three times the normal cost of masterwork armor), but the true worth of Holdfast plate can only be known by wearing a suit specifically forged to the user's physique. These tailored suits are commonly worn by Holdfast generals and dwarven heroes. Occasionally, a suit may be forged in thanks for deeds done in service of the empire, or as a gift to neighboring regents.

Game Notes: Like regular masterwork armors, the armor check penalty of Holdfast plate armors is lessened by 1. If the armor that has been crafted specifically for that wearer, the armor check penalty is lessened by 2.

New Cleric Domains

An asterisk (*) indicates a new spell described later in this chapter.

Creation Domain

Granted Power: Cast conjuration (creation) spells at +2 caster level.

Creation Domain Spells
1 *Create water*
2 *Minor image*
3 *Create food and water*
4 *Minor creation*
5 *Major creation*
6 *Heroes' feast*
7 *Permanent image*
8 *True creation**
9 *Genesis**

Darkness Domain

Granted Power: Free Blind-Fight feat.

Darkness Domain Spells
1 *Obscuring mist*
2 *Blindness*
3 *Blacklight**
4 *Armor of darkness**
5 *Summon monster V* (only summons 1d3 shadows)
6 *Prying eyes*
7 *Nightmare*
8 *Power word, blind*
9 *Power word, kill*

Dream Domain

Granted Power: You can draw upon your memories of the Dream to gain supreme confidence as a supernatural ability. You gain an enhancement bonus to Charisma equal to your cleric level. Activating the power is a free action, the power lasts 1 round, and it is usable twice per day.

Dream Domain Spells
1 *Sleep*
2 *Daydream**
3 *Deep slumber*
4 *Dreamscrying**
5 *Symbol of sleep* (good or neutrally aligned clerics) or *nightmare* (evil-aligned clerics)
6 *Symbol of fear*
7 *Oneiric form**
8 *Mind blank*
9 *Weird*

Glory Domain

Granted Power: Turn undead with a +2 bonus on the turning check and +1d6 to the turning damage roll.

Glory Domain Spells
1 *Disrupt undead*
2 *Bless weapon*
3 *Searing light*
4 *Holy smite*
5 *Holy sword*
6 *Bolt of glory**
7 *Sunbeam*
8 *Crown of glory**
9 *Gate*

Liberation Domain

Granted Power: The character gains a +2 morale bonus on all saving throws against enchantment spells or effects.

Liberation Domain Spells
1 *Remove fear*
2 *Remove paralysis*
3 *Remove curse*
4 *Freedom of movement*
5 *Break enchantment*
6 *Greater dispelling*
7 *Refuge*
8 *Mind blank*
9 *Unbinding*

Madness Domain

Granted Power: The character gains an Insanity score equal to half his or her class level. For spellcasting (determining bonus spells and DCs), the character uses his or her Wisdom score plus his or her Insanity score in place of Wisdom alone.

For all other purposes, such as determining skill and save modifiers, use Wisdom minus Insanity in place of Wisdom.

Once per day, the character can see and act with the clarity of true madness. Use the character's Insanity score as a positive rather than a negative modifier on a single roll involving Wisdom. Choose to use this power before the roll is made.

Madness Domain Spells
1 *Lesser confusion*
2 *Touch of madness**
3 *Rage**
4 *Confusion*
5 *Bolts of bedevilment**
6 *Phantasmal killer*
7 *Insanity*
8 *Maddening scream**
9 *Weird*

Repose Domain

The Repose domain is similar to the Death domain, but is granted by good-aligned deities whose clerics are barred from casting evil spells.

Granted Power: The character may use a *death touch* once per day. The *death touch* is a spell-like ability that is a death effect. The character must succeed at a melee touch attack against a living creature (using the rules for touch spells). When the character touches, roll 1d6 per his or her cleric level. If the total at least equals the creature's current hit points, it dies (no save).

Repose Domain Spells
1 *Deathwatch*
2 *Gentle repose*
3 *Speak with dead*
4 *Death ward*
5 *Slay living*
6 *Undeath to death*
7 *Destruction*
8 *Surelife**
9 *Wail of the banshee*

Weather Domain

Granted Power: Survival is a class skill.

Weather Domain Spells
1 *Obscuring mist*
2 *Fog cloud*
3 *Call lightning*
4 *Sleet storm*
5 *Ice storm*
6 *Control winds*
7 *Control weather*
8 *Whirlwind*
9 *Storm of vengeance*

New Spells

Armor of Darkness

Abjuration [Darkness]
Level: Darkness 4
Components: V, S, DF
Casting Time: 1 action
Range: Touch
Target: Creature touched
Duration: 10 minutes/level
Saving Throw: Will negates (harmless)
Spell Resistance: Yes (harmless)

The spell envelops the warded creature in a shroud of shadows. The shroud can, if the caster desires, conceal the wearer's features. In any case, it grants the recipient a +3 deflection bonus to Armor Class plus an additional +1 for every four caster levels (maximum bonus +8). The subject can see through the armor as if it did not exist and is also afforded darkvision with a range of 60 feet. Finally, the subject gains a +2 bonus on saving throws against any holy, good, or light spells or effects. Undead creatures that are subjects of *armor of darkness* also gain +4 turn resistance.

Blacklight

Evocation [Darkness]
Level: Darkness 3, Sor/Wiz 3
Components: V, S, M
Casting Time: 1 action
Range: Close (25 ft. + 5 ft./2 levels)
Area: A 20-ft.-radius emanation centered on a creature, object, or point in space
Duration: 1 round/level (D)
Saving Throw: Will negates or none (object)
Spell Resistance: Yes or no (object)

The caster creates an area of total darkness. The darkness is impenetrable to normal vision and darkvision, but the caster can see normally if within the blacklit area. Creatures outside the spell's area, even the caster, cannot see through it.

The spell can be cast on a point in space, an object, or a creature. If cast on an object or creature, the spell's effect radiates from that target and moves with it. Unattended

Damage from Bolt of Glory

Creature's Origin/Nature	Damage	Maximum Value
Material Plane, Elemental Plane, neutral outsider	1d6 per 2 levels	7d6
Negative Energy Plane, evil outsider, undead creature	1d6 per level	15d6
Positive Energy Plane, good outsider	—	—

objects and points in space do not get saving throws or benefit from spell resistance.

Blacklight counters or dispels any *light* spell of equal or lower level. The 3rd-level cleric spell *daylight* counters or dispels *blacklight*.

Bolt of Glory

Evocation [Good]
Level: Glory 6
Components: V, S, DF
Casting Time: 1 action
Range: Close (25 ft. + 5 ft./level)
Effect: Ray
Duration: Instantaneous
Saving Throw: None
Spell Resistance: Yes

This spell projects a bolt of energy from the Positive Energy Plane against one creature. The caster must succeed at a ranged touch attack to strike the target. A creature struck suffers varying damage, depending on its nature and home plane of existence, per the table on the previous page.

Bolts of Bedevilment

Enchantment [Mind-Affecting]
Level: Madness 5
Components: V, S
Casting Time: One action
Range: Medium (100 ft. + 10 ft./level)
Effect: Ray
Duration: 1 round/level
Saving Throw: Will negates
Spell Resistance: Yes

This spell grants the caster the ability to make one ray attack per round. The ray dazes one living creature, clouding its mind so that it takes no action for 1d3 rounds. The creature is not stunned (so attackers get no special advantage against it), but it can't move, cast spells, use mental abilities, and so on.

Collapsing Cavern

Conjuration (Earth)
Level: Drd 4, Sor/Wiz 4
Components: V, S, M
Casting Time: 1 standard action
Range: Medium (100 ft. + 10 ft./level)
Effect: 120-ft. line
Duration: 1 round + 1 round/level (D)
Saving Throw: Reflex half; see below
Spell Resistance: No

This spell rips large rocks away from the ground and sends them as missiles toward a single target point chosen by the spellcaster. The conjured rocks originate from a point chosen by the spellcaster anywhere within the spell range, and are then directed against a single target point chosen within that same spell range (measured from the spellcaster's position at the time of casting). Any creature caught in the path of the flying rocks between the point of origin and the target square is affected. If cast underground or inside a man-made structure, the rocks may strike from any direction, including the ceiling above, thus giving the spell its name. Once the rocks strike a target, they shatter—they cannot be reflected off of other objects or creatures. The target area cannot be changed once the spell is cast.

Collapsing cavern deals 4d6 points of damage to any creatures that it may strike. Additionally, creatures struck by the flying rocks may be knocked prone to the ground, and be unable to take any actions during the round subsequent to being struck. Affected creatures making a successful Reflex save remain on their feet; however, they still take half damage from the rocks.

The spell does not function underwater.

Material Component: A feather and a handful of pebbles.

Corruption

Necromancy [Fear, Mind-Affecting]
Level: Sor/Wiz 5
Components: V, S, F
Casting Time: 1 standard action

Range: Medium (100 ft. + 10 ft./level)
Area: One 40-ft. cube/level (S)
Duration: 1 round/level (D)
Saving Throw: Will negates; see below
Spell Resistance: Yes

This spell fills an area with a cold, negative energy. Once cast, everything within the area of effect turns a sickly gray-green color. All plants in the area begin to wither, and any creature with an Intelligence score of 2 or less automatically flees the area in terror, and may take no other actions until at least 100 feet away from the area of effect.

Those creatures that remain within the spell's area of affect may be filled with a sense of utter dread. For each round that a creature remains there, it suffers 1d4 hit points of damage, as well as 1d4 points of temporary Strength damage. The creature automatically loses all initiative rolls and suffers a –4 penalty to all Concentration checks. All creatures affected by the spell are also considered to be flat-footed for combat purposes. A successful saving throw negates all spell effects. A *remove fear* spell or the like immediate negates all effects except hit point damage.

Focus: A silver necklace with a spider insignia, worth at least 50 gp.

Create Vampire

Necromancy
Level: Sor/Wiz 9
Components: V, S, M
Casting Time: 1 hour
Range: Touch
Target: Dead creature touched
Duration: Instantaneous
Saving Throw: None; see text
Spell Resistance: No

With this sinister spell, the caster brings a creature back from the dead in the form of a vampire. The spell, which only affects a humanoid or monstrous humanoid subject, acts similarly to a vampire's energy drain. The primary difference is that the *create vampire* spell only affects a subject that is already dead, although for no longer than 10 days. Should *create vampire* be cast upon a still-living creature, or on a creature dead for longer than 10 days, the spell has no effect whatsoever.

Once created by the spell, the new vampire becomes the minion of the spellcaster that created it, and remains enthralled until the destruction of its maker. A vampire created by this powerful spell retains any class abilities, feats, or skill ranks it once possessed in life; however, it remembers little of its former life, save for its name. The base level of the affected creature (or Hit Dice) is reduced by 2. If the subject was 1st level, the corpse's effective Constitution score is reduced by 4. (If this reduction would put its Con at 0 or lower, the creature remains dead and cannot be transformed into a vampire.) This level/HD loss or Constitution loss cannot be repaired by any means. The base class, base attack bonus, base save bonuses, and hit points are otherwise unchanged. Once the base abilities and statistics of the affected creature are recalculated, the vampire template can be then added to it. Regardless of level, all creatures affected by this spell return as vampires, not vampire spawn.

The spellcaster immediately suffers 2d6 points of temporary Constitution damage and 1d6 points of temporary Strength damage after casting *create vampire*. Recovery of these points cannot begin until one full day after the spell is cast, unless a *wish* or *miracle* spell is utilized. The spellcaster can create a maximum number of vampires totaling no more than twice his own level; should the spell be cast upon a subject after this maximum is reached, the spell has no effect. The spellcaster cannot voluntarily free one of his existing enthralled vampires in order to create a new vampire; only when one of these vampires is destroyed completely can the caster begin again to produce new monsters.

Material Component: The severed hand and heart of a vampire spawn.

Crown of Glory

Evocation
Level: Glory 8
Components: V, S, M, DF
Casting Time: 1 full round
Range: Personal
Area: 120-ft.-radius emanation centered on caster
Duration: 1 minute/level
Saving Throw: Will negates
Spell Resistance: Yes

The caster is imbued with an aura of celestial authority, inspiring awe in all lesser creatures.

The caster gains a +4 enhancement bonus to his or her Charisma score for the duration of the spell. All creatures with fewer than 8 HD or levels cease whatever they are doing and are compelled to pay attention to the caster. Any such creature that wants to take hostile action against the caster must make a successful Will save to do so. Any creature that does not make this saving throw the first time it attempts a hostile action is *enthralled* for the duration of the spell (as the *enthrall* spell), as long as it is in the spell's area, nor will it try to leave the area on its own. Creatures with 8 HD or more may pay attention to the caster, but are not affected by this spell.

When the caster speaks, all listeners telepathically under-

stand him or her, even if they do not understand the language. While the spell lasts, the caster can make up to three suggestions to creatures of fewer than 8 HD in range, as if using the *mass suggestion* spell (Will save negates); creatures with 8 HD or more aren't affected by this power. Only creatures within range at the time a suggestion is given are subject to it.

Material Component: A gem worth at least 200 gp.

Daydream

Illusion [Mind-Affecting]
Level: Dream 2
Components: M, DF
Casting Time: 1 standard action
Range: Close (25 ft. + 5 ft./2 levels)
Target: Varies (see text)
Duration: 1 round/level (D) (see text)
Saving Throw: Will negates
Spell Resistance: Yes

The caster projects oneiric images from the target's mind into the air or upon any surface within range. While the spell is often used for demonstration or entertainment, the caster can also use the spell in combat in one of two ways:

Bolster: The next spell cast within 2 rounds is cast as though the caster were 2 levels higher due to the *daydream's* fantastic dramatics and the surge of power it borrows from the Dream.

Distract: The *daydream* projects fragments from the caster's own nightmares that can distract a single opponent capable of dreaming. The target must make a successful Will save or suffer a –1 penalty on all attack rolls and is required to make a successful Concentration check to cast any spells or make any skill checks. This effect lasts only 1 round per caster level or until a successful Will Save is made.

Material Component: A scrap of rice paper or vellum.

Dreamscrying

Divination (Scrying)
Level: Dream 4
Components: V, S, DF, F
Casting Time: 10 minutes
Range: See text
Effect: Magical sensor
Duration: 8 hours
Saving Throw: Will negates
Spell Resistance: Yes

Dreamscrying allows the caster to see and hear a specific creature as he dreams, requiring the spell to be cast immediately prior to normal rest time. The spell functions like *scrying*, except as noted above and with the following limitations.

The caster receives only vague, dreamlike images and sounds based on the whereabouts of the subject throughout an 8-hour period. He can hear only brief excerpts of conversation, as allowed by the GM, and no other spells can be cast during the spell's effects (as the caster sleeps). Although the spell is technically cast before the caster begins to rest, its effects take place during an 8-hour period and counts against him for purposes of determining the number of spells he may prepare the following day.

The spell will only function during the caster's normal period of rest. If he is awakened at any point during the duration, the spell ends. If the caster is an elf, his trance endures for a full 8 hours, during which *dreamscrying* takes place. If he is not, he sleeps soundly throughout the duration. The spell does not function if the caster is affected by a *nightmare* spell.

Within the oneiric realms of Ôæ (for good- or neutrally aligned clerics) or Gil'Mâridth (evil-aligned clerics), the caster looks upon the subject of the spell as through a fantastical gateway or pool. He can see the subject with astonishing clarity, but immediately upon awakening, only the vague sounds and images allowed by the spell are retained.

Divine Focus: A silken blanket worth at least 70 gp, in which the caster must be wrapped.

Genesis

Conjuration (Creation)
Level: Creation 9
Components: V, S , M, X P
Casting Time: 1 week (8 hours/day)
Range: 180 ft.
Effect: A demiplane on the Ethereal Plane centered on the caster's location
Duration: Instantaneous
Saving Throw: None
Spell Resistance: No

This spell creates an immobile, finite plane with limited access—a demiplane.

Demiplanes created by this power are very small, minor planes. A character can cast this spell only on the Ethereal Plane. When he or she casts it, a local density fluctuation precipitates the creation of a demiplane. At first, the demiplane grows at a rate of a 1-foot-radius per day to an initial maximum radius of 180 feet as the fledgling plane draws substance from surrounding ethereal vapors and protomatter or astral ectoplasm.

The character determines the environment in the demiplane when he or she first casts *genesis*, reflecting most

any desire he or she can visualize. The caster determines factors such as atmosphere, water, temperature, and the shape of the general terrain. However, the spell cannot create life, nor can it create construction. If desired, these must be brought in by some other fashion.

Once the basic demiplane reaches its maximum size, the character can continue to cast this spell to enlarge the demiplane if he or she is inside the boundaries of the demiplane. In such a case, the radius of the demiplane increases by 60 feet for each subsequent casting.

If the spell is cast again while outside an existing demiplane, the casting creates a separate bubble that does not touch or overlap any previously created demiplane.

XP Cost: 5,000 XP.

Leyhar's Obsessive Focus

Illusion [Mind-Affecting]
Level: Sor/Wiz 5
Components: V, S, M
Casting Time: 1 standard action
Range: Close (25 ft. + 5 ft./2 levels)
Target: One living creature
Duration: See text (D)
Saving Throw: Will negates
Spell Resistance: Yes

Created by the legendary Quaysarrian illusionist T'Rhos Leyhar, this spell allows the caster to reveal an illusionary image of an object to a specific target. If the target fails a Will save, the target is forced to immediately go forth and search for that object, as per a *geas* spell. Finding this object becomes paramount to the target, and takes precedence above all other things. Only by finding the object shown by the caster can the target end the spell.

The object shown by the caster to the target must actually exist; it cannot be a figment of the caster's imagination. Should the object be destroyed in between the time that the spell is originally cast and when the target would be able to find it, the target is fated to forever search for the object of the obsession in utter futility, unless the caster releases the target from the spell.

Material Component: Five gold coins and a lock of the target's hair.

Leyhar's Tempting Lure

Illusion [Mind-Affecting]
Level: Sor/Wiz 3
Components: V, S, M
Casting Time: 1 standard action
Range: Touch
Target: One living creature
Duration: 1 round/level (D)
Saving Throw: Will negates; see text
Spell Resistance: Yes

This spell produces the illusion of something incredibly attractive to the target. This object is also constantly in motion and always seems just out of reach to the target. Should the target fail to make a successful Will save, the object of the illusion must be relentlessly pursued for the entire duration of the spell, or until the caster chooses to end the spell. Only the target affected by the spell can see the illusion.

The caster of the spell may also select the path taken by this constantly moving illusion, thereby also directing the path taken by the pursing target. The path chosen by the caster cannot deliberately lead into obvious danger, or the spell is broken. Should the creature affected by the spell be stopped or held back from pursuing the illusion, the target makes every effort to break free from its constraints and to continue its pursuit for the remaining duration of the spell.

Material Component: A handful of bread crumbs.

Maddening Scream

Enchantment (Compulsion) [Mind-Affecting]
Level: Sor/Wiz 8, Madness 8
Components: V
Casting Time: One action
Range: Touch
Target: Living creature touched
Duration: 1d4+1 rounds
Saving Throw: None
Spell Resistance: Yes

The subject cannot keep him or herself from behaving as though completely mad. This spell makes it impossible for the victim to do anything other than run around shrieking.

The effect worsens the Armor Class of the creature by 4, makes Reflex saving throws impossible except on a roll of 20, and renders the creature incapable of using a shield.

Oneiric Form

Illusion [Mind-Affecting]
Level: Dream 7
Components: V, S
Casting Time: 1 standard action
Range: Personal
Target: Caster
Duration: 1 round/level (D)
Saving Throw: See text
Spell Resistance: No

When casting this spell, the caster assumes the physical appearance of his favored dream persona along with a

number of abilities. The effect is phantasmal, but the caster's absolute belief in this dreamlike shape makes it real to him. His allies and opponents can recognize the transformation as illusionary with a successful Will save, but no attempt to disbelieve it can deny the caster the protection the *oneric form* affords.

The spell functions like *disguise self*, except as noted above and with the following additions. The caster's creature type changes to outsider (dream). He gains a +4 inherent bonus to Armor Class, Charisma, and all saving throws. The caster gains darkvision out to 60 feet and damage reduction 5/–.

Primordial Transformation

Transformation
Level: Clr 6, Drd 6, Sor/Wiz 6
Components: V, S
Casting Time: 1 standard action
Range: Touch
Target: Creature touched
Duration: 1 min./level
Saving Throw: Fortitude negates
Spell Resistance: Yes

The affected creature undergoes a tremendous transformation into a hairy, primitive brute, becoming much larger, stronger, and faster than normal. However, the mental capacity of the creature becomes greatly diminished at the same time. The spell grants the subject a +6 enhancement bonus to Strength, Dexterity, and Constitution, and –6 penalties to Intelligence, Wisdom, and Charisma. These ability changes also affect hit points, saving throws, ability checks, and so on, as appropriate.

Additionally, the spell changes the affected creature's size category to the next largest one. The creature also gains increases to base movement of 10 feet, a natural armor bonus of +2, and 10 temporary hit point bonus. An affected creature whose size increases to Large has a space of 10 feet and a natural reach of 10 feet. The spell has additional adverse effects, though: Affected creatures are robbed of the ability to cast arcane spells, and they lose the ability to verbally communicate with others.

Rage

Enchantment
Level: Madness 3
Components: V, S
Casting Time: One action
Range: Touch
Target: Creature touched
Duration: 1 round/level
Saving Throw: Will negates (harmless)
Spell Resistance: Yes (harmless)

The caster can put a creature into a blood frenzy. In this rage, the creature gains +4 to Strength, +4 to Constitution, and a +2 morale bonus on Will saves. (Unlike a barbarian's rage, there is no penalty to AC, and no fatigue period occurs after the rage is over.)

Sandstorm

Conjuration (Creation)
Level: Drd 6, Sor/Wiz 6
Components: V, S, M
Casting Time: 1 standard action
Range: Medium (100 ft. + 10 ft./level)
Effect: Cloud spreads in 20-ft. radius, 20 ft. high
Saving Throw: Fortitude half
Spell Resistance: No

A storm of blinding sand erupts from a starting point selected by the spellcaster, slashing and cutting all creatures caught within its reach. The storm obscures all sight beyond 10 feet, including darkvision and low-light vision. Creatures within 5 feet of the blinding storm have total concealment (50% miss chance, and attackers trapped within the *sandstorm* cannot use sight to locate their opponents). Additionally, all creatures within the spell's area of effect take 1d6 points of damage per caster level (maximum 10d6).

A moderate wind (11-20 mph) disperses the *sandstorm* in 2 rounds; a strong wind (21+ mph) disperses the spell in 1 round. The spell does not function underwater, or in arctic climates.

If cast in a natural desert region, the *sandstorm* gains strength. Base damage for an enhanced *sandstorm* increases to 1d10 points of damage per caster level (maximum 10d10).

Material Component: A handful of sand and a pinch of sulfur.

Surelife

Abjuration
Level: Repose 8
Components: V, S, M
Casting Time: 1 round
Range: Personal
Target: The caster
Duration: 1 minute/2 levels
Saving Throw: None
Spell Resistance: No

This spell allows the caster to protect herself against some condition that would ordinarily cause certain death. The character can only protect herself against a natural occurrence or condition, not against a spell or the action of a creature. The character must specify the condition against which she wishes to protect herself, and the spell is effective only against that condition. Should the character be subjected to that condition during the duration of the spell, she feels no discomfort and takes no damage from the condition. However, the spell does not protect any items carried on the caster's person. At the end of the spell's duration, the condition has full normal effects if the character is still subjected to it.

Symbiosis

Conjuration (Healing)
Level: Brd 4, Clr 4, Drd 5, Pal 5, Rgr 5, Healing 4
Components: V, S
Casting Time: 1 standard action
Range: Touch
Target: Creature touched
Duration: Instantaneous
Saving Throw: Will half (harmless)
Spell Resistance: Yes (harmless)

By laying hands upon another living creature, the spellcaster transfers life essence to another being. The recipient of the spell temporarily receives all of the hit points, skills, spells, and spellcasting abilities of the caster. If the recipient and the caster share common skills, the recipient uses the higher of the two bonuses for the skill. The number of spell slots available to the caster should be added to those of the subject of the spell (if the subject has any). However, the recipient of the spell does not receive any of the memories or additional knowledge of the caster. Any damage taken by the spell recipient during this time comes first from the spellcaster's transferred hit points, then from the subject of the spell.

Once cast, the spellcaster goes into a temporary coma, falling to 0 hit points for the duration of the spell. The spellcaster is unconscious and immobile during this time, and may take no actions at all. If the spellcaster takes a single hit point of damage during the spell's duration, the spell is broken and the recipient immediately loses all temporary bonuses. Additionally, the spellcaster's remaining hit points (if any) are not transferred back if the spell is broken in this manner, and the caster remains below 0 hit points until healed. Should the spell expire naturally, any of the transferred hit points that are left instantly return to the caster without incident.

Touch of Madness

Enchantment [Mind-Affecting]
Level: Madness 2
Components: V, S
Casting Time: One action
Range: Touch
Target: Creature touched
Duration: 1 round/level
Saving Throw: Will negates
Spell Resistance: Yes

The caster may daze one living creature by making a successful touch attack. If the target creature does not make a successful Will save, its mind is clouded and it takes no action for 1 round per caster level. The dazed subject is not stunned (so attackers get no special advantage against it), but it can't move, cast spells, use mental abilities, and so on.

Touch of Slime

Transmutation
Level: Clr/Drd 5, Sor/Wiz 6
Components: V, S
Casting Time: 1 standard action
Range: Touch
Target: Living creature touched
Duration: Instantaneous; see text
Saving Throw: Fortitude negates; see text
Spell Resistance: Yes

By casting this spell, the caster's hands begin to drip with a highly toxic slime similar to that of an aboleth's, allowing the caster to inflict great pain upon an opponent with a successful melee touch attack. A creature hit by the spellcaster must succeed on a Fortitude save or begin to quickly mutate over the next 1d4+1 rounds, with the skin of the affected creature becoming covered entirely with a clear, watery slime. At the end of this time, affected creatures must remain completely immersed in water or take 1d4 points of damage each round. The slime reduces the creature's natural armor bonus by 1 (but never to less than 0).

A *remove disease* spell cast before the transformation is complete will restore an afflicted creature to normal. Afterward, however, only a *cure serious wounds, cure critical wounds, heal*, or *mass heal* spell can reverse the condition.

True Creation

Conjuration (Creation)
Level: Creation 8
Components: V, S, M, XP
Casting Time: 10 minutes
Range: 0 ft.
Effect: Unattended, nonmagical object of nonliving matter, up to 1 cu. ft./level
Duration: Instantaneous
Saving Throw: None
Spell Resistance: No

The caster creates a nonmagical, unattended object of any sort of matter. Items created are permanent and cannot be negated by dispelling magics or negating powers. For all intents and purposes, these items are completely real. The volume of the item created cannot exceed 1 cubic foot per caster level. The caster must succeed at an appropriate skill check to make a complex item.

Unlike the items brought into being by the lower-level spells *minor creation* and *major creation*, objects created by the casting of true creation can be used as material components.

XP Cost: The item's gold piece value in XP, or a minimum of 1 XP, whichever is more.

Undeath to Death

Necromancy
Level: Sor/Wiz 6, Clr 6, Repose 6
Components: V, S , M, D F
Casting Time: 1 action
Range: Medium (100 ft. + 10 ft./level)
Area: Several undead creatures within a 50-ft.-radius burst
Duration: Instantaneous
Saving Throw: Will negates
Spell Resistance: Yes

Undeath to death snuffs out the animating forces of undead creatures, killing them instantly. The spell slays 1d4 HD worth of undead creatures per caster level (maximum 20d4). Creatures with the fewest HD are affected first; among creatures with equal HD, those closest to the point of origin of the burst are affected first.

Material Component: A gem worth at least 500 gp.

Magic Items

Bonemail: The Xulmecs of the city-state of Amoya revere their dead in ways that foreigners find macabre at best. Warriors of sufficient prowess, wealth, or status with the clergy of Anahuara may be given armor fashioned from the very bones of one or more of his or her ancestors. Known as *tomioquan* by the Xulmecs, such armor is more commonly known as bonemail. Infused with the dead warrior's spirit, it grants the wearer insight on the battlefield and courage against his enemies. This necromantic practice has since been replicated by other cultures, but is found predominantly in western Xulmec.

Crafted by clerics and imbued with the blessings of a god, the bonemail armor is further calcified and strengthened by a wizard's art. Effectively as strong and durable as masterwork scale mail, bonemail armor provides the wearer a +1 divine bonus on all attack and damage rolls and saves to resist fear. Additionally, the spirit or spirits possessing the bonemail can grant the wearer an *augury* once each day. The divine bonuses and spell-like ability only function for wearers of the bloodline from whose bones the armor is constructed. The statistics listed in the table on page 81 reflect a suit of bonemail armor, which is always masterwork, before the additional enhancement bonuses to AC, cost, and creation are applied.

Moderate necromancy; CL 9th; Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *speak with dead, augury*; Price 16,500; Cost 9,750 gp + 850 XP.

Flying Guillotine +4: This highly specialized weapon is only used by the vampires of the Vanguard of Eternal Doom. Ordinarily, the weapon appears as a magical heavy flail with six long, black chains, and acts as a *heavy flail +4* in battle. However, the longest of the six chains has a black silk sack attached to one end. The perimeter of the opening of this sack is surrounded with hundreds of tiny silver blades. Should a *flying guillotine +4* strike an opponent with a critical hit, that opponent must make a successful Reflex save (DC 20) or be slain instantly, as the sack covers the head of the opponent and rips it free from its body. The body instantly falls lifeless with –10 hit points; however, the head remains magically alive and able to communicate for an additional day following this decapitation, allowing the owner of the flying guillotine to interrogate the head. Both body and head must be reattached if the slain creature is to be raised or resurrected.

The *flying guillotine +4* is always found in the possession of the vampires of the Vanguard; there is no other known source for this weapon.

Strong necromancy and transmutation; CL 18th; Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *keen edge*; Price: 75,315 gp; Cost 30,500 + 4,800 XP.

Magic Weapon Properties

In addition to enhancement bonuses, weapons can have one or more of the special abilities detailed below. A weapon with a special ability must have at least a +1 enhancement bonus.

Dreamforged: A dreamforged weapon was fashioned by clerics of Ôæ within the Dream itself (see Chapter 2), but through great spiritual effort has been translated into the waking world. In appearance, it resembles a normal weapon but it leaves a fleeting afterimage in its wake when it moves quickly. The first time a creature is damaged by a dreamforged weapon, it must succeed on a DC 14 Will save or suffer an additional 1d4 points of damage. On the second round, the creature will suffer an additional 2d4 per strike, and on the third round and each round thereafter, the additional damage remains at 3d4. A creature who succeeds on the saving throw is impervious to the dreamforged weapon's phantasmal damage for 24 hours.

Moderate illusion (phantasm). A dreamforged weapon cannot be created by any conventional means.

Dysmorphic: A dysmorphic weapon leaves horrid welts and scars and saps the confidence from its victims. Any living creature struck by a dysmorphic weapon suffers 2 points of Charisma damage and must succeed on a DC 14 Fortitude save or contract red ache. Simply holding such a vile weapon incurs a –2 profane penalty on the wielder's own Charisma. Favored by the deviant followers of gods like Narrimunâth, Nimlurun, and Bobugbubilz, these corruptive weapons are considered holy relics.

Moderate necromantic; CL 12th; Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *contagion*; Price +2 bonus.

Lucent: A lucent weapon constantly sheds a pale, luminous glow that illuminates a 5-foot radius at all times. Upon command, it illuminates a 40-foot radius with clear, white radiance, and creatures that take penalties in bright light also take them while within the radius of this magical light. In addition, a creature damaged by a lucent weapon must make a successful DC 14 Fortitude save or be limned with the same luminous glow that radiates from the lucent weapon. This effect replicates the spell *faerie fire*, although the glow is white in color and lasts for 1 minute. Creatures with spell resistance are unaffected. A creature that successfully saves cannot be affected by the same lucent weapon's *faerie fire* for 24 hours.

Moderate evocation; CL 10th; Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *light*; Price +1 bonus.

Silent: A silent weapon bestows the effect of a *silence* spell upon its wielder, though the effect only occurs when the owner grasps the weapon in hand. Although it negates all sounds made by the wielder, effectively resulting in automatic success on Move Silently checks, the wielder is also unable to cast spells that require verbal components or communicate audibly.

Moderate illusion; CL 10th; Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *silence*; Price +2 bonus.

Spectral: A spectral weapon can reach into the Ethereal Plane to strike its wielder's opponents. For melee weapons, the spectral weapon bypasses all armor and shield bonuses. Bows, crossbows, and slings so crafted bestow upon their ammunition the ability to bypass only cover bonuses. In the case of a target having full cover, a miss chance of 50% is applied instead, provided the wielder of the spectral bow, crossbow, or sling knows which space the target occupies. Despite these abilities, a spectral weapon also shines like a beacon to incorporeal creatures, even unequipped and stowed. The owner of the spectral weapon incurs a –4 circumstantial penalty to AC against such opponents and any miss chances the owner might benefit from are negated.

Moderate illusion; CL 13th; Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *ethereal jaunt*; Price +3 bonus.

Stealth: A stealth weapon allows its wielder to become invisible once per day equal to the enhancement bonus for attack and damage rolls. For example, a *+2 stealth longsword* allows its wielder to become invisible twice per day. Activating this power is a free action, and the duration is a full round. As with the spell *invisibility*, the effect ends if the wielder attacks an enemy, but he gains the benefits of *invisibility* during that action (+2 on the attack roll and enemies are denied their Dexterity bonus to AC).

Moderate illusion; CL 10th; Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *invisibility*; Price +1 bonus.

Truculent: A truculent weapon is predisposed to violence and will suffer no hesitation from its wielder. In the hands of an owner proficient in its weapon type, a truculent weapon replicates the effects of a speed weapon, allowing the wielder to make one extra attack when making a full attack action. The attack uses the wielder's full base attack bonus, plus any modifiers appropriate to the situation. (This benefit is not cumulative with similar effects, such as a *haste* spell.) In addition, the wielder is granted a +4 enhancement bonus to initiative checks. However, for every round (not counting the first) the wielder fails to deal damage to an opponent during combat he or she suffers 1d6 points of nonlethal damage from the weapon itself.

Moderate transmutation; CL 13th; Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *haste*; Price +3 bonus.

Coins of the World Before

Many nations mint their own coins, each nation's currency being roughly equivalent to those of her neighbors. But the treasure hordes discovered by adventurers and explorers are seldom so tidy, nearly always containing a handful of exotic coins forged by forgotten empires and ancient kingdoms.

As a general rule of thumb, the GM can always rule that a gold piece is simply a gold piece, but when heroes raise their torches above sparkling hordes of ancient currency, finding the treasure is often only the beginning.

Abylossian Coin Chain: Known to adventurers as "gold snakes," the coin chains of Abylos were the nomad's answer to the coin purse. The crudely minted coins, often little more than a flattened gold nugget, all have a hole punched through their center, permitting the coins to be threaded onto leather straps. The barbarian nomads would string a chain of gold coins, and hang them from their saddles as symbols of strength and glory in battle. Pictographs show the barbarians exchanging the chains like units of currency, betting and gambling over piles of the snakes, and trading in exchange for arms, slaves, and armor.

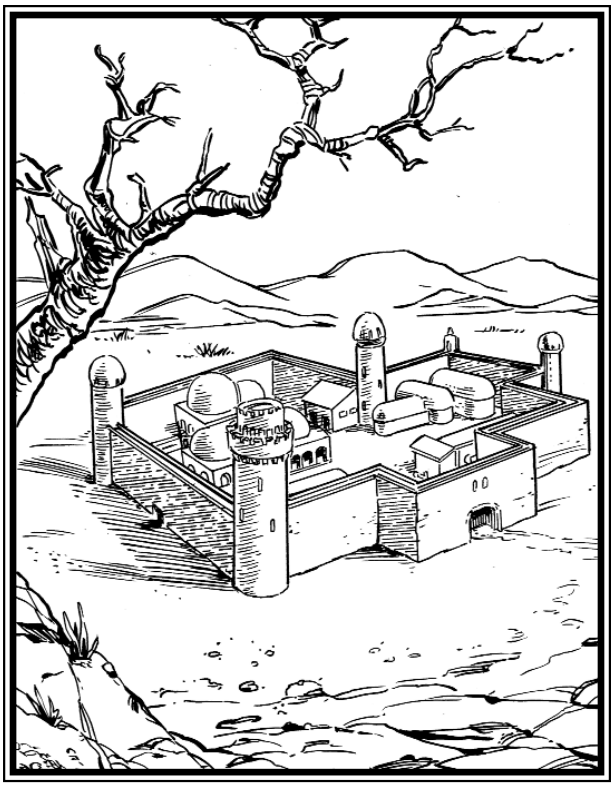
The coin chains are most often found in 10, 20, and 50 coin chains, and are usually worth their weight in gold. Legends tell of a "master chain" made of one hundred enormous coins hung on a chain of iron and born by the slaves of an Abylossian warlord.

Elven Leaf-Stones: The elves of Foresthome traded in smooth spheres of amber with leaves, flower petals, or droplets of water encased within the stone. The spheres vary widely, leading some scholars to theorize that the value of a stone was determined by its aesthetics, but there is little in the way of evidence to support this theory.

Of more interest to adventurers are the rare leaf-stones that contain spells. Utilitarian leaf-stones enchanted with *light, detect poison*, and *detect magic* are the most common, while leaf-stones with *charm person, mage armor*, and *shocking grasp* have also been discovered. The type of spell can often be determined only by trial and error. A dweomered leaf-stone contains 1 to 4 charges.

Nonmagical leaf-stones are worth as much as 5 gp to collectors. Dweomered leaf-stones are worth anywhere from 50 to 200 gp.

Nimorian Star: The chief currency used by the wealthy Priest-Kings, the Nimorian star is a gold piece with a black star etched into its center. The stars are curiously warm to the touch, and radiate an aura of minor divination if detected. A DC 20 Spellcraft check will reveal that the gold of the star carries the taint of fiendish essence.



Minted as a means of spying on the Nimorian populace, each star serves as a scrying focus. Any creature carrying a star suffers from a –2 modifier to any Will save made against scrying.

Nimorian stars are considered contraband in most good nations, but can be purchased on the black market for 100 gp each.

Of Cities and Citadels

The *DMG* provides guidelines for generating communities, but in a world besieged by violence, certain communities are created for the sole purpose of consolidating military power. These are the castles, forts, fortresses, and citadels of the world, where archers stand guard atop high walls, and knights ride out, lances raised, to thunder across the plains.

Strongholds differ from generic communities in important ways. Strongholds typically have lower populations than regular communities, but a great likelihood of high-level NPCs (most often fighters and warriors). Compared to smaller communities, a stronghold has a higher gold-piece-to-population ratio, due to any stronghold's need of craftsmen, armor, and weaponsmiths. This wealth curve peaks quickly, and unless a stronghold is surrounded by a large community, PCs will be hard pressed to find and

sell truly expensive items.

The largest stronghold is far smaller than a city, although oftentimes a city can spring up around an established stronghold, and a mighty metropolis might be warded by several castles.

The names of the stronghold levels are descriptive in nature, and have little to do with the actual strength of a stronghold. A band of spearmen might call their humble keep the Citadel of Blades, and Brighthawk Castle of the Theocracy of the Lance is actually a citadel. Every grizzled war veteran knows that impressive names often go with the least effectual strongholds, and that the mightiest citadels seldom trouble with such niceties, leaving dramatics to the bards.

The following tables supplement the community rules found in the *DMG*, and should be used in place of the community tables when generating strongholds.

Generating Stronholds

Stronghold Size	Garrison	GP Limit
Fort	10–100	200 gp
Keep	101–350	500 gp
Small Castle	351–1,000	1,500 gp
Large Castle	1,001–5,000	15,000 gp
Citadel	5,001 or more	25,000 gp

Garrison numbers reflect fighting men, usually warriors and fighters. Typical strongholds have an additional population of noncombatant commoners and experts equal to one third its garrison.

Forts: Forts are the smallest and weakest defenses, ranging from muddy encampments defended by ditches and earth ramparts, to wooden stockades with spindly watchtowers. Siege weapons are nearly always nonexistent. Barbarian communities are typically defended by forts.

Keep: The smallest stone defenses, a keep is often a single wall built around a donjon and gatehouse. One or two catapults or ballistae might sit atop towers. Monasteries and strongholds guarding mountain passes or built along the wild frontier are typically keeps.

Small Castle: Defended by a moat house and outer and inner walls, small castles are typically home to a small number of siege weapons, often supplemented by a handful of war wizards and clerics. A small castle might be the home of a knighthood, or a lord and his followers.

Large Castle: Built with outer and inner walls, several levels of towers, and any number of siege weapons, large castles are supported by several high-level war wizards, their apprentices, as well as clerics and their initiates. Large castles are the staging grounds for armies and the homes of great lords and kings.

Citadel: The mightiest of all strongholds, a citadel often dominates the landscape. Defended by concentric walls, multiple levels of towers, specialized siege weapons, and dedicated teams of powerful spellcasters, a citadel may even be defended by magical beasts—dragons, griffons, wyverns, or pegasi, ridden by knights. Citadels are home to the mightiest of regents, and often sit at the center of an empire, surrounded by a city or metropolis.

Stronghold Size	Community Modifier
Fort	–3
Keep	+0
Small Castle	+5 (roll twice)
Large Castle	+9 (roll three times)
Citadel	+16 (roll four times)

A stronghold's community modifier is used to generate the fortress' highest-level locals as per the *DMG*, but care should be exercised to avoid illogical results. In small strongholds especially, not every character class will be represented. For instance, a barbarian fort will rarely boast of a high-level paladin or monk. As always, GMs should tailor the results of their rolls to match the needs and consistency of the campaign setting.

Chapter 5
Rogues' Gallery and Hall of Heroes

The world of Áereth is populated by great heroes and wicked villains alike. Sagacious mages, devout priests, courageous warriors, and cunning rogues have all have left their mark on the cities and wilds. Following is a brief survey of some of the most celebrated and notorious personalities to tread the Known Realms. Only the key attribute scores and class levels of each NPC are listed, to give a sense of power level and strengths; the GM should feel free to scale the NPCs up or down to match the level of their current campaign.

GMs are encouraged to use these NPCs to imbue their own campaigns with a sense of life. Evil wizards and corrupt princes constantly scheme and plot, while courageous paladins ride the borderlands, righting wrongs and bringing justice to the wilds. Despite the allure of introducing these world-shaking personalities to the game, the GM should remember that it is the PC that is the hero of the story, the focus of the tale. No matter a NPC's power or influence, they are all supporting characters to the cast of PCs. Consequently, GMs should adapt the power levels of the NPCs to meet the needs of their particular campaign.

Aban Kaveh

(CG male rakshasa Rog7, Dex 17, Con 14, Int 18)

Loud and boisterous, this outrageous rakshasa merchant can often be heard for miles within the walls of Achaemia before he is seen … and what a sight he makes. Completely covered in indigo-black fur and fond of golden silk clothing, Aban Kaveh is easily the most recognizable and well-known figure in the rakshasa city—much to the dismay of the other rakshasa. He frequently disobeys the laws of the city, flaunting them as he does so, and often deals freely with those the other rakshasa view with disdain: humans, dwarves, and other foreigners. His hatred of the drow is also of concern to the Caliph and the ruling council of Achaemia, as they represent one of the city's strongest trading partners. So long as Aban Kaveh continues to bring coin into the city, his eccentricities are permitted, but the unruly rakshasa merchant is but a small step away from finding his black-furred neck on the executioner's block.

Despite his carefree, freewheeling nature, Aban Kaveh is highly intelligent, and is thought to have some sort of master agenda. Of late, he has divested himself of his traditional trade interests, and has become active in the building of grandships for the Twisted Sea. He is never seen walking the streets of Achaemia without his retinue of elven guards, and always has his enchanted twin scimitars, Trouble and More Trouble, either lashed to his belt or twirling in his hands, ready for a fight.

Acatzalan

(LG male human Ari3/Ftr2, Str 13, Wis 16, Cha 16)

Despised by the aristocracy of Voltigeur, Acatzalan possesses Xulmec blood from his father and the blood of Criestine nobility from his mother. Granting the half-blood the office of mayor to appease the restless citizens, Viceroy Durand has underestimated the love the lower and middle class have for Acatzalan. The young politician understands the duplicitous nature of the Viceroy and the disposition of Lady Mortianna better than they suspect, continually weighing the colonists' separatist ideas against loyalty to the crown. He has a bold vision for the future of the Colonies and a great respect for his Xulmec heritage. Acatzalan, a man known for his open-mindedness, is always willing to meet with visiting adventures of positive repute.

Analee Waveseer

(CG female aquatic elf Clr16, Wis 19, Cha 18)

One of the three leaders of the Sirens of Pelagia, Analee Waveseer is charged with guarding the Temple of the Sacred Wave on the hidden Isle of Argent. With the Isle serving as the only true headquarters of the Sirens, Analee's duties as a high priestess are married to her devotion to the organization.

Analee Waveseer is a sea elf of great beauty and power, consorting with the deep-dwelling beings of the sea and the proxies and petitioners of the gods themselves. She guards the greatest secrets of the Sirens and its most powerful treasures. Not content to remain static, Analee frequently swims the domain of her goddess and personally sees to it that errant captains and vengeful pirates do not locate the Isle of Argent.

Analee is always encountered with her friends and bodyguards, a Huge water elemental named Vaer and a triton lord named Erazaa. In battle, she wields a *trident of warning* and she always carries with her a *decanter of endless water*, enabling her to travel anywhere her faith requires without fear of suffocation.

Ashir the Maul

(CN male human Bbn16, Str 18, Con 19, Wis 13, Cha 14)

The warlord of the Cinai people is a swordsman of unmatched fury and might. A mountain of steely sinew with the reflexes of a lion and the hardened eyes of a raven, Ashir the Maul has led the armies of Cinai to victory time and again. Ashir is not a foolish ruler, but he prefers the absolutes of war and personal combat to the simpering, sycophantic politics of "civilized" countries. In Ashir's eyes, honor is won by courage and a quick blade, and those who shun battle are less than worms.

Aunyx

(LG half-elf female Mnk12, Str 14, Dex 16, Wis 18)

At first glance, the fiery-haired half-elf Aunyx does not appear to be anything other than a young woman of modest, stylish dress, and cheerful demeanor. Yet her prowess as a martial artist is quickly apparent when evil presents itself and her body becomes a fluid weapon. As one of the few known pupils of the legendary master, Joramus, Aunyx is a heroine of grace and precision.

A foundling raised by a wandering tribe of Gadjarrian halflings, Aunyx grew into a spirited lass with a big heart and matching temper. When she reached adolescence, her foster parents brought her to a monastery, hoping to give her the stability and discipline the vagabond halflings could not offer. Aunyx's restlessness could not long endure the inaction of ascetic study. Impressed with her outspoken conviction to bring justice to a world in need, Joramus, a visiting master, took her as his pupil. Together they set out from the monastery and wandered the Northlands for two years until Joramus eventually returned to his solitary journeys.

Aunyx is often found in the company of halflings and typically wanders the land with her friend and mount, a slightly addled light warhorse named Whirlwind. Aunyx wears *bracers of armor (+3)* and favors a *+2 thundering club* when faced with opponents she'd rather not touch—especially oozes, fungi, and most undead.

King Azghaar

(LE male sahuagin Rgr16, Str 19, Dex 16, Wis 16, Cha 16)

A sahuagin mutant unparalleled among his kind in the arts of war, Azghaar V is the king of the Undersea kingdom known as Azghaar-aqin. All who have learned his name fear the sahuagin king, and his sovereignty is a tangible presence within the isles of Dujamar, the Javran Sea, and even the town of Rutuan.

Beneath the waves, his influence reaches further still. Smaller principalities of sea devils pay tribute to him, extant only at his behest. Yet King Azghaar placates the krakens that dwell at the bottom of the Javran Sea, and they provide gifts of magical treasures—culled from the detritus of centuries of shipwrecks—in exchange for the fresh victims he supplies them. Their demands have increased over the years, and King Azghaar's pride will not suffer them indefinitely. Though he looks to the dry lands of Xulmec and the Criestine Colonies for future conquest, Azghaar knows his monstrous benefactors are instrumental to victory. At present, he is torn between bolstering their support or seeking alliances to supplant them.

Azghaar's mate is a malenti assassin named Ivtana—an ambassador from a foreign kingdom of sahuagin with designs against the Lirean Sea elves. Their consortion is as political as it is disconcerting to his kind—she resembling a fragile aquatic elf and he a four-armed mutant. Both keep the company of the cunning priests of Elas and mad cultists of Sothulth.

King Azghaar wields a *+3 icy burst trident* and wears a *periapt of wound closure* and *bracers of armor (+5)*. On his belt, he wears a stolen *horn of the tritons*, its former owner's skull mounted upon Azghaar's gruesome scepter, which functions as a *rod of rulership*.

Black Covey

Comprised of Alunine (CE female annis Sor13, Str 25, Cha 16), Meglea (CE female green hag Sor9, Str 19, Cha 18), and Sayocia (CE female green hag Sor7/Rog5, Str 19, Dex 18, Cha 15), the sisters of the Black Covey are the governing body of the Dujamar town of Rutuan. Approximately twenty years ago, the three hags convened in the marshes of Dujamar from their respective

homes in remote places of the Known Realms. The *crystal balls* they had used to communicate with one another they fused into a single *hag eye* of great power. Dispatching the thuggish rulers of Rutuan, the Black Covey was formed and declared its authority. The bodies of those who resisted their rule still decorate the town.

The hags live in an oversized cottage at the center of town. Guests to the Covey's home who retain their sanity afterward have trouble conveying the unspeakable horrors they witnessed within. A squad of ogres and their imposing boss, the lycanthrope Guloresh, enforce the Covey's laws and disturbing whims. Among their many secrets, the Covey has imprisoned a storm giant in the earth beneath their cottage, warping him with foul magics in the hopes of breeding a new servitor.

Black Dougal

(CN male human Rog14, Dex 20, Int 15, Cha 17)

Every back-alley cutpurse worth his shiv has heard of the infamous Black Dougal, rogue nonpareil. A thin, swarthy rogue with dark curls and black, dispassionate, eyes, the nefarious Dougal has been reported dead on multiple occasions, only to resurface anew with fresh scars and another fortune—which is quickly spent on women and wine.

A master of two-weapon combat, Dougal fights with the elven short sword *Ravenward* and a long knife named *Ironrain*. Both weapons bear multiple enchantments and have histories nearly as illustrious as their master's. *Ironrain*, specifically, is responsible for Dougal's penchant for survival: If the knife's master should ever perish, the blade teleports a portion of his corpse to a holding area until Dougal can be resurrected by a cleric. This also accounts for the speed with which Dougal spends his fortunes.

Black Dougal makes his home in the Free City of Soulgrave and is often found in the company of his master, Boss Bomar. Dougal was last seen riding north towards the Saint's Blood Mountains. Whispers allege he was sent on a quest to breach the legendary Iron Crypt of the Heretics.

Boss Bomar

(LN male half-orc War5/Rog3, Str 13, Int 15, Wis 14)

Unofficial master of the streets of the Free City of Soulgrave, Boss Bomar rules with a delicate balance of crude humor and quick violence. Despite his appearance as a carefree brute, Bomar seldom takes an action without considering its consequences. He simply analyzes situations so quickly that most assume that he doesn't think at

all. The barrel-chested half-orc is seldom seen without his escorts: lovely harlots that double as well-paid assassins.

Caarathyr Amond

(NG female elf Rgr8/Sor5, Dex 17, Wis 16, Cha 15)

One of seven Wardens of the Blackbriar Wood, Caarathyr is tasked with monitoring the game trails and paths leading in and out of the Blackbriar. A merry, lively elf-maid, Caarathyr (or Mistress Caar as she is known to her rangers) is quick to laugh, her voice ringing through the sun-dappled woods like a birdsong. It therefore comes as a surprise to many when evil humanoids or monsters enter the Blackbriar, and this same elf-maid transforms into a solemn huntress.

Caarathyr is deadly with a bow, and—while she seldom boasts of her skill—ranks among the deadliest archers in the North. Her prized possession is a composite bow made of cherry ash and dragon horn. Inscribed with flowing, elvish script, it is said the enchanted bow refuses to be strung by any but its mistress.

Captain Sentri

(LG male human Ftr14, Str 17, Con 15, Wis 14, Cha 15)

Master of the Sable March and General of the Seven Armies, Captain Sentri is renowned throughout the North as a paragon of virtue and righteousness. At heart a humble, loyal warrior of Crieste, Sentri is forced to play games of cloak and dagger to protect his nation's Child-Emperor. To rely on deception galls Sentri, but his plots

are no less cunning for his qualms.

The heir to eleven generations of warrior-lords, Sentri is steeped in the warrior traditions of Crieste. As a young soldier, he proved his skill and courage fighting on the borderlands. Afterward, Sentri traveled widely, serving first as a bodyguard to Criestine nobles, and then as a knight-ambassador to Crieste's far-flung allies. Sentri is loathe to speak of his adventures, but his private chambers bear treasures and trophies collected from across the Known Realms.

A dashing warrior in his early thirties, Sentri is broad of shoulder and a natural leader of men. The Knights of the Sable March are always recruiting upright young warriors, and the captain has an eye for talent. Most at home in a suit of mail on the field of battle, Sentri is less comfortable in the duplicitous courts of Crieste. Among aristocrats, he carries himself with a solemn silence. What the court sycophants mistake for stupidity is actually a warrior's wariness among enemies—and Sentri's suspicions are seldom misplaced.

King Chull'pak

(LN male mummy lord Clr14, Str 26, Wis 21, Cha 17)

The practice of mummification by the Amoya people seldom involves necromancy, but the city-state's need brought its former king back from the repose of death in a divine ritual. King Chull'pak is a mummy lord of solemn, but noble disposition. The protection of his people is paramount to Chull'pak, and he will personally slay any who threatens the holy shrines and sacred relics of the city. As a high priest of Anahuara, the king has been known to offer powerful healing and even resurrection magic to adventurers in exchange for service to his city. Missions against the drakon are more often than not the form such service takes.

Chull'pak wears a suit of *+2 bonemail armor* fashioned from the remains of his great-grandfather and carries a silvered *+4 lucent drakon bane heavy mace*, a weapon he put to considerable use when he lived. Now he wields it like a scepter and rallies his people whenever the snake men from Ssorlang dare venture into the Anduran Mountains.

Queen Citlalli

(NG female human Ari6/Clr4, Wis 16, Cha 17)

It is said that the dazzling Queen Citlalli spends more time aboard her family's longboats than in the city proper, yet the middle-aged queen does not neglect her duties as monarch of the second most powerful Xulmec city-state. The ruling family oversees all maritime trade for Athua, and in such foreign affairs Citlalli demonstrates she is as much a businesswoman as she is a queen. The Athuans fear little in the Surya Sea, but the brooding ruin of Ayoxatlan remains the exception. Queen Citlalli has been known to use her family's wealth to bribe adventurers into exploring its infamous depths to spare her people the risk.

Cozette LeRoux

(NE human female Rog6/Ftr2/Duelist 7, Dex 16, Int 18, Cha 17)

The youngest Barrier Lord the Isles have ever known, Cozette was born in the squalor of Bloodport thirty-one years ago. The daughter of a copperless waif and a murderous pirate, at the age of seven Cozette was sold into slavery. The Sirens of Pelagia soon seized the slave ship and Cozette was eventually dropped off in a Blihai orphanage, where she was adopted by a wealthy couple and given a formal education. At the age of twenty-one, Cozette joined the Sirens. After spending a few years learning all she could about piracy and her own lineage, she murdered the Siren captain of her ship and seized it as her own.

The next ten years she spent making a name for herself, climbing her way up the Imperial Navy's wanted list. Her lust for slaughter, equal to her lust for gold, has made the surname LeRoux one of the most dreaded on the open sea. The fearless Cozette shares rulership of the Isles with Lord Raazt but she is still in the prime of her life, spending as much time at the helm of her schooner, *The*

Banshee, as she does in her opulent manor in Bloodport.

Cozette wears her russet-red tresses loose or braided, and is seldom seen without her black leather coat (which functions as a *cloak of the manta ray*) and her *+3 keen saber*. She possesses many magical items, the best of which are cached in the cellars beneath her manor and guarded with a host of deadly traps. Though she is not proficient in the use of spells, she has an appreciation for necromancy and often employs wizards to animate her dismembered victims.

The Crone

(CN female ogre-mage Drd6/Sor20/Epic5, Str 18, Con 21, Wis 18, Cha 22)

Little is known about the ancient sorceress known as the Crone. Thirteenth and mightiest in a world-spanning coven of witches, the Crone makes her home somewhere in the far reaches of the North, appearing as the mood strikes her and often going unseen for entire decades. The withered, hunchbacked ogre-hag has been known to appear before noble heroes, offering power and wealth in return for assistance on peculiar quests. Compliance is never *demanded*, but those that are foolish enough to ridicule or scorn the Crone are rarely seen again.

Cyn Alfwen

(LE female half-elf Pal8/Blk5, Str 14, Wis 15, Cha 16)

As a commander serving in the armies of Leherti, Alfwen witnessed the Fall of Leherti firsthand. Fleeing from before the rush of the Scourge, Alfwen sought refuge among the bandit lands of the Freeholds. Cyn quickly rose through the ranks of brigands, her feverish self-hatred driving her to increasingly greater depths of madness. Despite the insanity that plagues her, the blackguard is a capable leader and tactician, commanding her small army of brigands with precision and skill. Now the brigand queen of Bald Tower, Alfwen leads regular raids on the Free Cities. The half-elf's single weakness is her seething hatred for soldiers of Leherti.

Cyn dresses in arms and armor appropriate to a brigand queen. She dons spiked half-plate for battle, and fights with a black-bladed bastard sword. The sword is said to be a gift of her demon patron, the half-plate recovered from the corpse of a defeated Scourge general.

Daessa

(CG female brightvenom drakon Ari1/Mnk5/Rog7, Dex 17, Wis 15, Cha 15)

Orphaned by the Brood of Ahzari, Daessa travels the Known Realms in opposition to all assassins. Sometimes called "the assassin killer"—an epithet usually misunderstood—she is attracted to adventurers who challenge authority and champion the less fortunate. Jaded by the arrogance and cruel whims of her own kind, Daessa is not accustomed to trusting even her allies and seldom speaks her intentions directly.

When her aristocratic family was slain by the Brood of Ahzari, Daessa escaped Ssorlang and found temporal peace among the macabre monks of the Lamasery of the Dead. Eventually she returned to the streets of Myashtlan, her ancestral home, and embraced the arts of a thief, studying the Brood assassins from the shadows. Someday she intends to infiltrate the Moryan Temple itself, and she searches always for powerful companions to help her.

When she moves about in Ssorlang society, Daessa plays the part of a flattering courtesan, hoping to insinuate herself into influential circles. When abroad, she plays the part of a Ssorlang ambassador and tries to manipulate others to her cause. Daessa wears a silken *cloak of charisma (+4)* and proudly carries a *+4 stealth keris*, a deadly weapon and trophy she pried from the dead hands of an elder Brood assassin.

Dolgar Thraciov

(CG male gnome Sor5, Int 17, Wis 16)

One of the most sought-after figures in all the dwarven courts of Taijin, this bitter, cranky gnome sorcerer would like nothing better than to disappear into one of the deep catacombs of the Herrenia Mountains. Unfortunately for him, the crown of Taijin will not let him leave the confines of the kingdom. For in Dolgar's possession is a potent artifact—a crystal known as the *Eye of the Bloodwyrm*—capable of seeing the future and of translating the omens and portents of prophecy. Although the gnome sorcerer has little idea of how to control the device, he is able to do so with far better accuracy and results than any other being on Áereth. His abilities with the *Eye* are deemed to be quite important to the kingdom of Taijin, important enough to make the gnome sorcerer a permanent—albeit pampered—guest of the crown.

When not on official business with the courts of Taijin, Dolgar can typically be found in the alehouses and taverns of Raiju Khor, regaling all within earshot with tales of his many adventures. For not long ago, Dolgar was a noted explorer and adventurer, battling his way to fortune and glory. He longs to become an adventureer once more, and to rid himself of the *Eye* and all its power—though he does not long for dwarven soldiers to shove spears in his back as he attempt to escape Taijin. Should he ever cross the path of another adventurer, he eagerly demands details of all their tales and exploits—and should they be sufficiently exciting to his longing ears, Dolgar may tempt fate and try to join his new "friends" in a life of adventure …

Abbot Kallus Wayrenne

(LG male human Mnk3/Clr12, Wis 18, Cha 16)

Ordained as the head of the Abbey of St. Terinmora, Abbot Wayrenne is a man of unflinching piety. His stern demeanor, which seems standoffish with one's first visit to the abbey, is tempered by his compassion for those who seek the absolution of the gods. The Abbot serves Gorhan foremost, but beseeches all the benevolent gods of the Sancturn Pantheon for their protection of his ministries. Even the Xulmecs of the abbey who still practice the rituals of their native gods find Wayrenne to be tolerant of their spirituality.

The Chuzecs would conquer the abbey and sacrifice its inhabitants to their god, but thanks to Abbot Wayrenne's vigilance, it has remained safe. Unbeknownst to all, however, he is dying, slowly falling prey to a divine curse laid upon him by Xolatl, the Fire Priest. Though the Abbot's faith will save his soul, it will not save his life. Wayrenne's search for a worthy successor has him eyeing all visiting clerics with great scrutiny. He has been known to test the faith of adventuring clerics by asking great quests of them in exchange for powerful healing and holy relics.

Abbot Wayrenne carries a *staff of healing* and possesses a *phylactery of undead turning*.

Elarabeth

(NG female half-elf Ftr3/Rog4/Duelist 6, Dex 16, Int 17, Cha 18)

Possessed of emerald green hair, sea-blue eyes, and skin of palest green, the lady mayor of Halcyon presents an impressive figure. Elarabeth is a veteran mariner and retired Siren, but has settled into the politics of Halcyon to preserve the city as a bastion of safety amidst the turbulent, pirate-infested Empyrean.

Elarabeth's father was a Criestine imperial officer killed when she was only a child. Her mother, a sea elf priestess of Pelagia, was tortured and crucified by the pirates of the Barrier Isles, and for this crime Elarabeth opposes them at every opportunity. Whether funding the Sirens' continued efforts or acting as a benefactor for adventurers contesting with the Barrier pirates, Lady Elarabeth uses her family inheritance and personal wealth to make the Empyrean Ocean a safer place for all.

Elarabeth uses a *+3 frost rapier* in combat and wears a *ring of water elemental command*.

Eldren Madrigan (Tirend)

(N male human Ari5/Brd12, Dex 15, Int 18, Wis 16, Cha 19)

Eldren is the gilded heir of the Madrigan estate and along with his twin sister, Gwynathra, guildmaster of the League of Resonance like his father before him. A young man both handsome and arrogant, Eldren is the quintessential aristocrat and a foppish bard, but behind the veneer of indulgence hides a rare cunning. Fully enmeshed in the political aspects of his office, he allows his sister to travel abroad and avoid the entanglements of diplomacy.

Few who look upon the golden-haired Eldren would suspect the strings he pulls among the sovereigns of the Northlands. Fewer still know his secret: he is, in fact, Tirend Madrigan, the founder of the League of Resonance. The same magic that devastated the University of Arven Phael centuries ago transferred his spirit into the body of an absent cousin. The same magic has kept his transient mind alive through each successive

generation. When his body dies, he inhabits the body of his son a number of years afterwards, or his closest male relative. Despite his efforts, Tirend has been unable to break this curse or keep his spirit in one place. Unlike his sister, Maera, he has yielded to the magic and has even grown comfortable with it.

The League of Resonance has been his greatest love since its founding centuries ago, and Tirend intends to see its designs reach fruition. The majority of Áereth's most renowned bards report directly to him, and only a select few know his true identity.

Wealthy and resourceful, Eldren always wears a suit of *+3 glamered leather* altered to resemble the next fashion in courtier attire. He carries a *+4 dancing rapier* at all times and makes frequent use of his *pipes of sounding* to impress fans and enemies alike.

Guloresh

(CE male ogre werecrocodile Ftr8, Str 23, Int 12, Wis 14, Cha 7)

An oversized ogre of disturbing and stolid demeanor, Guloresh reports directly to Alunine of Rutuan's Black Covey. For his impeccable loyalty, the annis called upon spirits of the Dujamar marshes and gifted him with lycanthropy. The ogres that he commands are typical brutes for their kind, but Guloresh keeps them in line with uncompromising intimidation and a marked lack of bravado. Something sinister and collected lurks behind the eyes of this formidable ogre champion, and it belongs to the hag Alunine.

Guloresh wields a *+2 adamantine warhammer* and bears a *+1 heavy wooden shield of arrow catching*.

Gwynathra Madrigan (Maera)

(CG female human Ari4/Brd6/Wiz7, Dex 17, Int 17, Cha 19)

Gwynathra is the golden-haired twin of Eldren Madrigan and guildmistress of the League of Resonance. Though she has great wealth at her disposal, Gwynathra seems a wayward spirit, choosing a life in the saddle over the indulgences of her inheritance.

Yet Gwynathra, like her brother, is more than she seems. Born Maera Madrigan, she was once the beautiful and privileged twin of Tirend Madrigan, patriarch of the family and founder of the League of Resonance. When the magic disaster claimed the University of Arven Phael and the lives of those in attendance, Maera's spirit survived in the body of a relative. The experience did little to change her, however. She remained spoiled and pretentious, seeing the rebirth as another pleasure to enjoy.

The passage of centuries has changed her. Having lived countless lifetimes in the bodies of her own descendants, Maera has grown humble. Witnessing war after war, she has even come to believe in her brother's work and the pacifistic goals of the League itself. While Eldren handles the politics of the Madrigan estate, Maera wanders the Known Realms in the body of the wayward Gwynathra. Even as she carries out her duties as a renowned Resonare, Maera searches always for the means to break the curse. She is weary of stealing the bodies of her own bloodline, and hopes to find release for herself and her brother.

Maera, in the identity of Gwynathra, wears inexpensive travel clothes, but her true wealth is evident in the magical items she possesses. She wields a *rapier of puncturing* and wears *bracers of armor (+3),* a *ring of protection (+5),* and *boots of levitation*. For the research she undertakes, she makes constant use of her *bag of holding (type IV)*.

Imorag the Wise

(LN male nalvor Clr12, Dex 15, Wis 19, Cha 19)

Wandering through the endless sands of the Ghetrian Desert is Imorag the Wise, a powerful nalvor cleric in the service of the god Soleth. How this nalvor from the Lostlands came to be a disciple of Soleth is unknown; however, what is certain is that the desert cleric is one of the god's most faithful—and powerful—servants.

Although the flesh of Imorag the Wise has literally been burned and charred to a blackened husk, and though his tongue has been torn out by fearful nalvor elders, the wizened priest is still an imposing—some would even say frightening—figure. Despite the absence of a tongue, Imorag still speaks with the thunderous voice of angels, able to inspire great hope or great fear with a mere word. He is a stern, imposing individual, dressed only in threadbare robes. He only carries a rusted mace as a weapon.

Imorag travels from town to town, city to city, in the remnants of the old Khonsurian Empire, urging all whom he encounters to abandon the old, corrupt way of the sphinx and to embrace the divine power of Soleth. Though branded as a blasphemer by the government of Xa Deshret, the cleric of Soleth is no longer hunted as a criminal. His power has grown far too great, and all prior attempts to kill Imorag—hanging, burial beneath the desert sands, burning at the stake—have failed, serving only to make the legend of Imorag more powerful than before. Though constantly on the move, Imorag can frequently be found in the poorer sections of the cities of Xa Deshret, healing the sick and fervently preaching the words of his divine master Soleth.

Isolia Seyene

(N female human Rog5/Brd7, Dex 16, Int 15, Wis 16, Cha 18)

Although she was raised in the impoverished, slum districts of Kassantia, one would not think that the cultured, silver-tongued lord-baroness to be anything but a pure-blooded aristocrat. Having studied the wealthy as her prey, young Isolia Seyene quickly learned to emulate their manners to make stealing their fine jewelry an easier feat. But Isolia was whisked away from her childhood crimes by a handsome young bard for a romantic voyage touring the Empyrean Ocean. She enjoyed a wedding at sea, losing her heart to both her new husband and the azure waters of Pelagia's domain. When their ship was scuttled by the infamous pirate lord Raazt, Isolia fell into the sea where she was rescued by merfolk before the sadistic scrag could find her. Rage against the Barrier pirates and her newfound passion for the sea led the anguished Isolia inexorably to the Sirens of Pelagia.

Fifteen years later, Isolia is a Criestine lord-baroness who serves as the Sirens' chief mainland contact. She recruits for new blood and entreats the wealthy and political to donate to their cause. The largest mercantile arrangements for Siren protection pass through Isolia's hands even as she keeps the Sirens from falling into the political intrigues of Lady Mortianna. Out of the public eye, Lord-Baroness Seyene often looks for trustworthy adventurers to carry out the missions her office restricts her from taking.

Queen Itlanexca

(LG female human Ari2/Clr1, Int 18, Cha 15)

At the tender age of fourteen, the young Queen of Teotcoatlan is already a wise asset to her people. Betrothed to King Mactezu, Itlanexca is idealistic but not naïve to the truths of the world; leading Teotcoatlan to continued glory and goodness is a path fraught with many enemies.

Along with the king, Itlanexca is tutored by the wisdom of the guardian naga Nonotzale. She is an acolyte to the virtues of Cynhara in an attempt to raise the goddess from the slumber of divine death. Madrah grants her spells for the time being.

Possessing long hair of radiant silver—an anomaly among her people—the young queen wears upon her head a feathered crown that functions like a *helm of telepathy*. When visited by foreign dignitaries she has a reason to distrust, Itlanexca has no qualms about reading their thoughts.

Jolene Carignan

(CN female human Ftr7/Rog7, Dex 16, Int 16)

To most of the populace of Morena Nova, Jolene Carignan is the attractive third daughter of a minor nobleman. She is also one of the most notorious bandits in the region, robbing the plantations of Morena Nova with daring and style. In recent times, she has expanded the reach of her larcenous greed far past the borders of her homeland, robbing the coffers of Taijin as well as many treasure troves hidden throughout Xa Deshret. Her band of fellow outlaws—the Company of the Black Fox, as they have come to be known—are also the sons and daughters of the Morenan royal court. Though their identities remain secret, each bolder, grander exploit executed by Jolene and her Company brings the threat of discovery ever closer.

In the courts of Morena Nova, Jolene Carignan is a shy and demure lady. When leading the Company of the Black Fox on one of their infamous raids, however, she is vain, arrogant, and known to frequently say a bawdy word or two to her traveling companions. She is one of the best horse riders in all the land, and is renowned—though only behind the black mask of the bandit—for her remarkable skill with handheld crossbows. Of late, she has taken to more and more daring exploits, robbing vaults said to be impenetrable, stealing the biggest and grandest treasures to be found in Morena Nova. Most of what she and her Company steal is either carelessly tossed into caves or given to the poor—for them, thievery is best done for the thrill.

Joramus

(LG human male Mnk18, Str 16, Dex 18, Wis 20)

With his modest appearance and calming demeanor, one would not think the aging Master Joramus capable of the feats to which legends hold. His iron-gray hair and soft blue eyes hide the passions of a fervent hero. But Joramus is not on the road to champion righteous causes—this he did in his youth, and he has moved into the twilight of his years. Rather, this pilgrim is in the business of *making* heroes. As he wanders the Known Realms, Master Joramus constantly searches for pupils on whom to bequeath his arts. His deeds, and the new heroes he has given rise to, have made Joramus one of the most legendary humans in the current age. In some lands, his name is the utterance of myth.

Not all who meet Joramus will find his favor, but those of goodly heart who cross paths with him will be the safer for it. He offers wisdom and advice in soft-spoken tones, never preaching, never forceful. Bardic tales claim that Joramus has visited gold dragons in their remote aeries, has consulted with the sphinxes of long-faded Khonsuria, and has supped with elder nagas of old Zimala. Less well known is the fact that aside from his great martial prowess, Joramus also happens to wear a pair of *bracers of armor (+5)* and puts a pair of *+4 holy merciful nunchaku* carved from the bones of a fallen titan to good use.

Kaede Ryu

(CG female half-dragon [green] Ftr8, Str 22, Con 19, Cha 14)

The undeniable crowd favorite of the gladiatorial fighting pits of Djeser al-Maqqara, Kaede Ryu is both beautiful and deadly. For the most part, her dragon heritage is difficult to detect; only glittering green scales on her forearms and her emerald flowing hair betray the fact that she is not purely human. A slave that was reputedly captured in the jungles of the Southlands, Kaede Ryu is said to be adept with all weapons, though the longspear is her favorite. She knows how to work a crowd, and how to put on a show while fighting to the death—something that has earned her the love of the entire city. Despite the fact that she earned her freedom from the gladiator pits years ago, she continues to fight as a free warrior, commanding hefty appearance fees each time she steps into battle.

Of late, Kaede Ryu has begun her own gladiatorial school, selecting the finest slaves in the city and instructing them in the arts of war. Although it was welcomed at first by the city, Lord Marko Hellmont and other powerful figures in Djeser al-Maqqara have lately grown concerned, wondering if Kaede Rye is forming an army of gladiators … or an actual army. Rumor has it that many of the weaker slaves purchased by Kaede Ryu are simply given their freedom and sent to the Northlands, a thought that the Slavers' Council cannot accept. For the moment, her massive popularity amongst the commonfolk of Djeser al-Maqqara make the dragon warrior untouchable to her enemies.

Lady Kesheba, Magister of the Aurora

(NG female human, Wiz11, Int 17, Cha 14)

Few rulers are as devoted to their people as the baroness of Koranth. The beauty of Lady Kesheba is legendary throughout the North, and she is regularly besieged by suitors. But the devotions expressed by her paramours pale before the love Lady Kasheba bears for her country.

This love is a double-edged blade. Koranth is a nation of free-willed wizards and mages, and rallying the spellcasters to a cause other than their own mystical research can be nearly impossible. Seeing her nation beset on all sides, Lady Kesheba has been forced to seek out magical means of ensuring the mages' compliance.

The fair Magister of the Aurora is desperate for loyal agents who will carry out missions on behalf of Koranth, and will pay handsomely for discrete adventurers with a knack for survival against long odds.

Kashya

(CG female half-elf PsyWar12, Str 16, Dex 17, Wis 16)

As one of the Captains of the Wanderers, Kashya travels the wilds of the Northlands in search of psionic-using creatures in need of liberation. Herself orphaned by abhorrent creatures in a village near the Vermilion Steppes, Kashya is passionately devoted to the liberation of all who suffer from the sins of the wicked. Lately she has taken to attacking slaver caravans bound for the markets of Djeser al-Maqqara. Kashya looks always for allies against the subjugation of the innocent.

Wearing *+3 elven chain* and wielding a *psychic longsword* known as the Revenant Blade, Kashya is a formidable foe, making frequent use of her *claws of the beast* power in conjunction with her sword. With her hair half-braided and woven with beads (and other sundry trinkets), her fiery amber eyes, and dark-skinned, tattooed body, this half-elf appears savage or barbaric to Northland eyes. Kashya's truest friend is her vibrant green psicrystal, Y'na ("hero" personality).

Khorjala the Hawk

(N male human Rgr9/Asn5, Str 15, Dex 18, Con 16, Wis 15, Cha 14)

The leader of the Lehertian resistance is known to be a noble general and natural leader of men, a courageous hero emerging from the ruins of war to serve Leherti in its darkest hour.

Nothing could be further from the truth.

Before the Fall of Leherti, the man calling himself Khorjala was awaiting execution in the dungeons of Araloges. When the Scourge swept over the city, the convict fought his way to freedom, eluding both his captors and the swarming hordes of orcs. Working his way south to the Free Cities, the convict killed Scourge soldiers out of necessity, inadvertently drawing the attention and support of the Lehertian resistance.

For the first time in the assassin's life, he found himself welcomed with open arms. The same crimes that labeled him a criminal now made him a hero of the common people. Arriving in the Free Cities, he adopted the name Khorjala, accepted the promotion to general, and has been taking the fight to the Scourge ever since.

Khorjala's success has not gone unnoticed by Tarkhan Khurzog. The demon-ogre knows something of Khorjala's past as an assassin, and delights in the power he wields over his greatest enemy. It is only a matter of time before the demon-ogre offers Khorjala a choice: Join the Scourge or be exposed as an imposter and assassin.

Khaine Gyles Durran

(NG male human Ftr10, Str 16, Dex 19, Wis 14, Cha 14)

Formerly a proud knight in the service of the Grand Duchy of Leherti, Sir Giles Durran was exiled from Crieste for his supposed failures during the Fall of Leherti. Whether these failures were genuine or trumped-up charges by others, no one can say, for Durran does not speak of his time in Crieste anymore, save to mention that he has a daughter there.

Following his exile, Durran made his way to the Lostlands, where he lived handsomely as a mercenary fighter for many years. His unrivaled prowess with the longbow caught the eye of one of the Vermilion Tribes, who asked him to join their number. Surprisingly, he did, and his blunt, no-nonsense attitude, as well as his legendary ferocity in combat, allowed him to quickly rise in the normally reclusive Tribe society, eventually leading him to become the ruling Khaine of the Huligai Tribe. He has begun to combine the traditional battle tactics of the Vermilion Tribes with those of the armies of the Northlands, turning the Tribes into an even deadlier fighting force. He is a quiet, unassuming man who says little and prefers to lead by example, but those who know him well say that revenge still burns brightly in his heart.

Leton N'Rhyll

(NG male halfling Brd8, Str 14, Dex 18, Int 16)

Leton N'Rhyll is one of the most well-known bards in the entire world. Although not the sweetest singer nor the most skilled with a lyre, there is not a tale or song in the entire world that Leton N'Rhyll does not know. His memory is legendary: The halfling bard has but to hear a song once, or see a scrap of parchment for a mere moment, and it is committed forever to his memory. Although the earnest young halfling has already traveled the realms of Áereth thrice over, he always returns to his humble tent in Gadjarria.

Leton's uncanny memory has made him part of many an adventure, albeit usually against his will. Though the bard would like to say that his appearance in royal courts throughout the world is entirely due to his good looks and sense of humor, the truth is that thieves constantly conspire to enlist his aid in their grandiose schemes. Leton has been kidnapped on well over a dozen occasions by ambitious bandits, hoping that the halfling bard can perhaps memorize a stolen treasure map for them, or recall a line from an ancient prophecy. For this reason, the feisty halfling bard, who possesses an overwhelmingly grand appetite for good food and fine wine, is notoriously wary of strangers with swords, particularly those who seem eager to ask him about tales of adventure.

Linni

(N female halfling Brd8/Psi5, Dex 16, Int 16, Cha 18)

As one of the Captains of the Wanderers, the halfling Linni travels the known roads of the Northlands in order to find psionic-using creatures in need of a home. As a psion and bard, she conceals her psionic talent from the ignorant and proclaims it to those who share it. Linni rides a valiant war pony named Marigold, using telepathic powers and dramatic songs to mislead her enemies and search for those in need.

Linni wears a suit of *+2 glamered leather armor* and favors her *+2 seeking shortbow* when forced into battle. She sings old songs of her ancestry in Gadjarrian and composes new ballads for Elraydia, but Linni's greatest passion finds expression through her masterwork drums. Her everyday companion is her psicrystal, Chenneth ("sympathetic" personality)—which means "grandmother" in Halfling—who has been known to scold Linni when it disapproves of her actions.

Loremer d'Arisseux

(N male human Ari2/Rog1, Int 15)

Motivated by greed and fear of responsibility, Loremer will do anything to ensure his position as mayor of Pleniere. Fortunately, such motivations often coincide with the safety of the town itself. When things are going well for him, Loremer assists explorers in smuggling Southland contraband through the Criestine tax system.

King Mactezu

(LG male human Ari2/Pal1, Wis 16, Cha 18)

Just fifteen years old, the young King of Teotcoatlan is already a proficient warrior on the path to greatness. Mactezu is still impressionable, but his secret mentor, the elder naga Nonotzale, and his betrothed, Queen Itlanexca, are his chief allies against a world of enemies: jealous nobles and foreign powers who would take the rulership of the most powerful Xulmec city-state from his youthful hands.

A paladin of many virtues, Mactezu's skills remain untested against the dangers of the world. He and his queen are guarded by the royal guard, an elite order of fighter/rangers who are always close at hand—except when Mactezu and Itlanexca meet with their serpentine mentor. Nonotzale teaches the young sovereigns the value of tolerance, so King Mactezu is willing to meet with foreigners if they have anything to offer Teotcoatlan, whether in the form of martial prowess, arcane knowledge, or simply information about faraway lands.

The dark-eyed young king keeps a *flame tongue* on his person at all times, a gift from Viceroy Durand. Mactezu is a handsome youth beloved by most of his subjects.

The Maelidoch

(LE male tiefling Wiz16, Dex 14, Con 6, Int 22)

The grim master of the Sireal Citadel is a demon half-blood trapped in a body crippled by an occult disease. The Maelidoch's tiefling traits aren't readily apparent as such, and he wears a black mask and heavy cloak to disguise the deformities that mark him as other than human. The wizard's body is covered in scaled scar tissue born of the disease that burns through his blood and makes his skin hot to the touch. Whether this blood-plague is the physical manifestation of the wizard's infernal ancestry or the result of his wicked experiments is unknown.

The Maelidoch is amoral and indifferent to the suffering of others, but seldom cruel for the sake of cruelty. He per-

forms endless cycles of experiments on the prison's inmates, twisting and shaping flesh like a sculptor shapes clay. The vast majority of Sireal's inmates never see the warden, but those who do cross the paths of the Maelidoch report a tall, silent man-thing cloaked in black, and trailing an aura of death and decay.

The Maelidoch holds himself aloof from the internecine politicking of the lord-barons, ruling his island prison free of corruption and outside influence. Curiously, the Maelidoch bears an unswerving loyalty to the Child-Emperor of Crieste. Like the wizard's crippling disease, the origins of this devotion are a mystery to all but the Maelidoch and his master.

Melisine d'Aurielle

(NG human female Sor8, Dex 17, Int 19, Cha 18)

The brilliant and beautiful Melisine d'Aurielle was tutored with her innate magic from a young age, and she enjoyed a carefree and spoiled life of magic and luxury. After an old mentor recommended she and her sister, Amarante, to the Royal Academy of Sorcery in Kassantia, she found her life changing dramatically. Her vanity and pride paved the way to an impressive reputation and soon the crown assigned her to the prestigious Beryl Conclave in the town of Voltigeur across the Empyrean.

Melisine became one of the arcane protectors of the Criestine Colonies, but she sees the assignment as an insult to her talents. Though well meaning in her station, she dreams of greater ambitions and has taken to researching local legends in hopes of finding the recognition she feels she deserves.

Melisine's inheritance and natural talent has yielded her a number of magical possessions. She wears an *amulet of natural armor (+2), bracers of armor (+4),* a *ring of blinking*, a *ring of regeneration*, and a host of jewelry.

Morgan Ironwolf

(NG female human Ftr9/Rgr4, Str 15, Con 17, Wis 14)

Raven haired, iron willed, and wild eyed, Ironwolf fought her way up from the rank of a common sellsword to the command of her own mercenary company. When the Duchy of Leherti fell to the Scourge, the Company of the Ironwolf was trapped behind the armies of the advancing horde. Morgan Ironwolf and her company of soldiers rallied the citizens of the city of Yithain. Led by the brazen warrior, the company turned the tide of the battle, and Yithain remains free to this day.

A young woman with a quiet temper and a strong sense of justice, Ironwolf leads her warriors by example. Before the Fall of Leherti, she had little reason to risk the wrath of the Scourge. But having witnessed the Tarkhan's cruelty firsthand, Ironwolf's conscience compels her to defend the forsaken refugees of Occupied Leherti.

The warrior commonly wears a fine suit of *elven chain mail* given to her by the elves of the Blackbriar, and carries a shield emblazoned with the company's sigil. She fights with a cunning mix of sound tactics and unrivaled bravery.

Lady Mortianna

(LE female human Ari4/Sor13, Int 14, Cha 19)

The coldly beautiful Lady Mortianna rules Crieste as Vizier to the Child-Emperor. Her plots span the entire continent and even reach into the Lostlands and Southlands. Some of the finest rogues and mages of the North serve as her spies, and very little transpires without the Vizier's knowledge. Her chief frustration is Captain Sentri, who, along with his Knights of the Sable March, has been able to match her schemes, move for move. Mortianna craves the humiliating defeat of her rival, and is always looking for pawns to play against Crieste's loyal son.

As befitting her position, Mortianna dresses in demure obeisance to the Child-Emperor. However, no one looking into her midnight black eyes can mistake the lady's raw ambition and force of personality. Like a marble statue, the lady has a cold, yet undeniable beauty. Many have courted the Vizier, offering to steal, lie, and even murder

on her behalf. An equal number have met their end at an executioner's axe, used and then abandoned by the lady whose affections they hoped to win.

Nentawat

(N male darkvenom drakon Ari2/Clr8, Str 15, Int 18, Wis 19, Cha 16)

The mayor-priest of Angkar is charged as caretaker of the ancient town and the sacred temple of Madrah that it oversees. A degenerate aristocrat in his youth, the drakon's heart has been humbled by decades of visiting pilgrims seeking the hidden truths of Madrah. Though he still possesses a glimmer of his racial arrogance, Nentawat has come to respect the many children of the Lord of the Earth and Sky and now he sees all foreigners as a chance to learn more about Áereth. Visitors to Angkar expecting hostility from the drakon are delightfully surprised by its soft-spoken ruler.

Nonotzale

(LG male guardian naga Clr6, Str 21, Dex 14, Con 19, Int 16, Wis 20, Cha 18)

A guardian naga of considerable power and knowledge, Nonotzale is the wise mentor behind the thrones of the Xulmec city-state of Teotcoatlan. Once a friend to the former queen of the Gilded City, now Nonotzale counsels the young King Mactezu and Queen Itlanexca with an eye to the future of all Xulmec. Lairing deep beneath the royal palace, the naga teaches the adolescent monarchs the virtues of Cynhara and the foresight of Madrah. In a land still wary of the presence of nagas, for now Nonotzale's presence remains a secret. Yet rumors have already circulated far as to the presence of *something* guiding the king and queen, and a time will come soon when the naga must reveal himself.

Hatched beneath the lost Zimalan capital city, Nonotzale spent the first half of his life fighting against the dark and spirit nagas who still haunt the ruins of the long-faded empire. When a young explorer named Cetlana found his home, a friendship was forged. Years later, when Cetlana married the king of Teotcoatlan, she invited the aging guardian naga to live with them in the palace. On her deathbed, she beseeched her old friend to care for her son and his new queen. Nonotzale has done so, and is ever vigilant against threats to his young charges.

Oro Loroth, the Mountain King

(LE male dwarf Ftr13, Str 17, Con 21, Int 14)

Few villains dominate the imaginations of the peasants in the western Northlands like the legend of Oro Loroth, the Mountain King. The renegade dwarf-lord reigns from his nigh-invulnerable mountain fastness, raiding the nations of good at will, carrying off slaves and entire troves of stolen treasure.

Taller than the average dwarf, his body decorated with tattooed runes, and his soot-stained beard as black as charcoal, Loroth cuts a fearsome image. The Mountain King's army is a ferocious mix of renegade dwarves, monstrous humanoids, human mercenaries, and beasts. While far from a match for the legions of the Steel Overlord, the Mountain King has more than enough might to defend that which is his. There will come a time when Loroth oversteps his boundaries and draws the wrath of the Overlord, but until that day he raids the southwestern slope of the Ul Dominors, terrorizing the people of the Sylvan Downs and trading the souls of his captives to infernal beings in exchange for power and demonic allies.

King Oztahua

(NG male human Ari2/Ftr8, Str 16, Wis 16, Cha 16)

King Oztahua of the Xulmec city-state of Kaatlan favors pragmatism above all else. He is predisposed toward peaceful coexistence and open trade with his neighbors,

believing in the tenets of his goddess, Calchoti. But at the slightest provocation from the Chuzecs or untoward actions from folk he does not know, Oztahua is quick to consider bloodshed and the tenets of Coatlimict. While he favors peace, he would rather allow the death of a hundred foreigners to save one of his own.

Prester "Trapmaster" Ungart

(NG male dwarf Rog14, Dex 18, Int 17)

With lockpicks in hand, a worn axe slung over his back, and a crossbow at his side, Prester "Trapmaster" Ungart has forgotten more about traps, tricks, and puzzles than most dungeon delvers will ever know. A master at deciphering lost languages and hieroglyphs, Prester made a name for himself early in his career by surviving traps and ambushes with an almost-intuitive sense for danger. Nearing retirement, the dwarf continues to roam the Known Realms in search of ever greater challenges, sometimes relishing the trap more than the treasure. He has contributed his knowledge to the creation of a handful of dungeons (most notably the Thief Lord's Vault), but Prester's first and last love will forever be exploration, preferably with a great deal of risk and reward thrown in for good measure.

Raazt

(CE male scrag Sor7/Ftr3, Str 25, Con 23, Int 15, Cha 16)

Known among fearful sailors as the Scrag Scuttler, Raazt's name is near the top of the long list of pirates wanted dead or alive by the Criestine Imperial Navy. Though he's owned several galleys, Raazt's favored method of pirating came with a unique use of necromancy: attacking ships via the hollowed-out and animated corpse of an immense dire shark he named *Lesstra*. Raazt's sobriquet stemmed from his reviled strategy of punching through the hull of his victim's ship, then surging up with his men—humans and orc-kin, mostly—through the hold. Lord Raazt made a tradition out of personally devouring the captain of each unfortunate ship as it slowly sank into the sea. Getting on in years now, Raazt has retired from the trade, setting up in Dead Man's Cove and sharing the rulership of the Barrier Isles with Cozette LeRoux, whom he despises and intends to one day kill and eat. Raazt sells his necromancy secrets and occasionally hires out *Lesstra* to wizards he feels are worthy of her.

Once a lithe specimen like most aquatic trolls, Raazt's body has rounded out since retiring from active piracy. Among other gruesome accoutrements, he wears a barbed fisherman's net over his mottled gray skin which functions as a *cloak of resistance +2* and he always keeps his *+3 cutlass of icy burst* on hand. A black leather patch (an *amulet of proof against detection and location*) covers his destroyed right eye, the painful result of an enchanted acidic dagger wound that will not regenerate. The very few who've seen what lies beneath the patch report a melted, fleshy pit that exposes part of his skull. Finding and flaying alive the Siren (see Sirens of Pelagia in Chapter 5 of the Gazetteer) who blinded him remains one of Raazt's major goals. Any lead on her whereabouts often takes priority over any other plot.

Paranoid and cruel, Raazt is in a perpetually foul mood. As a creature from cold waters, he complains constantly about the temperature of the sea around the Barrier Isles, but knows that his lot as a Barrier Lord is preferable to the short and ultimately unrewarding lifestyle of his kind. His quasit familiar, Azt, always perches on Raazt's shoulder and often parrots back the words of visitors in a mocking tone.

Raquelle Clavet

(LG female human Ari2/Ftr10, Str 15, Con 16, Wis 15, Cha 15)

Charged with the defense of the Criestine Colonies from Xulmec aggression, Lieutenant Clavet is a steel-nerved fighter. Given the nickname "princess of the borderline" (though never spoken to her face), Clavet is unwilling to exhibit vulnerability as a warrior or a woman. Her strength at arms is rivaled only by her tongue and tempered by her sense of justice. Yet these virtues and faults are softened foremost by her love for the people in her protection. Clavet is not overly prejudiced against the Xulmec natives, but her zealous devotion to the crown and her Northland kin make her an uncompromising diplomat. A former Knight of the Sable March, Clavet was charged by Captain Sentri himself to handle border disputes with Xulmec on the colonial frontier.

A fixture of Ft. Montsiang now for several years, the Omian Pass has never been safer than it is on Clavet's watch. Her soldiers are well equipped and well trained to handle the aggressions of the Chuzec warriors, but the lieutenant is always willing to hire newcomers to clear the Pass from more monstrous denizens. Such dangerous work is better handled by versatile adventurers than her Criestine soldiers.

Raylen Durand

(LE male rakshasa Rog5, Dex 16, Con 16, Int 16, Cha 17)

The real Raylend Durand was a ruthless courtier from Archbridge who beseeched Lady Mortianna for the role

of Imperial viceroy of the Criestine Colonies. Impressed with his proposals and esteemed career, she had him murdered and replaced him with a trusted otherworldly cohort—the better to control the far-off Imperial colony.

Raj-nirav, a sadistic rakshasa, relishes his guise as the pompous Viceroy Durand. With appraising eyes fixed firmly upon the Southlands, he sends regular reports to Lady Mortianna and in turn she sees to some of his Northland interests. A thorn in his side is Acatzalan, the mayor of Voltigeur, and Raquelle Clavet, the militant commander of Ft. Montsiang, do-gooders he hopes to soon replace with two of his kin, newly arrived from the far east.

The false Raylen Durand wears an *amulet of proof against detection and location* to further conceal his identity, and he keeps a *ring of djinni calling*, delighting in ordering about the noble genie bound to its owner.

Sakda

(LN male brightvenom drakon Ari8, Int 17, Wis 15, Cha 15)

This elderly drakon is the current and longstanding lord of Kanthara. He is a pragmatic ruler, and despite the accusations of human sympathy made against him, Sakda works to boost the living conditions of the slums of Kanthara. Seeking to improve the quality of the slave stock benefits both the humans and the drakon.

Saley Lonesinger

(CG female halfling Ftr7/Rog7)

The stories that surround this renowned pirate hunter seldom portray her as the halfling she is. Nicknamed the Empyrean Terror by bards, the mere sight of her standard—a shattered skull and spyglass—sends most buccaneers retreating at full sail. Saley is unrelenting in her pursuit, however, and those guilty of piracy that do not surrender are slain without mercy. When face-to-face with Saley, her enemies discover that the Empyrean Terror is a mere three and a half feet tall—yet every inch of her is worth fearing.

As leader of the Sirens of Pelagia, Saley has made many enemies. She has personally waged several sea battles against Cozette LeRoux—vicious engagements, many of which only the red-haired piratess and the diminutive Siren have survived. Saley is good humored in her everyday life, but she takes pirate-hunting very seriously. She is often encountered in the company of clerics of Soleth, Pelagia, and Olidyra. The many lives Saley has taken—always unapologetically and in the name of the greater good—has left in the steely halfling a need for frequent

penance among the gods she adores. Likewise, she has lost many friends to the cutlasses of her chosen enemies.

Saley Lonesinger wears a tailored suit of *+3 leather armor of invulnerability* and wields a *+4 human bane rapier,* a weapon she is very careful to keep from her enemies' hands.

Saraas Helsborne, the Steel Overlord

(LG male dwarf Ari3/Ftr14, Str 16, Con 17, Wis 15, Cha 14)

The ruler of the dwarven Holdfast is a passionate dwarf with midnight-black hair and a beard woven with gold and platinum. A mere three hundred years old, Helsborne stands with one foot in the past while looking to the future. This ability to balance tradition and the changing needs of the bearded mountain folk has earned Helsborne the respect and admiration of all the dwarves of the North.

Holdfast armies hold the Ul Dominor Mountains against the advance of the Scourge, a fact that is not lost on the nobles of Crieste. Helsborne trades on his nation's place as the linchpin in the North's war against the Scourge, encouraging trade with the elves and nations of men. The sole chink in Helsborne's armor is the renegade dwarf known as the Mountain King. For reasons unknown to human and dwarven sages alike, Helsborne refuses to war against the Mountain King, instead permitting the tyrannical villain to lurk in the very shadows of Helsborne's Holdfast.

Senth Lavrousse

(NG male half-elf Rgr8, Str 15, Dex 16, Wis 16)

Outcast from the Blackbriar Quarter of Voltigeur because of his mixed blood, Senth Lavrousse turned to the wilds of the Eztenqui Jungle and found himself enamored of its spirits. His accomplishments and zeal in defending the environs of Feronte from the frequent dangers of the jungle earned him the title of mayor from Viceroy Durand. Senth only half-heartedly accepted the position, favoring the active role of town guardian to the role of politician. Nevertheless, the townsfolk obey his wishes, and the young womenfolk vie for his favor. Senth's heart, however, belongs to a dryad sorceress of the Eztenqui who knows the secrets of Mt. Icpitl.

Seremac Beldor, the Black Prince

(LE male human Ari4/Ftr8, Dex 17, Int 14, Cha 9)

The Black Prince of Amin Dor possesses a fierce temper. Though handsome, Beldor's acerbic bitterness drives away friends and family, leaving only foppish toadies hoping to earn gold by association. The prince bears a burning animosity toward his father, the good King Beldor, and does everything in his power to embarrass and shame the aging monarch. The Black Prince is a master of warcraft, having studied at the feet of great military veterans since he could speak, but prefers to do away with his foes through deception and guile.

Serpent Oracle

(N female medusa, Sor12)

A pariah among her kind, the Serpent Oracle is an enigmatic medusa named Vhonistryl who has shunned the company of evil creatures to offer her prophetic powers to those who can find her. Gifted with great prescience even at a young age, Vhonistryl perceived her own kind's murderous jealousy and escaped before the inevitable assassination. Since that day, long ago, she has been unable to foresee her own fate—only those of the pilgrims who come before her.

The Serpent Oracle can see deeply into the future. Yet she is uncertain of the gods' intent with her gift, so she offers her visitors only sparing glances into the future and keeps her words cryptic. She hides within the ruins of Cohuatlizon, praying before a shrine to Choranus, the Seer Father, for insight into her own future. Vhonistryl lives a lonely existence, slaying the envious intruders who would exploit her powers and finding occasional delight—aloof though it must be—in more amiable company. She suppresses her gaze attack frequently, relying on her sorcery more than her heritage to subdue opponents. Nevertheless, over the decades the city's promenade has accrued a vast number of unwilling statues.

Her only regular companionship is a small gang of stone giants who adore her and live on the outskirts of Cohuatlizon. Asking nothing of her for themselves, they have earned her trust and always assist her against her greatest enemies.

Shahriyel Jhek

(CE male human lich Wiz22, Int 30, Wis 20, Cha 24)

In ancient times, the chief advisor to the Sphinx Queen Ankharet of the Khonsurian Empire was a cunning human wizard called Shahriyel Jhek. The evil wizard dared to overstep his bounds one too many times with his queen, and for his arrogance Ankharet walled Shahriyel Jhek up within his own tower, a prisoner for all eternity.

But Shahriyel Jhek was not to be so easily defeated. Using the magicks available to him within his prison tower, Jhek cheated death by transforming himself into an undead monstrosity—a lich. Then luck chose to smile upon the horrid creature. A group of unwary explorers happened upon the wizard's tower, and in opening the gates to his prison, they inadvertently freed him. Jhek made his way back into the realms of the living, which had not seen the likes of his evil for many a year.

Eventually, Jhek wandered out of the desert sands and through the gates of Rhaz al-Khali. He immediately

slaughtered its rulers and assumed command of the city. Jhek has bent the will of the city to his aims, which is to discover the secrets of an ancient prophecy called *The Riddle of Darkest Qartepre*. Only Jhek knows the entirety of the prophecy, and he shares this with no one. Despite his hideous appearance—Jhek still wears the tarnished golden circlet and the black robes that mark his station as an advisor of the Sphinx Queen—he is a gifted speaker and charismatic figure, able to enthrall the masses of Rhaz al-Khali with his silver tongue and powerful spells.

Shatu-murrim

(LG female lammasu Clr7, Str 22, Int 17, Wis 20)

Born in the ruins of Coatopolan, Shatu-murrim is the matriarch of a family of lammasus allied with the paladins of the Miztlani. She personally guards the tombs of Cihuamiztli, the Golden Lady, and her own grandfather, the Naram-sin. Shatu-murrim gives counsel to the Knights of Gold and shares with them the wisdom she has gained from her Lostland visitations and her heavenly contacts, and she even teaches Draconic or Celestial to those willing to learn. Any who would harm her family will find the peaceful lammasu matron to be a vessel of divine wrath.

Sionala Khor

(NE, female half-elf, Bbn8/Drd8, Str 15, Int 14, Wis 17, Cha 17)

As the de facto ruler of the Valley of Xyr Muthal, Sionala Khor is perhaps one of the most powerful figures in all the Lostlands. The barbarian queen wields a mighty artifact, a staff known as the Soulbinder, and with that staff Sionala controls all the beasts within the valley. Dinosaurs, mammoths, primitive dragons—all sorts of mighty beasts obey every whim of the haughty but beautiful barbarian queen.

The true origins of Sionala Khor are unknown, although most sages believe that she may have once been a slave in the markets of Djeser al-Maqqara. Most creatures that know of her think of her as a good, kindly soul—a perfect queen ruling over a gentle paradise. This image is completely false, but it's one that Sionala Khor perpetuates nonetheless. In actuality, she is a cruel, cold despot, who cares nothing for the Valley of Xyr Muthal or its creatures … she only loves the treasures that they can provide for her. Sionala Khor plays the wide-eyed innocent fool with those poor souls she encounters, trying to take advantage of them as best she can—but once they are of no use to her, she cruelly disposes of them.

Sonechki

(CG female human Rog4/Wiz8, Dex 16, Int 18)

The daughter of a Criestine nobleman and a gypsy sorceress, Sonechki has never found peace in the Imperial courts or the wandering caravan of her mother's tribe. A bookish rogue and artful wizard, Sonechki spends most of her time seeking the identity of her father's murderer and the whereabouts of her estranged mother. She collects magical daggers and spells like a miser his gold coins.

Sonechki's best clue to finding her mother is the curious *staff of divination* that once belonged to the elusive gypsy woman. She searches the Northlands for leads, often employing adventuring companies to investigate locales too dangerous for her alone. Her only constant companion is her familiar, an arrogant and ambitious owl named Evvit who looks down his beak on everyone except Sonechki.

Sparkmaker

(CN male tiefling Sor11, Dex 18, Int 17, Cha 18)

A wandering tiefling with an identity crisis, Sparkmaker shuns his given name, choosing instead the nickname given to him by his gnomish master. At a glance, he resembles a nondescript half-elf—and does his best to remain inconspicuous—but up close one cannot miss the preternatural appeal to his eyes and the small, curling horns growing from his temples. His manners twitchy and his paranoia profound, Sparkmaker seldom trusts

anyone too much. Yet he frequently attaches himself to adventuring companies to search for a future that makes sense to him—and to run from his devilish heritage.

Sparkmaker favors electricity spells and *summon monster*. He possesses several *ioun stones* and makes frequent—and at times premature—use of his *+2 shock light crossbow*. Sparkmaker's truest friend is his familiar, a rat named Stin'Kki, who offers him sound advice and appraisals of exotic cheeses.

Tala Revalieth

(N female elf Drd10, Dex 16, Wis 18)

Displaced from Mirdar Forest by the orc hordes that overran it, the wild elf Tala Revalieth now walks the Northland forests to bring Ildavir's justice to those who abuse her children. Favoring animals more than humanoids, she is the friend of all beasts and an enemy to those who would harm them.

Her wheat-colored hair, soft blue eyes, and fair features do little to hide her frosty disposition from strangers—a fact strangely offset by the presence of her friend and animal companion, a people-loving brown bear named Mungo. Despite her ire, Tala is still an elf, delighting in beautiful art and the majesty of the natural world. When sharing her company, other elves find Tala unusually impatient but endlessly resourceful.

Tala puts her *+3 spectral longbow* and *+2 flaming scimitar* to good use against aberrations and undead who intrude in the Northland forests.

Tarkhan Khurzog, Scourge of the North

(LE male half-fiend/ogre-mage Ftr12/Sor9, Str 24, Con 20, Int 17, Wis 14, Cha 19)

The fearsome overlord of the Scourge is a demon-blooded orge-mage of unmatched ambition and cruelty. The unholy offspring of a minor demon and an ogre-mage witch, Khurzog is a master at pitting the nations of the North against one another. By turning the suspicious, untrusting natures of kings to his advantage, the Tarkhan and his armies marched through the Northlands like a storm, toppling ancient nations and razing whole cities for their pleasure.

The kings of the civilized lands look to the North, praying that the Tarkhan's greed is sated, all the while knowing that the next war is not a matter of if, but when. For now Khurzog patiently bides his time in Azmog-Azmennum, studying his enemies and plotting his next campaign. The demon-ogre can afford to be patient: Each day the might of his armies grows and the courage of his enemies weakens.

Terhalien Raalt

(CE male drow Ftr6/Rog6/Asn4, Str 14, Dex 18, Int 16)

This skilled assassin is perhaps one of the most notorious killers on Áereth. Devilishly handsome, this fiendish drow is wanted in at least twelve different kingdoms for his murderous exploits. Although able to kill in any numbers of ways, Terhalien prefers a dagger tipped with an extremely rare poison, one purportedly made from tarrasque blood. The effect of the poison is always fatal and extremely slow-acting, putting its victims in exquisite agony for days before finishing them. The poison fits Terhalien's personality perfectly, as he kills for sport. The gold collected for killing his victims is merely a bonus. Sarcastic and sharp of wit, Terhalien is said to be quicker with his tongue than with his dagger.

Most recently, Terhalien was wanted for the killings of a Morenan duchess, who was flung off the parapets of the royal palace. His whereabouts since then are unknown. If not in a brothel or otherwise in the company of a beautiful woman, he typically can be found in various thieves' guilds, always searching for information, or at least for a situation to use to his advantage. Although he typically works alone, Terhalien is not above teaming up with others. Such "partners," however, rarely live to collect their reward.

Tsurugi Saku

(LG male dwarf Ftr12, Str 17, Con 16, Wis 15, Cha 12)

Also known as the Rock of Raiju, this venerable dwarf is a ferocious warrior and a trusted advisor, serving as a confidante for the past four Taijin kings. Tsurugi Saku is believed to be well over four hundred years old, ancient by even dwarf standards, yet the spry old warrior is still able to beat warriors half his age in duels. He faithfully acts as guardian of the magic seal for the Merchant House of Bakar Joseon each and every day.

In his earlier days, Saku personally led many of the dwarven assaults against their goblin enemies during the Seppuku Cleansing. Far better than any ancient map, Sake personally knows every twist and turn of the vast labyrinth of passageways that run beneath the Herrenia Mountains. He also knows the locations of every lair that ever existed in the mountains, from the largest giant caves to the smallest kobold warrens. A stern but kindly soul, Tsurugi Saku glady helps anyone who treats him with courtesy and respect.

Emperor Vithoon

(CE male darkvenom drakon Wiz15, Str 16, Con 14, Int 21, Wis 21, Cha 19)

Venerable and cruel, the Emperor of Ssorlang has coiled about the Emerald Throne for many long years, and they have taken their toll. Stricken with senility and recurring diseases that his attendants cannot cure for much longer, Vithoon's death is near. He usually defers to the decisions of his son, Prince Zurasak, but moments of lucidity suggest that the old drakon has a few more schemes to hatch—most of which do not include his son.

Volei Ojar

(CE male half-orc Ftr7/Rog6/Asn3, Str 15, Dex 17, Con 16, Int 14)

A slim, tusk-jawed half-orc with hard eyes and a quick blade, Volei Ojar is also one of the North's most wanted assassins—a fact he rues every day. Since the botched assassination attempt on King Beldor two years ago, Ojar has been on the run. The attempts on his own life tapered off after Ojar took up service with the Mountain King, but the half-orc is too cagey to believe that all the bounty hunters have abandoned the hunt.

Ojar is always on the lookout for young assassins to use as pawns, and passes along jobs to those who show promise. Despite his eagerness to rebuild a circle of assassins, the half-orc watches his associates and servants with the jaded eye of a hired killer, knowing that

with enough gold, anyone can be bought.

Xolatl

(LE male human Clr16, Str 17, Wis 18, Cha 18)

Known as the Fire Priest, Xolatl is the king and chief spiritual leader of the city-state of Chuzec. He rules the city with intimidation and frightening piety, his every edict said to be the will of Tlachinozal, the Scorched God. Those who question his orders find themselves—and their families—bound to the sacrificial alters of the Burning Temple.

Xolatl wears a suit of *+3 banded mail* edged with obsidian armor spikes and adorned with red phoenix feathers. The fearless priest wields a *+3 adamantine flaming burst battle axe* and a *+2 shortbow of distance*.

Yaracen Eoth

(LN male human Ftr9, Str 15, Dex 18, Int 17)

Although blind since the day he was born, Yaracen Eoth is a skilled and graceful fighter. Once one of the best pit fighters in all of Djeser al-Maqqara, his freedom was purchased in the slave markets there some thirty-odd years ago by a masked bidder. That bidder turned out to be one of the silent servants of the white apes of Tharnaka, who trained Yaracen Eoth to be his successor. When not on the Isles of Tharnaka, Yaracen Eoth is on the great ships traveling from the Isles to some other destination on Áereth usually conducting business on behalf of the white apes that are his true masters.

Yaracen Eoth is the guide that many merchants and other travelers seek when heading to Tharnaka. Though he barely speaks above a whisper, the blind, grizzled warrior is slightly more forthcoming about the secrets of the Isles of Tharnaka than most of his blind brethren. He is also cryptic when supplying answers to questions, and can play the part of the helpless, ignorant blind man well—however, he is a sharp and shrewd tactician, and has free rein to negotiate on the white apes' behalf. He also appears to be their most trusted servant, with access to nearly everything in all the cities of the Isles. He also is the only servant known to be able to change the minds of his ape masters, and his ability to mediate is legendary. More than once, hostilities between rival merchants visiting the Isles have been quelled by a few stern but soothing words from the blind warrior.

Yollotl

(CE male darkvenom drakon Ari3/Wiz7, Int 18, Cha 16)

Yollotl is the sadistic and collected lord of the city of Xincayot, and a strong supporter of Ssorlang's Amotuans. He spends most of his time organizing expeditions into the ruins of old Zimala, hoping to increase the influence of his faction with elder magic. Yollotl eschews his own sorcery in favor of the legion of bodyguards, and gives each of his servants who displeases him a single chance for reparation. Failing that, they are impaled, along with enemies of the state, and made to decorate the shoreline outside of the city walls.

King Zacatal

(N male human Ftr10, Str 18, Dex 17, Wis 15)

King Zacatal is the fair-minded monarch of the Xulmec city-state of Maras. In times of war, he personally takes to the field and leads his scouts in guerilla warfare, allowing nothing to endanger his people or the sacred cenotes they guard.

Prince Zurasak

(CE male darkvenom drakon Ftr5/Sor6/Eldritch Knight3, Str 21, Con 17, Int 20, Wis 20, Cha 18)

One of the most dreaded drakon in the Known Realms, Prince Zurasak is the true power behind Ssorlang's Emerald Throne. He advises the venerable Emperor Vithoon, forestalling his father's death as long as he can. Shirking his official duties as prince, Zurasak tours the breadth of Ssorlang frequently and has been known to personally lead raids against the Xulmec city-states, ensuring a villainous reputation long before taking the throne himself.

Prince Zurasak wields a vile artifact known as *Shadowcurve*, an intelligent *+5 unholy scimitar* forged of shadowstone. He often shuns the use of his natural magic in favor of personally slaying his enemies with the blade. The young drakon has foiled numerous coups against his father and looks forward to executing those who rise against him when he is Emperor. Such single-minded pursuits, however, will likely keep Ssorlang from long-term expansion in his coming reign—an ironic blessing for the Southlands.

Chapter 6
Zero-Level Characters

Few roleplaying experiences are more satisfying than playing a character from unschooled youth, to champion, to epic hero. Every culture has its legends of foundlings and orphans, maturing into mighty warriors, rogues, wizards, and prophets. These are the roots of epic fantasy—and of fantasy roleplaying.

Most d20 games assume that characters begin at first level, armed with the knowledge, weapons, armor, and spells necessary to make their mark upon the world. But in ongoing, living campaigns, players often wonder what took place *before* their characters stepped foot on the road to glory. Bereft of powerful special abilities, feats, and skills, 0-level PCs must survive by their wit, cunning, and sheer courage alone. Adventures set during this time can be some of the most exciting and dangerous of a PC's career, with danger lurking around every corner and the question of life or death hanging on the throw of a die.

Playing a PC from 0-level also gives a character the added depth of a personalized back-story, supported by unique skills and abilities. An adept might go on to become an infamous rogue who uses his old spells to lend him an edge over the city watch. An expert weaponsmith might become a fearsome paladin who insists on crafting his own unique weapons, equipment, and armor for use in his crusade against evil. Perhaps before being adopted by the church, the noble cleric was a cutpurse, and to this day the pious soul keeps his old skills in practice … just in case.

How did the elven knight acquire his master's sword, the same blade that drives him to vanquish evil? Why is the rogue committed to thwarting oppression in every form? From what ruin did the wizard acquire the magic staff, and does it really contain the soul of an ancient dragon? Why, in a world of deadly challenges and vicious foes, does a meek peasant take up weapons and stand against the press of darkness?

The answers to these questions, and more, are the adventures of 0-level characters.

Zero-level Player Characters

Zero-level player characters begin with 1 level in an NPC class, but differ from NPCs in that PCs are destined to become heroes. An NPC might spend his entire life gaining levels in Warrior, but a PC Warrior will soon become a Fighter, quickly outstripping her common, non-heroic peers. This can often invite jealousies and vicious rivalries when the smith's daughter returns home, now a celebrated paladin of the realm.

A 0-level PC chooses an NPC class—Adept, Aristocrat, Expert, or Warrior—and begins with –1,000 XP. After gaining one thousand experience points, reaching 0 XP, the PC gains a level and advances to one of the regular PC classes: Barbarian, Cleric, Druid, Fighter, Paladin, Ranger, Rogue, Wizard, or Sorcerer. One level in an NPC class never counts against a PC for purposes of multiclassing (see *PHB*).

The NPC classes available to PCs are outlined in detail in the *DMG* and are summarized here for quick reference.

First-Level Adept

Gifted in the ways of magic, yet unschooled in its mastery, adepts are the witchdoctors, mystics, healers, herbalists, and shamans of Áereth. While NPC adepts grow to become wise men, elders and sages, heroic adepts quickly rise to become champions of their chosen cause, serving a deity as a devoted cleric, or defending the spirits of nature as woodland druids.

An adept casts divine spells, which are drawn from the adept spell list. Like a cleric, an adept must choose and prepare her spells in advance. Each adept must choose a time each day at which she must spend an hour in quiet contemplation or supplication to regain her daily allotment of spells. Time spent resting has no effect on whether an adept can prepare spells. In addition, she receives bonus spells per day if she has a high Wisdom score.

Apprentices and Mediums

Not all adepts advance to become clerics or druids. At their discretion, GMs may permit PC adepts to be apprentices (wizards in training) or mediums (untutored sorcerers). Both sub-classes follow all the rules applying to adepts, with the following exceptions:

Apprentice: An apprentice's key attribute is Intelligence, not Wisdom. To prepare or cast a spell, an apprentice must have an Intelligence score equal to at least 10 + the spell level. The Difficulty Class for a saving throw against an apprentice's spell is 10 + the spell level + the apprentice's Intelligence modifier.

In addition, she receives bonus spells per day if she has a high Intelligence score.

An apprentice must study her spellbook each day to prepare her spells. She cannot prepare any spell not recorded in her spellbook.

An apprentice begins play with a spellbook containing all 0-level apprentice spells, plus three 1st-level spells of her choice. For each point of Intelligence bonus the apprentice has, the spellbook holds one additional 1st-level spell of her choice.

Medium: A medium's key attribute is Charisma, not Wisdom. To prepare or cast a spell, a medium must have a Charisma score equal to at least 10 + the spell level. The Difficulty Class for a saving throw against a medium's spell is 10 + the spell level + the medium's Charisma modifier.

In addition, she receives bonus spells per day if she has a high Charisma score.

A medium can cast any spell she knows without preparing it ahead of time. A medium's selection of spells is extremely limited. A medium begins play knowing four 0-level spells and two 1st-level spells of her choice.

Apprentice and Medium Spell List

0-level: *acid splash, dancing lights, daze, flare, light, ghost sound, touch of fatigue, mage hand, mending, message, open/close, prestidigitation, ray of frost, read magic, resistance*.

1st-level: *alarm, burning hands, cause fear, color spray, comprehend languages, detect secret doors, disguise self, expeditious retreat, feather fall, grease, hold portal, hypnotism, protection from chaos, protection from evil, protection from good, protection from law, obscuring mist, shield, sleep, unseen servant, ventriloquism*.

To prepare or cast a spell, an adept must have a Wisdom score equal to at least 10 + the spell level. The Difficulty Class for a saving throw against an adept's spell is 10 + the spell level + the adept's Wisdom modifier.

Each adept has a particular holy symbol (as a divine focus) depending on the adept's magical tradition.

Hit Points: 6 + Con modifier

Base Attack: +0

Starting Wealth: 2d4 x 10 gp

Fort Save: +0 **Ref Save:** +0 **Will Save:** +2

Class Skills: Concentration (Con), Craft (Int), Handle Animal (Cha), Heal (Wis), Knowledge (all skills taken individually) (Int), Profession (Wis), Spellcraft (Int), and Survival (Wis).

Skill Points: (2 + Int modifier) x4.

Weapon and Armor Proficiency: Adepts are skilled with all simple weapons. Adepts are not proficient with any type of armor nor with shields.

Spells per Day: 0 – 3; 1st – 1.

Adept Spell List

0-level: *create water, cure minor wounds, detect magic, ghost sound, guidance, light, mending, purify food and drink, read magic, touch of fatigue*.

1st-level: *bless, burning hands, cause fear, command, comprehend languages, cure light wounds, detect chaos, detect evil, detect good, detect law, endure elements, obscuring mist, protection from chaos, protection from evil, protection from good, protection from law, sleep*.

First-Level Aristocrat

Aristocrats are the nobles of Áereth, the privileged upper class with access to wealth, tutoring, and training. Squires, princes, scions of merchant-lords, and royal heirs are all aristocrats.

Simply because a character is born of royal or noble blood does not mean that the character can expect to have all his needs and wishes met. While aristocrats may receive preferential treatment by merchants and their ilk, they will also be expected to pay inflated prices. Similarly, many noble families send their scions out into the world, permitting the fledgling aristocrats to return only after they have proven their worth.

Hit Points: 8 + Con modifier

Starting Wealth: 6d4 x 10 gp

Base Attack: +0

Fort Save: +0 **Ref Save:** +0 **Will Save:** +2

Class Skills: Appraise (Int), Bluff (Cha), Diplomacy (Cha), Disguise (Cha), Forgery (Int), Gather Information (Cha), Handle Animal (Cha), Intimidate (Cha), Knowledge (all skills taken individually) (Int), Listen (Wis), Perform (Cha), Ride (Dex), Sense Motive (Wis), Speak Language, Spot (Wis), Swim (Str), and Survival (Wis).

Skill Points: (4 + Int modifier) x4.

Weapon and Armor Proficiency: The aristocrat is proficient in the use of all simple and martial weapons and with all types of armor and shields.

First-Level Expert

Blacksmiths, locksmiths, cutpurses, woodland scouts, and trackers are all experts in their chosen realm. Many occupations fall under the designation of expert. The class is highly versatile, permitting characters to focus and excel in specific areas of study.

Any occupation that is not explicitly a spellcaster, noble, or warrior is likely an expert. NPC experts grow to become master craftsmen and specialists in their fields, but PC experts broaden their fields of study, and thereby become even more skilled and talented because of their understanding of the larger world.

Hit Points: 6 + Con modifier

Starting Wealth: 3d4 x 10 gp

Base Attack: +0

Fort Save: +0 **Ref Save:** +0 **Will Save:** +2

Class Skills: The expert can choose any ten skills to be class skills.

Skill Points: (6 + Int modifier) x4.

Weapon and Armor Proficiency: The expert is proficient in the use of all simple weapons and with light armor but not shields.

First-Level Warrior

Warriors are the mainstays of Áereth. Brave and courageous, they stand watch atop high towers, hunt stags through deep woods, protect the common citizen, and serve in the king's army. Soldiers, watchmen, slave-gladiators, and huntsmen are all warriors.

Warriors are natural leaders, especially during times of danger and strife. In times of peace, excessive warriors can become a liability. Forced to seek their fortunes on the open road, some turn to banditry, while a select few train to become fighters, excelling in the arts of war.

Hit Points: 8 + Con modifier

Starting Wealth: 4d4 x 10 gp

Base Attack: +1

Fort Save: +2 **Ref Save:** +0 **Will Save:** +0

Class Skills: Climb (Str), Handle Animal (Cha), Intimidate (Cha), Jump (Str), Ride (Dex), and Swim (Str).

Skill Points: (2 + Int modifier) x 4.

Weapon and Armor Proficiency: The warrior is proficient in the use of all simple and martial weapons and all armor and shields.

Character Backgrounds

Every PC has a background, a story that explains his core value and beliefs. Backgrounds are much more than occupations, but the following list can provide inspirations for a character's background, along with suggested NPC classes. This register is in no way exhaustive nor could it ever be; a PC's history should be limited only by the player's imagination and the GM's whim.

The classes listed in parentheses should be taken as suggestions, not rules. Exceptions will always exist, and should be encouraged—especially in support of a PC's unique story.

Alchemist (Expert)

Animal Trainer (Expert)

Armorer (Expert)

Astrologer (Expert, Adept)

Blacksmith (Expert)

Brigand (Expert, Warrior)

Caravan Guard (Warrior)

Confidence Artist (Expert)

Cutpurse (Expert)

Entertainer (Expert)

Foundling (any[1])

Fortune-teller (Expert, Adept)

Gambler (Expert)

Gravedigger (Expert[2])

Guild Beggar (Expert[2])

Healer (Adept)

Herbalist (Adept)

Herder (Expert[2])

Hired Muscle (Warrior)

Hunter (Warrior, Expert)

Indentured Servant (Expert[2])

Jeweler (Expert)

Locksmith (Expert)

Logger (Expert[2])

Mercenary (Warrior)

Minstrel (Expert)

Noble (Aristocrat)

Outlaw (Expert, Warrior)

Orphan (any[1])

Royal (Aristocrat)

Savage (Warrior, Expert)

Scribe (Expert, Adept)

Scout (Expert)

Serf (Expert[2])

Shaman (Adept)

Slave (Warrior, Expert)

Smuggler (Expert)

Soldier (Warrior)

Squire (Aristocrat, Warrior)

Street Fighter (Warrior)

Trapper (Expert)

Yeoman (Expert[2])

Watchman (Warrior)

Weaponsmith (Expert)

Weaver (Expert)

Witchdoctor (Adept)

Woodcutter (Expert, Warrior)

Wizard's Apprentice (Adept[3])

Notes:

[1] Both orphans and foundlings adopt classes suitable to their foster families. An orphan taken in by the Thieves Guild will be predisposed to becoming an Expert with a focus in Rogue skills, whereas a foundling adopted by a monastery may show talents as an Adept or Warrior.

[2] With many backgrounds, the NPC class of Commoner in the *DMG* seems a more logical choice. Of the NPC classes, however, Commoner is the weakest, and in these instances it is best to go with Expert, reflecting a PC's exceptional interests and talents.

[3] With the GM's permission, Adepts can also be Apprentices or Mediums. See sidebar above for details.

Zero-Level Adventures

Adventures as a 0-level character can be among the most thrilling that a PC will ever have. Combats are deadly and often decided with the first blow. Without careful consideration by the GM, a string of bad rolls can turn a CR 1 wandering monster encounter into a game-stopping TPK (Total Party Kill). Players with 0-level PCs have to act with caution, creativity, and cunning, frequently coming up with unique solutions to challenges that higher-level PCs would never deign to try. Ad hoc traps, improvised weapons, and dirty tactics are often the only way a party can survive. Whereas stronger parties can rely on their superior armor and hit points to give the PCs time to think, a party of 0-level PCs has to be prepared and ready to act at a moment's notice, or else suffer the consequences.

This constant, on-edge tension is what makes low-level campaigns so enjoyable, but GMs must tread with care.

There are a number of ways to subtly shift the odds in the PCs favor, while still encouraging creative play. As in *DCC #0: Legends Are Made, Not Born*, PCs might overhear a monster before actually encountering it. Variants on this theme include coming across a beast's tracks, encountering the bleached bones of its previous victims, or simply catching the scent of its foul lair. Any of these warning signs will serve as cues for PCs to be on their guard. Of course, if PCs elect to disregard all precautions, their fate is their own!

Similarly, players should be encouraged to use cunning to overcome superior forces. There is no reason to duke it out, toe-to-toe with the ogre, when a rock dropped from the cave's entrance can do the work for you. Similarly, PCs might take the time to construct deadfalls, pit traps, and the like.

Finally, intelligent monsters might elect to take the PCs prisoner instead of slaying them outright. Captured PCs can be sold as slaves or simply reserved to be eaten at a later date. The opportunity to escape from captors, sans weapons or armor, is a challenge worthy of any hero!

Experience Point Awards for 0-Level Characters

PC Level	CR 1/2	CR 1	CR 2	CR 3	CR 4
0	200	400	800	1,200	2,000

Campaign Hooks

Zero-level adventures need not be world-spanning affairs. Simply learning to hunt or fight or acquiring a certain rare spell can become exciting adventures. Often, young heroes serve masters who may send them on challenging errands designed to tutor naïve students in the ways of the world. Having the entire party serving a single master is an excellent way to convince PCs to work together toward a single goal.

Zero-level adventures also present a great opportunity to introduce recurring villains. These arrogant foes are quick to disregard the PCs as nothing but nuisances, setting up rivalries and enmities that can stretch on for years or even decades.

Villains need not be powerful to be memorable. Whereas a higher-level PC might beat a dozen orcs in a battle, to a party of 0-level characters a single orc, hobgoblin, kobold, or goblin can be a terrifying foe. This gives a GM the chance to personalize the opponent, creating a more noteworthy encounter. Physical affects, unique fighting styles, unusual arms and armor can all make a common foe uncommon.

With this in mind, take inspiration from or use one of the following plot hooks as a seed for your campaign:

The Old Man of the Wood: The characters are the servants of Nymoren the White, a wizened mage who lives in a half-ruined tower deep in the Blackbriar Wood. Some of the PCs may be talented apprentices that have been adopted by the old mage, while others are simply the children of servants and were born into his service. Nymoren keeps close watch over his beloved woods and sends his young wards on errands to acquire exotic spell components, rescue the wizard's hapless animal companions, fend off the predations of goblins and kobolds, and perform quests on the old mage's behalf.

Tales of the Canting Crew: The characters are street urchins, beggars, and petty thieves, serving Obo the Beggarmaster. A wicked and corpulent taskmaster with an endless capacity for cruelty and greed, Obo makes certain to keep his wards under his thumb, placing extra pressure on those that show promise. Warriors will be tasked as hired thugs and muscle, experts will trained in the ways of the rogue, adepts will be carefully groomed—and all will be constantly watched for signs of treachery. For all his fiendish ways, Obo makes certain to protect his own, and may go to war with other lords of the underworld in defense of his charges. Adventures can range from petty thievery, to enforcing the Beggarmaster's street edicts, to collecting his tithes, to finally escaping from Obo's sweaty clutches.

Knights of the Realm: The characters are the squires, grooms, assistants, and spearmen of the solemn and virtuous Sir Kameron, Knight Errant of the Lance. Sir Kameron's love was kidnapped by an evil baron seven years ago and now the knight travels the Northlands in search of her. The lovelorn knight is dogged by assassins, evil knights, and foes that would besmirch his honor and lure the good knight into disgrace. Sir Kameron uses the PCs to accomplish what he cannot, going places where he would be noticed, and defending him against all comers while the knight searches the Known Realms for his lady. Adventures could include recovering the knight's stolen sword in time for a tournament, foiling attempts to frame him as a wicked ne'er-do-well, tracking down leads to his lost lady, and thwarting the endless plots of

Mentors

For many GMs and players, it may be a stretch to imagine peasants delving into a goblin lair and emerging, mere days later, as accomplished adventurers boasting of new feats, spells, and skills. Mentors, experts who train PCs in their new classes, can serve to bridge this gap, taking the PCs under their wings and tutoring them in the ways of adventuring.

Any NPC with at least one level in the class the PC wishes to adopt can serve as a mentor. But time spent studying with mentors need not be time wasted for players. For while a mentor may guide the PC along the proper path, nothing can take the place of actual experience. In this way, mentors can best serve as plot hooks, sending the adventurers scurrying off on missions, errands and quests, each challenge designed to test the PCs in their newfound roles.

For PCs that truly dedicate themselves to their studies, GMs should consider awarding PCs a one-time bonus of 1d4 skill points, to be allotted to specialties of the mentor.

the 0-level servants of a rival knight. Traveling with Sir Kameron permits the PCs to visit vast swaths of the North, where every day sees another kingdom and every night reveals another intrigue.

Of Kith and Kin: The Baron is dead and his ancient elven castellan, Essech Ggeredna, scours the lands for the new rulers. Regrettably the Baron had no direct heirs, so obscure bloodlines must be sought out, and the collected heirs resemble nothing so much as a band of uneducated rapscallions, rogues, mercenaries, and wild mages. Nevertheless, the PCs have indeed inherited a small barony placed deep within the wilds of the North, and now it is their task to keep it. This will require quickly mastering the skills necessary to lead a small, isolated community. Predators ranging from wolves to goblins and worse threaten the townsfolk, false heirs lay claim to the throne, and—worst of all—the true seat of the barony is in ruins, home to fearsome monsters and dungeons of untold depths. Who was the old baron and why were his heirs sought out … four hundred years after his death?

Pawns of the Slavelord: During the Fall of Leherti, untold numbers of Lehertians were captured and sold into slavery. The PCs begin their adventures as slaves in the care of Mordeng Skoloth, a wicked slavelord based in the city of Freeport. Mordeng delights in depraved blood sports, and has a special fondness for gladiator combat. The enslaved PCs in his stable are regularly forced to fight wild animals, monstrous humanoids, and even other slaves. Yet the intrigue of Freeport reaches to every segment of the population, so it isn't long before the PCs are thrust directly into the heart of the shadow war between Mordeng and his rivals. The PCs are forced to decide between helping Mordeng against his foes (and earning the foul man's gratitude) or defying his orders and suffering the slavelord's wrath (or even worse, the vengeance of his triumphant rivals).

Final Note: NPCs and 0-level PCs

It can be tempting for GMs to introduce powerful NPCs into the lives of the characters, such as knights and wizards who are always on hand to rescue the PCs when the going gets rough. This could easily overshadow a group of 0-level characters, turning them into the supporting cast for the GM's own band of heroes.

In these cases, remember the golden rule: No matter how weak they may be, the PCs are the heroes of the story. Even during a nation-shattering war, there is enough smaller-scale action for them. In this case, the war would simply provide the backdrop and stage setting for the PCs' adventures.

Áereth is a *world* full of powerful beings, but the *game* is about the PCs. Players want to play, not watch the GM's pet NPCs act out their lives like a historical drama.

Chapter 7
Paths of Adventure

Adventures in the DCC line are designed to be setting neutral, even within the world of Áereth. Every GM should feel comfortable removing the iconic *Dungeon Crawl Classics #1: Idylls of the Rat King* from the humble town of Silverton and placing the adventure wherever it will serve their own campaign the best. As always, GMs should tailor the world to suit their own designs and their group's enjoyment. Every other concern comes second.

Of course, that's all fine if you are an old hand at the game and know precisely the sort of campaign you'd like to run. But with over thirty adventures to choose from, where does an intrepid new GM begin?

Never fear! For those who seek guidance in the ever-expanding world of the Dungeon Crawl Classics, or for those sadistic GMs who must simply roll for *everything*, we present the Adventure Paths: series of modules loosely organized by level, location and theme, and which can serve as narratives to aid GMs in planning their PCs' careers as adventurers.

Note that these paths serve only as guidelines. GMs should feel free to adjust them as necessary for their wicked purposes. Flesh out the skeleton, add your own adventures, make the PCs lords of their own realms, and then lay waste to those kingdoms with armies of wicked monsters – in short, make the world your own!

To begin a campaign, choose your favorite low-level DCC and follow the subsequent titles in the path. Or, if you are truly willing, brave and brazen enough to throw caution to the wind, roll a d12.

If the result is 1-4, go to Adventure Path 1. If the result is 5-8, go to Adventure Path 2. If the result is 9-12, go to Adventure Path 3.

Adventure Path 1: West to Empire

Levels	Adventure
0	**DCC #35A: Halls of the Minotaur:** Humble villagers armed with farm tools venture into the Thornswild Forest to rescue a fallen paladin. There they uncover the ruins of a long-forgotten citadel, a tribe of ferocious kobolds, and Toth-Ror, a deadly minotaur bent on the PCs' destruction.
1-2	**DCC #29: Lair of the White Salamander:** Travelling south, the PCs (now aspiring heroes) come upon the sinking city of Thelport. There they discover a series of sea caves, where they battle their way past crazed cultists to the source of the city's plight: a horrible giant salamander gifted with wicked genius. Having saved the people of Thelport, the PCs can continue their travels west, or catch a ship south to Porthmeor (go to Adventure Path 1A).
1-3	**DCC #1: Idylls of the Rat King:** The PCs press on to Silverton, where a small mining community is being threatened by a wererat menace.
4-6	**DCC #27: Revenge of the Rat King:** The PCs, having deposed the Rat King, now suffer his wrath beneath the streets of Soulgrave. Escaping his clutches, they put an end to his wicked reign.
7-8	**DCC #5: Aerie of the Crow God:** Now heroes in Crieste, the PCs are summoned before Captain Sentri, Master of the Sable March. The Captain awards the PCs titles befitting their class and rank and tells them of the costal hamlet of Carnelloe, where dark secrets work to conceal an ancient tragedy. The Captain beseeches the PCs to act as his agents and investigate the lingering evil.

7-9 **DCC #19: The Volcano Caves:** Recognizing the might of her enemy's agents, the wicked Vizier of Crieste orders the PCs north to investigate the strange rumors surrounding mysterious Mount Rolnith, hoping that the PCs die beneath the dormant volcano. As insurance, the Vizier sends two of her finest assassins to finish what the mountain cannot. There, in the abandoned study of a long vanished wizardress, the PCs find a map leading to...

10 **DCC #30: Vault of the Dragon Kings:** Leaving the ruined Mount Rolnith, the PCs venture deeper into the Frosteye Mountains, in search of the legendary Vault of the Dragon Kings.

9-11 **DCC #12: The Blackguard's Revenge:** Returning triumphant from the Vault, the PCs are met by Khau the Red, magician in service of the Captain of the Sable March. The Cloister of the Ordocar, a sister order to the Knights of the Sable March, is under attack by an army of undead. Can the PCs reach the monastery in time to save the order?

11-13 **DCC #12.5: Iron Crypt of the Heretics:** Though the Cloister of the Ordocar has been saved, the root of the undead army must still be dealt a final blow. Tracking the army back to the Iron Crypt of the Heretics, the PCs must do battle with a nigh-invulnerable menace.

15 **DCC #13: Crypt of the Devil Lich:** The Ebon Egg destroyed, the PCs deliver the Iron Crypt's magical keys to the Monastery of the Dawning Sun. Upon their arrival, they realize that a horrible tragedy has taken place....

Adventure Path 1A: Wild Rovers

Levels Adventure

1-3 **DCC #24: Legend of the Ripper:** The PCs arrive in exotic Porthmeor, only to find the city locked in a grip of terror. The ghost of an ancient fiend has seemingly risen to stalk the city streets. Can the young heroes put the ghost to rest?

4-6 **DCC #35B: The Thief Lord's Vault:** The PCs continue their travels by sea, following the coast west to Punjar. There, in the city's shadowy bazaars, the adventurers catch word of a fabled treasure vault hidden beneath Punjar's grime-stained cobblestones. Investigations prove fruitful, and the PCs discover the entrance to one of the richest treasure vaults in all the Known World. Eluding the Thief Lord's cunning traps, the PCs tumble through a misty green portal to far-flung Voltigeur...

6-8 **DCC #16: Curse of the Emerald Cobra:** ...where the PCs learn of a mysterious artifact called Omihuictli – the Bone Blade, an enchanted bastard sword rumored to have been created from the leg bones of an ancient black dragon. The sword is said to rest in the heart of an extinct volcano, Mount Icpitl.

10-12 **DCC #4: Bloody Jack's Gold:** Sailing home from their savage encounter with the Emerald Cobra, the PCs' ship is blown off course to an island that doesn't appear on any map. One of the sailors recognizes the island from the *Ballad of Bloody Jack*. Investigating, the PCs discover the maze Jack built to protect the greatest hoard of his long and blood-soaked career.

12-14 **DCC #21: Assault on Strormbringer Castle:** Returning to civilization at last, the PCs sail into the town of Argalis, only to discover the town in ruins. Three hurricane-strength storms have struck in as many weeks, sent by a wicked storm giant intent on punishing the town. The townsfolk turn to the PCs. Can the heroes prevail against the Stormbringer?

14-16 **DCC #22: The Stormbringer Juggernaut:** After thanking the heroes for their assistance in defeating Stozari, Lord McDurmott, leader of Argalis, calls them back a week later with disturbing news. There are reports from the distant island of Cairvos of a gigantic warship under construction, led by a Stormbringer storm giant. He hires them once again, sending the heroes to vanquish the renewed Stormbringer threat.

Adventure Path 2: Lords of the Kingdom

Levels Adventure

0 **DCC #0: Legends are Made, not Born:** An ogre is terrorizing the town of Dundraville. Six brave citizens, mere peasants, band together with a plan to put an end to the evil ogre's villainy!

1 **DCC #2: Lost Vault of Tsathzar Rho:** The triumphant commoners, now adventurers, start on the long road to the heart of the Empire, where they will seek their fortunes. The would-be heroes stop for the night at the settlement of Hadler's Gap, where they hear curious tales of

once-peaceful kobolds and an ogre in the nearby hills. The PCs find their reputation as "Ogre Slayers" has preceded them. Will they live up to the stories?

1-2 **DCC #29: Well of the Worm:** Resuming their travels south, the PC come across a war-ravaged village plagued by the legacy of wars past. The elders beseech the PCs to put an end to the horrors.

1-3 **DCC #1: Idylls of the Rat King:** The PCs finally reach the capital of Archbridge, where tales of their heroic exploits have already reached people of power. The Captain of the Sable March offers the PCs their first mission for the crown: root out the goblin menace that has been plaguing the silver caravans from Silverton.

4-6 **DCC #27: Revenge of the Rat King:** Having successfully defended the people of Silverton, the PCs find themselves the target of the Rat King's wrath. In a carefully wrought trap, the PCs are lured beneath the streets of Soulgrave and into the clutches of the Rat King!

7-8 **DCC #5: Aerie of the Crow God:** Back in Archbridge, the PCs are given a hero's welcome, along with a handsome reward and commission from the Captain of the Sable March. Meeting the PCs in secret that evening, the Captain asks the PCs to undertake another dangerous mission for the crown, sending the PCs to the village of Carnelloe to investigate the site of an ancient tragedy.

6-8 **DCC #10: The Sunless Garden:** Returning triumphant once more, the PCs are given titles and the deed to a small, run-down keep on the border of Crieste. Shortly after the PCs assume ownership, the nearest trading post, Garland's Fork, is struck by a horrific curse, and it falls to the heroes to solve the crisis. ***Or:*** The wicked Vizier of Crieste, perceiving the heroes as a threat to her stranglehold on the Empire, commissions a ship for the PCs and orders them to deliver a message to the far-flung colony of Voltigeur. (Go to Adventure Path 2A.)

8-10 **DCC #6: Temple of the Dragon Cult:** With power comes responsibility. Across the borderlands, a dragon has been terrorizing the people of Thire. Lady Aedwyn Cyrean, ruler of the realm, raises an army to defeat the fearsome wyrm, but even they fail. She begs the heroes to finish off what her army could not accomplish.

12-14 **DCC #21: Assault on Stormbringer Castle:** Unnaturally strong storms strike the PCs' lands, ravaging their fields and fortifications. The source of the fearsome gales lies to the south, with the town of Argalis. A terrible storm giant demands tribute from Agalis and the surrounding settlements (including the PCs' manor). If she is denied, she will lay waste to the entire coast.

14-16 **DCC #22: The Stormbringer Juggernaut:** The Stormbringer giants return to threaten the realm once more, unless the PCs are able to stop their scheme from coming to fruition. But are even the heroes, now mighty beyond most, strong enough to stop the Stormbringer Juggernaut?

Adventure Path 2A: Of Pirates and Plunder

Levels Adventure

6-8 **DCC #16: Curse of the Emerald Cobra:** Sent to the end of the Empire by the Vizier of Crieste, the PCs learn of a mysterious artifact called Omihuictli – the Bone Blade, an enchanted bastard sword rumored to have been created from the leg bones of an ancient black dragon. The sword is said to rest in the heart of an extinct volcano, Mount Icpitl.

10-12 **DCC #4: Bloody Jack's Gold:** Sailing home from their savage encounter with the Emerald Cobra, the PCs' ship is blown off course to an island that doesn't appear on any map. One of the sailors recognizes the island from the *Ballad of Bloody Jack*. Investigating, the PCs discover the maze Jack built to protect the greatest hoard of his long and blood-soaked career.

12-14 **DCC #21: Assault on Stormbringer Castle:** Returning to civilization at last, the PCs sail into the town of Argalis, only to discover the town in ruins. Three hurricane-strength storms have struck in as many weeks, sent by a wicked storm giant intent on punishing the town. The townsfolk turn to the PCs. Can the heroes prevail against the Stormbringer?

12-14 **DCC #18: Citadel of the Demon Prince:** Hearing of the PCs' might, his Holiness, the Bishop of the Shining Lance, sends a secret agent, Renshai the Cunning, to meet with the PCs. Renshai, the Bishop's master spy, has uncovered a plot to bring demonic horror into the world. His Holiness begs a boon of the PCs,

asking them to investigate this wicked plot – and put to the sword whatever fiend is behind it.

14-15 **DCC #15: Lost Tomb of the Sphinx Queen:** Taking to the open sea once more, the PCs cross the Lirean Sea to the Great Desert to the south, where rumors lead them to a lost tomb from a long-forgotten empire.

14-16 **DCC #32: The Golden Palace of Zahadran:** Striking out to explore the legendary Lostlands, the PCs uncover a magically sealed dome concealing an ancient, golden palace.

Adventure Path 3: Legends of the North

Levels Adventure

0 **DCC #0: Legends are Made, not Born:** An ogre is terrorizing the town of Dundraville. Six brave citizens, mere peasants, band together with a plan to put an end to the evil ogre's villainy!

1-3 **DCC #28: Into the Wilds:** Seeking their fortunes on the open road, the PCs strike out for the wild borderlands. There they come upon Wildsgate, a frontier keep beset by a terrible curse. Fame and fortune await those courageous enough to venture into the threatening Wilds.

3-5 **DCC #3: The Mysterious Tower:** Fate leads the young heroes east, to the foot of a mysterious tower protected by ancient spells. Investigating a wizard's tower is never easy, but survivors might just return with long-hidden treasures.

4-6 **DCC #17: Legacy of the Savage Kings:** Leaving the mysterious tower, the PCs are met by Venderlos the Green, a druid in service of secret masters. Venderlos, having heard of the PCs' prowess, has come to ask a boon of the PCs. A foul blight has infected the Great Swamp, corrupting the swamp's inhabitants and threatening settlements and forests downstream. Will the PCs investigate and cure this foul disease?

7-9 **DCC #17.5: War of the Witch Queen:** Emerging triumphant from the Great Swamp, the PCs track the fleeing Witch Queen back to her stinking demesne. There, in vaults hidden deep beneath the earth, they put an end to her wicked schemes.

7-9 **DCC #19: The Volcano Caves:** Traveling west on their trek back to civilization, the heroes encounter strange rumors surrounding the mysterious Mount Rolnith. Investigating, the PCs discover that the dormant volcano is not all it seems. In the abandoned study of a long-vanished wizardress, the PCs find a map leading to...

10 **DCC #30: Vault of the Dragon Kings:** Leaving the ruined Mount Rolnith, the PCs venture deeper into the Frosteye Mountains, in search of the legendary Vault of the Dragon Kings.

9-11 **DCC #25: The Dread Crypt of Srihoz:** Returning from the Vault, the PCs come across rumors leading to windswept cliffs and the crypt of an ancient evil.

9-11 **DCC #12: The Blackguard's Revenge:** Upon their return from the Dread Crypt, the PCs receive a summons from Turoch Mas, Overlord of Ternyziem. The ruler tells the PCs of the Cloister of the Ordocar, an order of paladins that keep watch over the north. The order is under attack by an army of undead. Can the PCs reach the monastery in time to save the paladins?

11-13 **DCC #12.5: Iron Crypt of the Heretics:** Though the Cloister of the Ordocar has been saved, the source of the undead army yet remains. Tracking the army back to the Iron Crypt of the Heretics, PCs must do battle with a nigh-invulnerable menace.

15 **DCC #13: Crypt of the Devil Lich:** The Ebon Egg destroyed, the PCs deliver the Iron Crypt's magical keys to the Monastery of the Dawning Sun. Upon their arrival, they realize that a horrible tragedy has taken place....

Appendix I
DCC Index

This master index lists every place, deity, NPC, spell, object, monster, and organization that has appeared in a Dungeon Crawl Classics adventure module. The index does not include this *GM's Guide* or the *Gazetteer*, but does include every DCC up through the two included in this box. You can use this index to assist in finding adventures to use in your Áereth campaign, whether to match back to the geographic regions where your heroes are traveling, or to tie into NPCs that they have met.

The index is organized alphabetically. The category of each entry (e.g., NPC, monster, etc.) appears after the entry, followed by a number indicating which DCC the entry appears in.

A Soldier's Manual (Object) 26
Aaron Gannu (NPC) 27
Abollar (template) (Monster) 29
Abylos (Place) 23
Abyssal Wolf (Monster) 22
Acid Blood (Spell) 25
Adelaide Bomquis (NPC) 34
Ageta (NPC) 22
Ahandar (NPC) 33
Ahura Mazda (Deity) 32
Akkad (Place) 29
Akyani (Monster) 19
Alachakah (NPC) 33
Alasotur (NPC) 29
Albrecht Skullshank (NPC) 14
Alexander Cresh (NPC) 20
Alexander Montcrief (NPC) 7
Alizio's Book of Adventurers, Vol. VII (Object) 21
Ambroshea Trades (Place) 12
Amokra (NPC) 17.5
Amplify (Spell) 22
Amplify, Greater (Spell) 22
Amulet of Restored Glory (Object) 29
Anathaema Eagle (Monster) 5
Ancilith (NPC) 28
Andrew Vendi (NPC) 33
Angel Effigy (Monster) 18
Angra Mainyu (Deity) 32
Angrabeg's Commanding Eye (Object) 4
Animated Mass Pyre (Monster) 34
Ankharet the Queen (Deity) 15
Anselm (NPC) 5
Anthuria (NPC) 5.5
Anvil of Gyr (Object) 28
Anwar Fadain (NPC) 30
Apketh (NPC) 15
Aquarran (Monster) 19
Archbridge (Place) 1
Arden (NPC) 20
Arden Brightheart (NPC) 14
Ardishir the Magnificent (NPC) 32
Argalis (Place) 21, 22
Ari (NPC) 29
Ari'Al-nuk (NPC) 23
Aristemis (Deity) 12
Armos Plowman (NPC) 29
Aronarg (NPC) 29
Arovarel (Place) 13, 29
Arozza Stormbringer (NPC) 21, 22
Ars Malefice (Object) 17
Arsev ben Traiga (NPC) 15
Ascomoid (Monster) 26
Ash Guardian (Monster) 25
Asha Vahishta (Object) 32
Audun Egillsdottir (NPC) 29
Aurora Pass (Place) 26
Aurumvorax (Monster) 26
Austis Duframe (NPC) 12
Avatar Guards (Monster) 33
Axebury (Place) 5.5
Azi Dahaka (NPC) 32
Azubal (NPC) 28
Azurak ("Titan's Fury") (Object) 5
Back Alley Clah (NPC) 24
Bag of Endless Rats (Object) 14
Bagosh (NPC) 29
Bahdros (NPC) 22
Bakra (NPC) 17
Baldr (Deity) 29
Balti the Sage (NPC) 25
Barak (NPC) 7
Baraz Mahk (NPC) 2
Barbed Javelins (Weapon) 28
BargÏl (Deity) 8
Barracuda (Monster) 4
Barren Hills (Place) 15, 29
Barrowdown (Place) 29
Bastel Branwhip (NPC) 12
Bay of Many Sorrows (Place) 29
Bayard (NPC) 29
Bazaar of Quaysarria (Place) 32
Beastmen (NPC) 35A
Beasts of the Northlands (Object) 26
Bed of Health (Object) 3
Beeton (Place) 29
Behmanesh (NPC) 32
Belross Busex (NPC) 29
Bendel Llandeyr (NPC) 29
Berk (NPC) 0
Bezentaine (Object) 19
Black Dougal (NPC) 12.5
Black Elgor (NPC) 33
Black Pearl (Object) 29
Black Samarkin (NPC) 35B
Black Son (demon) (Deity) 18
Blackburn (NPC) 24
Blackened Pearl of Ages (Object) 14
Blackspine (NPC) 11
Blessings-Be (Place) 14
Blight Blades (Object) 17
Blighted Helm (Object) 17
Blister Beetle, Giant (Monster) 29
Blood Boulder (Monster) 21
Blood Coral (Object) 24
Blood Elemental (Spell) 25
Blood Hawk (Monster) 26
Blood Leech Swarm (Monster) 35B
Blood Whisker (NPC) 14
Bloodlust (Spell) 25

Bloodthorn Vine (Monster) 35A
Bloody Jack Dascombe (NPC) 4
Blubberbank (Place) 24
Boat Hook (Weapon) 29
Bobugbubilz (Deity) 13
Bogie Boys (Organization) 24
Bogris (NPC) 29
Boil Blood (Spell) 25
Bolts of Bedevilment (Spell) 20
Bone Jelly (Monster) 24
Bone Swarm (Monster) 13
Book of Bargúl (Object) 8
Borderlands (Place) 17
Braziers of Necromantic Guile (Object) 13
Breakers (Organization) 29
Breg (NPC) 20
Bromhandle (NPC) 34
Bronwyn (NPC) 7
Brother Aelris Llandeyr (NPC) 29
Brother Mikolas (NPC) 13
Brother Vinetto (NPC) 29
Bruzbid (NPC) 26
Cairvos (Place) 22
Calodek (NPC) 22
Camber Sorethin (NPC) 8
Canticle of the Damned (Object) 13
Capotztic (NPC) 16
Captain Argun (NPC) 28
Captain Balthew (NPC) 29
Captain Esterman Hempstrong (NPC) 29
Captain Grimhook (NPC) 29
Captain Jakob the Leper (NPC) 29
Captain Jared Goldtooth (NPC) 7
Carnelloe (Place) 5, 5.5, 29
Carrick (NPC) 24
Carrion Maggot (Monster) 24
Caryatid Column (Monster) 18
Cave Cricket (Monster) 26
Celthor the Slayer (NPC) 35B
Censer of Weal (Object) 26
Chalonna (NPC) 7
Chalychia the Devil-Lich (NPC) 13, 29
Cham Klein (NPC) 34
Chaotor (Deity) 13
Chaplain Korde (NPC) 26
Charp (NPC) 30
Chinvat Bridge (Place) 32
Chundag (NPC) 14
Clan Axefell (Organization) 28
Clan Deepdelve (Organization) 28
Clan Ember (Organization) 28
Clan Firebrand (Organization) 28
Clan Shieldfast (Organization) 28
Clan Wanderer (Organization) 28
Claw of Shifting Tides (Object) 29
Cloister of the Ordocar (Place) 12
Coatlimict (Deity) 4
Codex Ilyium (Object) 0
Coil (Spell) 16
Coin Devourer (Monster) 23
Cold Harbour (Place) 29
Coleus (NPC) 5.5
Comte du Javaire (NPC) 29
Construct, Kith (template) (Monster) 15
Corsair (Class) 29
Cortaigne (Place) 29
Corwin (NPC) 7
Cosmic Eggs (Object) 33
Coyopultec (NPC) 4
Crazy Klina (NPC) 24
Create Vampire (Spell) 25
Create Vampire Spawn (Spell) 25
Cresh Manor (Place) 20
Criestine Colonies (Place) 16
Criestine Empire (Place) 4, 16, 29
Crimson Ooze (Monster) 26
Crooknek (NPC) 29
Crown of Sett (Object) 17.5
Crown of Wulfrun (Object) 28
Crowngate (Place) 29
Cruel Justice (Object) 5
Crypt of Srihoz (Place) 25
Crypticus (Deity) 11
Crystal Shrine (Place) 29
Crystallis (Object) 29
Cuezpalcuanni (NPC) 16
Cult of the Broken Word (Organization) 18
Cult of the Forgotten Word (Organization) 33
Cybel (Object) 20
Cyrilla (NPC) 7
Dae Shar (NPC) 14
Daeobelinus (Monster) 20
Daeva (subtype) (Monster) 32
Dagger of Souls (Object) 18
Daras the Bold (NPC) 26
Darby Blist (NPC) 29
Dark Valerian (Object) 5
Darkenfold Forest (Place) 29
Darsov Erikson (NPC) 6
Darston “Dart” Isles (NPC) 12
Dawnfast (Object) 25
Deadeye the Imp (NPC) 14
Deadwood Treant (Monster) 10
Decapus (Monster) 26
Demesne of Baba Yazoth (Place) 17.5
Demi-gorgon (template) (Monster) 15
Demon, Aeshma (Monster) 18
Demon, Cambion (Monster) 18
Demon, Daraka (Monster) 18
Demon, Gharros (Monster) 18
Demon, Shadow (Monster) 22
Demon, Vapor (Monster) 14
Demonic Knight (Monster) 22
Denin Crob (NPC) 29
Dennel Batharda (NPC) 29
Deryn the Black (NPC) 30
Desiderius Merope (NPC) 29
Desk of Concentration (Object) 3
Desolation’s Glamour (Spell) 15
Devil Fish (Monster) 19
Devil Lizard (Monster) 20
Dewey’s Bookshelf (Object) 3
Diamond Carceperis (Object) 12
Diann the Bard (NPC) 25
Dire Polar Bear (Monster) 30
D’Lai Clan (Organization) 22
Doll of Sacrifice (Object) 28
Donner Llandeyr (NPC) 29
Doomtwitch Zombie (template) (Monster) 30
Dorean Llandeyr (NPC) 29
Dorkell (NPC) 29
Dorn Bronzethegn (NPC) 5.5
Draco Faerus (NPC) 12.5
Dracolisk (Monster) 18
Dracomorph (template) (Monster) 30
Dragon Ether (Object) 30
Dragon-blood (template) (Monster) 6
Dragon-kin (template) (Monster) 6
Dragon-kith (Spell) 6
Dragonspire Mountains (Place) 26
Dread Chathless (NPC) 18
Dread Ghost (template) (Monster) 30
Dread Spectre (template) (Monster) 30
Dread Watcher (NPC) 14
Dripping Temple (Place) 29
Drow, Aquatic (Monster) 29
Duchess of Domination (Deity) 29
Duergar Axe-hammer (Object) 5
Dundraville (Place) 0
Dünerain Mountains (Place) 14
Durbin (NPC) 0
Dust Brother (Monster) 23, 29
D’Varr (NPC) 22
Easy Chair of Penmanship (Object) 3
Ebon Egg (Object) 12.5
Edith Lough (NPC) 29
Efferam (NPC) 33
Egg of Autumn (Object) 29
Egg of Spring (Object) 29
Egg of Summer (Object) 29
Egg of Winter (Object) 29
Einaar (NPC) 29
Elemental (template) (Monster) 15
Elemental Plane of Fire (Place) 19
Elemental, Plague Tar (Monster) 5
Elgith (NPC) 29
Elianora D’Lai (NPC) 22
Elmot Kinfeld (NPC) 29
Emery Latigo (NPC) 33
Emperor Crab (Deity) 29
Empyrean Ocean (Place) 29
Erasmus Lore (NPC) 0
Erengoth (NPC) 22
Erik Frause (NPC) 29
Erol Shortshanks (NPC) 7
Euthaskia the Deceiver (NPC) 15
Ewan Treborne (NPC) 24
Exloe Burke (NPC) 33
Exploding Gem (Object) 26

Eye of Osirus (Object) 5
Eye of Tsathzar (Object) 35A
Eyjolfr (NPC) 29
Eztenqui Jungle (Place) 16
Fair Haven (Place) 7, 29
Fairweather (Place) 14
Fantastical Flying Beasts (Object) 26
Farguul's Fiery Finger (Object) 30
Farsis Llandeyr (NPC) 29
Father Alnwick (NPC) 29
Father Motter (NPC) 28
Fatty Blue (NPC) 20
Feasting (Monster) 20
Feldspar the Overseer (NPC) 33
Feodol Batharda (NPC) 29
Fereonte (Place) 16
Ferimax Ularaboo (NPC) 20
Feron "Blackwand" Tanerale (NPC) 35B
Fikk (NPC) 31
Finley's Eye (Object) 33
Fire Snake (Monster) 19
Firefiend (Monster) 18
Flame Paragon (template) (Monster) 30
Flayed Horror (Monster) 29
Flesh to Blood (Spell) 25
Fob Renault (NPC) 10
Foegar (NPC) 13
Foehammer Spires (Place) 28
Forbear the Smith (NPC) 1
Fraedok Hammerfell (NPC) 22
Freehold Thieves Guild (Organization) 17
Freeport (Place) 20
Fresk (NPC) 20
Frogroth (NPC) 0
From Potters Field (Object) 24
Frosteye Mountains (Place) 30
Fungal Mound (Monster) 29
Gaeran Hartson (NPC) 29
Gaff (Weapon) 29
Gar Ebal (NPC) 5
Garland's Fork (Place) 10, 29
Gas Spore (Monster) 26
Gaunt (Monster) 29
Gavuhn Donnell (NPC) 6
Gaze of the Basilisk (Spell) 16
Gefford Azimier (NPC) 33
Ger the Fighter (NPC) 25
Gilles Bier (NPC) 29
Gloomveil (Place) 8
Glorian (NPC) 3
Gnarga, King of the West (NPC) 30
Gnomish Airships (Object) 8
Gnomish Firearms (Object) 8
Godratt the Wise (NPC) 32
Golden Auroch (Object) 29
Golem, Amber (Monster) 25
Golem, Coin (Monster) 13
Golem, Ice (Monster) 19
Golem, Tablet (Monster) 23
Golem, Wizard (Monster) 29
Gondra (NPC) 21
Goren Bloodshaft (NPC) 11
Gorgimera (Monster) 18
Gorhan (Deity) 12
Gorson, the Blood Duke (NPC) 33
Gorung (Monster) 26
Gorwogijiro Gonejethis (NPC) 29
Gown of Allure (Object) 29
Graah (NPC) 17
Grave (NPC) 12
Great Serpent (Deity) 29
Great Swamp (Place) 17, 29
Grendel Knossos (NPC) 29
Grettir (NPC) 29
Grimmur (NPC) 29
Grishnaz the imp (NPC) 4
Grog (NPC) 7
Grussk (NPC) 30
Gudmundr (NPC) 29
Gurnard's Head (Place) 5
Gurt (NPC) 0
G'zogah (NPC) 1
Hadler's Gap (Place) 2
Haedor Hammerfell (NPC) 22
Half-Giant (template) (Monster) 30
Halifa (NPC) 22
Hallrbjorn (NPC) 29
Hammerfell Clan (Organization) 22
Hang Glider (Object) 29
Hared Daen (NPC) 29
Harnaw (NPC) 29
Harpoon Urchin (Monster) 19
Haverthold Asylum (Place) 34
Hb'kir (NPC) 30
He Who Is Fear And Righteous Might (Deity) 33
Headmaster Beaulibre (NPC) 33
Helena Dunraith (NPC) 29
Hellmoth (Monster) 18
Hellscarab Swarm (Monster) 15
Hellthorn (Monster) 18
Hengis (NPC) 29
Henry Crofter (NPC) 24
Heresy of Honor (Object) 12.5
Heresy of Mercy (Object) 12.5
Heresy of the Good War (Object) 12.5
Heresy of Truth (Object) 12.5
Hethvarag, King of the South (NPC) 30
Hilto Foibald (NPC) 28
Holger Kurtz (NPC) 24
Hollow One (Monster) 23
Hollow Spawn (Monster) 23
Holst Stoltsfad (NPC) 18
Honorus (Deity) 14
Hornauer (NPC) 5
House Cadryenne (Organization) 8, 29
House Ereluc (Organization) 12.5
House Faerus (Organization) 12.5
House Llandeyr (Organization) 29
House Malian (Organization) 29
Hroaldr (NPC) 29
Hrumeth (NPC) 15
Hubert Reichfort (NPC) 29
Huelga (NPC) 10
Iaha (NPC) 16
Iasmini (NPC) 24
Iborsum Shatter-fist (NPC) 6
Icy Creature (template) (Monster) 30
Id Ooze (template) (Monster) 30
Idruma (NPC) 31
Ikammanen (NPC) 29
Ikim Vaas (NPC) 34
Ildavir (Deity) 35A
Ilquot (Deity) 29
Immolius (NPC) 19
Immun-drac (NPC) 13
Impaler (Monster) 26
Improved Reduce Person (Spell) 11
Incense of Displacement (Object) 29
Indra Daeva (Monster) 32
Infected (template) (Monster) 29
Inphidian, Cobra-Back (Monster) 16
Instruments of Maddening Cacophany (Object) 23
Iron Crypt of the Heretics (Place) 12, 12.5
Ironflow River (Place) 26
Isle of Faroe (Place) 29
Isle of Tlahuaco (Place) 16
Itlapal (Object) 16
Jadis Wren (NPC) 22
Jarson Tender (NPC) 14
Jengenritz (NPC) 13
Jessa Smiles (NPC) 29
Jingo (NPC) 29
Jingo's Travelling Circus (Organization) 29
John Mossborn (NPC) 29
Jonah Skutle (NPC) 29
Jorah Silverhand (NPC) 16
Jornal (NPC) 29
Jumar Starshine (NPC) 29
Justicia (Deity) 13, 35B
Kaldal (NPC) 28
Kali (NPC) 8
Kampfult (Monster) 26
Kang ("Mercy") (Object) 5
Katachek (NPC) 18
Kay Mossborn (NPC) 5.5
Kayle Braggin (NPC) 8
Kazok-Ilthor (NPC) 29
Keeper of the Ways (NPC) 30
Kelborne Selbrei (NPC) 8
Kelemen the Gentle (NPC) 18
Kerwin Krell (NPC) 0
Khetira (NPC) 13
Khonsurian Empire (Place) 15
Khubsheth the Prophet (NPC) 15
Kih-koth (NPC) 35A
King of the North (NPC) 30
King's Highway (Place) 28, 29
Kinhul (NPC) 26

Klaklin (Monster) 19
Klaklin, Soldier (Monster) 19
Knag'rr the Finder (NPC) 15
Knights of the Ordocar (Organization) 12.5
Kolaracht (NPC) 10
Koldavis (NPC) 16
Kolgot (NPC) 28
Korg (NPC) 20
Kos (NPC) 28
Kostkorian (Monster) 30
Kreeasi (NPC) 30
Krklkkrkl (NPC) 13
Kuga (NPC) 10
Kyleth (NPC) 17
Kyleth the Witch-Queen (NPC) 17.5
Ladman Llandeyr (NPC) 29
Lady Aborn (NPC) 28
Lady Arabella (NPC) 11
Lady Elisabeth Pendour (NPC) 5
Lady Shadron (NPC) 12.5
Laeon River (Place) 23
Lagos (Deity) 26, 29
Lake Shadefell (Place) 29
Larenz Llandeyr (NPC) 29
Lares (Deity) 29
Larissa Batharda (NPC) 29
Lassoo (Monster) 19
Lastever (Place) 26
Laurossil Cadryenne (NPC) 8
Lava Creep (Monster) 8
Lawrence Gannu (NPC) 1
Leashstone (Object) 18
Lerrza Mahk (NPC) 2
Lessian Thrivolt (NPC) 29
Liah (NPC) 28
Lieux-Claren (Place) 16
Lirean Sea (Place) 29
Living Spirit (template) (Monster) 21
Living Tear (Monster) 23
Llandeyr Mausoleum (Place) 29
Llewellyn (NPC) 7
Lodbrag the Ogre (NPC) 2
Lodril (NPC) 35B
Logosan D'Lai (NPC) 22
Loki (Deity) 29
Loo (NPC) 20
Lord Arnost (NPC) 29
Lord Braxus (NPC) 13
Lord Duncan Merriweather (NPC) 0
Lord McDurmott (NPC) 21, 22
Lord Tulwar (NPC) 0
Lorethel (NPC) 29
Lower Innis (Place) 29
Luc Stethenfield (NPC) 34
Macuahuitl (Object) 4
Mad Savant (template) (Monster) 30
Maddening Scream (Spell) 20
Maeve (NPC) 17
Magic Lamps (Object) 3
Malachai's Magical Doors (Object) 22
Malchor (NPC) 11
Maligance (NPC) 33
Malotoch (Deity) 5, 13, 28
Manbreaker (Object) 30
Mantari (Monster) 26
Mar (NPC) 29
Marc Stethenfield (NPC) 34
Mare Stone (Object) 24
Mari Kell (NPC) 24
Maris Zahn (NPC) 29
Marquis de Sablieur (NPC) 29
Marris Llandeyr (NPC) 29
Marshak the Reever (NPC) 28
Masjed-al-Talba (NPC) 32
Mask of the Shadowcat (Object) 35B
Master Bolo (NPC) 28
Master Chief Lorenz Eunni (NPC) 12
Meelkor (Deity) 3
Melisine d'Aurielle (NPC) 16
Melisine dÍAurielle (NPC) 16
Menoden (NPC) 29
Menoden's Tower (Place) 29
Meraph the Golden (NPC) 15
Mergusi Kefon (NPC) 35B
Merry Bastards (Organization) 29
Metadilos (Monster) 29
Micohuani (Object) 16
Mikal (NPC) 20
Millers Court (Place) 24
Mirror of Physical Aptitude (Object) 29
Mite (Monster) 26
Moddar Vich (NPC) 29
Monastery of the Dawning Sun (Place) 13
Monks of the Saint (Organization) 12.5
Moonleaper (Object) 33
Moran Selbrei (NPC) 8
Moray eel (Monster) 4
Mortimer Mortenson (NPC) 7
Mother Green's Rest (Place) 18
Mount Icpitl (Place) 16
Mount Rolnith (Place) 19
Mountain King (NPC) 17
Mountain Troglodyte (Monster) 26
Mourning Cave (Place) 14
Mummy Dragon (template) (Monster) 13
Myerlinda (NPC) 33
Myna (Deity) 0
Myrkjartan (NPC) 30
Narrimunâth (Deity) 1
Narzy Hilspek (NPC) 1
Nazost the Scrivener (NPC) 28
N'dereg (NPC) 17
Necklack of Fangs (Object) 23
Necoctene (Monster) 16
Nicrotis (NPC) 29
Niflheim (Place) 29
Nimlurun (Deity) 1
Ninurta (Deity) 29
Nira Bavisar (NPC) 6
Nockmort (NPC) 10
Noosem (NPC) 33
Northlands (Place) 17.5
Nullsport (Place) 29
Nunsod Llandeyr (NPC) 29
Nykolus Rasslov (NPC) 29
Obitu-que (demon) (Deity) 17
Oblivion Incense (Object) 18
Octagon Gauntlet (Object) 33
Oculum Infernae (Object) 14
Oddr (NPC) 29
Odin (Deity) 29
Odolan (NPC) 14
Ograk, King of the East (NPC) 30
Olive Slime (Monster) 26
Omihuictli (the Bone Blade) (Object) 16
Oolgluur (NPC) 30
Open Hearth (Place) 29
Orden (Place) 26
Osirus (Deity) 5
Oswald Reichfort (NPC) 29
Oszkar the Black (NPC) 18
Outer Gods (Deity) 2
Oz (NPC) 13
Painshrieker (Monster) 29
Parhokk (Place) 2
Pech (Monster) 26
Pelagia (Deity) 7, 29
Phycomid (Monster) 26
Plague Chalice (Object) 29
Plague Wight (Monster) 29
Plantnip Candle (Object) 29
Pleniere (Place) 16
Pomatomus (NPC) 7
Porthmeor (Place) 24
Possessed Object (template) (Monster) 34
Potion of Longevity (Object) 23
Praxis Tome (Object) 33
Prester "Trapmaster" Ungart (NPC) 35B
Professor Yegaa (NPC) 33
Prophecy of Tremaste (Object) 29
Prophet's Leap (Place) 15
Punjar (Place) 35B
Pwalg (Monster) 20
Pyraxus (NPC) 6
Qi ("Focus") (Object) 5
Quast (NPC) 0
Quill of Dictation (Object) 35B
Quintoo (NPC) 33
Radiant Boy (Monster) 20
Radmanish (NPC) 32
Rain of Poison (Spell) 8
Rama Savitri (NPC) 6
Rassylov's Journal (Object) 29
Rathulagon (NPC) 26
Razor Wire Net (Object) 14
Realta Llandeyr (NPC) 29
Red Annie (NPC) 12
Red Wisdom (NPC) 18
Redcap (Monster) 24
Redhorn Hill (Place) 29

Redtooth Troll (Monster) 27
Reichfort Family (Organization) 29
Reizravel (NPC) 12
Relsa Llandeyr (NPC) 29
Renald Stethenfield (NPC) 34
Renna the Midwife (NPC) 1
Reswythe (NPC) 35B
Revenant (template) (Monster) 20
Rezapyros (NPC) 33
Rez-zomar the Goblin Chieftan (NPC) 1
River Saedre (Place) 28
Roe Ramenik (NPC) 33
Rogroakbub the Trollfiend (NPC) 13
Rook (Monster) 5
Roost Dretch (Monster) 5.5
Root of Malotoch (Object) 5.5
Rootshaker (NPC) 10
Rosemergy (NPC) 5.5
Rot Grub (Monster) 26
Rumatugtug (NPC) 33
Rune Stone of Baldr (Sorrow) (Object) 29
Rune Stone of Creation (Blessing) (Object) 29
Rune Stone of Fury (Strength) (Object) 29
Rune Stone of Rebirth (Hope) (Object) 29
Rune Stone of Wisdom (Vision) (Object) 29
Rune Stones of Odin (Object) 29
Rust Spider (Monster) 29
Sacrificial Guards (Monster) 33
Saedor's Guide to Constructs and Living Spirits (Object) 21
Saena Tree (Monster) 32
Saint's Blood Mountains (Place) 12, 12.5
Samuka (NPC) 18
Sand Blast (Spell) 29
Sanguine Stone (Object) 13
Sanguiomancy (School of Magic) 25
Sathsar (NPC) 26
Savage Quenn (NPC) 29
Scepter of Wildsgate (Object) 28
Scorpion Man (Monster) 23
Screaming Skull (Monster) 22
Sczee'zeeian (NPC) 33
Sea of Desperation (Place) 16
Sentinel of Cortaigne (Place) 29
Sepia Snake (Monster) 16
Seraph, grig (NPC) 29
Sergio the Vizier (NPC) 28
Serpentfury (Monster) 23
Serrek Tarn (NPC) 2
Serrenna Valuois (NPC) 1
Sewer Rat (Monster) 24
Sezrakan (NPC) 29
Sha Abbas (NPC) 32
Shadowstar (Object) 13
Shaduar (Monster) 16
Shae'Mae (NPC) 7
Sharktooth (NPC) 24
Sharyn-Ella (NPC) 0
Shed Form (Spell) 16
Shell Shurikens of Crushing (Object) 24
Shuderief (NPC) 10
Shul (Deity) 23
Sickle Rock Grove (Place) 5.5
Silverton (Place) 1
Sir Galwaith (NPC) 35A
Sir Gareth Porthglaze (NPC) 5.5
Skeggi (NPC) 29
Skr'thor (NPC) 7
Skulltop Hillock (Place) 0
Skunge Longtooth (NPC) 29
Slash Wing (Monster) 26
Slate, the intelligent chalkboard (Object) 13
Slazzik Balefire (NPC) 2
Sle'astakk (NPC) 30
Slime Zombie (template) (Monster) 26
Slithering Ooze (template) (Monster) 30
Slysska (NPC) 30
Snake Staff of Baba Yazoth (Object) 17.5
Snapdragon Swarm (Monster) 29
Sodersund (NPC) 28
Sodoutym (Deity) 28
Soleth (Deity) 31
Solgem Fleetfoot (NPC) 6
Solom Quor (NPC) 29
Soloman Black (NPC) 29
Soranna (NPC) 19
Soranna's Universal Elemental Weapon (Object) 19
Sorsha Llandeyr (NPC) 29
Sothulth (Deity) 26
Soul Cauldron (Object) 18
Soul Engine (Object) 18
Soul'daem (Object) 35B
Soulgrave (Place) 1, 27
Soulstone (Object) 18
Southern Seas (Place) 24
Spellsnake (Monster) 29
Spirit of Uru-nuk (Monster) 23
Squid, Land (Monster) 29
Srihoz (Heironeous Uliran Theopal) (NPC) 25
Sslithia (NPC) 7
Ssustre (NPC) 26
Staff of Water Control (Object) 21
Starys Malian (NPC) 29
Static Bat (Monster) 29
Stealth Sword (Object) 26
Stevrock Stormbringer (NPC) 22
Stink-fire Beetle (Monster) 29
Stone of Translation (Object) 29
Stonefriend (Object) 28
Stoneglass Mirror (Object) 31
Stoneshaper Masons (Organization) 29
Stormbringer Castle (Place) 21
Stormbringer Mountain (Place) 21
Stozari Stormbringer (NPC) 21, 22
Straitjacket (Object) 34
Strike of the Cobra (Spell) 16
Stygoth (NPC) 17
Sumer (Place) 29
Summerhold (Place) 29
Sunscratch (NPC) 30
Sute Lore (NPC) 0
Swarm Shuriken (Object) 35B
Swarm, Fine Fire Elemental (Monster) 19
Sword of Barons (Object) 28
Sword of Conviction (Object) 14
Tainted (template) (Monster) 29
Takaritha (NPC) 7
Ta'kira'kerymor ("Sword-breaker") (Object) 5
Talisman of the Great Beast (Object) 33
Tan Mold (Monster) 32
Tarfoot (NPC) 14
Tarik One-Arm (NPC) 0
Tarn Tetherknot (NPC) 11
Tarrak (NPC) 5
Taskmaster Broggab (NPC) 14
Tayanna Serrengriff (NPC) 29
Tazex (NPC) 31
Tecoacualli (NPC) 16
Tellakerry Clan (Organization) 29
Tentacled Horror (Monster) 16
Terisin (NPC) 29
Tharaxis (NPC) 19
The Abyss (Place) 18
The Book of Seven Serpents (Object) 16
The Castellan (NPC) 30
The Champion (NPC) 25
The Forlorn Maid (NPC) 17.5
The Great Beast (NPC) 33
The Greater Keys (Object) 15
The Lesser Keys (Object) 15
The Maw (Place) 17
The mysterious white tower (Place) 3
The Outriders (Organization) 28
The Shadowcrown (Object) 15
The Speaker to Dust (NPC) 15
The Star Arms (Object) 5
The Stepstone (Object) 15
The Watch (Organization) 28
The Wilds (Place) 28
Thedric Branch (NPC) 29
Theland (NPC) 26
Thelias (NPC) 30
Thelport (Place) 29
Thieves' Puzzle Box, Lesser (Object) 35B
Thistle (NPC) 14
Thor (Deity) 29
Thormyr (Deity) 26
Thornblood (Monster) 14
Thornswild Wood (Place) 35A
Thulsa, Stone of Scribes (Object) 23
Thurlo (NPC) 24

T'Klack (NPC) 14
Tlilcohuatl (NPC) 16
Toadspawn (template) (Monster) 13
Tomb of Nicrotis (Place) 29
Tome of the Black Tongue (Object) 13
Tor Barnabas (Blubberbank) (NPC) 29
Torc of Illusions (Object) 15
Torgo the Eye Gouger (NPC) 17
Tormul Serrengriff (NPC) 29
Tororthun (Deity) 8
Torvok Blackspear (NPC) 16
Toth-Ror (NPC) 35A
Totoki (NPC) 21
Touch of Madness (Spell) 20
Tower of the Black Pearl (Place) 29
Transport Obelisk (Object) 33
Tredoksule (Place) 21
True Death (Object) 13
Tsathzar Rho (NPC) 2
Tud (NPC) 29
Tusk (NPC) 7
Tzopiloani (Monster) 16
Ugloshti (NPC) 29
Ul Khaz'kul (Place) 23
Ul-Alam'inic (NPC) 23
Undine (template) (Monster) 24
Unuul (Language) 23
Ur (Place) 29
Urggar (NPC) 26
Urkallan Hills (Place) 2
Urudu River (Place) 23
Uru'Nuk (Place) 23
Valinus (NPC) 13
Vam Doadson (NPC) 34
Vampiric Bloom (Monster) 25
Vault of the Dragon Kings (Place) 30
Velth (NPC) 29
Venaku (NPC) 29
Venom Zombie (Monster) 8
Verdivis (NPC) 31
Verdivis' Catacomb (Place) 31
Vespertiliac (Monster) 20
Vestments of Vilim-Zhula (Object) 29
Vik (NPC) 24
Vile Gate (Object) 20
Vilim-Zhula (Deity) 29
Virkus (NPC) 14
Volosizz (NPC) 19
Voltigeur (Place) 16
Wall of Chill (Spell) 19
Wall of Radiation (Spell) 8
Warded Walls (Spell) 21, 22
Wardrobe of Cleansing (Object) 3
War-worm (Monster) 29
War-worm Queen (Monster) 29
War-worm Zombie (template) (Monster) 29
Wastes of Zamon (Place) 17.5
Weeping Forest (Place) 29
Weird, Lightning (Monster) 22
Welwyn (Place) 11
Westphalen School (Place) 33
Whisker (Object) 29
Whitefang Stronghold (Place) 26
Wildsgate (Place) 28
Will Dunraith (NPC) 29
Winds and Weather (Object) 26
Witch Grass (Monster) 21
Withers (Place) 33
Woodroe (Place) 18
Wrack (Monster) 18
Wulfrun (NPC) 28
Xander (NPC) 5
Xayactl Bay (Place) 16
Xiuhcoatl (NPC) 16
Xogg (NPC) 22
Xulmec (Place) 16
Xulmec city-states (Place) 4
Yasif Cazül, the Lord of Thieves (NPC) 35B
Ydak (NPC) 31
Zabator (NPC) 33
Zadok (NPC) 22
Zahadran (Place) 32
Zamuk the Swift (Deity) 28
Ziz Ka-Seer (NPC) 19
Zoë (NPC) 13
Zolmik Thiat (NPC) 29
Zolmik's Retreat (Place) 29
Zombifying Gas (Object) 17
Zurvan (Deity) 32

Credits and Afterword

Credits

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Special thanks to the many writers and artists who created the DCC adventures that inspired this world.

Afterword: Mike Ferguson

It's been much fun being able to work on the World of Dungeon Crawl Classics … and a childhood dream come true. Many thanks to the following who made the dream possible:

Joseph, Harley, and Jeff – for making this adventure a grand one indeed.

Laura Ferguson – a great sister, and the one who got me traveling down this road in the first place.

Sue Ferguson – my lovely wife, who humors my obsession with swords and sorcery.

Jonathan Day, John Geoghegan, Eric Mee, Rick Schmidt, and Rich Zeitler – the best gamers a GM could ask for. You guys rule.

And to the memory of Doug Cohen – a great gamer and a fantastic person. Requiescat in pace, my friend.

Afterword: Jeff LaSala

Foremost thanks to my wife, Marisa – Argentine gypsy, mermaid, and a friend to all halflings and kobolds. Thank you for your love and patience, for your much-needed distractions, and for dealing with the real world in those moments when I was in another. You are the bestest, to say the leastest. Never stop looking for your unicorn, okay? For now, I give you Cindy, the baby naga.

Heuristic thanks to my big brother, John – friend, musician, and dork. Thank you for our mutual word snobbery, being a sounding board for concepts and ideas, and for your endless stream of National Geographic lore – some useful, some mere nimiety. I hope to offer you as much assistance in your own oneiric musings and moliminous dreamings.

Symbiotic thanks to Harley Stroh – friend, kindred spirit, and Project Tyrant. Nowhere else have I seen as much energy, enthusiasm, and total geek encouragement as I have in you. Thank you for roping me into this project of gamer retrospection and creative Elysium. Thanks for being that guy at my wedding about whom people later asked, "Who was that masked dancer?"

Heartfelt thanks to Joseph Goodman, for giving me the opportunity to run amuck in the DCC world – I hope you find the Known Realms of Áereth to be worthy of your standards!

Thank you, Mike, for our shared ideas and for *Curse of the Emerald Cobra*, which gave me an excuse to delve into Nahuatl culture.

And nostalgic thanks to my original gaming group: Dan Arney, Chris Nygren, and Steve Simar. Dan, I still can't believe you used your vorpal axe on a fellow PC…

Afterword: Harley Stroh

Certain adventures only come around once.

Like when the grizzled old warrior decides to go after the dragon, and asks who's coming with him. Or when the dark-eyed sorceress slowly surveys the crowd of peasants, waiting for one to step forward and pull the sword from the stone.

Like many, I grew up studying the glossography of Pluffet Smedger the Elder, and listening to stories at the knee of the Old Mage of Shadowdale. I will always remember taking my first tentative steps into the Caves of Chaos, only to vanish down a darkened pit swarming with diseased rats. So when Joseph Goodman asked if I'd oversee the chronicling of Áereth, the world of the Dungeon Crawl Classics, I knew I had been invited on the adventure of a lifetime.

Our source material? Twenty or so (now thirty!) modules written by some of the brightest minds in the business. Immediately we set about extracting all the heroes and villains, monsters and ruins, drawing connections where there were dots, making them up where there were none. What began as a simple compilation quickly grew to an encyclopedic undertaking. Modules were photocopied and highlighted, maps drawn and re-drawn. Notes were taken, backstories written.

Patterns began to emerge.

Of course, not all of the patterns were good. The original Dungeon Crawl Classics were written as one-shot adventures for generic fantasy settings, with oh-so-brilliant settings like the Great Swamp. (What's so great about it?) By the time we came across the Swamp's sister setting, the Great Desert, I demanded a blood oath from the other writers, striking the word Great from their lexicon. As DCC authors, we can be forgiven; after all, when you named a demonic power after an old roommate in graduate school, no one ever dreamed that it would one day be canonized in the official campaign setting … forever.

But then something began to change. Áereth, compiled from the cultural Zeitgeist of classic sword-and-sorcery adventures, began writing itself. Dates started making sense. Old villains returned to overthrow empires, peasants grew into heroes and then legends. Like an ancient dragon stirring from a thousand-year rest, the world came to life.

Here's the secret about Dungeon Crawl Classics: Sure, they look like the old modules of yore; sure, they have the blue ink maps and the fonts we remember. But if nostalgia were all they had to offer, DCC sales would have withered and died after the first year. Far more importantly, they have risk, excitement, and adventure, the crucial ingredients to any good game of D&D.

Now it is nearly midnight. Tomorrow I will forward the manuscript on to Chicago. Is the world finished? Absolutely not. Given another four months, we could write – record – another two hundred pages. But like Gygax taught us all those years ago, games are meant to be played, not perfected. This gazetteer isn't a crystal ball peering into every corner of the world; it's a magic mirror, offering you a glimpse of a world you've never visited but have always known.

Now all that's left is for you to step through.

So take up your broadsword, blow the dust off your spellbook, and saddle the horses. The mailed Kings of the North are calling out your name, demanding an audience. I leave you to give an answer.

—Harley Stroh, February 2006

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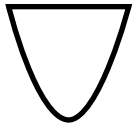
Dungeon Crawl Classics Character Record Sheet

Player's Name _____ **Character's Name** _____

Race _____ **Class** _____ **Level** _____ **Alignment** _____

Speed _____ **XP** _____

Initiative _____ **Spell Save DC** _____



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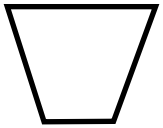

Hit Points

Tch: _____ **Max:** _____

FF: _____ **Nonlethal:** _____

BAB

Melee

2nd Hand

Ranged

Grapple

Strength
Modifier: _____

Dexterity
Modifier: _____

Constitution
Modifier: _____

Intelligence
Modifier: _____

Wisdom
Modifier: _____

Charisma
Modifier: _____

Fort Save

Ref Save

Will Save

Skills & Feats

Equipment & Treasure

Languages & Notes

Spells & Special Abilities

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the
World
of
Áereth
GM's Guide

Dungeon Crawl Classics #35

GM's Guide to the Known Realms

Contents

Introduction 2
Chapter 1: Creation and Early History 4
Chapter 2: Deities, Demigods, and Infernal Powers 16
Chapter 3: Bestiary of the Known Realms 49
Chapter 4: Setting Rules 75
Chapter 5: Rogues' Gallery and Hall of Heroes 97
Chapter 6: Zero-Level Characters 117
Chapter 7: Paths of Adventure 123
Appendix 1: DCC Index 127
Credits and Afterword 133
Legal 135
DCC Character Sheet 136

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Introduction

Welcome to the Known Realms, a world of adventure, arcane secrets, and untold riches, where a sharp sword and a shirt of mail are a warrior's only defense against wicked mages, monstrous hordes, and fierce dragons of yore.

Culled from the pages of an ancient tome, the Known Realms represent the scribes' world simulated by the d20 rule system. Whether the codex is the spurious work of a dark-age madman or a medieval tome of esoteric conjecture will never be known. What is certain is that it provides a wealth of information for the modern gamer.

During the arduous process of translation, concessions were made to fit the Known Realms to the d20 system, but otherwise the spirit and tone of the tome was left unchanged. Until such a time that the lost companion tomes are discovered and translated, it falls to you, the GM, to answer the lingering mysteries and fill in the unknown realms.

A World of High Adventure

The world of Áereth is foremost one of legendary adventure. Noble knights ride to the ends of the earth questing against legendary dragons and wicked warlords. Mighty wizards wage eldritch battle atop high mountain peaks and in the halls of lonely towers. Cunning rogues creep along rooftops of smoky cities, stealing past lethal traps and demonic sentries. Devout priests fight for the common good, bringing freedom to enslaved masses. Fearless adventurers unearth forgotten tombs and plumb the depths of endless caverns, ride at the head of armies, and cast powerful spells that shape the very nature of reality.

The Known Realms are vast. Many of its locales are recorded in the Dungeon Crawl Classic series of adventure modules, but these are only the first, tentative steps into the world of Áereth.

Looking for a shadowy port to sell your ill-gotten loot? Wicked Punjar beckons. Craving high intrigue and backstabbing politics? The Council of Lords awaits your petition. Hungry for the wail of war horns and the crash of armies? The armies of Leherti cry out for your command. Want to carve out your own fief from the untracked wilderness? The wild borderlands call. Eager to sink your glowing blade into the gullet of a dragon and ransack its fabled trove? Look no further. All these adventures and more are contained herein.

While the scribes of the codex outlined their world, it falls to you and your players to bring the Known Realms to life. Bind it to your home campaign, ravage its lands with the march of armies and dragon fire, make its people come alive through the heroics of your players.

Our work with the codex is finished. The legends of Áereth have only begun.

Styles of Play

Just as PCs gain levels and face more challenging puzzles and foes, so too must a campaign world evolve to paint an ever-broader horizon, luring heroes with treasures and ambitions just beyond their reach. As a world, Áereth can accommodate any number of styles of play, ranging from classic dungeon crawl to convoluted court intrigue. GMs need simply hold to a simple rule: Always make the PCs the focus of your world.

With this in mind, consider the following adventure suggestions for your evolving campaign:

Low-level PCs: Beginning and low-level PCs spend their time exploring nearby ruins, working as caravan guards, serving wizened sages, studying beneath noble knights, and fighting in merchant companies. Most settlements in the Northlands are isolated from their neighbors, and are forced to turn to unproven young heroes in times of desperation and need. The PCs might undertake short wilderness journeys, or the GMs may choose to simply assume that PCs begin their adventures at the

entrance of the dungeon. A band of low-level PCs can spend their first few levels simply exploring the surrounding lands, mapping out the wilderness and clearing dungeons and cave complexes of wicked creatures.

Mid-level PCs: Mid-level characters are often heroes who have carved out names for themselves. While not yet legends, they have established themselves as dangerous foes worthy of respect. These adventurers often travel far and wide, exploring the Southlands and Lostlands in the service of kings and regents, secret societies and knighthoods, or simply in the search of greater wealth and power. As renowned heroes, PCs quickly attract the notice of those more powerful than themselves. Some of these powers may choose to recruit the heroes to their noble causes; others may perceive the PCs as threats, and work to eradicate or corrupt the heroes before they grow into powerful threats.

High-level PCs: No longer the servants of emperors, high priests, or guildmasters, high-level PCs are these rulers, conquering existing kingdoms or carving new ones from the wilderness. Gathering wisdom, power, and fame, PCs undertake epic quests, riding at the head of armies, challenging dragons and demons alike. Only the fiercest or most numerous of foes present a challenge to a party of high-level PCs. As living legends, the heroes are responsible for defending their people from threats that can span entire planes. High-level games can also focus on the subtle plots of courtly intrigue, where a single careless phrase can plunge entire nations into war and chaos.

Epic-level PCs: Epic-level PCs can reshape the face of Áereth at their whim, rallying entire races to their cause, or laying waste to whole empires. Epic-level PCs are on the path to becoming minor divine powers and masters of Áereth. At this level, PCs can expect to regularly draw the attention of gods and infernal powers, working either with or against the PCs as suits their moods.

Contained Herein

The Known Realms are comprised of three continents: the Northlands, a collection of isolated kingdoms, faded empires, and majestic forests and mountains; the Southlands, a land of dense jungles and forgotten cities occupied by drakon and the ancient nagas; and the Lostlands, once the cradle of civilization, now a place of fearsome monsters and ancient, sand-swept ruins.

This boxed set contains the following:

Gazetteer of the Known Realms: a reference guide to the three continents, detailing the myriad nations, cultures, and monsters;

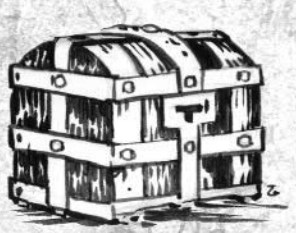
GM's Guide to the Known Realms: the book you hold in your hands, containing secrets and information crucial to running a campaign set in the Known Realms;

Dungeon Crawl Classics: Halls of the Minotaur: an introductory adventure designed to bring 0-level characters to 1st level and beyond;

Dungeon Crawl Classics: Vault of the Thief Lord: a challenging adventure designed for expert players and character levels 4-6, set in the deadly city of Punjar;

Three full-color maps detailing the vast sweep of the Known Realms; and

The Player's Map to the Known Realms, an incomplete map of the world for the players to complete in the course of their adventures.



Chapter 1
Creation and Early History

The summation below is gathered from the creation myths of many of Áereth's religions and cultures. No single church will cite this information in such a concise, comprehensive form, but if one made a painstaking study of the clergies of the Sancturn Pantheon, interviewed disciples of numerous demigods, and consulted scholars of the Triad, one might gather an account similar to the one below.

GMs are encouraged to alter this mythology as they see fit to better accommodate their campaigns. This is merely one possibility regarding the origins of Áereth.

In a formless age measureless to mortals, there arrived a clan of beings that theologians would one day name the Greater Gods. Leading them was the Triad, and the eldest among them was Choranus, the Seer Father and the figurehead of Law. At his side was his equal and consort Ildavir, the Giver of Form, and his brother, Centivus the Shaper. When the Triad and its kin entered the Void, its sole occupant, a being of Chaos known as Zhühn, fled before their luminous presence.

With the help of his children, Choranus began the creation of the world, a place of light, water, and air. He designed laws to govern the course of nature and the powers that could suspend them, setting the stage for impending life. Yet even as the Greater Gods forged this world, Zhühn extended his hands and unmade it, for ever was destruction swifter than creation. Again and again they fashioned their world anew and Zhühn, their Great Enemy, broke it apart. Choranus sought to bring order into the vast expanse, but Zhühn would allow only entropy.

After the Triad took counsel, they welcomed an assemblage of other gods to take part in creation. Most pivotal was the Sancturn Pantheon, divinities who sought refuge from the ruin of their previous home. The Triad granted them their protection and magnified their power. These divinities, later named the Lesser Gods by theologians, were exemplars of good, evil, and neutrality—moralistic ideologies carried over from their former home. Once the Sancturns had settled themselves among the Outer Planes, the Triad invited them to take part in its designs.

With their collective work, Choranus oversaw the construction of a ghostly new world—a place of raw magical convergence suffused with the spirit of nature and the collective power of the Greater and Lesser Gods. Under the direction of Ildavir, the gods gave physical substance to the world by drawing upon the Inner Planes, and Choranus set it spinning within the spiral arrays of the Material Plane.

Though he fought to unmake it, Zhühn's power was outmatched. Dwelling in the corners of his diminishing Void, Zhühn recoiled at the sight of such enduring creation. To him, the existence of anything but the Void itself was a blasphemy, for he was a being of chaos and oblivion and knew only those. Now light and life flourished, spoiling the endless gloom. This new world, having survived the Great Enemy's will to destroy, has come to be known in the current age as Áereth—derived from a phrase in the Old Giant tongue meaning "where we walk."

Seeing it safe from Zhühn's negation, Choranus at last asked Centivus to devise the first creatures to inhabit Áereth. As his brother set to work, the Seer Father and Giver of Form rejoiced at his artistry and lent their skills to his. From the hands of the Triad, many beings entered the world. This was an antediluvian age of legendary beasts, a time when rocs alone soared the skies, krakens swam the depths, and colossal worms bored the earth unchallenged. Ever was Centivus the artist, his divine imagination given free rein to shape new beasts. This he did with the counsel of Ildavir, whose knowledge of nature and balance lent focus to his work. It was she who infused his creations with life and substance, giving each the ability to proliferate its own kind. At last, Choranus decided which would be given sentience, sharp intellect, or the gift of magic.

The three gods continued to create, experimenting with flesh and blood to set a multitude of strange and monstrous creatures free to roam all the lands. From these

beginnings the animal features of the Known Realms find their origin. When Centivus designed the first felines, Choranus marveled again at his brother's skill, and he gave the most powerful among these features like those of he and his consort: fair faces crowned with flowing hair. These became the first sphinxes, and they were graced with wisdom and prescience. The next creatures were serpentine, and Choranus smiled at their colorful, scaled bodies, and he gave them, too, faces like the gods' own. These became the nagas, and they were graced with cunning and a talent for sorcery.

Seeing the need for greater balance in the world, Ildavir began to populate Áereth with a host of lesser forms, taking her inspiration from the great works of Centivus. These became the animals, and they would thrive in all climates and terrains and rule the wild places. From sphinxes, Ildavir created lions and great cats of all varieties. From nagas, she created reptiles and all species of serpents. From rocs, she created birds, and from the great ocean dwellers, she created fish. These new beasts were at first larger than their eventual progeny, and are known in the present world as dire animals.

Then Choranus crafted a race formed fully in the gods' own image. This effort took the form of titans, large of stature and great in strength. Intending the titans to rule over all others, he found that they did not obey the edicts intended for them. They became a race of discord—seeded, perhaps, by the subtle hand of Zhühn—and the titans went their separate ways and withdrew to the mountainous corners of the world. The magic within them adapted their bodies to the regions in which they chose to dwell, and their power slowly declined. They became the giants, lesser forms of the titans. Lost in their own selfish struggles, the giants abandoned their heritage and forsook the gods.

Disappointed in the fallibility of the titans, Choranus turned to Centivus again. He asked him to devise a ruling race, one that perfected on the forms that came before. As his younger brother set to work on these next creations, Choranus delighted at the beauty of their draconic form. Cunning as the nagas, they possessed the strength of titans and the wisdom of sphinxes. Ildavir gave them life in the cradle of a mountain valley, and Choranus gave them sovereign minds. The Seer Father also granted them profound skill with magic that they might shape their civilizations and defend themselves against enemies who would supplant them. These beings were the first dragons.

As the most intelligent creatures on Áereth, and possessing breaths of deadly elemental power, dragons lorded over all others. At their head, Choranus placed four avatars shaped much like the titans but draconic in feature. These were the Dragon Kings, ambassadors of the gods, given the task of relaying the laws of Choranus to the dragons and those in their charge.

At this time, Choranus longed to recreate his attempt with the titans, this time on a smaller, more numerous scale. Taking inspiration from his own family, he created the smaller humanoid races that would serve the dragons in their mighty empire. In the likeness of Ireth, his sagacious, eldest daughter, he fashioned the elves. For Daenthar, his stout and industrious eldest son, Choranus hewed the dwarves. From the image of Poderon, his good-humored, hard-working son, he forged the gnomes. For the harmony of Olidyra, his diminutive, wayward daughter, he conceived the halflings. Foreseeing the eventual rise of these humanoid races, Choranus at last created humans, a people who would embody the virtues—and failings—of all others. One by one, these five races revealed themselves, and they were at first wary of the great beasts that ruled the land. As they increased in number, the intelligent creatures that came before began to contend with them. In time, some adopted the humanoids as a master might foster an apprentice, beginning with the dragons. As intended, the elves, dwarves, gnomes, halflings, and humans became as servitors to the wiser, more powerful dragons.

Watching the works of their superiors, some of the Lesser Gods grew jealous and began to experiment with the powers of creation, giving rise to goblinkind and many others. Hags, harpies, ogres, and trolls numbered among the many monstrous denizens. Affronted by these bastard creations, Ildavir appealed to her consort and his brother. With their approval, Ildavir countered with new creations of her own. Beings such as centaurs, merfolk, satyrs, sea cats, treants, and all things fey came from this time.

The ethics of law and chaos, loyalty and disobedience, were in flux within Áereth. Each race fought for its place in the young world and many refused to bow to the lordship of the Dragon Kings, sovereignty decreed by Choranus himself. Zhühn, seeking to subvert the work of creation, sent forth his mightiest servant, a fallen titan named Cadixtat that the Great Enemy had fostered since that race's birth. Once instrumental in the titans' defiance against the gods, Cadixtat, the most powerful of his kind, now marched across the face of Áereth sewing chaos and disloyalty wherever he went. Empowered with a portion of Zhühn's own anarchic power, even the Dragon Kings dared not challenge him. Unwilling to allow the Great Enemy this heavy-handed stratagem, Choranus sent forth a sentinel of law named Teleus to defend Áereth, imbuing him with some of the Seer Father's own axiomatic power.

The battle between Teleus and Cadixtat spanned the world and carried far into the Reign of Dragons, as the

law of Choranus and the chaos of Zhühn sought to rule the fate of Áereth. This Great Conflict of ideologies, physical, and spiritual power never knew a victor, however, for when Teleus at last disarmed Cadixtat of his Axe of Unmaking, Choranus recalled his champion. Content to allow the absence of both ethical extremes, the Triad commanded the rest of the Greater Gods to stay their influence as well. In their place, they charged the Sancturn Pantheon to watch over the mortal races of Áereth and allow their morals of good, evil, and neutrality to hold sway. The Greater Gods would remain only the distant figureheads of creation.

Unable to exert his power physically upon the world again, Zhühn endeavored to dissolve it slowly, piece by piece, with the patience only a creature of the Void could understand. Though he was great in power, many of the gods of good and evil would forever oppose him.

The time had come for mortals, not gods, to shape the course of the world.

Early History

The Reign of Dragons

From the moment they entered the world, the dragons were lords, and at their head were placed the immortal Dragon Kings. Cast in the likeness of the gods themselves and infused with draconic might, they were paragons of virtue who ruled over the dragons and their great empires. Embodying the elements of fire, lightning, cold, and acid, each was affiliated with a direction of the world itself.

In addition to their roles as rulers, the Dragon Kings served as mediators between the gods and mortals, delivering divine will to Áereth. Under their wisdom, the dragons' dominion flourished during a time of peace and discovery. Many beautiful things were wrought and many magics woven. Mountainous cities were constructed like vast aeries and sprawling temples were raised in swamplands, fertile steppes, and secret valleys. There was no soil on the surface of Áereth that had not felt the talons of a dragon walk upon it.

As the eons passed, the gods began to look to their newer creations, and the influence of the Dragon Kings over their own vassals waned. Sensing their own fading power, they erected the Vault of the Dragon Kings deep within the Frosteye Mountains. It became a haven for dragons who wished to hold onto the glory and virtues that their empire once held dear. Within lay the Pool of

Dreams, a reliquary that cared for the souls of dragons that passed from the mortal world. The Pool would preserve the collective knowledge and memories of the dragons until the gods favored the world's firstborn again.

In the creation of the Pool of Dreams, the Dragon Kings of the East and West sacrificed their power and succumbed to death. Unforeseen by the remaining two, this tumultuous event divided dragonkind as never before, for now dragons had witnessed the frailty of their lieges. Some retained their loyalty to the remaining Kings, while others claimed that a new era had begun and sought to grab the power for themselves. From this ideological rift, their magic became manifest. With the march of time, each faction evolved into the variances of metallic and chromatic. Abandoning the Kings and the gods they served, the rebellious chromatic faction began to lose their luster, their scales dulling to the matte hues of the color spectrum.

When the transformation was nearly completed, a great red wyrm named Sevrylascarethiin—or Sunscratch in the Common tongue—rose to prominence. Together with his brethren, he waged war against the remaining Dragon Kings and their followers and personally struck down the King of the South at its outset. The King of the North in turn slew Sunscratch but himself fell gravely wounded in the struggle.

With the death of their champion, the chromatic dragons fled the ancestral valleys, while the remaining Dragon King retreated into the Vault and barred its doors. The metallic dragons disbanded, disillusioned by their loss, and left their homeland as well. As the centuries passed, the Vault was lost and its memory passed from common knowledge into legend.

The Reign of Cats

When the dragons ruled Áereth with their great empires, many intelligent and ambitious creatures vied for petty dominance under their expansive shadow. When the Dragon Kings and their vassals fell from power, the first to walk abroad uncontested in the world at large was the sphinx.

Believing themselves to be paragons of physical and mental perfection, the sphinxes saw themselves as caretakers of the world. They used their wits and their appetites to maintain order among the lesser races by devouring those who could not answer their riddles. In the eastern deserts and hills, the collective might of the sphinxes elevated them above all others. Building upon the ruins of the dragons who came before and studying their abandoned works, the sphinxes united as a single power. Any enemies who attempted to challenge them were swiftly cowed or devoured.

Seeing the need for servants, the leonine race ceased devouring the numerous humanoids and began to subjugate them instead with the persuasive acuity only a sphinx can employ. They coaxed the elves from the forests of Ahna-Vithyre with cryptic promises of magic

and bribed the dwarves from the Gorzeruun Mountains with promises of mithral and gold. With riddles and promised knowledge, they lured the gnomes from their overrun homeland, and the halflings of Gadjarria dwelt already upon the doorstep of their desert home. Humans, a race of uncertain desires, were brought under wing with sheer aggression. Even great numbers of hobgoblins, haler than their goblin cousins, were seized by the sphinxes for their own purposes.

Some resisted. The dwarves who refused the lure retreated to depths into which they knew the sphinxes would not venture, and these would become deep dwarves and duergar. Some gnomes, upon reaching the sphinx homeland, found hidden tunnels in the earth and delved deeper still, eventually becoming the svirfneblin known today. Those elves who refused to leave their forests were the wood elves, while sea elves retreated deeper into their waters when the sphinxes approached.

With the lesser races in tow, the sphinxes carved a vast empire throughout the Lostlands and named it Khonsuria after its first pharaoh. The humanoid servants were viewed as pets or pack animals to the sphinxes; useful, even affectionately cared for at times, but patronized nonetheless. While some humanoids were afforded a measure of esteem within Khonsurian society, even the greatest among these were considered beneath the lowliest of sphinxes. The empire expanded its borders north and west, reaching its paws partially into the Northlands.

A family of androsphinxes ruled the young empire, and the third such pharaoh was a brutal tyrant whose cruelty tested the loyalty of his own kind. His daughter, however, was a high priestess of Amun Tor and was beloved by her people and even their humanoid servants. Legends say that Amun Tor himself consorted with the beautiful gynosphinx and that their child was destined from conception to rule the gilded empire. Whatever her origin, the last and most enduring sovereign to rule the Khonsurian Empire was a Queen. With the approval of the sphinxes and the gods themselves, she dethroned her wicked father and took his place.

Her name was Ankharet the Blessed, an immortal gynosphinx who ruled the Empire for prosperous millennia. She took as her consort the great gold wyrm Kozuragen, who had served the Dragon Kings in his youth and fought against the armies of Sunscratch in his prime. Now he sat at Ankharet's side and offered the council and wisdom of his long life.

Under the Queen's guidance, each species of sphinx was given a role within their society. The noble androsphinxes became the empire's prophets, leaders, and priests, serving as councilors and interpreters of the Queen's law. Gynosphinxes served as Ankharet's ambassadors, and carried her diplomacy into foreign lands. The bloodthirsty hieracosphinxes served as the warriors of the empire, defending it from all enemies. Criosphinxes carried the Queen's directives to her humanoid subjects, overseeing the construction of pyramids and monuments to the glory of Khonsuria and its Queen.

The empire was not without its insurrections. A faction of elven rebels sought freedom from the desert sands and searched in vain for the tunnels that the early svirfneblin had used long before. When their brethren refused to join them in their escape, the rebels named them traitors. The sphinxes, deigning not to risk their own against the insurgents, sent the loyal elves to retrieve their wayward kin. The Kindred War ensued, and the rebels found their only escape to be an ominous rift called the Devil's Cauldron. Corrupting fumes seeped into the elves, seeding their hearts with evil and initiating a slow change within their bodies. Fleeing into the chthonian depths, the rebel elves found their own dark paths in history, heard the call of a goddess, and would one day be known to the surface world as the drow.

The Reign of Serpents

Shortly after the rise of Khonsuria and across the Surya Sea, another creature came into its own. On Zimala, the Island of Obsidian, the totemic nagas had united their tribes and established their own budding empire. Though the dragon empire that preceded them had been unrivaled in its power, the nagas held conviction that they had been created first, that the limbless serpentine form was one of perfection. The god Madrah, they knew, had been charged to oversee the lands of the west, and though the nagas themselves varied in their chosen virtues, all paid homage to him and the spirits he engendered.

With the help of lizardfolk, marsh-dwelling neighbors north of Zimala whom the nagas had coerced into alliance, the nagas began to expand their lands. As their empire grew, the god Madrah took an empress to be his consort and from her egg was hatched a female they named Cynhuara. When the empress died suspiciously, he took a consort of common blood and she hatched a male they named Axaluatl. Immortal nagas of great power, the two half-siblings were revered by their kind as gods, and in their name stately temples were raised even before their coming of age.

Eldest of the two, Cynhuara was given the Zimalan Empire to rule as her own. However, she eschewed the role of Empress, instead establishing the Naga Council. Populated with all species of nagas, it was predominantly comprised of wise and benevolent teotl-nagas (guardian nagas). Axaluatl became an emissary for the Council who traveled abroad and explored beyond the

empire's borders. Incredulous that his half-sister would relinquish the power of regency, he plotted in secret to become Emperor. Axaluatl's conspiracies included a number of tlanti-nagas (dark nagas) of sinister power.

The Naga Council was given the task of overseeing all aspects of the Zimalan Empire with a view toward its eternal preservation and the needs of its subjects. Cynhuara herself sat at the Council's head, and together they led the Empire into a peaceful coexistence with many races for long years. Within Zimala and some of the lands north of the Island, the nagas were dominant, and those who challenged them were struck down with fang and spell. Within naga society, the tlanti-nagas served as explorers and military leaders along with the ehecatl-nagas (spirit nagas). The mali-nagas (earth nagas) and atl-nagas (water nagas), by far the most numerous, served as warriors on land and sea whenever force was required.

Under the teotls' guidance—and against Axaluatl's—the humans of neighboring lands were taken into Zimalan protection. Existing formerly in a loose society of feuding tribes, the humans were inlaid into naga society like an intricate mosaic and were taught minor magics and the arts of medicine and industry. As with nobles of modern Áereth, nagas and their human retainers would often form strong bonds of friendship. As apprentices and servants, the humans helped the nagas build their glorious cities and raise pyramids and temples in devotion to Madrah and his divine offspring, Cynhuara and Axaluatl.

The Clash of Empires

Both the Khonsurian and Zimalan Empires contended with many hostile creatures, for they were wealthy and harbored many coveted secrets. Humanoid and monstrous enemies arose and fought to raise their own nations, but the might and magic of the Serpents and Cats put down every challenge.

Yet the two great empires remained unaware of each other for centuries, with only the whispered rumor of a faraway empire ever crossing the ocean that divided them. Ankharet the Sphinx Queen forbade her people to fly west across the sea, for they believed that only the Realm of the Dead lay there. To travel to where the sun met its demise each day was to join the Accursed. The Naga Council, meanwhile, did not seek to expand its holdings beyond their own continents and the far north was filled with barbaric peoples not worth the effort to conquer. They had little desire to sail the oceans.

The ventures of Axaluatl, however, brought him at last to the far north, where he heard still more rumors of the Khonsurian Empire. With his entourage of supporters, he crossed the Surya Sea and there at last met the outlying sphinxes. When Ankharet learned of the Zimalan Empire, she embraced the discovery. Her people believed then that the gods had pushed the Realm of the Dead further to the west and in doing so had revealed new allies.

In the minds of some, the discovery prompted dreams of invasion and further conquest. Yet Cynhuara and the

Naga Council extended the tail of alliance and mutual trade. Ankharet responded in kind. Though they were great rivals in power, each empire agreed to maintain peace, for neither desired the other's land and there was much they could share.

For long years, both empires prospered. Beseeching the gods of the earth and sea, the nagas and sphinxes called upon great elemental magics and drew up a chain of islands across the Surya Sea. With the labor of millions, nonpareil magic, and a technology now lost from the world, the nagas and sphinxes constructed Ayoxatlan, a causeway of colossal scale that stretched across the miles of the sea. Using the god-given islands as their primary support, the bridge allowed for easy passage between the two empires. Though a sphinx could fly the distance unladen, the journey was overly taxing and they welcomed the convenience of a paved roadway where they could cross the water with their humanoid attendants and other trade goods. In the tongue of sphinxes, the marvelous span was known as Harak Manu, or "bridge to the west."

This golden era came to a close, however, when corruption entered the heart of Ankharet the Blessed. What led to the great Queen's fall none can accurately say, whether she was lured into darkness by the whisperings of Zhühn or whether her soul had been steeped in depravity from the very beginning. Perhaps it was her acquisition of the mysterious Shadowcrown that darkened her heart or the many potent gifts given her by the nagas. Yet even as the final stones were laid in place within Ayoxatlan, so did Ankharet and the wicked Axaluatl agree to a secret plan of mutual benefit.

In secret, Ankharet began to prey upon the servitor races—and even her own kind—as a vampire would its victims. Her deepest crime was the murder of her own consort, Kozuragen. To disguise her sin and set in motion her plans with Axaluatl, the Queen publicly accused the Naga Council for his death, claiming it had sent assassins to kill both she and her consort in a bid to sow confusion for an inevitable naga attack.

The sphinxes' faith in their revered Queen was absolute. Without hesitation, the sphinxes turned baleful eyes upon the Serpents across the sea. Led by the Queen's own daughter, Meraph the Golden, the Khonsurian Empire launched a vengeful crusade against the Zimalan Empire. Fury at the death of her father burned in the heart of Meraph.

The nagas were ill prepared for the invasion. Cynhuara, shocked at Ankharet's accusation, sought to calm the attacking sphinxes and clear away the misunderstanding. When she confronted the arriving Meraph, Axaluatl at last betrayed his half-sister and used his magic to silence her. The half-dragon sphinx, blinded by rage and unwilling to hear diplomacy, killed Cynhuara with the help of her elite warriors. The Naga Council fought back, but half its members were slain outright. An all-out war had begun between the powerful races. The nagas collapsed the bridge Ayoxatlan to prevent easy access for the Khonsurian armies. As if both empires had lost the favor of their gods, the isles upon which the great causeway had been built sank into the sea again.

Axaluatl, whose agreement with Ankharet only included the removal of Cynhuara and the Naga Council, realized that the Queen had betrayed him. She sought now to eliminate the Zimalan Empire altogether. Enraged at her duplicity, Axaluatl led his subjects in frequent counterattacks. For years, the two empires struggled against one another, Serpent against Cat. The nagas were nearly annihilated in the great war.

The War of Brothers

An androsphinx of prophetic power named Khubsheth, who was a disciple of Choranus and the consort of Meraph, discerned the corruption of the Sphinx Queen. He saw the Naga Council to be innocent of the crime for which the war had been waged, and revealed the truth to Meraph and her wrathful armies on the eve of the nagas' destruction. When the sphinxes halted their attack, Meraph, stunned by the magnitude of her mother's treachery and the genocide Meraph herself had begun, fled in grief. Khubsheth pursued his beloved and asked her to return with him and confront the Queen.

Yet Ankharet's loyal subjects were many, and sphinx turned against sphinx in a great civil war known as the War of Brothers. Years of bloody conflict ensued, ending at last when Meraph and her followers were victorious. Ankharet's defenders were routed and the Queen herself captured. During the conflict, however, the servitor races had found their freedom and the sphinxes' many enemies had advanced on the weakening empire. The surviving sphinxes from both sides, thousands strong, disappeared from the Lostlands almost overnight, a mythic event that modern historians cannot explain. The few sphinxes that remained chose solitary existence over the united civilization they once ruled.

Meraph, Khubsheth, and their few remaining allies were left standing with their shackled Queen. Divinely protected from her own kin, Ankharet the Cursed could not be slain. Khubsheth, granted divine foresight, determined that those destined to slay Ankharet would not be born until thousands of years later. Until that day, he knew, the Queen would have to be bound. And so the Tomb of the Sphinx Queen was built, the last monument to a once-great empire and a prison for its traitorous Queen.

Meraph insisted upon interring herself within the tomb to await the prophesized heroes and the death of her mother. Khubsheth, granted immortality for his vigilance, would wait through the passage of centuries for that fated time.

The Khonsurian Empire itself was no more, brought low by its own beloved Queen.

The Wrath of Serpents

Meanwhile, the nagas nursed their wounds in the aftermath of their war with the sphinxes, struggling to recover from the devastating losses. The dark nagas found an opportunity in the chaos to reshape what little remained of the Zimalan Empire. Seeing that the actions of Axaluatl had led to the slaughter of his own people, his former devotees renounced him. Once a strong disciple of Axaluatl, a dark naga priest named Zuyuan seized political power and led a revolt against the Shadow Serpent. Unable to slay the immortal—for he, too, was divinely protected like Ankharet—Zuyuan outlawed his worship. Those who professed loyalty to the betrayer were slain, and Axaluatl, diminished in status and power, was forced into seclusion.

Excited by his success and lusting for more power, Zuyuan led a campaign of persecution against the Naga Council for failing to perceive the sphinx threat. With great support, he dissolved the now-impotent Council and exiled the teotl-nagas who had backed it. Into this void of power, Zuyuan established the Dark Council. Staffed with his chosen cohorts, he rebuilt the struggling Zimalan Empire into a regime of tyranny. Zuyuan insisted that magic and intrigue, not peace and diplomacy, were the tools of survival for their kind. Unwilling to trust anything that was not a naga, they tightened their coils on their human servants until they become little more than slaves and chattel.

As the years passed, the humans grew restless. Rumors reached Zimala that the servitor races of the far east had been freed by the fall of the sphinxes. The once-great Khonsurian Empire was fast fading into mere legend, and elves and dwarves began to rise in great numbers in the Northland regions. It seemed to the wise that the gods now favored beings that walked on two legs. Unable to recover their former might, the nagas grew cynical and jealous. Hearing the stories of freedom, the nagas' human slaves began to chafe against the oppression of their masters.

Realizing that the future belonged to these lesser, more numerous races, the Dark Council decided to breed their own humanoid species in a bid to retain dominance. If humanoids were to inherit Áereth, then the nagas would control those who ruled them. Inspired by the lizardfolk race but desiring a people of greater power, the nagas sought to create a race in their own serpentine image. Zuyuan supported experiments with human slaves and captured lizardfolk, infusing them with foul sorcery and the blood of reptiles. From these unholy trials came inphidians and tzopiloani, evil human-reptile hybrids. When the nagas began to use their own sorcerous blood in the experiments, they spawned their greatest achievement, and also their ultimate downfall: the drakon.

Possessing the same ambition as humans, the innate magic of nagas, and a sinister lack of fear, the drakon eventually rebelled against their progenitors in a conflict known as the Wrath of Serpents. With the inphidians and tzopiloani on their side, the drakon threw down the Dark Council. In the chaos, the nagas were unable to maintain constriction of their slaves. The humans slipped their bonds and fled toward the northern reaches of the old empire and the wide peninsula known as Xulmec. Some believe it was the exiled teotl-nagas lurking beneath the earth who first broke the humans' shackles to set them free. The Naga Council of old, after all, would never have enslaved their humanoid servants.

Even as they struggled against the nagas, the drakon sought to replace them as slavers of the humans. Assassins were sent against Huamec, the human slave who dared to lead his people to freedom, but they fell at his hand. Locked as they were in the death throes of naga might, the drakon could spare no further attempts against the refugees.

And so the Zimalan Empire was no more, destroyed by its own desperation and insolence. The nagas that survived the Wrath of Serpents withdrew from the politics of the world and hid away in dark places, coiled in hate. Only the teotl-nagas, though few in number, remained seekers of peace. They laired in the tombs of their ancient civilization, lived the virtues of Cynhuara, and guarded the secrets of their once-mighty empire.

The Homecoming

While the Xulmecs sought to establish their own civilization bereft of naga rule, the former servants of the Khonsurian Empire had migrated north into the vast, unspoiled lands whence they had first emerged before sphinx rule. The remnants of long-vanished draconic realms riddled the lands that they settled into. Each race found its own path, contending whenever another's presence threatened.

As the elves wandered, they sensed the familiar presence of Ireth, goddess of verdure and wizardry. Following her voice they settled once again in the forests of Ahna-Vithyre, for there it was that elves had first awakened in

Áereth. In the Foresthome, Ireth taught them the deepest secrets of magic and forestry. This tutelage came to the elves as memories long buried, for their time among the sphinxes had suppressed their origins. When they returned to the woods, they met again their wild kin in the deepest groves and their sea-dwelling cousins in Ahna-Vithyre's coast.

Guided by the rhythmic intonations of Daenthar, the earth god of industry, the dwarves climbed back into the mountains. With his mentoring, they resumed their ages-old love of mining and crafting amidst their native stone, and steadily the dwarven kingdoms forged strong alliances with one another. The mightiest of these nations was the mountain kingdom of Amonzadd, whose great stone windows looked down upon the vast forests of Ahna-Vithyre.

The savage tribes of humans dispersed among the Northlands, trading eagerly with their neighbors but never making enduring allegiances among their kind as did the dwarves, nor did they settle in large numbers like the elves. Without exception, no race ever exhibited as much diversity in culture as humans. They were vast in number but largely divided, and so their inherent desire for expansion could not include the holdings of the stronger races.

The gnomes had no homeland to return to, for their gem-laden hills in the far northeast had been largely depleted of their mineral wealth and the lands were rife with goblinoids. Never a people to despair of the past, the gnomes settled wherever commerce was good, serving as mediators and tradesmen between towns, cities, nations, and races. Poderon, the earth god of levity, became their patron, and gave them the optimistic worldview that gnomes still enjoy.

The last of the servitor races to leave the Lostlands—and the only to regularly return—were the halflings. Despairing at the malignance their homeland had become, the music of Olidyra, the goddess of travel and exploration, called to them and instilled in them a love for the open road. Gypsies and vagabonds all, the halflings chose a life of constant wandering and could be found in all realms. Traditionally, halflings returned each year to Gadjarria, where they weep at their loss and sing of their freedom.

Explorers of all races began the long journey across the Empyrean Ocean and rediscovered the humans of the Southlands that they had once met when the sphinx and naga empires had been allies centuries before. Culturally, the Xulmecs were considered primitive and the coastlines were riddled with dangerous creatures. The threat of drakon and lizardfolk lurked deeper within the jungles, and few explorers would approach the remote Island of Obsidian, Zimala.

Powerful with magic and crafts reminiscent of the old naga and sphinx empires, the elves and dwarves exerted their influence across the lands. The greatest human wizards apprenticed themselves to the elves of Ahna-Vithyre to refine their art. Master blacksmiths of the human lands studied in the hold of Amonzadd. Gnomes and halflings, for their part, wound their way as peaceably as possible through all racial societies. Whenever the ambitious humans pushed their borders too far, they were swiftly reminded with overwhelming force that their dominions existed only at the behest of elven and dwarven mercy. Goblinoids occasionally emerged from the plains, hills, and mountains, but the concerted effort of local territories inevitably drove them back.

With this influx of magic and artistry, the elves and dwarves grew haughty over the years and made enemies of jealous races—and even each other. Humans continued to study at the foot of their trees and mountains and some sought ways to steal their arts for themselves. Nations began to war with one another even as they fought off the ever-persistent hordes of goblinkind.

The War of Divine Right

Far from civilized lands, a young storm giant named Aeshotal grew restless from the turbulence of Áereth and its bloody conflicts. He set off on a pilgrimage around the Known Realms. Giantkind in its many, scattered tribes had dwelt outside of the march of history, and the troubled Aeshotal sought a place for his people. The storm giant's quest led him to the monasteries and libraries of many kingdoms, yet always his search found no answers.

At last, in the deepest catacombs of a mired temple in the Great Swamp, Aeshotal heard a disembodied voice address him from the shadows. The voice told him to find the Cave of Truth in the Frosteye Mountains, a place labeled on no map nor named in any tome. With nowhere else to turn, Aeshotal journeyed to the Cave and found a great door guarded by a curious sentinel. The strange human tried to convince the giant to turn away, explaining that only death and the ruin of Áereth lay beyond.

In his mind, the mysterious voice whispered to Aeshotal that the smaller races were hiding the truth from his kind, and that the destiny of giantkind lay within. Conflicted and angry, Aeshotal struck at the man with lightning, only to find the energy passing harmlessly through him. When he struck at him with his greatsword, he found that this, too, could not pierce him. Aeshotal simply stepped through the ghostly man, wrenched open the door, and entered the darkness beyond.

Within he found a network of chambers with ancient lore etched into stone walls in thousands of glyphs, bas-

reliefs, and even sculptures. He spent years meditating here, attempting to decipher the glyphs, aided only by his patience—and the mysterious voice. At last he found the answer to his quest: the knowledge that giants, formerly the titans, had been created by the gods *before* the smaller races, and had in fact come before the Dragon Kings themselves. With this knowledge came the conviction that giants were *meant* to reign over all others. Cold, logical madness gave Aeshotal the answer he'd long sought. If the giants united now, as their godless ancestors had failed to upon their creation, they could bring order to the world and rule as they were divinely decreed.

Aeshotal left the chamber and began his campaign to unite the giant tribes. He spoke of prophecies and the divine mandate that giants were sovereign to the smaller races. Highly charismatic and growing in power as he went, Aeshotal was seen as a visionary and messiah, and most giants were easily seduced into joining his dream of righteous conquest. In the frigid reaches of the Northern Wastes, he won over the frost giant jarls. In the fiery mountains of the east and west, he found support with the fire giant kings. The primitive hill giants from the Valley of Xyr Muthal and stone giants from around the Northlands flocked to his banner, though some cloud and storm giants were not as easily swayed. After more than fifty years, he'd established an insurmountable force at his disposal in all corners of the Northlands, the vast majority of giantkind poised at his command.

United as never before—and never since—the giants of the Known Realms laid siege upon the humanoid kingdoms in the War of Divine Right. On many fronts and in terrains advantageous to the giants, they laid low city after city, destroying those who refused to surrender to their authority. For the first time since their service in the Khonsurian Empire, the elves, dwarves, and humans banded together against the collective might of the giants—against which they steadily lost ground. Even gnomes and halflings joined their fellows and fought against the giants with guerilla-style warfare, excelling as they always had against large opponents.

During these years, each side searched for every advantage as battles took place in every part of the civilized world. While the humanoid races struggled to unite, the giants persuaded other monstrous and giantish creatures to join in their war. Ogres and ettins swelled their armies against the elven realms, while trolls and gargoyles emerged from the mountains to assail the dwarf holds. Kapoacinths and scrags joined the storm giants against the sea elves and coast-dwelling humans. Cloud giants threw their magic against the nations' capitals. Chief among Aeshotal's supporters were the sinister and wealthy Stormbringer family of storm giants and the Stone Wings, an extensive clan of fiendish gargoyles summoned from the hellish Outer Planes.

As the Northlands were steadily subdued by his persistence, Aeshotal sent storm and fire giants across the sea to conquer the humans of Southlands, whom he regarded as impotent primitives. Even united against the onslaught, the Xulmecs were unprepared for the attack and lost many lives. They called upon Madrah and their god-kings to save them. When death seemed inevitable, it was Huamec, the first Xulmec god-king, who answered. He instructed his priests to build an icon in his image carved in pure obsidian. Constructed of immense size, Huamec possessed the idol and led a counter-attack against the giants. The giants in the Southlands were soundly defeated, but Huamec himself was slain in the endeavor and the monolithic idol itself was cast down.

In the Northlands, the humans of the Abylosian Empire, in an attempt to halt the advance of giants east and south, enlarged a river valley into a gorge of titanic proportions with the concerted efforts of druids, wizards, and countless slaves. Becoming a permanent scar in the land, the barrier worked only too well, funneling the full strength of the giants back toward the elven Foresthome and surrounding lands. The frontiers of civilization were either smashed flat or conquered by the giants, their people enslaved.

Against Aeshotal's hordes, the crafts of the dwarves and the arcana of the elves were sorely tested. Working together now efficiently, the greatest dwarven artisans and elven wizards crafted golems of stone and iron to counter the strength of the giants, while elven sorcerers bargained with genies for elemental conjurations to use against them. These efforts slowed the giants but could never push them back.

The War of Divine Right raged on, with the smaller races continuing to lose ground each year. Aeshotal and his greatest forces eventually surrounded Ahna-Vithyre and Amonzadd in the land of Lirea, enclosing the power bases of both elf and dwarf civilizations within his grip. Once the defenders' lines broke, the giants would swarm into their capitals and lay claim to all of Áereth. The elders of the elves and dwarves formed the Eldritch Coalition, an alliance comprised of archmages, high priests, and generals of both peoples. They came together in desperation, ready to discuss new strategies, contingencies—or even surrender to Aeshotal.

At this time, a cloud giantess named Jathra fought her way through the elf and dwarf fortifications, subduing but not killing every guard who dared to arrest her infiltration. When the slender, white-skinned giant broke into the council chamber of the Eldritch Coalition, the elves and dwarves thought they had come to their end at last and prepared to fight. Instead, Jathra bowed and intro-

duced herself to them, speaking words of peace and pacifism. She had not been sent by Aeshotal, she explained, but represented a faction of giants who opposed the war.

Desperate, the Eldritch Coalition listened to the giant, but some among them doubted her intentions, so full of hate for giants that they were blind to her offers. Jathra presented to them a cache of scrolls she'd recovered from the fabled Vault of the Dragon Kings, relics that harbored magics that she believed could end the war peacefully.

The scrolls contained the arcana needed to construct the Pillars of Expulsion, artifacts that could exert powerful enchantments that could forcefully compel the giants to leave the region and scatter their armies. Originally conceived by the Dragon Kings to mercifully defeat Sunscratch and his followers, the project had been abandoned in favor of the Pool of Dreams. The Pillars had therefore never been created, but the lore to build them lay now in the hands of the Eldritch Coalition. It was Jathra's belief that the giants were never meant to rule; they were meant to dwell in remote places and offer guidance to the smaller races who sought them out. The scrolls offered the means to bring peace to the land again.

The construction of the Pillars—adamantine obelisks carved with complex runes and woven with many spells—would represent the ultimate achievement of the artifice of elves and dwarves. The elves of Parhokk, a city famous for its enchanters, were called upon to imbue the Pillars with the compulsion magic that was their core.

When the obelisks were complete, Jathra explained that the placement of the Pillars of Expulsion was vital, and that they would have to be arranged in a great ring around the land outside the giant encampments. She spoke of sacrifice and honor, and such virtues struck a painful cord within the hearts of the long-lived people of Ahna-Vithyre and Amonzadd.

Once they were built, the greatest elven and dwarven champions carried the obelisks, at great risk, through the enemy lines. Though most of these heroes fell at giant hands, the Pillars were placed without exception in a great ring around the land of Lirea, fully encircling the giant forces. When the time was right, the Eldritch Coalition called upon their gods and their magic and activated the Pillars of Expulsion as Jathra had instructed.

Had the Coalition worked in concert, the plan might have succeeded. But doubt gnawed at the hearts of some, who feared that Jathra was as evil as the rest of her kin and was deceiving them. Some tales say that the surreptitious hand of Zhühn was at work within them, corrupting them as he may have Ankharet the Blessed, Aeshotal, and countless other across the ages. These elf and dwarf dissenters dared to believe that they could alter the magic of the Pillars, to transform their compulsion magic into energies deadly to the giants. They channeled their magic and their hate into the whole, and the Pillars of Expulsion came to life.

Thus polluted, it was not enchantment magic that flared from the obelisks, but another power altogether that rent

apart the elements around them. The fabric of the Material Plane was torn asunder in the immediate vicinity of each obelisk, turning into a churning mass of deadly elements. Much was drawn back into the elemental planes even as portals to the same planes were opened nearby. Fire, lightning, cyclones, and great torrents of water poured through. Tremors shook all the land within the circle of Pillars, and great caverns beneath the earth collapsed.

As a result of this cataclysm, the land known as Lirea slowly sank into the sea as portals to the Elemental Plane of Water spilled onto the landmass. Ocean waters from the Empyrean Ocean flooded inland, spilling over the Foresthome of the elves and the dwarven hold of Amonzadd. The devastation was vast and thorough. Giants, elves, and dwarves—along with numerous other creatures in the crossfire—were swallowed up.

The land sank too fast to save the nations but slowly enough to horrify those looking on from outside the deadly ring. In the end, Aeshotal and the giants had been defeated, but at a cost greater than anyone ever imagined. What once crowned the land in magic and majesty now dwelt at the bottom of a vast bay that would later be named the Lirean Sea. Ruins of the elves' and dwarves' former glory were held now in the dominion of the world's oceans and its denizens.

In time, the elemental portals were closed, and the wild storms were tamed by druids and clerics. Those elves and dwarves that survived the cataclysm were those who'd settled in outlying forests and mountains beyond Lirea. Though many humans had lost their lives in the devastation, there were countless more scattered throughout the land, greater in number than any other. The remaining elves and dwarves could not recover their former might, nor repopulate their own kind as swiftly as humans. Gnomes and halflings, like humans, could be found in all countries and never built their own kingdoms. Sea elves, who once dwelt along the coasts of Ahna-Vithyre, now swam the newly formed Lirean Sea and kept a vigil over the ruin of their homeland, to protect its secrets from treasure hunters.

With the sudden end of the giant-led war and the fall of Lirea, the thinking races of the Known Realms knew that an era had ended. Seasons passed differently now, distant threats seemed more ominous. Great magics had been wrought and cast down upon the mortal world, and devastation could come swiftly. The dwarves and elves formed solid treaties in honor of the Eldritch Coalition, living tributes to their fallen heroes and sovereigns. In the aftermath of the War of Divine Right, it was clear to all who was left standing stronger than all others.

The era of humans had begun.

Chapter 2
Deities, Demigods, and Infernal Powers

The races of Áereth pay homage to many powers, beliefs, and divinities. Though the gods themselves are many, only some—arguably the most well known—are described here. The names given are merely the most common. Almost every god has at least a dozen names—some have many more or none at all—which stem from the languages and cultures that revere them.

GMs should feel free to alter the pantheons to suit the needs and themes of their campaigns. Whereas an epic story set in the Southlands might make frequent use of the Xulmec demigods, another campaign set in the Lostlands may never make mention of those endemic gods across the ocean. GMs are certainly invited to include new pantheons of their own or those borrowed from other mythos. This chapter assumes that the Sancturn Pantheon—many of whose members have been gathered from the DCCs—is the primary spiritual authority in the world of Áereth.

Other pantheons could be assigned to other Material Plane worlds, but still count followers from among the people of Áereth. Conversely, the gods of various pantheons could share dominion over this world. Finally, pantheons may be intermingled with the Sancturns, or the names used by the gods can vary to accommodate all gods in one. Variag, for example, may also be the same as the Norse god Ymir. Odin may be another name by which Choranus is known, and Tyr may be the same as Gorhan or Thormyr.

The Triad and the Greater Gods

According to a consensus of belief, above all divinities is the Triad, the eldest of the Greater Gods whose mighty works begat the world. They are Choranus the Seer Father, his consort Ildavir the Giver of Form, and his brother Centivus the Shaper. The children of Choranus and Ildavir are Ireth, Daenthar, Poderon, and Olidyra. At least five other gods of great power were invited to have a hand in the world's creation. These were Amun Tor, Auzarr, Madrah, Ahriman, and Ormazd, beings of unknown origin.

The arrival and subsequent creations of these beings were an offense to Zhühn, the Dweller in the Void, a creature of such power that he would later be worshipped as a Greater God himself by the nihilistic and the mad. Knowing only nonexistence and timelessness, Zhühn is the antithesis of creation itself.

The Sancturn Pantheon

Áereth has been the battleground for the lofty ideals of the gods since its first dawn. Before the doctrines of Good and Evil began their eternal struggle, the ethics of Law and Chaos sought to dominate the course of the world. Eventually recognizing the need for a balance of the two—and the need for choice—the Triad withdrew its overwhelming influence from the world, and today seldom intercedes in Áereth directly.

Instead it is the Lesser Gods of the Sancturn Pantheon who hold the greatest sway in everyday life. Refugees from their own long-vanished cosmos, the Sancturns now give the mortals of Áereth the capacity to shape their own world. Once led by Ôæ, these gods now answer only to the Triad. Given power over the provinces of Áereth, the Sancturns keep at bay those mortals whose ambitions would threaten to unseat the cosmic order—and indeed, disorder—of the multiverse itself.

Demigods

Though the Greater Gods remain as they are, the powers of the Lesser Gods can wax and wane. As well, some deities have taken mortal creatures as consorts and from such unions demigods have been formed. Other, less understood means exist to create new divinities.

One such source is the lifeblood of the gods themselves. When Áereth was still young, Zhühn sought to sabotage its existence by attacking those who gave it life. The

Great Enemy, in his naïveté, dealt a grievous blow to the body of Ildavir, the Giver of Form. From the wound sprang the goddess Elyr, fully formed. In her wake, Ildavir's injury was healed, and Zhühn had gained a serious new enemy.

Seeing that his aggression only resulted in the bane of new life, Zhühn learned that divine flesh was both malleable and enduring. When the ocean goddess Pelagia gave birth to a son aeons later, the Great Enemy seized the child and wrenched his body in two. Unable to perish so easily, the sundered halves of the newborn god still shriveled under Zhühn's touch and became the twin demigods of Narrimunâth and Nimlurun. Legends tell of other occasions where divine interference has created new divinities, intentionally or otherwise.

Though the slaying of a god is difficult, at best, many have been altogether forgotten or shunned. Meelkor, once the god of humility, was accused of complicity in unforgivable divine crimes by Zhühn centuries ago and was forcefully driven from the cosmos. Sothulth, a demigod of paranoia, represents another such exiled divinity, though he has attempted to return to mortal memory.

Outer Gods

Referred to collectively as the Outer Gods, these blasphemous beings are believed to exist outside of the known planes. Worshipped on Áereth only by the most aberrant creatures, the insane, or the misguided, they are abominations among gods. Zhühn himself is sometimes affiliated with the Outer Gods insofar that he may have had a hand in their making—or he may be one of them who broke away, a pariah among corruptive gods.

Infernal Powers

Devils and demons do not fit neatly into the scheme of mortals and gods. Ancient beings of evil power, some may have been wrought from the detritus of failed worlds when the Triad first began creation. Others may be older still, creatures possessed of law, chaos, and evil long before such words had meaning. Or perhaps they're merely the manifestations of the cumulative sins of free-thinking beings. Whatever their origins, the fiends prey upon mortal souls of the Material Plane, finding sustenance from their misery, despair, and every choice sin. They only bring death upon a mortal when doing so also siphons his soul, or when they have been denied it altogether.

A mere sampling of ten archdevils and demon princes are described below, though a great deal many more fiendish lords look upon Áereth with voracious, soul-craving appetites.

A Final Note

The gods are not the celestial bodies they care for. Ildavir is not the earth, but she is its caretaker. Shul is not the moon, and Pelagia is not the ocean itself. The gods stand apart from their creations and their charges, yet none knows a sculpture as well as the sculptor, none a child as well as its parent.

The GM is encouraged to use the gods to give flavor to his or her campaign, for the clergies of all gods have agendas of their own, for good and ill. The church of Gorhan could serve as the driving force behind a PC cleric, to help guide her and the adventures she accepts. The evil cults of the Hidden Lord could provide a steady stream of antagonists for the PCs. The machinations of the Great Enemy, Zhühn himself, could dwell behind the scenes in a campaign destined to become epic. But GMs should not use any of these too heavy-handedly. Although gods influence the world, they do not themselves move it. That is the job for the heroes.

If the god's alignment in the accompanying table (following page) has a smaller letter in parentheses after it, that means the ethos of the religion often leans in that direction (for example, "g" for Good).

Mictlan

Mictlan is the Underworld of Xulmec belief. Drawing their culture from the provinces of the former Zimalan Empire, the humans of the Xulmec city-states maintain that upon a man's death, his spirit is drawn into Mictlan, the Land of the Dead, a subterranean landscape.

Northland scholars make the obvious comparison between this spiritual realm and the Underdeep itself, but while many similarities between the two exist, fundamental differences abound. Scholars of the arcane and planar lore surmise that Mictlan is simply the name given to that portion of the Ethereal Plane or the Plane of Shadow that overlaps the upper regions of the Underdeep beneath the nations of the Southlands.

The Triad

Name	Align.	Portfolio	Gender	Domains
Centivus	N	Creation, Artistry, Possibility	m	Creation, Knowledge, Protection, Travel
Choranus	LN	Creation, Destiny, Magic	m	Creation, Knowledge, Magic, Protection, Strength, Travel
Ildavir	N	Creation, Life, Nature, Animals	f	Animal, Creation, Earth, Plant, Protection

Greater Gods

Ahriman	CE	Death, Disease,Darkness, Suffering	m	Chaos, Death, Destruction, Evil
Amun Tor	N	Mysteries, Riddles	m	Air, Fire, Knowledge, Magic, Weather
Auzarr	N	The Transitive Planes, Teleportation, Psionics	f	Knowledge, Magic, Travel
Daenthar	LG	Earth, Industry, Vows, Trust	m	Earth, Good, Law, Protection
Ireth	CG	Astronomy, Forestry, Wizardry	f	Air, Animal, Earth, Good, Knowledge, Magic
Madrah	N	Earth, Sky	m	Air, Earth, Magic, Travel, Weather
Olidyra	N(g)	Travel, Exploration, Adventure	f	Luck, Plant, Trickery, Travel
Ormazd	LG	Creation,the Sun, Prophecy	m	Creation, Good, Law, Sun
Poderon	NG	Earth, Commerce, Festivity	m	Animal, Earth, Good, Trickery
Zhühn	CE	Deception, Corruption, Falsehood	m	Destruction, Evil, Magic, Trickery

Lesser Gods

Delvyr	NG	Knowledge, Learning, Light	m	Glory, Good, Knowledge, Sun
Denithae	N	Agriculture, Harvest	f	Earth, Plant, Protection
Elyr	CG	Healing, Life, Succor	f	Good, Healing, Liberation, Luck
Fenwar	N	Fire, Lightning, the Hearth	m	Air, Fire, Sun
Gil'Mâridth	CE	Nightmares, Fear, Night Terrors	f	Dream, Evil, Trickery
Gorhan	LG	Valor, War, Chivalry	m	Good, Healing, Strength, War
Hidden Lord	CE	Secrets, Misdirection, Forbidden Lore, Shadows	m	Darkness, Evil, Knowledge, Trickery
Justicia	LG	Justice, Mercy, Defense	f	Good, Healing, Law, Protection
Klazath	LE	War, Subjugation	m	Destruction, Evil, Law, Strength
Lasheeva	NE	Undeath, Murder, Affliction	f	Death, Destruction, Evil
Myna	CN	Chance, Circumstance, Fortune	f	Chaos, Luck, Trickery
Neshti	CG	Thievery, Trickery, Vigilantism	f	Chaos, Good, Luck, Trickery
Ôæ	NG	Dreams, Imagination, Storytelling	m	Dream, Good, Protection
Pelagia	N	Oceans, Seas, Music, Travel	f	Protection, Travel, Water
Rathul	CN	Lies, Dissimilation	m	Chaos, Knowledge, Trickery
Shul	LN	The Moon, Measurement, Tradition, Literacy	m	Air, Knowledge, Law
Soleth	LN	Peaceful Death, Solitude	m	Healing, Law, Protection, Repose
Tororthun	N/CE	Subterrane, Denizens of the Underdeep / Malice, Spiders	f	Drow*, Earth, Poison*, Spider* / Drow*, Evil, Poison*, Spider*
Ulesh	LG	Peace, Pacifism	m	Good, Knowledge, Law, Protection
Valdreth	LN	Time, Longevity, Integrity	m	Law, Magic, Protection
Variag	N	Ice, Winter, War	m	Air, Strength, War, Water
Wyshalar	CN	Survival, Vitality	f	Protection, Travel, Trickery
Xeluth	NE	Violence, War, Strife	m	Destruction, Evil, Strength, War
Yvyn	NE	Conspiracy, Holy War, Rebellion	f	Evil, Trickery, War

Demigods

Ahpuchac	N	Maras, the Underworld	m	Earth, Protection, Repose
Anahuara	NG	Amoya, the Moons	f	Good, Healing, Magic, Repose
Ankharet	NE	Khonsuria, Sphinxes	f	Destruction, Evil, Knowledge, Trickery
Aristemis	NG	Strategy, Diplomacy	f	Good, Knowledge, War
Axaluatl	LE	Zimala, Nagas, Reptiles	m	Evil, Death, Law
Bargúl	LE	Death, Undead, Drow	f	Death, Drow*, Law, Undead*
Bobugbubilz	CE	Evil Amphibians	m	Chaos, Evil, Water
Cadixtat	CE	Chaos	m	Chaos, Destruction
Calchoti	CG	Kaatlan, Rain, Charity	f	Good, Healing, Plant, Water
Chondri	NG	Marine Life, Aggression	m	Good, Strength, Water
Coatlimict	NE	Kaatlan, War, Carnage, Undeath	m	Death, Evil, War
Cynhuara	LG	Zimala, Nagas, Reptiles	f	Good, Healing, Magic
Elas	NE	Marine Life, Ambush	f	Evil, Trickery, Water
Gadraak	CE	Territorialism, Violence	m	Chaos, Evil, Strength, War
Huamext	NG	Xulmec, Protection	m	Earth, Good, Protection
Ilhuicatl	NG	Athua, the Sea	m	Good, Protection, Travel, Water
Ilquot	CN	Cold Waters, Marine Predators, Retribution	m	Protection, War, Water
Kagnar	CE	Savagery, Animality	m	Destruction, Evil, Strength
Lagos	CE	Antagonism, Reptiles, Savagery	m	Chaos, Destruction, Evil, Strength
Malotoch	CE	Scavengers, Ruin, Cannibalism	f	Air, Chaos, Death, Evil
Molgrem	LE	Militarism, War	m	Evil, Destruction, Law, War
Narrimunâth	LE	Disease, Vermin	m	Death, Destruction, Evil
Nimlurun	CE	Filth, Pollution	m	Death, Destruction, Evil
Septych	LE	Avarice, Tyranny	m	Evil, Law, Trickery (current)
Sothulth	CN(e)	Paranoia, Insanity	m	Chaos, Destruction, Knowledge, Trickery
Teleus	LG	Law	m	Good, Law, War
Thalass	N	Terrestrial Waters, Music	m	Animal, Protection, Water
Tlachinozal	LE	Chuzec, Fire	m	Earth, Evil, Fire
Thormyr	LN(g)	Honor, Duty, Protection	m	Healing, Law, Protection, Strength
Traitor	CE	Betrayal, Chaos, Madness	m	Chaos, Healing, Madness, Trickery
Urath	CE	Terror, Voracity	m	Chaos, Destruction, Evil

Infernal Powers

Lords of Hell

Amzolol	LE	Deception	m
Bei'thor	LE	Cruelty, Sadism	m
Jezuel	LE	Pain, Torture, Indignity	f
Nethruel	LE	Obsession, Addiction	m
Sestyruas	LE	Envy, Covetousness	m

Lords of the Abyss

Azi Dahaka	CE	Storms, Waste	m
Izmaledt	CE	Obscenity, Malformation	m
Obitu-que	CE	Domination, Prepotency	m
Qäyaqiq	CE	Curiosity, Desperation, Suicide	?
Tzitzimitl	CE	Destruction, Ruin	f

** Domains introduced in The Complete Guide to Drow from Goodman Games.*

The Powers

Ahpuchac (The Black Jaguar)

Demigod, N — The Underworld, Maras

Ahpuchac (*oh*-pu-chak), the Black Jaguar, is the patron god of the Xulmec city-state of Maras and the guardian of Mictlan, the Underworld. He is the bringer of balance, ushering good and evil into death and the afterlife that awaits. It is believed by the people of Xulmec that one's destination is determined as much by the journey through the Underworld as by the life one led. Ahpuchac prowls Mictlan to ensure all are given a fair chance on this momentous quest.

Once the tribal chieftain of Maras and the founder of its city-state, Ahpuchac gained the mantle of godhood when he was lured into the depths by a spiritual jaguar sent by Madrah, the Lord of the Earth and Sky. Fulfilling a spiritual need for the Xulmec people, the Black Jaguar now oversees mortality itself, guarding the Underworld from the sabotage of other divinities.

The domains associated with Ahpuchac are Earth, Protection, and Repose. His favored weapon is the razor glove, and his symbol is the depiction of himself in perfect profile.

Ahriman (The Deathbringer)

Greater god, CE —Death, Disease, Darkness, Suffering

Ahriman, the Fiendish Spirit, the Deathbringer, is the ancient god of darkness and destruction, suffering, and disease—and some believe, one of the authors of evil itself. Like Ormazd, his radiant twin, Ahriman is believed to have spawned from an obscure, if powerful, neutral deity named Zurvan. Ahriman merely watched as the Triad and the other deific powers coalesced the world, studying its creation so he could learn how to destroy it again and remake it in his own nightmarish image.

The Fiendish Spirit has given rise to many infernal beings and darkened the hearts of many mortals. During the Reign of Dragons, he sowed the desire for destruction among the mightiest of dragons to bring about their own civil war. When Ahriman's worship was at its most profound, the desert-dwelling people of Abylos named him Angra Mainyu, the Deathbringer. Although the faith of the Fiendish Spirit has waned, his few remaining followers wait patiently for signs of his return. They cling to the prophesied age when Angra Mainyu slays his twin, the god Ormazd, Lord of Wisdom.

Ahriman is the only god willing to treat with Zhühn openly, forging the occasional alliance with the Great Enemy for their mutual benefit—although both mighty gods know that should their schemes of destruction break apart the world, they will vie for dominance. While Zhühn seeks the annihilation of existence itself, Ahriman seeks destruction for its own sake, intending to rebuild again under his administration.

When Ahriman is depicted in religious art, he takes the form of a giant-sized demon with a pair of massive black horns and wielding an oversized kukri. The Fiendish Spirit and his hateful clerics weave hidden alliances among many evil factions, sewing destruction from the darkness and hiding from the followers of Ormazd until Ahriman's return, when he will raze the mortal world undisguised.

The domains associated with Ahriman are Chaos, Death, Destruction, and Evil. His favored weapon is the kukri, and his symbol is a demonic visage with two black horns.

Amun Tor (The Father of Riddles)

Greater god, N —Mystery, Riddles

Amun Tor (*ah*-mun-TOR), the Lord of Mystery, the Father of Riddles, is a mysteriarch among gods, the deity of knowledge, the known and unknown. He is the god once charged by the Triad to oversee the realms now known as the Lostlands. It was Amun Tor who first led the sphinxes to the majesty that was the Khonsurian Empire, and it was Amun Tor who warned his daughter, the immortal Queen Ankharet, from the path that led to its ruin. He watches still over the wind, hills, and deserts of the Lostlands, the unseen lord of every city and desolation.

The Father of Riddles has many followers, mostly among the peoples of the Lostlands, but few real priests

devote their lives to his enigmatic dogma. True worship of Amun Tor is a mystery in itself; an acolyte must study the hieroglyphs of his mazelike temples for many years to discover his doctrines. One of Amun Tor's only known tenets is that true power is worth searching for and is therefore hidden in riddles. The greatest of his temples, usually half-buried in the wilds of the Lostlands, are labyrinthine pyramids hiding divine reliquaries and arcane libraries. Adventurers faced with the prospect of infiltrating one of Amun Tor's temples know that exceptional perils and exceptional rewards lie within.

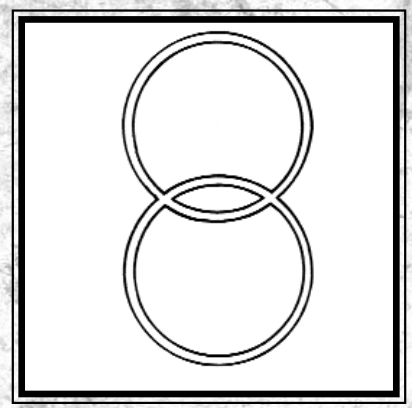
The Lord of Mysteries is depicted differently in each culture of which he is a part. Some see him as a great androsphinx, while others see him as a tall elf gilded like the noble servants of old Khonsuria. Still others represent him only as an eye-shaped glyph.

The domains associated with Amun Tor are Air, Fire, Knowledge, Magic, and Weather. His favored weapon is the quarterstaff. His symbol varies with each culture but often incorporates an image of an eye.

Amzolol

Archdevil, LE —Deception

Amzolol (*ahm*-zoe-lol), the Lord of Deceit, is a cunning archdevil who adheres strictly to the lawful nature of his infernal kind but weaves loopholes into the promises he makes. Mortals who wish to deceive their enemies beseech Amzolol for the guile to swindle, outwit, or frame their enemies, little realizing that the deepest deception and greatest loss is their own. The Lord of Deceit suspends his trickery for his most promising mortal thralls that they might grow in worldly power to carry out Amzolol's will—though the artful promises of the Lord of Deceit are sure to snare them in the end. Most of his human agents are clerics, roguish bureaucrats, and politicians.



Anahuara (the Blessing of Night)

Demigod, NG — Amoya, the Moons

Anahuara (*on*-uh-woh-ra), the Blessing of Night, the Lady Eidolon, the Lucent Guardian, is the patroness of the Xulmec city-state of Amoya and the divine keeper of the Southland moons. To the Xulmec people, where the sun grants the world life only from afar, the moons grant greater vitality the closer they are to the earth. While the Spectral Moon measures time and bestows magic and spiritual balance upon the land, the White Moon keeps the world in physical equilibrium. Anahuara is the guardian of both.

Once the chieftain-founder of the city-state of Amoya, Anahuara now watches over it as a sentinel of life and death and the magic of the Spectral Moon. She is afforded her lunar power by Shul, the Watcher in the Sky, but affinity for the violet-hued Southland moon is hers alone. Anahuara is depicted as she was in life, a tall woman with very long, unbound hair. The mantle of her godhood is represented in the suit of bone armor she wears, and in her hands she carries a mace that glows with the violet light of the Spectral Moon. She is often shown with a nimbus of the moon behind her. Silver, called the Tears of Anahuara, is a holy material to her faithful and is never used as simple currency among the Amoyas. As the moons wax and wane, priests of Anahuara interpret her will for the lay followers. As with most Amoyas, the followers of Anahuara revere death as much as life itself, seeing both as coterminous states of existence. In the dogma of the Lucent Guardian, undeath has its appropriate time and place. More often than not, the undead are considered subversions of the natural order, but there are times when the animated dead are sanctioned by Anahuara.

The domains associated with Anahuara are Good, Healing, Magic, and Repose. Her favored weapon is the light mace, whose head clerics typically coat with alchemical silver. The symbol of Anahuara is formed of both moons in varying positions, usually one half-eclipsed by the other.

Ankharet (the Cursed)

Demigod, NE —Khonsuria, Sphinxes

Ankharet (*on*-kar-ret), the Cursed, the Sphinx Queen, was the demigoddess who once ruled the Khonsurian Empire millennia ago. Once known as Ankharet the Blessed, she was fathered by Amun Tor himself and set upon the throne of the glorious sphinx empire. She ruled for countless years and brought prosperity to her kind, ensuring the Reign of Cats as one of the greatest ages of Áereth's long history.

Yet Ankharet brought her own empire into ruin when she succumbed to corruption and evil. The civil war that came of her crimes resulted in the death of half her kind and drove the survivors into a mysterious exodus. The Sphinx Queen herself was defeated and imprisoned in a massive tomb in the Barren Hills, where she slumbers still under the watch of the androsphinx prophet Khubsheth, and Ankharet's own daughter, Meraph the Golden. According to prophecy, Ankharet will sleep until those destined to slay her arrive—or until the champions of her faith free her to reign again. Within the tomb, Ankharet's power is greatly diminished, but should she escape its mystic confines, she will return to her full glory.

Few sphinxes remain in the Known Realms, and fewer still revere the goddess who brought destruction to their ancient empire. Yet even the sinister dreams of the sleeping Sphinx Queen have inspired humanoid cults devoted to returning her to power. None suspect that the great statue near Prophet's Leap, the mysterious stone sphinx, now hides the Queen's physical body. But it is only a matter of time before her followers find her.

Clerics of Ankharet gather in Lostlands ruins, consorting with evil creatures such as lamia and chimeras. These cultists venerate sphinxes above all, but the magical beasts seldom treat with them, devouring them more often than not. On rare occasions, hieracosphinxes allow themselves to be bribed by these humanoid minions of their ancient queen, perhaps in the tiny hope of seeing their empire reborn one day. Ankharet herself is depicted as a gynosphinx of transcendent beauty, mighty in stature and graceful of body.

The domains associated with Ankharet are Destruction, Evil, Knowledge, and Trickery. Her favored weapon is the razor glove and her symbol is a fair feminine face, adorned with a Khonsurian headdress and a black crown. Often this symbol is paired with an ansate cross.

Aristemis (The Insightful One)

Demigod, NG — Strategy, Diplomacy

Aristemis (uh-*riss*-teh-miss), the Clear Thinker, the Insightful One, the Arrow of Vision, is the demipower of strategy and intelligent combat. She is the patroness of warriors and generals, and sometimes politicians, traders, and even rogues. Alhough Aristemis bears the courage of her lieges, Gorhan and Justicia, she also knows the wisdom of choosing her battles, when to walk away from them, and when to use diplomacy in the place of violence. Generals who redirect their armies in bold maneuvers, engage in daring strategies, or even retreat, call upon Aristemis for her insight. Clerics of the Clear Thinker often serve as war advisors and some multiclass as rangers to serve as military scouts.

Aristemis is portrayed as a woman in robes with piercing eyes, strong features, and short-cropped dark hair. She carries a great bow, but she is seldom shown using it. In religious art, Aristemis is often depicted standing to the right of Gorhan, whispering in his ear.

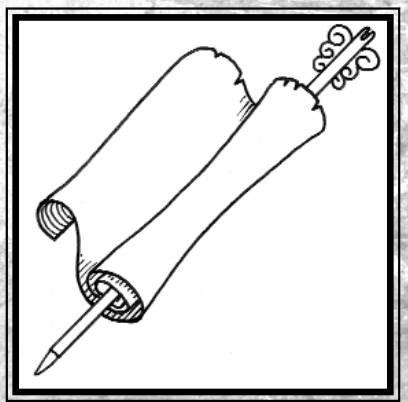
The domains Aristemis is associated with are Good, Knowledge, and War. Her favored weapon is the longbow, and her symbol is an arrow wrapped loosely in a scroll.

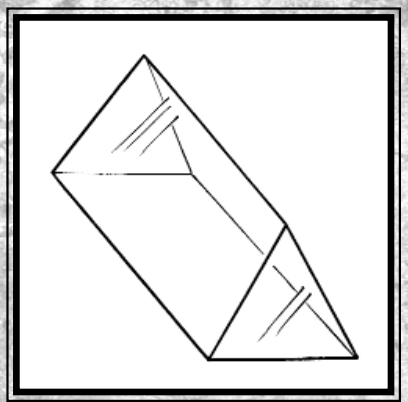
Auzarr (Keeper of the Nexus)

Greater god, N — The Transitive Planes, Teleportation, Psionics

Auzarr (*oh*-zar), Keeper of the Nexus, is the abstruse deity of the Transitive Planes, the conduits between realities, and all supernatural passage. She is the guardian of the fabric of reality and the strands that bind them, maintaining all extra- and nondimensional spaces. Auzarr's mantle of connectivity does not make her church a popular one on Áereth, but even for a Greater God Auzarr is largely apathetic toward mortal worship.

Those who do revere the Keeper of the Nexus understand the need for her work and strive to encourage or limit the magic of spatial relocation. Psionic creatures often pay homage to Auzarr as well, as much of their





power is drawn from astral energies. The Keeper of the Nexus is seldom portrayed in religious art, rendered as a nimbus of radiant energy or a tall, stately woman.

The domains associated with Auzarr are Knowledge, Magic, and Travel. As she has no favored weapon, the few clerics of the Keeper use the unarmed strike in its place. Her symbol is a prism or a silver loom.

Axaluatl (the Shadow Serpent)

Demigod, LE — Zimala, Nagas, Reptiles

Axaluatl (*ah*-shal-*wah*-tuhl), the Shadow Serpent, is the demi-power fathered by Madrah himself to assist his sister Cynhuara with the rulership of the Zimalan Empire. In an effort to usurp control from the Naga Council, the scheming of Axaluatl helped bring about the empire's eventual fall. In the wake of Zimala's war with the sphinxes of Khonsuria, Axaluatl's own disciples turned against him, withdrawing their devotion and slaying his loyal minions until his divinity became impotent.

Alone in the dark for millennia, the Shadow Serpent has slowly garnered support from small cults of lizardfolk, troglodytes, and even dark and spirit nagas still dwelling in the ruins of Zimala. Determined to rise again, Axaluatl seeks to expand his worship to include humans. Rumors have reached followers of the Shadow Serpent that the worship of Cynhuara may draw her back from death, a concern that frightens Axaluatl more than any other. He is determined to stamp out such misguided devotion to his dead sister and slay all remaining guardian nagas. The likeness of Axaluatl remains carved in the ancient temples of Zimala, depicting him as a dark naga of tremendous size. Legends suggest that he exists in physical form somewhere beneath the ruins of Teoyotlan.

The domains associated with Axaluatl are Evil, Death, and Law. His favored weapon, employed by those servants who can grip a weapon, is the garrote. The symbol of the Shadow Serpent is his own body twined around a jeweled sceptre.

Azi Dahaka

Demon prince, CE —Storms, Waste

Azi Dahaka (oz-*ee*-da-*hah*-kah) is a bestial demon spawned by Ahriman himself, one of many evil divinities unleashed upon the world by the Deathbringer to wreak destruction. Considered the spiritual inspiration of the hydra, Azi Dahaka is not a subtle demon prince, caring nothing for deception or cunning. He lives to destroy and suffers mortal thralls only if they promise to carry out schemes that bring ruin and waste to civilization. Long ago, a physical manifestation of Azi Dahaka was imprisoned within an Áerethian desert beneath a dome of enchanted glass. Releasing this multi-headed serpent is only the first step in stirring the bound demon. Like the hydra's head, killing one of Azi Dahaka's physical forms spawns two in its place. Each new body is birthed in the bowels of the Abyss and sets upon one goal: Return to the Material Plane to destroy.

Bargúl (the Sword of Darkness)

Demigod, LE — Death, Undead, Drow

Bargúl (*bar*-gool), the Sword of Darkness, Leader of the Hosts of Thorrin, is the heroine goddess of the drow. When the rebel elves fled from the subjugations of Khonsuria, it was the warrior-maid Bargúl who drove the Kindred Wars to its bloody climax and led her people into the depths of Áereth. Having brought her people so far into the darkness, Bargúl at last found salvation when she heard the call of Tororthun, the estranged goddess of the depths.

Upon her death, the Leader of the Hosts was rewarded with divinity as the necromantic swordmaiden of Tororthun's evil aspect, the Spider Queen—Bargúl brings the only semblance of true law to the otherwise selfish society of her people. Serving now as the drow patroness of death and the undead, the Sword of Darkness is only sparingly worshipped but remains a hero to drow throughout the Underdeep for having freed them from the tyranny of the Overworld.

The clergy of Bargúl are militant warrior-priestesses whose strategy in battle involves animating the dead of their fallen that they may fight anew. Despite this practice—or perhaps to explain it—all drow life is sacred to Bargúl. Her faithful are forbidden to slay other drow in cold blood and

must take care even if forced to fight them fairly. This respect for her own kind is often at odds with the Spider Queen's erratic ways, but Bargúl does not relent on her stance.

The domains associated with Bargúl are Death, Drow, Law, and Undead. Her favored weapon is the long or short sword (clerics must choose one), and her symbol is a skeletal soldier, usually depicted with flowing white hair like her own.

Bei'thor (Centurion of Evil)

Archdevil, LE — Cruelty, Sadism

Bei'thor (*bay*-ih-tour), an arrogant archdevil styling himself the Centurion of Evil, leads an eternal campaign to corrupt mortals with sins of wanton cruelty. When triumphant armies conquer neighboring lands, it is his influence which leads to needless slaughter, wickedness, and privation. Blackguards of Bei'thor are called the Knights of Darkness, a name as vainglorious as the devil they serve. Bei'thor, once a half-fiend mortal, attained the title of archdevil after centuries of unspeakable deeds. Despite his nefarious reputation, Bei'thor is most famous for his legendary defeat at the hands of Tevron. A powerful hound archon and champion of Justicia, Tevron saved the Northlands with his brilliant stratagems, personally sending Bei'thor in retreat to the depths of Hell.

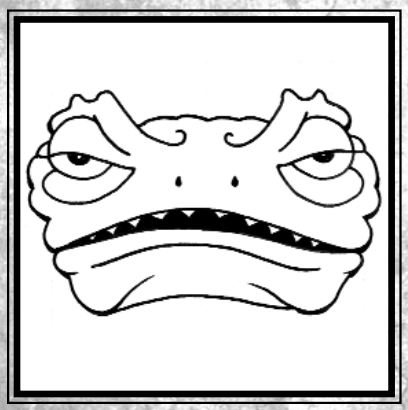
Bobugbubilz (the Toadfiend)

Demigod, CE — Evil Amphibians

Bobugbubilz (bo-*bug*-bub-ilz), the Toadfiend God, is the slimy god of evil amphibians, turbid water and slime, and the mephitis of foul places. A chaotic power of mires and malodorous life, Bobugbubilz is content simply to spread his putrid offspring across the planes and let them multiply and sow discord and misery where they will. The Material Plane is, of course, his favorite realm upon which to inflict his foul progeny. The disgust he and his clergy garner among the fairer races serves only to amuse Bobugbubilz.

The Toadfiend bears no relation to Pelagia, but many of his servants dwell within her oceans and seas. He is served primarily by anomalous members of various amphibious races, including locathahs, scrags, and sahuagin. Human cults spring up now and again in his wake, carrying out deviant rites and spawning new creatures in his name. Appropriately, Bobugbubilz's physical form is believed to be a bloated, toad-like monstrosity of alarming size, his rancid odor preceding his appearance.

The domains associated with Bobugbubilz are Chaos, Evil, and Water. His favored weapon is the whip and his symbol is the leering, malformed head of a toad.



Cadixtat (the Severed Chaos)

Demigod, CE — Chaos

Cadixtat (*kah*-dix-tat), the Sundered Master, the Severed Chaos, was once a deific titan and champion to Zhühn's goals of entropy on Áereth. When Teleus the Obedient severed his hand, his Axe of Unmaking and his great power were lost to him. The balance of Law and Chaos was restored when Teleus was withdrawn from the world, allowing the morals of Good and Evil to contend in their place. Seeing Cadixtat's purpose neutralized, Zhühn butchered the rest of his body and cast it in pieces down upon the world. Thus disarrayed, each part of the once-great titan twisted into a slumbering aberration of near-sentience deep beneath the surface. Over the subsequent ages, cults have coalesced to worship these creatures, laboring with profane magic to awaken them. The consciousness of Cadixtat himself is effectively inactive, dispersed and unknowing, but rumors among some circles of the occult claim that uniting his limbs could resurrect the Sundered Master. What agenda Cadixtat would follow or who he would serve, were he to reform, are a matter of pure speculation.

The domains associated with Cadixtat and his aberrant body parts are Chaos and Destruction, though Zhühn himself likely grants any spells from his worship. The favored weapon of Cadixtat is the battle axe and his symbol is simply a mesh of crisscrossing lines in random directions. Children who scribble are often scolded for accidentally evoking the sign of Cadixtat.

Calchoti (the Rain Queen)

Demigod, CG — Kaatlan, Rain, Charity

Calchoti (*kal*-cho-tee), the Rain Queen, the Virgin Water, is the magnanimous patroness of the Xulmec city-state of Kaatlan. She is the bringer of rainfall and verdant life, playing a vital role for the crops the Xulmec harvest. The Rain Queen is a deity who teaches that life is sacred and not to be wasted; one must offer friendship and charity to one's neighbors and even one's enemies.

Any day of rainfall is a hallowed day to her clerics, and even violent storms are regarded with wonder and fear of her power. The clergy of Calchoti shares an oddly symbiotic relationship with that of Coatlimict the Skull-Father that none outside of either faith can understand. While each god will hold greater sway than the other during any given season, the two never war with one another despite their strongly opposed tenets. Calchoti is depicted in temple carvings as a small woman with rain falling from her body.

The domains associated with the Rain Queen are Good, Healing, Plant, and Water. Her favored weapon is the *atlatl* and her symbol is a pitcher pouring water.

Centivus (the Shaper)

Greater god, N — Creation, Artistry, Possibility, Conjuration, Transmutation

Centivus (*sent*-ih-vus) the Shaper, the Great Artist, is the embodiment of imagination and possibility, a deity of Creation as one of the Triad. Lesser known than Choranus and Ildavir, Centivus is a humble god, caring little for mortal worship. He is the incidental patron of all artists and wizards who study the schools of conjuration and transmutation. Though few worship him directly, many offer prayers to the Great Artist when in need of inspiration. Centivus is less adamant in his opposition of Zhühn, but the Shaper, as the ultimate purveyor of creativity and inventiveness, is still anathema to the Great Enemy.

The domains associated with Centivus are Creation, Knowledge, Protection, and Travel. His favored weapon has changed over the years; lately, it is the light crossbow. The symbol of Centivus varies with each culture in which he is revered.

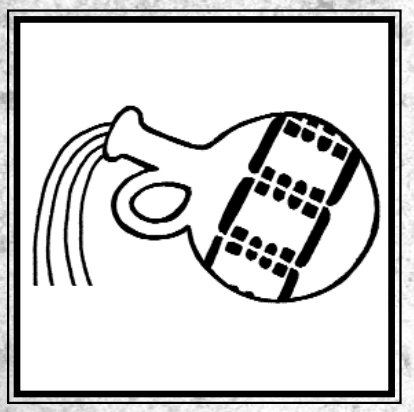
Chondri (the Voracious)

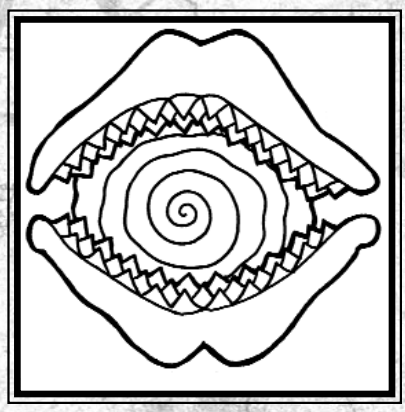
Demigod, NG — Deep-dwelling Marine Life, Aggression

Chondri (*chon*-dree), the Voracious, Seraph of the Deep, the Sea-Angel of Blood, is the twin of Elas as a god of deep waters. Often considered an aspect of Pelagia, he is in fact merely one of many children of the Coral Queen. He is a patron of the natural animals of the deep sea, most often associated with sharks.

Chondri is depicted as a gigantic shark with a flattened, skate-like head and fitted with a terrifying, serrated snout like that of some monstrous sawfish. Though his form strikes horror into the hearts of all who see him, the respectful have nothing to fear of this goodly deity.

The domains associated with Chondri are Good, Strength, and Water. The favored symbol of the Sea-Angel is the trident and his symbol is the open jaws of a shark.





Choranus (the Seer Father)

Greater god, LN — Creation, Destiny, Magic

Choranus (*kor*-uh-niss), the Seer Father, is arguably the most powerful being known to Áereth. Most races and cultures in the Known Realms speak of a god that first created the world, and most point to a power like him. He watches Áereth remotely, concerned with its future perhaps more than its past, delegating present concerns to his children and the lesser gods.

Though his worshippers are few, Chroranus is often invoked by prophets, seers, and wizards for his divine omniscience, and by all those who seek the knowledge that one's own destiny imparts. Followers of Choranus maintain that every spell or psionic power that glimpses the future—be it mere seconds or long years—must meet approval with the Seer Father. He alone, they believe, can perceive the enormity of the future and decides what portents to divulge to the mortal world. In a thousand cultures Choranus is given a thousand names and a thousand representations. As a member of the Triad, he is the consort of Ildavir and the elder brother of Centivus. Choranus is the chief enemy of Zhühn, whose empty Void the Seer Father invaded with his very presence.

The domains associated with Choranus are Creation, Knowledge, Magic, Protection, Strength, and Travel. He has no favored weapon. The symbol of Choranus varies with each culture in which he is revered.

Coatlimict (the Skull-Father)

Demigod, NE — Kaatlan, War, Carnage, Undeath

Coatlimict (ko-*aht*-li-*mikt*), the Serpent-Haired, Skull-Father, Prince of the Summer Harvest, and the Reaper of Men, is the Xulmec god of carnage and undeath. Once a mighty king of Kaatlan, Coatlimict was a favored disciple of Calchoti who turned from the peace and altruism of her faith. The final years of his tyranny ran red with the blood of his enemies. After Coatlimict was slain, his many pacts with the Lords of Hell earned him a tenuous position as a demigod. The god of bloodshed and undeath, the Skull-Father is the patron of warriors, necromancers, and blackguards.

Despite his fall into evil, the clergy of the Skull-Father bears an enigmatic state of peace with the priesthood of the Rain Queen, allowing both faiths to coexist within Kaatlan. Coatlimict is usually depicted as a giant, overly muscled human with a fleshless head and living serpents for hair, wearing a cloak of feathers and bearing his favored weapon. Clerics of the Skull-Father are frightening to behold, as they often wear the flayed skins of their victims and adorn their temples with the animated, severed heads of their enemies mounted upon pikes.

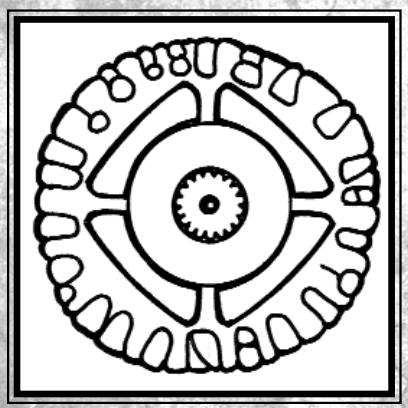
The domains associated with Coatlimict are Death, Evil, and War. His favored weapon is the two-handed *macuahuitl* and his symbol is a stylized skull from which serpents slither like the rays of the sun.

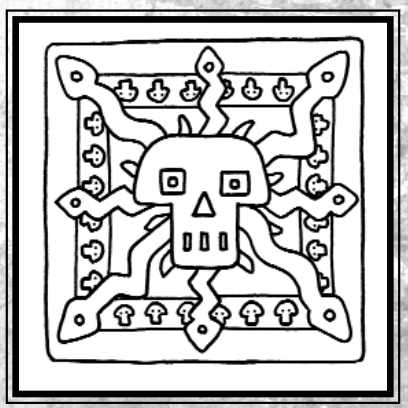
Cynhuara (the Radiant Serpent)

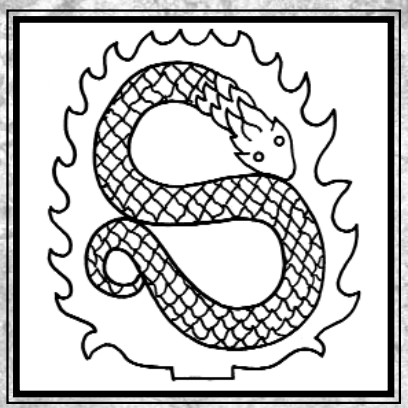
Demigod, LG — Zimala, Nagas, Reptiles

Cynhuara (sin-*wahr*-uh), the Radiant Serpent, was a demi-goddess sired by Madrah to rule the Zimalan Empire. When she came of age, she created the Naga Council, a democratic assembly that gave greater voice to her subjects. With the Radiant Serpent at its head, the Council begat an age of peaceful expansion and magical progress. The peace came to a terrible end when Cyhara's brother, Axaluatl, betrayed her and the Council, bringing war from the Khonsurian Empire that decimated the population. In the attack, Cynhuara herself was slain by Meraph, the half-dragon daughter of Queen Ankharet.

Yet divinity is not so easily extinguished. Cynhuara has lain in the slumber of death for millennia, but the rumor of prophecy has begun to circulate among the guardian nagas who live today and a handful of devoted cults of the Radiant Serpent.







Asserting that the goddess can be returned from death, the disciples of Cynhuara have come to understand that only one person, a young human female, can avail this prophecy: Itlanexca, the adolescent queen of Teotcoatlan. Herself only a young acolyte of the Radiant Serpent, the queen is unaware of her destiny and of the enemies who would see her dead to prevent it.

Clerics who worship the slumbering goddess have their spells granted by Madrah himself—until the goddess's rebirth. The domains associated with the Radiant Serpent are Good, Healing, and Magic. Her favored weapon, for those of her followers who can grasp one, is the flail. Her symbol is a serpent surrounded by a halo of flame.

Daenthar (the Hallowed Forge)

Greater god, LG — Earth, Industry, Vows, Trust

Daenthar (*dane*-thar), the Hallowed Forge, the Mountainlord, is the earth god of industry, blacksmithing, and oaths. He is the patron of miners and all who draw from the rock to shape tools of defense and war. Dwarves were hewn in the image of Daenthar, and it is indeed the Hallowed Forge that most of the Bearded Folk venerate. Yet other races pay their respects to him as well, particularly mountaineers, blacksmiths, and those who work with their hands. The Mountainlord, a stern god of unwavering law, is well known for his promised word; when an oath is made by him or his clerics, one can be assured the oath will be fulfilled. Though seldom are curses made in his name, vows of love, justice, and revenge are common.

Daenthar is one of the Greater Gods, and the most serious-minded of his siblings. He is an earth god like Poderon, but he is dour by comparison, lacking the levity of his younger brother. Gaining the friendship of Daenthar is a promise of security, for the Mountainlord defends his own. Daenthar is widely acknowledged but his clergy is small; clerics of the Hallowed Forge are found mostly within stony temples deep within mountain holds. In ceremony, they are clad in full battle armor that varies with each temple, but the everyday vestments of the Mountainlord's clergy resemble well-tailored workman's attire that is uniform across the Known Realms. When the likeness of Daenthar is carved in religious art, he always appears as a stout human or tall dwarf, either standing over a forge or arrayed in heavy battle armor.

The domains associated with the Mountainlord are Earth, Good, Law, and Protection. His favored weapon is the warhammer, while the symbol of Daenthar is a forging hammer set against a cracked mountain.

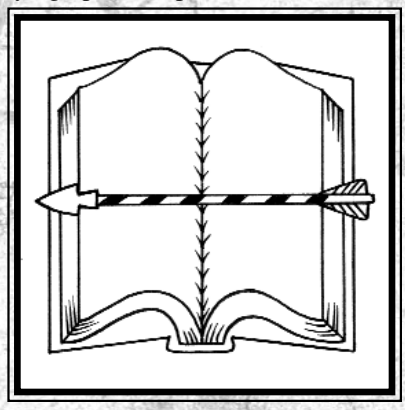
Delvyr (the Luminous)

Lesser god, NG — Knowledge, Learning, Light

Delvyr (*del*-veer), the Luminous, the Revealing Light, the Hallowed Docent, is the deity of education, knowledge, and radiance. He is the patron god of scholars, librarians, educators, and warriors who fight for the preservation of truth. Learned bards and chroniclers revere Delvyr above others, for he strives to reveal all secrets and unmask the guises of evil and all those who would bury knowledge. He is also the god of sunlight and exposure, the purveyor of open truth and unclouded opinion. Clerics and paladins who serve Delvyr are chief opponents of the undead, bringing purifying sunlight to bear against them. Monks, bards, and scholars devoted to the Revealing Light often spend long hours in research, although Delvyr does not seek to hold up his followers in dusty libraries forever. The search for knowledge is an active one; the Church of Delvyr often funds expeditions to recover lost lore, forgotten mythos, records from fallen civilizations, or even magics buried by the ages.

In religious renderings, Delvyr is always shown dwelling in places of lore, such as libraries, archaeological digs, and council chambers. Within these environments, he is shown in four stages of life: a child, a youth, a middle-aged man, and an elder to depict one's need to learn throughout one's life. Delvyr is a known enemy to the Hidden Lord, whose shadows he intends to illuminate, whose secrets he aims to reveal. Though a deity of undisputable good, Delvyr believes in truth for truth's sake; even harmful or blasphemous lore is best brought to light and carefully guarded, rather than left hidden for the unwary to find.

The domains associated with Delvyr are Glory, Good, Knowledge, and Sun. His favored weapon is the shortbow and his symbol is an arrow lying upon an open book.



Elas (the Lurker)

Demigod, NE — Deep-dwelling Marine Life, Ambush

Elas (*ee*-loss), the Lurker, She-Devil of the Deep, is a wicked and capricious terror of the ocean floor. Ever at war with her brother Chondri the Voracious, together they rule over the deep seas and its most fearsome creatures.

Elas is a deity of extreme cunning and a mistress of ambush. She is depicted as a colossal manta ray with the head and notorious jaws of a massive moray eel. When Elas takes physical form within Áereth's ocean, she is a true monster of the deep. While her dorsal side is perfectly camouflaged against the seabed, her ventral is an otherworldly wash of prismatic effulgence. Those who look upon it are irresistibly drawn into her waiting jaws of death. Her numerous tails are long, barbed, and poisonous. She spends most of her time resting on the ocean floor, laying in wait for prey deserving of her interest. Clerics of the Lurker are primarily sahuagin and locathahs.

The domains associated with Elas are Evil, Trickery, and Water. The favored weapon of Elas is the trident and her symbol is a manta ray or a sand dollar rimmed with spear points.

Elyr (the Healing Touch)

Lesser god, CG — Healing, Life, Succor

Elyr (*el*-eer), the Healing Touch, the Maiden of Life, the Binder of Wounds, the Sustainer, is the goddess of continued life, the purging of sickness, and the binding of all hurts. She is the patroness of those who give aid to others, be they home-dwelling healers or warriors who brave enemy territory to rescue captives. Born immaculate from the blood of Ildavir, Elyr takes her mother's devotion to life to a zealous extreme, believing that life should be sustained at all costs and is worth any risk.

Elyr's well-meaning, uncompromising dogma is often at odds with the tenets of Soleth, which state that there is a time for merciful death. Clerics of the Healing Touch are a blessing to the wounded and those in peril, but often a bane to the dying who prefer the release of death. Elyr does not enjoy suffering, but her drive to stave off death outweighs the need to relieve pain. Accordingly, the Maiden of Life abhors the undead, and her clerics often join the faithful of Delvyr in their crusades to destroy them. Elyr wages great opposition to the machinations of Zhühn, for she adores creation and the restoration of life in all its forms. The Maiden of Life is usually depicted as a radiant young woman in simple robes, tending the sick and wounded. No matter what armor or vestments they wear, clerics of Elyr are recognizable by their very long, well-groomed hair, vowing never to cut it once they join the clergy, as a symbol of long and enduring life.

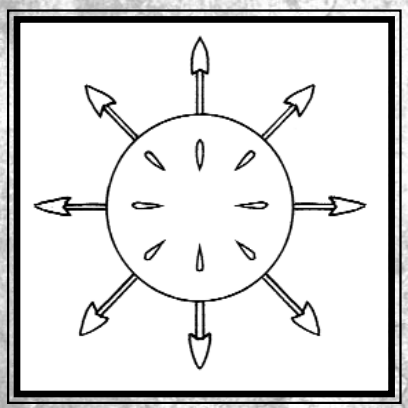
The domains associated with Elyr are Good, Healing, Liberation, and Luck. Her favored weapon is the sling. The symbol of the Maiden of Life is a radiant hand, sometimes shown clasping or touching the palm of a withered hand.

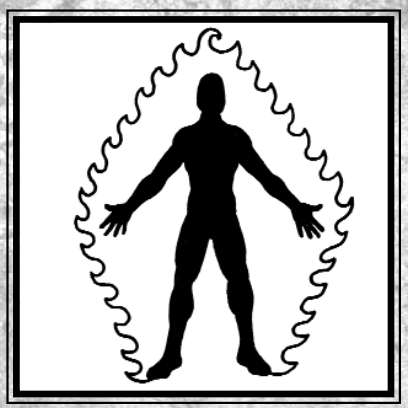
Fenwar (the Firelord)

Lesser god, N — Fire, Lightning, the Hearth

Fenwar (*fen*-wahr), the Firelord, the Blazing King, is the god of forest fires, lightning storms, hot springs, and the kinetic energies of nature wherever they manifest—volcanoes, auroras, fireflies. He is the patron of creatures inured to fire or lightning, but also of simple people who rely upon the fires of the hearth to keep their homes warm. As a god in service to Ildavir, Fenwar maintains the balance of nature with his phenomena of heat and flame.

Known for his temper, Fenwar does not tolerate those who abuse his dominion. Clerics and druids of the Firelord never cause forest fires, but they do permit them to run their course as part of Áereth's cycle of life. They do investigate such holocausts, however, if they have reason





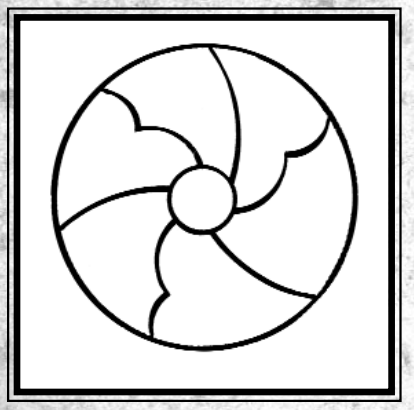
to suspect mortal instigation. Temples of Fenwar, though uncommon, are great lodges of stone with windows open to the sky. Altars, resembling massive hearths, are usually guarded by fire, magma, or steam mephits. Holy days are observed during lightning storms, when Fenwar is the most active.

The domains associated with Fenwar are Air, Fire, and Sun. His favored weapon is the halberd, and his symbol is a man-shaped figure wreathed in flame or electricity.

Gil'Mâridth (the Torment)

Lesser god, CE — Nightmares, Fear, Night Terrors

Gil'Mâridth (gil-*mahr*-idth), the Torment, the Great Hag, the Dread of Night, formerly a being of unmatched evil and power in the Sancturn Pantheon's homeworld, refused to be lowered beneath Áereth's greater gods. Instead, she escaped into the Dream held aloft by Ôæ where she reigns rivaled only by Ôæ himself and, like him, exists almost without body or awareness beyond that imagined realm. Out of sight to most dreamers, Gil'Mâridth and her cult of shanghaied dreamers wage a tireless battle with Ôæ and his faithful in an effort to reclaim the Dream and shape it to her liking, just as she has since before the dawn of Áereth. The Great Hag's dominion within the Dream is a realm of unimagined horror, and she will not relent until every dream has been made part of her nightmare.



With the near-consummate power of Ôæ, however, Gil'Mâridth's aim is not an easy one. Yet the march of fear and misery in the waking world disquiets dreamers' dreams, inviting the Torment's terrifying intrusion. Unbelieved if not unknown by most mortals, the war she wages threatens very real repercussions for every dreamer in the waking world should she achieve her frightening designs. For the Cult of Mâridth, the enormity of potential misery brought on from such troubles as plagues and wars—and especially the Northlands' Scourge—gives them hope.

The unquiet clerics of the Torment are recruited by senior priests of the faith who enter their nightmares and drive them to the edge of sanity until they come to understand the creeds of Gil'Mâridth. These disturbed believers live anonymously and work diligently to poison the waking lives of dreamers with terror they should carry with them in their sleep. Most of them function independently, haunting individuals according to instructions received in their own tortured dreams, but elite sects of the Cult of Mâridth exist, often in coordination with other evil faiths. The spread of mental anguish—and hence, troubled dreams—fuels the Torment's power within the Dream. The Dread of Night is the antithesis of hope and safety, fulfilling a dreamer's worst imagined horror. By default, she is depicted as a night hag, a creature commonly connected to her faith.

The domains associated with Gil'Mâridth are Dream, Evil, and Trickery. She is no purveyor of death, preferring the sedation and unconsciousness of her enemies to ensure their arrival in her dominion. For this reason, clerics of the Torment employ poisons such as oil of taggit and blue whinnis. When forced into combat, they wield the sap, Gil'Mâridth's favored weapon. Her symbol is a dark spiral or vortex reflecting the reoccurring image central to her priests' nightmares.

Gorhan (the Helmed Vengeance)

Lesser god, LG — Valor, War, Chivalry

Gorhan (*gor*-han), the Helmed Vengeance, the Brave One, He Who Fights First, is the deity of assertive combat and valorous accomplishments. He is the patron god of those who fight with courage against the lawless and corrupt. Nonhumans often favor Gorhan in their darkest hour, but usually know him by a different name. Most of the Brave One's faithful are paladins and cavaliers, and even elves have founded knightly orders in his name. His fervor against evil often outweighs his reason, and his followers evince the same trait.

Gorhan is always depicted as a slender knight in luminous, golden armor, a radiant longsword and shield in hand. The visor of his helm always hides his face, revealing him as neither human nor elven in countenance. Gorhan is the husband of Justicia and embodies the emphatic force that carries out her righteous decrees. When forgiveness or reprieve are no longer options for the guilty, the Helmed Vengeance becomes the executioner. Clerics of Gorhan respect valor above all, and

those who've proven their courage against the face of true evil earn the right to wear armor emblazoned with their deity's sacred symbol. Though they wear standard vestments within their temples, clerics and paladins of the Brave One favor the anonymity of visored helms on the battlefield.

The domains Gorhan is associated with are Good, Healing, Strength, and War. His favored weapon is the longsword, and his symbol is such a sword stained with black blood. Those temples that honor both Gorhan and his wife merge their symbols together as one.

Hidden Lord

Lesser god, CE — Secrets, Misdirection, Forbidden Lore, Shadows

The Hidden Lord, the Cloaked One, the Keeper of Forbidden Lore, or He of Many Names is a deity of the shadows, an unseen master of dark places and darker secrets. Those mortals who seek heretical writings and buried truths inevitably find themselves coveting the power of the Hidden Lord—whether they know it or not. The Cloaked One is one of the few gods who do not openly preach their tenets, for his ways are by their very nature concealed. His clergy, the Hidden Path, is a well-organized secret society that carries out its evil agenda through clandestine means, feigning the worship of other gods and communicating to each other with complex codes. In every land he is known with a different name—such as Nuurifar, Crypticus, or Salderast—and whenever one of these names become fairly established, his clergy renames him.

The Hidden Lord is never portrayed in any form; any depiction of him is intended to mislead. Some affiliate the Hidden Lord with Zhühn due to his secret agendas, but this is inaccurate; the Hidden Lord seeks power, while Zhühn seeks to remove all power. There is no common appearance among his faithful. If there is a means to identify a cleric of the Hidden Lord, they do not share it outside their own. Any priest who turns from the Hidden Path is marked for death.

The domains associated with the Cloaked One are Darkness, Evil, Knowledge, and Trickery. His symbol, very rarely seen, is a black cowl concealing a wispy visage and a pair of glowing eyes. A cleric of the Hidden Lord can use the holy symbol of any neutral or evil deity to channel their spells. The Hidden Lord's favored weapon is a wavy-bladed dagger.

Huamext (The Restored)

Demigod, NG — Xulmec, Protection

Huamext (*woh*-mesht), the Guardian and Preserver, is the reincarnation of the hero-turned-god Huamec the Deliverer. Once a chieftain of his people, Huamec first led the human slaves to freedom from the naga empire of Zimala. After establishing them in the Xulmec peninsula, Huamec ascended into divinity, only to sacrifice his immortal life to save his people in the War of Divine Right. Centuries later, Huamec emerged again, revived by one of his descendants, a priestess named Ixtique. Having achieved divinity herself with the sole purpose of resurrecting her ancestor and god, her spirit fused with his and a new aspect of both exists in the form of Huamext. Huamext is the god of vigilance for all of Xulmec, a deity keeping surveillance on the lands and its people.

Huamext is often considered the eldest human son of Madrah, for he gives of himself more than any of Madrah's progeny. Although he is worshipped primarily in Teotcoatlan, Huamec is a legend and hero to all tribes of Xulmec, and shrines to Huamext exist in every city so the people can pay him their respect. In his temples, the Guardian is depicted as he was in life, a bear of a man wielding a massive warclub and sometimes wearing armor made from the scales of a dragon; at his side is always a young girl, representing the spirit of Ixtique who gave Huamec renewed life. Nevertheless, both are worshipped as Huamext, a single deity. Priests of the Guardian and Preserver are open-minded, willing to form allegiances with foreigners but never willing to risk the security of all Xulmec. Huamext and his clergy disapprove of the infighting that often exists between the city-states, a state of attrition they cannot foil. It was priests of Huamec who were first taught the rites to create living idols (see Chapter 3), and for this reason every temple to Huamext is guarded by one of the idols.

The domains associated with Huamext are Earth, Good, and Protection. His favored weapon is the greatclub and his symbol is a quetzal-feathered phoenix.

Ildavir (The Giver of Form)

Greater god, N — Creation, Life, Nature, Animals

Ildavir (*il*-duh-veer), the Giver of Form, the Mother of Essence, is often overlooked but is no less powerful than the others of the Triad. It was Ildavir who first gave corporeal form to the creatures of Áereth, setting them into the cyclic arrays of nature and granting them the ability to procreate. As a goddess of Creation, Ildavir stands aloof from the world, seeing that it moves as intended only on a global scale. Even so, some choose to worship her directly. Clerics and druids of the Old Faith, as it is called, know the Mother of Essence to be the foremost god of nature itself, the origin of all earthly life. They place great value in physical creatures, objects, and places. Simultaneously materialistic and humble, Ildirians preach the value of the world and its workings and strive always to protect nature and its children. Farmers, agriculturists, and even hunters regularly offer tribute to the Giver of Form.

When depicted, Ildavir is envisioned as a winged dryad or sylph and bearing the antlers of a caribou or gazelle. She stands always apart from the world, and yet in contact with it, providing nourishment. She is the consort of Choranus and the mother of Ireth, Daenthar, Poderon, and Olidyra. The goddess Elyr is her youngest progeny, who sprang fully formed from a wound dealt her by Zhühn, her foremost enemy. The gods who despoil nature, such as Malotoch, Nimlurun, and Narrimunâth, are often the objects of her anger.

The domains associated with the Mother of Essence are Animal, Creation, Earth, Plant, and Protection. Her favored weapon is the scythe and her symbol is a leaf, frond, or tree.

Ilhuicatl (Lord of the Reef)

Demigod, NG — Athua, the Sea

Ilhuicatl (il-*hwee*-kotl), Lord of the Reef, is the patron god of the Xulmec city-state of Athua, given divine status by Madrah and fostered by the ocean goddess Pelagia. To the Athuans, he is the personification of the sea itself, though even they recognize the existence of Pelagia as the motherly, oceanic goddess above him. Ilhuicatl is the protector of all goodly, marine-dwelling creatures, including merfolk and tritons.

Ilhuicatl is depicted as a noble triton with the Southland features of a Xulmec human. According to legend, as a mortal man he fell in love with a mermaid who beckoned him into the sea, where he joined with the spirit of Pelagia herself. Porpoises and dolphins are sacred animals in the faith of the Lord of the Reef, and human clerics of Ilhuicatl maintain strong contact with the clerics of merfolk and tritons who also revere him.

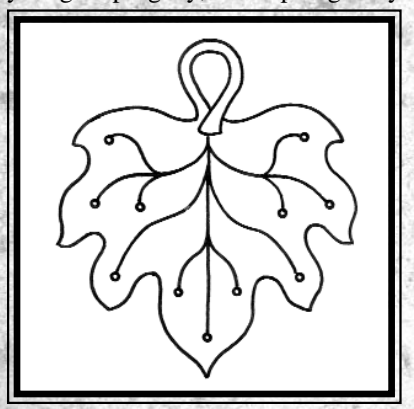
The domains associated with Ilhuicatl are Good, Protection, Travel, and Water. His favored weapon is the spear, and his symbol is a conch.

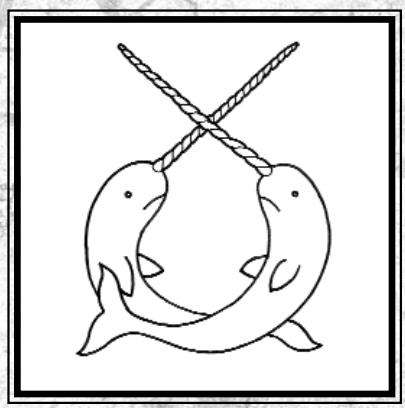
Ilquot (The Bell in the Deep)

Demigod, CN — Cold Waters of the North, Marine Predators, Retribution

Ilquot (*il*-quot), the Bell in the Deep, the Bellowing Bray of Night, is the fierce and jealous protector of the frigid northern oceans. He is the patron not only of those living upon the northern coasts but also the predators that keep their fragile ecosystems healthy. Ilquot is, in fact, their top predator, a rare and unseen hunter letting no beast take more than its fair share.

Like his brothers and sisters, Ilquot watches over a realm bequeathed to him by his mother Pelagia. Among them, his reputation is the dourest, yet his spirit is as ferocious within the seas' krakens and orcas as it is gentle with its puffins' chicks. The savage clerics of Ilquot must live a life as wild and brutal as his favored children, the creatures of the icy waters, though their numbers are few and dwindling. Without the presence of Ilquot's clerics as wardens of the cold northern seas, local priests have had to take special care not to





infringe upon this gelid divinity's simple yet easily disregarded tenets. When a larger number of mortals are disrespectful of the sea, Ilquot is quick to bring retribution upon them, inciting his faithful to war. The Bell in the Deep is usually depicted as an intimidating humanoid with the head of some great animal of the arctic seas, typically a walrus, polar bear, or octopus.

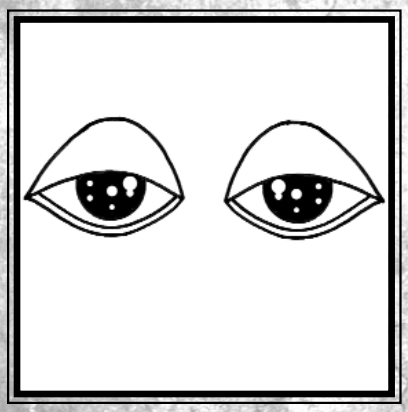
The domains associated with Ilquot are Protection, War, and Water. The favored weapon of Ilquot is the harpoon, interchangeable with the javelin. His symbol is a pair of crossed narwhal tusks, often frozen in ice.

Ireth (the Starmistress)

Greater god, CG — Astronomy, Forestry, Wizardry

Ireth (*eer*-ith), the Starmistress, the Stargazer, the Verdant Mantle, is the goddess of the night sky, woodlands, and magic. She is the patroness of astronomers, navigators, and woodsmen who respect the balance of nature. Ireth is the primary deity worshipped by the elves of Áereth. The elven race was fashioned in her image, reflecting her virtues, love of knowledge and art, and fascination with magic. Though possessed of a disciplined mind, Ireth is nevertheless whimsical, a trait bestowed upon the elves at their creation.

Eschewing formal temples, the Stargazer's places of worship take many forms, from *hallowed* forest glades open to the sky to stargazing observatories and sky-lit libraries. Elves, studious wizards, and those who look beyond Áereth itself into the stars themselves all pay their respects to the Starmistress. She is a mystic deity who embodies both worldliness and the unearthly mysteries of existence itself.



Ireth is the eldest child of Choranus and Ildavir. When she is rendered in religious art, Ireth appears as a slender wizard in modest, voluminous robes with long, flowing tresses. She is often shown with a spellbook in hand and a sheathed sword at her hip—or else wielding the sword with the book under one arm. She is typically depicted as elven, half-elven, or human.

The domains associated with Ireth are Air, Animal, Earth, Good, Knowledge, and Magic. Her favored weapon is the longsword and her symbol is a pair of eyes with star-flecked pupils.

Izmaledt (the Lord of Many Forms)

Demon prince, CE — Obscenities, Malformation

Izmaledt (*iz*-muh-let), the Lord of Many Forms, is the demon prince of physical blasphemies, the purveyor of putrid flesh, and the hybridization of unnatural horrors. Those who find the loathsome worship of Nimlurun too systematic for their tastes often find themselves thralls to Izmaledt, for the Lord of Many Forms offers obscenity without reason. Usually stricken with contagions themselves, cultists of Izmaledt are typically found in the company of the fouler creatures of Áereth, such as otyughs, gibbering mouthers, or oozes. Wizards in the service of the Lord of Many Forms experiment with the flesh of their enemies, stitching and rearranging limbs from one creature to another, and a liberal use of transmutation magic is a common pastime for such depraved souls.

Jezuel

Archdevil, LE — Pain, Torture, Indignity

Jezuel (*jez*-ooh-el), a sadistic she-devil who calls herself the Queen of Tribulation, seeks always to bring physical and mental anguish to mortals. She alleviates the suffering of her worshippers while they live, only to bring it a hundredfold upon them when their souls are in her grasp. To earn her protection, the depraved cultists of Jezuel must inflict agonies upon others, but her demand for torment does not end with physical pain. Indignity and shame are her favorite afflictions to work upon the mortal mind, and for this reason she spends a great deal of her effort spreading misery like a plague. The father who cannot feed his starving children, the soldier whose terror leads him to abandon his comrades when they are in need, the midwife who fails to save the newborn child—these Jezuel names her greatest triumphs.

Justicia (the Helmless Vigil)

Lesser god, LG — Justice, Mercy, Defense

Justicia (jus-*ti*-shuh), the Highest Magistress, the Restoring Flame, the Helmless Vigil, is the goddess of mercy, justice, and defensive combat. As the patroness of judges, lawmen, and knights, she oversees justice in all its forms, be it in a court of law or the field of battle. As the patroness of guardians and the beneficent, Justicia seeks to remedy all hurts and redeem all evil. Those who admit their crimes can find forgiveness with the Restoring Flame, but when evil fails to repent, she burns with a purifying fire. Though she

favors the moral virtues of good, Justicia usually remains impartial to the laws of the land in which she is revered.

Justicia is the wife of Gorhan—she is the voice of reason behind his unwavering valor. She is depicted as a statuesque knight in silver armor. In one hand, she holds the scales of justice, and in the other, a gilded longsword. Long dark hair spills from her head. She never wears a helm, preferring to look into the eyes of those she judges. When armored, clerics and paladins of the Highest Magistress shun the use of visors, preferring open-faced helms as they march into battle.

The domains associated with Justicia are Good, Healing, Law, and Protection. Her favored weapon is a longsword. Her symbol, a shield bearing radiant eyes with a longsword held against its face, is often merged with that of her husband's in joint worship.

Klazath (the Crimson Banner)

Lesser god, LE — War, Subjugation

Klazath (*klah*-zuth), the Crimson Banner, the Rain of Death, is the god of glory through violence, conflict, and war for its own sake. He is the patron of conquerors, tyrants, and martial governments, as well as individual soldiers who believe that the honor of battle itself outweighs all consequences. Followers of Klazath consider peace an enervating state, a stagnation that weakens all parties. The dogma of the Crimson Banner demands the necessity of war, citing nature—the design of Ildavir herself—as a model for unending violence. The weak, Klazath teaches, must be slain so they do not consume the resources needed for the strong. Barring that, they must be subjugated to serve the interests of the conquerors. Klazath is not a popular god in many lands, but generals and kings often rally in the name of the Crimson Banner to justify their means. Be it true piety or lip service, the clerics of Klazath welcome all bloodshed in his name.

A god of needless war, Klazath is the current consort of Yvyn, the Righteous Slaughter. He is also a prime enemy of Justicia and Gorhan, whom he enjoys luring onto the battlefield. Klazath is depicted as a warrior in black plate armor, half spattered with blood, wearing an elaborate plumed or horned helm. In his mailed fists, he carries a great war axe. The war priests of the Crimson Banner smear their own blood on their armor before a battle, signifying their willingness to bleed for their faith.

The domains associated with the Rain of Death are Destruction, Evil, Law, and Strength. His symbol is a bloodstained, double-headed axe of black metal. Accordingly, the battleaxe is his favored weapon.

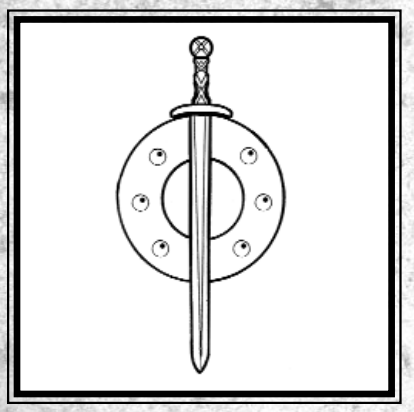
Lagos (the Scaly God)

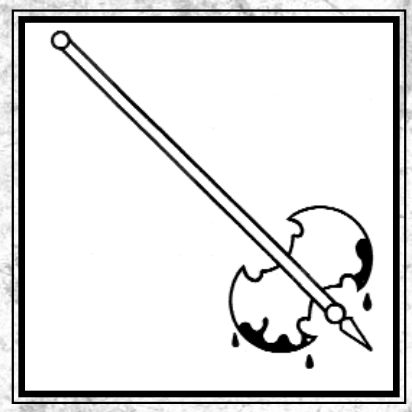
Demigod, CE — Antagonism, Reptiles, Savagery

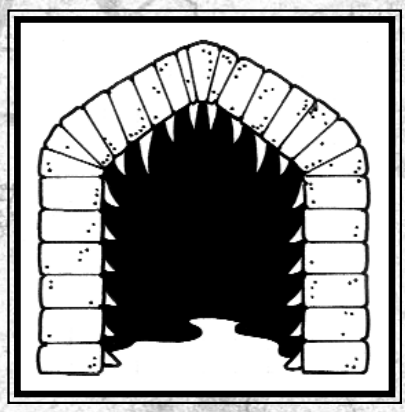
Lagos (*loh*-gos), the Scaly God, the Scaled One, is the demigod of reptilian creatures and subterranean caves, violence, and battles for supremacy. The hostility Lagos exhibits is fierce but brief, and this trait is common even among those he lords over. At the core, he is indolent and selfish, offering his favor only in passing and very little else. It is believed that he will personally devour those who displease him, and Lagos is not known for his patience. He is given to fits of rage and lustful indulgences.

Lagos is portrayed as a tremendous wide-mouthed reptile with a long tongue, razor claws, and a thick, club-like tail. His green-blue, scaly hide is scarred and peeling, and he is always depicted in acts of aggression. His servants, appropriately, are mostly troglodytes, kobolds, or evil-minded lizardfolk. Cave-dwelling humans have been known to worship Lagos as well, primitive barbarians as violent as the reptiles the Scaly God represents. Spiritual leaders of such tribes who serve Lagos are usually shamans and adepts, offering regular blood sacrifices at crude shrines.

The domains associated with Lagos are Chaos, Destruction, Evil, and Strength. Most of his followers







would rather use teeth and claws in combat; when forced to wield a weapon, the morningstar is the god's favored choice. The symbol of the Scaly God is a stony archway lined with reptilian teeth.

Lasheeva (Lady Dissolution)

Lesser god, NE — Undeath, Murder, Affliction

Lasheeva (lah-*shee*-vuh), Lady Dissolution, the Cold Seductress, the Black Desecration, the Daughter of Nightmares, is the goddess of undeath and the termination of natural life. When mortals first felt the cold grip of death upon them, it was Lasheeva who offered an attractive, if macabre, alternative. Granting choice creatures her chilling touch, the goddess personally introduced the curse of undeath to Áereth. Lasheeva is the unequivocal warden of the Negative Energy Plane and thereby gives new, "blessed" life to the dead. With this defiance of the gods' despotic mandate of mortality, she seduces countless souls into her dark fold.

Priests of opposing faiths theorize that Lasheeva was Áereth's first and most powerful lich who ascended to divinity with the support of a cabal of evil gods, but clerics of Lasheeva know that it was Lady Dissolution herself—an ancient princess of the Sancturn Pantheon—who bestowed the mantle of lichdom upon willing mortals and personally crafted the first phylacteries that sustain her greatest protégés. Even the most impious of intelligent undead acknowledge Lasheeva as the goddess of their own unliving existence, but many revere her outright. The largest temples of the Lady Dissolution, subterranean crypts desecrated in her name, are guarded by mummies and liches of the foulest sort. High priests and priestesses are, in fact, required to choose the path of either undead form at an hour appointed by Lasheeva herself. Her shrines are infamously rife with ghouls, zombies, and skeletons.

Lasheeva is the daughter of Gil'Mâridth and the immortal enemy of Soleth. Her followers are Áereth's quintessential purveyors of undeath, hoping to spread negative energy across the world like a plague. Lay followers of Lasheeva are almost always dabblers of necromancy and often find themselves targeted by paladins. Even the all-hating followers of Zhühn oppose her faithful, for undeath cheats the Great Enemy of the obliteration he craves for all life.

The domains associated with the Black Desecration are Death, Destruction, and Evil. Her favored weapon is the falchion and her symbol is a black, jawless skull set with open, living eyes.

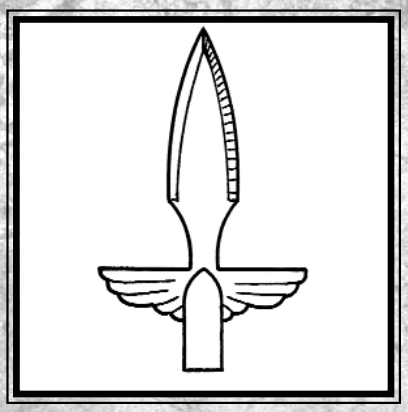
Madrah (Lord of the Earth and Sky)

Greater god, N — Earth, Sky

Madrah (*moh*-druh), the Lord of the Earth and Sky, Heart-of-Sky, the Mighty Eye, is a greater god of terrestrial life and aerial forces. Though his dominion technically reaches across all Áereth, he was charged by the Triad to oversee the continent and islands that make up the Southlands. Accordingly, he is seen by most natives of that land as the overlord of all gods. The Mighty Eye fathered the demigods Cynhuara and Axaluatl, the immortal rulers of the long-faded Zimalan Empire, and granted divine ascension to the gods of Xulmec. Madrah is powerful but equivocal, his incarnations as numerous as the cultures that worship him. While the humans of Xulmec believe he is the savior of all existence—the only being capable of keeping the Sun from burning the world to ash—the drakon of Ssorlang believe he is a great lord of reptiles preparing the world for serpent rule. Such varying aspects, tenets, and origins of the Lord of the Earth and Sky can be found carved in temple walls throughout the Southlands in the form of simple glyphs and vast, intricate mosaics. Though nearly every thinking creature in the Southlands pays some form of homage to him, few worship Madrah directly, instead worshipping the many spirits, demigods, and divine progenies who serve him.

Those few clerics who venerate Madrah directly, many of whom are druids, are as inscrutable as their god, often found wandering the breadth of the Southlands on an unceasing pilgrimage, like caretakers of his dominion. The faithful of Madrah can be found in many forms: in city streets, garbed in rags and muttering ancient incantations backwards, braving the isles of Dujamar in the raiment of dragonhide armor, or counseling the drakon Emperor in silken robes. Northland theologians are never certain what to make of this elder god, his esoteric ways, or his oracular priests.

The domains Madrah is associated



with are Air, Earth, Magic, Travel, and Weather. His favored weapon is the shortspear. The symbol of the Lord of the Earth and Sky varies with every culture in which he is revered.

Malotoch (the Crow God)

Demigod, CE — Scavengers, Ruin, Cannibalism

Malotoch (*mal*-uh-tock), the Carrion Crow God, the Mother of Ruin, the Mistress Defiler, the Crow Witch, is the patron goddess of scavengers, cannibals, and all those who practice unclean rites. She is the demonic mistress of the living and undead who feast upon carrion or otherwise benefit from the loss of mortal life. Like poisonous mushrooms that thrive on decay, so Malotoch thrives on the ruin of life. Living monsters such as hags, harpies, and rooks (see *DCC #5: Aerie of the Crow God*) pay homage to her, as do cannibalistic undead such as ghouls and ghasts. Where great battles end and the glorious fallen lie, there Malotoch and her foul children are drawn.

The Crow Witch is always depicted with the curvaceous body of a woman and the head and legs of a monstrous crow. Clerics of Malotoch frequently keep the company of zombies and ghouls and adorn their armor with the bones of carrion birds or their latest victims. Among the profane rites performed by Malotoch's cults are the corruption of birds of prey into anathemas of nature, and evils of this sort often draws the ire of druids. Unsurprisingly, Malotoch is despised by most gods, although she garners a grudging respect from Nimlurun and Narrimunâth. The clerics of all three gods work in concert to achieve loftier, fouler plots than any of their clergies could alone.

The domains Malotoch is associated with are Air, Chaos, Death, and Evil. Her favorite weapon is the short sword. Cultists who serve Malotoch and nearly all undead raised in her name have a bloodstone imbedded in place of their left eyes. The bloodstone, often surrounded by cracked bones, is one of her symbols; the other is a crow perched atop a skull.

Myna (the Maid of Fortune)

Lesser god, CN — Chance, Circumstance, Fortune

Myna (*my*-nuh), Fortune Herself, the Lady of Weal, is the goddess that many turn to when prayers to the other gods have gone unanswered. For some mortals, Myna's name hangs upon their lips every day, ever coveting a change in fortune. As the divine embodiment of fortune itself, Myna is an elusive deity whose intercession is often unwelcome to lawful deities of the Sancturn Pantheon. She tips the scale on small and large affairs, offering good fortune to the underdog or withdrawing her favor from the advantageous or those predisposed to victory. She is whimsy incarnate, and none can discern the patterns of, or requirements for, her favor. The immortal power that controls the dice, Fortune Herself makes plays at both good and evil, law and chaos, and the only certainty in her dogma is the need for perpetual change.

Once, Myna's faith was known to few outside of an exclusive cult of the serendipitous and the secretive, but gradually her capricious dogma resolved into theism. Clerics of the Lady of Weal, most multiclassed as rogues or bards, are seen as smaller versions of the goddess herself, frustrating and fickle yet bearing good fortune. Their blessings, however, are always welcome, and for this reason her church has grown wealthy from the tiny donations of countless peasants and considerable contributions from nobles rich with coin. When Myna is depicted in religious art, she is seen as a flighty young woman, dancing or casting dice.

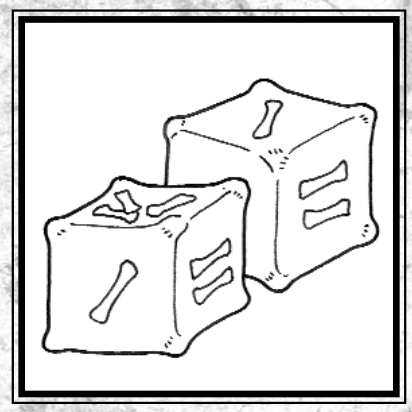
The domains associated with the Lady of Weal are Chaos, Luck, and Trickery. Her favored weapon is the dart, and her symbol is a stylized bullseye or a pair of dice made of bone.

Narrimunâth (the Lord of Disease)

Demigod, LE — Disease, Vermin

Narrimunâth (nar-ih-moon-*ahth*), the Rat God, the Lord of Disease, the Venerable, is the twin brother of Nimlurun and a demigod twisted to evil by the hand of Zhühn. He is the god of plagues and debilitating illness, the patron deity of wererats, those who would spread sickness, and other forms of vermin.

Narrimunâth is half of the god born of Pelagia, intended to be a god of purity. Zhühn's sabotage of the birth resulted in the sundering of the newborn deity, resulting in the twin gods



of sickness and filth. Narrimunâth gets along well with Nimlurun as well as can be expected between evil gods, and together they often scheme with Malotoch the Crow God. The Lord of Disease is always depicted as a half-man, half-rat abomination with a naked rat's tail, razor claws, and glowing red eyes.

The domains Narrimunâth is associated with are Death, Destruction, and Evil. His favorite weapon is the sap, and his symbol is a mangy, dead, or undead rat.

Nethruel

Archdevil, LE — Obsession, Addiction

Nethruel (*neth*-roo-el), the Fervent Lord, is a canny archdevil who feeds the sins of obsession among the mortal world. He is the devil of extremes, of ceaseless, unhealthy devotion. The veteran who looks for absolution in a bottle, the maiden who quits the company of her true friends in pursuit of a disreputable paramour, the wizard who neglects his family to focus on his magic—all these may have come under the influence of Nethruel. Cultists of the Fervent Lord, themselves victims of the demon prince, seek to afflict others with addictions and the debilitating reliance on objects, other people, or even ideas.

Neshti (The Stealthmaiden)

Lesser god, CG — Thievery, Trickery, Vigilantism

Neshti (*nesh*-tee), the Veiled Thief, the Stealthmaiden, the Lady of Shadows, is the goddess of thievery, malfeasance, and most pursuits on the wrong side of the law. She is the patroness of rogues, vigilantes, and peasant heroes, all those willing to stand against tyranny and cruelty. Many crimes are committed in her name, but the Stealthmaiden is only willing to grant her blessings on those who do so for the right reasons. A thief who steals bread to feed his children, a bard who swindles a cruel city official, and a sorceress who charms a miserly noble into granting a bit of his fortune as alms to the poor may all offer a prayer to Neshti—in the hope that she will veil their crimes so they will live to commit more. The Lady of Shadows offers no apologies, and will use any means necessary to see the greater good done, possessing no misgivings about stabbing her enemies in the back. Neshti and most of her faithful do not care for fair fights, as evil seldom does either. Although averse to murder, she is willing to deal violence upon her enemies and if death is the consequence of villainy, so be it.

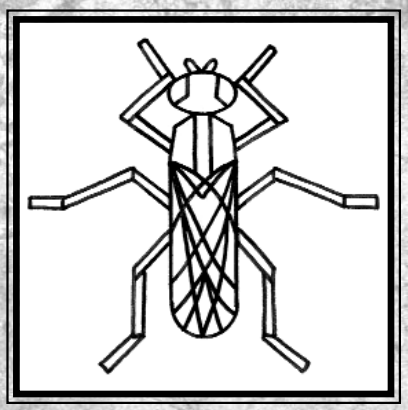
The Stealthmaiden's underhanded dogma is controversial among other goodly deities. In religious art, she is depicted as a hooded adolescent girl with raven-black hair, and is sometimes seen hiding from Justicia and Gorhan. Neshti does not care for temples and open worship, so her faithful usually gather in guildhalls or in small, nondescript shrines out of plain sight. There is no uniform appearance among her faithful; the black-clad, rooftop-dwelling burglar, the well-armed adventuring wizard, and the nondescript neighborhood cobbler could all be followers of the Lady of Shadows. Many of Neshti's clerics multiclass as rogues.

The domains associated with Neshti are Chaos, Good, Luck, and Trickery, and her favored weapon is the punching dagger. Neshti's symbol, more often seen tattooed in out-of-sight places than rendered on religious architecture, is a depiction of a blindfolded female face.

Nimlurun (The Lord of Filth)

Demigod, CE — Filth, Pollution

Nimlurun (*nim*-luh-roon), the Lord of Filth, the Holy Defiler, the Unclean One, was corrupted along with his brother Narrimunâth by Zhühn to bring further decay to the world. He is the god of refuse, putrescence, and all things unclean. Only the sick-minded and destitute pay deliberate homage to Nimlurun, but people who seek purity often speak the Lord of Filth's name in an attempt to placate him and avoid his attentions. His clerics seek to foul the skies of the world, pollute its waters,



and despoil the earth. As such, they often inspire the anger of druids and the gods of the earth.

Nimlurun is the twin of Narrimunâth, born of Pelagia and intended to be a god of purity. Zhühn's interference in the god's birth resulted in the making of two demigods of disease and despoilment. Nimlurun works often with his brother, and together they are known to treat with Malotoch, whom they reluctantly regard as an equal. Like his brother, Nimlurun is depicted as a half-man, half-rat beast, though his mangy fur is always coated in slime.

The domains he is associated with are Death, Evil, and Destruction. His favorite weapon is the light mace, and his symbol is an insect, usually a dung fly.

Ôæ (The Dreamer)

Lesser god, NG — Dreams, Imagination, Storytelling

Ôæ (*aw*-uh), the Dreamer, is the god of mortal dreams and imagination, the patron of wistful lovers, the downtrodden, and all who long for a better place than the waking world offers. Once the caretaker of the Sancturns before they arrived in primeval Áereth, the Dreamer forwent the gifts of the Triad to persist only within his memory: the Dream, that perpetual afterimage of their lost home.

Because of Ôæ's all-consuming preoccupation with sustaining the

The Dream

When the Sancturn Pantheon fled the ruin of their homeworld (see *Chapter 1*), a small impression of this transcendental place was preserved within the mind of their caretaker, Ôæ. Though this quality was not physically compatible with Áereth, its boundless wonderment was eagerly welcomed by the Triad as a blessing upon their creation. Ever since, the gift of dreaming has been bestowed upon all thinking beings—mortals and gods alike—as a nocturnal, fantastical playground. This is Ôæ's Dream.

Spatially limitless, the Dream is a world of pure imagination with its designs owing as much to Ôæ's memory of their home as it does to the sleeping fantasies of every dreamer since the dawn of Áereth. With each dreamer's dream, a slight aspect of this realm is upturned and reshaped in ways that may defy any waking sense of logic. But as extravagant as a mere dream may be, the changes to the Dream itself are mostly fleeting and rarely significant by themselves. But the sheer number of ever-churning dreams upon the dreamscape, each leaving their impressions, means Ôæ's Dream is a plane in constant flux.

The regular immersions into the Dream that each dreamer experiences are often forgotten (at least on a conscious level), and awareness of one's dreams as existing within the Dream is rare. Even the knowledge in the waking world that one's dreams take place within Ôæ's Dream is of little consequence once asleep. But for the followers of Ôæ, Gil'Mâridth, and other entities focused on the Dream, it is a world as real and potentially dangerous as any other.

Unbeknownst to most dreamers, the Dream at large is not the paradise it ought to be. A great war wages between the Knights of Ôæ and the crazed votaries of Gil'Mâridth who would transform the Dream into an infinite dreamscape of horrific insanity. Being Ôæ's Dream, he will always have the upper hand, for the hearts of good dreamers have long overcome fear and despair. However, Gil'Mâridth's influence cannot be overstated. Her domain within the Dream is vast and now situated at its very heart. By all accounts, it is an enormous black swirl of frantic nightmare. No dreamers—not even her most horrific mortal minions—have ever safely ventured deep within her realm. It is from this unspeakable stronghold that the Great Hag commands her agents of terror: the Cult of Mâridth, diverse denizens of both the Dream and the waking world, and if the rumors are true, more than one of Áereth's shadowy gods secretly bows to the Dread of Night as their queen.

Despite the horrors associated with Gil'Mâridth, her power does not dominate the Dream. For the most part, the Dream is a realm of benign wonders and mind-boggling scenarios with perils rarely in plain sight. Great dreamers and native entities alike can be found roaming its ever-shifting vistas. Races and civilizations unheard of on Áereth carry on in war and in peace in distant realms even the oldest of its dreamers may never see. Meanwhile, Ôæns guide lucid dreamers through their master's imagined terrain where the dreams of dogs, gods, and children revel and reel, touting and trumpeting their splendors into the Dreamer's living memory of home.

Dream, he is a god without body or awareness outside of the Dream itself. But within, he is an immensely powerful being, watching over his select flock of devotees and the dreams of all creatures alike. In the waking world, Ôæ's clergy rarely congregate or hold any formal shrines, and they wear no special vestments. They are characteristically imaginative daydreamers who have come into the faith after being approached by Ôæ himself in their sleep. Ôæns typically lead simple lives as artists and storytellers, encouraging children to hone their imaginations and jaded adults to reclaim their restless dreams of youth. In this, they hope to foster avid dreamers for Ôæ to bring into his fold. Clerics of Ôæ occasionally multiclass as bards, and many find that adventuring fuels their imaginations and enriches their dreams. Ôæns dedicate themselves to opposing the misdeeds of Gil'Mâridth and her clergy, a war that is waged only partially in the waking world. Within the Dream, these Knights of Ôæ assemble in imagined temples within holy cities of utterly fantastic design. There they work to protect and maintain this slice of their patron's—in fact, all of the Sancturn Pantheon's—ancient home.

The Dreamer is usually portrayed as a handsome, robed archmage or hierophant with his eyes closed. As the caretaker of the memory of their home, most gods of the Sancturn Pantheon look upon Ôæ fondly, but the Dreamer wages eternal war with Gil'Mâridth.

The domains Ôæ is associated with are Dream, Good, and Protection. His favored weapon is the sling, and his symbol is a closed eye set against a cloud, often with some fantastic dreamscape etched within. While priests of Ôæ must prepare their spells like any other cleric, their meditative state is much more of a vivid daydream.

Obitu-que

Demon prince, CE — Domination, Prepotency

Obitu-que (*oh*-bih-too-kay), Lord of the Five, is a demon prince who dreams of rulership and dominance over every living thing in existence. Though this vague desire is not uncommon among demons, the sheer focus and belief to which Obitu-que adheres is extraordinary. A lord of fire, slavery, and destruction, Obitu-que was once a mere balor among many, commanding demonic armies against the devils of Hell. After centuries spilling the ichor of the lawful fiends and his own kind, he carved for himself the Abyssal principality. Experimenting with loathsome magics, he mutated his own body and looked with new eyes—all five of them—upon the Material Plane with conquest in mind. Obitu-que met with brief success, personally razing and sacrificing whole villages, but his body was slain by the last of a line of noble human barbarians.

Yet centuries later, the spirit of the Lord of the Five lingers still, causing blight where his body remains. The demon prince is patient, and finds a great spiritual hold over like-minded mortals with dreams of predominance and tyranny. Nothing satisfies Obitu-que more than the feeling of domination, the subversion of his victims' wills.

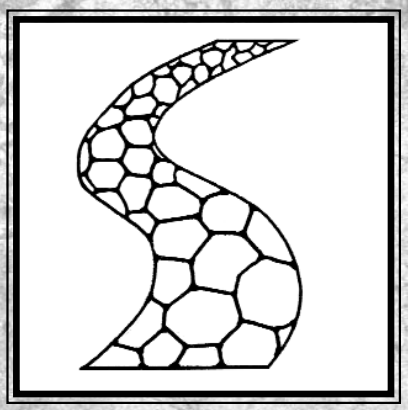
Olidyra (the Dauntless)

Greater god, N — Travel, Exploration, Adventure

Olidyra (*oh*-lih-*deer*-uh), the Dauntless, Lady Pathfinder, the Wanderess, is the goddess of exploration, adventure, and discovery. She is the patroness of wayfarers, vagabonds, fortune-hunters, and all those willing to make risks or venture into the unknown. Olidyra is worshipped primarily by halflings, the race whose creation she inspired, but all travelers and most adventurers know a brief prayer or two that entreats Lady Pathfinder for safe journeys.

The faithful of this wayward, roguish deity believe that Olidyra often breaks the mandates of the Triad, choosing to wander Áereth in mortal form simply to subvert its law and explore the ever-changing world. Such headstrong desire and naked curiosity are seen most often in halflings, who carry small shrines to the Wanderess in their wagons. Permanent temples to Lady Pathfinder are exceptionally rare, though the remnants of hastily built tributes of rock and wood are often found along well-beaten paths. Olidyra gets on well with most other gods, except those who seek to harm or imprison others. She is considered the only deity who "understands" the wiles of Myna, and is always quick to share a joke with her brother Poderon. Accordingly, clerics of Olidyra are on especially friendly terms with the faithful of these gods. When the Wanderess is depicted in religious art—typically painted in bright colors on the sides of wagons—she appears as a female halfling, human, or half-elf, with either a walking stick or a bow in hand.

The domains associated with Lady Pathfinder are Luck, Plant, Trickery, and Travel. Her favored weapon is the shortbow and her symbol is a winding or forked road.



Ormazd (the Changeless)

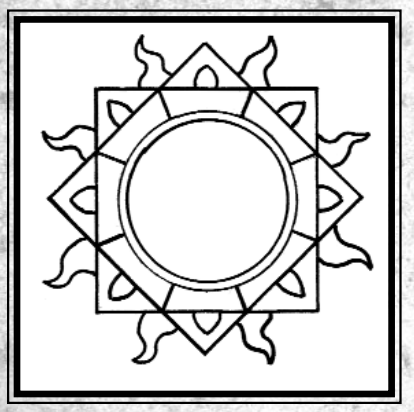
Greater god, LG — Creation, the Sun, Prophecy

Ormazd (*or*-mahzd), the Changeless, the Lord of Wisdom, is the creation god of sunlight, a mysterious deity of great power seldom heard in the current age. If Choranus is the god of destiny, then Ormazd is the god of the prophecies it engenders. Like Ahriman, his dark twin, Ormazd is believed to have spawned from a neutral deity named Zurvan, of which very little is known. Commonly associated with angelic beings, Ormazd is said to have sponsored a celestial host that once temporarily purged the world of evil when Ahriman's faith was as its greatest. Ormazd's skills of creation were paramount in the formation of Áereth, but his many battles against his brother have reduced his power over the ages and diminished his worship in the mortal realms.

When Ormazd's worship was at its peak, the desert-dwelling people of Abylos named him Ahura Mazda, the Lord of Wisdom. Such civilizations, believing him to be the sole creator of the world, are buried now in the desert sands. Yet in recent years, small clergies of Ormazd have sprung up in the Northlands, sometimes affiliated with the church of Delvyr and theologians of the Triad.

When Ormazd is depicted in religious art, he resembles a winged bull with the face of a bearded man and the blaze of the sun behind him. Ormazd and his prophetic clerics work always to oppose the designs of Ahriman, vigilant for traces of the evil god's influence. Priests of Ormazd inspire renewed interest in Áereth's distant past and the unknown, eastern lands.

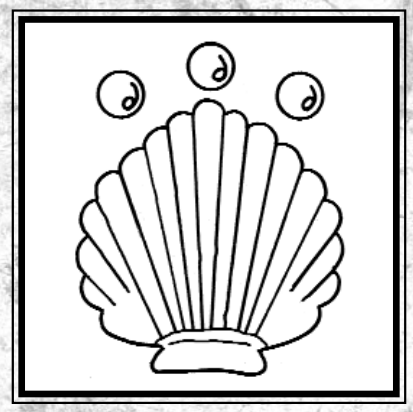
The domains associated with Ormazd are Creation, Good, Law, and Sun. His favored weapon is the kukri and his symbol is a blazing sun.



Pelagia (of the Singing Sea)

Lesser god, N — Oceans, Seas, Music, Travel

Pelagia (pehl-*ah*-gee-uh) of the Singing Sea, the Coral Queen, the Fish of Argent, the Maiden Voyager, is the goddess of the seas and oceans of Áereth, music in all its forms, and travel. She is the patroness of bards, fishermen, and folk who ply the sea for their livelihood. Though she can be as capricious as nature itself, Pelagia favors those who respect the waters of Áereth and the creatures within them. Whales are especially sacred animals in her faith, and their song is always considered a good omen. While many evil creatures make a home in the depths, Pelagia respects their right to dwell there, in keeping with the balance of nature and the morals of Áereth. The faithful of the Coral Queen never seek to destroy such wicked creatures but are permitted to defend themselves when necessary.



With the whole of the world's waters her dominion, Pelagia has delegated the aegis of each oceanic region to one of her many children. Most of them are demigods; Chandri, Elas, Ilquot, and Thalass number among the many. Pelagia names Zhühn her greatest enemy, for when she gave birth to a son, the Great Enemy tore him asunder and spawned the twin gods Narrimunâth and Nimlurun. Deities of filth and disease, her corrupted children often try to spoil the waters of Pelagia's dominion. Consequently, clerics of the Coral Queen seek to destroy every cult and shrine to the destitute demigods.

Pelagia's island-temples are scattered across the seas of Áereth, and most of her clerics live upon coastlines or aboard ships. Nearly every sailor offers a prayer to the Coral Queen when setting out to sea, whether it's a quick jaunt up the coastline or a voyage across the Empyrean. Rare shells and pearls are highly valued by clerics of Pelagia and make excellent religious donations. Particularly religious captains drop such natural baubles into the sea at the midpoint of their journeys. Music also plays a large role in the Pelagian faith. Clerics of the Coral Queen may sing sonorous anthems with the morning tide, while a devoted sailor sings a common sea shanty hymn during his nightwatch. The Maiden Voyager is usually depicted as a fair-haired mermaid adorned with coral jewelry, though in some lands she appears as a selkie with raven tresses.

The domains associated with Pelagia are Protection, Travel, and Water. Her favored weapon is the rapier and her symbol is a sea shell of any kind, usually a conch or cockleshell.

Poderon (the Deep Delver)

Greater god, NG — Earth, Commerce, Festivity

Poderon (*poe*-der-on), the Deep Delver, the Jovial Miner, is the earth god of commerce and merrymaking. As an earth god, he is the patron of miners, gemcutters, and merchants, but all those who purvey or seek merriment look to Poderon. Though the gnome race was first cast in his image and revere him more than any god, others pay homage to the Deep Delver as well, particularly those whose livelihood comes from the earth itself. Although his commitment to hard work and the preservation of the earth cannot be disputed, Poderon is best known for his optimism and appreciation for comfort—a trait seen everyday in the gnomes of Áereth. The Delver is famous for his sense of humor, but he becomes a dangerous foe when the happiness of his subjects is threatened.

Although he is one of the Greater Gods, the Deep Delver is more willing than his siblings to intercede in mortal affairs, a fact that often incurs the scrutiny of his father, Choranus. As a son of Ildavir, Poderon has a fondness for earth-dwelling animals and wooded realms. His places of worship exist in many places, from metropolitan sanctuaries to sylvan shrines, though his formal temples are kept well-hidden. Such hallowed chambers are reliquaries for as many rock samples as Poderon's clergy can procure. These stones vary from everyday granite and coal to the purest of sapphires and diamonds.

Gnomish clerics of Poderon follow a loose hierarchy of gemstone titles. Acolytes may be malachites, azurites, or garnets, while more senior priests may be topazes or jasmals. When the Deep Delver is rendered in religious art, he usually appears as a slender human teenager or a middle-aged gnome with a hammer or pick in hand. Just as often, Poderon is shown as a large badger or in the company of one.

The domains associated with the Deep Delver are Animal, Earth, Good, and Trickery. His favored weapon is the heavy pick, and his symbol is a mining pick and a halved geode.

Qayaqiq

Demon prince, CE — Curiosity, Desperation, Suicide

Qäyaqiq (*kah*-yuh-kik), the Fatal Dream, the Shaded Door, is a demonic power which prays upon sleeping souls. The Fatal Dream is a straightforward yet little understood entity, which coexists within the Abyss and the Dream, and is thus an enemy to both Ôæ and Gil'Mâridth alike. One thing is certain, however: Qäyaqiq hunts the souls of dreamers by a means unvaried since time immemorial. Appearing in their dreams as a gate or doorway cloaked in shadow, the Shaded Door beckons the curious to enter. What fate lies beyond that door may only be suspected, but once entered, neither men nor gods can account for the lost soul. Many lullabies and nursery rhymes warn young sleepers to "shun the Shaded Door."

According to mortal thralls, Qäyaqiq employs a clergy of one: Each is a deranged, suicidal dreamer believing that he alone is favored by Qäyaqiq and must find a worthy successor before finding absolution. Once this is done, the madman may enter the Shaded Door that night where a glorious reward supposedly awaits.

Sestyruas

Archdevil, LE — Envy, Covetousness

Sestyruas (ses-*teer*-ooh-us), a mendacious archdevil who calls himself the Lord of Ardor, aims to fan the flames of envy among mortals, driving them to crimes of jealousy and passion. He whispers to those who crave what they cannot have, offering only enough power and satisfaction to string them along until death brings their souls to the foot of his sulphurous throne. His mortal thralls are depraved clerics and rogues who treat frequently with erinyes, the chief servants of Sestyruas. Proficient liars, some multiclass as bards to better employ their forked tongues.

Septych (the Blackhammer)

Demigod, LE — Avarice, Tyranny

The Septych (*seph*-tish), the Dark Dwarven Gods, the Seven As One, are in fact seven aspects in a single deity. Once seven dwarven brothers, their concerted pursuit of immortality spanned centuries and the ruthless butchery of innocents. But in the end, each turned against his brother in the final grab for divinity. As punishment for their brutality and greed, the brothers were granted godhood only as a single entity. Since that day, only the personality of one of the seven brothers manifests at any given time, one brother for each period of seventy-seven years. While one rules, the other six wait, impotent, for the passage of centuries for their next "turn." Gods of avarice and blood-soaked tyranny, the Septych is worshipped in secret by thieves, assassins, evil warriors, and any

dwarf given over to the greed to which his race is often accused.

Currently, it is Sodoutym (so-*dooh*-tim), the Blackhammer, the Dark Foe, Hellbeard, whose mind rules the Septych. Like his brothers before him, Sodoutym spends his time searching for the means to separate his soul from the rest, and he will likely do so for eternity. To this end, the Blackhammer demands blood sacrifice from his followers as he scours the face of Áereth for the prophesied soul that can release him from his deific bondage. Sodoutym is depicted as a well-muscled dwarf with the outstretched wings of a bat and writhing tentacles instead of a beard. His clerics lair in caves, sharing the company of dire bats and foul aberrations.

The domains associated with the Blackhammer are Evil, Law, and Trickery. The favored weapon of Sodoutym is a seven-tailed scourge, though the other six Dark Dwarven Gods possess favored weapons of their own. The symbol of the Dark Foe is a swarm of attacking bats. The symbol of the Septych is a stylized version of the Dwarf rune for 7, which has made it an unlucky number among dwarves.

Shul (the Watcher in the Sky)

Lesser god, LN — The Moon, Measurement, Tradition, Literacy

Shul (*shool*), God of the Four Phases of the Moon, the Watcher in the Sky, the Glistening Orb, the Lawgiver, is the god of measurement, tradition, literacy, and the moon itself. Credited as the deity to give Áereth the standard, twelve-month calendar and Ùr, the oldest written language from which most humanoid languages descended, Shul is the patron god of educators and disciplinarians who follow strict curricula. Though his name is remembered in the modern age, true worship of the Lawgiver has faded.

In religious writings, Shul's name appears, but often only through his epithets. The Watcher in the Sky is an ally to Valdreth, the Enduring, and their collective clergies once worked with one another to record the passage of time. He is the sponsor of the Xulmec goddess Anahuara, a divinity he admires but cannot entirely fathom for her sepulchral dogma.

The Watcher in the Sky is depicted primarily as the moon itself, or the moon with a human male face. The faith of Shul was largely destroyed centuries ago, but small cults of the Lawgiver still dwell in remote places, maintaining the same traditions and rituals during precise phases of the moon. Such hermitic cults observe the march of time and preserve dead languages in carven stone. The holiest of days for all of the faith are lunar eclipses.

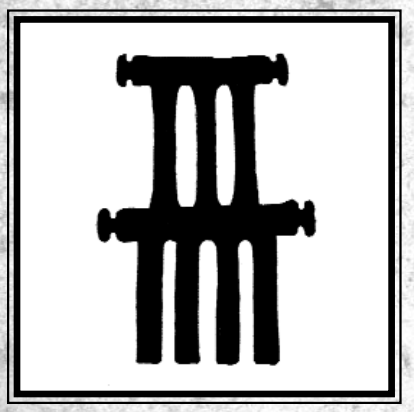
The domains associated with Shul are Air, Knowledge, and Law. His favored weapon is the dagger, and those used by his clergy are usually made from sharpened stone. The symbol of Shul is the moon.

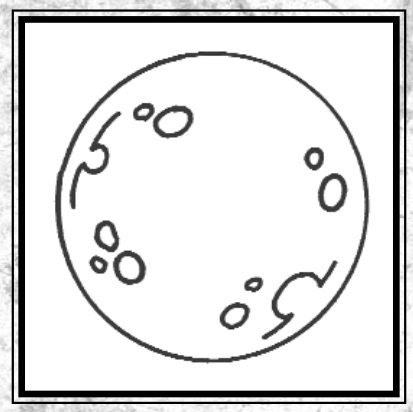
Soleth (the Silent Death)

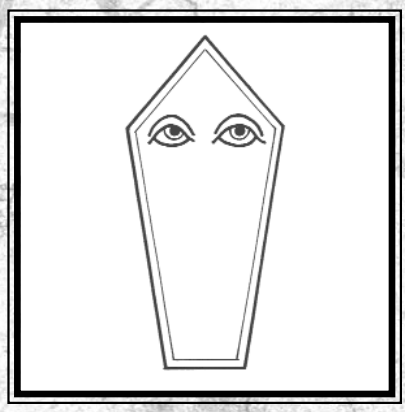
Lesser god, LN — Peaceful Death, Solitude

Soleth (*so*-leth), the Silent Death, the Merciful One, is the god of merciful, dignified death. He is the patron of morticians and healers who cannot save the dying. The somber-shrouded clerics of the Merciful One are a misunderstood lot, for they appear when there is no hope of continued life. Though they heal when they can, they are practitioners of euthanasia, and give last rites to those on their deathbeds to help usher them painlessly into the beyond.

Soleth teaches that death should be a quiet, dignified event. This belief is often at odds with the tenets of Elyr, whose fervor for life outweighs the need for its release. For this reason, the Silent Death's faithful seldom get along with the faithful of the Maiden of Life. However, like Elyr and Delvyr, Soleth abhors war and all forms of undeath. The Merciful One opposes the machinations of







Lasheeva at every opportunity, for she represents everything he despises.

Clerics of Soleth brew a special draught that they administer to the dead of their faithful which protects them from the taint of evil necromancy. Clerics and monks who serve the Silent Death wear grey and black robes and sashes, but clerics don heavier armor when questing or adventuring. Temples of Soleth are as solemn catacombs, their chambers and galleries furnished with sarcophagi, funeral biers, and rock-hewn graves. As grim as they appear, few places are as free from the touch of undeath. Respect for the dead and the living is Soleth's greatest tenet, a virtue best exemplified by a clerical sect known as the Threnodim. Multiclassed as bards, they compose impromptu eulogies for the unnoticed deaths of common men and perform great requiems for fallen heroes.

The domains associated with the Silent Death are Healing, Law, Protection, and Repose. His favored weapon is the bastard sword; his faithful loathe violence, but they are quick to dispense it to prevent further death. The symbol of Soleth is a stone coffin etched with a pair of open eyes.

Sothulth (the All-Seeing Orb)

Demigod, CN(e) — Paranoia, Insanity

Sothulth (*so*-thoolth), the Great Eye, the All-Seeing Orb, is a largely forgotten deity banished from the planes by the Sancturn Pantheon for a divine crime few can remember. Though exiled to the fringes of the multiverse and the Astral Plane, Sothulth is still able to make brief sojourns to the Outer and Material Planes. It manifests only long enough to carry out one of its erratic plans and move on again.

Once a more popular deity whose mantle was better understood, Sothulth offers very little to its worshippers, so the few cultists of the Great Eye are usually as insane as it is. An unpredictable god, the All-Seeing Orb will grant generous boons or afflict great curses upon its own followers. Some loremasters hypothesize that Sothulth was once implicated by Zhühn for a great crime, and its subsequent banishment drove it to the state of madness it is known for today. Usually depicted as a large purple or black eye emerging from a dark nebula, in any form Sothulth takes, a single staring eye remains its dominant feature.

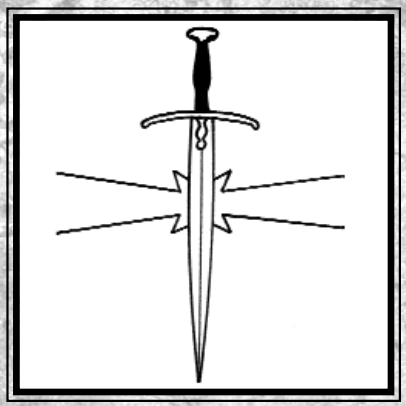
The domains associated with Sothulth are Chaos, Destruction, Knowledge, and Trickery. The favored weapon of the Great Eye is the scythe, and its symbol is an eye.

Teleus (the Obedient)

Archangel, LG — Law

Teleus (tel-*lee*-us), the Obedient, the Trusting Light, is the angelic champion of Law established by Choranus himself when Áereth was young. Charged with countering the chaos of Zhühn with order and unity, Teleus challenged the corruptive power of the titan Cadixtat. After their world-spanning battle, Teleus at last threw his enemy down when he severed Cadixtat's hand with his sword. Still, Cadixtat survived, and thus neither Law nor Chaos completely triumphed. Satisfied with the balance of the two, Choranus ordered Teleus to quit Áereth. A lord among solars, Teleus is sometimes worshipped as a god himself. Too humble to allow this, Teleus works to shift his clerics' devotion to another, like-minded god of law, such as Gorhan, Justicia, or even Choranus.

When mortals devote themselves to Teleus, the domains associated with his worship are Good, Law, and War. His favored weapon is the greatsword and his symbol is the same sword surrounded by parallel rays of the sun or held against a nimbus of light.



Thalass (the River Father)

Demigod, N — Terrestrial Waters, Music

Thalass (*thal*-us), the River Father, the Lakelord, the Purifying Flood, is the deity of inland waters, lakes, and rivers. He is the patron god of those who draw life from the water, rewarding those who respect nature with abundance. The Purifying Flood responds with deluges and violent rainstorms against transgressors.

Clerics and druids of Thalass often dwell near forest springs and lakes, sometimes consorting with nymphs, called the Daughters of Thalass. Always vigilant against the pollutions of Nimlurun, they have been known to hire adventurers when their waters are threatened by aberrations or enemy clerics. The River Father is said to resemble a noble satyr with garments of pure water, wielding a bow that fires arrows of crystal. Thalass is one of the many children of Pelagia, and his faithful often worship at the banks of rivers, for all rivers lead to the dominion of the Coral Queen.

The domains associated with Thalass are Animal, Protection, and Water. His favored weapon is the shortbow and his symbol is the syrinx, a set of hollow reed panpipes.

Thormyr (the Loyal)

Demigod, LN(g) — Honor, Duty, Protection

Thormyr (*thor*-meer), the Loyal, the Dauntless Warrior, is the god of duty and honor, especially in the face of evil. He is the patron of soldiers, guardsmen, and all men-at-arms who protect the innocent from the lawless. A stern, serious god, Thormyr rewards loyalty above all, granting his blessing to the steadfast and valiant and promising spiritual deliverance to the fallen.

Centuries ago, as a virtuous paladin in service of Justicia, Thormyr's unswerving duty to her laws drove him on a quest into Hell itself. The crusade led to an assault against archdevils, the saving of countless innocents, and the recovery of a holy relic—and to Thormyr's torture and death. After bargaining for the release of his soul, Justicia and Gorhan elevated the fallen warrior into divinity. Entrusted with the mantle of duty by the Greater Gods, Thormyr was forced to adopt a more neutrally inclined role as a deity.

The Dauntless Warrior is always depicted as a towering warrior in silver scale mail, holding a ranseur as he did in life. His lay followers often serve as bodyguards or court protectors, while his clerics are charged with vigilance against evil. Despite Thormyr's adherence to neutrality as the god of honor and duty, most of his followers are of good alignment. Paladins who serve him often refer to him as Honorus, the Duty and the Flame.

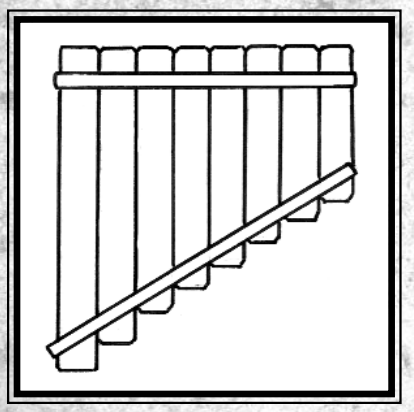
The domains associated with Thormyr are Healing, Law, Protection, and Strength. His favored weapon is the ranseur and his holy symbol consists of the polearm laid slantwise across a silver shield.

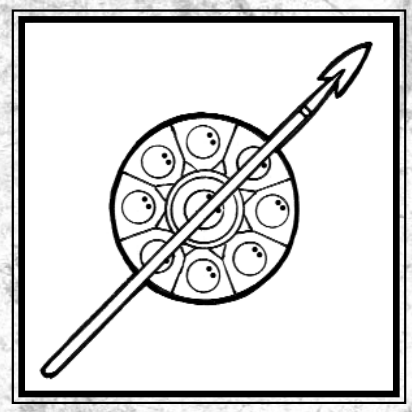
Tlachinozal (the Scorched God)

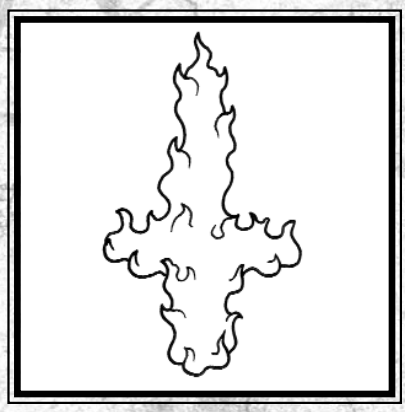
Demigod, LE — Chuzec, Fire

Tlachinozal (tla-*chin*-o-suhl), the Scorched God, the Fire Requiem, is the patron god of the Xulmec city-state of Chuzec. Having deposed the former goddess of Chuzec, whom he claims failed to protect his people from volcanic eruptions a thousand years ago, Tlachinozal is a militant deity of fire and earth. He teaches that fire can either destroy or strengthen that which it touches; infidels and foreigners will burn, while the faithful will endure and be reshaped like Chuzec itself. The Fire Requiem demands sacrifice in the form of captured enemies, whose hearts are taken from them and cast into braziers of holy fire.

Acolytes of Tlachinozal must learn to speak Ignan, then brand their bodies with sigils of their god. More dedicated priests of Tlachinozal often undergo a ceremony known as the Cleansing, whereby their skin is ritually burned but thereafter pro-







vides a stronger resistance to fire. Despite the xenophobia his militarism breeds, the Scorched God was the first Xulmec deity to approve of foreigners' art of forged metal, and many of his followers are metallurgists and blacksmiths. When his image is burned into the walls of his temples, Tlachinozal is depicted as a large, muscular man with red skin whose appearance suspiciously resembles that of an efreeti.

The domains associated with Tlachinozal are Earth, Evil, and Fire. His favored weapon is the shortbow, with arrows usually set aflame. His symbol is a shard of fire resembling an arrow, knife, or sword.

Tororthun (The Stone Spider)

Lesser god, N/CE — Subterrane, Denizens of the Underdeep / Malice, Spiders

Tororthun (toe-*ror*-thoon), the Stone Spider, the Eight Legs of the World, the Queen of the Damned, is the goddess of the cavernous depths of Áereth, the narrow, stygian passages, and all the crawling denizens of the Underdeep. When the rebel elves fled from the sphinxes millennia ago, it was Tororthun who called to them, lured them into the abyssal chasms of her dominion, and embraced them. As the fumes from the Devil's Cauldron slowly transformed them into the drow, the Stone Spider sheltered them from the scrutiny of the Overworld. Yet some say Tororthun is a goddess stricken mad, for she occasionally flies into a fury of senseless evil. Calling herself simply the Spider Queen during such spells, she retreats to her illimitable web in the demonic planes of the Abyss. Capricious and cruel, the Queen sets her minions against one another, favoring and disfavoring on a whim. Some sages familiar with the faith of Tororthun speculate that the evil of the drow infected their own matron deity, making a demon out of a goddess, while others say that Tororthun was stricken by a binding curse from Zhühn himself in an effort to undermine yet another of the gods' creations. When she is lucid, Tororthun is a fierce protector of her chosen followers, watching over the dark elves who have made a home in the earthen womb of her Underdeep dominion.

An uneasy ambivalence exists between Ireth, whom surface elves worship above all, and Tororthun. The Starmistress does not approve of the darkness the drow have embraced or the violent society they have spawned, but she is grateful that the Stone Spider has taken them under her care. Ireth, however, despises Tororthun's demonic alter ego, and ever searches for the means to "cure" the goddess of this affliction, hoping to steer the wicked drow back from evil. While priestesses of Tororthun are willing to treat with other faiths of neutrality, the clergy of the Spider Queen see all other deities as unworthy enemies. The Spider Queen has made a fierce enemy of the Xulmec god Ahpuchac, whose dominion of the subterranean world does not please her. Tororthun is depicted as a massive arachnid, a hybrid of chitin and solid stone, crawling perpetually through the Underdeep. Her Spider Queen persona is seen as a drow female of ravishing beauty and cruel countenance, or as a whip-wielding drider.

Those clergy who worship the Stone Spider have access to the domains of Drow, Earth, Poison, and Spider, while those who worship her demonic aspect have access to Drow, Evil, Poison, and Spider. The favored weapon of Tororthun is the longsword, while the favored weapon of her Spider Queen persona is the whip. Her symbol is an image of herself, a stony spider usually rendered symmetrically.

The Traitor (The Undying Lord)

Demigod, CE — Betrayal, Chaos, Madness

Once a mortal wizard named Thandric, the being known as the Traitor ascended to divinity centuries ago. Thandric and his brother, princes of a forgotten kingdom, were sent on a quest to find a legendary Elyrian potion called the Draught of Ages that could heal their dying father, the king, who was stricken with a magic curse. The people, beset on all sides by their enemies, needed their warrior-king to lead them from destruction. On their quest, Thandric heard rumors that the Draught could grant its imbiber eternal youth, and this desire germinated within him. When the princes returned with the potion, their father lay on his deathbed and the armies of the enemy had reached the gates of their capital city. Fearing for his own life in that moment, Thandric grabbed the Draught from his father's hand. Thandric drank the Draught, hoping to achieve eternal youth and save himself. As the

enemy breached the gates, Thandric watched his home overtaken and his people slain. When they attacked Thandric, his body sustained grave injuries but he would not die. He had gained immortality…and the curse of godhood.

For his betrayal, Thandric was "awarded" the immortal mantle of chaos. His identity as a man long since shattered, the Traitor is now the patron god of treasonists, betrayers—and of course, traitors. As a purveyor of chaos, the Traitor is infamous for his dark whimsy, and even his own followers are not immune. Sometimes he withholds spells, while at other times he aids his followers' enemies. His true name largely forgotten, he now has many names and titles, including Chaotor, the Undying Lord, and the Regenerating One. He is worshipped by medicine men, witch doctors, and shamans of evil bent. Those who forsake their former deities often find a twisted home in his service. The Traitor is usually seen as a kindly old man with subtle, disturbing bestial traits. Some believe the Traitor is an office more than an entity, that he whose betrayal outweighs that of the current Traitor will take his place.

The Traitor's domains are Chaos, Healing, Madness, and Trickery. His favored weapon is a staff of Caduceus (quarterstaff) with a hidden stiletto blade concealed beneath its cap. The symbol of the Traitor is a vial of poison, usually shown unstoppered and half empty.

Tzitzimitl (The Queen of Air)

Demon princess, CE — Destruction, Ruin

Tzitzimitl (tsih-tsi-*mitl*), the self-titled Queen of Air, is the demon princess of destruction and ruin, the patroness of outcasts and criminals who seek vengeance against the righteous. Selfish, cruel individuals turn to Tzitzimitl for worldly power, finding retribution in the fell rites of her worship. Among the Lords of the Abyss, Tzitzimitl is the mistress of vrocks, and it is usually these vulture-headed demons that her mortal followers endeavor to summon with their rituals. Sufficient blood sacrifice and evil deeds allow the cultists to summon a vrock to the Material Plane for greater lengths of time than spells would normally permit.

In the Southlands, where Tzitzimitl's thralls are greater than number, she is opposed by the humans of the city-state of Amoya—and their goddess, Anahuara. Of great import to cultists of Tzitzimitl is the March of Lightless Despair, the five moonless days at the end of each year, when it is believed that Tzitzimitl takes physical form on the Material Plane and battles Anahuara. Demonic allies of the Queen of Air also visit the land, as the magic of mortals wanes during the absence of the Spectral Moon. The demon princess and her allies have always been defeated, however, and punishment usually falls upon her worshippers for their insufficient devotion.

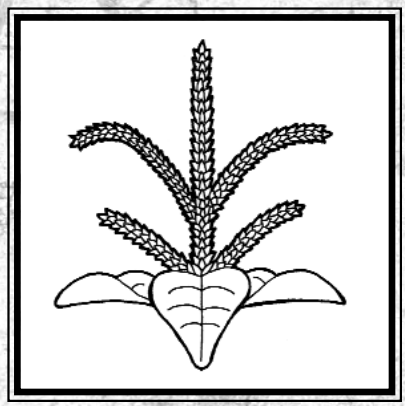
Valdreth (The Enduring)

Lesser god, LN — Time, Longevity, Integrity

Valdreth (*vahl*-dreth), the Enduring, the Unchanging One, is indisputably the oldest of the Sancturn Pantheon. Before Valdreth's arrival, time as it is understood did not exist in the Triad's creation. He is the god of the everlasting and the caretaker of time itself. A dying father who wishes to impart knowledge to his children, a desperate general who waits for reinforcements before the enemy horde appears, and a wizard in short possession of a valuable book may each beseech Valdreth to grant them more time. Yet the Unchanging One rarely stops the great march of time itself, teaching his faithful instead that they must take care to use what time they do have wisely.

Clerics of Valdreth are patient men and women who know well just how long an hour can be—and how short a lifetime. In religious art, the Unchanging One is depicted as a clear-eyed sage, sometimes middle-aged, sometimes venerable. Temples of Valdreth are known for selling *unguents of timelessness*, usually finding buyers in wizards, scholars, and those who wish to preserve frail writings otherwise subject to the ravages of time.

The domains associated with Valdreth are Law, Magic, and Protection. His favored weapon is



the light mace, and his symbol is an amaranth or a timepiece of any kind.

Variag (the Icelord)

Lesser god, N — Ice, Winter, War

Variag (*var*-ee-og), the Icelord, is the god of brutal winter and cold winds. He is the patron of those who thrive in the frozen tundra and relish the sound of cracking ice. Barbarians of the Frost Barrens revere the Icelord, mostly to placate him into relenting his frozen embrace. It is said that when winter descends upon Áereth, Variag is allowed to venture forth and bring storms of ice to lands normally forbidden to him. Winters longer and colder than normal are said to be the indulgences of the merciless Icelord. He is also a god of war, loving the clash of cold steel and the spilling of blood upon the snow.

Variag is not evil or malicious, but he cares little for those frozen by his administrations. His reign of ice is always kept in check by Ildavir, who ensures the balance of nature in all things. In the mountainous realms of Áereth, frost giants worship Variag, as do any humanoids willing to endure arctic conditions and glacial environs—for in such remote places few other clergies venture. Druids and rangers of the frozen north usually choose wolves as animal companions, for they are sacred to the Icelord.

The domains associated with Variag are Air, Strength, War, and Water. His favored weapon is the greataxe, and his symbol is the silhouette of a wolf etched into the blade of such an axe.

Xeluth (the Ravager)

Lesser god, NE — Violence, War, Strife

Xeluth (zel-*ooth*), the Ravager, is the god of violence and the brutality of war. He is the patron of all who use force to achieve their ends, those who delight in slaughter, and those who grow stronger with conflict. Xeluth cares more for the fight than the spoils, more for war itself than triumph or even its outcome. Although he shares many tenets with Klazath, Xeluth usually contends with the Crimson Banner for the attentions of Yvyn—a battle the Ravager seldom wins.

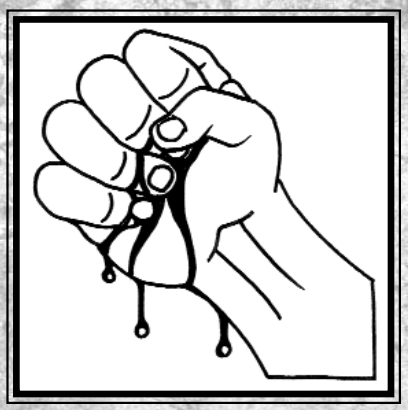
The conquests and schemes of Xeluth, often aided by other evil powers, have led to the spawning of several bloodthirsty demigods commonly worshipped by monstrous humanoids. These including Kagnar, the god of animality and rage (served by gnolls and minotaurs), Gadraak, the god of territorialism (served by orcs and ogres), Molgrem, the god of militarism (served by goblins and hobgoblins), and Urath, the god of mindless slaughter and fury (served by trolls). Often these very same humanoids turn directly to Xeluth, and for this reason his clergies are diverse. Fearless human priests in polished, spiked platemail and spear-wielding, hide-clad shamans from an orc tribe might both serve Xeluth. Given the Ravager's dogma, such disparate clerics are as likely to ally with one another as do battle. Advancement through challenge or assassination is common in Xeluth's brutal faith. The Ravager himself is depicted as a helmed warrior, his face concealed with a death's head mask. In his burly arms, he wields a great flail whose spiked ball resembles a black sun with a nimbus of fire.

The domains associated with Xeluth are Destruction, Evil, Strength, and War. His favored weapon is the heavy flail and his symbol is a skull, usually bloody or pierced with a blade.

Yvyn (the Righteous Slaughter)

Lesser god, NE — Conspiracy, Holy War, Rebellion

Yvyn (*ee*-vin), the Curdled Trust, the Vicious Cycle, the Holy Preemptor, the Righteous Slaughter, the Mastress Cabal, the Whisper in the Darkness, is the goddess of conspiracy, insurrection, and the evils of xenophobia. When each great race first emerged and feared the wonders of the world they did not understand, it was Yvyn who whispered into their ears, warning them of the treachery of their strange new neighbors. The Mastress Cabal nourishes the seeds of doubt and mistrust which bloom and grow until cries for war reach



fever pitch and great crusades are unleashed in the name of other gods. To her followers, the leaders of the land are corrupt, deserving to be dethroned. Yvyn ever champions the underdog, yet only until he is redeemed—then she moves onto the new underdog who wishes to usurp her prior darling. She is the Vicious Cycle churning whirlwinds of paranoia into great storms of bloodshed.

Very often, the Holy Preemptor seeks out other gods—great and small—with whom to conspire, caring not whether they be good or evil. Yvyn, whose causes are rarely her own, seeks only bloodshed and the joy of usurpation. In turn, every god knows that Yvyn is the first one to turn to when a violent alliance is required. Yvyn allies herself with the Hidden Lord more than any other deity, for the two share many of the same modi operandi. Indeed many of Yvyn's own secret and ferocious cultists are likely devotees of the Cloaked One as well. Her cults count among their members clerics from all walks of life and stations within society; yet their only true allegiance is to the Mastress Cabal and to each other. Their mission is singular: to foment insurgency in the name of the Righteous Slaughter. Yvyn is seldom rendered in art, but when she is, she is seen as a middle-aged woman looking upon a battle from afar, clutching in her hands a military fork.

The domains associated with Yvyn are Evil, Trickery, and War. Her favored weapon is the trident (a pitchfork to the rebellious peasant) and her symbol is a clenched fist dripping blood.

Zhühn (The Great Enemy)

Greater god, CE — Deception, Blight, Corruption, Poison, Falsehood

Zhühn (zeun), the Great Enemy, the White Sepulcher, the Faceless Lord, the Dweller in the Void, is an opportunistic being of surreptitious means and great, overshadowing power. He is the power who answers when there is no other to hear, who plays the role of any invoked deity, be it false or imagined. Very few of Zhühn's servants are aware of their service to him, for they know their god by different names (e.g., Entropy, *DCC #10: The Sunless Garden*). Whenever a false idol is served or an unknown deity is called upon, it is Zhühn who fills the empty void, grants the spells to the idolater, and beguiles the unwary.

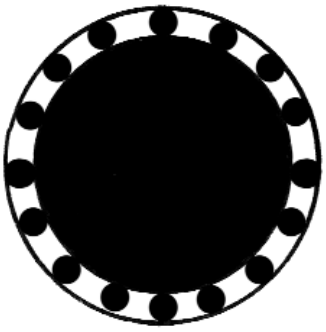
Zhühn desires nothing less than the eradication of all sentient life, the complete undoing of Creation. He dwelt in the Void before the Triad interrupted the darkness, and Zhühn will not rest until all is unmade. His plots are numerous, many-layered, and may take centuries to reach fruition. He is content to save a village of innocents if he can poison the entire kingdom; he will spare a nation if he can destroy the continent. Often those who fall from grace unwittingly find Zhühn picking up the slack. Blackguards and corrupted clerics of good frequently result from Zhühn's subtle administrations. So far-reaching are his machinations that even the most virtuous clerics often second guess their own actions, asking whether they are serving their god's will or the Great Enemy's.

Zhühn names no allies among the gods—and surely none can trust him. His greatest adversaries are Choranus and Ildavir, while Elyr, a product of his own ignorance, perseveres as a painful thorn in his side. To carry out his goals of corruption, he despoiled the newborn god that became Narrimunâth and Nimlurun and has designs on other gods as well. When Zhühn is depicted, he is seen as a cowled figure with a single outstretched hand. In such images, he always lurks in the corner or only partially in the frame of the image—never hidden, yet never prevalent. His body is never seen whole, but

The Void

The Void is nothingness, utter emptiness, the very absence of existence. It is not a plane to which one can go. When any being possessed of less power than a god enters the Void, he is eradicated altogether. The Void should not be confused with the Astral Plane, which is an endless space that binds together the Outer, Inner, and Material Planes. The Void is that dimensionless nothingness in which the Material Plane was created.

Spheres of annihilation are, in fact, small holes in existence, errant pieces of the Void itself. Fortunately for everyone but Zhühn himself, the Void is very small now. Creation has replaced it with life and existence, and all that does remain of the Void contains the Great Enemy himself. Expanding it anew remains Zhühn's single-minded pursuit.



rather half-formed from its surroundings, symbolizing Zhühn's manipulation of existing material and his refusal to create things anew.

The White Sepulcher does have a few mortal agents who serve him knowingly. These individuals, such as the Ruin Knights, are frightening indeed and usually bereft of their humanity. They are the shadow figures who hide behind the puppetmasters who hide behind the proxies. Elder priests of all faiths often warn their novices against the whisperings of Zhühn. Indeed, his name is often invoked when accusations of corruption are made, whether the Great Enemy is truly to blame or not. Zhühn sponsors no formal temples and his servants are difficult to unmask. The nihilistic clergy of the Great Enemy, when not carrying out local schemes to subvert creation, experiment with arcana to disintegrate reality itself. *Spheres of annihilation* and *rods of cancellation* are only two of the many dangerous instruments to come of such fell research.

The domains associated with the Faceless Lord are Destruction, Evil, Magic, and Trickery. His favored weapon—if indeed one is ever shown—is the dart (usually poisoned). Zhühn cares for no symbols, but to channel his power, his clerics must deface the holy symbol of another god to use as his own.

Favored Deities by Race

With the exception of some demigods, the many races of Áereth revere the gods whose ideologies appeal to them the most. The list below shows what gods many of the races of Áereth typically worship based on their own dispositions and cultural beliefs. The gods are listed in the order of most likely worshipped.

Race/Monster	Gods
Aberrations	Outer Gods, Narrimunâth, Nimlurun, Zhühn
Bugbears	Molgrem, Kagnar, Gadraak, Xeluth
Centaurs	Ildavir
Doppelgangers	The Hidden One
Dragons	Centivus, Choranus, Ahriman
Dwarves	Daenthar, Fenwar, Centivus
Dwarves (duergar)	Daenthar, the Septych
Elves	Ireth, Centivus, Ildavir, Valdreth
Elves (gray, wild, wood)	Ireth, Ildavir, Centivus, Choranus
Elves (aquatic)	Ireth, Pelagia, Ildavir, Chondri
Elves (drow)	Tororthun, Bargúl
Fey (nymphs, dryads, satyrs, etc.)	Ildavir, Thalass
Gargoyles	Ahriman, Urath
Giants	Daenthar, Fenwar, Poderon, Variag
Gnolls	Kagnar, Xeluth, Lords of the Abyss
Gnomes	Poderon, Fenwar, Ireth
Gnomes (rock, svirfneblin)	Poderon, Daenthar
Goblinoids (goblins, hobgoblins)	Molgrem, Xeluth, Yvyn
Hags	Gil'Mâridth, Malotoch
Half-elves	Wyshalar, Delvyr
Half-orcs	Xeluth, Klazath, Thormyr
Halflings	Olidyra, Neshti, Rathul, Wyshalar, Myna
Harpies	Malotoch
Hobgoblins	Molgrem, Xeluth, Lords of Hell, Yvyn
Kobolds	Lagos
Lamias	Ankharet
Lammasus	Amun Tor, Madrah, Delvyr
Lizardfolk	Ildavir, Madrah, Cynhuara
Locathahs	Pelagia, Elas
Medusas	Lords of Hell
Merfolk	Pelagia, Chondri
Minotaurs	Kagnar, Xeluth
Nagas	Axaluatl, Cynhuara, Madrah
Ogres	Gadraak, Xeluth
Orcs	Gadraak, Xeluth, Klazath
Sahuagin	Elas
Sphinxes	Amun Tor, Ankharet
Treants	Ildavir, Thalass
Tritons	Pelagia, Chondri
Troglodytes	Lagos
Trolls	Urath, Xeluth
Undead	Lasheeva, Malotoch (ghouls)

Chapter 3
Bestiary of the Known Realms

Azure Ooze

Large Ooze
Hit Dice: 5d10+30 (57 hp)
Initiative: –5
Speed: 40 ft., 40 ft. swim
Armor Class: 4 (–5 Dex, –1 size), touch 4, flat-footed 4
Base Attack/Grapple: +3/+10
Attack: Slam +5 melee (1d8+3)
Full Attack: Slam
Space/Reach: 10 ft./10 ft.
Special Attacks: Constrict 1d8+3, improved grab, paralysis
Special Qualities: Blindsight 60 ft., immunity to cold and fire, ooze traits, transparent
Saves: Fort +7, Ref –4, Will –4
Abilities: Str 16, Dex 1, Con 23, Int –, Wis 1, Cha 1
Skills: Swim +10
Feats: –
Environment: Any aquatic or marshes
Organization: Solitary
Challenge Rating: 5
Treasure: None
Alignment: Always neutral
Advancement: 6–8 HD (Large); 9–12 HD (Huge)
Level Adjustment: –

This ooze resembles a giant blob of bright blue slime with a diameter of about twenty feet.

A typical azure ooze weighs about 3,600 pounds. An azure ooze can be found meandering through wetlands and other areas that go near large bodies of water. It feeds on anything that crosses its path, and is not hesitant to feed upon living creatures much larger than itself. Despite their amorphous nature, azure oozes are surprisingly quick, and are equally adept at moving through water as well as land. It can compress its body to fit through fissures and other small areas as small as one inch wide.

Combat

An azure ooze attacks by hitting its opponents with long, gooey pseudopods. If it successfully strikes an opponent, it then attempts to grab that foe and paralyze it. An azure ooze never releases its hold on a victim unless the ooze is killed or until the ooze is finished feeding on its prey.

Blindsight (Ex): An azure ooze's entire body is a sensory organ, which can ascertain prey by any scent or vibration within 100 feet of the creature.

Constrict (Ex): An azure ooze deals automatic slam and paralysis damage with a successful grapple check.

Improved Grab (Ex): To use this ability, an azure ooze must first hit an opponent with its slam attack. It can then start to attempt a grapple as a free action without provoking an attack of opportunity. If it wins the grapple check, it establishes a hold and can constrict.

Paralysis (Ex): An azure ooze secrets a paralyzing fluid that renders its victims completely helpless with prolonged exposure. Any constricting attack automatically deals this paralyzing attack. Any creature constricted by the azure ooze must succeed on a DC 19 Fortitude save each round on the ooze's turn or be paralyzed for 1d6 rounds. The save is Constitution-based.

Ceraton

Large Magical Beast (Cold)
Hit Dice: 3d10+9 (25 hp)
Initiative: +1
Speed: 40 ft.
Armor Class: 11 (+1 Dex, –1 size, +1 natural), touch 10, flat-footed 10
Base Attack/Grapple: +3/+12
Attack: Claw +7 melee (2d4+5)
Full Attack: 2 claws +7 melee (2d4+5) or bite +2 melee (1d6+2)
Space/Reach: 10 ft./5 ft.
Special Attacks: Pounce, rend 2d6+9
Special Qualities: Darkvision 60 ft., immunity to cold, low-light vision, vulnerability to fire, scent
Saves: Fort +6, Ref +4, Will +0
Abilities: Str 20, Dex 12, Con 16, Int 9, Wis 9, Cha 12
Skills: Balance +6, Hide +3, Jump +6, Listen +5, Spot +4
Feats: Alertness, Lightning Reflexes, Toughness
Environment: Any desert or hills
Organization: Solitary, pair, or pack (3–12)
Challenge Rating: 2
Treasure: Standard
Alignment: Always lawful neutral
Advancement: 4–7 HD (Large); 8–12 HD (Huge)
Level Adjustment: –

This nimble, hardy creature resembles a cross between a horse and a crocodile, and is covered with large gray scales.

Ceratons are feared predators in the snowy regions of the Northlands, hunting game when it is plentiful, and closing in on human and demihuman settlements when their regular food supply becomes scarce. They are fearless trackers and hunters, and are masters of finding warm-blooded creatures wherever they might hide. They also run on two powerful hind legs, and are surprisingly fast for their size.

Despite being most commonly found in the colder regions of the Northlands, ceratons are lizards, and thought to be distantly related to dinosaurs. Although countless theories abound as to why these creatures prefer the cold instead of the warmth of jungles, these powerful lizards hate warmth with a passion, and invariably become sick and die if transported to a warmer climate. The steppes of Saramanthia are as far south as the ceratons naturally roam.

Certain warriors in Saramanthia have managed to train the ceratons as mounts. Though difficult to capture and train, ceratons make strong, powerful hunting steeds that are prized by elite warriors throughout the Northlands. Minor wars have erupted between barbarians of the Northlands and the barbarians of the Lostlands over which is the better steed: the ceraton or the shadroquus.

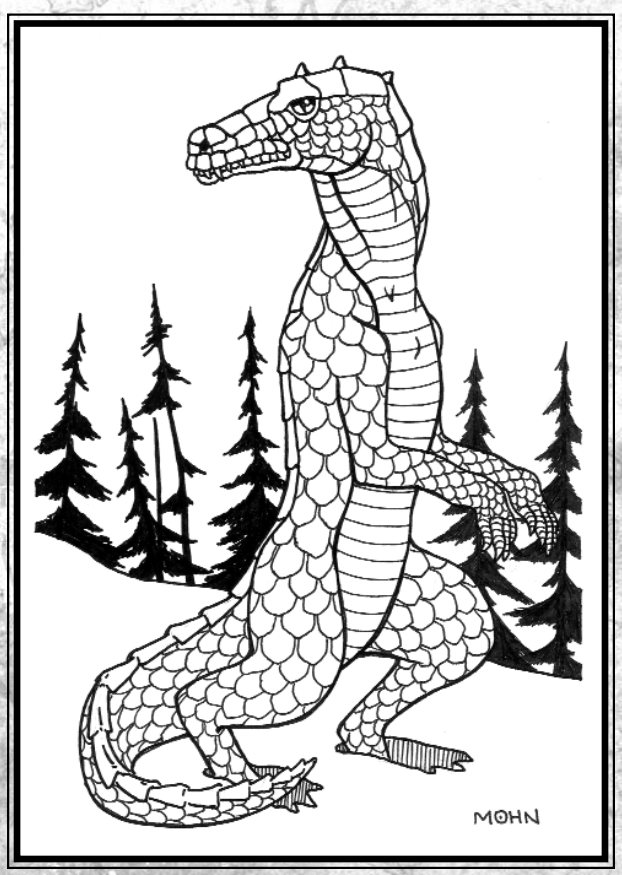
Combat

In the wild, ceratons move about like packs of dire wolves, hunting large packs of game animals and moving mostly at night. They attack in groups of three or more, and only attack those opponents whom they feel fairly certain of slaying.

A trained ceraton moves and attacks at the behest of its rider. If given free rein, it prefers to pounce upon a single opponent; however, it generally follows the lead of its rider and does whatever it is asked.

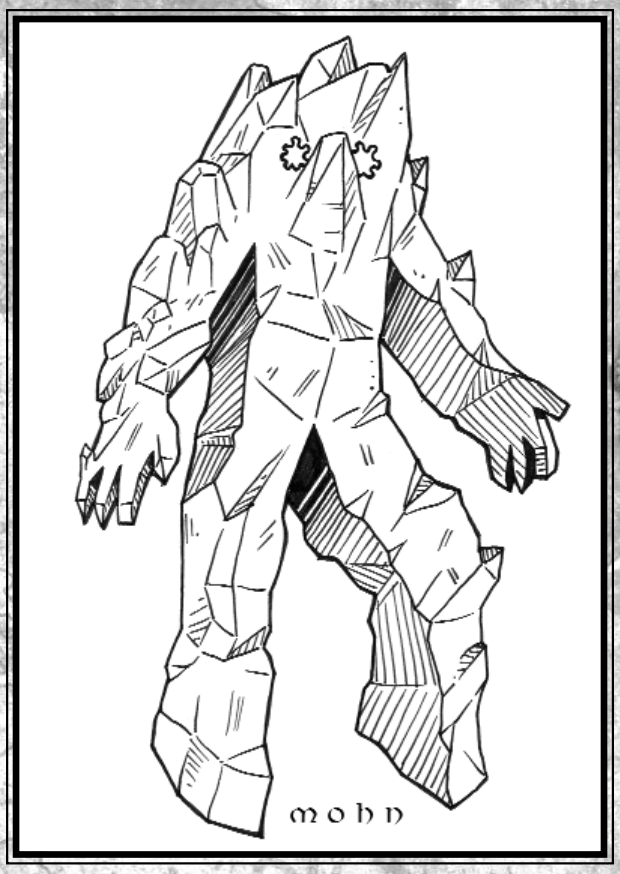
Pounce (Ex): If a ceraton charges, it can make a full attack.

Rend (Ex): A ceraton that hits with both claw attacks latches onto the opponent's body and tears the flesh. This attack automatically deals an extra 2d6+9 points of damage.



Crystal Golem

Large Construct
Hit Dice: 6d10+30 (63 hp)
Initiative: +2
Speed: 30 ft.
Armor Class: 11 (+2 Dex, –1 size), touch 11, flat-footed 9
Base Attack/Grapple: +4/+12
Attack: Slam +7 melee (2d8+4)
Full Attack: 2 slams +7 melee (2d8+4)
Space/Reach: 10 ft./10 ft.
Special Attacks: Blindness
Special Qualities: Construct traits, damage reduction 10/adamantine and bludgeoning, darkvision 60 ft., immunity to magic, low-light vision
Saves: Fort +2, Ref +4, Will +2
Abilities: Str 19, Dex 14, Con –, Int –, Wis 11, Cha 1
Skills: –
Feats: –
Environment: Any
Organization: Solitary or gang (2–4)
Challenge Rating: 5
Treasure: None
Alignment: Always neutral
Advancement: 7–9 HD (Large); 10–16 HD (Huge)
Level Adjustment: –



This man-shaped creature is made from large blocks of crystal quartz. It is ten feet tall and looks to weigh around two thousand pounds.

A crystal golem has a humanoid body hewn from a single piece of transparent crystal. Their bodies are beautiful and glow softly. Their creators typically carve them into the likenesses of classical statues, and they are frequently mistaken for prized works of art.

Combat

Crystal golems are tenacious fighters, attacking relentlessly with their powerful fists. They fight until destroyed, or until their foes are vanquished.

Blindness (Ex): A crystal golem's body can glow extremely brightly, causing great pain to those who look upon its form. Any living creature that gazes at the glowing form of the crystal golem must succeed on a Will save (DC 13) or be temporarily blinded for 2d4 rounds. Any blinded creature that possesses the Blind-Fight feat may continue to attack the crystal golem without penalty, even if the save is failed.

Immunity to Magic (Ex): A crystal golem is immune to any spell or spell-like ability that allows spell resistance. In addition, certain spells and effects function differently against the creature, as noted below.

Any sort of *light* spell cast either upon or within 20 feet of a crystal golem acts as a healing spell for the creature, healing up to 2d8+8 hit points of damage.

Any sort of *darkness* spell cast either upon or within 20 feet of a crystal golem has the opposite effect, causing great harm to the golem. *Darkness* spells cast near but not directly upon the golem cause 1d4+4 hit points of damage; *darkness* spells cast directly upon the creature cause 2d8+8 hit points of damage.

Any sort of normal or magical fire directed against the crystal golem as an attack causes no damage, but instead acts as a *haste* spell, allowing the golem to move about much more freely. This effect lasts for 1d6 rounds.

Construction

A crystal golem's body is chiseled from a single block of hard crystal quartz that weighs at least two thousand pounds. The crystal must be of exceptional quality, and costs 4,000 gp. Assembling the body requires a DC 14 Craft (sculpting) check or a DC 14 Craft (jewelry) check.

CL 14th; Craft Construct, *antimagic field, continual flame, geas/quest*; Price 80,000 gp; Cost 30,000 gp + 2,000 XP.

Draexodon

Huge Magical Beast
Hit Dice: 7d10+35 (73 hp)
Initiative: +1
Speed: 30 ft.
Armor Class: 13 (+1 Dex, –2 size, +4 natural), touch 9, flat-footed 12
Base Attack/Grapple: +7/+22
Attack: Claw +12 melee (2d6+7)
Full Attack: 4 claws +12 melee (2d6+7) or bite +7 melee (2d4+3)
Space/Reach: 10 ft./10 ft.
Special Attacks: Bull rush, frightful presence
Special Qualities: Damage reduction 5/silver
Saves: Fort +10, Ref +6, Will +1
Abilities: Str 24, Dex 12, Con 20, Int 6, Wis 9, Cha 6
Skills: Jump +12, Spot +7, Swim +12
Feats: Great Fortitude
Environment: Any hills or plains
Organization: Pair or herd (3– 6)
Challenge Rating: 7
Treasure: Standard
Alignment: Usually lawful evil
Advancement: 8–12 HD (Huge); 13–18 HD (Gargantuan)
Level Adjustment: –

This is a mighty reptilian creature, standing more than twelve feet tall at the shoulder and weighing several tons. Its body is covered in brown, knobby scales.

Left to its own devices, the draeoxodon is a relatively harmless and peaceable creature that can be found grazing in the plains of the Northlands. For the most part, the wild draeoxodon herds are ruthlessly hunted and captured by goblinoid bandits, who then train the beasts for their own nefarious purposes. A trained draeoxodon takes on the personality and temperament of its new masters, becoming an evil, vicious beast that is quite dangerous indeed.

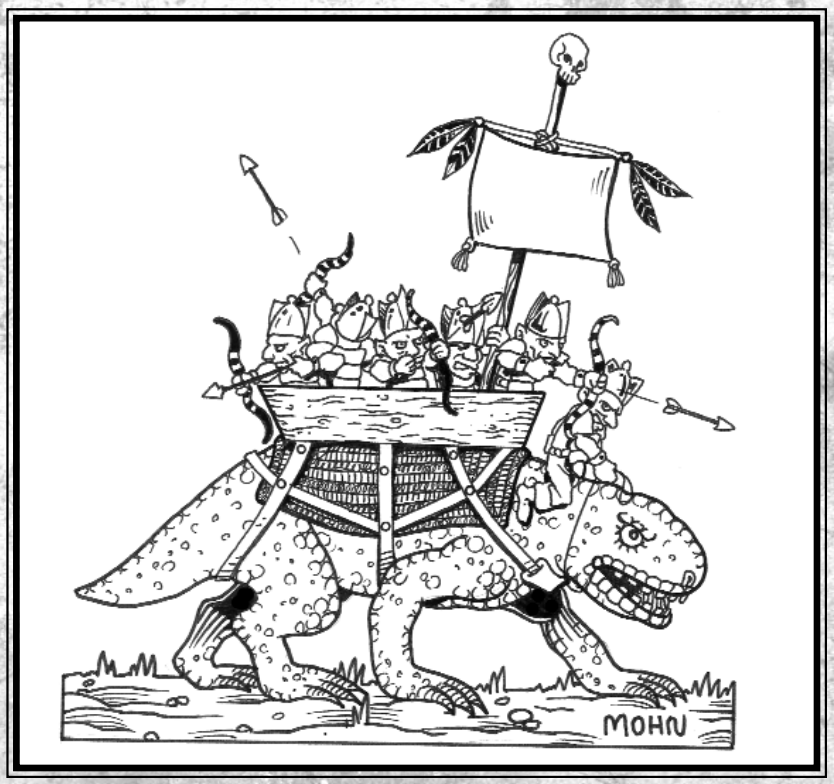
The training of a draeoxodon is a long, laborious process, which can take upward of a year to complete. However, once trained, they respond to the commands—and the whips—of their goblin masters without hesitation. Although used for a number of purposes by goblins, the draeoxodon serves three primary functions for a tribe: to haul materials or weapons, to attack foes, and to act as a mobile artillery station for goblin archers. As many as eight to twelve goblins can ride on a draeoxodon's back, although no more than four can be perched on top of the beast and still be able to take their full actions.

Combat

Wild draeoxodons are gentle creatures, and only fight when cornered. Otherwise, they seek to flee combat where possible. Trained draeoxodons, on the other hand, are savage fighters, immediately charging into combat when possible and ripping their opponents to shreds with their claws after the initial charge. With goblin riders aboard, they show a little more restraint (but barely), letting their riders control their direction in combat and following their leads as to when to charge and when to strike.

Bull Rush (Ex): A draeoxodon begins a battle by charging at an opponent, lowering its head and smashing into opponents with its large, thick skull. In addition to the normal benefits and hazards of a charge, this allows the creature to make a single slam attack with a +12 attack bonus that deals 3d6+6 points of damage.

Frightful Presence (Su): The draexodon can inspire terror by charging or attacking. Affected creatures must succeed on a DC 12 Will save or become shaken, remaining in that condition as long as they remain with 30 feet of the draexodon. The save DC is Charisma-based.



Drakon

Known by as many names as the cultures who fear them—among them anu-zorai, naga-born, and the most common, drakon—these arrogant reptilian humanoids are rightly respected throughout the Southlands of Áereth. Once a loose society of warring tribes and factions, the drakon have only increased in power, rising from the depths of Zimala centuries ago to form the nation of Ssorlang. Despite the failed expansion of their self-titled empire, the drakon remain a constant source of terror in this part of the world, and recent rumblings of drakon militancy have made the civilizations of the Southlands look to their borders.

The drakon are a cunning race, always planning grandiose schemes of domination, and only their constant infighting keeps their power in check. The only creatures that they treat with any true respect are their ancient forebears, the nagas. Though the arcana that gave rise to the drakon has long been lost, most scholars believe that the nagas of the old Zimalan Empire injected their own blood into humanoid subjects in the failed attempt to create a powerful race under their control. The fact that the drakon were birthed by magic—and not divine creation—has led to their narcissistic belief that their race is one of perfection.

Apart from the nagas, most drakon consider all other races beneath their contempt. Although they gladly smile and give promises of great wealth and power to their allies, any friendship or alliance with the drakon inevitably ends with a knife in the back … and a twist of the blade.

Given their mutative origin, a number of different strains of the species exist, but the most common are detailed below.

The drakon speak the Draconic and Common languages.

Combat

The drakon are master tacticians. They rarely enter combat without some sort of cunning battle plan, and will retreat if doing so means that they can survive to deliver revenge another day. Although they believe that violence is the ultimate tool to achieving their goals, the drakon are a patient race and can accept losing a battle or two in order to win a war. Whenever possible, the drakon will first deploy or sacrifice their non-drakon allies in combat, letting these creatures take the heaviest hits in a fight before entering the fray themselves.

Drakon Religion

Most drakon are too imperious to bow before any god, but those who choose the devoted path of a cleric worship the demigods Axaluatl, Lagos, or even the infernal powers—sometimes an amalgam of wicked deities. Such polytheistic drakon clerics have access to two of the following domains: Death, Evil, or War.

Drakon Society

The drakon comprise a hubristic culture, dedicated to the conquest and enslavement of all other creatures, whom they believe to be servitors at best and cattle at worst. Their society is cruel and unforgiving, as likely to turn on itself as on its enemies. Violence, an integral part of drakon life, it is believed to be the best solution to all problems. When direct violence fails, the use of deceit and dissimulation, like a subtle poison, is equally applauded.

Drakon dwell chiefly in the cities and towns of Ssorlang, but many communities reside deep within the jungles and swamps of the Southlands, inaccessible to all but the most hardy of travelers. The drakon venerate the pyramid structure of their forebears—they believe that it symbolizes the steady ascension to power, a concept, they believe, that is lost on their human enemies. As such, nearly every building in a drakon community, no matter how large or small, is usually built in some sort of structure resembling a pyramid, and the triangle or pyramid shape can commonly be found throughout the various aspects of drakon society.

Drakon (Brightvenom)

Medium Monstrous Humanoid (Reptilian)
Hit Dice: 3d8+3 (16 hp)
Initiative: +5
Speed: 30 ft., climb 20 ft., swim 20 ft.
Armor Class: 13 (+1 Dex, +2 natural), touch 11, flat-footed 12
Base Attack/Grapple: +3/+3
Attack: Bite +3 melee (1d4 plus poison) or masterwork composite longbow +5 ranged (1d8)
Full Attack: Bite +3 melee (1d4 plus poison) or masterwork longsword +4 melee (1d8) or masterwork composite longbow +5 ranged (1d8)
Space/Reach: 5 ft./5 ft.
Special Attacks: Charming gaze, poison
Special Qualities: Darkvision 60 ft., deceive, keen senses
Saves: Fort +2, Ref +4, Will +4
Abilities: Str 11, Dex 13, Con 13, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 14
Skills: Concentration +4, Hide +2, Knowledge (arcana) +2, Knowledge (religion) +2, Listen +4, Move Silently +2, Spot +4
Feats: Alertness, Improved Initiative
Environment: Warm forests or marshes
Organization: Solitary, pair, band (3–6), clan (2–12 brightvenom drakon, 2–12 drakon mongrels, and 2–4 darkvenom drakon), or colony (10–200 brightvenom drakon, 10–200 drakon mongrels, and 6–60 darkvenom drakon)
Challenge Rating: 2
Treasure: Double standard
Alignment: Usually neutral evil
Advancement: By character class
Level Adjustment: +2

Upon first glance, the creature resembles a slender human with exceedingly pale skin and a gentle, languid grace. Its reptilian nature is revealed in a patina of fine scales along each forearm, its neck, and even along each temple. Its perfect white teeth are offset by a set of narrow fangs.

The scales of a brightvenom drakon can vary in color and pattern as much as any species of snake, but most possess the red and black bands reminiscent of the spirit naga. Their hair is always fine, usually black and quite straight.

Brightvenom drakon are the emissaries and diplomats of the drakon race. Experts in the art of deception, these creatures frequent travel in the realms of mankind, gathering information and sowing dissension. Brightvenom drakon infiltrating human communities often pose as prophets, teachers, or tradesman, creating mayhem with their silvery, forked tongues—turning the foes of the drakon race against each other with words instead of swords.

Combat

Brightvenom drakon tend to avoid combat whenever possible, and attempt to talk their way out of trouble, using their charming gaze to diffuse potentially violent situations. Only when they have the clear advantage in combat will they display their murderous nature, closing in for the kill with their poisonous fangs and their swords.

Deceive (Su): Once per day, a brightvenom drakon can assume the appearance of a human, elf, or half-elf of the same height and weight as itself. The effect resembles the *disguise self* spell and lasts for 1 hour per character level. The brightvenom drakon gains a +10 bonus on Disguise checks when the ability is used to effect a disguise.

Charming Gaze (Su): As *charm person*, 30 feet, Will DC 14 negates. The save DC is Charisma-based.

Poison (Ex): Injury, Fortitude DC 13, initial and secondary damage 1d6 Con. The save DC is Constitution-based.

Brightvenom Drakon as Characters

Brightvenom drakon characters possess the following racial traits:

— +2 Dexterity, +2 Constitution, +4 Charisma.

—Medium size

—A brightvenom drakon's base land speed is 30 feet.

—Darkvision out to 60 feet.

—Racial Hit Dice: A brightvenom drakon starts out with three levels of monstrous humanoid, which provide 3d8 Hit Dice, a base attack bonus of +3, and base saving throw bonuses of Fort +1, Ref +3, and Will +3.

—Racial Skills: A brightvenom drakon's monstrous humanoid levels give it skill points equal to 6 x (2 + Int modifier). Its class skills are Concentration, Hide, Knowledge (any), Listen, Move Silently, and Spot.

—Racial Feats: A brightvenom drakon's monstrous humanoid levels give it two feats.

— +2 natural armor bonus.

—Special Attacks (see above): Charming gaze (save DC 12 + Cha modifier), poison bite (save DC 12 + Con modifier)

—Special Qualities (see above): Deceive, darkvision 60 ft., keen senses

—Automatic Languages: Common, Draconic. Bonus Languages: Infernal, Orc.

—Favored Class: Rogue (male) or sorcerer (female).

—Level Adjustment: +2.

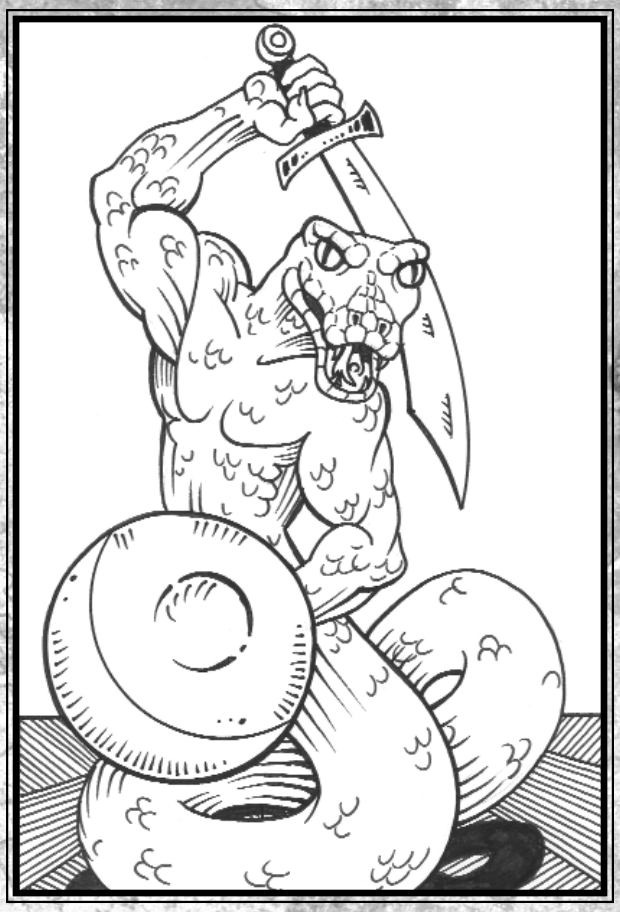
Drakon (Darkvenom)

Large Monstrous Humanoid (Reptilian)
Hit Dice: 8d8+24 (60 hp)
Initiative: +5
Speed: 30 ft., climb 30 ft., swim 30 ft.
Armor Class: 18 (+1 Dex, –1 size, +8 natural), touch 10, flat-footed 17
Base Attack/Grapple: +6/+16
Attack: Bite +11 melee (2d4+9 plus poison) or masterwork composite longbow (+2 Str bonus) +7 ranged (1d8+2)
Full Attack: Bite +11 melee (2d4+9 plus poison) or masterwork greataxe +12 melee (3d6+9) or masterwork composite longbow (+2 Str bonus) +7 ranged (1d8+2)
Space/Reach: 10 ft./10 ft.
Special Attacks: Constrict 1d4+4, improved grab, paralyzing gaze, poison
Special Qualities: Darkvision 60 ft., regeneration 5, transfigure
Saves: Fort +5, Ref +7, Will +10
Abilities: Str 22, Dex 13, Con 16, Int 18, Wis 18, Cha 20
Skills: Climb +12, Concentration +12, Gather Information +8, Heal +8, Hide +8, Knowledge (arcana) +14, Knowledge (religion) +14, Listen +14, Move Silently +4, Spot +8
Feats: Alertness, Dodge, Improved Initiative
Environment: Warm forests or marshes
Organization: Solitary, pair, band (3–6), clan (2–12 brightvenom drakon, 2–12 drakon mongrels, and 2–4 darkvenom drakon), or colony (10–200 brightvenom drakon, 10–200 drakon mongrels, and 6–60 darkvenom drakon)
Challenge Rating: 6
Treasure: Double standard
Alignment: Usually chaotic evil
Advancement: By character class
Level Adjustment: +6

Massive and fearsome, the serpent-like creature resembles a giant snake with powerful humanoid arms and keen, intelligent eyes. Its sinuous, muscular body is covered in darkly-hued scales glittering with a reflective sheen.

Though their coloration may vary, most darkvenom drakon possess scales of deep blue or darkest green. In rarer cases, a darkvenom drakon may possess the deep purple shade of the dark naga. Their bodies range from 9 to 15 feet in height and weigh 300 to 500 lbs.

As the undisputed leaders of the drakon race, darkvenom drakon are ruthless fighters that delight in the utter destruction of other creatures—by any means. They are aggressive creatures, vain even for drakon, and constantly strive to destroy their enemies and rivals.



Combat

More headstrong than their more calculating brightvenom cousins, the darkvenom drakon delight in physical combat and gladly enter melee when they scent an easy victory. Whenever possible, they attempt to use the paralyzing gaze to first weaken a potential opponent, so that they can slowly crush their enemies—literally—and watch them suffer as they die.

Transfigure (Su): Once per day, a brightvenom drakon can assume the form of a humanoid of Medium size. The effect resembles the *polymorph self* spell, but it lasts for only 1 minute per character level.

Constrict (Ex): A darkvenom drakon deals 1d4+4 hit points of damage with a successful grapple check.

Improved Grab (Ex): To use this ability, a darkvenom drakon must successfully hit a Large or smaller creature with its bite attack. It can then attempt to start a grapple as a free action without provoking an attack of opportunity. If it successfully makes the grapple check, it establishes a hold and can then constrict.

Paralyzing Gaze (Su): The gaze of a darkvenom drakon's eyes can paralyze victims within 40 feet who fail a Fortitude save (DC 19). If the saving throw is suc-

cessful, the character is forever immune to the gaze of that particular darkvenom drakon. If it fails, the victim is paralyzed for 2d6 rounds. The save DC is Charisma-based.

Poison (Ex): Injury, Fortitude DC 17, initial and secondary damage 2d6 Con. The save DC is Constitution-based.

Drakon (Mongrel)

Medium Monstrous Humanoid (Reptilian)
Hit Dice: 6d8+12 (39 hp)
Initiative: +6
Speed: 30 ft.
Armor Class: 17 (+2 Dex, +3 natural, +2 masterwork leather armor), touch 12, flat-footed 15
Base Attack/Grapple: +6/+8
Attack: Bite +8 melee (1d6+3 plus poison) or masterwork composite longbow (+2 Str bonus) +9 ranged (1d8+2)
Full Attack: Bite +8 melee (1d6+3 plus poison) or masterwork longsword +9 melee (1d8+2) or masterwork composite longbow (+2 Str bonus) +9 ranged (1d8+2)
Space/Reach: 5 ft./5 ft.
Special Attacks: Constrict 1d4+1, poison, improved grab
Special Qualities: Darkvision 60 ft.
Saves: Fort +4, Ref +7, Will +5
Abilities: Str 15, Dex 15, Con 15, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 16
Skills: Concentration +6, Hide +8, Listen +6, Move Silently +4, Spot +4
Feats: Alertness, Improved Initiative, Toughness
Environment: Warm forests or marshes
Organization: Solitary, pair, band (3–6), clan (2–12 brightvenom drakon, 2–12 drakon mongrels, and 2–4 darkvenom drakon), or colony (10–200 brightvenom drakon, 10–200 drakon mongrels, and 6–60 darkvenom drakon)
Challenge Rating: 4
Treasure: Standard
Alignment: Usually neutral evil
Advancement: By character class
Level Adjustment: +4

This creature has the upper torso of a humanoid and the scaled, lower torso of giant snake. Scales and even banded flesh can be seen along its humanoid half, betraying its heritage.

A subset of the race, drakon mongrels vary the most in their appearance. Their heads and torsos might resemble those of any humanoid, though reptilian features are common to all of them. A mongrel's serpentine lower half displays the coloration of virtually any species of snake, most likely matching those of its brightvenom parent.

Drakon mongrels are the hybrid offspring of humanoid and brightvenom drakon parents. Also known as "mules" because of their inability to reproduce, drakon mongrels are disliked intensely by both brightvenom and darkvenom drakon and indeed aren't even considered part of their race by these "pure" broods. For this reason, they are typically used as bodyguards, foot soldiers, and laborers in drakon society. They are also usually less educated than their drakon cousins, although this does not mean than they are necessarily less intelligent. Most drakon mongrels act subservient to the brightvenom and darkvenom drakon and follow the orders of these "superior" creatures without hesitation.

Unlike brightvenom and darkvenom drakon, drakon mongrels do not have the ability to shift into an alternate form.

Combat

Because of their low value in drakon society, drakon mongrels are usually the "shock troops" in any sort of combat situation involving the drakon. They charge fearlessly into melee combat, using their constricting tails and brute strength to overpower their enemies.

Constrict (Ex): A drakon mongrel deals 1d4+1 hit points of damage with a successful grapple check.

Improved Grab (Ex): To use this ability, a drakon mongrel must successfully hit a Medium or smaller creature with its bite attack. It can then attempt to start a grapple as a free action without provoking an attack of opportunity. If it successfully makes the grapple check, it establishes a hold and can then constrict.

Poison (Ex): Injury, Fortitude DC 15, initial and secondary damage 2d4 Con. The save DC is Constitution-based.

Earth Naga

Medium Aberration
Hit Dice: 4d8+12 (30 hp)
Initiative: +3
Speed: 40 ft. (8 squares), burrow 20 ft.
Armor Class: 17 (+3 Dex, +4 natural), touch 13, flat-footed 14
Base Attack/Grapple: +3/+6
Attack: Bite +6 melee (1d6+3 plus acid) or acid spit +6 ranged (1d4 plus acid)
Full Attack: Bite +6 melee (1d6+3 plus acid) or tail slap +1 melee (2d4+1) or acid spit +6 ranged (1d4 plus acid)
Space/Reach: 5 ft./5 ft.
Special Attacks: Acid bite, acid spit
Special Qualities: Darkvision 60 ft., resistance to charm
Saves: Fort +4, Ref +6, Will +4
Abilities: Str 16, Dex 16, Con 16, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 18
Skills: Bluff +8, Gather Information +10, Intimidate +10, Listen +6, Sense Motive +6, Spot +2
Feats: Alertness, Lightning Reflexes
Environment: Warm forest or mountain; underground
Organization: Solitary, pair, or nest (3–4)
Challenge Rating: 3
Treasure: Standard
Alignment: Usually neutral evil
Advancement: 5–6 HD (Medium); 7–12 HD (Large)
Level Adjustment: –

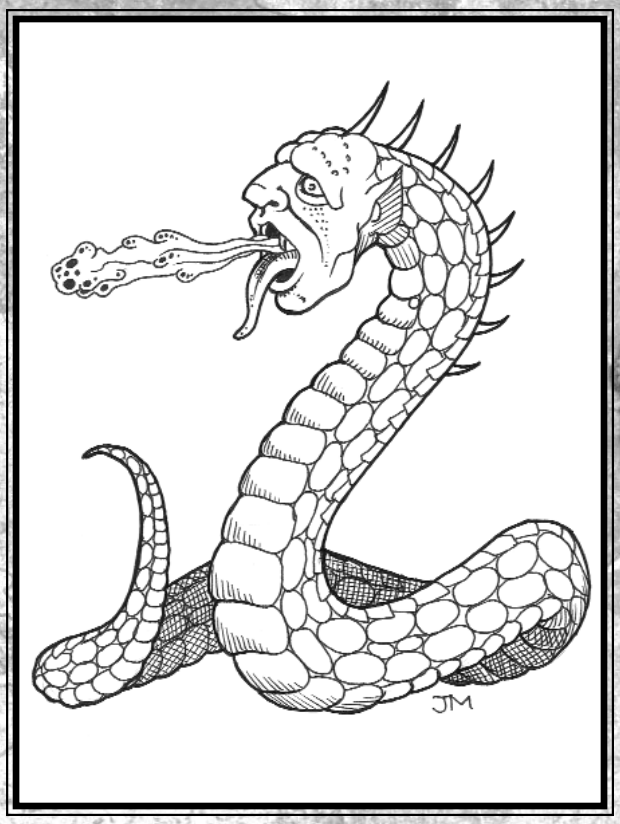
This loathsome serpent has a dark, scaled body banded in stripes of black and indigo.

Physically resembling other naga, earth naga are smaller and faster than others of their species. Their reptilian scales are always colored black and indigo, making them difficult to spot in the darkness.

Once commonly found throughout the Southlands, the foul earth naga is now fortunately a somewhat rare beast typically found lurking in jungles and ruins. For centuries, the earth naga comprised the bulk of the Southlands' mighty armies, crushing the foes of the Zimalan Empire with ease. With the fall of the Empire, the legions of earth naga dwindled away to nearly nothing, making them little more than a dangerous rarity.

Earth naga are impulsive, violent creatures. They are irritated by conversation and become bored easily. This impatience is reflected in their bad temperament and their willingness to fight at a moment's notice, even against each other. They have little respect for anything and take great delight in mindless destruction.

Earth naga speak Common and Infernal.



Combat

Unlike other nagas, earth naga love melee combat. Typically, they rush their opponents immediately, seeking to incapacitate strong opponents with their acid bites as quickly as possible. However, when in trouble, they may try to bluff their way out of danger by pretending that they have magical abilities, hoping that their opponents may believe them to be dark naga or guardian naga. Earth naga also work well with one another in group combat, and try to separate and isolate multiple opponents wherever possible.

Acid (Ex): The fangs of an earth naga drip with a highly potent acid. Any opponent bitten by one of these creatures must make a successful Fortitude save of DC 16 or take an additional 1d6 hit points of damage. The save DC is Constitution-based.

Resistance to Charm (Ex): Earth naga have a +1 racial bonus on saving throws against all charm effects (not included in the statistics block).

Spit (Ex): An earth naga can spit acid 1d6 times per day up to 30 feet as a ranged attack action. Opponents hit by this attack must make successful saves (see above) to avoid the effect.

Ghozali

Medium Aberration
Hit Dice: 6d8+6 (33 hp)
Initiative: +11
Speed: Fly 40 ft. (good)
Armor Class: 19 (+7 Dex, +2 natural), touch 17, flat-footed 12
Base Attack/Grapple: +4/+5
Attack: Tentacle +5 melee (1d10+1)
Full Attack: 9 tentacles +5 melee (1d10+1) or bite +0 melee (1d6+1)
Space/Reach: 5 ft./10 ft.
Special Attacks: Poison gas, improved grab
Special Qualities: Darkvision 60 ft.
Saves: Fort +3, Ref +9, Will +8
Abilities: Str 12, Dex 24, Con 12, Int 16, Wis 16, Cha 14
Skills: Bluff +10, Concentration +10, Hide +16, Spot +10, Survival +12
Feats: Dodge, Hover, Improved Initiative, Mobility, Wingover
Environment: Any mountains
Organization: Solitary, pair, flight (3–8), or murder (9–36)
Challenge Rating: 3
Treasure: Standard
Alignment: Usually chaotic neutral
Advancement: 7–9 HD (Medium); 10–16 HD (Large)
Level Adjustment: –

This flying humanoid appears to remain aloft with thin membranes stretched between long, thin tentacles. Its body is covered in blue and gold scales.

Vaguely resembling bloated, winged humans, ghozali are flying creatures whose bodies are filled with a magical gas, allowing them to remain airborne throughout their entire lives. Thin membranes stretch between their long, thin tentacles, which they use as wings to maneuver deftly through the air. Their bodies are covered entirely in bright blue and gold scales.

These strange, brightly colored creatures spend their entire lives flying through the air, swooping down from the clouds only on rare occasion to attack tempting prey. Ghozali travel in small, roaming tribes. They tend not to occupy a constant territory, but are instead always on the move, drifting and flying as many as a hundred miles per day. Some sages have suggested that there is a method to the ghozali's madness, as they may be visiting hidden places throughout the world to store treasure and other secrets.

Ghozali are sociable creatures amongst themselves and with other flying creatures. If approached in the skies that are their home, they can be quite agreeable and helpful. However, they view ground-dwellers as little more than

prey, and have nothing but contempt for that which cannot fly. As such, they are rarely seen near the earth except to hunt, and even then tend to reserve their feeding grounds to mountaintops or other elevated areas.

Ghozali speak Common and Draconic.

Combat

Ghozali rarely go within melee distance of the ground, unless they believe they have the advantage of numbers or surprise. Their favorite tactic is to grab a non-flying opponent and then fly high in the air, dropping that opponent from a high distance onto sharp rocks. Although the ghozali's poison gas attack is quite deadly, it usually uses it only as a last resort.

Poison Gas (Su): Injury, Fortitude DC 14, initial and secondary damage 1d8 Con. The save DC is Constitution-based.

A ghozali can expel some of the gas that inflates its body and keeps it airborne, creating a 20-foot cone of highly poisonous gas. Each time such a cone of gas is expelled, however, the flying speed of the ghozali is reduced by 10 feet, and its maneuverability class also goes down by one rank. This effect lasts for 1d6 rounds. It may use its gas attack only three times per day.

Improved Grab (Ex): To use this ability, a ghozali must hit an opponent at least one size category smaller than itself with its tentacle attack. It can then attempt to start a grapple as a free action without provoking an attack of opportunity.

Horror of Zamon

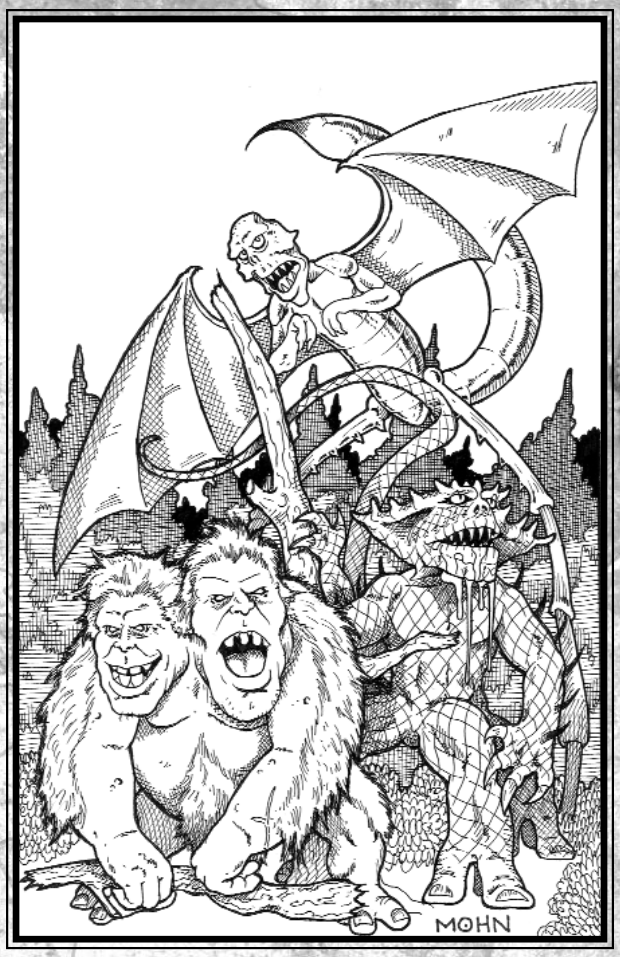
Huge Aberration
Hit Dice: 8d8+64 (100 hp)
Initiative: +0
Speed: 20 ft.
Armor Class: 12 (–2 size, +4 natural), touch 8, flat-footed 12
Base Attack/Grapple: +6/+21
Attack: Claw +11 melee (1d10+7)
Full Attack: 2 claws +11 melee (1d10+7) or bite +6 melee (1d6+5)
Space/Reach: 10 ft./10 ft.
Special Attacks: Constrict, improved grab (see below)
Special Qualities: Phoenix rebirth (see below)
Saves: Fort +10, Ref +2, Will +5
Abilities: Str 24, Dex 10, Con 26, Int 6, Wis 9, Cha 6
Skills: Climb +16, Jump +18
Feats: Blind-Fight, Toughness
Environment: Any forest or mountains
Organization: Solitary
Challenge Rating: 8–12 (see text below)
Treasure: Standard
Alignment: Always chaotic evil
Advancement: 9–12 HD (Huge); 13–18 HD (Gargantuan)
Level Adjustment: –

The Horrors of Zamon are all basically humanoid in shape, and all stand somewhere between ten and twelve feet tall. From there, their appearances all change dramatically from individual to individual, although they always remain terrifying.

Originally created long ago by the experiments of mad alchemists, the Horrors of Zamon are walking beings of dread, wandering through the desolate regions of the Northlands and destroying all that cross their path.

No two Horrors are alike—it is said that their twisted souls are born every time a mortal has a nightmare, making each one slightly different and unique. It is no less surprising to see a Horror covered in flames and feathers than to see a Horror dripping with slime and ice. The width and breadth of their appearance and abilities are as varied as snowflakes in a blizzard.

Although the wandering Horrors can be found scattered throughout the Northlands, they can mostly be found congregated near the Myrwych Forest. The reasons for this are unclear, but it is believed that the first Horrors were created in this forest, and that something mystical may connect the Horrors to this sinister place. Oddly, the number of Horrors sighted near the forest increases during snowstorms.



Creating a Horror of Zamon

Both the final appearance and extra abilities of a Horror of Zamon (if any) can be determined by rolling a d6 on the random tables in the sidebar. A "stock" Horror of Zamon without any additional abilities or attacks has a standard CR of 8; as a rule of thumb, for each additional two special abilities or attacks acquired by the Horror, the CR of that Horror should be increased by 1.

Combat

The Horrors of Zamon, simply put, are mindless killing machines. If they spot a living creature, they attempt to kill it as quickly as possible. They never attempt to ambush or surprise an opponent. Specific individual tactics will vary with each Horror.

Constrict (Ex): A Horror of Zamon deals automatic arm or tentacle damage with a successful grapple check.

Improved Grab (Ex): To use this ability, the Horror of Zamon must hit with a claw or tentacle attack. It can then attempt to start a grapple as a free action without provoking an attack of opportunity. If it wins the grapple check, it establishes a hold and can constrict.

Horror of Zamon Appearance and Abilities

Appearance

Roll once for each category.

Overall Visage
1 – Dripping, drooling
2 – Glaring, intimidating
3 – Twitching, screaming
4 – Fat, lazy
5 – Hanging, flaccid
6 – Rotting, tormented

Head
1 – Triangular
2 – Amorphous
3 – Square and gaunt
4 – Round and soft
5 – Wide and flat
6 – Two-headed

Skin Color
1 – Jet black[1]
2 – Blood red
3 – Yellowish and bruised
4 – Blue and indigo
5 – Bright green
6 – Sickly white

Back
1 – Spine-covered
2 – Scaly
3 – Slimy and hunched
4 – Fur-covered
5 – Bird-winged[2]
6 – Bat-winged[2]

Hide
1 – Fat
2 – Exoskeleton plating[3]
3 – Covered in sores
4 – Thick, matted fur
5 – Lizard-like scales
6 – Soft, thick flesh

Tail
1 – Long, thin, prehensile
2 – Short and stubby
3 – Long and spiked[4]
4 – Long, thick, clubbed[4]
5 – Soft and furry
6 – None

Mouth
1 – Massive tusks
2 – Jagged, long teeth[5]
3 – Small, sharp fangs
4 – Long and needle-like
5 – Flat, crushing molars
6 – Saw-toothed[5]

Legs
1 – Thick and stubby
2 – Telescopig, froglike[6]
3 – Insect-like
4 – Tentacles
5 – Long and gangly
6 – 1d4 additional[7]

Arms
1 – Powerful, muscular
2 – Short, emaciated
3 – Insect-like
4 – Tentacles[8]
5 – Long and hairy[9]
6 – 1d4 additional[8]

[1] Skin color provides a +4 bonus to all Hide checks.

[2] Winged Horrors also gain a flying movement of 20 feet, with good maneuverability.

[3] Exoskeleton plating provides an additional +4 natural armor bonus.

[4] These tails provide an additional tail slap attack (+6 melee, 2d6+6 damage).

[5] Provides an additional d6 to bite damage.

[6] Provides a +6 bonus to Jump.

[7] Increases base movement to 40 feet.

[8] Also provides additional 1d4 claw attacks.

[9] Increases Reach to 20 feet.

Abilities

Roll twice on Main Ability table, then roll as needed.

Main Ability
1 – Immunity
2 – Extra ranged attack
3 – Extra melee attack
4 – Spell-like ability
5 – None
6 – Roll twice more

Immunity
1 – DR 5/silver
2 – DR 10/adamantine
3 – Immune to charm, fear
4 – Immune to fire
5 – Immune to cold
6 – Immune to magical energy type (roll below)

Magical Energy Immunity
1 – Magical fire
2 – Magical cold
3 – Magical lightning
4 – Magical melee weapons
5 – Arcane spells
6 – Divine spells

Ranged Attack
1 – Poison quills, 40 ft. range, +4 ranged attack[1]
2 – *Fireball* 3/day[2]
3 – *Cone of cold* 3/day[2]
4 – *Cloudkill* 1/day[2]
5 – *Chain lightning* 1/day[2]
6 – Breath weapon[3]

Breath Weapon Type
1 – Line, acid, 60 ft.
2 – Line, lightning, 60 ft.
3 – Cone, fire, 30 ft.
4 – Cone, cold, 30 ft.
5 – Cone, caustic gas, 30 ft.
6 – Roll twice again

Melee Attack
1 – Poisoned claws/talons[1]
2 – Festering wounds[5]
3 – Extra mouth (gains another bite attack)
4 – Horns +0 melee (1d8+1)
5 – Rend 2d6+10
6 – Vampiric touch[6]

Spell-Like Ability
1 – Turn invisible, as per the spell *greater invisibility*[2]
2 – Teleport, as per the spell *greater teleportation*[2]
3 – Turn to stone, as per the spell *flesh to stone*[2]
4 – Create earthquake, as per the spell *earthquake*[4]
5 – Wounding touch, as per the spell *inflict serious wounds*[4]
6 – Roll twice more

[1] All poison attacks have the following statistics: Injury, Fortitude DC 22, initial and secondary damage 1d6 Con. The save DC is Constitution-based.

[2] All wizard/sorcerer-based spell-like effects act as though cast by a 16th-level wizard.

[3] All breath weapon types have the following save and damage statistics: DC 22, 3d6 hit points of damage. Once a Horror uses a breath weapon attack, it cannot be re-used for another 2d4 rounds. A successful Reflex save means that the intended victim takes no damage.

[4] All divine-based spell-like effects act as though cast by a 14th-level cleric.

[5] Any damage caused by the Horror can only be healed by magical means.

[6] As a melee touch attack, a Horror of Zamon can steal life force from its foe, as the *vampiric touch* spell (caster level 16th).

Phoenix Rebirth (Su): Ironically, the Horrors of Zamon are perhaps most dangerous when they are about to die. A Horror of Zamon that is reduced to 0 to –9 hit points immediately bursts into magical flame, which surrounds the creature's body in a 20-foot radius. Any creature caught in this area of fire must make a successful Fortitude save (DC 22) or take 2d6 points of damage; a successful save results in only half damage. The Horror of Zamon takes no damage from the fire. If the fallen body of the Horror is not reduced to –10 hit points within 1d4 rounds of bursting ablaze, the body is completed consumed and reduced to mere ashes by the magical flames … and from those ashes emerge two new Horrors of Zamon, fully healed and ready to fight. As with all the Horrors, these two new Horrors are unique and may share no common traits with the fallen creature that created it; statistics for the new Horrors must once more be rolled randomly on the tables on the previous page.

Horse of Parelor

Large Magical Beast
Hit Dice: 4d10+20 (42 hp)
Initiative: +7
Speed: 40 ft.
Armor Class: 14 (+3 Dex, –1 size, +2 natural), touch 12, flat-footed 11
Base Attack/Grapple: +4/+12
Attack: Hoof +7 melee (2d6+4)
Full Attack: 2 hooves +7 melee (2d6+4) or bite +2 melee (1d6+2)
Space/Reach: 10 ft./5 ft.
Special Attacks: Trample
Special Qualities: Darkvision 60 ft., dimension door, low-light vision
Saves: Fort +9, Ref +7, Will +0
Abilities: Str 18, Dex 16, Con 20, Int 12, Wis 9, Cha 12
Skills: Heal +2, Hide +2, Jump +8, Listen +4, Move Silently +8, Sense Motive +4, Spot +4
Feats: Alertness, Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Lightning Reflexes, Track
Environment: Any plains
Organization: Solitary or pair
Challenge Rating: 4
Treasure: Standard
Alignment: Usually neutral good
Advancement: 5–8 HD (Large); 9–16 HD (Huge)
Level Adjustment: –

This majestic steed stands seven feet high at the shoulder and weighs about 1,800 pounds.

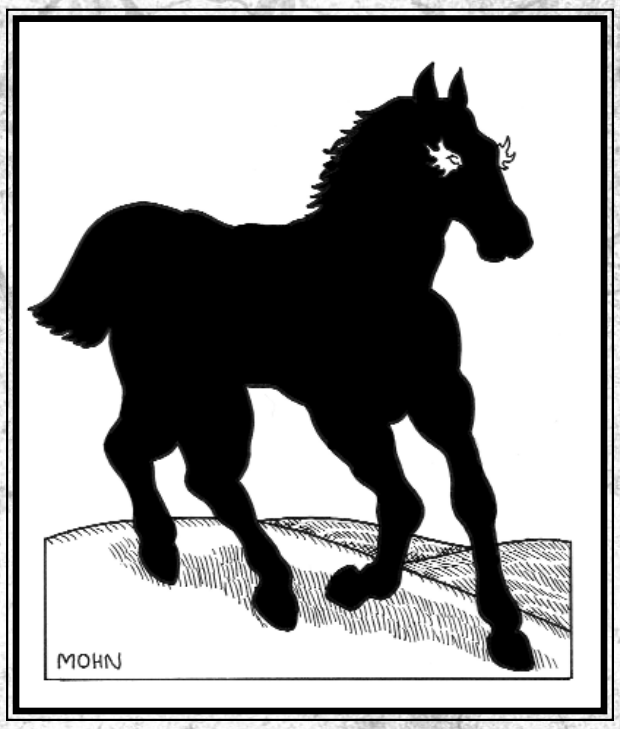
The legendary Horses of Parelor are renowned throughout the Northlands as the finest mounts in the world. Whenever tales of virtuous knights are told, these knights invariably ride the Horses of Parelor into battle and glory. Although in most cases the reputation of the Horses far exceeds their actual abilities, they are still quite powerful creatures, and it is not without good reason that distinguished knights seek their services.

At first glance, the Horses of Parelor resemble ordinary horses, albeit ones that are quite large and well muscled. All have coats and manes black as a moonless midnight. However, the eyes of the Horses betray their true nature—magical blue flame literally burns in their eyes. For this reason, it is often assumed that the Horses are evil or some sort of offshoot of the malevolent nightmare; however, all that the flame signifies is their magical nature.

In the wild, the Horses of Parelor are rare indeed, roaming in small herds through the grassy plains of the Northlands. Even rarer are those that agree to become the steed of a nobleman or warrior. Horses of Parelor are strong-willed creatures, and speak both the Common and Elvish tongues with ease. The Horses cannot be forced like a beast of burden into serving any master; instead, a Horse of Parelor must be convinced to willingly accept a rider. These are not partnerships that the Horses take lightly—most Horses of Parelor accept but a single humanoid rider in a lifetime.

Combat

When alone or only with others of its kind, the Horses of Parelor seek to avoid combat, fighting only when there is no other option. Their teleportation abilities allow them to accomplish this with ease.



With a rider, the Horses use their teleportation ability as an offensive weapon, moving about the battlefield to tactical advantage wherever possible. A favorite tactic of knights mounted upon one of the Horses is to begin a charge from a far distance, and then to teleport into melee range at a full charge. The Horses of Parelor generally follow the lead of their riders; however, they are not shy about acting counter to their rider's wishes when they believe them to be foolhardy.

***Dimension Door* (Sp):** A Horse of Parelor can teleport, as *dimension door* (caster level 10th), once per round as a free action. The ability affects only the Horse of Parelor and a single rider that sits atop the Horse. If the Horse has multiple riders, it is up to the Horse's discretion as to which rider it keeps when teleporting. Both the Horse of Parelor and its rider never appear within a solid object, and both can act immediately after teleporting.

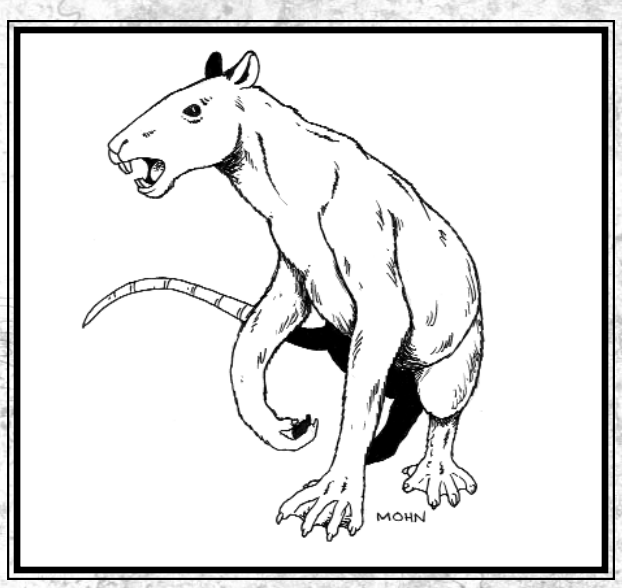
Trample (Ex): Reflex half DC 16. The save DC is Strength-based.

Huezcatla

Large Animal
Hit Dice: 3d8 (16 hp)
Initiative: +1
Speed: 30 ft. (6 squares), swim 40 ft.
Armor Class: 14 (–1 size, +2 Dex, +3 natural), touch 11, flat-footed 12
Base Attack/Grapple: +2/+6
Attack: Bite +5 melee (1d6+3)
Full Attack: Bite +5 melee (1d6+3)
Space/Reach: 10 ft./5 ft.
Special Attacks: —
Special Qualities: Low-light vision, scent
Saves: Fort +5, Ref +5, Will +2
Abilities: Str 16, Dex 14, Con 15, Int 2, Wis 12, Cha 16
Skills: Balance +4, Climb +5, Hide +6*, Listen +5, Move Silently +4, Spot +5, Swim +9
Feats: Alertness, Toughness
Environment: Tropical rainforest, lakes, and rivers
Organization: Solitary, pair, or herd (10–30)
Challenge Rating: 2
Treasure: None
Alignment: Always neutral
Advancement: —
Level Adjustment: —

This strange beast stands almost as tall as a horse, but its body is stockier and covered with thin, coarse fur. Its forelegs are longer than its hind legs, and its feet end in webbed, claw-like toes. The animal's face resembles that of a large rodent, with two large incisors protruding from its mouth, and its long, naked tail resembles a rat's.

Resembling dire cousins of the common Southland capybara, the huezcatla (wess-*kot*-luh) is a peaceful, semi-aquatic rodent of extraordinary size. Usually five feet high at the shoulder, the typical huezcatla is seven feet long and weighs 1,300 lbs. Their webbed digits allow them to swim and maneuver swiftly through water.



Huezcatlas dwell in grasslands and forests along riverbanks and lakes, eating grasses, aquatic plants, melons, and squashes. They are crepuscular animals, active at dawn and twilight, resting most of the day in shallow waters. Close proximity to abundant water is a must for huezcatlas. They issue grunts, clicks, and purrs to communicate with one another, and gruff barks to alert others when predators are detected. Caimans, anacondas, jaguars, and wild dogs will hunt them, but huezcatlas are quick to retaliate when they cannot retreat.

The Xulmec people often train and domesticate huezcatlas for riding and even for combat. A huezcatla can fight while carrying a rider, but the rider cannot also attack unless he succeeds on a Ride check.

Combat

Normally benign creatures, huezcatlas prefer to run or hide than enter combat. They issue gruff barks when threatened, alerting others (and their humanoid masters) to the danger. A huezcatla's front incisors, usually used for gnawing hardy plants, can break skin easily.

Skills: A huezcatala has a +8 racial bonus on any Swim checks to perform some special action or avoid a hazard. It can always choose to take 10 on a Swim check, even if distracted on endangered. It can use the run action while swimming, provided it swims in a straight line.

A huezcatla gains a +4 racial bonus on Hide checks when in the water. Further, a huezcatla can lie in the water with only its eyes, ears, and nostrils showing, gaining a +8 cover bonus on Hide checks.

Carrying Capacity: A light load for a huezcatla is up to 200 pounds; a medium load, 201–400 pounds; and a heavy load, 401–600 pounds. However, huezcatlas are extremely uncooperative if burdened with anything greater than a light load or a single rider. Handle Animal or wild empathy checks are required hourly when the huezcatla is overburdened in this way.

Lightning Giant

Large Giant
Hit Dice: 10d8+40 (85 hp)
Initiative: +7
Speed: 40 ft.
Armor Class: 18 (+3 Dex, –1 size, +6 natural), touch 12, flat-footed 15
Base Attack/Grapple: +7/+17
Attack: Greatclub +12 melee (1d10+6) or slam +12 melee (1d4+9) or rock +10 ranged (2d6+7)
Full Attack: Greatclub +12 melee (1d10+6) or 2 slams +12 melee (1d4+9) or rock +10 ranged (2d6+7)
Space/Reach: 10 ft./10 ft.
Special Attacks: Haste, rock throwing
Special Qualities: Darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision, rock catching
Saves: Fort +11, Ref +8, Will +3
Abilities: Str 23, Dex 17, Con 19, Int 13, Wis 10, Cha 13
Skills: Climb +8, Intimidate +6, Jump +8, Listen +2, Spot +4
Feats: Cleave, Improved Bull Rush, Improved Initiative, Lighning Reflexes, Power Attack
Environment: Any mountain
Organization: Solitary, gang (2–5), band (6–9 plus 35% noncombatants plus 1 adept or cleric of 1st or 2nd level), or tribe (21–30 plus 1 adept, cleric, or sorcerer of 3rd–5th level plus 6–12 dire wolves, and 4–16 orcs)
Challenge Rating: 6
Treasure: Double standard
Alignment: Usually chaotic evil
Advancement: By character class
Level Adjustment: +4

This lean, wiry humanoid is at least a dozen feet tall. It wears bright, garish clothing.

Lightning giants make their lairs in the remote mountains of the world. Adult males are twelve feet tall and weigh about five thousand pounds. Compared to other giants, they appear very lean and wiry. Females are slightly shorter and lighter. Lightning giants can live to be four hundred years old.

Lightning giants are brutal bullies that are constantly in battle, whether with each other or with other creatures. They are also commonly the minions of thunder giants.

Lightning giants are incredibly vain creatures, and usually wear bright, garish clothing. They constantly seek to be

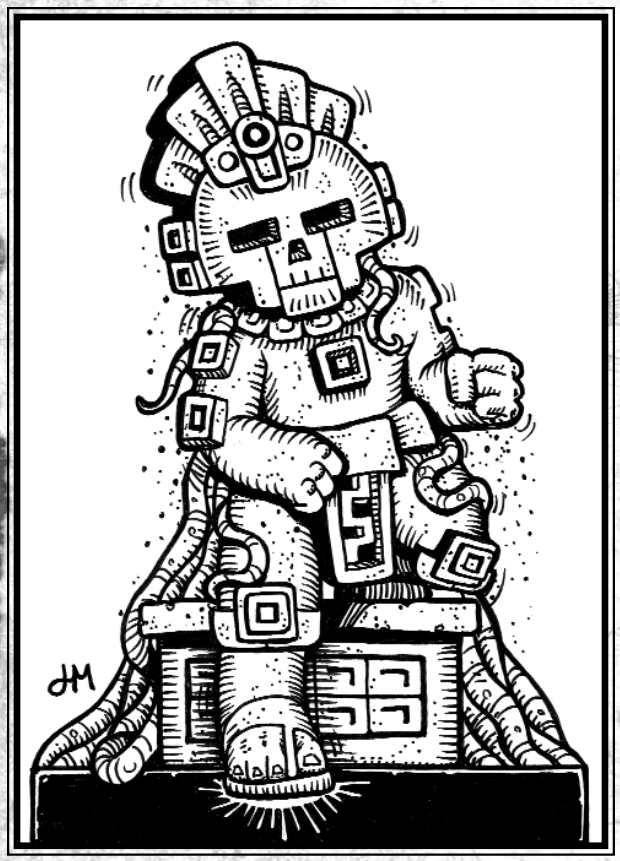
the center of attention, and are incredibly loud. They have a fondness for vulgar jokes and bawdy stories. Only fear can silence these boisterous giants, and the only creature known to strike fear in a lightning giant is a thunder giant. Wherever a thunder giant can be found, there is usually a lightning giant lurking around somewhere in the shadows, following the thunder giant's every command. Like most bullies, lightning giants are easily impressed with displays of power, and will readily submit to any being it believes to be vastly superior to itself. Of course, lightning giants also spend much time bullying and berating the weak, and they typically surround themselves with weaker lackeys, such as orcs or gnolls.

Combat

Lightning giants are surprisingly quick for their size, and use their mobility to their advantage. Frequently, they feign slowness to lull their opponents, and then try to rush in for a quick kill. They are masters of setting up ambushes, and generally fight only on terrain with which they are very familiar.

***Haste* (Sp):** After it has engaged in at least 1 round of combat, a lightning giant can *haste* itself once per day as a free action. The effect lasts 3 rounds and is otherwise the same as the spell.

Rock Throwing (Ex): The range increment is 120 feet for a lightning giant's thrown rocks.



Lightning Giants as Characters

Sly and quick, lightning giant characters are proud and aggressive warriors.

Lightning giant characters possess the following racial traits.

— +6 Strength, +3 Dexterity, +4 Constitution.

— Large size. –1 penalty to Armor Class, –1 penalty on attack rolls, –4 penalty on Hide checks, +4 bonus on grapple checks, lifting and carrying limits double those of Medium characters.

—Space/Reach: 10 feet/10 feet.

—A lightning giant's base land speed is 40 feet.

—Darkvision out to 60 feet and low-light vision.

—Racial Hit Dice: A lightning giant begins with ten levels of giant, which provide 10d8 Hit Dice, a base attack bonus of +7, and base saving throw bonuses of Fort +7, Ref +6, and Will +1.

—Racial Skills: A lightning giant's giant levels give it skill points equal to 13 x (2 + Int modifier). Its class skills are Climb, Intimidate, Jump, Listen, and Spot.

—Racial Feats: A lightning giant's giant levels give it five feats.

— +6 natural armor bonus.

—Special Attacks: Haste, rock throwing.

—Special Qualities: Rock catching.

—Automatic Languages: Giant. Bonus Languages: Common, Draconic, Elven, Goblin, Orc.

—Favored Class: Barbarian.

—Level Adjustment: +4.

Living Idol (Itepixcan)

Medium Construct
Hit Dice: 6d10+20 (50 hp)
Initiative: +2
Speed: 30 ft.
Armor Class: 22 (+2 Dex, +10 natural), touch 12, flat-footed 20
Base Attack/Grapple: +4/+9
Attack: Slam +10 melee (1d4+5)
Full Attack: 2 slams +10 melee (1d4+5)
Space/Reach: 5 ft./5 ft.
Special Attacks: See below
Special Qualities: Construct traits, damage reduction 8/adamantine, darkvision 60 ft., enshrined, fast healing 1, immunity to magic, vigilance
Saves: Fort +2, Ref +3, Will +4
Abilities: Str 21, Dex 14, Con –, Int 3, Wis 10, Cha 1
Skills: Hide +9*, Listen +5, Move Silently +7, Search +1, Spot +5
Feats: Alertness, Iron Will, Weapon Focus (fists)
Environment: See below
Organization: Solitary
Challenge Rating: 7
Treasure: None
Alignment: As per sponsoring deity
Advancement: 6–12 HD (Medium); 13–20 HD (Large); 21–35 HD (Huge); 36-45 HD (Gargantuan); 46-60 HD (Colossal)
Level Adjustment: –

This statue of polished black obsidian is carved to resemble a sandaled, muscular human robed in simple vestments. Atop its shoulders, an oversized skull is crowned with a stony headdress of feathers and its fleshless face stares back at you. After remaining inert within the shadowed alcove, the statue suddenly lurches into motion.

Resembling golems only in the most fundamental of ways, living idols—known as itepixcan (ee-*tep*-ish-kahn) in the Xulmec tongue—are divinely touched constructs that trace their origin to the god Huamec during the War of Divine Right thousands of years ago (see Chapter 1). After his pyrrhic victory against the invading giants, the god was slain—the obsidian colossus he had possessed

and animated lay shattered—and the priests of Xulmec passed along the rites Huamec had taught to them, the secret of giving life to stone. For the demigod's great sacrifice, Madrah, the Lord of the Earth and Sky, approved of the secrets of idol creation, and today living idols now guard the shrines and temples of the Xulmec demigods. Though they are pale imitations of Huamec's titanic avatar, living idols are formidable in their own right.

The construction materials of a living idol can vary greatly. The most common are basalt and obsidian and are typically fashioned into the likeness of a human—often with exaggerated features and always carved with designs appropriate for the god it serves. On rare occasions, more valuable minerals are used, such alabaster, onyx, or jade. Statues that become living idols are usually Medium in size, but larger idols have been found guarding the most sacred of temples and reliquaries. The statistics above represent the most common, weakest form of living idol.

Although clerics perform the sacred rites and supplicate their god to give the construct life, only a deity can animate a living idol and they are only constructed with a god's edict. Once animated, the idol acts as the eternal guardian of an area designated by that deity, hereafter referred to as its shrine. This shrine is typically a temple, burial ground, or sacrificial altar. Sometimes a single object is guarded, and the idol's shrine is the container that holds it.

Living idols must always obey the directives and orders of their sponsored deity. Though their actions are usually compliant with the wishes of the shrine's resident clerics, living idols are bound only to the wills of the gods, not mortals. Since they usually do not speak, any actions they take beyond defending their shrines are subject to great religious speculation. Often, these actions are viewed as portentous, as omens from the gods—a living idol may stand motionless beside the altar of a temple for centuries, then abruptly move six steps to the north for what appears to be no reason at all. Likewise, an idol may relocate itself frequently or manipulate its environment.

Living idols are respected by common folk as operative, vengeful instruments of the gods. On rare occasions, living idols have even been known to slay one of their own attendant clerics, a sure sign of the god's disapproval or the presence of a charlatan of the faith. Living idols seldom speak, but they understand Xulmec, Celestial, Infernal, and Abyssal.

Combat

Living idols serve to defend a holy place or relic for their sponsoring deity. Their fighting tactics are simple—destroy or drive away any threat. They fight until they or their enemies are destroyed and will not pursue enemies that retreat beyond the shrine they guard. Living idols possess a glimmer of intelligence and are capable of discerning between heretics (enemies) and "approved" visitors (allies).

Enshrined (Su): Each living idol is divinely bound to a single shrine and will never stray more than 200 feet from it (a single 5-foot by 5-foot square). This range doubles with each size category a living idol is advanced—for example, a Huge living idol will never stray more than 800 feet from its shrine. Should a living idol ever be forced to move beyond this range, it immediately carries out the malediction ability (see below), whether or not it possesses this ability normally, then reverts to an inanimate state. Returning the idol to its shrine restores its animation.

On rare occasions, the sponsoring deity will allow the living idol to move beyond its shrine. Such occurrences are always of great importance to the faith in question, such as a living idol sent to accompany a chosen cleric on an important quest.

Immunity to Magic (Ex): A living idol is immune to any spell or spell-like ability that allows spell resistance.

Vigilance (Su): At all times, an effect similar to an *alarm* spell is placed within the primary entrance to a living idol's designated area. The living idol is instantly aware of any creature of Tiny size or larger that enters the warded location. It seldom takes action when first alerted; it merely notes the intrusion and cannot be surprised.

Special Attacks: All living idols possess the same special qualities as listed in the statistics presented above, plus one to three special abilities from the list below. GMs may choose or roll 1d8 for these abilities. The save DC against a special attack is equal to 10 + 1/2 living idol's HD + living idol's Wisdom modifier unless otherwise noted.

(1) Earth Glide (Ex): A living idol can glide through stone, dirt, or almost any other sort of earth except metal as easily as a fish swims through water. Its movement leaves behind no tunnel or hole, nor does it create any ripple or other signs of its presence. A *move earth* spell cast on an area containing a living idol flings the living idol back 30 feet.

(2) Healing Suppression (Ex): Damage dealt by a living idol heals only at half the normal rate, whether the source is natural or magical in nature. For example, a *cure serious wounds* spell that would normally heal 15 points of damage will only heal 7 when used to heal a wound inflicted by a living idol.

(3) Malediction (Su): Once per day, a living idol can call upon the divine force that animates it to curse its intrud-

ing enemies. Opening whatever serves as its mouth, the living idol emits a disturbing keen or deep, base pitch, wracking all targets within 60 feet with morale-shattering pain. Targets must succeed on a Will save or suffer a –4 penalty on attack rolls, skill checks, and ability checks for 4d10 minutes. Malediction has no affect on the living idol's allies.

(4) Menacing Visage (Su): Three times per day, as a standard action, a living idol can manifest a horrific countenance (such as an otherwise human head "unhinging" several times to reveal a grinning skull with glowing eyes within) that sends a wave of fear across its enemies. All living creatures within a 50-foot cone must succeed on a Will save or become panicked for 2d4 rounds. This is a necromantic mind-affecting fear effect. A creature that successfully saves against this visage cannot be affected by the same living idol's visage for 24 hours.

(5) Spell-like Ability (Su): 2/day—*dispel magic,* or *searing light, spider climb*.

(6) Spell-like Ability (Su): 1/day—*dimension door* or *dismissal*.

(7) True Seeing (Su): A living idol continuously uses *true seeing* as the spell (caster level 9th).

(8) Improved Grab (Ex): To use this ability, a living idol must hit a creature of its own size or smaller with its slam attack. It can then attempt to start a grapple as a free action without provoking an attack of opportunity. If it wins the grapple check, it establishes a hold and can constrict.

Constrict (Ex): A living idol deals automatic slam damage with a successful grapple check.

Skills: *The Hide bonus increases by +8 when a living idol is concealed against a relief for which the living idol's body is designed to complement.

Nalvor

Medium Humanoid
Hit Dice: 2d8+6 (15 hp)
Initiative: +1
Speed: 30 ft.
Armor Class: 14 (+1 Dex, +3 hide armor), touch 11, flat-footed 13
Base Attack/Grapple: +1/+3
Attack: Scimitar +3 melee (1d6+2) or shortbow +2 ranged (1d6)
Full Attack: Scimitar +3 melee (1d6+2) or shortbow +2 ranged (1d6)
Space/Reach: 5 ft./5 ft.
Special Attacks: –
Special Qualities: Darkvision 60 ft., immunity to charm and fear, low-light vision
Saves: Fort +8, Ref +1, Will +0
Abilities: Str 14, Dex 12, Con 16, Int 10, Wis 9, Cha 10
Skills: Climb +3, Hide +2, Listen +3, Move Silently +2, Spot +2
Feats: Alertness, Endurance
Environment: Any desert
Organization: Patrol (2–5), squad (6–11 plus 1–2 monitor lizards), or legion (20–80 plus 20% noncombatants plus 2–12 horses)
Challenge Rating: 1
Treasure: Standard
Alignment: Usually lawful neutral
Advancement: By character class
Level Adjustment: +2

This striking humanoid has long black hair and olive green skin. Its clothes are ragged and torn, standing in sharp contrast to its physical beauty.

The nalvor are physically striking humanoids, with long, flowing black hair and olive green skin. However, due to centuries of hatred from other races, they believe themselves to be incredibly ugly, and typically dress in rags.

The nalvor are a strange race of hybrid humanoids. Created to essentially be the equivalent of humanoid mules by their sphinx masters, the nalvor have the blood of both elf and hobgoblin flowing through their veins. While this strange combination created a strong and ruthlessly efficient slave, it has also made in modern times a pariah creature hated throughout the world. Elves find the nalvor to be little more than an evil abomination; the goblinoid races, meanwhile, find them to be gutless and

impure. For this reason, the nalvor never left the ruins of their ancestral home; only amidst the ruins created by their former sphinx masters have they been able to find solace from the rest of the world.

The nalvor are socially inept creatures, with no sense of courtesy or manners. They simply take what they want and do as they please. The only exception to this is when they are confronted with someone or something they believe to be their superior—usually, something associated in some manner with their former sphinx masters. Then they become polite to a fault, and always defer to that "superior" being, no matter how ludicrous or suicidal its demands may become.

Nalvor are incredibly patient creatures. Although abandoned centuries ago by the sphinxes, they still fervently believe that their sphinx masters shall return to them. For this reason, the nalvor are regarded by most other creatures as being far too passive—they seem incapable of making any sort of quick decision, and generally try to resolve any situation or problem in terms of how their sphinx masters would want that situation resolved. It is the rare nalvor indeed who can act as a leader and not a follower; it is even rarer when that nalvor shows a spark of imagination or tactical thought. As a result, the nalvor cities are often attacked by bandits, who know that their prey will be slow and their reactions predictable.

Combat

Nalvor are unimaginative fighters, and generally deal with threats in the most direct manner possible. Ironically, they often confuse their enemies, as their incredibly poor tactics can be easily mistaken for trickery. However, what they lack in cunning, they certainly make up for in sheer determination. Nalvor are notoriously stubborn and do not retreat unless commanded to do so. They typically fight to the death.

Immunity to Charm and Fear (Ex): All nalvor are immune to charm- and fear-based spells and magic.

Nalvor Society

The society of the nalvor is a bureaucratic nightmare. Meticulous to a fault, the nalvor always try to follow the ancient laws of their sphinx masters to the letter. Unfortunately, many of these laws conflict with one another, leading to confusion and indecision. Nalvor cities are governed by ruling councils, which debate endlessly, as they seek to interpret ancient law and to find universal consensus … effectively paralyzing their society. For this reason, nalvor society has evolved little since the halcyon days of the Khonsurian Empire, and it is rare indeed when a confident, decisive nalvor leader can emerge and unite all nalvor with authority.

Nalvor as Characters

Nalvor characters possess the following racial traits.

—Strength +4, Dexterity +2, Constitution +6, Intelligence –2, Charisma –2.

—Medium size.

—A nalvor's base land speed is 30 feet.

—Darkvision out to 60 feet; low-light vision.

—Racial Hit Dice: A nalvor begins with two levels of humanoid, which provide 2d8 Hit Dice, a base attack bonus of +1, and base saving throw bonuses of Fort +3, Ref +0, and Will +0.

—Racial Skills: A nalvor's humanoid levels give it skill points equal to 5 x (2 + Int modifier). Its class skills are Climb, Hide, Listen, Move Silently, and Spot.

—Racial Feats: Nalvor automatically receive the feat of Endurance. Additionally, a nalvor's humanoid levels give it one bonus feat.

—Automatic Languages: Elven, Goblin. Bonus Languages: Common, Draconic, Orc.

—Favored Class: Ranger.

—Level Adjustment: +2.

Oneiric Creature

Oneiric creatures dwell within the Dream (see Chapter 2), the imaginative realm maintained by Ôæ, although they resemble beings found on the Material Plane. In rare instances when they are translated into the waking world, their appearance is more fantastical than their Material counterparts.

Oneiric creatures are transitory in the waking world. Typically they are called into existence by agents of the Dream, found most often defending sites of sacred importance to Ôæ or Gil'Mâridth.

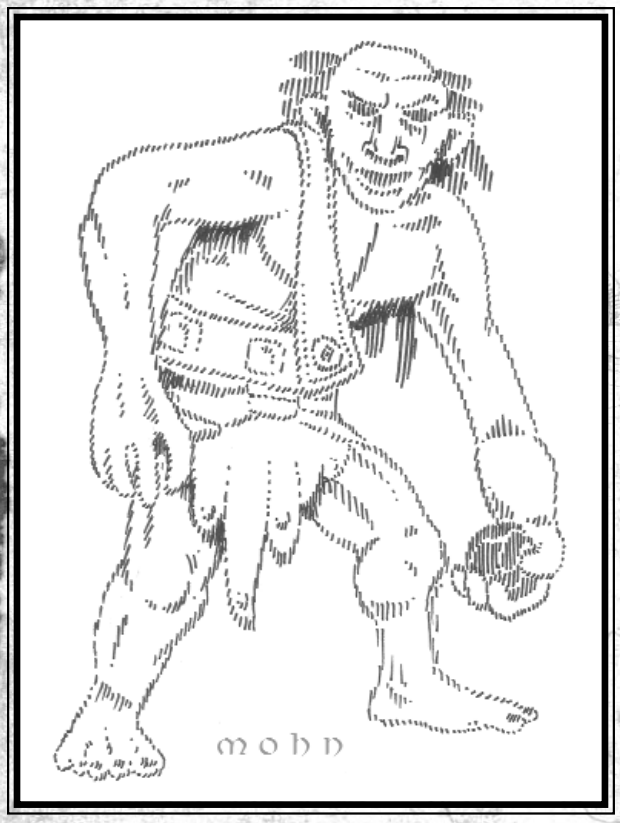
Creating an Oneiric Creature

"Oneiric" is an inherited template that can be added to any creature (referred to hereafter as the "base creature"). An oneiric creature uses all the base creature's statistics and special abilities except as noted here.

Size and Type: The creature's type changes to outsider. It gains the dream subtype.

Special Attacks: An oneiric creature retains all the special attacks of the base creature and also gains the following special attack.

Phantasmal Strike (Ex): Twice per day, an oneiric creature can make a devastating attack that belies its strength



and speed. It can make a normal melee attack to deal extra damage equal to twice its HD total (maximum of +20 points) against a foe. If the oneiric creature's foe makes a successful Will save (DC = 10 + 1/2 oneiric creature's HD + oneiric creature's Cha modifier), the attack is disbelieved and no damage is suffered.

Special Qualities: An oneiric creature has all the special qualities of the base creature, plus the following special qualities.

Doubt Vulnerability (Ex): If an opponent is made aware of an oneiric creature's phantasmal nature, he can attempt to disbelieve it as a standard action that does not provoke an attack of opportunity as long as he has line of sight with the creature. If the opponent succeeds on a Will save (DC = 10 + 1/2 the oneiric creature's HD + its Cha modifier), he deals 1d8 points of damage to the oneiric creature.

Ephemeral (Ex): When an oneiric creature reaches 0 hit points, all traces of its body (including blood or other vitals) dissipate as though it never was. Additionally, half of all ability score or hit point damage dealt by the oneiric creature returns at the rate of 1 hit point or ability score point per round. For example, a fighter who suffered 22 points of damage from an oneiric hill giant would be restored 1 hit point per round for 11 rounds following its death. Creatures slain by an oneiric creature do not, however, return from death.

Fearless (Ex): An oneiric creature knows that it is ephemeral in the waking world and cannot be intimidated or persuaded. It is immune to all mind-affecting spells and effects.

Spell Resistance (Ex): An oneiric creature has spell resistance equal to its Hit Dice +10.

Abilities: Increase from the base creature as follows: Wis +2, Cha +6.

Challenge Rating: HD 3 or less, as base creature; HD 4 to 7, as base creature +1; HD 8 or more, as base creature +2.

Alignment: Usually neutral.

Level Adjustment: Same as base creature +1.

Pteral

Medium Monstrous Humanoid
Hit Dice: 3d8+6 (19 hp)
Initiative: +3
Speed: 30 ft., fly 60 ft. (good)
Armor Class: 15 (+3 Dex, +2 natural), touch 13, flat-footed 12
Base Attack/Grapple: +3/+5
Attack: Claw +5 melee (1d6+2)
Full Attack: 2 claws +5 melee (1d6+2) or sting (1d4+1 plus poison)
Space/Reach: 5 ft./5 ft.
Special Attacks: Poison
Special Qualities: Regeneration 5, telepathy
Saves: Fort +3, Ref +6, Will +3
Abilities: Str 14, Dex 17, Con 15, Int 9, Wis 11, Cha 7
Skills: Climb +3, Hide +5, Move Silently +4, Spot +2
Feats: Flyby Attack, Hover
Environment: Any temperate or warm forest
Organization: Solitary, pair, squad (3–12) or colony (20–100 plus 20% noncombatants plus one 9th-level sorceress queen)
Challenge Rating: 2
Treasure: Standard
Alignment: Always lawful evil
Advancement: By character class
Level Adjustment: +3

These violent and merciless wasp-men stand six feet tall. They have jet back hides with reddish markings, large transparent wings, and long, sharp stingers.

A powerful and destructive race of creatures, the pterals have an unrelenting need to consume and destroy all that they can find. Fortunately, these creatures are seldom active, and hibernate for years at a time.

Ordinarily, pterals pose little threat to the rest of the world, as their hives are dormant, and virtually all of the

pterals in the hive are in deep hibernation. During these times, only one or two squads of pterals stay active to defend the hive. However, for reasons unknown, once every seven years the entire hive awakens and enters a feeding cycle. During this time, the creatures seek to consume as much food as possible, preferring the flesh of animals above all other types of sustenance. Their appetites are legendary—a single hive has been known to slay every living creature within a hundred miles. Fortunately, feeding cycles only last for little more than a month; after that, the pterals return to their hives and become dormant once more.

Pteral colonies live in massive structures called blood hives, named for their crimson hue. Blood hives are massive organic spheres capable of supporting over one hundred pterals, and can easily measure over a quarter mile in diameter. It is not known exactly how the blood hives are created, but however the process occurs, it is quick—new blood hives have been known to spring up in less than a fortnight.

Each hive is ruled by a pteral queen that never physically leaves the hive. The queen is always female and always a sorceress of immense power. The queen is the undisputed ruler of all the pterals that inhabit her hive, and her commands are always obeyed. Should a queen be killed, the remaining pterals of her hive quickly disband, scattering throughout the region in search of new hives to join.

Combat

Pterals fight primarily to defend their hive and their queen. However, during their feeding cycles, they move swiftly across the land surrounding their hive, consuming all living creatures that they encounter and destroying everything else. They tend to fight in pairs, using their flight ability to their advantage over land-based opponents.

Poison (Ex): Injury, Fortitude DC 14, initial and secondary damage 1d6 Constitution. The save DC is Constitution-based.

Regeneration (Ex): Fire and cold deal normal damage to a pteral. If a pteral loses a limb or body part, the lost portion regrows in 2d6 minutes. The creature can reattach the severed member instantly by holding it to the stump.

Telepathy (Ex): Pterals can communicate telepathically with others of their own race at will, as per a *helm of telepathy*. They cannot extend this ability to creatures of other races, nor does this mean that they can automatically communicate with other telepathic creatures.

Pteral Society

Pteral society revolves around two simple concepts: propagate the species, and protect the hive queen at all costs. They are highly organized creatures, and operate in a ruthlessly efficient manner. Those too old, sick, or weak to further help the hive are summarily executed. A pteral queen rules over her hive with ironclad authority, and her minions obey her every command. While it is not unheard of for a lone pteral to go rogue and to break away from its hive, to do so is essentially a death sentence, as that rogue pteral will be hunted down by warriors from its hive until the end of its days.

Pteral as Characters

Pteral characters possess the following racial traits.

—Strength +2, Dexterity +3, Constitution +2, Intelligence –1, Charisma –2.

—Medium size.

—A pteral's base land speed is 30 feet, and has a flying speed of 60 feet with Good maneuverability.

—Darkvision out to 60 feet; low-light vision.

—Racial Hit Dice: A pteral begins with two levels of humanoid, which provide 2d8 Hit Dice, a base attack bonus of +1, and base saving throw bonuses of Fort +3,

Ref +0, and Will +0.

—Racial Skills: A pteral's humanoid levels give it skill points equal to 6 x (2 + Int modifier). Its class skills are Climb, Hide, Move Silently, and Spot.

—Racial Feats: A pteral's monstrous humanoid levels give it two feats.

—+2 natural armor bonus.

—Special Qualities: Poison, regeneration 5, limited telepathy

—Automatic Languages: Pteral. Bonus Languages: Common, Goblin.

—Favored Class: Fighter.

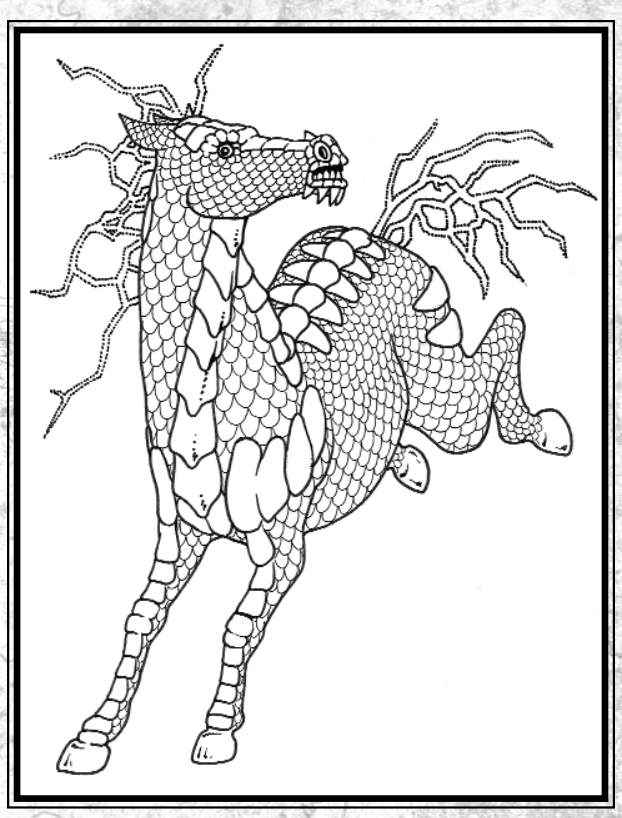
—Level Adjustment: +3.

Shadroquus

Medium Dragon
Hit Dice: 3d12+9 (28 hp)
Initiative: +9
Speed: 30 ft.
Armor Class: 16 (+5 Dex, –1 size, +2 natural), touch 14, flat-footed 11
Base Attack/Grapple: +3/+10
Attack: Hoof +5 melee (1d6+3)
Full Attack: 4 clawed hooves +5 melee (1d6+3) or bite +0 melee (1d4+1)
Space/Reach: 10 ft./5 ft.
Special Attacks: Breath weapon, charm person
Special Qualities: Darkvision 60 ft., immunity to sleep and paralysis, low-light vision, scent
Saves: Fort +6, Ref +8, Will +3
Abilities: Str 16, Dex 20, Con 16, Int 14, Wis 11, Cha 13
Skills: Climb +9, Hide +7, Jump +9, Spot +6
Feats: Endurance, Improved Initiative, Lightning Reflexes
Environment: Any desert
Organization: Solitary, pair, or herd (3–12)
Challenge Rating: 3
Treasure: Standard
Alignment: Always neutral good
Advancement: 4–7 HD (Large); 8–12 HD (Huge)
Level Adjustment: –

These large, enchanted horses have dark blue scales, not fur; and their white manes and tails are in fact constant surges of crackling, magical lightning.

It is said that long ago, the mightiest of sphinx sorcerers in the Khonsurian Empire sought to create the ultimate horse by combining the traits of desert stallions and blue dragons in a single creature: the shadroquus. Although



the truth behind this tale is somewhat debatable, the fact remains that herds of these creatures roam free across the deserts of Xa Deshret and the Vermilion Steppes, and that they are amongst the most beautiful—and deadly—creatures to be found in the region.

Occasionally, they can be tamed by riders in the Vermilion Steppes, although it is a fairly rare occurrence. Only the best of the riders among the Tribes actually manage to bend a shadroquus to their will. Although still highly temperamental, once trained and broken, shadroquus become loyal, obedient steeds, and remain inseparable from their riders until death.

Combat

Shadroquus are relentless fighters. In the wild, they prefer to swarm around an opponent, hitting it with their breath weapon attacks and letting the occasional lone shadroquus hit with a quick melee strike. As a trained mount, the shadroquus follows the lead of its rider, although it still has a preference for its lightning breath attack whenever possible.

Breath Weapon (Su): The breath weapon of a shadroquus is a 40-foot line of lightning. It is usable once every 1d4 rounds, deals 3d8 points of damage, and allows a DC 17 Reflex save for half damage. The save DC is Constitution-based.

***Charm Person* (Sp):** When a shadroquus gazes upon an opponent with its magical flaming eyes, it has the oppor-

tunity to charm that opponent. The effect works as a *charm person* spell with a 40-foot range; a successful Will save (DC 12) negates the effect. The save DC is Charisma-based.

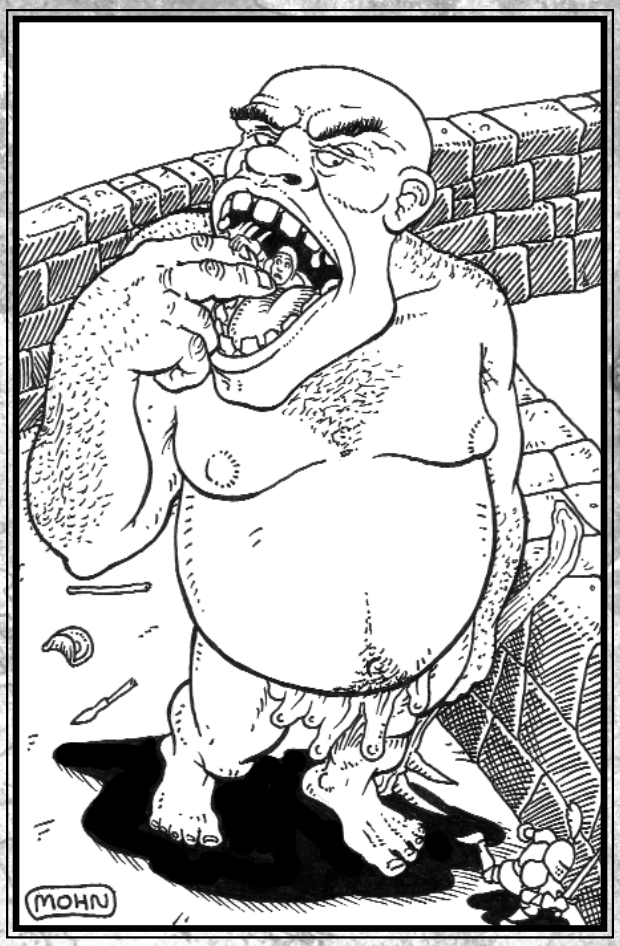
Thunder Giant

Gargantuan Giant
Hit Dice: 24d8+216 (324 hp)
Initiative: +1
Speed: 40 ft.
Armor Class: 23 (+1 Dex, –4 size, +16 natural), touch 7, flat-footed 22
Base Attack/Grapple: +18/+47
Attack: Greataxe +31 melee (4d6+17) or slam +31 melee (1d8+25) or rock +10 ranged (4d6+17)
Full Attack: Greataxe +31 melee (4d6+17) or 2 slams +31 melee (1d8+25) or rock +10 ranged (4d6+17)
Space/Reach: 20 ft./20 ft.
Special Attacks: Improved grab, rock throwing, rush, snatch, swallow whole, trample
Special Qualities: Darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision, rock catching
Saves: Fort +23, Ref +9, Will +10
Abilities: Str 44, Dex 12, Con 28, Int 12, Wis 15, Cha 18
Skills: Climb +20, Concentration +10, Craft (any) +2, Handle Animal +6, Intimidate +6, Jump +18, Listen +5
Feats: Awesome Blow, Combat Reflexes, Great Cleave, Improved Bull Rush, Power Attack
Environment: Any mountains
Organization: Solitary, pair, family (3–6), or tribe (6–10 plus 1 barbarian leader of 7th–9th level plus 1–4 dire bears, and 1–4 lightning giants)
Challenge Rating: 16
Treasure: Double standard
Alignment: Usually neutral evil
Advancement: By character class
Level Adjustment: +10

This towering, malevolent warrior is a giant among giants. It stands well over thirty feet tall and looks to weigh several tons.

Thunder giants are moody, capricious individuals that love secrets more than gold. They constantly plot against "the small ones": any humanoid smaller than themselves that may live within one hundred miles of their lair. Thunder giants are usually only found on the highest of mountains or in the deepest depths below these peaks; mercifully, this makes them a rare evil to most of the world.

Thunder giants believe themselves to be witty, intelligent creatures. They love to talk, and will speak at length to any creature capable of understanding them—even their enemies, in the heat of combat. Though they are no doubt sharper than most of their giantkin cousins, thunder



giants are not nearly as clever as they believe themselves to be. They love riddles and puzzles, and often present these riddles to those that they capture as proof of their own cleverness. However, thunder giants are not terribly original, and are usually dumbfounded when they find their riddles solved—or themselves outwitted—by a shrewd rogue or bard. Of course, that is when thunder giants lose their temper and start reaching for axes …

The "cleverness" of the thunder giants also extends to their lairs. Built within extensive caverns, thunder giants turn their lairs into sprawling, winding labyrinths, filled with magical traps and puzzles. It has not been unknown for a thunder giant to create a lair that is *too* deadly, inevitably slaying its giant master and leaving hordes of treasure trapped but waiting for intrepid explorers.

Combat

Thunder giants, although incredibly powerful, rarely like to directly enter combat. It is often why they surround themselves with hill giant or lightning giant minions—to "soften up" potential foes before having to enter combat themselves. Once in combat, however, they are fierce, determined warriors who certainly know how to use their immense size to their advantage. Like other giants, they

use their rock throwing abilities to attack foes from afar, and their powerful greataxes in melee. They also have the gruesome habit of eating opponents alive, though more oftentimes than not, this particular tactic backfires upon them in combat.

Improved Grab (Ex): To use this ability, the thunder giant must hit a Huge or smaller opponent with its slam attack. It can then attempt to start a grapple as a free action without provoking an attack of opportunity. If it wins the grapple check, it establishes a hold and can try to swallow the foe the following round.

Rock Throwing (Ex): The range increment is 200 feet for a thunder giant's thrown rocks.

Swallow Whole (Ex): A thunder giant can try to swallow a grabbed opponent of Medium or lesser size by making a successful grapple check. Once inside, the opponent takes 1d4+4 points of crushing damage plus 1d4 points of acid damage per round from the thunder giant's digestive juices. A swallowed creature can cut its way out by dealing 25 points of damage to the thunder giant's digestive tract (AC 20). Once the creature exits, muscular action closes the hole; another swallowed opponent must cut its own way out. The thunder giant's stomach can hold 1 Medium, 2 Small, or 4 Tiny or smaller creatures.

Trample (Ex): A thunder giant has the ability to trample opponents that are underfoot. The save for this trampling attack is Reflex DC 40, with a successful save resulting in only half damage; the save DC is Strength-based.

Thunder Giants as Characters

Powerful and cunning, thunder giant characters rarely step foot in the rest of the civilized world.

Thunder giant characters possess the following racial traits.

— +16 Strength, +4 Dexterity, +8 Constitution, +2 Wisdom.

— Gargantuan size. –4 penalty to Armor Class, –4 penalty on attack rolls, –12 penalty on Hide checks, +12 bonus on grapple checks, lifting and carrying limits four times that of Medium characters.

—Space/Reach: 20 feet/20 feet.

—A thunder giant's base land speed is 40 feet.

—Darkvision out to 60 feet and low-light vision.

—Racial Hit Dice: A thunder giant begins with twenty-four levels of giant, which provide 24d8 Hit Dice, a base attack bonus of +18, and base saving throw bonuses of Fort +23, Ref +9, and Will +10.

—Racial Skills: A thunder giant's giant levels give it skill points equal to 27 x (2 + Int modifier). Its class skills are Climb, Concentration, Craft (any one), Handle Animal, Intimidate, Jump, and Listen.

—Racial Feats: A thunder giant's giant levels give it five feats.

— +11 natural armor bonus.

—Special Attacks: Rock throwing, trample.

—Special Qualities: Rock catching.

—Automatic Languages: Giant. Bonus Languages: Common, Draconic, Elven, Goblin, Orc.

—Favored Class: Barbarian.

—Level Adjustment: +10.

Xochatateo

Xochatateo are filthy undead humanoids, often still covered with the gore from their own death and from the eviscerations of their many victims.

Created when a sacrifice goes horribly wrong, a xochatateo is a tormented creature cursed to exist between the realms of life and death, constantly seeking the hearts of the living to replace the one that once beat within its chest.

It is unclear as to exactly why the xochatateo are created. Some scholars argue that they are created when a sacrifice ritual is conducted incorrectly; others believe that they are created when the subject being sacrificed simply refuses to die. A few cynics even believe that xochatateo are nothing more than a cruel god's joke. Regardless of the reasons why the undead creature is created, there is no disputing how they come into existence: During a sacrifice ritual, when the still-beating heart is ripped from a humanoid creature's chest, for some reason that creature does not die. Instead, it is reborn as a cruel, savage creature with a taste for mortal flesh.

While exhibiting cannibalistic behavior, the xochatateo are most infamous for their obsession with hearts. After a killing frenzy, they typically rip out the hearts of their victims and horde them as treasure. Although it is unclear as to why the xochatateo are so obsessed with hearts, survivors of xochatateo attacks have reported that the creatures often place their new trophies inside their own chests, as if to replace the hearts that were torn out of them.

Xochatateo are generally filthy creatures, typically covered with gore. They frequently inhabit graveyards or lurk near temples where sacrifices may occur, hoping for easy access to the hearts of the living. For this reason, they are

often mistaken for ghouls. However, as they retain some of their memories and intelligence, they may still attempt to contact living creatures that seem familiar from their former lives, and occasionally exhibit some semblance of humanity in their otherwise vicious behavior.

Xochatateo are almost always loners, preferring to keep to themselves and to stay away from other creatures. They have a pathological hatred of other undead creatures, particularly other xochatateo, and will immediately attack such creatures if suddenly confronted by them.

Xochatateo speak any languages that they knew in life.

Creating a Xochatateo

"Xochatateo" is an acquired template that can be added to any humanoid or monstrous humanoid creature (referred to hereafter as the base creature).

A xochatateo uses all the base creature's statistics and special abilities except as noted here.

Size and Type: The creature's type changes to undead (augmented humanoid or monstrous humanoid). Do not recalculate base attack bonus, saves, or skill points. Size is unchanged.

Hit Dice: Increase all current and future Hit Dice to d12s.

Speed: Same as the base creature. If the base creature has a swim speed, the xochatateo retains the ability to swim and is not vulnerable to immersion in running water.

Armor Class: The base creature's natural armor bonus improves by +2.

Attack: A xochatateo retains all the attacks of the base creature and also gains a slam attack if it did not already possess one. If the base creature can use weapons, the xochatateo retains this ability. A creature with natural weapons retains those natural weapons. A xochatateo fighting without weapons uses either its slam attack or its primary natural weapon (if it has any). A xochatateo armed with a weapon uses its slam or a weapon, as it desires.

Full Attack: A xochatateo fighting without weapons uses either its slam attack (see above) or its natural weapons (if it has any). If armed with a weapon, it usually uses the weapon as its primary attack along with a slam or other natural weapon as a natural secondary attack.

Damage: Xochatateos have slam attacks. If the base creature does not have this attack form, use the appropriate damage value from the table below according to the xochatateo's size. Creatures that have other kinds of natural weapons retain their old damage values or use the appropriate value from the table below, whichever is better.

Size	Damage
Fine	1
Diminutive	1d2
Tiny	1d3
Small	1d4
Medium	1d6
Large	1d8
Huge	2d6
Gargantuan	2d8
Colossal	4d6

Special Attacks: A xochatateo retains all the special attacks of the base creature and gains those described below. Saves have a DC of 10 + 1/2 the xochatateo's HD + its Cha modifier unless noted otherwise.

Weakening Touch (Ex): A xochatateo can severely weaken its victims merely by touching them for an extended period of time. Should a xochatateo make a successful grapple check against an opponent, it pins the foe, dealing 1d6 points of Constitution drain each round the pin is maintained.

Special Qualities: A xochatateo retains all the special qualities of the base creature and gains those described below.

Blood Frenzy (Su): Upon reducing a foe to 0 hit points, a xochatateo gains temporary Strength and Constitution bonuses by feeding upon either the blood or the heart of that foe. This feeding frenzy takes 2 full rounds; after this time, the foe that is being consumed reaches –10 hit points and is permanently slain. The victim cannot be raised, reincarnated, or resurrected (though a *limited*

wish, wish, miracle, or *true resurrection* spell can restore life. No other actions may be taken by the xochatateo while it is in a blood frenzy. Once the frenzy is complete, the xochatateo gains a temporary bonus of +4 to both its Strength and Dexterity scores for an additional 2d6 rounds.

Blood Healing (Su): Upon entering a blood frenzy, a xochatateo's hit points are magically restored to full levels, healing the creature completely.

Damage Reduction (Su): A xochatateo has damage reduction 5/silver and magic. A xochatateo's natural weapons are treated as magic weapons for the purpose of overcoming damage reduction.

Turn Resistance (Ex): A xochatateo has +2 turn resistance.

Weakness to Holy Symbols (Su): See below.

Abilities: Increase from the base creature as follows: Str +6, Dex +2, Wis –4, Cha +4. As an undead creature, a xochatateo has no Constitution score.

Skills: A xochatateo has a +6 racial bonus on Hide, Listen, Move Silently, and Spot checks. Otherwise same as the base creature.

Feats: A xochatateo gains Alertness, Dodge, and Improved Initiative, assuming the base creature meets the prerequisites and does not already possess these feats.

Environment: Any; usually same as base creature.

Organization: Solitary.

Challenge Rating: Same as the base creature +1.

Treasure: Standard.

Alignment: Always evil (any).

Advancement: By character class.

Level Adjustment: Same as the base creature +4.

Xochatateo Weaknesses

Despite their power, the xochatateo also have a number of weaknesses.

Slaying a Xochatateo: Holy objects (symbols, water, etc.) of good origin cause immense harm to a xochatateo. The mere sight of a holy symbol automatically causes the xochatateo to make a Fortitude save of DC 16 or suffer a temporary loss of 1d4 Strength for 1d6 rounds or until the object disappears from its sight. A specific symbol or item's presence may only affect the xochatateo in this manner once per day. Additionally, striking a xochatateo with either a holy symbol or holy water of good origin causes double damage; a magical holy item (such as a *holy avenger*) causes triple damage.

Xochatateo Characters

Xochatateo are always evil, which causes characters of certain classes to lose some class abilities. In addition, certain classes take additional penalties.

Clerics: Xochatateo clerics lose the ability to turn undead (if they possessed it) but gain the ability to rebuke undead. A xochatateo cleric has access to two of the following domains: Chaos, Destruction, Evil, or Trickery.

Sorcerers and Wizards: Xochatateo are incapable of casting spells that are not of a divine nature. A wizard or sorcerer that becomes a xochatateo loses all ability to cast spells; however, all other skills and abilities are retained.

Chapter 4
Setting Rules

The Known Realms are home to a wealth of cultures and races. Lost empires, barbarian raiders, mad archwizards, and marauding hordes have all left their indelible mark on the world. Memories of Áereth's past live on in the blood of her people, from the mightiest king to the common serf.

The world is also a changing one, vibrant with life. Traders smelling of strange spices bring new traditions and weird magics from foreign lands, while priests in dark temples interrogate fiends in their search for forbidden knowledge. New challenges demand new heroes—courageous champions who can take up arms in the defense of good.

As heroes and villains, PCs must be able to stand in both the spider-haunted Áereth of old and the wild frontiers of today. This chapter details weapons, feats, and spells born from Áereth's storied past and savage present.

Feats

The feats in this chapter supplement the feats in the *PHB*. Follow the rules in the *PHB* to determine when feats are acquired.

Some of the feats require that a character be raised in a particular region of Áereth. Others are designed for evil NPCs who worship the infernal powers of Áereth, and are suited for PCs only when playing in an evil campaign. Because of the impact these feats can have on a game, players should consult their GM prior to taking these feats.

Any feat with the [Fighter] descriptor may be selected as one of a fighter's bonus feats.

Assess Enemies [General]

You have learned to size up your enemies.

Benefit: You can make a standard action to appraise your enemies and determine which is the most powerful. Only enemies that you can see within 60 feet are considered during the attempt, and only one such opponent at any given time can be determined. You make a DC 15 Wisdom check. If you succeed, you can gauge which opponent has the highest CR.

Special: A dwarf fighter may select Assess Enemies as a bonus fighter feat.

Ancestral Weapon [General, Fighter]

You have inherited your family's ancestral weapon, a masterwork item with a long and storied history.

Benefit: Choose a masterwork weapon during character creation. This item is sacred to your family, and as the family's scion and the bearer of the item, you are held to exacting standards.

At the GM's discretion, the masterwork weapon may later "awaken" to magical properties. Activating even the least of such properties should be the goal of an epic quest.

Special: This feat can only be taken at 1st level.

Capture [General]

You have been trained to subdue your enemies for capture.

Prerequisite: Combat Expertise

Benefit: You can deal nonlethal damage with most weapons at no penalty on the attack roll.

Normal: Without this feat, you take a –4 on your attack rolls when you use a melee weapon that deals lethal damage to deal nonlethal damage instead.

Special: A human or half-elf from the Xulmec city-states may select Capture without meeting the prerequisite.

Fiend Slayer [General, Fighter]

You have studied fiends and faced them in battle, giving you an intuitive understanding of their combat style.

Prerequisite: Dexterity 13, Knowledge (chosen enemy) 5 ranks.

Benefit: You gain a +2 dodge bonus to your Armor Class when fighting against one chosen enemy: aberrations, demons, devils, or undead. Any time you lose your Dexterity bonus (if any) to Armor Class, such as being caught flat-footed, you lose your dodge bonus as well.

Special: This feat may be taken multiple times, selecting a different foe each time.

Infernal Corrupion [General]

Close association with infernal powers has altered your physical body.

Prerequisite: Infernal Pact.

Benefit: Each time this feat is taken, roll 1d12 and consult the following table. This feat may be taken multiple times. Re-roll any duplicate effects.

Roll	Corruption
1-2	*Eyes of the Grimalkin:* Your eyes become like those of a cat, granting low-light vision that permits you to see twice as far as a human in starlight, moonlight, torchlight, and similar con-

New Feats

General Feats	Prerequisites	Benefits
Assess Enemies	–	DC 15 Wis check to identify highest CR
Ancestral Weapon*	–	Gain masterwork weapon
Capture	Combat Expertise	Deal nonlethal damage with weapons at no attack penalty.
Fiend Slayer*	Dex 13, Knowledge (chosen enemy) 5 ranks	+2 Dodge bonus to AC against chosen enemy
Infernal Pact	Knowledge (demonology/devilry) 5 ranks, spellcaster	Access Infernal spell list
Infernal Corruption	Infernal Pact	Varies
Infernal Sworn	Infernal Corruption, Infernal Pact	Resistance to fire, cold, or electricity 5
Siren Cry	Female, Perform (singing) 3 ranks, divine caster level 1	Attack similar to harpy's captivating song
Regional Feats	**Prerequisites**	**Benefits**
Poisoner	Southern Province, Freeport, Scourgelands	No risk of poisoning self when using poison
Savage Born	Cinai, Frost Barrens, Icenwastes, the Wilds, Saramanthia, Scourgelands	+2 in Diplomacy, Sense Motive, Intimidate with savages
Summon Horde	Savage Born, Leadership, character level 7th	Summon hundreds of barbarians
Metamagic Feats	**Prerequisites**	**Benefits**
Key of the Moon	Arcane spellcaster	Caster level changes with moon phases
Seer	Spellcraft 5 ranks	Spell slot requirement reduced by –1
Lore Caster	Seer, spellcraft 10 ranks	Spell slot requirement reduced by additional –1

** A fighter may select this feat as one of his fighter bonus feats.*

ditions of poor illumination.

3-4 *Kiss of the Serpent:* Your saliva becomes poisonous to others (Contact DC 13, Initial 1d4 hp, Secondary 1d12 hp). Once per day you can either spit venom as a standard melee touch attack, or lick your weapon, thereby applying poison to your weapon. You remain susceptible to all other poisons but your own.

5-6 *Talons of the Vulture:* Your fingernails grow into razor sharp claws, allowing you to inflict 1d6 points of damage as an unarmed attack.

7-8 *Horns of the Goat:* A pair of small horns emerge from your temple and a palpable aura of wickedness hangs about you, granting a +2 circumstance bonus to Intimidate checks.

9-10 *Child of the Wyrm:* Your skin grows a hard coat of scales, granting a +1 natural armor bonus.

11 *Blood of the Maggot:* You gain a +1 bonus to your Constitution score, but your body constantly reeks of rotting meat.

12 Roll twice, ignoring any 12s and re-rolling duplicate effects.

Infernal Pact [General]

You have sold your soul to a demon or devil in return for infernal spell powers.

Prerequisite: Knowledge (demonology/deviltry) 5 ranks, arcane or divine spellcaster.

Benefit: You have access to the Infernal spell list in addition to your regular spell list. If you already have access to the spell on the list, your caster level for the duplicate spell is +1. Evil clerics can worship infernal powers in addition to evil deities.

Regular: Worshippers of infernal powers (demons or devils) are not granted spells.

Special: The character cannot be brought back from the dead without additional indenture or promise of sacrifice.

Infernal Sworn [General]

Your infernal liege has made you resistant to certain energies.

Prerequisite: Infernal Corruption, Infernal Pact.

Benefit: You gain fire, cold, or electricity resistance 5. This feat may be taken multiple times, taking different energy types, whose benefits do not stack.

Key of The Moon [Metamagic]

Your spellcasting abilities are tied to the phases of the moon.

Prerequisite: Arcane spellcaster.

Benefit: For the three days preceding and following a full moon, your effective caster level is increased by +1. For the three days preceding and following a new moon, your effective caster level is decreased by –1.

Infernal Spell List

0-level: *inflict minor wounds, guidance*.

1st-level: *bane, cause fear, divine favor, doom, inflict light wounds, protection from good, summon monster II**.

2nd-level: *aid, augury, death knell, inflict moderate wounds, summon monster II**.

3rd-level: *inflict serious wounds, prayer, summon monster III**.

4th-level: *divine power, inflict critical wounds, planar ally (lesser)*, summon monster IV**.

5th-level: *contact other plane, commune, dispel good, slay living, summon monster V**.

6th-level: *harm, legend lore, summon monster VI**.

7th-level: *destruction, summon monster VII**.

8th-level: *summon monster VIII**.

9th-level: *gate, miracle, summon monster IX**.

*Cast as an evil spell only.

Lore Caster [Metamagic]

You are a master of ancient forgotten lore. The might of the universe courses through your spells.

Prerequisite: Seer, Spellcraft 10 ranks.

Benefit: When altering a spell with a metamagic feat, the spell slot requirement of the feat is reduced by –1, for a total of –2 when stacked with the Seer feat. A spell slot requirement cannot be reduced below the spell's original level.

Poisoner [General]

You hail from a culture with a practice of poisoning and are accomplished in its use.

Prerequisite: Raised in Southern Province, Freeport, or Scourgelands.

Benefit: You are trained in the use of poison and never risk poisoning yourself when applying it to a blade or otherwise readying the poison for use.

Normal: A character has a 5% chance of exposing himself to a poison whenever applying it to a weapon or otherwise readying the poison for use. Additionally, a character who rolls a natural 1 on an attack roll with a poisoned weapon must makes a DC 15 Reflex save or accidentally poison herself with the weapon.

Savage Born [General]

You have an innate kinship with barbarians.

Prerequisite: Raised in Cinai, Frost Barrens, Icenwastes, the Wilds, Saramanthia, Scourgelands*.

Benefit: You receive a +2 bonus on all Diplomacy, Sense Motive, and Intimidate checks made on savages. At the GM's discretion, additional groups may qualify.

Special: You may only take this feat as a 1st-level character.

*Half-orcs and monstrous humanoids only.

Seer [Metamagic]

A devotee of esoteric lore, you are able to attune your spells to the turning of the cosmos.

Prerequisite: Spellcraft 5 ranks.

Benefit: When altering a spell with a metamagic feat, the spell slot requirement of the feat is reduced by 1.

For example, an *enlarged fireball* would normally use up a 4th-level spell slot. When cast with the Seer feat, the spell would use up a 3rd-level spell slot.

Siren Cry [General]

You can sing to captivate your opponents.

Prerequisite: Female, Perform (singing) 3 ranks, ability to cast at least one divine spell of 1st level or higher.

Benefit: Once per day, you can make a special attack similar to a harpy's captivating song. As a standard action that does not provoke an attack of opportunity, you utter a sonorous cry that causes one or more creatures to become captivated. Each creature to be captivated must be within 60 feet, be able to see and hear you, and must make a successful Will save to negate the effect. This is a sonic, mind-affecting charm effect. The DC to resist the siren cry is equal to 10 + your Charisma modifier. The save DC is Charisma-based.

A captivated creature walks toward you, taking the most direct route available. If the path leads into a dangerous area (over the edge of a ship in shark-infested waters, or the like), that creature gets a second saving throw. Captivated creatures can take no actions other than to defend themselves. (A victim cannot run away or attack but takes no defensive penalties.) A victim within 5 feet of you stands there and offers no resistance to your attacks. The effect continues for as long as you sing and for 1 round thereafter. A bard's countersong ability allows the captivated creature to attempt a new Will save.

Special: A member of the Sirens of Pelagia may select Siren Cry without possessing any divine spells.

Summon Horde [General]

A legend amongst your people, you can summon a barbarian horde.

Prerequisite: Savage Born, Leadership, character level 7th.

Benefit: This horde can only be summoned in the homeland of the PC, from among his barbarian kin. A horde is limited by the population of an area, and can number up to the PC's Leadership score (character level + Charisma bonus) times 500.

While a horde can be raised for any number of causes, its success is ultimately judged on the amount of loot pillaged, be it in the form of grain and livestock, gold, or even slaves. Chaotic and undisciplined, hordes quickly disband unless led by a masterful (and successful) general.

A horde takes one month to gather, and can be kept together for a number of weeks equal to the PC's

Leadership score. At the end of this time, the PC must make a DC 15 Diplomacy check.

Modifiers may apply to Diplomacy check, as shown on the table below.

Diplomacy Check Modifiers to Summon Horde

Condition	Modifier
Leader's Reputation	
Cowardice	–10
Failure	–5
Generous	+2
Heroic	+5
Treasure Shared	
None	–15
Partial, late, or unfair	–10
Average	–5
Above average	+0
Exceptional, gift items	+5
Horde's Success in Battle	
Defeat	–10
Stalemate	–5
Victory	+0
Overwhelming victory	+5

If the PC fails the check, the horde disbands, the barbarians return to their homelands, and the PC may not call a horde until one year has passed. At the GM's discretion, certain conditions may have to be met before the commander of a failed campaign can rally another horde to his cause.

If the PC succeeds on the Diplomacy check, the horde remains together for another week, after which the PC must make another DC 15 Diplomacy check. The cycle continues until the horde disbands or the PC elects to dismiss the horde.

A PC dismissing a horde after a successful campaign must also wait a year before summoning another horde, but will find it easy to recruit eager barbarians to his cause.

In rare instances, a legendary barbarian might have several generals serving beneath him who have all rallied hordes to their banners, placing multiple armies beneath the command of the single horde-master. In such cases, it is the single horde-master who must succeed on the Diplomacy check.

Equipment

Conch: The conch is a brightly colored seashell of spiral design. Bards of the Xulmec city-state of Athua often choose the conch as the favored wind instrument for use with their bardic music. Playing the conch relies upon the insertion and placement of the hands as well as embouchure, the manipulation of the musician's lips, to produce a loud if mellow sound. Though several pitches can be achieved, some conches have been carved to yield a greater variety of sounds; these customized conches are always masterwork and of the finest quality.

The conch is spiritually ingrained in the culture of the Xulmec city-state of Athua. If the conch is blown by a user with at least 2 ranks of Perform (wind instruments) during the first round of combat, all allies of Athuan nationality within 30 feet are granted a +1 morale bonus on attack rolls for the first 3 rounds of combat. Blowing into a conch in this way is a standard action that provokes an attack of opportunity. Cost: 1 gp, masterwork 100 gp. Weight: 1 lb.

Drum, Xulmec: Two varieties of percussion instruments are native to the Xulmec city-states. The first is the teponaztli, a drum fashioned from the trunk of a hardwood tree, played horizontally and common among religious ceremonies. The other is the huehuetl, a vertical drum with an animal skin drawn across the top and left open at the bottom. Both are decorated with intricate carvings, often depicting historic scenes. Cost: 10 gp, masterwork 100 gp. Weight: 5 lb.

Quipu: Quipus are recording devices fashioned by the Amoyas but have become more commonplace throughout Xulmec. Originally used for textile counting, the quipu has been adapted by wizards to serve as an alternate form of spellbook. Consisting of spun and dyed knots woven from llama or alpaca hair, the complex network of strands represents arcane syllables that only a wizard proficient with its use can interpret. Mastery of the quipu requires at least 2 ranks in Knowledge (local) for the Amoya region or 5 ranks in Knowledge (arcana) and a Dexterity of 13 or greater. A single quipu contains only thirty pages worth of spells, but it is effectively weightless and a wizard can possess more than one to accommodate his repertoire of known spells. Immersion in water does not harm the quipu. Cost: 20 gp. Weight: —

Threnody Chimes: Though largely associated with the Threnodim—bardic priests of Soleth who developed and perfected this peculiar class of instruments—most bards fortunate enough to come across threnody chimes will seek to acquire one. The chimes come in a wide variety of sizes and designs, but the principle behind them all is the same; inside a wooden box-like resonating chamber is a complex mechanism of metal chime rods tuned to somber keys in the smaller hand-held instruments and capable of a full musical range in larger ones. Typically small enough to be worn with a strap about the neck and held gently in the arms like the performer is laying a dying loved one to rest, the right hand is laid within a hand-shaped impression on its upward face with a striking key beneath each finger. These keys strike the chime rods currently in position while the fingers of the left hand diligently work an intricate array of levers, buttons, or slides on the opposite side to retract, dampen, and replace the sets of chime rods into striking position. The result is a sound as haunting as it is sorrowfully beautiful—a darker, swimming timbre akin to both clavichord and clock chimes.

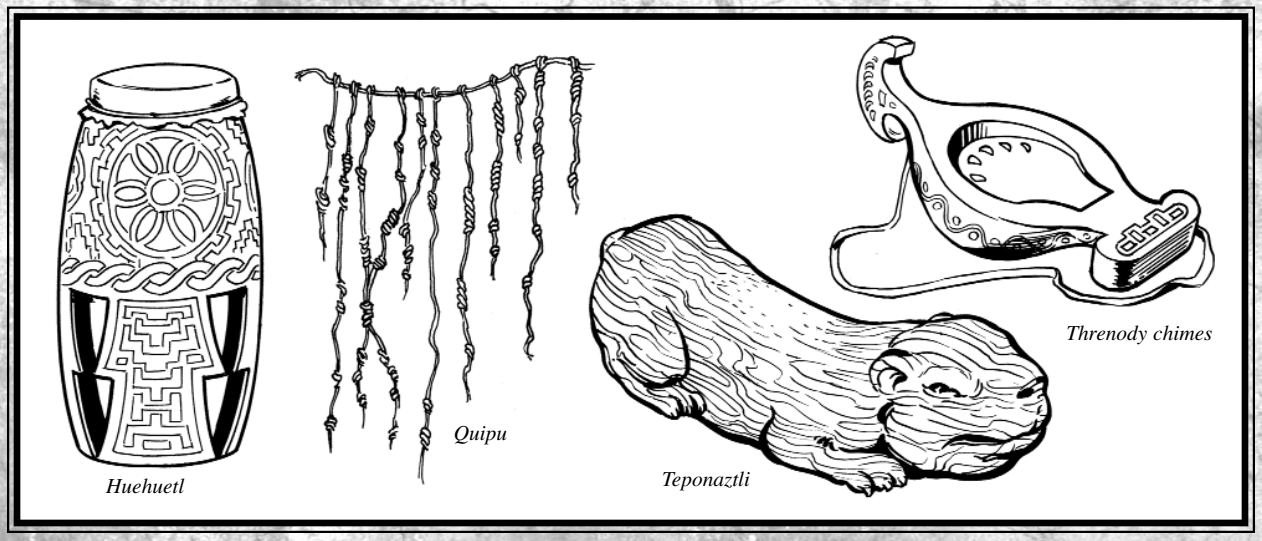
Externally, threnody chimes are usually decorated with ornate, morbid designs reflecting the tenets of Soleth. Some are even fashioned to suggest a humanoid body reclining at the moment of death. Furthering this image, Threnodim customarily play the chimes in a half-kneel with head bowed, though this posture is rarely assumed by most other bards. Cost: 80 gp, masterwork 200 gp. Weight: varies.

Tlahuiztli: The tlahuiztli is a Xulmec tabard, a tight-fitting cloth garment worn over the ichcahuipilli (see below). Its color marks the status of the warrior who wears it, and must be earned on the field of battle. In the Xulmec culture, slaying an enemy does not earn the same respect as capturing one. Multicolored feathers of many birds adorn the suit and matching helmet, with various combinations meant to represent different animals. When a Xulmec captain wears a legitimately earned tlahuiztli in the company of soldiers in his command, each soldier within 30 feet is granted a +1 morale bonus on attack rolls. Cost: 5 gp (but must be earned).

Weapons

Atlatl: Originally used for hunting waterfowl and fish, the atlatl is now used by the Xulmecs as an effective instrument of war. Consisting of a two-foot-long hardwood board and hook, which is used as leverage, the atlatl propels a large, obsidian-tipped dart with greater force and accuracy than that of a hand-thrown spear. To natives of the Xulmec city-state, the atlatl is a martial weapon, but it is exotic to anyone else. Darts that miss their target have a 75% chance of breaking.

Keris: Originating from the Shadowed West, this exotic dagger has come into more common use in the nation of Ssorlang and even the people of Darawan. No two keris blades are alike, unique by their very nature and the mystic ways of the bladesmith. The keris is considered a very



New Weapons

Exotic Weapons	Cost	Dmg (S)	Dmg (M)	Critical	Range	Weight[1]	Type
Light Melee Weapons							
Keris	320 gp	1d3	1d4	19-20/x3	10 ft.	1 lb.	Piercing
Razor glove	5 gp	1d4	1d6	x2	—	1/2 lb.	Slashing
One-Handed Melee Weapons							
Macuahuitl, one-handed	20 gp	1d6	1d8/x3	x3	—	7 lb.	Slashing
Two-Handed Melee Weapons							
Macuahuitl, two handed	50 gp	2d4	2d6	x3	—	13 lb.	Slashing
Tepoztopilli	50 gp	1d6	2d4	x3	—	10 lb.	Slashing
Ranged Weapons							
Atlatl	1 gp	1d6	1d8	x3	80 ft.	2 lb.	Piercing
Darts (5)	3 gp	—	—	—	—	—	—

[1] Weight figures are for Medium weapons. A Small weapon weighs half as much, and a Large weapon weighs twice as much.

New Armor

Armor	Cost	Armor Bonus	Max Dex	Check Penalty	Spell Failure	Speed (30 ft.)	Speed (20 ft.)	Weight[1]
Light armor								
Bonemail	90 gp	+4	+4	–1	20%	30 ft.	20 ft.	15 lbs.
Ichcahuipilli	8 gp	+2	+7	0	5%	30 ft.	20 ft.	8 lb.
Shields								
Chimalli	5 gp	+1	—	–1	5%	—	—	6 lbs.

[1] Weight figures are for armor sized to fit Medium characters. Armor fitted for Small characters weighs half as much, and armor fitted for Large characters weighs twice as much.

personal weapon that can bring good fortune to its owner—and misfortune to thieves. The length of the blade varies, but it is usually asymmetrical and often forged of iron or steel in a wavelike, serpentine fashion. The hilt is ornate, and acid is used to bring out the luster or darkness of the metal blade. The keris is considered a monk weapon, provided the monk takes the Exotic Weapon Proficiency feat to become proficient with it. All keris blades are masterwork. If used as a thrown weapon, the keris incurs a –2 circumstance penalty on the attack roll.

Macuahuitl: The macuahuitl (usually called a "macana" by Northlanders) is a flat, hardwood club with extremely sharp blades of flint or obsidian set along its edges. A weapon native to the Xulmec city-states, the macuahuitl can be used to cleave through flesh and bone or subdue opponents. Created in both one- and two-handed varieties, it is a martial weapon to Xulmecs but exotic to anyone else.

Razor Glove: The razor glove comes in many designs, typically employed by jungle-dwelling warriors to emulate the fighting style of great cats. Usually fashioned with stiff leather, the glove fits over the entire hand much like a gauntlet, while curving, metal blades run along each finger and are supported at the wrist. The blades cannot be retracted, and wearing the gloves while using any skill requiring the use of one's hands to manipulate objects incurs a –4 circumstance penalty. The wearer's opponent cannot use a disarm action against the razor glove. The cost and weight given are for a single glove. An attack with a razor glove is considered an armed attack.

Tepoztopilli: Resembling a pole-arm counterpart of the macuahuitl, the shaft of the tepoztopilli (called the "top-illi" among Northlanders) is wooden, and its flared head is set with razor-sharp obsidian blades. The tepoztopilli has reach. Wielders can strike opponents 10 feet away with it, but they cannot use it against an adjacent foe. Natives of Xulmec city-states treat the tepoztopilli as a martial weapon, but it is an exotic weapon to anyone else.

Armor

Bonemail: See *Magic Items of Áereth* below.

Chimalli: The chimalli is a wooden Xulmec shield, always brightly painted to reflect the wearer's spiritual and national allegiance, including symbols representing the status within his unit or city. Xulmec fighters and warriors often create and adorn their own shields, taking at least 1 rank in Craft (armorsmithing) for this reason

alone. A Xulmec who crafts, paints, and feathers his own shield receives an additional +1 morale bonus to AC when fighting defensively or choosing a total defense action.

Ichcahuipilli: The ichcahuipilli (called the "cahuipi" among Northlanders) is a heavy, quilted body armor common among Xulmec warriors. Often soaked in brine for greater durability, it offers greater protection than standard padded armor and more flexibility than leather.

Regional Masterwork Items

While any craftsman with enough time, skill and materials can create a masterwork item, certain regions of Áereth are renowned for their signature arms, armor or equipment. The reputation of a smith might hinge on his ability to craft a certain type of sword, and seedy merchants may try to dupe naïve heroes into paying masterwork prices for regular equipment, claiming, "They were born in the devil-fire forges of Zamon," or some other such nonsense.

Apart from their sheer monetary value, regional masterwork items can also inspire the admiration and envy of savvy onlookers. Such recognition cuts both ways: A noble scion wielding a fabled blade of Criestine steel might rally a routing army, while a peasant found with the same weapon may be imprisoned and executed for the crime of carrying a weapon above his station.

The true nature of an item can be discerned with an appropriate Craft check (DC 15). While superior forgeries can make this check more difficult, such items are rare, since making a masterful forgery requires nearly as much skill as crafting a masterwork item.

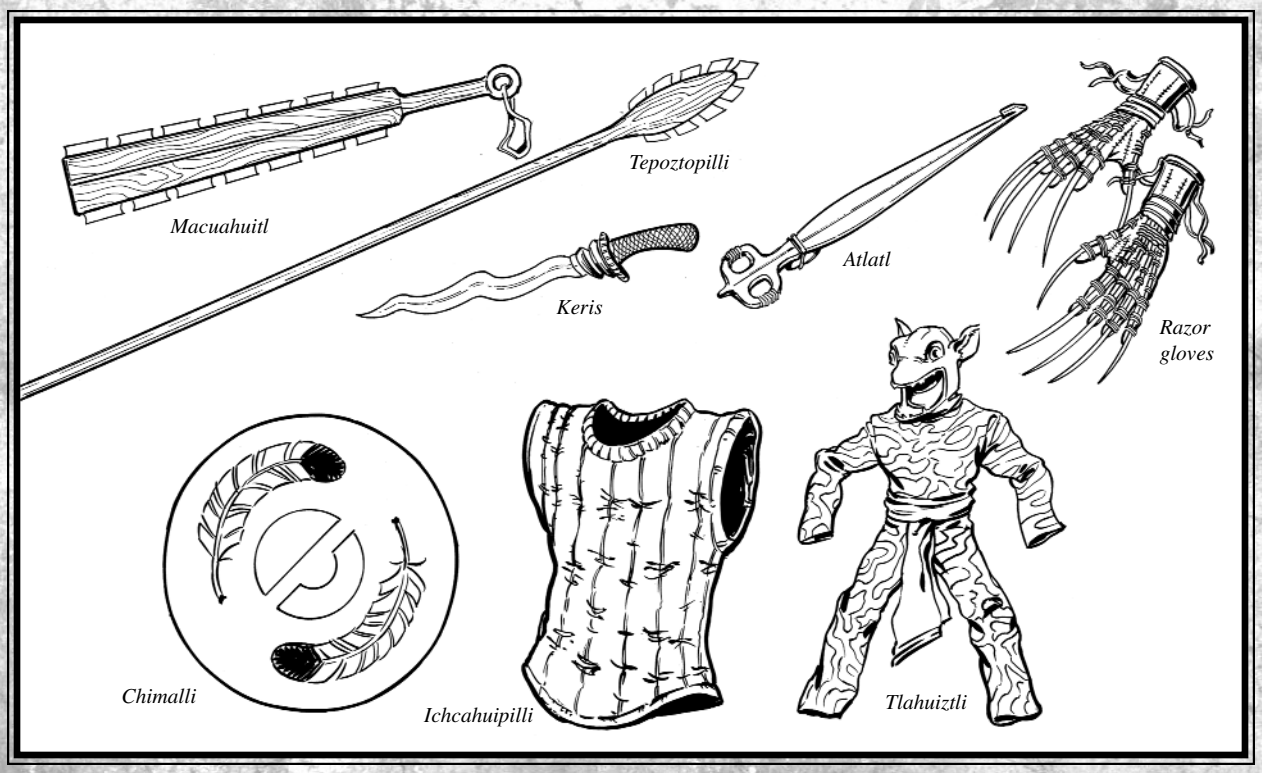
As per all masterwork items, you cannot add the masterwork quality after an item is created; it must be crafted as a masterwork item (see the Craft skill, *PHB*). Similarly, unless otherwise noted, regional masterwork items are far more expensive than their mundane counterparts.

Regional Masterwork Weapons

Blackore Longsword and Lance: In the empire of Crieste, the finest warriors have always armed themselves with weapons forged of blackore steel. Iron mined from the Blackore Hills is highly prized by Criestine weaponsmiths, and all the legendary weapons of the empire were forged of the precious metal.

When a warrior of Crieste achieves knighthood, he is awarded with a blackore longsword and lance, presented by his liege. The weapons are symbols of a warrior's honor, and the distinctive steel, shot through with wavy bands of black and azure, is immediately recognizable to any Criestine citizen. For a non-knight to carry a blackore weapon is a high crime against the crown, punishable by execution.

It is illegal to sell a blackore weapon, though tragic ballads tell of warriors, desperate for gold, selling their weapons to villains who proceed to masquerade as



knights. Illegal blackore weapons are highly prized by enemies of the empire, who are willing to pay exorbitant amounts (up to twice the going rate for a masterwork item) to obtain them.

Game Notes: A lance or longsword forged of blackore steel has the same stats as a masterwork weapon of that type. If worn openly, it also grants its owner a +1 circumstance bonus to Intimidate and Charisma checks made with Criestine commoners. (Nobles, accustomed to dealing with knights, are seldom impressed by knighthood alone.)

Cinai Waraxe: The horse lords of the Cinai are feared for their reckless courage and savage ferocity. Their smiths of the Lion have mastered the creation of the waraxe, forging long curved blades with remarkable strength and sharpness. Designed to be wielded one-handed while mounted, or in two hands by foot troops, a master of the weapon can kill with a single blow and strike another target before the first hits the ground.

Waraxes are traditionally attached to shafts of polished ironwood, and are protected with cases made from the cured skins of chimeras or wyverns. The creation of a waraxe is a sacred act, and only undertaken by master smiths who destroy any axes that fail to meet their exacting standards; thus every Cinai waraxe is a masterwork weapon. Waraxes are revered as family heirlooms and commonly bear names referring to their greatest battles. A waraxe might gain three or four names during its life, as its owners are driven on to ever greater deeds. Losing a waraxe is a great dishonor to the entire clan, and many warriors have devoted their entire lives to recovering an ancestral weapon.

Waraxes are never sold by the Cinai people. When the axes turn up on the black market, they are quickly bought by collectors, often for as much as 600 gp or more.

Game Notes: The Cinai waraxe shares the same statistics as a masterwork dwarven waraxe. Like the dwarven waraxe, it is too large to be used in one hand without special training, and is thus an exotic weapon. A Medium character can use a Cinai waraxe two-handed as a martial weapon. Humans raised in the tradition of the Cinai Lions treat the waraxe as a martial weapon even when wielded in one hand.

Shadowstone Weapons: When the Shadow Star fell into the Lostlands and created the Devil's Cauldron, molten debris from the dark comet spread across all Áereth as it blazed across the sky for the final time. Most of this debris—along with the smoldering remains of the original comet—are located in the Cauldron; however, significant chunks of the comet are also scattered in the Mountains of the Fifth Prince and the Lostlands. Small remnants can be found in the Northlands and Southlands as well.

Although the debris from the Shadow Star is commonly called "shadowstone," this is something of a misnomer. Shadowstone is actually a metal. The material has a dark purple hue and a dull, flat texture. It is often found in chunks, ranging from the size of a human fist to that of an elephant. It only melts at extremely high temperatures and is notoriously difficult to work with, but certain smiths in Xa Deshret still know the secret for forging shadowstone.

The sphinxes of the Khonsurian Empire unlocked the secrets of the stone centuries ago. Shadowstone has impressive magical properties, and can be used to create powerful weapons. Prolonged exposure to the stone causes madness. This initially created great problems for the sphinxes, who sent slaves to mine and harvest the largest stone fragments from the Mountains of the Fifth Prince. At first, the sphinxes sent dwarves to do this work—however, the dwarves mutated and went insane, eventually transforming into the derro that lurk in the Underdeep. Elven slaves were next, but they proved to lack the hardiness necessary for the brutal work; hobgoblin slaves then followed, but they lacked the finesse to effectively excavate the material, hacking the huge chunks of ore into tiny, unusable fragments. It was for this reason that the sphinx wizards eventually bred the nalvor race. The sphinxes had hoped to combine all of the positive qualities of elf and hobgoblin for mining shadowstone.

Most weapons forged from shadowstone are still found within Xa Deshret and the swirling sands of the Ghetrian Desert. These are typically ancient relics or family heirlooms, and already in the hands of a skilled warrior. Many of the most powerful magical objects in all of Áereth are forged from shadowstone, such as the legendary *Shadowcrown* of the sphinx and the blade known as *Shadowstar*, which was wielded long ago by the drow sorceress Khetira.

At the present time, at least three nalvor smiths in Xa Deshret are capable of forging new weapons from raw shadowstone—a task easier said than done, as they all remain hidden in the darkest recesses of the Mountains of the Fifth Prince.

Game Notes: Any weapon forged from shadowstone is a masterwork weapon. The chaotic nature of shadowstone weapons also affects their wielders in two ways. Firstly, the material eventually causes a certain degree of madness in those who remain in prolonged exposure to it. After the first 30 days of possessing a weapon forged of shadowstone, the wielder acts as if affected by a *confusion* spell each time the weapon is drawn. The spell acts as if cast by a 20th-level caster. This effect can be temporarily negated by a *dispel chaos* spell.

Secondly, the fluctuating chaos magic contained within the shadowstone weapon can increase or decrease on any

given day, strengthening or diminishing the weapon's power. Each day of game time, there is a 1 in 6 chance that the power has changed. On each day, the player should roll a d6 for the weapon. If the result is a 1, the PC is aware that a change has taken place, but not necessarily what that change would be until the weapon is wielded in battle. The GM should then roll a d4 to determine the exact nature of the change.

Roll	Result
1	–1 to all magical bonuses; loss of any/all additional magical abilities
2	+1 to all magical bonuses
3	+2 to all magical bonuses; range and duration of any/all magical abilities doubled
4	+3 to all magical bonuses; random gain of 1d4 intelligent item lesser powers

Should a weapon forged from shadowstone have its magical bonuses reduced to 0, it should still be treated as a magical weapon in combat. A shadowstone weapon cannot have a magical bonus of greater than +5.

Vermilion Longbows: Known for their cunning and utter ruthlessness in battle, the warriors of the Vermilion Tribes are also noted for their unique longbows. Made from the enchanted wood of darkfyre trees, the Vermilion bows actually appear at first glance to be two longbows that are crossed over one another, as if in the shape of an X. However, the Vermilion longbow is a single piece, albeit a very complex one. The weapon also has two drawstrings. The arrow to be fired from the bow is nocked at the intersection of the two drawstrings before being released. Despite its complexities, the warriors of the Vermilion tribes use the weapon with great ease, often firing it from horseback with deadly precision while riding at a full gallop.

Although initially crafted by Vermilion bowsmiths, each bow is then individualized by its user, with ornate designs carved into the wood of the bow. These carvings generally represent victories in battle or tributes to long-ago ancestors, which are drawn in great detail. The bows of the greatest warriors of the Vermilion tribes are massive, almost unwieldy weapons, as more wood is grafted to the bows for depicting the victories of these legendary fighters.

Vermilion longbows are among the most prized of possessions to the Tribe warriors, and are never found far from their grasps, ready to fire. Although highly esteemed and revered, they are not ever used by more than one warrior, or even passed along as family heirlooms. Warriors are buried in death with their bows, to ensure good hunting in the afterlife.

Warriors of the Vermilion Tribes never sell their longbows, under any circumstances. Should a member of the Vermilion Tribes be caught stealing another warrior's bow, whether to sell on the black market or for personal use, it is a crime punishable by death. Should a bow ever appear on the black market, they can fetch upwards of 750 gp or more.

Game Notes: A Vermilion longbow shares the same statistics as a masterwork longbow, save for its range, which is doubled. Its unwieldy nature makes it too difficult to handle properly in battle without special training, and should therefore be considered an exotic weapon. Elves or humans raised in the Vermilion Tribes have significant advantages in learning how to use this special bow, and it should only be considered a martial weapon in their hands.

Regional Masterwork Armor

Holdfast Plate: The dwarves of the Holdfast are famous for their breastplate, half-plate and full plate armors. Dwarf smiths devote entire centuries to the various aspects of metallurgy, smithing, and practical battle experience with a single goal in mind: to forge the finest heavy armors in the Known Realms.

Each is a unique work of art, fashioned for a particular warrior, and stylized according to the nature of the armorsmith. Certain smiths fashion armor in the likeness of demons and dragons, some emboss their armors with sparkling gems and inlays of gold and silver, while others carefully etch each plate with acid.

The dwarves are happy to sell their masterpieces, which always command a high price on the market (up to three times the normal cost of masterwork armor), but the true worth of Holdfast plate can only be known by wearing a suit specifically forged to the user's physique. These tailored suits are commonly worn by Holdfast generals and dwarven heroes. Occasionally, a suit may be forged in thanks for deeds done in service of the empire, or as a gift to neighboring regents.

Game Notes: Like regular masterwork armors, the armor check penalty of Holdfast plate armors is lessened by 1. If the armor that has been crafted specifically for that wearer, the armor check penalty is lessened by 2.

New Cleric Domains

An asterisk (*) indicates a new spell described later in this chapter.

Creation Domain

Granted Power: Cast conjuration (creation) spells at +2 caster level.

Creation Domain Spells
1 *Create water*
2 *Minor image*
3 *Create food and water*
4 *Minor creation*
5 *Major creation*
6 *Heroes' feast*
7 *Permanent image*
8 *True creation**
9 *Genesis**

Darkness Domain

Granted Power: Free Blind-Fight feat.

Darkness Domain Spells
1 *Obscuring mist*
2 *Blindness*
3 *Blacklight**
4 *Armor of darkness**
5 *Summon monster V* (only summons 1d3 shadows)
6 *Prying eyes*
7 *Nightmare*
8 *Power word, blind*
9 *Power word, kill*

Dream Domain

Granted Power: You can draw upon your memories of the Dream to gain supreme confidence as a supernatural ability. You gain an enhancement bonus to Charisma equal to your cleric level. Activating the power is a free action, the power lasts 1 round, and it is usable twice per day.

Dream Domain Spells
1 *Sleep*
2 *Daydream**
3 *Deep slumber*
4 *Dreamscrying**
5 *Symbol of sleep* (good or neutrally aligned clerics) or *nightmare* (evil-aligned clerics)
6 *Symbol of fear*
7 *Oneiric form**
8 *Mind blank*
9 *Weird*

Glory Domain

Granted Power: Turn undead with a +2 bonus on the turning check and +1d6 to the turning damage roll.

Glory Domain Spells
1 *Disrupt undead*
2 *Bless weapon*
3 *Searing light*
4 *Holy smite*
5 *Holy sword*
6 *Bolt of glory**
7 *Sunbeam*
8 *Crown of glory**
9 *Gate*

Liberation Domain

Granted Power: The character gains a +2 morale bonus on all saving throws against enchantment spells or effects.

Liberation Domain Spells
1 *Remove fear*
2 *Remove paralysis*
3 *Remove curse*
4 *Freedom of movement*
5 *Break enchantment*
6 *Greater dispelling*
7 *Refuge*
8 *Mind blank*
9 *Unbinding*

Madness Domain

Granted Power: The character gains an Insanity score equal to half his or her class level. For spellcasting (determining bonus spells and DCs), the character uses his or her Wisdom score plus his or her Insanity score in place of Wisdom alone.

For all other purposes, such as determining skill and save modifiers, use Wisdom minus Insanity in place of Wisdom.

Once per day, the character can see and act with the clarity of true madness. Use the character's Insanity score as a positive rather than a negative modifier on a single roll involving Wisdom. Choose to use this power before the roll is made.

Madness Domain Spells
1 *Lesser confusion*
2 *Touch of madness**
3 *Rage**
4 *Confusion*
5 *Bolts of bedevilment**
6 *Phantasmal killer*
7 *Insanity*
8 *Maddening scream**
9 *Weird*

Repose Domain

The Repose domain is similar to the Death domain, but is granted by good-aligned deities whose clerics are barred from casting evil spells.

Granted Power: The character may use a *death touch* once per day. The *death touch* is a spell-like ability that is a death effect. The character must succeed at a melee touch attack against a living creature (using the rules for touch spells). When the character touches, roll 1d6 per his or her cleric level. If the total at least equals the creature's current hit points, it dies (no save).

Repose Domain Spells
1 *Deathwatch*
2 *Gentle repose*
3 *Speak with dead*
4 *Death ward*
5 *Slay living*
6 *Undeath to death*
7 *Destruction*
8 *Surelife**
9 *Wail of the banshee*

Weather Domain

Granted Power: Survival is a class skill.

Weather Domain Spells
1 *Obscuring mist*
2 *Fog cloud*
3 *Call lightning*
4 *Sleet storm*
5 *Ice storm*
6 *Control winds*
7 *Control weather*
8 *Whirlwind*
9 *Storm of vengeance*

New Spells

Armor of Darkness

Abjuration [Darkness]
Level: Darkness 4
Components: V, S, DF
Casting Time: 1 action
Range: Touch
Target: Creature touched
Duration: 10 minutes/level
Saving Throw: Will negates (harmless)
Spell Resistance: Yes (harmless)

The spell envelops the warded creature in a shroud of shadows. The shroud can, if the caster desires, conceal the wearer's features. In any case, it grants the recipient a +3 deflection bonus to Armor Class plus an additional +1 for every four caster levels (maximum bonus +8). The subject can see through the armor as if it did not exist and is also afforded darkvision with a range of 60 feet. Finally, the subject gains a +2 bonus on saving throws against any holy, good, or light spells or effects. Undead creatures that are subjects of *armor of darkness* also gain +4 turn resistance.

Blacklight

Evocation [Darkness]
Level: Darkness 3, Sor/Wiz 3
Components: V, S, M
Casting Time: 1 action
Range: Close (25 ft. + 5 ft./2 levels)
Area: A 20-ft.-radius emanation centered on a creature, object, or point in space
Duration: 1 round/level (D)
Saving Throw: Will negates or none (object)
Spell Resistance: Yes or no (object)

The caster creates an area of total darkness. The darkness is impenetrable to normal vision and darkvision, but the caster can see normally if within the blacklit area. Creatures outside the spell's area, even the caster, cannot see through it.

The spell can be cast on a point in space, an object, or a creature. If cast on an object or creature, the spell's effect radiates from that target and moves with it. Unattended

Damage from Bolt of Glory

Creature's Origin/Nature	Damage	Maximum Value
Material Plane, Elemental Plane, neutral outsider	1d6 per 2 levels	7d6
Negative Energy Plane, evil outsider, undead creature	1d6 per level	15d6
Positive Energy Plane, good outsider	—	—

objects and points in space do not get saving throws or benefit from spell resistance.

Blacklight counters or dispels any *light* spell of equal or lower level. The 3rd-level cleric spell *daylight* counters or dispels *blacklight*.

Bolt of Glory

Evocation [Good]
Level: Glory 6
Components: V, S, DF
Casting Time: 1 action
Range: Close (25 ft. + 5 ft./level)
Effect: Ray
Duration: Instantaneous
Saving Throw: None
Spell Resistance: Yes

This spell projects a bolt of energy from the Positive Energy Plane against one creature. The caster must succeed at a ranged touch attack to strike the target. A creature struck suffers varying damage, depending on its nature and home plane of existence, per the table on the previous page.

Bolts of Bedevilment

Enchantment [Mind-Affecting]
Level: Madness 5
Components: V, S
Casting Time: One action
Range: Medium (100 ft. + 10 ft./level)
Effect: Ray
Duration: 1 round/level
Saving Throw: Will negates
Spell Resistance: Yes

This spell grants the caster the ability to make one ray attack per round. The ray dazes one living creature, clouding its mind so that it takes no action for 1d3 rounds. The creature is not stunned (so attackers get no special advantage against it), but it can't move, cast spells, use mental abilities, and so on.

Collapsing Cavern

Conjuration (Earth)
Level: Drd 4, Sor/Wiz 4
Components: V, S, M
Casting Time: 1 standard action
Range: Medium (100 ft. + 10 ft./level)
Effect: 120-ft. line
Duration: 1 round + 1 round/level (D)
Saving Throw: Reflex half; see below
Spell Resistance: No

This spell rips large rocks away from the ground and sends them as missiles toward a single target point chosen by the spellcaster. The conjured rocks originate from a point chosen by the spellcaster anywhere within the spell range, and are then directed against a single target point chosen within that same spell range (measured from the spellcaster's position at the time of casting). Any creature caught in the path of the flying rocks between the point of origin and the target square is affected. If cast underground or inside a man-made structure, the rocks may strike from any direction, including the ceiling above, thus giving the spell its name. Once the rocks strike a target, they shatter—they cannot be reflected off of other objects or creatures. The target area cannot be changed once the spell is cast.

Collapsing cavern deals 4d6 points of damage to any creatures that it may strike. Additionally, creatures struck by the flying rocks may be knocked prone to the ground, and be unable to take any actions during the round subsequent to being struck. Affected creatures making a successful Reflex save remain on their feet; however, they still take half damage from the rocks.

The spell does not function underwater.

Material Component: A feather and a handful of pebbles.

Corruption

Necromancy [Fear, Mind-Affecting]
Level: Sor/Wiz 5
Components: V, S, F
Casting Time: 1 standard action

Range: Medium (100 ft. + 10 ft./level)
Area: One 40-ft. cube/level (S)
Duration: 1 round/level (D)
Saving Throw: Will negates; see below
Spell Resistance: Yes

This spell fills an area with a cold, negative energy. Once cast, everything within the area of effect turns a sickly gray-green color. All plants in the area begin to wither, and any creature with an Intelligence score of 2 or less automatically flees the area in terror, and may take no other actions until at least 100 feet away from the area of effect.

Those creatures that remain within the spell's area of affect may be filled with a sense of utter dread. For each round that a creature remains there, it suffers 1d4 hit points of damage, as well as 1d4 points of temporary Strength damage. The creature automatically loses all initiative rolls and suffers a –4 penalty to all Concentration checks. All creatures affected by the spell are also considered to be flat-footed for combat purposes. A successful saving throw negates all spell effects. A *remove fear* spell or the like immediate negates all effects except hit point damage.

Focus: A silver necklace with a spider insignia, worth at least 50 gp.

Create Vampire

Necromancy
Level: Sor/Wiz 9
Components: V, S, M
Casting Time: 1 hour
Range: Touch
Target: Dead creature touched
Duration: Instantaneous
Saving Throw: None; see text
Spell Resistance: No

With this sinister spell, the caster brings a creature back from the dead in the form of a vampire. The spell, which only affects a humanoid or monstrous humanoid subject, acts similarly to a vampire's energy drain. The primary difference is that the *create vampire* spell only affects a subject that is already dead, although for no longer than 10 days. Should *create vampire* be cast upon a still-living creature, or on a creature dead for longer than 10 days, the spell has no effect whatsoever.

Once created by the spell, the new vampire becomes the minion of the spellcaster that created it, and remains enthralled until the destruction of its maker. A vampire created by this powerful spell retains any class abilities, feats, or skill ranks it once possessed in life; however, it remembers little of its former life, save for its name. The base level of the affected creature (or Hit Dice) is reduced by 2. If the subject was 1st level, the corpse's effective Constitution score is reduced by 4. (If this reduction would put its Con at 0 or lower, the creature remains dead and cannot be transformed into a vampire.) This level/HD loss or Constitution loss cannot be repaired by any means. The base class, base attack bonus, base save bonuses, and hit points are otherwise unchanged. Once the base abilities and statistics of the affected creature are recalculated, the vampire template can be then added to it. Regardless of level, all creatures affected by this spell return as vampires, not vampire spawn.

The spellcaster immediately suffers 2d6 points of temporary Constitution damage and 1d6 points of temporary Strength damage after casting *create vampire*. Recovery of these points cannot begin until one full day after the spell is cast, unless a *wish* or *miracle* spell is utilized. The spellcaster can create a maximum number of vampires totaling no more than twice his own level; should the spell be cast upon a subject after this maximum is reached, the spell has no effect. The spellcaster cannot voluntarily free one of his existing enthralled vampires in order to create a new vampire; only when one of these vampires is destroyed completely can the caster begin again to produce new monsters.

Material Component: The severed hand and heart of a vampire spawn.

Crown of Glory

Evocation
Level: Glory 8
Components: V, S, M, DF
Casting Time: 1 full round
Range: Personal
Area: 120-ft.-radius emanation centered on caster
Duration: 1 minute/level
Saving Throw: Will negates
Spell Resistance: Yes

The caster is imbued with an aura of celestial authority, inspiring awe in all lesser creatures.

The caster gains a +4 enhancement bonus to his or her Charisma score for the duration of the spell. All creatures with fewer than 8 HD or levels cease whatever they are doing and are compelled to pay attention to the caster. Any such creature that wants to take hostile action against the caster must make a successful Will save to do so. Any creature that does not make this saving throw the first time it attempts a hostile action is *enthralled* for the duration of the spell (as the *enthrall* spell), as long as it is in the spell's area, nor will it try to leave the area on its own. Creatures with 8 HD or more may pay attention to the caster, but are not affected by this spell.

When the caster speaks, all listeners telepathically under-

stand him or her, even if they do not understand the language. While the spell lasts, the caster can make up to three suggestions to creatures of fewer than 8 HD in range, as if using the *mass suggestion* spell (Will save negates); creatures with 8 HD or more aren't affected by this power. Only creatures within range at the time a suggestion is given are subject to it.

Material Component: A gem worth at least 200 gp.

Daydream

Illusion [Mind-Affecting]
Level: Dream 2
Components: M, DF
Casting Time: 1 standard action
Range: Close (25 ft. + 5 ft./2 levels)
Target: Varies (see text)
Duration: 1 round/level (D) (see text)
Saving Throw: Will negates
Spell Resistance: Yes

The caster projects oneiric images from the target's mind into the air or upon any surface within range. While the spell is often used for demonstration or entertainment, the caster can also use the spell in combat in one of two ways:

Bolster: The next spell cast within 2 rounds is cast as though the caster were 2 levels higher due to the *daydream's* fantastic dramatics and the surge of power it borrows from the Dream.

Distract: The *daydream* projects fragments from the caster's own nightmares that can distract a single opponent capable of dreaming. The target must make a successful Will save or suffer a –1 penalty on all attack rolls and is required to make a successful Concentration check to cast any spells or make any skill checks. This effect lasts only 1 round per caster level or until a successful Will Save is made.

Material Component: A scrap of rice paper or vellum.

Dreamscrying

Divination (Scrying)
Level: Dream 4
Components: V, S, DF, F
Casting Time: 10 minutes
Range: See text
Effect: Magical sensor
Duration: 8 hours
Saving Throw: Will negates
Spell Resistance: Yes

Dreamscrying allows the caster to see and hear a specific creature as he dreams, requiring the spell to be cast immediately prior to normal rest time. The spell functions like *scrying*, except as noted above and with the following limitations.

The caster receives only vague, dreamlike images and sounds based on the whereabouts of the subject throughout an 8-hour period. He can hear only brief excerpts of conversation, as allowed by the GM, and no other spells can be cast during the spell's effects (as the caster sleeps). Although the spell is technically cast before the caster begins to rest, its effects take place during an 8-hour period and counts against him for purposes of determining the number of spells he may prepare the following day.

The spell will only function during the caster's normal period of rest. If he is awakened at any point during the duration, the spell ends. If the caster is an elf, his trance endures for a full 8 hours, during which *dreamscrying* takes place. If he is not, he sleeps soundly throughout the duration. The spell does not function if the caster is affected by a *nightmare* spell.

Within the oneiric realms of Ôæ (for good- or neutrally aligned clerics) or Gil'Mâridth (evil-aligned clerics), the caster looks upon the subject of the spell as through a fantastical gateway or pool. He can see the subject with astonishing clarity, but immediately upon awakening, only the vague sounds and images allowed by the spell are retained.

Divine Focus: A silken blanket worth at least 70 gp, in which the caster must be wrapped.

Genesis

Conjuration (Creation)
Level: Creation 9
Components: V, S , M, X P
Casting Time: 1 week (8 hours/day)
Range: 180 ft.
Effect: A demiplane on the Ethereal Plane centered on the caster's location
Duration: Instantaneous
Saving Throw: None
Spell Resistance: No

This spell creates an immobile, finite plane with limited access—a demiplane.

Demiplanes created by this power are very small, minor planes. A character can cast this spell only on the Ethereal Plane. When he or she casts it, a local density fluctuation precipitates the creation of a demiplane. At first, the demiplane grows at a rate of a 1-foot-radius per day to an initial maximum radius of 180 feet as the fledgling plane draws substance from surrounding ethereal vapors and protomatter or astral ectoplasm.

The character determines the environment in the demiplane when he or she first casts *genesis*, reflecting most

any desire he or she can visualize. The caster determines factors such as atmosphere, water, temperature, and the shape of the general terrain. However, the spell cannot create life, nor can it create construction. If desired, these must be brought in by some other fashion.

Once the basic demiplane reaches its maximum size, the character can continue to cast this spell to enlarge the demiplane if he or she is inside the boundaries of the demiplane. In such a case, the radius of the demiplane increases by 60 feet for each subsequent casting.

If the spell is cast again while outside an existing demiplane, the casting creates a separate bubble that does not touch or overlap any previously created demiplane.

XP Cost: 5,000 XP.

Leyhar's Obsessive Focus

Illusion [Mind-Affecting]
Level: Sor/Wiz 5
Components: V, S, M
Casting Time: 1 standard action
Range: Close (25 ft. + 5 ft./2 levels)
Target: One living creature
Duration: See text (D)
Saving Throw: Will negates
Spell Resistance: Yes

Created by the legendary Quaysarrian illusionist T'Rhos Leyhar, this spell allows the caster to reveal an illusionary image of an object to a specific target. If the target fails a Will save, the target is forced to immediately go forth and search for that object, as per a *geas* spell. Finding this object becomes paramount to the target, and takes precedence above all other things. Only by finding the object shown by the caster can the target end the spell.

The object shown by the caster to the target must actually exist; it cannot be a figment of the caster's imagination. Should the object be destroyed in between the time that the spell is originally cast and when the target would be able to find it, the target is fated to forever search for the object of the obsession in utter futility, unless the caster releases the target from the spell.

Material Component: Five gold coins and a lock of the target's hair.

Leyhar's Tempting Lure

Illusion [Mind-Affecting]
Level: Sor/Wiz 3
Components: V, S, M
Casting Time: 1 standard action
Range: Touch
Target: One living creature
Duration: 1 round/level (D)
Saving Throw: Will negates; see text
Spell Resistance: Yes

This spell produces the illusion of something incredibly attractive to the target. This object is also constantly in motion and always seems just out of reach to the target. Should the target fail to make a successful Will save, the object of the illusion must be relentlessly pursued for the entire duration of the spell, or until the caster chooses to end the spell. Only the target affected by the spell can see the illusion.

The caster of the spell may also select the path taken by this constantly moving illusion, thereby also directing the path taken by the pursing target. The path chosen by the caster cannot deliberately lead into obvious danger, or the spell is broken. Should the creature affected by the spell be stopped or held back from pursuing the illusion, the target makes every effort to break free from its constraints and to continue its pursuit for the remaining duration of the spell.

Material Component: A handful of bread crumbs.

Maddening Scream

Enchantment (Compulsion) [Mind-Affecting]
Level: Sor/Wiz 8, Madness 8
Components: V
Casting Time: One action
Range: Touch
Target: Living creature touched
Duration: 1d4+1 rounds
Saving Throw: None
Spell Resistance: Yes

The subject cannot keep him or herself from behaving as though completely mad. This spell makes it impossible for the victim to do anything other than run around shrieking.

The effect worsens the Armor Class of the creature by 4, makes Reflex saving throws impossible except on a roll of 20, and renders the creature incapable of using a shield.

Oneiric Form

Illusion [Mind-Affecting]
Level: Dream 7
Components: V, S
Casting Time: 1 standard action
Range: Personal
Target: Caster
Duration: 1 round/level (D)
Saving Throw: See text
Spell Resistance: No

When casting this spell, the caster assumes the physical appearance of his favored dream persona along with a

number of abilities. The effect is phantasmal, but the caster's absolute belief in this dreamlike shape makes it real to him. His allies and opponents can recognize the transformation as illusionary with a successful Will save, but no attempt to disbelieve it can deny the caster the protection the *oneric form* affords.

The spell functions like *disguise self*, except as noted above and with the following additions. The caster's creature type changes to outsider (dream). He gains a +4 inherent bonus to Armor Class, Charisma, and all saving throws. The caster gains darkvision out to 60 feet and damage reduction 5/–.

Primordial Transformation

Transformation
Level: Clr 6, Drd 6, Sor/Wiz 6
Components: V, S
Casting Time: 1 standard action
Range: Touch
Target: Creature touched
Duration: 1 min./level
Saving Throw: Fortitude negates
Spell Resistance: Yes

The affected creature undergoes a tremendous transformation into a hairy, primitive brute, becoming much larger, stronger, and faster than normal. However, the mental capacity of the creature becomes greatly diminished at the same time. The spell grants the subject a +6 enhancement bonus to Strength, Dexterity, and Constitution, and –6 penalties to Intelligence, Wisdom, and Charisma. These ability changes also affect hit points, saving throws, ability checks, and so on, as appropriate.

Additionally, the spell changes the affected creature's size category to the next largest one. The creature also gains increases to base movement of 10 feet, a natural armor bonus of +2, and 10 temporary hit point bonus. An affected creature whose size increases to Large has a space of 10 feet and a natural reach of 10 feet. The spell has additional adverse effects, though: Affected creatures are robbed of the ability to cast arcane spells, and they lose the ability to verbally communicate with others.

Rage

Enchantment
Level: Madness 3
Components: V, S
Casting Time: One action
Range: Touch
Target: Creature touched
Duration: 1 round/level
Saving Throw: Will negates (harmless)
Spell Resistance: Yes (harmless)

The caster can put a creature into a blood frenzy. In this rage, the creature gains +4 to Strength, +4 to Constitution, and a +2 morale bonus on Will saves. (Unlike a barbarian's rage, there is no penalty to AC, and no fatigue period occurs after the rage is over.)

Sandstorm

Conjuration (Creation)
Level: Drd 6, Sor/Wiz 6
Components: V, S, M
Casting Time: 1 standard action
Range: Medium (100 ft. + 10 ft./level)
Effect: Cloud spreads in 20-ft. radius, 20 ft. high
Saving Throw: Fortitude half
Spell Resistance: No

A storm of blinding sand erupts from a starting point selected by the spellcaster, slashing and cutting all creatures caught within its reach. The storm obscures all sight beyond 10 feet, including darkvision and low-light vision. Creatures within 5 feet of the blinding storm have total concealment (50% miss chance, and attackers trapped within the *sandstorm* cannot use sight to locate their opponents). Additionally, all creatures within the spell's area of effect take 1d6 points of damage per caster level (maximum 10d6).

A moderate wind (11-20 mph) disperses the *sandstorm* in 2 rounds; a strong wind (21+ mph) disperses the spell in 1 round. The spell does not function underwater, or in arctic climates.

If cast in a natural desert region, the *sandstorm* gains strength. Base damage for an enhanced *sandstorm* increases to 1d10 points of damage per caster level (maximum 10d10).

Material Component: A handful of sand and a pinch of sulfur.

Surelife

Abjuration
Level: Repose 8
Components: V, S, M
Casting Time: 1 round
Range: Personal
Target: The caster
Duration: 1 minute/2 levels
Saving Throw: None
Spell Resistance: No

This spell allows the caster to protect herself against some condition that would ordinarily cause certain death. The character can only protect herself against a natural occurrence or condition, not against a spell or the action of a creature. The character must specify the condition against which she wishes to protect herself, and the spell is effective only against that condition. Should the character be subjected to that condition during the duration of the spell, she feels no discomfort and takes no damage from the condition. However, the spell does not protect any items carried on the caster's person. At the end of the spell's duration, the condition has full normal effects if the character is still subjected to it.

Symbiosis

Conjuration (Healing)
Level: Brd 4, Clr 4, Drd 5, Pal 5, Rgr 5, Healing 4
Components: V, S
Casting Time: 1 standard action
Range: Touch
Target: Creature touched
Duration: Instantaneous
Saving Throw: Will half (harmless)
Spell Resistance: Yes (harmless)

By laying hands upon another living creature, the spellcaster transfers life essence to another being. The recipient of the spell temporarily receives all of the hit points, skills, spells, and spellcasting abilities of the caster. If the recipient and the caster share common skills, the recipient uses the higher of the two bonuses for the skill. The number of spell slots available to the caster should be added to those of the subject of the spell (if the subject has any). However, the recipient of the spell does not receive any of the memories or additional knowledge of the caster. Any damage taken by the spell recipient during this time comes first from the spellcaster's transferred hit points, then from the subject of the spell.

Once cast, the spellcaster goes into a temporary coma, falling to 0 hit points for the duration of the spell. The spellcaster is unconscious and immobile during this time, and may take no actions at all. If the spellcaster takes a single hit point of damage during the spell's duration, the spell is broken and the recipient immediately loses all temporary bonuses. Additionally, the spellcaster's remaining hit points (if any) are not transferred back if the spell is broken in this manner, and the caster remains below 0 hit points until healed. Should the spell expire naturally, any of the transferred hit points that are left instantly return to the caster without incident.

Touch of Madness

Enchantment [Mind-Affecting]
Level: Madness 2
Components: V, S
Casting Time: One action
Range: Touch
Target: Creature touched
Duration: 1 round/level
Saving Throw: Will negates
Spell Resistance: Yes

The caster may daze one living creature by making a successful touch attack. If the target creature does not make a successful Will save, its mind is clouded and it takes no action for 1 round per caster level. The dazed subject is not stunned (so attackers get no special advantage against it), but it can't move, cast spells, use mental abilities, and so on.

Touch of Slime

Transmutation
Level: Clr/Drd 5, Sor/Wiz 6
Components: V, S
Casting Time: 1 standard action
Range: Touch
Target: Living creature touched
Duration: Instantaneous; see text
Saving Throw: Fortitude negates; see text
Spell Resistance: Yes

By casting this spell, the caster's hands begin to drip with a highly toxic slime similar to that of an aboleth's, allowing the caster to inflict great pain upon an opponent with a successful melee touch attack. A creature hit by the spellcaster must succeed on a Fortitude save or begin to quickly mutate over the next 1d4+1 rounds, with the skin of the affected creature becoming covered entirely with a clear, watery slime. At the end of this time, affected creatures must remain completely immersed in water or take 1d4 points of damage each round. The slime reduces the creature's natural armor bonus by 1 (but never to less than 0).

A *remove disease* spell cast before the transformation is complete will restore an afflicted creature to normal. Afterward, however, only a *cure serious wounds, cure critical wounds, heal*, or *mass heal* spell can reverse the condition.

True Creation

Conjuration (Creation)
Level: Creation 8
Components: V, S, M, XP
Casting Time: 10 minutes
Range: 0 ft.
Effect: Unattended, nonmagical object of nonliving matter, up to 1 cu. ft./level
Duration: Instantaneous
Saving Throw: None
Spell Resistance: No

The caster creates a nonmagical, unattended object of any sort of matter. Items created are permanent and cannot be negated by dispelling magics or negating powers. For all intents and purposes, these items are completely real. The volume of the item created cannot exceed 1 cubic foot per caster level. The caster must succeed at an appropriate skill check to make a complex item.

Unlike the items brought into being by the lower-level spells *minor creation* and *major creation*, objects created by the casting of true creation can be used as material components.

XP Cost: The item's gold piece value in XP, or a minimum of 1 XP, whichever is more.

Undeath to Death

Necromancy
Level: Sor/Wiz 6, Clr 6, Repose 6
Components: V, S , M, D F
Casting Time: 1 action
Range: Medium (100 ft. + 10 ft./level)
Area: Several undead creatures within a 50-ft.-radius burst
Duration: Instantaneous
Saving Throw: Will negates
Spell Resistance: Yes

Undeath to death snuffs out the animating forces of undead creatures, killing them instantly. The spell slays 1d4 HD worth of undead creatures per caster level (maximum 20d4). Creatures with the fewest HD are affected first; among creatures with equal HD, those closest to the point of origin of the burst are affected first.

Material Component: A gem worth at least 500 gp.

Magic Items

Bonemail: The Xulmecs of the city-state of Amoya revere their dead in ways that foreigners find macabre at best. Warriors of sufficient prowess, wealth, or status with the clergy of Anahuara may be given armor fashioned from the very bones of one or more of his or her ancestors. Known as *tomioquan* by the Xulmecs, such armor is more commonly known as bonemail. Infused with the dead warrior's spirit, it grants the wearer insight on the battlefield and courage against his enemies. This necromantic practice has since been replicated by other cultures, but is found predominantly in western Xulmec.

Crafted by clerics and imbued with the blessings of a god, the bonemail armor is further calcified and strengthened by a wizard's art. Effectively as strong and durable as masterwork scale mail, bonemail armor provides the wearer a +1 divine bonus on all attack and damage rolls and saves to resist fear. Additionally, the spirit or spirits possessing the bonemail can grant the wearer an *augury* once each day. The divine bonuses and spell-like ability only function for wearers of the bloodline from whose bones the armor is constructed. The statistics listed in the table on page 81 reflect a suit of bonemail armor, which is always masterwork, before the additional enhancement bonuses to AC, cost, and creation are applied.

Moderate necromancy; CL 9th; Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *speak with dead, augury*; Price 16,500; Cost 9,750 gp + 850 XP.

Flying Guillotine +4: This highly specialized weapon is only used by the vampires of the Vanguard of Eternal Doom. Ordinarily, the weapon appears as a magical heavy flail with six long, black chains, and acts as a *heavy flail +4* in battle. However, the longest of the six chains has a black silk sack attached to one end. The perimeter of the opening of this sack is surrounded with hundreds of tiny silver blades. Should a *flying guillotine +4* strike an opponent with a critical hit, that opponent must make a successful Reflex save (DC 20) or be slain instantly, as the sack covers the head of the opponent and rips it free from its body. The body instantly falls lifeless with –10 hit points; however, the head remains magically alive and able to communicate for an additional day following this decapitation, allowing the owner of the flying guillotine to interrogate the head. Both body and head must be reattached if the slain creature is to be raised or resurrected.

The *flying guillotine +4* is always found in the possession of the vampires of the Vanguard; there is no other known source for this weapon.

Strong necromancy and transmutation; CL 18th; Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *keen edge*; Price: 75,315 gp; Cost 30,500 + 4,800 XP.

Magic Weapon Properties

In addition to enhancement bonuses, weapons can have one or more of the special abilities detailed below. A weapon with a special ability must have at least a +1 enhancement bonus.

Dreamforged: A dreamforged weapon was fashioned by clerics of Ôæ within the Dream itself (see Chapter 2), but through great spiritual effort has been translated into the waking world. In appearance, it resembles a normal weapon but it leaves a fleeting afterimage in its wake when it moves quickly. The first time a creature is damaged by a dreamforged weapon, it must succeed on a DC 14 Will save or suffer an additional 1d4 points of damage. On the second round, the creature will suffer an additional 2d4 per strike, and on the third round and each round thereafter, the additional damage remains at 3d4. A creature who succeeds on the saving throw is impervious to the dreamforged weapon's phantasmal damage for 24 hours.

Moderate illusion (phantasm). A dreamforged weapon cannot be created by any conventional means.

Dysmorphic: A dysmorphic weapon leaves horrid welts and scars and saps the confidence from its victims. Any living creature struck by a dysmorphic weapon suffers 2 points of Charisma damage and must succeed on a DC 14 Fortitude save or contract red ache. Simply holding such a vile weapon incurs a –2 profane penalty on the wielder's own Charisma. Favored by the deviant followers of gods like Narrimunâth, Nimlurun, and Bobugbubilz, these corruptive weapons are considered holy relics.

Moderate necromantic; CL 12th; Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *contagion*; Price +2 bonus.

Lucent: A lucent weapon constantly sheds a pale, luminous glow that illuminates a 5-foot radius at all times. Upon command, it illuminates a 40-foot radius with clear, white radiance, and creatures that take penalties in bright light also take them while within the radius of this magical light. In addition, a creature damaged by a lucent weapon must make a successful DC 14 Fortitude save or be limned with the same luminous glow that radiates from the lucent weapon. This effect replicates the spell *faerie fire*, although the glow is white in color and lasts for 1 minute. Creatures with spell resistance are unaffected. A creature that successfully saves cannot be affected by the same lucent weapon's *faerie fire* for 24 hours.

Moderate evocation; CL 10th; Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *light*; Price +1 bonus.

Silent: A silent weapon bestows the effect of a *silence* spell upon its wielder, though the effect only occurs when the owner grasps the weapon in hand. Although it negates all sounds made by the wielder, effectively resulting in automatic success on Move Silently checks, the wielder is also unable to cast spells that require verbal components or communicate audibly.

Moderate illusion; CL 10th; Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *silence*; Price +2 bonus.

Spectral: A spectral weapon can reach into the Ethereal Plane to strike its wielder's opponents. For melee weapons, the spectral weapon bypasses all armor and shield bonuses. Bows, crossbows, and slings so crafted bestow upon their ammunition the ability to bypass only cover bonuses. In the case of a target having full cover, a miss chance of 50% is applied instead, provided the wielder of the spectral bow, crossbow, or sling knows which space the target occupies. Despite these abilities, a spectral weapon also shines like a beacon to incorporeal creatures, even unequipped and stowed. The owner of the spectral weapon incurs a –4 circumstantial penalty to AC against such opponents and any miss chances the owner might benefit from are negated.

Moderate illusion; CL 13th; Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *ethereal jaunt*; Price +3 bonus.

Stealth: A stealth weapon allows its wielder to become invisible once per day equal to the enhancement bonus for attack and damage rolls. For example, a *+2 stealth longsword* allows its wielder to become invisible twice per day. Activating this power is a free action, and the duration is a full round. As with the spell *invisibility*, the effect ends if the wielder attacks an enemy, but he gains the benefits of *invisibility* during that action (+2 on the attack roll and enemies are denied their Dexterity bonus to AC).

Moderate illusion; CL 10th; Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *invisibility*; Price +1 bonus.

Truculent: A truculent weapon is predisposed to violence and will suffer no hesitation from its wielder. In the hands of an owner proficient in its weapon type, a truculent weapon replicates the effects of a speed weapon, allowing the wielder to make one extra attack when making a full attack action. The attack uses the wielder's full base attack bonus, plus any modifiers appropriate to the situation. (This benefit is not cumulative with similar effects, such as a *haste* spell.) In addition, the wielder is granted a +4 enhancement bonus to initiative checks. However, for every round (not counting the first) the wielder fails to deal damage to an opponent during combat he or she suffers 1d6 points of nonlethal damage from the weapon itself.

Moderate transmutation; CL 13th; Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *haste*; Price +3 bonus.

Coins of the World Before

Many nations mint their own coins, each nation's currency being roughly equivalent to those of her neighbors. But the treasure hordes discovered by adventurers and explorers are seldom so tidy, nearly always containing a handful of exotic coins forged by forgotten empires and ancient kingdoms.

As a general rule of thumb, the GM can always rule that a gold piece is simply a gold piece, but when heroes raise their torches above sparkling hordes of ancient currency, finding the treasure is often only the beginning.

Abylossian Coin Chain: Known to adventurers as "gold snakes," the coin chains of Abylos were the nomad's answer to the coin purse. The crudely minted coins, often little more than a flattened gold nugget, all have a hole punched through their center, permitting the coins to be threaded onto leather straps. The barbarian nomads would string a chain of gold coins, and hang them from their saddles as symbols of strength and glory in battle. Pictographs show the barbarians exchanging the chains like units of currency, betting and gambling over piles of the snakes, and trading in exchange for arms, slaves, and armor.

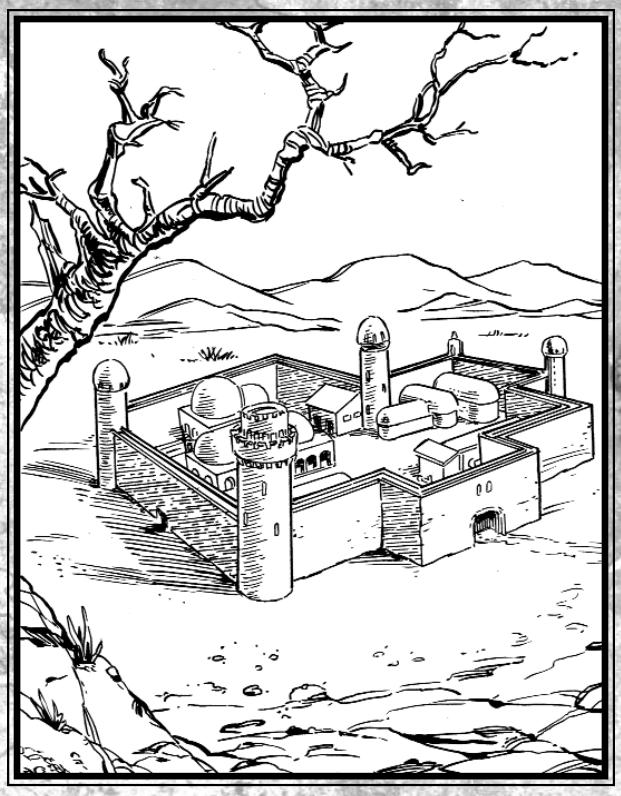
The coin chains are most often found in 10, 20, and 50 coin chains, and are usually worth their weight in gold. Legends tell of a "master chain" made of one hundred enormous coins hung on a chain of iron and born by the slaves of an Abylossian warlord.

Elven Leaf-Stones: The elves of Foresthome traded in smooth spheres of amber with leaves, flower petals, or droplets of water encased within the stone. The spheres vary widely, leading some scholars to theorize that the value of a stone was determined by its aesthetics, but there is little in the way of evidence to support this theory.

Of more interest to adventurers are the rare leaf-stones that contain spells. Utilitarian leaf-stones enchanted with *light, detect poison*, and *detect magic* are the most common, while leaf-stones with *charm person, mage armor*, and *shocking grasp* have also been discovered. The type of spell can often be determined only by trial and error. A dweomered leaf-stone contains 1 to 4 charges.

Nonmagical leaf-stones are worth as much as 5 gp to collectors. Dweomered leaf-stones are worth anywhere from 50 to 200 gp.

Nimorian Star: The chief currency used by the wealthy Priest-Kings, the Nimorian star is a gold piece with a black star etched into its center. The stars are curiously warm to the touch, and radiate an aura of minor divination if detected. A DC 20 Spellcraft check will reveal that the gold of the star carries the taint of fiendish essence.



Minted as a means of spying on the Nimorian populace, each star serves as a scrying focus. Any creature carrying a star suffers from a –2 modifier to any Will save made against scrying.

Nimorian stars are considered contraband in most good nations, but can be purchased on the black market for 100 gp each.

Of Cities and Citadels

The *DMG* provides guidelines for generating communities, but in a world besieged by violence, certain communities are created for the sole purpose of consolidating military power. These are the castles, forts, fortresses, and citadels of the world, where archers stand guard atop high walls, and knights ride out, lances raised, to thunder across the plains.

Strongholds differ from generic communities in important ways. Strongholds typically have lower populations than regular communities, but a great likelihood of high-level NPCs (most often fighters and warriors). Compared to smaller communities, a stronghold has a higher gold-piece-to-population ratio, due to any stronghold's need of craftsmen, armor, and weaponsmiths. This wealth curve peaks quickly, and unless a stronghold is surrounded by a large community, PCs will be hard pressed to find and

sell truly expensive items.

The largest stronghold is far smaller than a city, although oftentimes a city can spring up around an established stronghold, and a mighty metropolis might be warded by several castles.

The names of the stronghold levels are descriptive in nature, and have little to do with the actual strength of a stronghold. A band of spearmen might call their humble keep the Citadel of Blades, and Brighthawk Castle of the Theocracy of the Lance is actually a citadel. Every grizzled war veteran knows that impressive names often go with the least effectual strongholds, and that the mightiest citadels seldom trouble with such niceties, leaving dramatics to the bards.

The following tables supplement the community rules found in the *DMG*, and should be used in place of the community tables when generating strongholds.

Generating Stronholds

Stronghold Size	Garrison	GP Limit
Fort	10–100	200 gp
Keep	101–350	500 gp
Small Castle	351–1,000	1,500 gp
Large Castle	1,001–5,000	15,000 gp
Citadel	5,001 or more	25,000 gp

Garrison numbers reflect fighting men, usually warriors and fighters. Typical strongholds have an additional population of noncombatant commoners and experts equal to one third its garrison.

Forts: Forts are the smallest and weakest defenses, ranging from muddy encampments defended by ditches and earth ramparts, to wooden stockades with spindly watchtowers. Siege weapons are nearly always nonexistent. Barbarian communities are typically defended by forts.

Keep: The smallest stone defenses, a keep is often a single wall built around a donjon and gatehouse. One or two catapults or ballistae might sit atop towers. Monasteries and strongholds guarding mountain passes or built along the wild frontier are typically keeps.

Small Castle: Defended by a moat house and outer and inner walls, small castles are typically home to a small number of siege weapons, often supplemented by a handful of war wizards and clerics. A small castle might be the home of a knighthood, or a lord and his followers.

Large Castle: Built with outer and inner walls, several levels of towers, and any number of siege weapons, large castles are supported by several high-level war wizards, their apprentices, as well as clerics and their initiates. Large castles are the staging grounds for armies and the homes of great lords and kings.

Citadel: The mightiest of all strongholds, a citadel often dominates the landscape. Defended by concentric walls, multiple levels of towers, specialized siege weapons, and dedicated teams of powerful spellcasters, a citadel may even be defended by magical beasts—dragons, griffons, wyverns, or pegasi, ridden by knights. Citadels are home to the mightiest of regents, and often sit at the center of an empire, surrounded by a city or metropolis.

Stronghold Size	Community Modifier
Fort	–3
Keep	+0
Small Castle	+5 (roll twice)
Large Castle	+9 (roll three times)
Citadel	+16 (roll four times)

A stronghold's community modifier is used to generate the fortress' highest-level locals as per the *DMG*, but care should be exercised to avoid illogical results. In small strongholds especially, not every character class will be represented. For instance, a barbarian fort will rarely boast of a high-level paladin or monk. As always, GMs should tailor the results of their rolls to match the needs and consistency of the campaign setting.

Chapter 5
Rogues' Gallery and Hall of Heroes

The world of Áereth is populated by great heroes and wicked villains alike. Sagacious mages, devout priests, courageous warriors, and cunning rogues have all have left their mark on the cities and wilds. Following is a brief survey of some of the most celebrated and notorious personalities to tread the Known Realms. Only the key attribute scores and class levels of each NPC are listed, to give a sense of power level and strengths; the GM should feel free to scale the NPCs up or down to match the level of their current campaign.

GMs are encouraged to use these NPCs to imbue their own campaigns with a sense of life. Evil wizards and corrupt princes constantly scheme and plot, while courageous paladins ride the borderlands, righting wrongs and bringing justice to the wilds. Despite the allure of introducing these world-shaking personalities to the game, the GM should remember that it is the PC that is the hero of the story, the focus of the tale. No matter a NPC's power or influence, they are all supporting characters to the cast of PCs. Consequently, GMs should adapt the power levels of the NPCs to meet the needs of their particular campaign.

Aban Kaveh

(CG male rakshasa Rog7, Dex 17, Con 14, Int 18)

Loud and boisterous, this outrageous rakshasa merchant can often be heard for miles within the walls of Achaemia before he is seen … and what a sight he makes. Completely covered in indigo-black fur and fond of golden silk clothing, Aban Kaveh is easily the most recognizable and well-known figure in the rakshasa city—much to the dismay of the other rakshasa. He frequently disobeys the laws of the city, flaunting them as he does so, and often deals freely with those the other rakshasa view with disdain: humans, dwarves, and other foreigners. His hatred of the drow is also of concern to the Caliph and the ruling council of Achaemia, as they represent one of the city's strongest trading partners. So long as Aban Kaveh continues to bring coin into the city, his eccentricities are permitted, but the unruly rakshasa merchant is but a small step away from finding his black-furred neck on the executioner's block.

Despite his carefree, freewheeling nature, Aban Kaveh is highly intelligent, and is thought to have some sort of master agenda. Of late, he has divested himself of his traditional trade interests, and has become active in the building of grandships for the Twisted Sea. He is never seen walking the streets of Achaemia without his retinue of elven guards, and always has his enchanted twin scimitars, Trouble and More Trouble, either lashed to his belt or twirling in his hands, ready for a fight.

Acatzalan

(LG male human Ari3/Ftr2, Str 13, Wis 16, Cha 16)

Despised by the aristocracy of Voltigeur, Acatzalan possesses Xulmec blood from his father and the blood of Criestine nobility from his mother. Granting the half-blood the office of mayor to appease the restless citizens, Viceroy Durand has underestimated the love the lower and middle class have for Acatzalan. The young politician understands the duplicitous nature of the Viceroy and the disposition of Lady Mortianna better than they suspect, continually weighing the colonists' separatist ideas against loyalty to the crown. He has a bold vision for the future of the Colonies and a great respect for his Xulmec heritage. Acatzalan, a man known for his open-mindedness, is always willing to meet with visiting adventures of positive repute.

Analee Waveseer

(CG female aquatic elf Clr16, Wis 19, Cha 18)

One of the three leaders of the Sirens of Pelagia, Analee Waveseer is charged with guarding the Temple of the Sacred Wave on the hidden Isle of Argent. With the Isle serving as the only true headquarters of the Sirens, Analee's duties as a high priestess are married to her devotion to the organization.

Analee Waveseer is a sea elf of great beauty and power, consorting with the deep-dwelling beings of the sea and the proxies and petitioners of the gods themselves. She guards the greatest secrets of the Sirens and its most powerful treasures. Not content to remain static, Analee frequently swims the domain of her goddess and personally sees to it that errant captains and vengeful pirates do not locate the Isle of Argent.

Analee is always encountered with her friends and bodyguards, a Huge water elemental named Vaer and a triton lord named Erazaa. In battle, she wields a *trident of warning* and she always carries with her a *decanter of endless water*, enabling her to travel anywhere her faith requires without fear of suffocation.

Ashir the Maul

(CN male human Bbn16, Str 18, Con 19, Wis 13, Cha 14)

The warlord of the Cinai people is a swordsman of unmatched fury and might. A mountain of steely sinew with the reflexes of a lion and the hardened eyes of a raven, Ashir the Maul has led the armies of Cinai to victory time and again. Ashir is not a foolish ruler, but he prefers the absolutes of war and personal combat to the simpering, sycophantic politics of "civilized" countries. In Ashir's eyes, honor is won by courage and a quick blade, and those who shun battle are less than worms.

Aunyx

(LG half-elf female Mnk12, Str 14, Dex 16, Wis 18)

At first glance, the fiery-haired half-elf Aunyx does not appear to be anything other than a young woman of modest, stylish dress, and cheerful demeanor. Yet her prowess as a martial artist is quickly apparent when evil presents itself and her body becomes a fluid weapon. As one of the few known pupils of the legendary master, Joramus, Aunyx is a heroine of grace and precision.

A foundling raised by a wandering tribe of Gadjarrian halflings, Aunyx grew into a spirited lass with a big heart and matching temper. When she reached adolescence, her foster parents brought her to a monastery, hoping to give her the stability and discipline the vagabond halflings could not offer. Aunyx's restlessness could not long endure the inaction of ascetic study. Impressed with her outspoken conviction to bring justice to a world in need, Joramus, a visiting master, took her as his pupil. Together they set out from the monastery and wandered the Northlands for two years until Joramus eventually returned to his solitary journeys.

Aunyx is often found in the company of halflings and typically wanders the land with her friend and mount, a slightly addled light warhorse named Whirlwind. Aunyx wears *bracers of armor (+3)* and favors a *+2 thundering club* when faced with opponents she'd rather not touch—especially oozes, fungi, and most undead.

King Azghaar

(LE male sahuagin Rgr16, Str 19, Dex 16, Wis 16, Cha 16)

A sahuagin mutant unparalleled among his kind in the arts of war, Azghaar V is the king of the Undersea kingdom known as Azghaar-aqin. All who have learned his name fear the sahuagin king, and his sovereignty is a tangible presence within the isles of Dujamar, the Javran Sea, and even the town of Rutuan.

Beneath the waves, his influence reaches further still. Smaller principalities of sea devils pay tribute to him, extant only at his behest. Yet King Azghaar placates the krakens that dwell at the bottom of the Javran Sea, and they provide gifts of magical treasures—culled from the detritus of centuries of shipwrecks—in exchange for the fresh victims he supplies them. Their demands have increased over the years, and King Azghaar's pride will not suffer them indefinitely. Though he looks to the dry lands of Xulmec and the Criestine Colonies for future conquest, Azghaar knows his monstrous benefactors are instrumental to victory. At present, he is torn between bolstering their support or seeking alliances to supplant them.

Azghaar's mate is a malenti assassin named Ivtana—an ambassador from a foreign kingdom of sahuagin with designs against the Lirean Sea elves. Their consortion is as political as it is disconcerting to his kind—she resembling a fragile aquatic elf and he a four-armed mutant. Both keep the company of the cunning priests of Elas and mad cultists of Sothulth.

King Azghaar wields a *+3 icy burst trident* and wears a *periapt of wound closure* and *bracers of armor (+5)*. On his belt, he wears a stolen *horn of the tritons*, its former owner's skull mounted upon Azghaar's gruesome scepter, which functions as a *rod of rulership*.

Black Covey

Comprised of Alunine (CE female annis Sor13, Str 25, Cha 16), Meglea (CE female green hag Sor9, Str 19, Cha 18), and Sayocia (CE female green hag Sor7/Rog5, Str 19, Dex 18, Cha 15), the sisters of the Black Covey are the governing body of the Dujamar town of Rutuan. Approximately twenty years ago, the three hags convened in the marshes of Dujamar from their respective

homes in remote places of the Known Realms. The *crystal balls* they had used to communicate with one another they fused into a single *hag eye* of great power. Dispatching the thuggish rulers of Rutuan, the Black Covey was formed and declared its authority. The bodies of those who resisted their rule still decorate the town.

The hags live in an oversized cottage at the center of town. Guests to the Covey's home who retain their sanity afterward have trouble conveying the unspeakable horrors they witnessed within. A squad of ogres and their imposing boss, the lycanthrope Guloresh, enforce the Covey's laws and disturbing whims. Among their many secrets, the Covey has imprisoned a storm giant in the earth beneath their cottage, warping him with foul magics in the hopes of breeding a new servitor.

Black Dougal

(CN male human Rog14, Dex 20, Int 15, Cha 17)

Every back-alley cutpurse worth his shiv has heard of the infamous Black Dougal, rogue nonpareil. A thin, swarthy rogue with dark curls and black, dispassionate, eyes, the nefarious Dougal has been reported dead on multiple occasions, only to resurface anew with fresh scars and another fortune—which is quickly spent on women and wine.

A master of two-weapon combat, Dougal fights with the elven short sword *Ravenward* and a long knife named *Ironrain*. Both weapons bear multiple enchantments and have histories nearly as illustrious as their master's. *Ironrain*, specifically, is responsible for Dougal's penchant for survival: If the knife's master should ever perish, the blade teleports a portion of his corpse to a holding area until Dougal can be resurrected by a cleric. This also accounts for the speed with which Dougal spends his fortunes.

Black Dougal makes his home in the Free City of Soulgrave and is often found in the company of his master, Boss Bomar. Dougal was last seen riding north towards the Saint's Blood Mountains. Whispers allege he was sent on a quest to breach the legendary Iron Crypt of the Heretics.

Boss Bomar

(LN male half-orc War5/Rog3, Str 13, Int 15, Wis 14)

Unofficial master of the streets of the Free City of Soulgrave, Boss Bomar rules with a delicate balance of crude humor and quick violence. Despite his appearance as a carefree brute, Bomar seldom takes an action without considering its consequences. He simply analyzes situations so quickly that most assume that he doesn't think at

all. The barrel-chested half-orc is seldom seen without his escorts: lovely harlots that double as well-paid assassins.

Caarathyr Amond

(NG female elf Rgr8/Sor5, Dex 17, Wis 16, Cha 15)

One of seven Wardens of the Blackbriar Wood, Caarathyr is tasked with monitoring the game trails and paths leading in and out of the Blackbriar. A merry, lively elf-maid, Caarathyr (or Mistress Caar as she is known to her rangers) is quick to laugh, her voice ringing through the sun-dappled woods like a birdsong. It therefore comes as a surprise to many when evil humanoids or monsters enter the Blackbriar, and this same elf-maid transforms into a solemn huntress.

Caarathyr is deadly with a bow, and—while she seldom boasts of her skill—ranks among the deadliest archers in the North. Her prized possession is a composite bow made of cherry ash and dragon horn. Inscribed with flowing, elvish script, it is said the enchanted bow refuses to be strung by any but its mistress.

Captain Sentri

(LG male human Ftr14, Str 17, Con 15, Wis 14, Cha 15)

Master of the Sable March and General of the Seven Armies, Captain Sentri is renowned throughout the North as a paragon of virtue and righteousness. At heart a humble, loyal warrior of Crieste, Sentri is forced to play games of cloak and dagger to protect his nation's Child-Emperor. To rely on deception galls Sentri, but his plots

are no less cunning for his qualms.

The heir to eleven generations of warrior-lords, Sentri is steeped in the warrior traditions of Crieste. As a young soldier, he proved his skill and courage fighting on the borderlands. Afterward, Sentri traveled widely, serving first as a bodyguard to Criestine nobles, and then as a knight-ambassador to Crieste's far-flung allies. Sentri is loathe to speak of his adventures, but his private chambers bear treasures and trophies collected from across the Known Realms.

A dashing warrior in his early thirties, Sentri is broad of shoulder and a natural leader of men. The Knights of the Sable March are always recruiting upright young warriors, and the captain has an eye for talent. Most at home in a suit of mail on the field of battle, Sentri is less comfortable in the duplicitous courts of Crieste. Among aristocrats, he carries himself with a solemn silence. What the court sycophants mistake for stupidity is actually a warrior's wariness among enemies—and Sentri's suspicions are seldom misplaced.

King Chull'pak

(LN male mummy lord Clr14, Str 26, Wis 21, Cha 17)

The practice of mummification by the Amoya people seldom involves necromancy, but the city-state's need brought its former king back from the repose of death in a divine ritual. King Chull'pak is a mummy lord of solemn, but noble disposition. The protection of his people is paramount to Chull'pak, and he will personally slay any who threatens the holy shrines and sacred relics of the city. As a high priest of Anahuara, the king has been known to offer powerful healing and even resurrection magic to adventurers in exchange for service to his city. Missions against the drakon are more often than not the form such service takes.

Chull'pak wears a suit of *+2 bonemail armor* fashioned from the remains of his great-grandfather and carries a silvered *+4 lucent drakon bane heavy mace*, a weapon he put to considerable use when he lived. Now he wields it like a scepter and rallies his people whenever the snake men from Ssorlang dare venture into the Anduran Mountains.

Queen Citlalli

(NG female human Ari6/Clr4, Wis 16, Cha 17)

It is said that the dazzling Queen Citlalli spends more time aboard her family's longboats than in the city proper, yet the middle-aged queen does not neglect her duties as monarch of the second most powerful Xulmec city-state. The ruling family oversees all maritime trade for Athua, and in such foreign affairs Citlalli demonstrates she is as much a businesswoman as she is a queen. The Athuans fear little in the Surya Sea, but the brooding ruin of Ayoxatlan remains the exception. Queen Citlalli has been known to use her family's wealth to bribe adventurers into exploring its infamous depths to spare her people the risk.

Cozette LeRoux

(NE human female Rog6/Ftr2/Duelist 7, Dex 16, Int 18, Cha 17)

The youngest Barrier Lord the Isles have ever known, Cozette was born in the squalor of Bloodport thirty-one years ago. The daughter of a copperless waif and a murderous pirate, at the age of seven Cozette was sold into slavery. The Sirens of Pelagia soon seized the slave ship and Cozette was eventually dropped off in a Blihai orphanage, where she was adopted by a wealthy couple and given a formal education. At the age of twenty-one, Cozette joined the Sirens. After spending a few years learning all she could about piracy and her own lineage, she murdered the Siren captain of her ship and seized it as her own.

The next ten years she spent making a name for herself, climbing her way up the Imperial Navy's wanted list. Her lust for slaughter, equal to her lust for gold, has made the surname LeRoux one of the most dreaded on the open sea. The fearless Cozette shares rulership of the Isles with Lord Raazt but she is still in the prime of her life, spending as much time at the helm of her schooner, *The*

Banshee, as she does in her opulent manor in Bloodport.

Cozette wears her russet-red tresses loose or braided, and is seldom seen without her black leather coat (which functions as a *cloak of the manta ray*) and her *+3 keen saber*. She possesses many magical items, the best of which are cached in the cellars beneath her manor and guarded with a host of deadly traps. Though she is not proficient in the use of spells, she has an appreciation for necromancy and often employs wizards to animate her dismembered victims.

The Crone

(CN female ogre-mage Drd6/Sor20/Epic5, Str 18, Con 21, Wis 18, Cha 22)

Little is known about the ancient sorceress known as the Crone. Thirteenth and mightiest in a world-spanning coven of witches, the Crone makes her home somewhere in the far reaches of the North, appearing as the mood strikes her and often going unseen for entire decades. The withered, hunchbacked ogre-hag has been known to appear before noble heroes, offering power and wealth in return for assistance on peculiar quests. Compliance is never *demanded*, but those that are foolish enough to ridicule or scorn the Crone are rarely seen again.

Cyn Alfwen

(LE female half-elf Pal8/Blk5, Str 14, Wis 15, Cha 16)

As a commander serving in the armies of Leherti, Alfwen witnessed the Fall of Leherti firsthand. Fleeing from before the rush of the Scourge, Alfwen sought refuge among the bandit lands of the Freeholds. Cyn quickly rose through the ranks of brigands, her feverish self-hatred driving her to increasingly greater depths of madness. Despite the insanity that plagues her, the blackguard is a capable leader and tactician, commanding her small army of brigands with precision and skill. Now the brigand queen of Bald Tower, Alfwen leads regular raids on the Free Cities. The half-elf's single weakness is her seething hatred for soldiers of Leherti.

Cyn dresses in arms and armor appropriate to a brigand queen. She dons spiked half-plate for battle, and fights with a black-bladed bastard sword. The sword is said to be a gift of her demon patron, the half-plate recovered from the corpse of a defeated Scourge general.

Daessa

(CG female brightvenom drakon Ari1/Mnk5/Rog7, Dex 17, Wis 15, Cha 15)

Orphaned by the Brood of Ahzari, Daessa travels the Known Realms in opposition to all assassins. Sometimes called "the assassin killer"—an epithet usually misunderstood—she is attracted to adventurers who challenge authority and champion the less fortunate. Jaded by the arrogance and cruel whims of her own kind, Daessa is not accustomed to trusting even her allies and seldom speaks her intentions directly.

When her aristocratic family was slain by the Brood of Ahzari, Daessa escaped Ssorlang and found temporal peace among the macabre monks of the Lamasery of the Dead. Eventually she returned to the streets of Myashtlan, her ancestral home, and embraced the arts of a thief, studying the Brood assassins from the shadows. Someday she intends to infiltrate the Moryan Temple itself, and she searches always for powerful companions to help her.

When she moves about in Ssorlang society, Daessa plays the part of a flattering courtesan, hoping to insinuate herself into influential circles. When abroad, she plays the part of a Ssorlang ambassador and tries to manipulate others to her cause. Daessa wears a silken *cloak of charisma (+4)* and proudly carries a *+4 stealth keris*, a deadly weapon and trophy she pried from the dead hands of an elder Brood assassin.

Dolgar Thraciov

(CG male gnome Sor5, Int 17, Wis 16)

One of the most sought-after figures in all the dwarven courts of Taijin, this bitter, cranky gnome sorcerer would like nothing better than to disappear into one of the deep catacombs of the Herrenia Mountains. Unfortunately for him, the crown of Taijin will not let him leave the confines of the kingdom. For in Dolgar's possession is a potent artifact—a crystal known as the *Eye of the Bloodwyrm*—capable of seeing the future and of translating the omens and portents of prophecy. Although the gnome sorcerer has little idea of how to control the device, he is able to do so with far better accuracy and results than any other being on Áereth. His abilities with the *Eye* are deemed to be quite important to the kingdom of Taijin, important enough to make the gnome sorcerer a permanent—albeit pampered—guest of the crown.

When not on official business with the courts of Taijin, Dolgar can typically be found in the alehouses and taverns of Raiju Khor, regaling all within earshot with tales of his many adventures. For not long ago, Dolgar was a noted explorer and adventurer, battling his way to fortune and glory. He longs to become an adventureer once more, and to rid himself of the *Eye* and all its power—though he does not long for dwarven soldiers to shove spears in his back as he attempt to escape Taijin. Should he ever cross the path of another adventurer, he eagerly demands details of all their tales and exploits—and should they be sufficiently exciting to his longing ears, Dolgar may tempt fate and try to join his new "friends" in a life of adventure …

Abbot Kallus Wayrenne

(LG male human Mnk3/Clr12, Wis 18, Cha 16)

Ordained as the head of the Abbey of St. Terinmora, Abbot Wayrenne is a man of unflinching piety. His stern demeanor, which seems standoffish with one's first visit to the abbey, is tempered by his compassion for those who seek the absolution of the gods. The Abbot serves Gorhan foremost, but beseeches all the benevolent gods of the Sancturn Pantheon for their protection of his ministries. Even the Xulmecs of the abbey who still practice the rituals of their native gods find Wayrenne to be tolerant of their spirituality.

The Chuzecs would conquer the abbey and sacrifice its inhabitants to their god, but thanks to Abbot Wayrenne's vigilance, it has remained safe. Unbeknownst to all, however, he is dying, slowly falling prey to a divine curse laid upon him by Xolatl, the Fire Priest. Though the Abbot's faith will save his soul, it will not save his life. Wayrenne's search for a worthy successor has him eyeing all visiting clerics with great scrutiny. He has been known to test the faith of adventuring clerics by asking great quests of them in exchange for powerful healing and holy relics.

Abbot Wayrenne carries a *staff of healing* and possesses a *phylactery of undead turning*.

Elarabeth

(NG female half-elf Ftr3/Rog4/Duelist 6, Dex 16, Int 17, Cha 18)

Possessed of emerald green hair, sea-blue eyes, and skin of palest green, the lady mayor of Halcyon presents an impressive figure. Elarabeth is a veteran mariner and retired Siren, but has settled into the politics of Halcyon to preserve the city as a bastion of safety amidst the turbulent, pirate-infested Empyrean.

Elarabeth's father was a Criestine imperial officer killed when she was only a child. Her mother, a sea elf priestess of Pelagia, was tortured and crucified by the pirates of the Barrier Isles, and for this crime Elarabeth opposes them at every opportunity. Whether funding the Sirens' continued efforts or acting as a benefactor for adventurers contesting with the Barrier pirates, Lady Elarabeth uses her family inheritance and personal wealth to make the Empyrean Ocean a safer place for all.

Elarabeth uses a *+3 frost rapier* in combat and wears a *ring of water elemental command*.

Eldren Madrigan (Tirend)

(N male human Ari5/Brd12, Dex 15, Int 18, Wis 16, Cha 19)

Eldren is the gilded heir of the Madrigan estate and along with his twin sister, Gwynathra, guildmaster of the League of Resonance like his father before him. A young man both handsome and arrogant, Eldren is the quintessential aristocrat and a foppish bard, but behind the veneer of indulgence hides a rare cunning. Fully enmeshed in the political aspects of his office, he allows his sister to travel abroad and avoid the entanglements of diplomacy.

Few who look upon the golden-haired Eldren would suspect the strings he pulls among the sovereigns of the Northlands. Fewer still know his secret: he is, in fact, Tirend Madrigan, the founder of the League of Resonance. The same magic that devastated the University of Arven Phael centuries ago transferred his spirit into the body of an absent cousin. The same magic has kept his transient mind alive through each successive

generation. When his body dies, he inhabits the body of his son a number of years afterwards, or his closest male relative. Despite his efforts, Tirend has been unable to break this curse or keep his spirit in one place. Unlike his sister, Maera, he has yielded to the magic and has even grown comfortable with it.

The League of Resonance has been his greatest love since its founding centuries ago, and Tirend intends to see its designs reach fruition. The majority of Áereth's most renowned bards report directly to him, and only a select few know his true identity.

Wealthy and resourceful, Eldren always wears a suit of *+3 glamered leather* altered to resemble the next fashion in courtier attire. He carries a *+4 dancing rapier* at all times and makes frequent use of his *pipes of sounding* to impress fans and enemies alike.

Guloresh

(CE male ogre werecrocodile Ftr8, Str 23, Int 12, Wis 14, Cha 7)

An oversized ogre of disturbing and stolid demeanor, Guloresh reports directly to Alunine of Rutuan's Black Covey. For his impeccable loyalty, the annis called upon spirits of the Dujamar marshes and gifted him with lycanthropy. The ogres that he commands are typical brutes for their kind, but Guloresh keeps them in line with uncompromising intimidation and a marked lack of bravado. Something sinister and collected lurks behind the eyes of this formidable ogre champion, and it belongs to the hag Alunine.

Guloresh wields a *+2 adamantine warhammer* and bears a *+1 heavy wooden shield of arrow catching*.

Gwynathra Madrigan (Maera)

(CG female human Ari4/Brd6/Wiz7, Dex 17, Int 17, Cha 19)

Gwynathra is the golden-haired twin of Eldren Madrigan and guildmistress of the League of Resonance. Though she has great wealth at her disposal, Gwynathra seems a wayward spirit, choosing a life in the saddle over the indulgences of her inheritance.

Yet Gwynathra, like her brother, is more than she seems. Born Maera Madrigan, she was once the beautiful and privileged twin of Tirend Madrigan, patriarch of the family and founder of the League of Resonance. When the magic disaster claimed the University of Arven Phael and the lives of those in attendance, Maera's spirit survived in the body of a relative. The experience did little to change her, however. She remained spoiled and pretentious, seeing the rebirth as another pleasure to enjoy.

The passage of centuries has changed her. Having lived countless lifetimes in the bodies of her own descendants, Maera has grown humble. Witnessing war after war, she has even come to believe in her brother's work and the pacifistic goals of the League itself. While Eldren handles the politics of the Madrigan estate, Maera wanders the Known Realms in the body of the wayward Gwynathra. Even as she carries out her duties as a renowned Resonare, Maera searches always for the means to break the curse. She is weary of stealing the bodies of her own bloodline, and hopes to find release for herself and her brother.

Maera, in the identity of Gwynathra, wears inexpensive travel clothes, but her true wealth is evident in the magical items she possesses. She wields a *rapier of puncturing* and wears *bracers of armor (+3),* a *ring of protection (+5),* and *boots of levitation*. For the research she undertakes, she makes constant use of her *bag of holding (type IV)*.

Imorag the Wise

(LN male nalvor Clr12, Dex 15, Wis 19, Cha 19)

Wandering through the endless sands of the Ghetrian Desert is Imorag the Wise, a powerful nalvor cleric in the service of the god Soleth. How this nalvor from the Lostlands came to be a disciple of Soleth is unknown; however, what is certain is that the desert cleric is one of the god's most faithful—and powerful—servants.

Although the flesh of Imorag the Wise has literally been burned and charred to a blackened husk, and though his tongue has been torn out by fearful nalvor elders, the wizened priest is still an imposing—some would even say frightening—figure. Despite the absence of a tongue, Imorag still speaks with the thunderous voice of angels, able to inspire great hope or great fear with a mere word. He is a stern, imposing individual, dressed only in threadbare robes. He only carries a rusted mace as a weapon.

Imorag travels from town to town, city to city, in the remnants of the old Khonsurian Empire, urging all whom he encounters to abandon the old, corrupt way of the sphinx and to embrace the divine power of Soleth. Though branded as a blasphemer by the government of Xa Deshret, the cleric of Soleth is no longer hunted as a criminal. His power has grown far too great, and all prior attempts to kill Imorag—hanging, burial beneath the desert sands, burning at the stake—have failed, serving only to make the legend of Imorag more powerful than before. Though constantly on the move, Imorag can frequently be found in the poorer sections of the cities of Xa Deshret, healing the sick and fervently preaching the words of his divine master Soleth.

Isolia Seyene

(N female human Rog5/Brd7, Dex 16, Int 15, Wis 16, Cha 18)

Although she was raised in the impoverished, slum districts of Kassantia, one would not think that the cultured, silver-tongued lord-baroness to be anything but a pure-blooded aristocrat. Having studied the wealthy as her prey, young Isolia Seyene quickly learned to emulate their manners to make stealing their fine jewelry an easier feat. But Isolia was whisked away from her childhood crimes by a handsome young bard for a romantic voyage touring the Empyrean Ocean. She enjoyed a wedding at sea, losing her heart to both her new husband and the azure waters of Pelagia's domain. When their ship was scuttled by the infamous pirate lord Raazt, Isolia fell into the sea where she was rescued by merfolk before the sadistic scrag could find her. Rage against the Barrier pirates and her newfound passion for the sea led the anguished Isolia inexorably to the Sirens of Pelagia.

Fifteen years later, Isolia is a Criestine lord-baroness who serves as the Sirens' chief mainland contact. She recruits for new blood and entreats the wealthy and political to donate to their cause. The largest mercantile arrangements for Siren protection pass through Isolia's hands even as she keeps the Sirens from falling into the political intrigues of Lady Mortianna. Out of the public eye, Lord-Baroness Seyene often looks for trustworthy adventurers to carry out the missions her office restricts her from taking.

Queen Itlanexca

(LG female human Ari2/Clr1, Int 18, Cha 15)

At the tender age of fourteen, the young Queen of Teotcoatlan is already a wise asset to her people. Betrothed to King Mactezu, Itlanexca is idealistic but not naïve to the truths of the world; leading Teotcoatlan to continued glory and goodness is a path fraught with many enemies.

Along with the king, Itlanexca is tutored by the wisdom of the guardian naga Nonotzale. She is an acolyte to the virtues of Cynhara in an attempt to raise the goddess from the slumber of divine death. Madrah grants her spells for the time being.

Possessing long hair of radiant silver—an anomaly among her people—the young queen wears upon her head a feathered crown that functions like a *helm of telepathy*. When visited by foreign dignitaries she has a reason to distrust, Itlanexca has no qualms about reading their thoughts.

Jolene Carignan

(CN female human Ftr7/Rog7, Dex 16, Int 16)

To most of the populace of Morena Nova, Jolene Carignan is the attractive third daughter of a minor nobleman. She is also one of the most notorious bandits in the region, robbing the plantations of Morena Nova with daring and style. In recent times, she has expanded the reach of her larcenous greed far past the borders of her homeland, robbing the coffers of Taijin as well as many treasure troves hidden throughout Xa Deshret. Her band of fellow outlaws—the Company of the Black Fox, as they have come to be known—are also the sons and daughters of the Morenan royal court. Though their identities remain secret, each bolder, grander exploit executed by Jolene and her Company brings the threat of discovery ever closer.

In the courts of Morena Nova, Jolene Carignan is a shy and demure lady. When leading the Company of the Black Fox on one of their infamous raids, however, she is vain, arrogant, and known to frequently say a bawdy word or two to her traveling companions. She is one of the best horse riders in all the land, and is renowned—though only behind the black mask of the bandit—for her remarkable skill with handheld crossbows. Of late, she has taken to more and more daring exploits, robbing vaults said to be impenetrable, stealing the biggest and grandest treasures to be found in Morena Nova. Most of what she and her Company steal is either carelessly tossed into caves or given to the poor—for them, thievery is best done for the thrill.

Joramus

(LG human male Mnk18, Str 16, Dex 18, Wis 20)

With his modest appearance and calming demeanor, one would not think the aging Master Joramus capable of the feats to which legends hold. His iron-gray hair and soft blue eyes hide the passions of a fervent hero. But Joramus is not on the road to champion righteous causes—this he did in his youth, and he has moved into the twilight of his years. Rather, this pilgrim is in the business of *making* heroes. As he wanders the Known Realms, Master Joramus constantly searches for pupils on whom to bequeath his arts. His deeds, and the new heroes he has given rise to, have made Joramus one of the most legendary humans in the current age. In some lands, his name is the utterance of myth.

Not all who meet Joramus will find his favor, but those of goodly heart who cross paths with him will be the safer for it. He offers wisdom and advice in soft-spoken tones, never preaching, never forceful. Bardic tales claim that Joramus has visited gold dragons in their remote aeries, has consulted with the sphinxes of long-faded Khonsuria, and has supped with elder nagas of old Zimala. Less well known is the fact that aside from his great martial prowess, Joramus also happens to wear a pair of *bracers of armor (+5)* and puts a pair of *+4 holy merciful nunchaku* carved from the bones of a fallen titan to good use.

Kaede Ryu

(CG female half-dragon [green] Ftr8, Str 22, Con 19, Cha 14)

The undeniable crowd favorite of the gladiatorial fighting pits of Djeser al-Maqqara, Kaede Ryu is both beautiful and deadly. For the most part, her dragon heritage is difficult to detect; only glittering green scales on her forearms and her emerald flowing hair betray the fact that she is not purely human. A slave that was reputedly captured in the jungles of the Southlands, Kaede Ryu is said to be adept with all weapons, though the longspear is her favorite. She knows how to work a crowd, and how to put on a show while fighting to the death—something that has earned her the love of the entire city. Despite the fact that she earned her freedom from the gladiator pits years ago, she continues to fight as a free warrior, commanding hefty appearance fees each time she steps into battle.

Of late, Kaede Ryu has begun her own gladiatorial school, selecting the finest slaves in the city and instructing them in the arts of war. Although it was welcomed at first by the city, Lord Marko Hellmont and other powerful figures in Djeser al-Maqqara have lately grown concerned, wondering if Kaede Rye is forming an army of gladiators … or an actual army. Rumor has it that many of the weaker slaves purchased by Kaede Ryu are simply given their freedom and sent to the Northlands, a thought that the Slavers' Council cannot accept. For the moment, her massive popularity amongst the commonfolk of Djeser al-Maqqara make the dragon warrior untouchable to her enemies.

Lady Kesheba, Magister of the Aurora

(NG female human, Wiz11, Int 17, Cha 14)

Few rulers are as devoted to their people as the baroness of Koranth. The beauty of Lady Kesheba is legendary throughout the North, and she is regularly besieged by suitors. But the devotions expressed by her paramours pale before the love Lady Kasheba bears for her country.

This love is a double-edged blade. Koranth is a nation of free-willed wizards and mages, and rallying the spellcasters to a cause other than their own mystical research can be nearly impossible. Seeing her nation beset on all sides, Lady Kesheba has been forced to seek out magical means of ensuring the mages' compliance.

The fair Magister of the Aurora is desperate for loyal agents who will carry out missions on behalf of Koranth, and will pay handsomely for discrete adventurers with a knack for survival against long odds.

Kashya

(CG female half-elf PsyWar12, Str 16, Dex 17, Wis 16)

As one of the Captains of the Wanderers, Kashya travels the wilds of the Northlands in search of psionic-using creatures in need of liberation. Herself orphaned by abhorrent creatures in a village near the Vermilion Steppes, Kashya is passionately devoted to the liberation of all who suffer from the sins of the wicked. Lately she has taken to attacking slaver caravans bound for the markets of Djeser al-Maqqara. Kashya looks always for allies against the subjugation of the innocent.

Wearing *+3 elven chain* and wielding a *psychic longsword* known as the Revenant Blade, Kashya is a formidable foe, making frequent use of her *claws of the beast* power in conjunction with her sword. With her hair half-braided and woven with beads (and other sundry trinkets), her fiery amber eyes, and dark-skinned, tattooed body, this half-elf appears savage or barbaric to Northland eyes. Kashya's truest friend is her vibrant green psicrystal, Y'na ("hero" personality).

Khorjala the Hawk

(N male human Rgr9/Asn5, Str 15, Dex 18, Con 16, Wis 15, Cha 14)

The leader of the Lehertian resistance is known to be a noble general and natural leader of men, a courageous hero emerging from the ruins of war to serve Leherti in its darkest hour.

Nothing could be further from the truth.

Before the Fall of Leherti, the man calling himself Khorjala was awaiting execution in the dungeons of Araloges. When the Scourge swept over the city, the convict fought his way to freedom, eluding both his captors and the swarming hordes of orcs. Working his way south to the Free Cities, the convict killed Scourge soldiers out of necessity, inadvertently drawing the attention and support of the Lehertian resistance.

For the first time in the assassin's life, he found himself welcomed with open arms. The same crimes that labeled him a criminal now made him a hero of the common people. Arriving in the Free Cities, he adopted the name Khorjala, accepted the promotion to general, and has been taking the fight to the Scourge ever since.

Khorjala's success has not gone unnoticed by Tarkhan Khurzog. The demon-ogre knows something of Khorjala's past as an assassin, and delights in the power he wields over his greatest enemy. It is only a matter of time before the demon-ogre offers Khorjala a choice: Join the Scourge or be exposed as an imposter and assassin.

Khaine Gyles Durran

(NG male human Ftr10, Str 16, Dex 19, Wis 14, Cha 14)

Formerly a proud knight in the service of the Grand Duchy of Leherti, Sir Giles Durran was exiled from Crieste for his supposed failures during the Fall of Leherti. Whether these failures were genuine or trumped-up charges by others, no one can say, for Durran does not speak of his time in Crieste anymore, save to mention that he has a daughter there.

Following his exile, Durran made his way to the Lostlands, where he lived handsomely as a mercenary fighter for many years. His unrivaled prowess with the longbow caught the eye of one of the Vermilion Tribes, who asked him to join their number. Surprisingly, he did, and his blunt, no-nonsense attitude, as well as his legendary ferocity in combat, allowed him to quickly rise in the normally reclusive Tribe society, eventually leading him to become the ruling Khaine of the Huligai Tribe. He has begun to combine the traditional battle tactics of the Vermilion Tribes with those of the armies of the Northlands, turning the Tribes into an even deadlier fighting force. He is a quiet, unassuming man who says little and prefers to lead by example, but those who know him well say that revenge still burns brightly in his heart.

Leton N'Rhyll

(NG male halfling Brd8, Str 14, Dex 18, Int 16)

Leton N'Rhyll is one of the most well-known bards in the entire world. Although not the sweetest singer nor the most skilled with a lyre, there is not a tale or song in the entire world that Leton N'Rhyll does not know. His memory is legendary: The halfling bard has but to hear a song once, or see a scrap of parchment for a mere moment, and it is committed forever to his memory. Although the earnest young halfling has already traveled the realms of Áereth thrice over, he always returns to his humble tent in Gadjarria.

Leton's uncanny memory has made him part of many an adventure, albeit usually against his will. Though the bard would like to say that his appearance in royal courts throughout the world is entirely due to his good looks and sense of humor, the truth is that thieves constantly conspire to enlist his aid in their grandiose schemes. Leton has been kidnapped on well over a dozen occasions by ambitious bandits, hoping that the halfling bard can perhaps memorize a stolen treasure map for them, or recall a line from an ancient prophecy. For this reason, the feisty halfling bard, who possesses an overwhelmingly grand appetite for good food and fine wine, is notoriously wary of strangers with swords, particularly those who seem eager to ask him about tales of adventure.

Linni

(N female halfling Brd8/Psi5, Dex 16, Int 16, Cha 18)

As one of the Captains of the Wanderers, the halfling Linni travels the known roads of the Northlands in order to find psionic-using creatures in need of a home. As a psion and bard, she conceals her psionic talent from the ignorant and proclaims it to those who share it. Linni rides a valiant war pony named Marigold, using telepathic powers and dramatic songs to mislead her enemies and search for those in need.

Linni wears a suit of *+2 glamered leather armor* and favors her *+2 seeking shortbow* when forced into battle. She sings old songs of her ancestry in Gadjarrian and composes new ballads for Elraydia, but Linni's greatest passion finds expression through her masterwork drums. Her everyday companion is her psicrystal, Chenneth ("sympathetic" personality)—which means "grandmother" in Halfling—who has been known to scold Linni when it disapproves of her actions.

Loremer d'Arisseux

(N male human Ari2/Rog1, Int 15)

Motivated by greed and fear of responsibility, Loremer will do anything to ensure his position as mayor of Pleniere. Fortunately, such motivations often coincide with the safety of the town itself. When things are going well for him, Loremer assists explorers in smuggling Southland contraband through the Criestine tax system.

King Mactezu

(LG male human Ari2/Pal1, Wis 16, Cha 18)

Just fifteen years old, the young King of Teotcoatlan is already a proficient warrior on the path to greatness. Mactezu is still impressionable, but his secret mentor, the elder naga Nonotzale, and his betrothed, Queen Itlanexca, are his chief allies against a world of enemies: jealous nobles and foreign powers who would take the rulership of the most powerful Xulmec city-state from his youthful hands.

A paladin of many virtues, Mactezu's skills remain untested against the dangers of the world. He and his queen are guarded by the royal guard, an elite order of fighter/rangers who are always close at hand—except when Mactezu and Itlanexca meet with their serpentine mentor. Nonotzale teaches the young sovereigns the value of tolerance, so King Mactezu is willing to meet with foreigners if they have anything to offer Teotcoatlan, whether in the form of martial prowess, arcane knowledge, or simply information about faraway lands.

The dark-eyed young king keeps a *flame tongue* on his person at all times, a gift from Viceroy Durand. Mactezu is a handsome youth beloved by most of his subjects.

The Maelidoch

(LE male tiefling Wiz16, Dex 14, Con 6, Int 22)

The grim master of the Sireal Citadel is a demon half-blood trapped in a body crippled by an occult disease. The Maelidoch's tiefling traits aren't readily apparent as such, and he wears a black mask and heavy cloak to disguise the deformities that mark him as other than human. The wizard's body is covered in scaled scar tissue born of the disease that burns through his blood and makes his skin hot to the touch. Whether this blood-plague is the physical manifestation of the wizard's infernal ancestry or the result of his wicked experiments is unknown.

The Maelidoch is amoral and indifferent to the suffering of others, but seldom cruel for the sake of cruelty. He per-

forms endless cycles of experiments on the prison's inmates, twisting and shaping flesh like a sculptor shapes clay. The vast majority of Sireal's inmates never see the warden, but those who do cross the paths of the Maelidoch report a tall, silent man-thing cloaked in black, and trailing an aura of death and decay.

The Maelidoch holds himself aloof from the internecine politicking of the lord-barons, ruling his island prison free of corruption and outside influence. Curiously, the Maelidoch bears an unswerving loyalty to the Child-Emperor of Crieste. Like the wizard's crippling disease, the origins of this devotion are a mystery to all but the Maelidoch and his master.

Melisine d'Aurielle

(NG human female Sor8, Dex 17, Int 19, Cha 18)

The brilliant and beautiful Melisine d'Aurielle was tutored with her innate magic from a young age, and she enjoyed a carefree and spoiled life of magic and luxury. After an old mentor recommended she and her sister, Amarante, to the Royal Academy of Sorcery in Kassantia, she found her life changing dramatically. Her vanity and pride paved the way to an impressive reputation and soon the crown assigned her to the prestigious Beryl Conclave in the town of Voltigeur across the Empyrean.

Melisine became one of the arcane protectors of the Criestine Colonies, but she sees the assignment as an insult to her talents. Though well meaning in her station, she dreams of greater ambitions and has taken to researching local legends in hopes of finding the recognition she feels she deserves.

Melisine's inheritance and natural talent has yielded her a number of magical possessions. She wears an *amulet of natural armor (+2), bracers of armor (+4),* a *ring of blinking*, a *ring of regeneration*, and a host of jewelry.

Morgan Ironwolf

(NG female human Ftr9/Rgr4, Str 15, Con 17, Wis 14)

Raven haired, iron willed, and wild eyed, Ironwolf fought her way up from the rank of a common sellsword to the command of her own mercenary company. When the Duchy of Leherti fell to the Scourge, the Company of the Ironwolf was trapped behind the armies of the advancing horde. Morgan Ironwolf and her company of soldiers rallied the citizens of the city of Yithain. Led by the brazen warrior, the company turned the tide of the battle, and Yithain remains free to this day.

A young woman with a quiet temper and a strong sense of justice, Ironwolf leads her warriors by example. Before the Fall of Leherti, she had little reason to risk the wrath of the Scourge. But having witnessed the Tarkhan's cruelty firsthand, Ironwolf's conscience compels her to defend the forsaken refugees of Occupied Leherti.

The warrior commonly wears a fine suit of *elven chain mail* given to her by the elves of the Blackbriar, and carries a shield emblazoned with the company's sigil. She fights with a cunning mix of sound tactics and unrivaled bravery.

Lady Mortianna

(LE female human Ari4/Sor13, Int 14, Cha 19)

The coldly beautiful Lady Mortianna rules Crieste as Vizier to the Child-Emperor. Her plots span the entire continent and even reach into the Lostlands and Southlands. Some of the finest rogues and mages of the North serve as her spies, and very little transpires without the Vizier's knowledge. Her chief frustration is Captain Sentri, who, along with his Knights of the Sable March, has been able to match her schemes, move for move. Mortianna craves the humiliating defeat of her rival, and is always looking for pawns to play against Crieste's loyal son.

As befitting her position, Mortianna dresses in demure obeisance to the Child-Emperor. However, no one looking into her midnight black eyes can mistake the lady's raw ambition and force of personality. Like a marble statue, the lady has a cold, yet undeniable beauty. Many have courted the Vizier, offering to steal, lie, and even murder

on her behalf. An equal number have met their end at an executioner's axe, used and then abandoned by the lady whose affections they hoped to win.

Nentawat

(N male darkvenom drakon Ari2/Clr8, Str 15, Int 18, Wis 19, Cha 16)

The mayor-priest of Angkar is charged as caretaker of the ancient town and the sacred temple of Madrah that it oversees. A degenerate aristocrat in his youth, the drakon's heart has been humbled by decades of visiting pilgrims seeking the hidden truths of Madrah. Though he still possesses a glimmer of his racial arrogance, Nentawat has come to respect the many children of the Lord of the Earth and Sky and now he sees all foreigners as a chance to learn more about Áereth. Visitors to Angkar expecting hostility from the drakon are delightfully surprised by its soft-spoken ruler.

Nonotzale

(LG male guardian naga Clr6, Str 21, Dex 14, Con 19, Int 16, Wis 20, Cha 18)

A guardian naga of considerable power and knowledge, Nonotzale is the wise mentor behind the thrones of the Xulmec city-state of Teotcoatlan. Once a friend to the former queen of the Gilded City, now Nonotzale counsels the young King Mactezu and Queen Itlanexca with an eye to the future of all Xulmec. Lairing deep beneath the royal palace, the naga teaches the adolescent monarchs the virtues of Cynhara and the foresight of Madrah. In a land still wary of the presence of nagas, for now Nonotzale's presence remains a secret. Yet rumors have already circulated far as to the presence of *something* guiding the king and queen, and a time will come soon when the naga must reveal himself.

Hatched beneath the lost Zimalan capital city, Nonotzale spent the first half of his life fighting against the dark and spirit nagas who still haunt the ruins of the long-faded empire. When a young explorer named Cetlana found his home, a friendship was forged. Years later, when Cetlana married the king of Teotcoatlan, she invited the aging guardian naga to live with them in the palace. On her deathbed, she beseeched her old friend to care for her son and his new queen. Nonotzale has done so, and is ever vigilant against threats to his young charges.

Oro Loroth, the Mountain King

(LE male dwarf Ftr13, Str 17, Con 21, Int 14)

Few villains dominate the imaginations of the peasants in the western Northlands like the legend of Oro Loroth, the Mountain King. The renegade dwarf-lord reigns from his nigh-invulnerable mountain fastness, raiding the nations of good at will, carrying off slaves and entire troves of stolen treasure.

Taller than the average dwarf, his body decorated with tattooed runes, and his soot-stained beard as black as charcoal, Loroth cuts a fearsome image. The Mountain King's army is a ferocious mix of renegade dwarves, monstrous humanoids, human mercenaries, and beasts. While far from a match for the legions of the Steel Overlord, the Mountain King has more than enough might to defend that which is his. There will come a time when Loroth oversteps his boundaries and draws the wrath of the Overlord, but until that day he raids the southwestern slope of the Ul Dominors, terrorizing the people of the Sylvan Downs and trading the souls of his captives to infernal beings in exchange for power and demonic allies.

King Oztahua

(NG male human Ari2/Ftr8, Str 16, Wis 16, Cha 16)

King Oztahua of the Xulmec city-state of Kaatlan favors pragmatism above all else. He is predisposed toward peaceful coexistence and open trade with his neighbors,

believing in the tenets of his goddess, Calchoti. But at the slightest provocation from the Chuzecs or untoward actions from folk he does not know, Oztahua is quick to consider bloodshed and the tenets of Coatlimict. While he favors peace, he would rather allow the death of a hundred foreigners to save one of his own.

Prester "Trapmaster" Ungart

(NG male dwarf Rog14, Dex 18, Int 17)

With lockpicks in hand, a worn axe slung over his back, and a crossbow at his side, Prester "Trapmaster" Ungart has forgotten more about traps, tricks, and puzzles than most dungeon delvers will ever know. A master at deciphering lost languages and hieroglyphs, Prester made a name for himself early in his career by surviving traps and ambushes with an almost-intuitive sense for danger. Nearing retirement, the dwarf continues to roam the Known Realms in search of ever greater challenges, sometimes relishing the trap more than the treasure. He has contributed his knowledge to the creation of a handful of dungeons (most notably the Thief Lord's Vault), but Prester's first and last love will forever be exploration, preferably with a great deal of risk and reward thrown in for good measure.

Raazt

(CE male scrag Sor7/Ftr3, Str 25, Con 23, Int 15, Cha 16)

Known among fearful sailors as the Scrag Scuttler, Raazt's name is near the top of the long list of pirates wanted dead or alive by the Criestine Imperial Navy. Though he's owned several galleys, Raazt's favored method of pirating came with a unique use of necromancy: attacking ships via the hollowed-out and animated corpse of an immense dire shark he named *Lesstra*. Raazt's sobriquet stemmed from his reviled strategy of punching through the hull of his victim's ship, then surging up with his men—humans and orc-kin, mostly—through the hold. Lord Raazt made a tradition out of personally devouring the captain of each unfortunate ship as it slowly sank into the sea. Getting on in years now, Raazt has retired from the trade, setting up in Dead Man's Cove and sharing the rulership of the Barrier Isles with Cozette LeRoux, whom he despises and intends to one day kill and eat. Raazt sells his necromancy secrets and occasionally hires out *Lesstra* to wizards he feels are worthy of her.

Once a lithe specimen like most aquatic trolls, Raazt's body has rounded out since retiring from active piracy. Among other gruesome accoutrements, he wears a barbed fisherman's net over his mottled gray skin which functions as a *cloak of resistance +2* and he always keeps his *+3 cutlass of icy burst* on hand. A black leather patch (an *amulet of proof against detection and location*) covers his destroyed right eye, the painful result of an enchanted acidic dagger wound that will not regenerate. The very few who've seen what lies beneath the patch report a melted, fleshy pit that exposes part of his skull. Finding and flaying alive the Siren (see Sirens of Pelagia in Chapter 5 of the Gazetteer) who blinded him remains one of Raazt's major goals. Any lead on her whereabouts often takes priority over any other plot.

Paranoid and cruel, Raazt is in a perpetually foul mood. As a creature from cold waters, he complains constantly about the temperature of the sea around the Barrier Isles, but knows that his lot as a Barrier Lord is preferable to the short and ultimately unrewarding lifestyle of his kind. His quasit familiar, Azt, always perches on Raazt's shoulder and often parrots back the words of visitors in a mocking tone.

Raquelle Clavet

(LG female human Ari2/Ftr10, Str 15, Con 16, Wis 15, Cha 15)

Charged with the defense of the Criestine Colonies from Xulmec aggression, Lieutenant Clavet is a steel-nerved fighter. Given the nickname "princess of the borderline" (though never spoken to her face), Clavet is unwilling to exhibit vulnerability as a warrior or a woman. Her strength at arms is rivaled only by her tongue and tempered by her sense of justice. Yet these virtues and faults are softened foremost by her love for the people in her protection. Clavet is not overly prejudiced against the Xulmec natives, but her zealous devotion to the crown and her Northland kin make her an uncompromising diplomat. A former Knight of the Sable March, Clavet was charged by Captain Sentri himself to handle border disputes with Xulmec on the colonial frontier.

A fixture of Ft. Montsiang now for several years, the Omian Pass has never been safer than it is on Clavet's watch. Her soldiers are well equipped and well trained to handle the aggressions of the Chuzec warriors, but the lieutenant is always willing to hire newcomers to clear the Pass from more monstrous denizens. Such dangerous work is better handled by versatile adventurers than her Criestine soldiers.

Raylen Durand

(LE male rakshasa Rog5, Dex 16, Con 16, Int 16, Cha 17)

The real Raylend Durand was a ruthless courtier from Archbridge who beseeched Lady Mortianna for the role

of Imperial viceroy of the Criestine Colonies. Impressed with his proposals and esteemed career, she had him murdered and replaced him with a trusted otherworldly cohort—the better to control the far-off Imperial colony.

Raj-nirav, a sadistic rakshasa, relishes his guise as the pompous Viceroy Durand. With appraising eyes fixed firmly upon the Southlands, he sends regular reports to Lady Mortianna and in turn she sees to some of his Northland interests. A thorn in his side is Acatzalan, the mayor of Voltigeur, and Raquelle Clavet, the militant commander of Ft. Montsiang, do-gooders he hopes to soon replace with two of his kin, newly arrived from the far east.

The false Raylen Durand wears an *amulet of proof against detection and location* to further conceal his identity, and he keeps a *ring of djinni calling*, delighting in ordering about the noble genie bound to its owner.

Sakda

(LN male brightvenom drakon Ari8, Int 17, Wis 15, Cha 15)

This elderly drakon is the current and longstanding lord of Kanthara. He is a pragmatic ruler, and despite the accusations of human sympathy made against him, Sakda works to boost the living conditions of the slums of Kanthara. Seeking to improve the quality of the slave stock benefits both the humans and the drakon.

Saley Lonesinger

(CG female halfling Ftr7/Rog7)

The stories that surround this renowned pirate hunter seldom portray her as the halfling she is. Nicknamed the Empyrean Terror by bards, the mere sight of her standard—a shattered skull and spyglass—sends most buccaneers retreating at full sail. Saley is unrelenting in her pursuit, however, and those guilty of piracy that do not surrender are slain without mercy. When face-to-face with Saley, her enemies discover that the Empyrean Terror is a mere three and a half feet tall—yet every inch of her is worth fearing.

As leader of the Sirens of Pelagia, Saley has made many enemies. She has personally waged several sea battles against Cozette LeRoux—vicious engagements, many of which only the red-haired piratess and the diminutive Siren have survived. Saley is good humored in her everyday life, but she takes pirate-hunting very seriously. She is often encountered in the company of clerics of Soleth, Pelagia, and Olidyra. The many lives Saley has taken—always unapologetically and in the name of the greater good—has left in the steely halfling a need for frequent

penance among the gods she adores. Likewise, she has lost many friends to the cutlasses of her chosen enemies.

Saley Lonesinger wears a tailored suit of *+3 leather armor of invulnerability* and wields a *+4 human bane rapier,* a weapon she is very careful to keep from her enemies' hands.

Saraas Helsborne, the Steel Overlord

(LG male dwarf Ari3/Ftr14, Str 16, Con 17, Wis 15, Cha 14)

The ruler of the dwarven Holdfast is a passionate dwarf with midnight-black hair and a beard woven with gold and platinum. A mere three hundred years old, Helsborne stands with one foot in the past while looking to the future. This ability to balance tradition and the changing needs of the bearded mountain folk has earned Helsborne the respect and admiration of all the dwarves of the North.

Holdfast armies hold the Ul Dominor Mountains against the advance of the Scourge, a fact that is not lost on the nobles of Crieste. Helsborne trades on his nation's place as the linchpin in the North's war against the Scourge, encouraging trade with the elves and nations of men. The sole chink in Helsborne's armor is the renegade dwarf known as the Mountain King. For reasons unknown to human and dwarven sages alike, Helsborne refuses to war against the Mountain King, instead permitting the tyrannical villain to lurk in the very shadows of Helsborne's Holdfast.

Senth Lavrousse

(NG male half-elf Rgr8, Str 15, Dex 16, Wis 16)

Outcast from the Blackbriar Quarter of Voltigeur because of his mixed blood, Senth Lavrousse turned to the wilds of the Eztenqui Jungle and found himself enamored of its spirits. His accomplishments and zeal in defending the environs of Feronte from the frequent dangers of the jungle earned him the title of mayor from Viceroy Durand. Senth only half-heartedly accepted the position, favoring the active role of town guardian to the role of politician. Nevertheless, the townsfolk obey his wishes, and the young womenfolk vie for his favor. Senth's heart, however, belongs to a dryad sorceress of the Eztenqui who knows the secrets of Mt. Icpitl.

Seremac Beldor, the Black Prince

(LE male human Ari4/Ftr8, Dex 17, Int 14, Cha 9)

The Black Prince of Amin Dor possesses a fierce temper. Though handsome, Beldor's acerbic bitterness drives away friends and family, leaving only foppish toadies hoping to earn gold by association. The prince bears a burning animosity toward his father, the good King Beldor, and does everything in his power to embarrass and shame the aging monarch. The Black Prince is a master of warcraft, having studied at the feet of great military veterans since he could speak, but prefers to do away with his foes through deception and guile.

Serpent Oracle

(N female medusa, Sor12)

A pariah among her kind, the Serpent Oracle is an enigmatic medusa named Vhonistryl who has shunned the company of evil creatures to offer her prophetic powers to those who can find her. Gifted with great prescience even at a young age, Vhonistryl perceived her own kind's murderous jealousy and escaped before the inevitable assassination. Since that day, long ago, she has been unable to foresee her own fate—only those of the pilgrims who come before her.

The Serpent Oracle can see deeply into the future. Yet she is uncertain of the gods' intent with her gift, so she offers her visitors only sparing glances into the future and keeps her words cryptic. She hides within the ruins of Cohuatlizon, praying before a shrine to Choranus, the Seer Father, for insight into her own future. Vhonistryl lives a lonely existence, slaying the envious intruders who would exploit her powers and finding occasional delight—aloof though it must be—in more amiable company. She suppresses her gaze attack frequently, relying on her sorcery more than her heritage to subdue opponents. Nevertheless, over the decades the city's promenade has accrued a vast number of unwilling statues.

Her only regular companionship is a small gang of stone giants who adore her and live on the outskirts of Cohuatlizon. Asking nothing of her for themselves, they have earned her trust and always assist her against her greatest enemies.

Shahriyel Jhek

(CE male human lich Wiz22, Int 30, Wis 20, Cha 24)

In ancient times, the chief advisor to the Sphinx Queen Ankharet of the Khonsurian Empire was a cunning human wizard called Shahriyel Jhek. The evil wizard dared to overstep his bounds one too many times with his queen, and for his arrogance Ankharet walled Shahriyel Jhek up within his own tower, a prisoner for all eternity.

But Shahriyel Jhek was not to be so easily defeated. Using the magicks available to him within his prison tower, Jhek cheated death by transforming himself into an undead monstrosity—a lich. Then luck chose to smile upon the horrid creature. A group of unwary explorers happened upon the wizard's tower, and in opening the gates to his prison, they inadvertently freed him. Jhek made his way back into the realms of the living, which had not seen the likes of his evil for many a year.

Eventually, Jhek wandered out of the desert sands and through the gates of Rhaz al-Khali. He immediately

slaughtered its rulers and assumed command of the city. Jhek has bent the will of the city to his aims, which is to discover the secrets of an ancient prophecy called *The Riddle of Darkest Qartepre*. Only Jhek knows the entirety of the prophecy, and he shares this with no one. Despite his hideous appearance—Jhek still wears the tarnished golden circlet and the black robes that mark his station as an advisor of the Sphinx Queen—he is a gifted speaker and charismatic figure, able to enthrall the masses of Rhaz al-Khali with his silver tongue and powerful spells.

Shatu-murrim

(LG female lammasu Clr7, Str 22, Int 17, Wis 20)

Born in the ruins of Coatopolan, Shatu-murrim is the matriarch of a family of lammasus allied with the paladins of the Miztlani. She personally guards the tombs of Cihuamiztli, the Golden Lady, and her own grandfather, the Naram-sin. Shatu-murrim gives counsel to the Knights of Gold and shares with them the wisdom she has gained from her Lostland visitations and her heavenly contacts, and she even teaches Draconic or Celestial to those willing to learn. Any who would harm her family will find the peaceful lammasu matron to be a vessel of divine wrath.

Sionala Khor

(NE, female half-elf, Bbn8/Drd8, Str 15, Int 14, Wis 17, Cha 17)

As the de facto ruler of the Valley of Xyr Muthal, Sionala Khor is perhaps one of the most powerful figures in all the Lostlands. The barbarian queen wields a mighty artifact, a staff known as the Soulbinder, and with that staff Sionala controls all the beasts within the valley. Dinosaurs, mammoths, primitive dragons—all sorts of mighty beasts obey every whim of the haughty but beautiful barbarian queen.

The true origins of Sionala Khor are unknown, although most sages believe that she may have once been a slave in the markets of Djeser al-Maqqara. Most creatures that know of her think of her as a good, kindly soul—a perfect queen ruling over a gentle paradise. This image is completely false, but it's one that Sionala Khor perpetuates nonetheless. In actuality, she is a cruel, cold despot, who cares nothing for the Valley of Xyr Muthal or its creatures … she only loves the treasures that they can provide for her. Sionala Khor plays the wide-eyed innocent fool with those poor souls she encounters, trying to take advantage of them as best she can—but once they are of no use to her, she cruelly disposes of them.

Sonechki

(CG female human Rog4/Wiz8, Dex 16, Int 18)

The daughter of a Criestine nobleman and a gypsy sorceress, Sonechki has never found peace in the Imperial courts or the wandering caravan of her mother's tribe. A bookish rogue and artful wizard, Sonechki spends most of her time seeking the identity of her father's murderer and the whereabouts of her estranged mother. She collects magical daggers and spells like a miser his gold coins.

Sonechki's best clue to finding her mother is the curious *staff of divination* that once belonged to the elusive gypsy woman. She searches the Northlands for leads, often employing adventuring companies to investigate locales too dangerous for her alone. Her only constant companion is her familiar, an arrogant and ambitious owl named Evvit who looks down his beak on everyone except Sonechki.

Sparkmaker

(CN male tiefling Sor11, Dex 18, Int 17, Cha 18)

A wandering tiefling with an identity crisis, Sparkmaker shuns his given name, choosing instead the nickname given to him by his gnomish master. At a glance, he resembles a nondescript half-elf—and does his best to remain inconspicuous—but up close one cannot miss the preternatural appeal to his eyes and the small, curling horns growing from his temples. His manners twitchy and his paranoia profound, Sparkmaker seldom trusts

anyone too much. Yet he frequently attaches himself to adventuring companies to search for a future that makes sense to him—and to run from his devilish heritage.

Sparkmaker favors electricity spells and *summon monster*. He possesses several *ioun stones* and makes frequent—and at times premature—use of his *+2 shock light crossbow*. Sparkmaker's truest friend is his familiar, a rat named Stin'Kki, who offers him sound advice and appraisals of exotic cheeses.

Tala Revalieth

(N female elf Drd10, Dex 16, Wis 18)

Displaced from Mirdar Forest by the orc hordes that overran it, the wild elf Tala Revalieth now walks the Northland forests to bring Ildavir's justice to those who abuse her children. Favoring animals more than humanoids, she is the friend of all beasts and an enemy to those who would harm them.

Her wheat-colored hair, soft blue eyes, and fair features do little to hide her frosty disposition from strangers—a fact strangely offset by the presence of her friend and animal companion, a people-loving brown bear named Mungo. Despite her ire, Tala is still an elf, delighting in beautiful art and the majesty of the natural world. When sharing her company, other elves find Tala unusually impatient but endlessly resourceful.

Tala puts her *+3 spectral longbow* and *+2 flaming scimitar* to good use against aberrations and undead who intrude in the Northland forests.

Tarkhan Khurzog, Scourge of the North

(LE male half-fiend/ogre-mage Ftr12/Sor9, Str 24, Con 20, Int 17, Wis 14, Cha 19)

The fearsome overlord of the Scourge is a demon-blooded orge-mage of unmatched ambition and cruelty. The unholy offspring of a minor demon and an ogre-mage witch, Khurzog is a master at pitting the nations of the North against one another. By turning the suspicious, untrusting natures of kings to his advantage, the Tarkhan and his armies marched through the Northlands like a storm, toppling ancient nations and razing whole cities for their pleasure.

The kings of the civilized lands look to the North, praying that the Tarkhan's greed is sated, all the while knowing that the next war is not a matter of if, but when. For now Khurzog patiently bides his time in Azmog-Azmennum, studying his enemies and plotting his next campaign. The demon-ogre can afford to be patient: Each day the might of his armies grows and the courage of his enemies weakens.

Terhalien Raalt

(CE male drow Ftr6/Rog6/Asn4, Str 14, Dex 18, Int 16)

This skilled assassin is perhaps one of the most notorious killers on Áereth. Devilishly handsome, this fiendish drow is wanted in at least twelve different kingdoms for his murderous exploits. Although able to kill in any numbers of ways, Terhalien prefers a dagger tipped with an extremely rare poison, one purportedly made from tarrasque blood. The effect of the poison is always fatal and extremely slow-acting, putting its victims in exquisite agony for days before finishing them. The poison fits Terhalien's personality perfectly, as he kills for sport. The gold collected for killing his victims is merely a bonus. Sarcastic and sharp of wit, Terhalien is said to be quicker with his tongue than with his dagger.

Most recently, Terhalien was wanted for the killings of a Morenan duchess, who was flung off the parapets of the royal palace. His whereabouts since then are unknown. If not in a brothel or otherwise in the company of a beautiful woman, he typically can be found in various thieves' guilds, always searching for information, or at least for a situation to use to his advantage. Although he typically works alone, Terhalien is not above teaming up with others. Such "partners," however, rarely live to collect their reward.

Tsurugi Saku

(LG male dwarf Ftr12, Str 17, Con 16, Wis 15, Cha 12)

Also known as the Rock of Raiju, this venerable dwarf is a ferocious warrior and a trusted advisor, serving as a confidante for the past four Taijin kings. Tsurugi Saku is believed to be well over four hundred years old, ancient by even dwarf standards, yet the spry old warrior is still able to beat warriors half his age in duels. He faithfully acts as guardian of the magic seal for the Merchant House of Bakar Joseon each and every day.

In his earlier days, Saku personally led many of the dwarven assaults against their goblin enemies during the Seppuku Cleansing. Far better than any ancient map, Sake personally knows every twist and turn of the vast labyrinth of passageways that run beneath the Herrenia Mountains. He also knows the locations of every lair that ever existed in the mountains, from the largest giant caves to the smallest kobold warrens. A stern but kindly soul, Tsurugi Saku glady helps anyone who treats him with courtesy and respect.

Emperor Vithoon

(CE male darkvenom drakon Wiz15, Str 16, Con 14, Int 21, Wis 21, Cha 19)

Venerable and cruel, the Emperor of Ssorlang has coiled about the Emerald Throne for many long years, and they have taken their toll. Stricken with senility and recurring diseases that his attendants cannot cure for much longer, Vithoon's death is near. He usually defers to the decisions of his son, Prince Zurasak, but moments of lucidity suggest that the old drakon has a few more schemes to hatch—most of which do not include his son.

Volei Ojar

(CE male half-orc Ftr7/Rog6/Asn3, Str 15, Dex 17, Con 16, Int 14)

A slim, tusk-jawed half-orc with hard eyes and a quick blade, Volei Ojar is also one of the North's most wanted assassins—a fact he rues every day. Since the botched assassination attempt on King Beldor two years ago, Ojar has been on the run. The attempts on his own life tapered off after Ojar took up service with the Mountain King, but the half-orc is too cagey to believe that all the bounty hunters have abandoned the hunt.

Ojar is always on the lookout for young assassins to use as pawns, and passes along jobs to those who show promise. Despite his eagerness to rebuild a circle of assassins, the half-orc watches his associates and servants with the jaded eye of a hired killer, knowing that

with enough gold, anyone can be bought.

Xolatl

(LE male human Clr16, Str 17, Wis 18, Cha 18)

Known as the Fire Priest, Xolatl is the king and chief spiritual leader of the city-state of Chuzec. He rules the city with intimidation and frightening piety, his every edict said to be the will of Tlachinozal, the Scorched God. Those who question his orders find themselves—and their families—bound to the sacrificial alters of the Burning Temple.

Xolatl wears a suit of *+3 banded mail* edged with obsidian armor spikes and adorned with red phoenix feathers. The fearless priest wields a *+3 adamantine flaming burst battle axe* and a *+2 shortbow of distance*.

Yaracen Eoth

(LN male human Ftr9, Str 15, Dex 18, Int 17)

Although blind since the day he was born, Yaracen Eoth is a skilled and graceful fighter. Once one of the best pit fighters in all of Djeser al-Maqqara, his freedom was purchased in the slave markets there some thirty-odd years ago by a masked bidder. That bidder turned out to be one of the silent servants of the white apes of Tharnaka, who trained Yaracen Eoth to be his successor. When not on the Isles of Tharnaka, Yaracen Eoth is on the great ships traveling from the Isles to some other destination on Áereth usually conducting business on behalf of the white apes that are his true masters.

Yaracen Eoth is the guide that many merchants and other travelers seek when heading to Tharnaka. Though he barely speaks above a whisper, the blind, grizzled warrior is slightly more forthcoming about the secrets of the Isles of Tharnaka than most of his blind brethren. He is also cryptic when supplying answers to questions, and can play the part of the helpless, ignorant blind man well—however, he is a sharp and shrewd tactician, and has free rein to negotiate on the white apes' behalf. He also appears to be their most trusted servant, with access to nearly everything in all the cities of the Isles. He also is the only servant known to be able to change the minds of his ape masters, and his ability to mediate is legendary. More than once, hostilities between rival merchants visiting the Isles have been quelled by a few stern but soothing words from the blind warrior.

Yollotl

(CE male darkvenom drakon Ari3/Wiz7, Int 18, Cha 16)

Yollotl is the sadistic and collected lord of the city of Xincayot, and a strong supporter of Ssorlang's Amotuans. He spends most of his time organizing expeditions into the ruins of old Zimala, hoping to increase the influence of his faction with elder magic. Yollotl eschews his own sorcery in favor of the legion of bodyguards, and gives each of his servants who displeases him a single chance for reparation. Failing that, they are impaled, along with enemies of the state, and made to decorate the shoreline outside of the city walls.

King Zacatal

(N male human Ftr10, Str 18, Dex 17, Wis 15)

King Zacatal is the fair-minded monarch of the Xulmec city-state of Maras. In times of war, he personally takes to the field and leads his scouts in guerilla warfare, allowing nothing to endanger his people or the sacred cenotes they guard.

Prince Zurasak

(CE male darkvenom drakon Ftr5/Sor6/Eldritch Knight3, Str 21, Con 17, Int 20, Wis 20, Cha 18)

One of the most dreaded drakon in the Known Realms, Prince Zurasak is the true power behind Ssorlang's Emerald Throne. He advises the venerable Emperor Vithoon, forestalling his father's death as long as he can. Shirking his official duties as prince, Zurasak tours the breadth of Ssorlang frequently and has been known to personally lead raids against the Xulmec city-states, ensuring a villainous reputation long before taking the throne himself.

Prince Zurasak wields a vile artifact known as *Shadowcurve*, an intelligent *+5 unholy scimitar* forged of shadowstone. He often shuns the use of his natural magic in favor of personally slaying his enemies with the blade. The young drakon has foiled numerous coups against his father and looks forward to executing those who rise against him when he is Emperor. Such single-minded pursuits, however, will likely keep Ssorlang from long-term expansion in his coming reign—an ironic blessing for the Southlands.

Chapter 6
Zero-Level Characters

Few roleplaying experiences are more satisfying than playing a character from unschooled youth, to champion, to epic hero. Every culture has its legends of foundlings and orphans, maturing into mighty warriors, rogues, wizards, and prophets. These are the roots of epic fantasy—and of fantasy roleplaying.

Most d20 games assume that characters begin at first level, armed with the knowledge, weapons, armor, and spells necessary to make their mark upon the world. But in ongoing, living campaigns, players often wonder what took place *before* their characters stepped foot on the road to glory. Bereft of powerful special abilities, feats, and skills, 0-level PCs must survive by their wit, cunning, and sheer courage alone. Adventures set during this time can be some of the most exciting and dangerous of a PC's career, with danger lurking around every corner and the question of life or death hanging on the throw of a die.

Playing a PC from 0-level also gives a character the added depth of a personalized back-story, supported by unique skills and abilities. An adept might go on to become an infamous rogue who uses his old spells to lend him an edge over the city watch. An expert weaponsmith might become a fearsome paladin who insists on crafting his own unique weapons, equipment, and armor for use in his crusade against evil. Perhaps before being adopted by the church, the noble cleric was a cutpurse, and to this day the pious soul keeps his old skills in practice … just in case.

How did the elven knight acquire his master's sword, the same blade that drives him to vanquish evil? Why is the rogue committed to thwarting oppression in every form? From what ruin did the wizard acquire the magic staff, and does it really contain the soul of an ancient dragon? Why, in a world of deadly challenges and vicious foes, does a meek peasant take up weapons and stand against the press of darkness?

The answers to these questions, and more, are the adventures of 0-level characters.

Zero-level Player Characters

Zero-level player characters begin with 1 level in an NPC class, but differ from NPCs in that PCs are destined to become heroes. An NPC might spend his entire life gaining levels in Warrior, but a PC Warrior will soon become a Fighter, quickly outstripping her common, non-heroic peers. This can often invite jealousies and vicious rivalries when the smith's daughter returns home, now a celebrated paladin of the realm.

A 0-level PC chooses an NPC class—Adept, Aristocrat, Expert, or Warrior—and begins with –1,000 XP. After gaining one thousand experience points, reaching 0 XP, the PC gains a level and advances to one of the regular PC classes: Barbarian, Cleric, Druid, Fighter, Paladin, Ranger, Rogue, Wizard, or Sorcerer. One level in an NPC class never counts against a PC for purposes of multiclassing (see *PHB*).

The NPC classes available to PCs are outlined in detail in the *DMG* and are summarized here for quick reference.

First-Level Adept

Gifted in the ways of magic, yet unschooled in its mastery, adepts are the witchdoctors, mystics, healers, herbalists, and shamans of Áereth. While NPC adepts grow to become wise men, elders and sages, heroic adepts quickly rise to become champions of their chosen cause, serving a deity as a devoted cleric, or defending the spirits of nature as woodland druids.

An adept casts divine spells, which are drawn from the adept spell list. Like a cleric, an adept must choose and prepare her spells in advance. Each adept must choose a time each day at which she must spend an hour in quiet contemplation or supplication to regain her daily allotment of spells. Time spent resting has no effect on whether an adept can prepare spells. In addition, she receives bonus spells per day if she has a high Wisdom score.

Apprentices and Mediums

Not all adepts advance to become clerics or druids. At their discretion, GMs may permit PC adepts to be apprentices (wizards in training) or mediums (untutored sorcerers). Both sub-classes follow all the rules applying to adepts, with the following exceptions:

Apprentice: An apprentice's key attribute is Intelligence, not Wisdom. To prepare or cast a spell, an apprentice must have an Intelligence score equal to at least 10 + the spell level. The Difficulty Class for a saving throw against an apprentice's spell is 10 + the spell level + the apprentice's Intelligence modifier.

In addition, she receives bonus spells per day if she has a high Intelligence score.

An apprentice must study her spellbook each day to prepare her spells. She cannot prepare any spell not recorded in her spellbook.

An apprentice begins play with a spellbook containing all 0-level apprentice spells, plus three 1st-level spells of her choice. For each point of Intelligence bonus the apprentice has, the spellbook holds one additional 1st-level spell of her choice.

Medium: A medium's key attribute is Charisma, not Wisdom. To prepare or cast a spell, a medium must have a Charisma score equal to at least 10 + the spell level. The Difficulty Class for a saving throw against a medium's spell is 10 + the spell level + the medium's Charisma modifier.

In addition, she receives bonus spells per day if she has a high Charisma score.

A medium can cast any spell she knows without preparing it ahead of time. A medium's selection of spells is extremely limited. A medium begins play knowing four 0-level spells and two 1st-level spells of her choice.

Apprentice and Medium Spell List

0-level: *acid splash, dancing lights, daze, flare, light, ghost sound, touch of fatigue, mage hand, mending, message, open/close, prestidigitation, ray of frost, read magic, resistance*.

1st-level: *alarm, burning hands, cause fear, color spray, comprehend languages, detect secret doors, disguise self, expeditious retreat, feather fall, grease, hold portal, hypnotism, protection from chaos, protection from evil, protection from good, protection from law, obscuring mist, shield, sleep, unseen servant, ventriloquism*.

To prepare or cast a spell, an adept must have a Wisdom score equal to at least 10 + the spell level. The Difficulty Class for a saving throw against an adept's spell is 10 + the spell level + the adept's Wisdom modifier.

Each adept has a particular holy symbol (as a divine focus) depending on the adept's magical tradition.

Hit Points: 6 + Con modifier

Base Attack: +0

Starting Wealth: 2d4 x 10 gp

Fort Save: +0 **Ref Save:** +0 **Will Save:** +2

Class Skills: Concentration (Con), Craft (Int), Handle Animal (Cha), Heal (Wis), Knowledge (all skills taken individually) (Int), Profession (Wis), Spellcraft (Int), and Survival (Wis).

Skill Points: (2 + Int modifier) x4.

Weapon and Armor Proficiency: Adepts are skilled with all simple weapons. Adepts are not proficient with any type of armor nor with shields.

Spells per Day: 0 – 3; 1st – 1.

Adept Spell List

0-level: *create water, cure minor wounds, detect magic, ghost sound, guidance, light, mending, purify food and drink, read magic, touch of fatigue*.

1st-level: *bless, burning hands, cause fear, command, comprehend languages, cure light wounds, detect chaos, detect evil, detect good, detect law, endure elements, obscuring mist, protection from chaos, protection from evil, protection from good, protection from law, sleep*.

First-Level Aristocrat

Aristocrats are the nobles of Áereth, the privileged upper class with access to wealth, tutoring, and training. Squires, princes, scions of merchant-lords, and royal heirs are all aristocrats.

Simply because a character is born of royal or noble blood does not mean that the character can expect to have all his needs and wishes met. While aristocrats may receive preferential treatment by merchants and their ilk, they will also be expected to pay inflated prices. Similarly, many noble families send their scions out into the world, permitting the fledgling aristocrats to return only after they have proven their worth.

Hit Points: 8 + Con modifier

Starting Wealth: 6d4 x 10 gp

Base Attack: +0

Fort Save: +0 **Ref Save:** +0 **Will Save:** +2

Class Skills: Appraise (Int), Bluff (Cha), Diplomacy (Cha), Disguise (Cha), Forgery (Int), Gather Information (Cha), Handle Animal (Cha), Intimidate (Cha), Knowledge (all skills taken individually) (Int), Listen (Wis), Perform (Cha), Ride (Dex), Sense Motive (Wis), Speak Language, Spot (Wis), Swim (Str), and Survival (Wis).

Skill Points: (4 + Int modifier) x4.

Weapon and Armor Proficiency: The aristocrat is proficient in the use of all simple and martial weapons and with all types of armor and shields.

First-Level Expert

Blacksmiths, locksmiths, cutpurses, woodland scouts, and trackers are all experts in their chosen realm. Many occupations fall under the designation of expert. The class is highly versatile, permitting characters to focus and excel in specific areas of study.

Any occupation that is not explicitly a spellcaster, noble, or warrior is likely an expert. NPC experts grow to become master craftsmen and specialists in their fields, but PC experts broaden their fields of study, and thereby become even more skilled and talented because of their understanding of the larger world.

Hit Points: 6 + Con modifier

Starting Wealth: 3d4 x 10 gp

Base Attack: +0

Fort Save: +0 **Ref Save:** +0 **Will Save:** +2

Class Skills: The expert can choose any ten skills to be class skills.

Skill Points: (6 + Int modifier) x4.

Weapon and Armor Proficiency: The expert is proficient in the use of all simple weapons and with light armor but not shields.

First-Level Warrior

Warriors are the mainstays of Áereth. Brave and courageous, they stand watch atop high towers, hunt stags through deep woods, protect the common citizen, and serve in the king's army. Soldiers, watchmen, slave-gladiators, and huntsmen are all warriors.

Warriors are natural leaders, especially during times of danger and strife. In times of peace, excessive warriors can become a liability. Forced to seek their fortunes on the open road, some turn to banditry, while a select few train to become fighters, excelling in the arts of war.

Hit Points: 8 + Con modifier

Starting Wealth: 4d4 x 10 gp

Base Attack: +1

Fort Save: +2 **Ref Save:** +0 **Will Save:** +0

Class Skills: Climb (Str), Handle Animal (Cha), Intimidate (Cha), Jump (Str), Ride (Dex), and Swim (Str).

Skill Points: (2 + Int modifier) x 4.

Weapon and Armor Proficiency: The warrior is proficient in the use of all simple and martial weapons and all armor and shields.

Character Backgrounds

Every PC has a background, a story that explains his core value and beliefs. Backgrounds are much more than occupations, but the following list can provide inspirations for a character's background, along with suggested NPC classes. This register is in no way exhaustive nor could it ever be; a PC's history should be limited only by the player's imagination and the GM's whim.

The classes listed in parentheses should be taken as suggestions, not rules. Exceptions will always exist, and should be encouraged—especially in support of a PC's unique story.

Alchemist (Expert)

Animal Trainer (Expert)

Armorer (Expert)

Astrologer (Expert, Adept)

Blacksmith (Expert)

Brigand (Expert, Warrior)

Caravan Guard (Warrior)

Confidence Artist (Expert)

Cutpurse (Expert)

Entertainer (Expert)

Foundling (any[1])

Fortune-teller (Expert, Adept)

Gambler (Expert)

Gravedigger (Expert[2])

Guild Beggar (Expert[2])

Healer (Adept)

Herbalist (Adept)

Herder (Expert[2])

Hired Muscle (Warrior)

Hunter (Warrior, Expert)

Indentured Servant (Expert[2])

Jeweler (Expert)

Locksmith (Expert)

Logger (Expert[2])

Mercenary (Warrior)

Minstrel (Expert)

Noble (Aristocrat)

Outlaw (Expert, Warrior)

Orphan (any[1])

Royal (Aristocrat)

Savage (Warrior, Expert)

Scribe (Expert, Adept)

Scout (Expert)

Serf (Expert[2])

Shaman (Adept)

Slave (Warrior, Expert)

Smuggler (Expert)

Soldier (Warrior)

Squire (Aristocrat, Warrior)

Street Fighter (Warrior)

Trapper (Expert)

Yeoman (Expert[2])

Watchman (Warrior)

Weaponsmith (Expert)

Weaver (Expert)

Witchdoctor (Adept)

Woodcutter (Expert, Warrior)

Wizard's Apprentice (Adept[3])

Notes:

[1] Both orphans and foundlings adopt classes suitable to their foster families. An orphan taken in by the Thieves Guild will be predisposed to becoming an Expert with a focus in Rogue skills, whereas a foundling adopted by a monastery may show talents as an Adept or Warrior.

[2] With many backgrounds, the NPC class of Commoner in the *DMG* seems a more logical choice. Of the NPC classes, however, Commoner is the weakest, and in these instances it is best to go with Expert, reflecting a PC's exceptional interests and talents.

[3] With the GM's permission, Adepts can also be Apprentices or Mediums. See sidebar above for details.

Zero-Level Adventures

Adventures as a 0-level character can be among the most thrilling that a PC will ever have. Combats are deadly and often decided with the first blow. Without careful consideration by the GM, a string of bad rolls can turn a CR 1 wandering monster encounter into a game-stopping TPK (Total Party Kill). Players with 0-level PCs have to act with caution, creativity, and cunning, frequently coming up with unique solutions to challenges that higher-level PCs would never deign to try. Ad hoc traps, improvised weapons, and dirty tactics are often the only way a party can survive. Whereas stronger parties can rely on their superior armor and hit points to give the PCs time to think, a party of 0-level PCs has to be prepared and ready to act at a moment's notice, or else suffer the consequences.

This constant, on-edge tension is what makes low-level campaigns so enjoyable, but GMs must tread with care.

There are a number of ways to subtly shift the odds in the PCs favor, while still encouraging creative play. As in *DCC #0: Legends Are Made, Not Born*, PCs might overhear a monster before actually encountering it. Variants on this theme include coming across a beast's tracks, encountering the bleached bones of its previous victims, or simply catching the scent of its foul lair. Any of these warning signs will serve as cues for PCs to be on their guard. Of course, if PCs elect to disregard all precautions, their fate is their own!

Similarly, players should be encouraged to use cunning to overcome superior forces. There is no reason to duke it out, toe-to-toe with the ogre, when a rock dropped from the cave's entrance can do the work for you. Similarly, PCs might take the time to construct deadfalls, pit traps, and the like.

Finally, intelligent monsters might elect to take the PCs prisoner instead of slaying them outright. Captured PCs can be sold as slaves or simply reserved to be eaten at a later date. The opportunity to escape from captors, sans weapons or armor, is a challenge worthy of any hero!

Experience Point Awards for 0-Level Characters

PC Level	CR 1/2	CR 1	CR 2	CR 3	CR 4
0	200	400	800	1,200	2,000

Campaign Hooks

Zero-level adventures need not be world-spanning affairs. Simply learning to hunt or fight or acquiring a certain rare spell can become exciting adventures. Often, young heroes serve masters who may send them on challenging errands designed to tutor naïve students in the ways of the world. Having the entire party serving a single master is an excellent way to convince PCs to work together toward a single goal.

Zero-level adventures also present a great opportunity to introduce recurring villains. These arrogant foes are quick to disregard the PCs as nothing but nuisances, setting up rivalries and enmities that can stretch on for years or even decades.

Villains need not be powerful to be memorable. Whereas a higher-level PC might beat a dozen orcs in a battle, to a party of 0-level characters a single orc, hobgoblin, kobold, or goblin can be a terrifying foe. This gives a GM the chance to personalize the opponent, creating a more noteworthy encounter. Physical affects, unique fighting styles, unusual arms and armor can all make a common foe uncommon.

With this in mind, take inspiration from or use one of the following plot hooks as a seed for your campaign:

The Old Man of the Wood: The characters are the servants of Nymoren the White, a wizened mage who lives in a half-ruined tower deep in the Blackbriar Wood. Some of the PCs may be talented apprentices that have been adopted by the old mage, while others are simply the children of servants and were born into his service. Nymoren keeps close watch over his beloved woods and sends his young wards on errands to acquire exotic spell components, rescue the wizard's hapless animal companions, fend off the predations of goblins and kobolds, and perform quests on the old mage's behalf.

Tales of the Canting Crew: The characters are street urchins, beggars, and petty thieves, serving Obo the Beggarmaster. A wicked and corpulent taskmaster with an endless capacity for cruelty and greed, Obo makes certain to keep his wards under his thumb, placing extra pressure on those that show promise. Warriors will be tasked as hired thugs and muscle, experts will trained in the ways of the rogue, adepts will be carefully groomed—and all will be constantly watched for signs of treachery. For all his fiendish ways, Obo makes certain to protect his own, and may go to war with other lords of the underworld in defense of his charges. Adventures can range from petty thievery, to enforcing the Beggarmaster's street edicts, to collecting his tithes, to finally escaping from Obo's sweaty clutches.

Knights of the Realm: The characters are the squires, grooms, assistants, and spearmen of the solemn and virtuous Sir Kameron, Knight Errant of the Lance. Sir Kameron's love was kidnapped by an evil baron seven years ago and now the knight travels the Northlands in search of her. The lovelorn knight is dogged by assassins, evil knights, and foes that would besmirch his honor and lure the good knight into disgrace. Sir Kameron uses the PCs to accomplish what he cannot, going places where he would be noticed, and defending him against all comers while the knight searches the Known Realms for his lady. Adventures could include recovering the knight's stolen sword in time for a tournament, foiling attempts to frame him as a wicked ne'er-do-well, tracking down leads to his lost lady, and thwarting the endless plots of

Mentors

For many GMs and players, it may be a stretch to imagine peasants delving into a goblin lair and emerging, mere days later, as accomplished adventurers boasting of new feats, spells, and skills. Mentors, experts who train PCs in their new classes, can serve to bridge this gap, taking the PCs under their wings and tutoring them in the ways of adventuring.

Any NPC with at least one level in the class the PC wishes to adopt can serve as a mentor. But time spent studying with mentors need not be time wasted for players. For while a mentor may guide the PC along the proper path, nothing can take the place of actual experience. In this way, mentors can best serve as plot hooks, sending the adventurers scurrying off on missions, errands and quests, each challenge designed to test the PCs in their newfound roles.

For PCs that truly dedicate themselves to their studies, GMs should consider awarding PCs a one-time bonus of 1d4 skill points, to be allotted to specialties of the mentor.

the 0-level servants of a rival knight. Traveling with Sir Kameron permits the PCs to visit vast swaths of the North, where every day sees another kingdom and every night reveals another intrigue.

Of Kith and Kin: The Baron is dead and his ancient elven castellan, Essech Ggeredna, scours the lands for the new rulers. Regrettably the Baron had no direct heirs, so obscure bloodlines must be sought out, and the collected heirs resemble nothing so much as a band of uneducated rapscallions, rogues, mercenaries, and wild mages. Nevertheless, the PCs have indeed inherited a small barony placed deep within the wilds of the North, and now it is their task to keep it. This will require quickly mastering the skills necessary to lead a small, isolated community. Predators ranging from wolves to goblins and worse threaten the townsfolk, false heirs lay claim to the throne, and—worst of all—the true seat of the barony is in ruins, home to fearsome monsters and dungeons of untold depths. Who was the old baron and why were his heirs sought out … four hundred years after his death?

Pawns of the Slavelord: During the Fall of Leherti, untold numbers of Lehertians were captured and sold into slavery. The PCs begin their adventures as slaves in the care of Mordeng Skoloth, a wicked slavelord based in the city of Freeport. Mordeng delights in depraved blood sports, and has a special fondness for gladiator combat. The enslaved PCs in his stable are regularly forced to fight wild animals, monstrous humanoids, and even other slaves. Yet the intrigue of Freeport reaches to every segment of the population, so it isn't long before the PCs are thrust directly into the heart of the shadow war between Mordeng and his rivals. The PCs are forced to decide between helping Mordeng against his foes (and earning the foul man's gratitude) or defying his orders and suffering the slavelord's wrath (or even worse, the vengeance of his triumphant rivals).

Final Note: NPCs and 0-level PCs

It can be tempting for GMs to introduce powerful NPCs into the lives of the characters, such as knights and wizards who are always on hand to rescue the PCs when the going gets rough. This could easily overshadow a group of 0-level characters, turning them into the supporting cast for the GM's own band of heroes.

In these cases, remember the golden rule: No matter how weak they may be, the PCs are the heroes of the story. Even during a nation-shattering war, there is enough smaller-scale action for them. In this case, the war would simply provide the backdrop and stage setting for the PCs' adventures.

Áereth is a *world* full of powerful beings, but the *game* is about the PCs. Players want to play, not watch the GM's pet NPCs act out their lives like a historical drama.

Chapter 7
Paths of Adventure

Adventures in the DCC line are designed to be setting neutral, even within the world of Áereth. Every GM should feel comfortable removing the iconic *Dungeon Crawl Classics #1: Idylls of the Rat King* from the humble town of Silverton and placing the adventure wherever it will serve their own campaign the best. As always, GMs should tailor the world to suit their own designs and their group's enjoyment. Every other concern comes second.

Of course, that's all fine if you are an old hand at the game and know precisely the sort of campaign you'd like to run. But with over thirty adventures to choose from, where does an intrepid new GM begin?

Never fear! For those who seek guidance in the ever-expanding world of the Dungeon Crawl Classics, or for those sadistic GMs who must simply roll for *everything*, we present the Adventure Paths: series of modules loosely organized by level, location and theme, and which can serve as narratives to aid GMs in planning their PCs' careers as adventurers.

Note that these paths serve only as guidelines. GMs should feel free to adjust them as necessary for their wicked purposes. Flesh out the skeleton, add your own adventures, make the PCs lords of their own realms, and then lay waste to those kingdoms with armies of wicked monsters – in short, make the world your own!

To begin a campaign, choose your favorite low-level DCC and follow the subsequent titles in the path. Or, if you are truly willing, brave and brazen enough to throw caution to the wind, roll a d12.

If the result is 1-4, go to Adventure Path 1. If the result is 5-8, go to Adventure Path 2. If the result is 9-12, go to Adventure Path 3.

Adventure Path 1: West to Empire

Levels	Adventure
0	**DCC #35A: Halls of the Minotaur:** Humble villagers armed with farm tools venture into the Thornswild Forest to rescue a fallen paladin. There they uncover the ruins of a long-forgotten citadel, a tribe of ferocious kobolds, and Toth-Ror, a deadly minotaur bent on the PCs' destruction.
1-2	**DCC #29: Lair of the White Salamander:** Travelling south, the PCs (now aspiring heroes) come upon the sinking city of Thelport. There they discover a series of sea caves, where they battle their way past crazed cultists to the source of the city's plight: a horrible giant salamander gifted with wicked genius. Having saved the people of Thelport, the PCs can continue their travels west, or catch a ship south to Porthmeor (go to Adventure Path 1A).
1-3	**DCC #1: Idylls of the Rat King:** The PCs press on to Silverton, where a small mining community is being threatened by a wererat menace.
4-6	**DCC #27: Revenge of the Rat King:** The PCs, having deposed the Rat King, now suffer his wrath beneath the streets of Soulgrave. Escaping his clutches, they put an end to his wicked reign.
7-8	**DCC #5: Aerie of the Crow God:** Now heroes in Crieste, the PCs are summoned before Captain Sentri, Master of the Sable March. The Captain awards the PCs titles befitting their class and rank and tells them of the costal hamlet of Carnelloe, where dark secrets work to conceal an ancient tragedy. The Captain beseeches the PCs to act as his agents and investigate the lingering evil.

7-9 **DCC #19: The Volcano Caves:** Recognizing the might of her enemy's agents, the wicked Vizier of Crieste orders the PCs north to investigate the strange rumors surrounding mysterious Mount Rolnith, hoping that the PCs die beneath the dormant volcano. As insurance, the Vizier sends two of her finest assassins to finish what the mountain cannot. There, in the abandoned study of a long vanished wizardress, the PCs find a map leading to...

10 **DCC #30: Vault of the Dragon Kings:** Leaving the ruined Mount Rolnith, the PCs venture deeper into the Frosteye Mountains, in search of the legendary Vault of the Dragon Kings.

9-11 **DCC #12: The Blackguard's Revenge:** Returning triumphant from the Vault, the PCs are met by Khau the Red, magician in service of the Captain of the Sable March. The Cloister of the Ordocar, a sister order to the Knights of the Sable March, is under attack by an army of undead. Can the PCs reach the monastery in time to save the order?

11-13 **DCC #12.5: Iron Crypt of the Heretics:** Though the Cloister of the Ordocar has been saved, the root of the undead army must still be dealt a final blow. Tracking the army back to the Iron Crypt of the Heretics, the PCs must do battle with a nigh-invulnerable menace.

15 **DCC #13: Crypt of the Devil Lich:** The Ebon Egg destroyed, the PCs deliver the Iron Crypt's magical keys to the Monastery of the Dawning Sun. Upon their arrival, they realize that a horrible tragedy has taken place....

Adventure Path 1A: Wild Rovers

Levels Adventure

1-3 **DCC #24: Legend of the Ripper:** The PCs arrive in exotic Porthmeor, only to find the city locked in a grip of terror. The ghost of an ancient fiend has seemingly risen to stalk the city streets. Can the young heroes put the ghost to rest?

4-6 **DCC #35B: The Thief Lord's Vault:** The PCs continue their travels by sea, following the coast west to Punjar. There, in the city's shadowy bazaars, the adventurers catch word of a fabled treasure vault hidden beneath Punjar's grime-stained cobblestones. Investigations prove fruitful, and the PCs discover the entrance to one of the richest treasure vaults in all the Known World. Eluding the Thief Lord's cunning traps, the PCs tumble through a misty green portal to far-flung Voltigeur...

6-8 **DCC #16: Curse of the Emerald Cobra:** ...where the PCs learn of a mysterious artifact called Omihuictli – the Bone Blade, an enchanted bastard sword rumored to have been created from the leg bones of an ancient black dragon. The sword is said to rest in the heart of an extinct volcano, Mount Icpitl.

10-12 **DCC #4: Bloody Jack's Gold:** Sailing home from their savage encounter with the Emerald Cobra, the PCs' ship is blown off course to an island that doesn't appear on any map. One of the sailors recognizes the island from the *Ballad of Bloody Jack*. Investigating, the PCs discover the maze Jack built to protect the greatest hoard of his long and blood-soaked career.

12-14 **DCC #21: Assault on Strormbringer Castle:** Returning to civilization at last, the PCs sail into the town of Argalis, only to discover the town in ruins. Three hurricane-strength storms have struck in as many weeks, sent by a wicked storm giant intent on punishing the town. The townsfolk turn to the PCs. Can the heroes prevail against the Stormbringer?

14-16 **DCC #22: The Stormbringer Juggernaut:** After thanking the heroes for their assistance in defeating Stozari, Lord McDurmott, leader of Argalis, calls them back a week later with disturbing news. There are reports from the distant island of Cairvos of a gigantic warship under construction, led by a Stormbringer storm giant. He hires them once again, sending the heroes to vanquish the renewed Stormbringer threat.

Adventure Path 2: Lords of the Kingdom

Levels Adventure

0 **DCC #0: Legends are Made, not Born:** An ogre is terrorizing the town of Dundraville. Six brave citizens, mere peasants, band together with a plan to put an end to the evil ogre's villainy!

1 **DCC #2: Lost Vault of Tsathzar Rho:** The triumphant commoners, now adventurers, start on the long road to the heart of the Empire, where they will seek their fortunes. The would-be heroes stop for the night at the settlement of Hadler's Gap, where they hear curious tales of

once-peaceful kobolds and an ogre in the nearby hills. The PCs find their reputation as "Ogre Slayers" has preceded them. Will they live up to the stories?

1-2 **DCC #29: Well of the Worm:** Resuming their travels south, the PC come across a war-ravaged village plagued by the legacy of wars past. The elders beseech the PCs to put an end to the horrors.

1-3 **DCC #1: Idylls of the Rat King:** The PCs finally reach the capital of Archbridge, where tales of their heroic exploits have already reached people of power. The Captain of the Sable March offers the PCs their first mission for the crown: root out the goblin menace that has been plaguing the silver caravans from Silverton.

4-6 **DCC #27: Revenge of the Rat King:** Having successfully defended the people of Silverton, the PCs find themselves the target of the Rat King's wrath. In a carefully wrought trap, the PCs are lured beneath the streets of Soulgrave and into the clutches of the Rat King!

7-8 **DCC #5: Aerie of the Crow God:** Back in Archbridge, the PCs are given a hero's welcome, along with a handsome reward and commission from the Captain of the Sable March. Meeting the PCs in secret that evening, the Captain asks the PCs to undertake another dangerous mission for the crown, sending the PCs to the village of Carnelloe to investigate the site of an ancient tragedy.

6-8 **DCC #10: The Sunless Garden:** Returning triumphant once more, the PCs are given titles and the deed to a small, run-down keep on the border of Crieste. Shortly after the PCs assume ownership, the nearest trading post, Garland's Fork, is struck by a horrific curse, and it falls to the heroes to solve the crisis. ***Or:*** The wicked Vizier of Crieste, perceiving the heroes as a threat to her stranglehold on the Empire, commissions a ship for the PCs and orders them to deliver a message to the far-flung colony of Voltigeur. (Go to Adventure Path 2A.)

8-10 **DCC #6: Temple of the Dragon Cult:** With power comes responsibility. Across the borderlands, a dragon has been terrorizing the people of Thire. Lady Aedwyn Cyrean, ruler of the realm, raises an army to defeat the fearsome wyrm, but even they fail. She begs the heroes to finish off what her army could not accomplish.

12-14 **DCC #21: Assault on Stormbringer Castle:** Unnaturally strong storms strike the PCs' lands, ravaging their fields and fortifications. The source of the fearsome gales lies to the south, with the town of Argalis. A terrible storm giant demands tribute from Agalis and the surrounding settlements (including the PCs' manor). If she is denied, she will lay waste to the entire coast.

14-16 **DCC #22: The Stormbringer Juggernaut:** The Stormbringer giants return to threaten the realm once more, unless the PCs are able to stop their scheme from coming to fruition. But are even the heroes, now mighty beyond most, strong enough to stop the Stormbringer Juggernaut?

Adventure Path 2A: Of Pirates and Plunder

Levels Adventure

6-8 **DCC #16: Curse of the Emerald Cobra:** Sent to the end of the Empire by the Vizier of Crieste, the PCs learn of a mysterious artifact called Omihuictli – the Bone Blade, an enchanted bastard sword rumored to have been created from the leg bones of an ancient black dragon. The sword is said to rest in the heart of an extinct volcano, Mount Icpitl.

10-12 **DCC #4: Bloody Jack's Gold:** Sailing home from their savage encounter with the Emerald Cobra, the PCs' ship is blown off course to an island that doesn't appear on any map. One of the sailors recognizes the island from the *Ballad of Bloody Jack*. Investigating, the PCs discover the maze Jack built to protect the greatest hoard of his long and blood-soaked career.

12-14 **DCC #21: Assault on Stormbringer Castle:** Returning to civilization at last, the PCs sail into the town of Argalis, only to discover the town in ruins. Three hurricane-strength storms have struck in as many weeks, sent by a wicked storm giant intent on punishing the town. The townsfolk turn to the PCs. Can the heroes prevail against the Stormbringer?

12-14 **DCC #18: Citadel of the Demon Prince:** Hearing of the PCs' might, his Holiness, the Bishop of the Shining Lance, sends a secret agent, Renshai the Cunning, to meet with the PCs. Renshai, the Bishop's master spy, has uncovered a plot to bring demonic horror into the world. His Holiness begs a boon of the PCs,

asking them to investigate this wicked plot – and put to the sword whatever fiend is behind it.

14-15 **DCC #15: Lost Tomb of the Sphinx Queen:** Taking to the open sea once more, the PCs cross the Lirean Sea to the Great Desert to the south, where rumors lead them to a lost tomb from a long-forgotten empire.

14-16 **DCC #32: The Golden Palace of Zahadran:** Striking out to explore the legendary Lostlands, the PCs uncover a magically sealed dome concealing an ancient, golden palace.

Adventure Path 3: Legends of the North

Levels Adventure

0 **DCC #0: Legends are Made, not Born:** An ogre is terrorizing the town of Dundraville. Six brave citizens, mere peasants, band together with a plan to put an end to the evil ogre's villainy!

1-3 **DCC #28: Into the Wilds:** Seeking their fortunes on the open road, the PCs strike out for the wild borderlands. There they come upon Wildsgate, a frontier keep beset by a terrible curse. Fame and fortune await those courageous enough to venture into the threatening Wilds.

3-5 **DCC #3: The Mysterious Tower:** Fate leads the young heroes east, to the foot of a mysterious tower protected by ancient spells. Investigating a wizard's tower is never easy, but survivors might just return with long-hidden treasures.

4-6 **DCC #17: Legacy of the Savage Kings:** Leaving the mysterious tower, the PCs are met by Venderlos the Green, a druid in service of secret masters. Venderlos, having heard of the PCs' prowess, has come to ask a boon of the PCs. A foul blight has infected the Great Swamp, corrupting the swamp's inhabitants and threatening settlements and forests downstream. Will the PCs investigate and cure this foul disease?

7-9 **DCC #17.5: War of the Witch Queen:** Emerging triumphant from the Great Swamp, the PCs track the fleeing Witch Queen back to her stinking demesne. There, in vaults hidden deep beneath the earth, they put an end to her wicked schemes.

7-9 **DCC #19: The Volcano Caves:** Traveling west on their trek back to civilization, the heroes encounter strange rumors surrounding the mysterious Mount Rolnith. Investigating, the PCs discover that the dormant volcano is not all it seems. In the abandoned study of a long-vanished wizardress, the PCs find a map leading to...

10 **DCC #30: Vault of the Dragon Kings:** Leaving the ruined Mount Rolnith, the PCs venture deeper into the Frosteye Mountains, in search of the legendary Vault of the Dragon Kings.

9-11 **DCC #25: The Dread Crypt of Srihoz:** Returning from the Vault, the PCs come across rumors leading to windswept cliffs and the crypt of an ancient evil.

9-11 **DCC #12: The Blackguard's Revenge:** Upon their return from the Dread Crypt, the PCs receive a summons from Turoch Mas, Overlord of Ternyziem. The ruler tells the PCs of the Cloister of the Ordocar, an order of paladins that keep watch over the north. The order is under attack by an army of undead. Can the PCs reach the monastery in time to save the paladins?

11-13 **DCC #12.5: Iron Crypt of the Heretics:** Though the Cloister of the Ordocar has been saved, the source of the undead army yet remains. Tracking the army back to the Iron Crypt of the Heretics, PCs must do battle with a nigh-invulnerable menace.

15 **DCC #13: Crypt of the Devil Lich:** The Ebon Egg destroyed, the PCs deliver the Iron Crypt's magical keys to the Monastery of the Dawning Sun. Upon their arrival, they realize that a horrible tragedy has taken place....

Appendix 1
DCC Index

This master index lists every place, deity, NPC, spell, object, monster, and organization that has appeared in a Dungeon Crawl Classics adventure module. The index does not include this *GM's Guide* or the *Gazetteer*, but does include every DCC up through the two included in this box. You can use this index to assist in finding adventures to use in your Áereth campaign, whether to match back to the geographic regions where your heroes are traveling, or to tie into NPCs that they have met.

The index is organized alphabetically. The category of each entry (e.g., NPC, monster, etc.) appears after the entry, followed by a number indicating which DCC the entry appears in.

A Soldier's Manual (Object) 26
Aaron Gannu (NPC) 27
Abollar (template) (Monster) 29
Abylos (Place) 23
Abyssal Wolf (Monster) 22
Acid Blood (Spell) 25
Adelaide Bomquis (NPC) 34
Ageta (NPC) 22
Ahandar (NPC) 33
Ahura Mazda (Deity) 32
Akkad (Place) 29
Akyani (Monster) 19
Alachakah (NPC) 33
Alasotur (NPC) 29
Albrecht Skullshank (NPC) 14
Alexander Cresh (NPC) 20
Alexander Montcrief (NPC) 7
Alizio's Book of Adventurers, Vol. VII (Object) 21
Ambroshea Trades (Place) 12
Amokra (NPC) 17.5
Amplify (Spell) 22
Amplify, Greater (Spell) 22
Amulet of Restored Glory (Object) 29
Anathaema Eagle (Monster) 5
Ancilith (NPC) 28
Andrew Vendi (NPC) 33
Angel Effigy (Monster) 18
Angra Mainyu (Deity) 32
Angrabeg's Commanding Eye (Object) 4
Animated Mass Pyre (Monster) 34
Ankharet the Queen (Deity) 15
Anselm (NPC) 5
Anthuria (NPC) 5.5
Anvil of Gyr (Object) 28
Anwar Fadain (NPC) 30
Apketh (NPC) 15
Aquarran (Monster) 19
Archbridge (Place) 1
Arden (NPC) 20
Arden Brightheart (NPC) 14
Ardishir the Magnificent (NPC) 32
Argalis (Place) 21, 22
Ari (NPC) 29
Ari'Al-nuk (NPC) 23
Aristemis (Deity) 12
Armos Plowman (NPC) 29
Aronarg (NPC) 29
Arovarel (Place) 13, 29
Arozza Stormbringer (NPC) 21, 22
Ars Malefice (Object) 17
Arsev ben Traiga (NPC) 15
Ascomoid (Monster) 26
Ash Guardian (Monster) 25
Asha Vahishta (Object) 32
Audun Egillsdottir (NPC) 29
Aurora Pass (Place) 26
Aurumvorax (Monster) 26
Austis Duframe (NPC) 12
Avatar Guards (Monster) 33
Axebury (Place) 5.5
Azi Dahaka (NPC) 32
Azubal (NPC) 28
Azurak ("Titan's Fury") (Object) 5
Back Alley Clah (NPC) 24
Bag of Endless Rats (Object) 14
Bagosh (NPC) 29
Bahdros (NPC) 22
Bakra (NPC) 17
Baldr (Deity) 29
Balti the Sage (NPC) 25
Barak (NPC) 7
Baraz Mahk (NPC) 2
Barbed Javelins (Weapon) 28
BargÏl (Deity) 8
Barracuda (Monster) 4
Barren Hills (Place) 15, 29
Barrowdown (Place) 29
Bastel Branwhip (NPC) 12
Bay of Many Sorrows (Place) 29
Bayard (NPC) 29
Bazaar of Quaysarria (Place) 32
Beastmen (NPC) 35A
Beasts of the Northlands (Object) 26
Bed of Health (Object) 3
Beeton (Place) 29
Behmanesh (NPC) 32
Belross Busex (NPC) 29
Bendel Llandeyr (NPC) 29
Berk (NPC) 0
Bezentaine (Object) 19
Black Dougal (NPC) 12.5
Black Elgor (NPC) 33
Black Pearl (Object) 29
Black Samarkin (NPC) 35B
Black Son (demon) (Deity) 18
Blackburn (NPC) 24
Blackened Pearl of Ages (Object) 14
Blackspine (NPC) 11
Blessings-Be (Place) 14
Blight Blades (Object) 17
Blighted Helm (Object) 17
Blister Beetle, Giant (Monster) 29
Blood Boulder (Monster) 21
Blood Coral (Object) 24
Blood Elemental (Spell) 25
Blood Hawk (Monster) 26
Blood Leech Swarm (Monster) 35B
Blood Whisker (NPC) 14
Bloodlust (Spell) 25

Bloodthorn Vine (Monster) 35A
Bloody Jack Dascombe (NPC) 4
Blubberbank (Place) 24
Boat Hook (Weapon) 29
Bobugbubilz (Deity) 13
Bogie Boys (Organization) 24
Bogris (NPC) 29
Boil Blood (Spell) 25
Bolts of Bedevilment (Spell) 20
Bone Jelly (Monster) 24
Bone Swarm (Monster) 13
Book of Bargúl (Object) 8
Borderlands (Place) 17
Braziers of Necromantic Guile (Object) 13
Breakers (Organization) 29
Breg (NPC) 20
Bromhandle (NPC) 34
Bronwyn (NPC) 7
Brother Aelris Llandeyr (NPC) 29
Brother Mikolas (NPC) 13
Brother Vinetto (NPC) 29
Bruzbid (NPC) 26
Cairvos (Place) 22
Calodek (NPC) 22
Camber Sorethin (NPC) 8
Canticle of the Damned (Object) 13
Capotztic (NPC) 16
Captain Argun (NPC) 28
Captain Balthew (NPC) 29
Captain Esterman Hempstrong (NPC) 29
Captain Grimhook (NPC) 29
Captain Jakob the Leper (NPC) 29
Captain Jared Goldtooth (NPC) 7
Carnelloe (Place) 5, 5.5, 29
Carrick (NPC) 24
Carrion Maggot (Monster) 24
Caryatid Column (Monster) 18
Cave Cricket (Monster) 26
Celthor the Slayer (NPC) 35B
Censer of Weal (Object) 26
Chalonna (NPC) 7
Chalychia the Devil-Lich (NPC) 13, 29
Cham Klein (NPC) 34
Chaotor (Deity) 13
Chaplain Korde (NPC) 26
Charp (NPC) 30
Chinvat Bridge (Place) 32
Chundag (NPC) 14
Clan Axefell (Organization) 28
Clan Deepdelve (Organization) 28
Clan Ember (Organization) 28
Clan Firebrand (Organization) 28
Clan Shieldfast (Organization) 28
Clan Wanderer (Organization) 28
Claw of Shifting Tides (Object) 29
Cloister of the Ordocar (Place) 12
Coatlimict (Deity) 4
Codex Ilyium (Object) 0
Coil (Spell) 16
Coin Devourer (Monster) 23
Cold Harbour (Place) 29
Coleus (NPC) 5.5
Comte du Javaire (NPC) 29
Construct, Kith (template) (Monster) 15
Corsair (Class) 29
Cortaigne (Place) 29
Corwin (NPC) 7
Cosmic Eggs (Object) 33
Coyopultec (NPC) 4
Crazy Klina (NPC) 24
Create Vampire (Spell) 25
Create Vampire Spawn (Spell) 25
Cresh Manor (Place) 20
Criestine Colonies (Place) 16
Criestine Empire (Place) 4, 16, 29
Crimson Ooze (Monster) 26
Crooknek (NPC) 29
Crown of Sett (Object) 17.5
Crown of Wulfrun (Object) 28
Crowngate (Place) 29
Cruel Justice (Object) 5
Crypt of Srihoz (Place) 25
Crypticus (Deity) 11
Crystal Shrine (Place) 29
Crystallis (Object) 29
Cuezpalcuanni (NPC) 16
Cult of the Broken Word (Organization) 18
Cult of the Forgotten Word (Organization) 33
Cybel (Object) 20
Cyrilla (NPC) 7
Dae Shar (NPC) 14
Daeobelinus (Monster) 20
Daeva (subtype) (Monster) 32
Dagger of Souls (Object) 18
Daras the Bold (NPC) 26
Darby Blist (NPC) 29
Dark Valerian (Object) 5
Darkenfold Forest (Place) 29
Darsov Erikson (NPC) 6
Darston "Dart" Isles (NPC) 12
Dawnfast (Object) 25
Deadeye the Imp (NPC) 14
Deadwood Treant (Monster) 10
Decapus (Monster) 26
Demesne of Baba Yazoth (Place) 17.5
Demi-gorgon (template) (Monster) 15
Demon, Aeshma (Monster) 18
Demon, Cambion (Monster) 18
Demon, Daraka (Monster) 18
Demon, Gharros (Monster) 18
Demon, Shadow (Monster) 22
Demon, Vapor (Monster) 14
Demonic Knight (Monster) 22
Denin Crob (NPC) 29
Dennel Batharda (NPC) 29
Deryn the Black (NPC) 30
Desiderius Merope (NPC) 29
Desk of Concentration (Object) 3
Desolation's Glamour (Spell) 15
Devil Fish (Monster) 19
Devil Lizard (Monster) 20
Dewey's Bookshelf (Object) 3
Diamond Carceperis (Object) 12
Diann the Bard (NPC) 25
Dire Polar Bear (Monster) 30
D'Lai Clan (Organization) 22
Doll of Sacrifice (Object) 28
Donner Llandeyr (NPC) 29
Doomtwitch Zombie (template) (Monster) 30
Dorean Llandeyr (NPC) 29
Dorkell (NPC) 29
Dorn Bronzethegn (NPC) 5.5
Draco Faerus (NPC) 12.5
Dracolisk (Monster) 18
Dracomorph (template) (Monster) 30
Dragon Ether (Object) 30
Dragon-blood (template) (Monster) 6
Dragon-kin (template) (Monster) 6
Dragon-kith (Spell) 6
Dragonspire Mountains (Place) 26
Dread Chathless (NPC) 18
Dread Ghost (template) (Monster) 30
Dread Spectre (template) (Monster) 30
Dread Watcher (NPC) 14
Dripping Temple (Place) 29
Drow, Aquatic (Monster) 29
Duchess of Domination (Deity) 29
Duergar Axe-hammer (Object) 5
Dundraville (Place) 0
Dünerain Mountains (Place) 14
Durbin (NPC) 0
Dust Brother (Monster) 23, 29
D'Varr (NPC) 22
Easy Chair of Penmanship (Object) 3
Ebon Egg (Object) 12.5
Edith Lough (NPC) 29
Efferam (NPC) 33
Egg of Autumn (Object) 29
Egg of Spring (Object) 29
Egg of Summer (Object) 29
Egg of Winter (Object) 29
Einaar (NPC) 29
Elemental (template) (Monster) 15
Elemental Plane of Fire (Place) 19
Elemental, Plague Tar (Monster) 5
Elgith (NPC) 29
Elianora D'Lai (NPC) 22
Elmot Kinfeld (NPC) 29
Emery Latigo (NPC) 33
Emperor Crab (Deity) 29
Empyrean Ocean (Place) 29
Erasmus Lore (NPC) 0
Erengoth (NPC) 22
Erik Frause (NPC) 29
Erol Shortshanks (NPC) 7
Euthaskia the Deceiver (NPC) 15
Ewan Treborne (NPC) 24
Exloe Burke (NPC) 33
Exploding Gem (Object) 26

Eye of Osirus (Object) 5
Eye of Tsathzar (Object) 35A
Eyjolfr (NPC) 29
Eztenqui Jungle (Place) 16
Fair Haven (Place) 7, 29
Fairweather (Place) 14
Fantastical Flying Beasts (Object) 26
Farguul's Fiery Finger (Object) 30
Farsis Llandeyr (NPC) 29
Father Alnwick (NPC) 29
Father Motter (NPC) 28
Fatty Blue (NPC) 20
Feasting (Monster) 20
Feldspar the Overseer (NPC) 33
Feodol Batharda (NPC) 29
Fereonte (Place) 16
Ferimax Ularaboo (NPC) 20
Feron "Blackwand" Tanerale (NPC) 35B
Fikk (NPC) 31
Finley's Eye (Object) 33
Fire Snake (Monster) 19
Firefiend (Monster) 18
Flame Paragon (template) (Monster) 30
Flayed Horror (Monster) 29
Flesh to Blood (Spell) 25
Fob Renault (NPC) 10
Foegar (NPC) 13
Foehammer Spires (Place) 28
Forbear the Smith (NPC) 1
Fraedok Hammerfell (NPC) 22
Freehold Thieves Guild (Organization) 17
Freeport (Place) 20
Fresk (NPC) 20
Frogroth (NPC) 0
From Potters Field (Object) 24
Frosteye Mountains (Place) 30
Fungal Mound (Monster) 29
Gaeran Hartson (NPC) 29
Gaff (Weapon) 29
Gar Ebal (NPC) 5
Garland's Fork (Place) 10, 29
Gas Spore (Monster) 26
Gaunt (Monster) 29
Gavuhn Donnell (NPC) 6
Gaze of the Basilisk (Spell) 16
Gefford Azimier (NPC) 33
Ger the Fighter (NPC) 25
Gilles Bier (NPC) 29
Gloomveil (Place) 8
Glorian (NPC) 3
Gnarga, King of the West (NPC) 30
Gnomish Airships (Object) 8
Gnomish Firearms (Object) 8
Godratt the Wise (NPC) 32
Golden Auroch (Object) 29
Golem, Amber (Monster) 25
Golem, Coin (Monster) 13
Golem, Ice (Monster) 19
Golem, Tablet (Monster) 23
Golem, Wizard (Monster) 29
Gondra (NPC) 21
Goren Bloodshaft (NPC) 11
Gorgimera (Monster) 18
Gorhan (Deity) 12
Gorson, the Blood Duke (NPC) 33
Gorung (Monster) 26
Gorwogijiro Gonejethis (NPC) 29
Gown of Allure (Object) 29
Graah (NPC) 17
Grave (NPC) 12
Great Serpent (Deity) 29
Great Swamp (Place) 17, 29
Grendel Knossos (NPC) 29
Grettir (NPC) 29
Grimmur (NPC) 29
Grishnaz the imp (NPC) 4
Grog (NPC) 7
Grussk (NPC) 30
Gudmundr (NPC) 29
Gurnard's Head (Place) 5
Gurt (NPC) 0
G'zogah (NPC) 1
Hadler's Gap (Place) 2
Haedor Hammerfell (NPC) 22
Half-Giant (template) (Monster) 30
Halifa (NPC) 22
Hallrbjorn (NPC) 29
Hammerfell Clan (Organization) 22
Hang Glider (Object) 29
Hared Daen (NPC) 29
Harnaw (NPC) 29
Harpoon Urchin (Monster) 19
Haverthold Asylum (Place) 34
Hb'kir (NPC) 30
He Who Is Fear And Righteous Might (Deity) 33
Headmaster Beaulibre (NPC) 33
Helena Dunraith (NPC) 29
Hellmoth (Monster) 18
Hellscarab Swarm (Monster) 15
Hellthorn (Monster) 18
Hengis (NPC) 29
Henry Crofter (NPC) 24
Heresy of Honor (Object) 12.5
Heresy of Mercy (Object) 12.5
Heresy of the Good War (Object) 12.5
Heresy of Truth (Object) 12.5
Hethvarag, King of the South (NPC) 30
Hilto Foibald (NPC) 28
Holger Kurtz (NPC) 24
Hollow One (Monster) 23
Hollow Spawn (Monster) 23
Holst Stoltsfad (NPC) 18
Honorus (Deity) 14
Hornauer (NPC) 5
House Cadryenne (Organization) 8, 29
House Ereluc (Organization) 12.5
House Faerus (Organization) 12.5
House Llandeyr (Organization) 29
House Malian (Organization) 29
Hroaldr (NPC) 29
Hrumeth (NPC) 15
Hubert Reichfort (NPC) 29
Huelga (NPC) 10
Iaha (NPC) 16
Iasmini (NPC) 24
Iborsum Shatter-fist (NPC) 6
Icy Creature (template) (Monster) 30
Id Ooze (template) (Monster) 30
Idruma (NPC) 31
Ikammanen (NPC) 29
Ikim Vaas (NPC) 34
Ildavir (Deity) 35A
Ilquot (Deity) 29
Immolius (NPC) 19
Immun-drac (NPC) 13
Impaler (Monster) 26
Improved Reduce Person (Spell) 11
Incense of Displacement (Object) 29
Indra Daeva (Monster) 32
Infected (template) (Monster) 29
Inphidian, Cobra-Back (Monster) 16
Instruments of Maddening Cacophany (Object) 23
Iron Crypt of the Heretics (Place) 12, 12.5
Ironflow River (Place) 26
Isle of Faroe (Place) 29
Isle of Tlahuaco (Place) 16
Itlapal (Object) 16
Jadis Wren (NPC) 22
Jarson Tender (NPC) 14
Jengenritz (NPC) 13
Jessa Smiles (NPC) 29
Jingo (NPC) 29
Jingo's Travelling Circus (Organization) 29
John Mossborn (NPC) 29
Jonah Skutle (NPC) 29
Jorah Silverhand (NPC) 16
Jornal (NPC) 29
Jumar Starshine (NPC) 29
Justicia (Deity) 13, 35B
Kaldal (NPC) 28
Kali (NPC) 8
Kampfult (Monster) 26
Kang ("Mercy") (Object) 5
Katachek (NPC) 18
Kay Mossborn (NPC) 5.5
Kayle Braggin (NPC) 8
Kazok-Ilthor (NPC) 29
Keeper of the Ways (NPC) 30
Kelborne Selbrei (NPC) 8
Kelemen the Gentle (NPC) 18
Kerwin Krell (NPC) 0
Khetira (NPC) 13
Khonsurian Empire (Place) 15
Khubsheth the Prophet (NPC) 15
Kih-koth (NPC) 35A
King of the North (NPC) 30
King's Highway (Place) 28, 29
Kinhul (NPC) 26

Klaklin (Monster) 19
Klaklin, Soldier (Monster) 19
Knag'rr the Finder (NPC) 15
Knights of the Ordocar (Organization) 12.5
Kolaracht (NPC) 10
Koldavis (NPC) 16
Kolgot (NPC) 28
Korg (NPC) 20
Kos (NPC) 28
Kostkorian (Monster) 30
Kreeasi (NPC) 30
Krklkkrkl (NPC) 13
Kuga (NPC) 10
Kyleth (NPC) 17
Kyleth the Witch-Queen (NPC) 17.5
Ladman Llandeyr (NPC) 29
Lady Aborn (NPC) 28
Lady Arabella (NPC) 11
Lady Elisabeth Pendour (NPC) 5
Lady Shadron (NPC) 12.5
Laeon River (Place) 23
Lagos (Deity) 26, 29
Lake Shadefell (Place) 29
Larenz Llandeyr (NPC) 29
Lares (Deity) 29
Larissa Batharda (NPC) 29
Lassoo (Monster) 19
Lastever (Place) 26
Laurossil Cadryenne (NPC) 8
Lava Creep (Monster) 8
Lawrence Gannu (NPC) 1
Leashstone (Object) 18
Lerrza Mahk (NPC) 2
Lessian Thrivolt (NPC) 29
Liah (NPC) 28
Lieux-Claren (Place) 16
Lirean Sea (Place) 29
Living Spirit (template) (Monster) 21
Living Tear (Monster) 23
Llandeyr Mausoleum (Place) 29
Llewellyn (NPC) 7
Lodbrag the Ogre (NPC) 2
Lodril (NPC) 35B
Logosan D'Lai (NPC) 22
Loki (Deity) 29
Loo (NPC) 20
Lord Arnost (NPC) 29
Lord Braxus (NPC) 13
Lord Duncan Merriweather (NPC) 0
Lord McDurmott (NPC) 21, 22
Lord Tulwar (NPC) 0
Lorethel (NPC) 29
Lower Innis (Place) 29
Luc Stethenfield (NPC) 34
Macuahuitl (Object) 4
Mad Savant (template) (Monster) 30
Maddening Scream (Spell) 20
Maeve (NPC) 17
Magic Lamps (Object) 3
Malachai's Magical Doors (Object) 22
Malchor (NPC) 11
Maligance (NPC) 33
Malotoch (Deity) 5, 13, 28
Manbreaker (Object) 30
Mantari (Monster) 26
Mar (NPC) 29
Marc Stethenfield (NPC) 34
Mare Stone (Object) 24
Mari Kell (NPC) 24
Maris Zahn (NPC) 29
Marquis de Sablieur (NPC) 29
Marris Llandeyr (NPC) 29
Marshak the Reever (NPC) 28
Masjed-al-Talba (NPC) 32
Mask of the Shadowcat (Object) 35B
Master Bolo (NPC) 28
Master Chief Lorenz Eunni (NPC) 12
Meelkor (Deity) 3
Melisine d'Aurielle (NPC) 16
Melisine dÍAurielle (NPC) 16
Menoden (NPC) 29
Menoden's Tower (Place) 29
Meraph the Golden (NPC) 15
Mergusi Kefon (NPC) 35B
Merry Bastards (Organization) 29
Metadilos (Monster) 29
Micohuani (Object) 16
Mikal (NPC) 20
Millers Court (Place) 24
Mirror of Physical Aptitude (Object) 29
Mite (Monster) 26
Moddar Vich (NPC) 29
Monastery of the Dawning Sun (Place) 13
Monks of the Saint (Organization) 12.5
Moonleaper (Object) 33
Moran Selbrei (NPC) 8
Moray eel (Monster) 4
Mortimer Mortenson (NPC) 7
Mother Green's Rest (Place) 18
Mount Icpitl (Place) 16
Mount Rolnith (Place) 19
Mountain King (NPC) 17
Mountain Troglodyte (Monster) 26
Mourning Cave (Place) 14
Mummy Dragon (template) (Monster) 13
Myerlinda (NPC) 33
Myna (Deity) 0
Myrkjartan (NPC) 30
Narrimunâth (Deity) 1
Narzy Hilspek (NPC) 1
Nazost the Scrivener (NPC) 28
N'dereg (NPC) 17
Necklack of Fangs (Object) 23
Necoctene (Monster) 16
Nicrotis (NPC) 29
Niflheim (Place) 29
Nimlurun (Deity) 1
Ninurta (Deity) 29
Nira Bavisar (NPC) 6
Nockmort (NPC) 10
Noosem (NPC) 33
Northlands (Place) 17.5
Nullsport (Place) 29
Nunsod Llandeyr (NPC) 29
Nykolus Rasslov (NPC) 29
Obitu-que (demon) (Deity) 17
Oblivion Incense (Object) 18
Octagon Gauntlet (Object) 33
Oculum Infernae (Object) 14
Oddr (NPC) 29
Odin (Deity) 29
Odolan (NPC) 14
Ograk, King of the East (NPC) 30
Olive Slime (Monster) 26
Omihuictli (the Bone Blade) (Object) 16
Oolgluur (NPC) 30
Open Hearth (Place) 29
Orden (Place) 26
Osirus (Deity) 5
Oswald Reichfort (NPC) 29
Oszkar the Black (NPC) 18
Outer Gods (Deity) 2
Oz (NPC) 13
Painshrieker (Monster) 29
Parhokk (Place) 2
Pech (Monster) 26
Pelagia (Deity) 7, 29
Phycomid (Monster) 26
Plague Chalice (Object) 29
Plague Wight (Monster) 29
Plantnip Candle (Object) 29
Pleniere (Place) 16
Pomatomus (NPC) 7
Porthmeor (Place) 24
Possessed Object (template) (Monster) 34
Potion of Longevity (Object) 23
Praxis Tome (Object) 33
Prester "Trapmaster" Ungart (NPC) 35B
Professor Yegaa (NPC) 33
Prophecy of Tremaste (Object) 29
Prophet's Leap (Place) 15
Punjar (Place) 35B
Pwalg (Monster) 20
Pyraxus (NPC) 6
Qi ("Focus") (Object) 5
Quast (NPC) 0
Quill of Dictation (Object) 35B
Quintoo (NPC) 33
Radiant Boy (Monster) 20
Radmanish (NPC) 32
Rain of Poison (Spell) 8
Rama Savitri (NPC) 6
Rassylov's Journal (Object) 29
Rathulagon (NPC) 26
Razor Wire Net (Object) 14
Realta Llandeyr (NPC) 29
Red Annie (NPC) 12
Red Wisdom (NPC) 18
Redcap (Monster) 24
Redhorn Hill (Place) 29

Redtooth Troll (Monster) 27
Reichfort Family (Organization) 29
Reizravel (NPC) 12
Relsa Llandeyr (NPC) 29
Renald Stethenfield (NPC) 34
Renna the Midwife (NPC) 1
Reswythe (NPC) 35B
Revenant (template) (Monster) 20
Rezapyros (NPC) 33
Rez-zomar the Goblin Chieftan (NPC) 1
River Saedre (Place) 28
Roe Ramenik (NPC) 33
Rogroakbub the Trollfiend (NPC) 13
Rook (Monster) 5
Roost Dretch (Monster) 5.5
Root of Malotoch (Object) 5.5
Rootshaker (NPC) 10
Rosemergy (NPC) 5.5
Rot Grub (Monster) 26
Rumatugtug (NPC) 33
Rune Stone of Baldr (Sorrow) (Object) 29
Rune Stone of Creation (Blessing) (Object) 29
Rune Stone of Fury (Strength) (Object) 29
Rune Stone of Rebirth (Hope) (Object) 29
Rune Stone of Wisdom (Vision) (Object) 29
Rune Stones of Odin (Object) 29
Rust Spider (Monster) 29
Sacrificial Guards (Monster) 33
Saedor's Guide to Constructs and Living Spirits (Object) 21
Saena Tree (Monster) 32
Saint's Blood Mountains (Place) 12, 12.5
Samuka (NPC) 18
Sand Blast (Spell) 29
Sanguine Stone (Object) 13
Sanguiomancy (School of Magic) 25
Sathsar (NPC) 26
Savage Quenn (NPC) 29
Scepter of Wildsgate (Object) 28
Scorpion Man (Monster) 23
Screaming Skull (Monster) 22
Sczee'zeeian (NPC) 33
Sea of Desperation (Place) 16
Sentinel of Cortaigne (Place) 29
Sepia Snake (Monster) 16
Seraph, grig (NPC) 29
Sergio the Vizier (NPC) 28
Serpentfury (Monster) 23
Serrek Tarn (NPC) 2
Serrenna Valuois (NPC) 1
Sewer Rat (Monster) 24
Sezrakan (NPC) 29
Sha Abbas (NPC) 32
Shadowstar (Object) 13
Shaduar (Monster) 16
Shae'Mae (NPC) 7
Sharktooth (NPC) 24
Sharyn-Ella (NPC) 0
Shed Form (Spell) 16
Shell Shurikens of Crushing (Object) 24
Shuderief (NPC) 10
Shul (Deity) 23
Sickle Rock Grove (Place) 5.5
Silverton (Place) 1
Sir Galwaith (NPC) 35A
Sir Gareth Porthglaze (NPC) 5.5
Skeggi (NPC) 29
Skr'thor (NPC) 7
Skulltop Hillock (Place) 0
Skunge Longtooth (NPC) 29
Slash Wing (Monster) 26
Slate, the intelligent chalkboard (Object) 13
Slazzik Balefire (NPC) 2
Sle'astakk (NPC) 30
Slime Zombie (template) (Monster) 26
Slithering Ooze (template) (Monster) 30
Slysska (NPC) 30
Snake Staff of Baba Yazoth (Object) 17.5
Snapdragon Swarm (Monster) 29
Sodersund (NPC) 28
Sodoutym (Deity) 28
Soleth (Deity) 31
Solgem Fleetfoot (NPC) 6
Solom Quor (NPC) 29
Soloman Black (NPC) 29
Soranna (NPC) 19
Soranna's Universal Elemental Weapon (Object) 19
Sorsha Llandeyr (NPC) 29
Sothulth (Deity) 26
Soul Cauldron (Object) 18
Soul Engine (Object) 18
Soul'daem (Object) 35B
Soulgrave (Place) 1, 27
Soulstone (Object) 18
Southern Seas (Place) 24
Spellsnake (Monster) 29
Spirit of Uru-nuk (Monster) 23
Squid, Land (Monster) 29
Srihoz (Heironeous Uliran Theopal) (NPC) 25
Sslithia (NPC) 7
Ssustre (NPC) 26
Staff of Water Control (Object) 21
Starys Malian (NPC) 29
Static Bat (Monster) 29
Stealth Sword (Object) 26
Stevrock Stormbringer (NPC) 22
Stink-fire Beetle (Monster) 29
Stone of Translation (Object) 29
Stonefriend (Object) 28
Stoneglass Mirror (Object) 31
Stoneshaper Masons (Organization) 29
Stormbringer Castle (Place) 21
Stormbringer Mountain (Place) 21
Stozari Stormbringer (NPC) 21, 22
Straitjacket (Object) 34
Strike of the Cobra (Spell) 16
Stygoth (NPC) 17
Sumer (Place) 29
Summerhold (Place) 29
Sunscratch (NPC) 30
Sute Lore (NPC) 0
Swarm Shuriken (Object) 35B
Swarm, Fine Fire Elemental (Monster) 19
Sword of Barons (Object) 28
Sword of Conviction (Object) 14
Tainted (template) (Monster) 29
Takaritha (NPC) 7
Ta'kira'kerymor ("Sword-breaker") (Object) 5
Talisman of the Great Beast (Object) 33
Tan Mold (Monster) 32
Tarfoot (NPC) 14
Tarik One-Arm (NPC) 0
Tarn Tetherknot (NPC) 11
Tarrak (NPC) 5
Taskmaster Broggab (NPC) 14
Tayanna Serrengriff (NPC) 29
Tazex (NPC) 31
Tecoacualli (NPC) 16
Tellakerry Clan (Organization) 29
Tentacled Horror (Monster) 16
Terisin (NPC) 29
Tharaxis (NPC) 19
The Abyss (Place) 18
The Book of Seven Serpents (Object) 16
The Castellan (NPC) 30
The Champion (NPC) 25
The Forlorn Maid (NPC) 17.5
The Great Beast (NPC) 33
The Greater Keys (Object) 15
The Lesser Keys (Object) 15
The Maw (Place) 17
The mysterious white tower (Place) 3
The Outriders (Organization) 28
The Shadowcrown (Object) 15
The Speaker to Dust (NPC) 15
The Star Arms (Object) 5
The Stepstone (Object) 15
The Watch (Organization) 28
The Wilds (Place) 28
Thedric Branch (NPC) 29
Theland (NPC) 26
Thelias (NPC) 30
Thelport (Place) 29
Thieves' Puzzle Box, Lesser (Object) 35B
Thistle (NPC) 14
Thor (Deity) 29
Thormyr (Deity) 26
Thornblood (Monster) 14
Thornswild Wood (Place) 35A
Thulsa, Stone of Scribes (Object) 23
Thurlo (NPC) 24

T'Klack (NPC) 14
Tlilcohuatl (NPC) 16
Toadspawn (template) (Monster) 13
Tomb of Nicrotis (Place) 29
Tome of the Black Tongue (Object) 13
Tor Barnabas (Blubberbank) (NPC) 29
Torc of Illusions (Object) 15
Torgo the Eye Gouger (NPC) 17
Tormul Serrengriff (NPC) 29
Tororthun (Deity) 8
Torvok Blackspear (NPC) 16
Toth-Ror (NPC) 35A
Totoki (NPC) 21
Touch of Madness (Spell) 20
Tower of the Black Pearl (Place) 29
Transport Obelisk (Object) 33
Tredoksule (Place) 21
True Death (Object) 13
Tsathzar Rho (NPC) 2
Tud (NPC) 29
Tusk (NPC) 7
Tzopiloani (Monster) 16
Ugloshti (NPC) 29
Ul Khaz'kul (Place) 23
Ul-Alam'inic (NPC) 23
Undine (template) (Monster) 24
Unuul (Language) 23
Ur (Place) 29
Urggar (NPC) 26
Urkallan Hills (Place) 2
Urudu River (Place) 23
Uru'Nuk (Place) 23
Valinus (NPC) 13
Vam Doadson (NPC) 34
Vampiric Bloom (Monster) 25
Vault of the Dragon Kings (Place) 30
Velth (NPC) 29
Venaku (NPC) 29
Venom Zombie (Monster) 8
Verdivis (NPC) 31
Verdivis' Catacomb (Place) 31
Vespertiliac (Monster) 20
Vestments of Vilim-Zhula (Object) 29
Vik (NPC) 24
Vile Gate (Object) 20
Vilim-Zhula (Deity) 29
Virkus (NPC) 14
Volosizz (NPC) 19
Voltigeur (Place) 16
Wall of Chill (Spell) 19
Wall of Radiation (Spell) 8
Warded Walls (Spell) 21, 22
Wardrobe of Cleansing (Object) 3
War-worm (Monster) 29
War-worm Queen (Monster) 29
War-worm Zombie (template) (Monster) 29
Wastes of Zamon (Place) 17.5
Weeping Forest (Place) 29
Weird, Lightning (Monster) 22
Welwyn (Place) 11
Westphalen School (Place) 33
Whisker (Object) 29
Whitefang Stronghold (Place) 26
Wildsgate (Place) 28
Will Dunraith (NPC) 29
Winds and Weather (Object) 26
Witch Grass (Monster) 21
Withers (Place) 33
Woodroe (Place) 18
Wrack (Monster) 18
Wulfrun (NPC) 28
Xander (NPC) 5
Xayactl Bay (Place) 16
Xiuhcoatl (NPC) 16
Xogg (NPC) 22
Xulmec (Place) 16
Xulmec city-states (Place) 4
Yasif Cazül, the Lord of Thieves (NPC) 35B
Ydak (NPC) 31
Zabator (NPC) 33
Zadok (NPC) 22
Zahadran (Place) 32
Zamuk the Swift (Deity) 28
Ziz Ka-Seer (NPC) 19
Zoë (NPC) 13
Zolmik Thiat (NPC) 29
Zolmik's Retreat (Place) 29
Zombifying Gas (Object) 17
Zurvan (Deity) 32

Credits and Afterword

Credits

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Layout: Joseph Goodman

Editor-in-Chief: Joseph Goodman

Playtesters: You!

Special thanks to the many writers and artists who created the DCC adventures that inspired this world.

Afterword: Mike Ferguson

It's been much fun being able to work on the World of Dungeon Crawl Classics … and a childhood dream come true. Many thanks to the following who made the dream possible:

Joseph, Harley, and Jeff – for making this adventure a grand one indeed.

Laura Ferguson – a great sister, and the one who got me traveling down this road in the first place.

Sue Ferguson – my lovely wife, who humors my obsession with swords and sorcery.

Jonathan Day, John Geoghegan, Eric Mee, Rick Schmidt, and Rich Zeitler – the best gamers a GM could ask for. You guys rule.

And to the memory of Doug Cohen – a great gamer and a fantastic person. Requiescat in pace, my friend.

Afterword: Jeff LaSala

Foremost thanks to my wife, Marisa – Argentine gypsy, mermaid, and a friend to all halflings and kobolds. Thank you for your love and patience, for your much-needed distractions, and for dealing with the real world in those moments when I was in another. You are the bestest, to say the leastest. Never stop looking for your unicorn, okay? For now, I give you Cindy, the baby naga.

Heuristic thanks to my big brother, John – friend, musician, and dork. Thank you for our mutual word snobbery, being a sounding board for concepts and ideas, and for your endless stream of National Geographic lore – some useful, some mere nimiety. I hope to offer you as much assistance in your own oneiric musings and moliminous dreamings.

Symbiotic thanks to Harley Stroh – friend, kindred spirit, and Project Tyrant. Nowhere else have I seen as much energy, enthusiasm, and total geek encouragement as I have in you. Thank you for roping me into this project of gamer retrospection and creative Elysium. Thanks for being that guy at my wedding about whom people later asked, "Who was that masked dancer?"

Heartfelt thanks to Joseph Goodman, for giving me the opportunity to run amuck in the DCC world – I hope you find the Known Realms of Áereth to be worthy of your standards!

Thank you, Mike, for our shared ideas and for *Curse of the Emerald Cobra*, which gave me an excuse to delve into Nahuatl culture.

And nostalgic thanks to my original gaming group: Dan Arney, Chris Nygren, and Steve Simar. Dan, I still can't believe you used your vorpal axe on a fellow PC…

Afterword: Harley Stroh

Certain adventures only come around once.

Like when the grizzled old warrior decides to go after the dragon, and asks who's coming with him. Or when the dark-eyed sorceress slowly surveys the crowd of peasants, waiting for one to step forward and pull the sword from the stone.

Like many, I grew up studying the glossography of Pluffet Smedger the Elder, and listening to stories at the knee of the Old Mage of Shadowdale. I will always remember taking my first tentative steps into the Caves of Chaos, only to vanish down a darkened pit swarming with diseased rats. So when Joseph Goodman asked if I'd oversee the chronicling of Áereth, the world of the Dungeon Crawl Classics, I knew I had been invited on the adventure of a lifetime.

Our source material? Twenty or so (now thirty!) modules written by some of the brightest minds in the business. Immediately we set about extracting all the heroes and villains, monsters and ruins, drawing connections where there were dots, making them up where there were none. What began as a simple compilation quickly grew to an encyclopedic undertaking. Modules were photocopied and highlighted, maps drawn and re-drawn. Notes were taken, backstories written.

Patterns began to emerge.

Of course, not all of the patterns were good. The original Dungeon Crawl Classics were written as one-shot adventures for generic fantasy settings, with oh-so-brilliant settings like the Great Swamp. (What's so great about it?) By the time we came across the Swamp's sister setting, the Great Desert, I demanded a blood oath from the other writers, striking the word Great from their lexicon. As DCC authors, we can be forgiven; after all, when you named a demonic power after an old roommate in graduate school, no one ever dreamed that it would one day be canonized in the official campaign setting … forever.

But then something began to change. Áereth, compiled from the cultural Zeitgeist of classic sword-and-sorcery adventures, began writing itself. Dates started making sense. Old villains returned to overthrow empires, peasants grew into heroes and then legends. Like an ancient dragon stirring from a thousand-year rest, the world came to life.

Here's the secret about Dungeon Crawl Classics: Sure, they look like the old modules of yore; sure, they have the blue ink maps and the fonts we remember. But if nostalgia were all they had to offer, DCC sales would have withered and died after the first year. Far more importantly, they have risk, excitement, and adventure, the crucial ingredients to any good game of D&D.

Now it is nearly midnight. Tomorrow I will forward the manuscript on to Chicago. Is the world finished? Absolutely not. Given another four months, we could write – record – another two hundred pages. But like Gygax taught us all those years ago, games are meant to be played, not perfected. This gazetteer isn't a crystal ball peering into every corner of the world; it's a magic mirror, offering you a glimpse of a world you've never visited but have always known.

Now all that's left is for you to step through.

So take up your broadsword, blow the dust off your spellbook, and saddle the horses. The mailed Kings of the North are calling out your name, demanding an audience. I leave you to give an answer.

—Harley Stroh, February 2006

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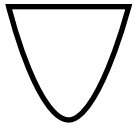
Dungeon Crawl Classics Character Record Sheet

Player's Name _____ **Character's Name** _____

Race _____ **Class** _____ **Level** _____ **Alignment** _____

Speed _____ **XP** _____

Initiative _____ **Spell Save DC** _____



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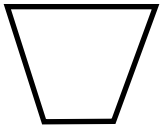

Hit Points

Tch: _____ **Max:** _____

FF: _____ **Nonlethal:** _____

BAB

Melee

2nd Hand

Ranged

Grapple

Strength
Modifier: _____

Dexterity
Modifier: _____

Constitution
Modifier: _____

Intelligence
Modifier: _____

Wisdom
Modifier: _____

Charisma
Modifier: _____

Fort Save

Ref Save

Will Save

Skills & Feats

Equipment & Treasure

Languages & Notes

Spells & Special Abilities

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The World of Aereth

Empire of Crieste

Free Province of Thire

Morena Nova

Criestine Colonies

Ssorlang

The Vermilion Tribes

Taijin

Vivekanika

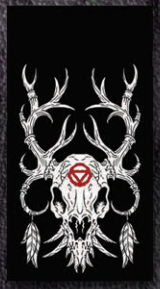
City-State of Porthmeor

Free City of Wildsgate

Free City of Ternyziem

Sires of Pelagia

Djeser al-Maqqara



Scourgelands

League of Resonance

Darawan

Kaatlan

Maras

Miztlani

Amoya

Chuzec

Athua

Teotcoatlan

World of Aereth - PDF

Setup Grid

Top Map (TM)

1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15

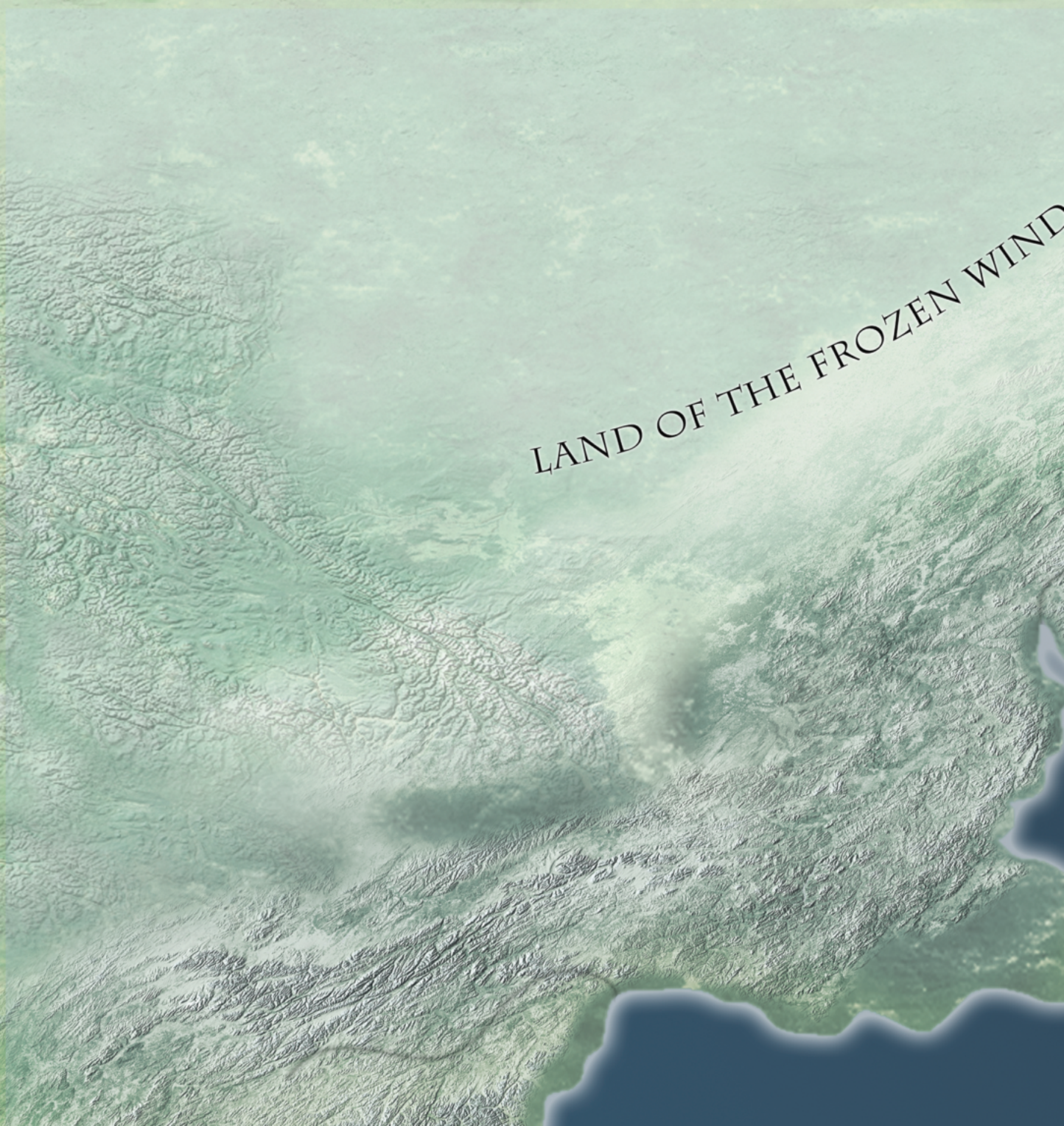
Middle Map (MM)

1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15

Lower Map (LM)

1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15

the World of Aereth Gazetteer


LAND OF THE FROZEN WIND

STRAIT OF GNASHING ICE
TAINS

the
World
of
Áereth
Gazetteer

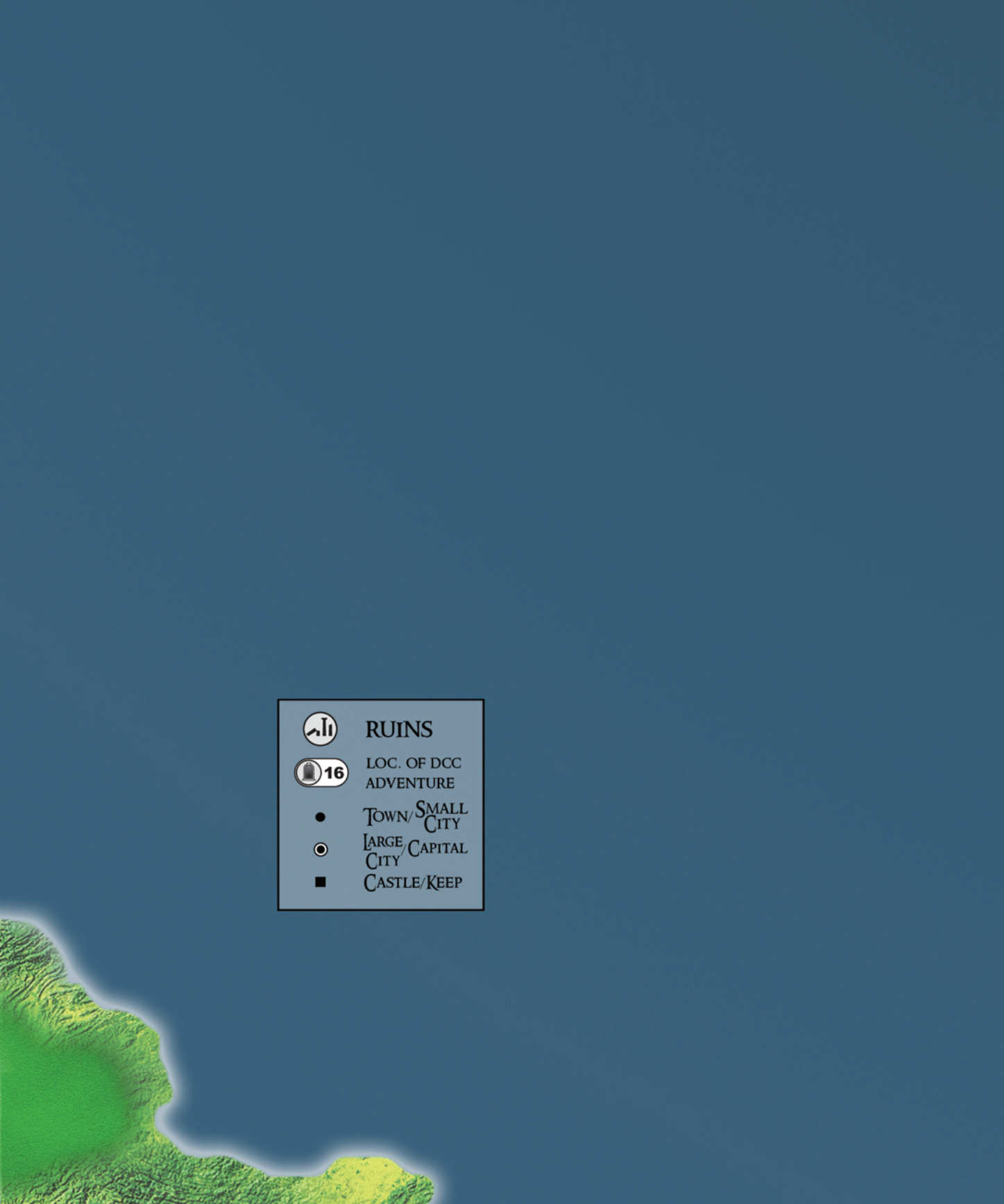
GREAT NORTHER

RN SEA

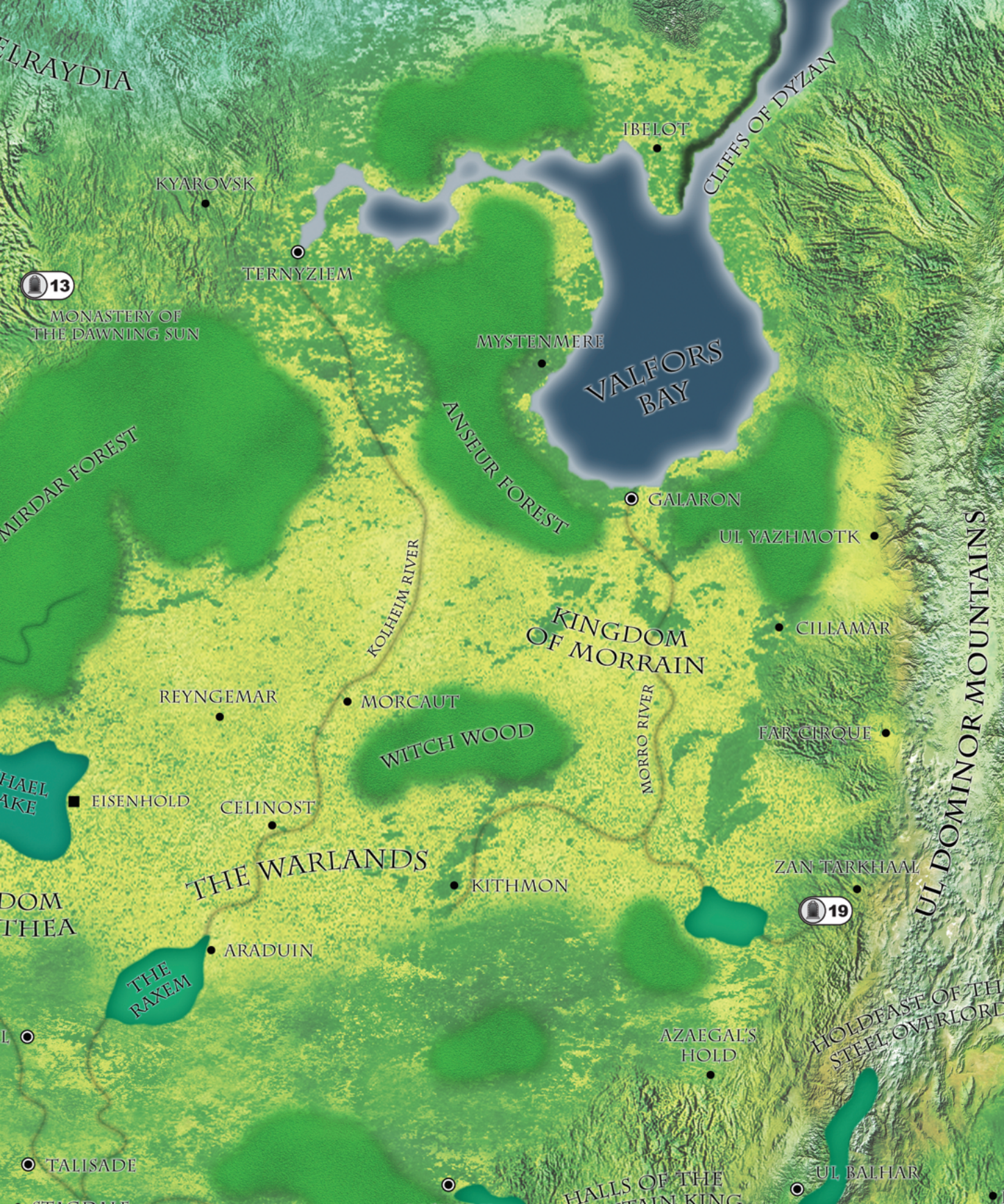
WALEHAVEN
FROST BARRENS
SAINT'S BLOOD MOUNTAINS
25
12.5
12
AMBROSHEA
TRADES

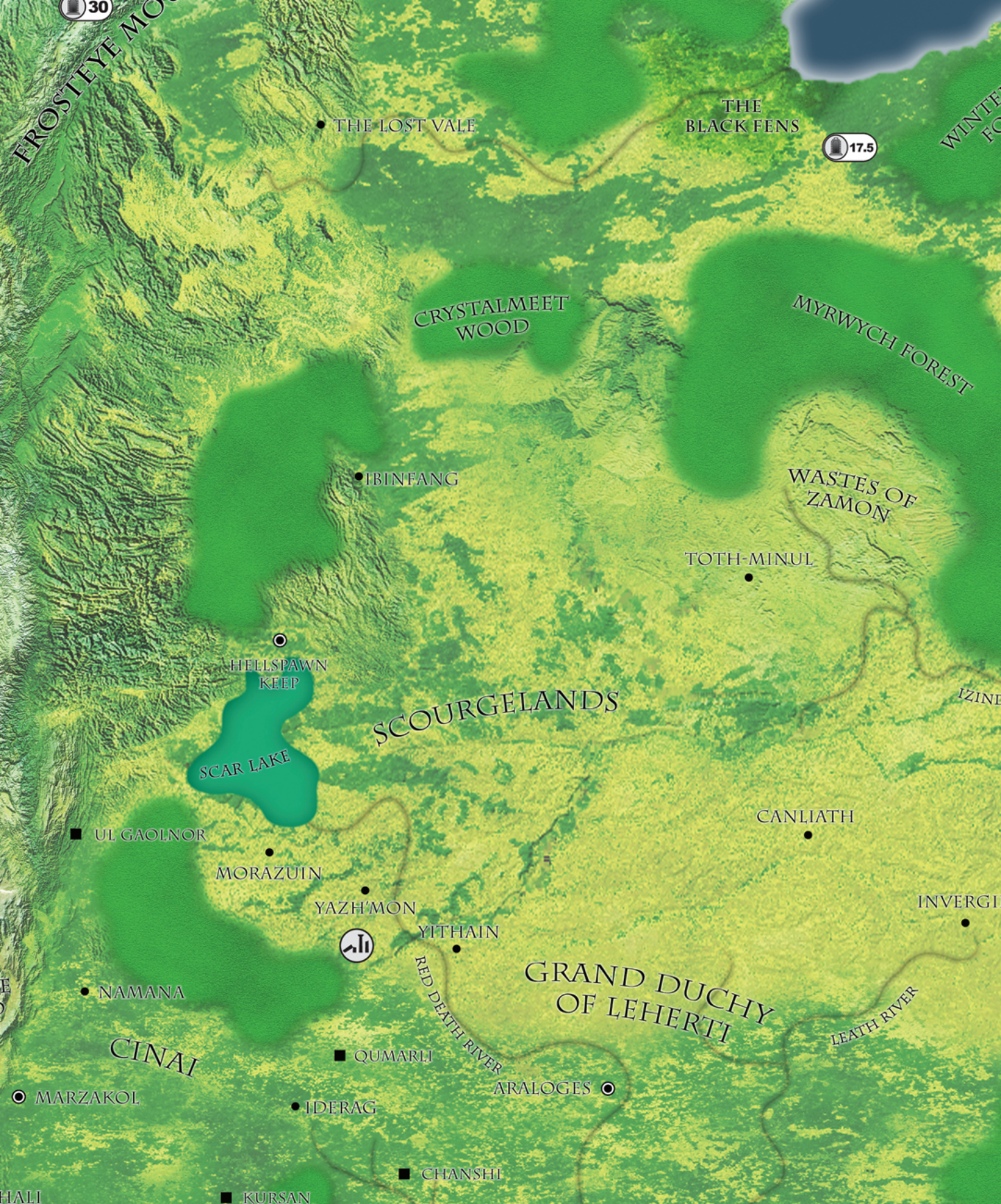
BLACKICE MOUN
DEAD VA
ICENWASTES
UNTAINS

ALES


RUINS
16
LOC. OF DCC ADVENTURE
TOWN/SMALL CITY
LARGE CITY/CAPITAL
CASTLE/KEEP

NYFAIL MOUNTAINS
BAY OF ASUR
WELLWYN
11
CAIRNSWILD


ELRAYDIA
IBELOT
CLIFFS OF DYZAN
KYAROVSK
TERNYZIEM
13
MONASTERY OF THE DAWNING SUN
MYSTENMERE
VALFORS BAY
MIRDAR FOREST
ANSEUR FOREST
GALARON
UL YAZHMOTK
KOLHEIM RIVER
KINGDOM OF MORRAIN
CILLAMAR
UL DOMINOR MOUNTAINS
REYNGEMAR
MORCAUT
WITCH WOOD
MORRO RIVER
FAR CIRQUE
EISENHOLD
CELINOST
THE WARLANDS
KITHMON
ZAN TARKHAAL
19
ARADUIN
THE RAXEM
AZAEGAL'S HOLD
TALISADE
UL BALHAR

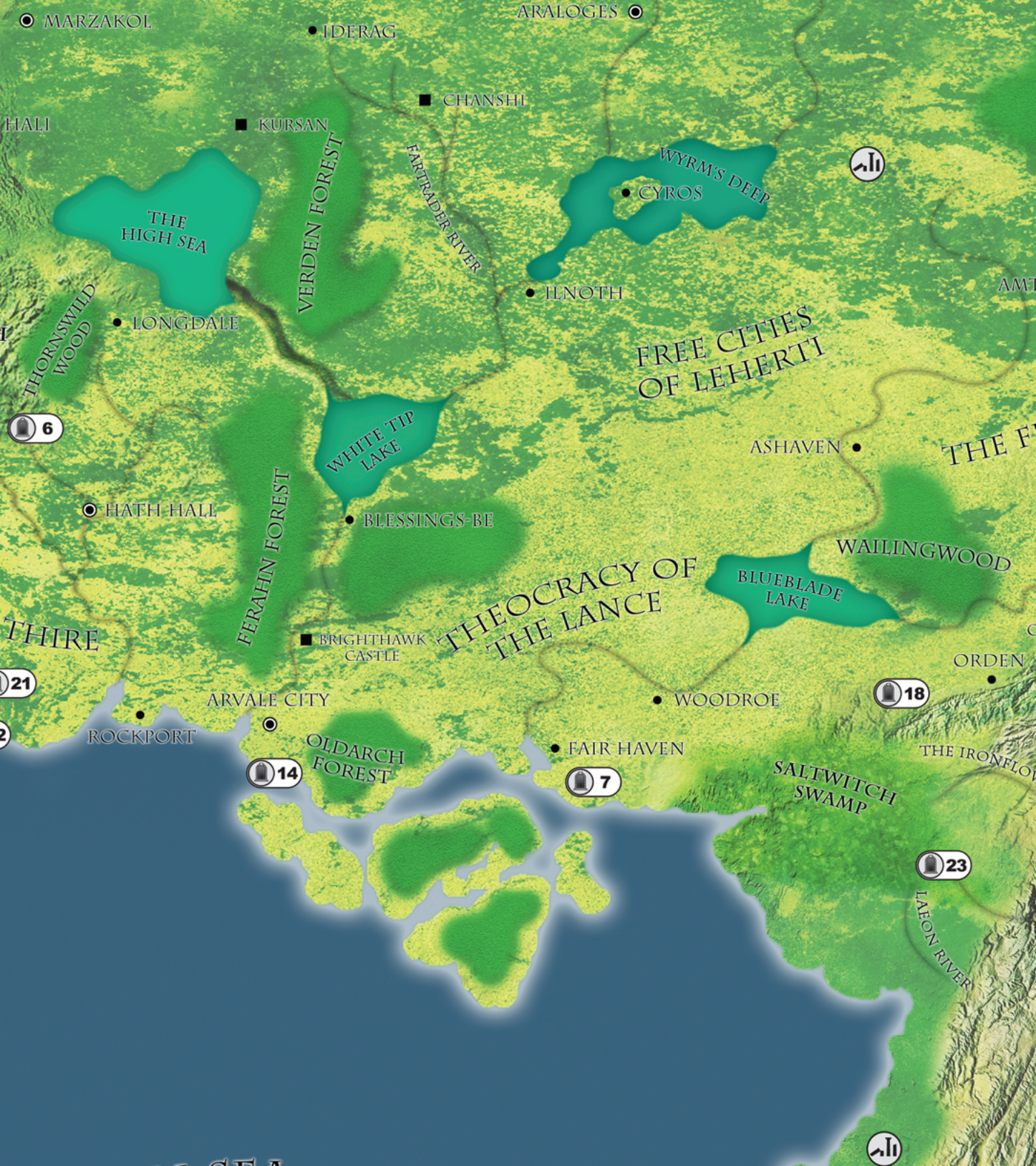

30
FROSTEYE MO
THE LOST VALE
THE BLACK FENS
17.5
WINTE
FO
CRYSTALMEET WOOD
MYRWYCH FOREST
IBINFANG
WASTES OF ZAMON
TOTH-MINUL
HELLSPAWN KEEP
SCOURGELANDS
IZIN
SCAR LAKE
CANLIATH
UL GAOLNOR
MORAZUIN
YAZH'MON
INVERGI
YITHAIN
NAMANA
GRAND DUCHY OF LEHERTI
RED DEATH RIVER
LEATH RIVER
CINAI
QUMARLI
ARALOGES
MARZAKOL
IDERAG
CHANSHI
KURSAN
HALI

RMERE
OREST
HOARFROST BAY
NORTHWATCH
KEEP
RAKEWIGHT
STROMBLAEN
OOL RIVER
BARONY OF
KORANTH
N
ARDWALL
LOST LAKE
RAVENHOLLOW

TOJAN BAY
SCRAGTOOTH STRAIT

DÛNERAIN MOUNTAINS
KINGDOM OF UTHUR
AMN'O
IRONVALE
3
ISLE OF NOS CAEN
FOLKEVER
WARRINGHILL
HALSGAT
JAVRAN SEA

TALISADE
STAGDALE
RISINOX
HALLS OF THE MOUNTAIN KING
UL BALHAR
ORGEMOUTH
THE WILDS
28
WILDSGATE
SAEDRE RIVER
VELTOS
AVENORS
STALGARD
TROLLTOOTH PEAKS
SYLVAN DOWNS
KALÍA
OAKENMEET
DUNDRAE LAKE
2
SALTMOON
HADLER'S GAP
DUNDRAVILLE
WICHEATH
STRAITS OF YMTAL
BLACKBRIAR WOOD
GREAT SWAMP
17
GARLAND'S FORK
10
STAGWOOD
34
HIGH CROSS
THE BLADE REACH
ARGALIS
ARCHEN RIVER
ARCHBRIDGE
VERNAUT
MOSSWOOD
AXEBURY
1
VAQUEREA
CARNELLOE
SILVERTON
5
33
THE FANGS
SOULGRAVE
27
BLACK ORE HILLS
BLIHAI
TARRASINE
THE GRAVES


MARZAKOL
IDERAG
ARALOGES
CHANSHI
KURSAN
HALI
THE HIGH SEA
VERDEN FOREST
FARTRADER RIVER
WYRM'S DEEP
CYROS
ILNOTH
LONGDALE
THORNSWILD WOOD
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ORDEN
ARVALE CITY
WOODROE
ROCKPORT
OLDARCH FOREST
FAIR HAVEN
SALTWITCH SWAMP
LAEON RIVER
6
21
18
14
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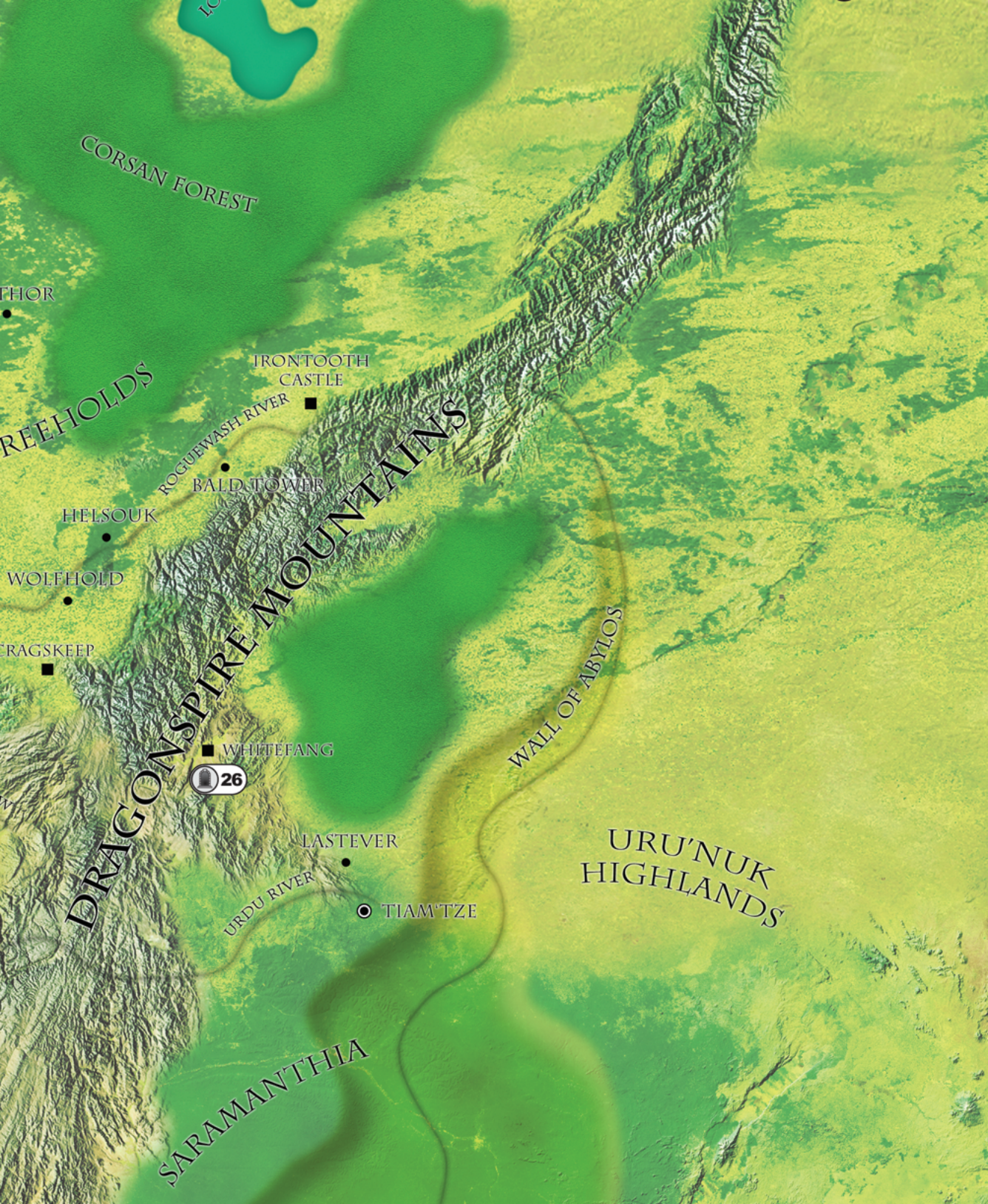
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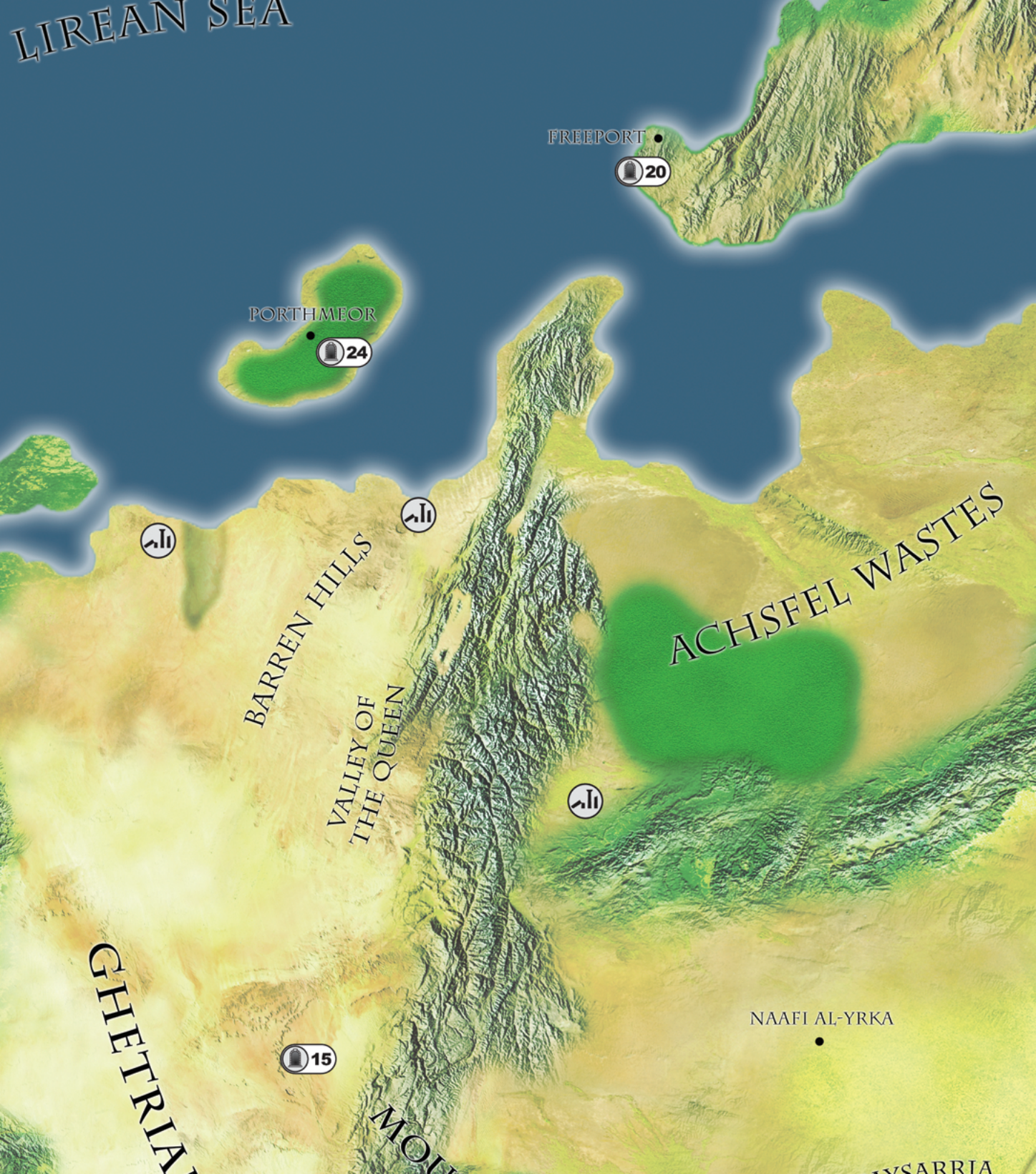
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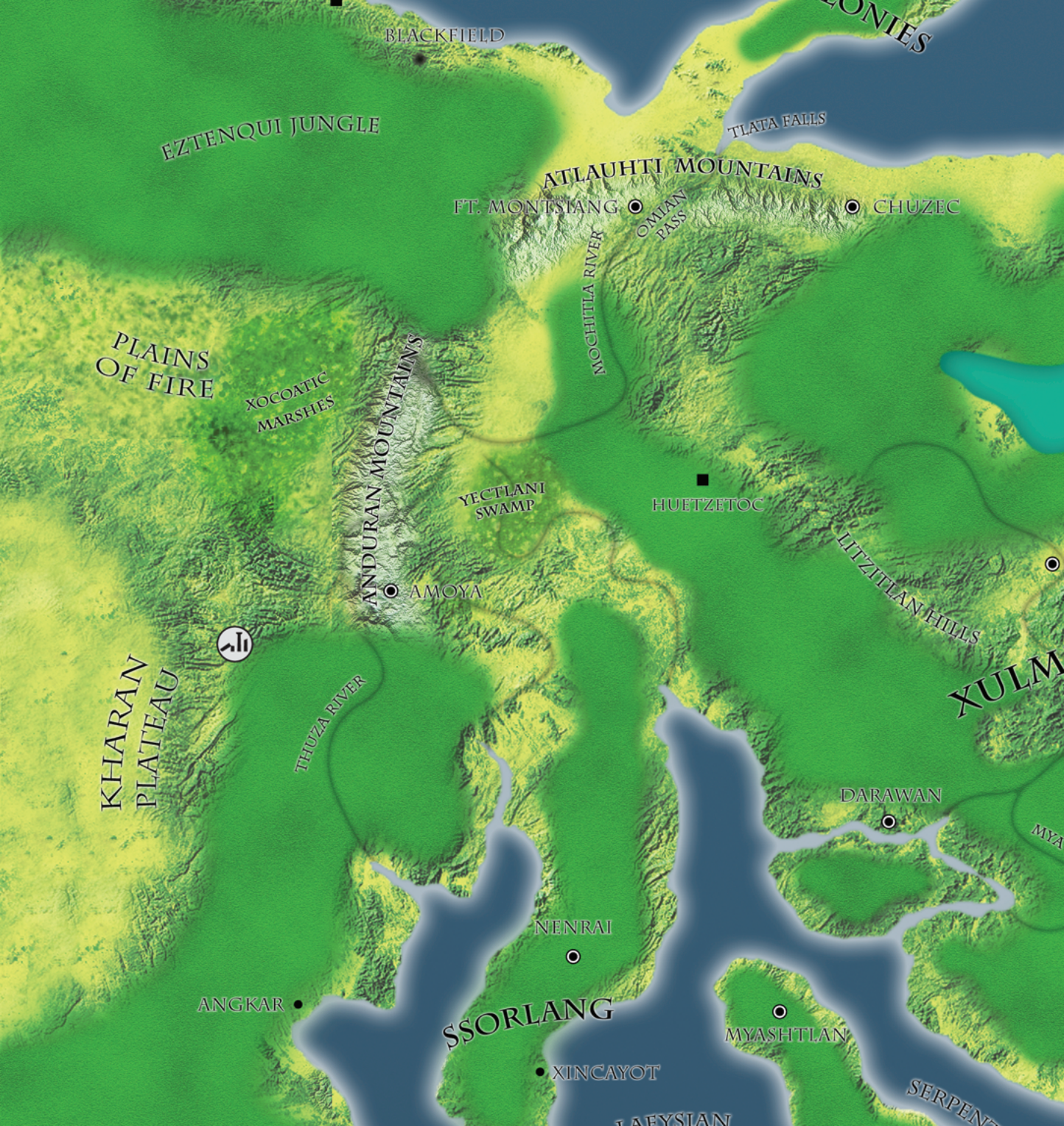
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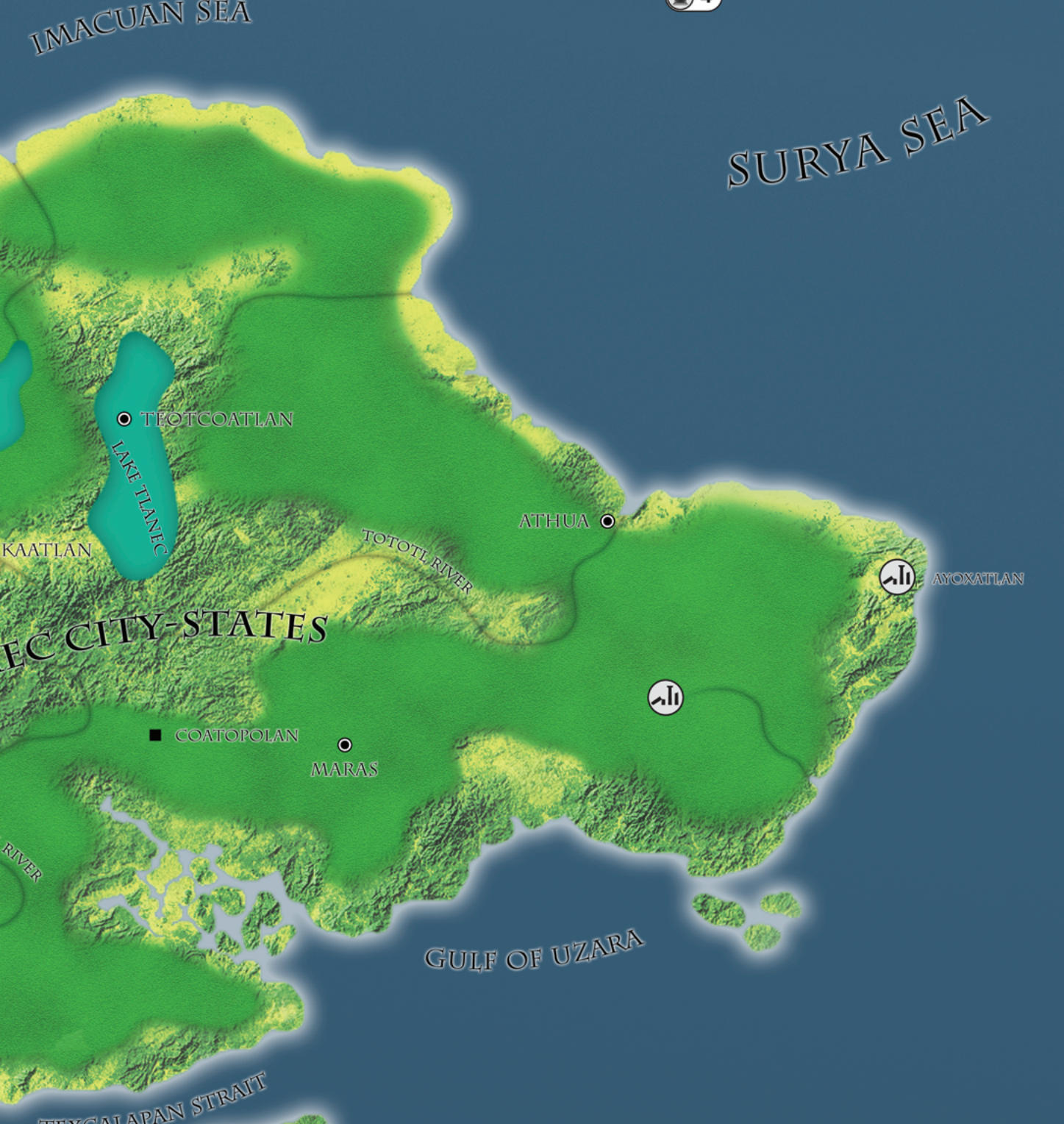
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HERRENIA MOU
THE ISLES OF THARNAKA
SYAXAR
KHIAZAN RIVER
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N DESERT
NTAINS OF THE
FIFTH PRINCE
QUAYSARRIA
32
SHADHALIA
GLOOM MARSHES
OF TASHGAR
SAKHAEN TAIR
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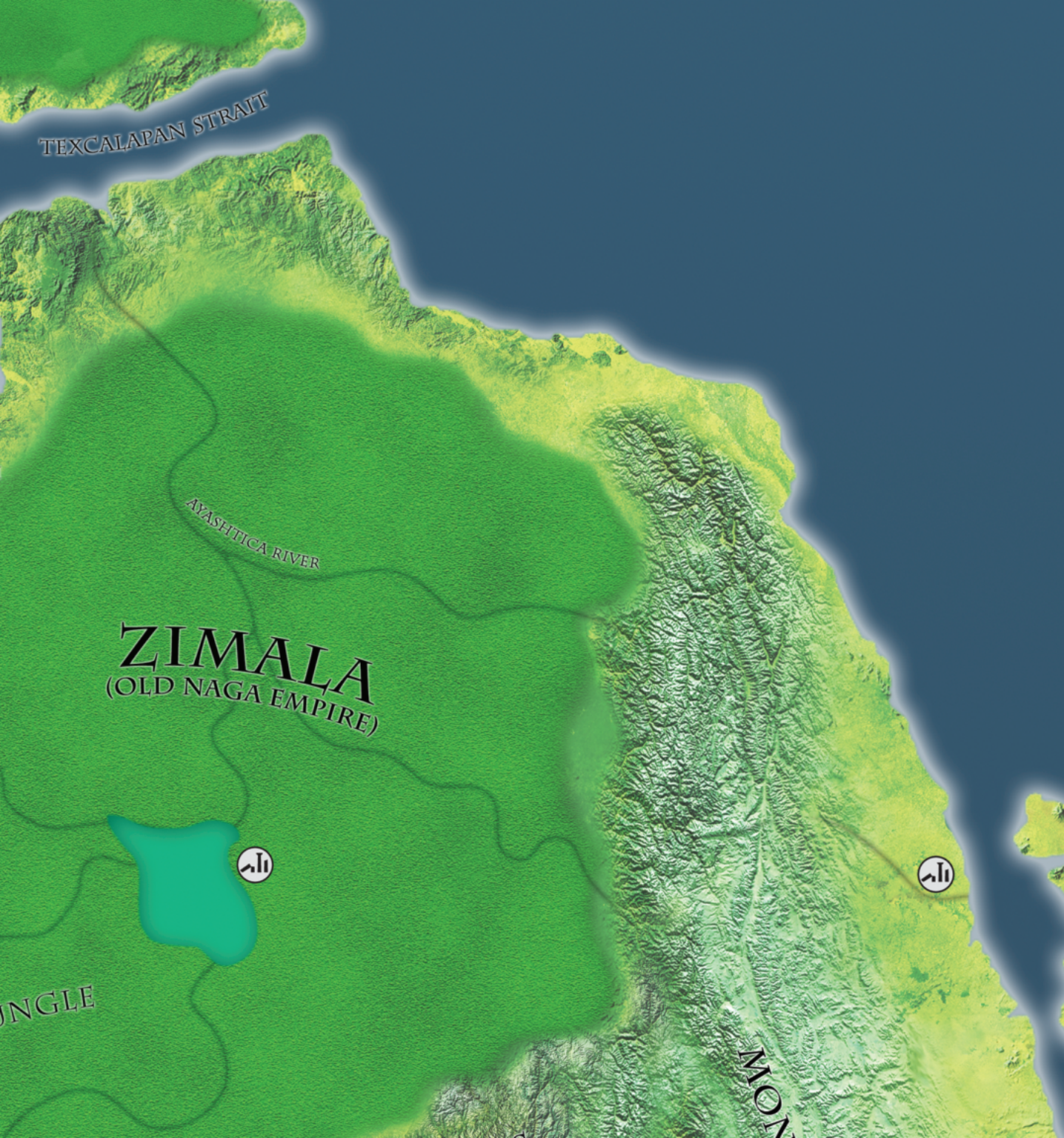
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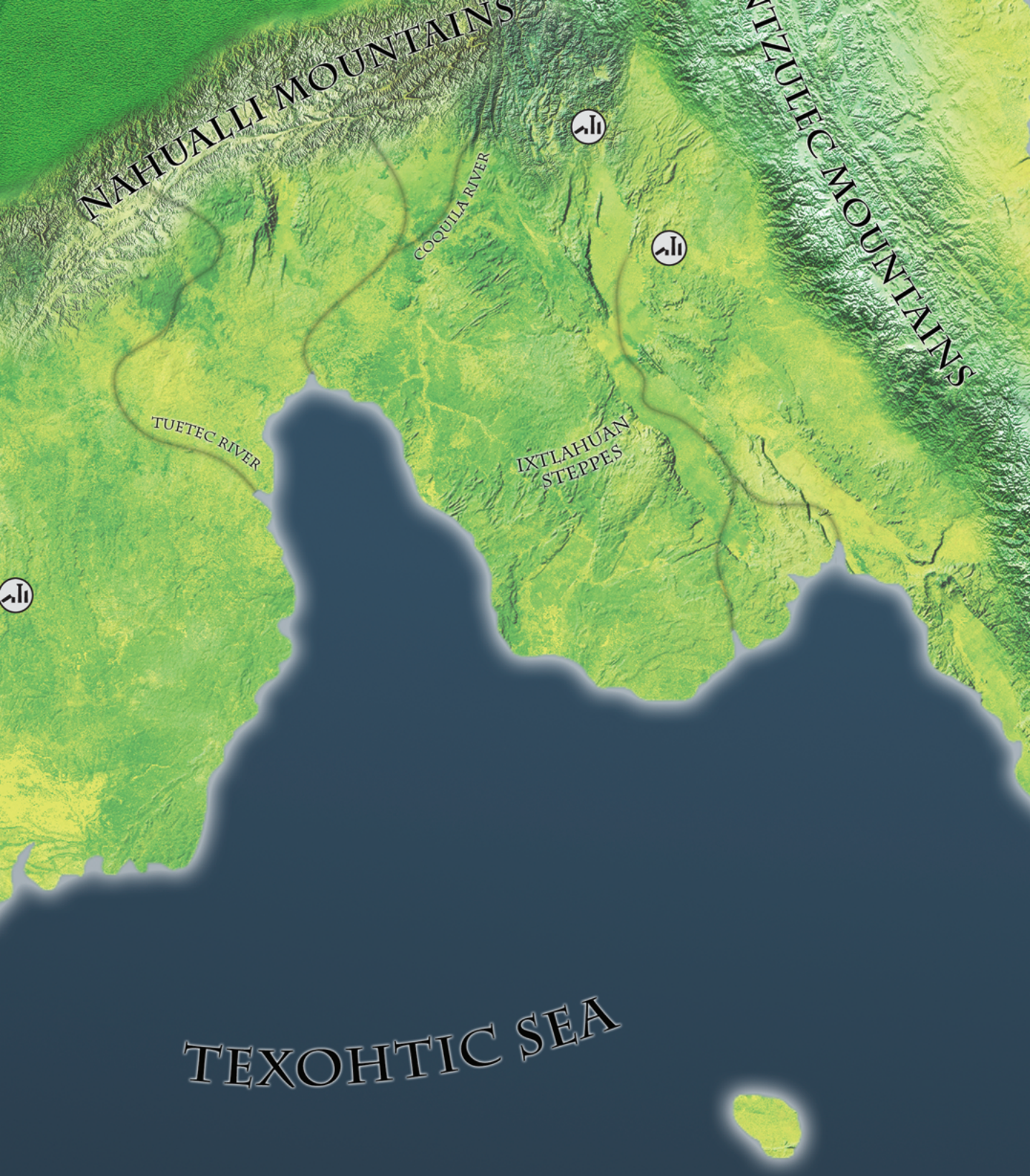
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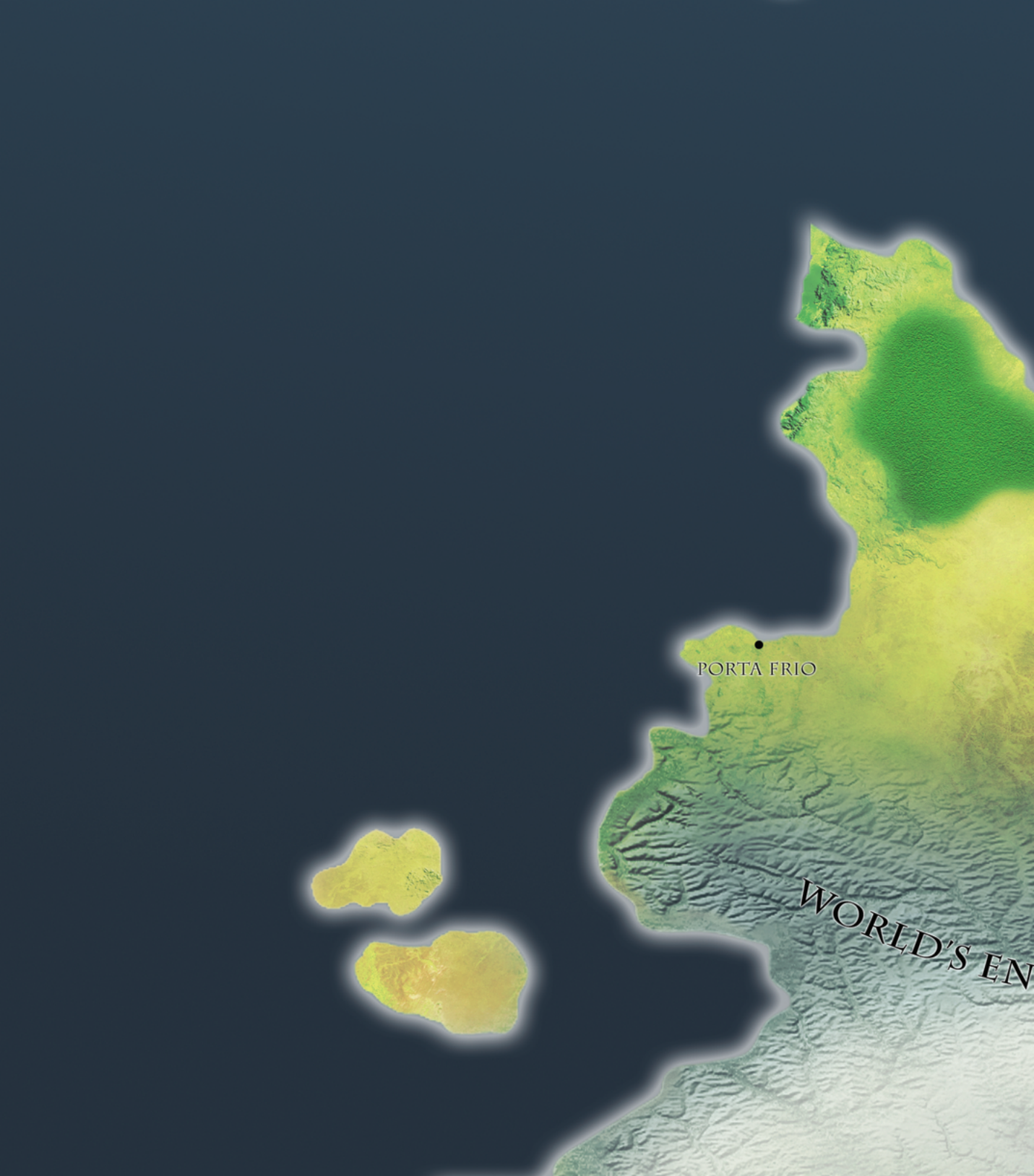
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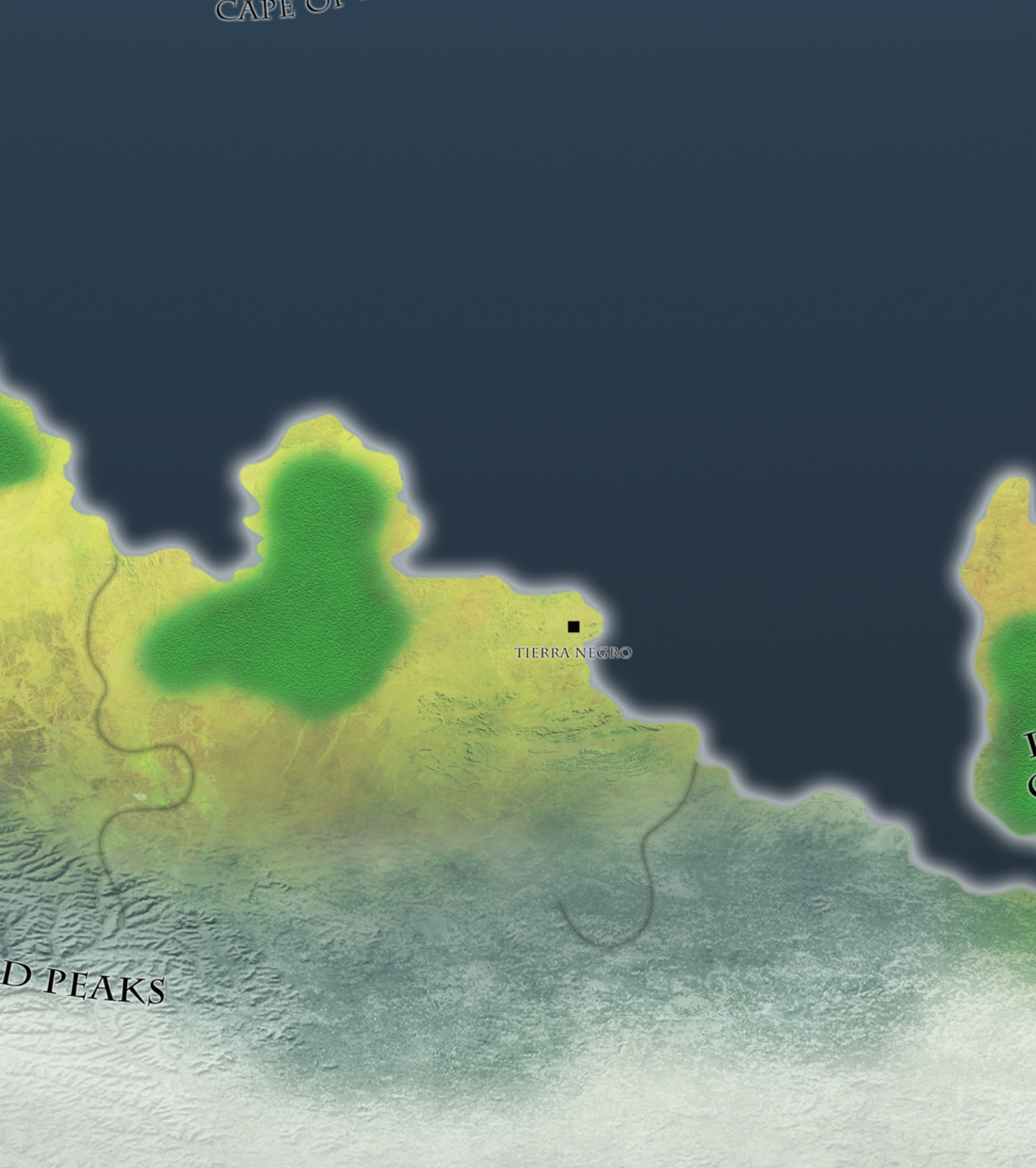
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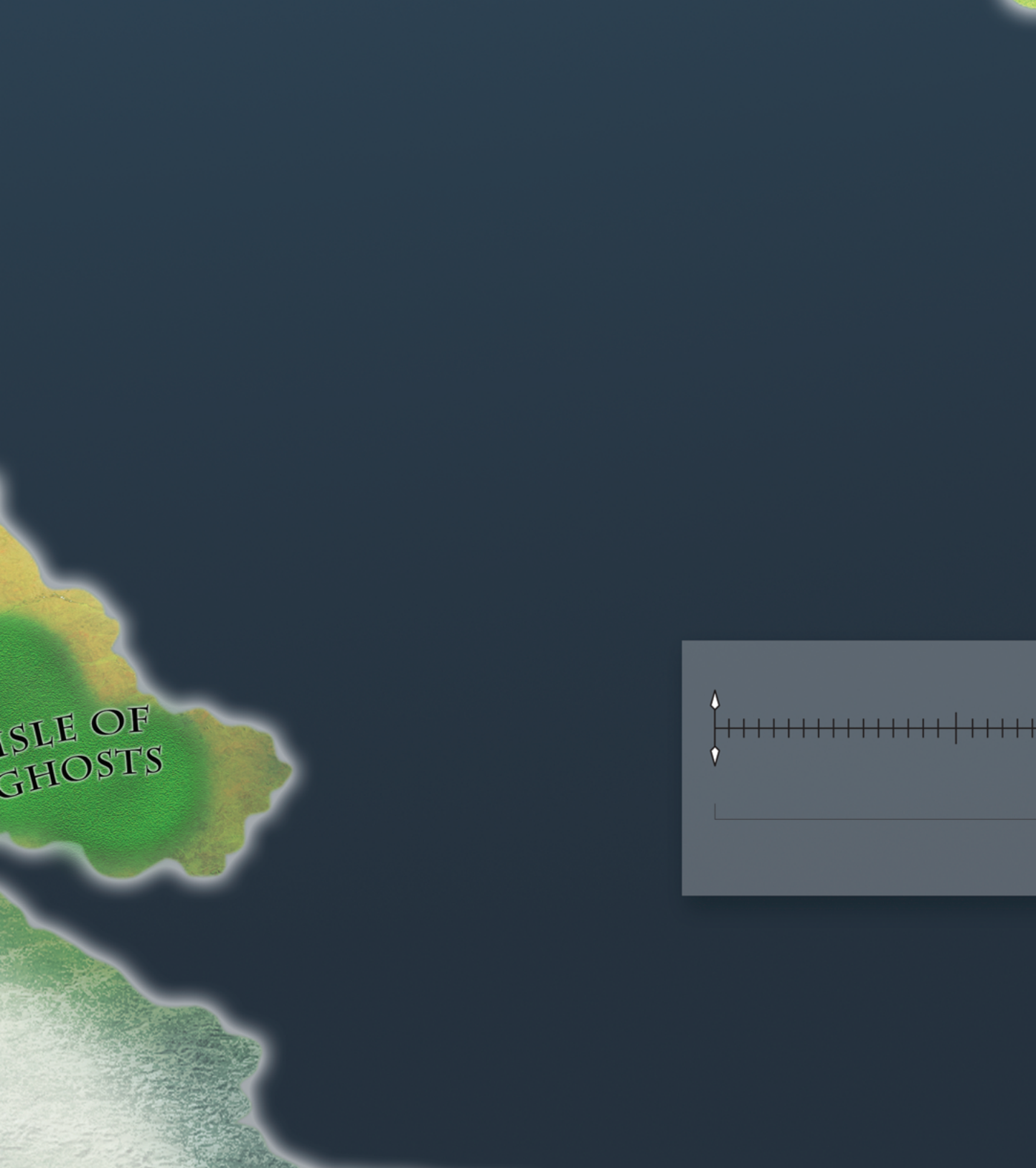
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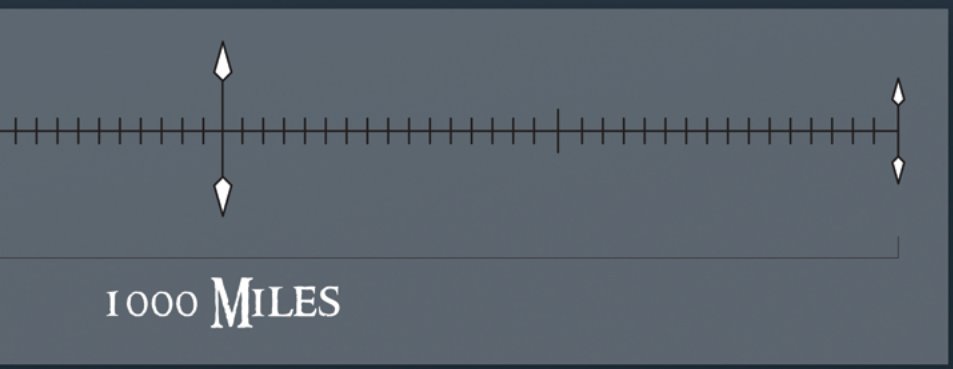
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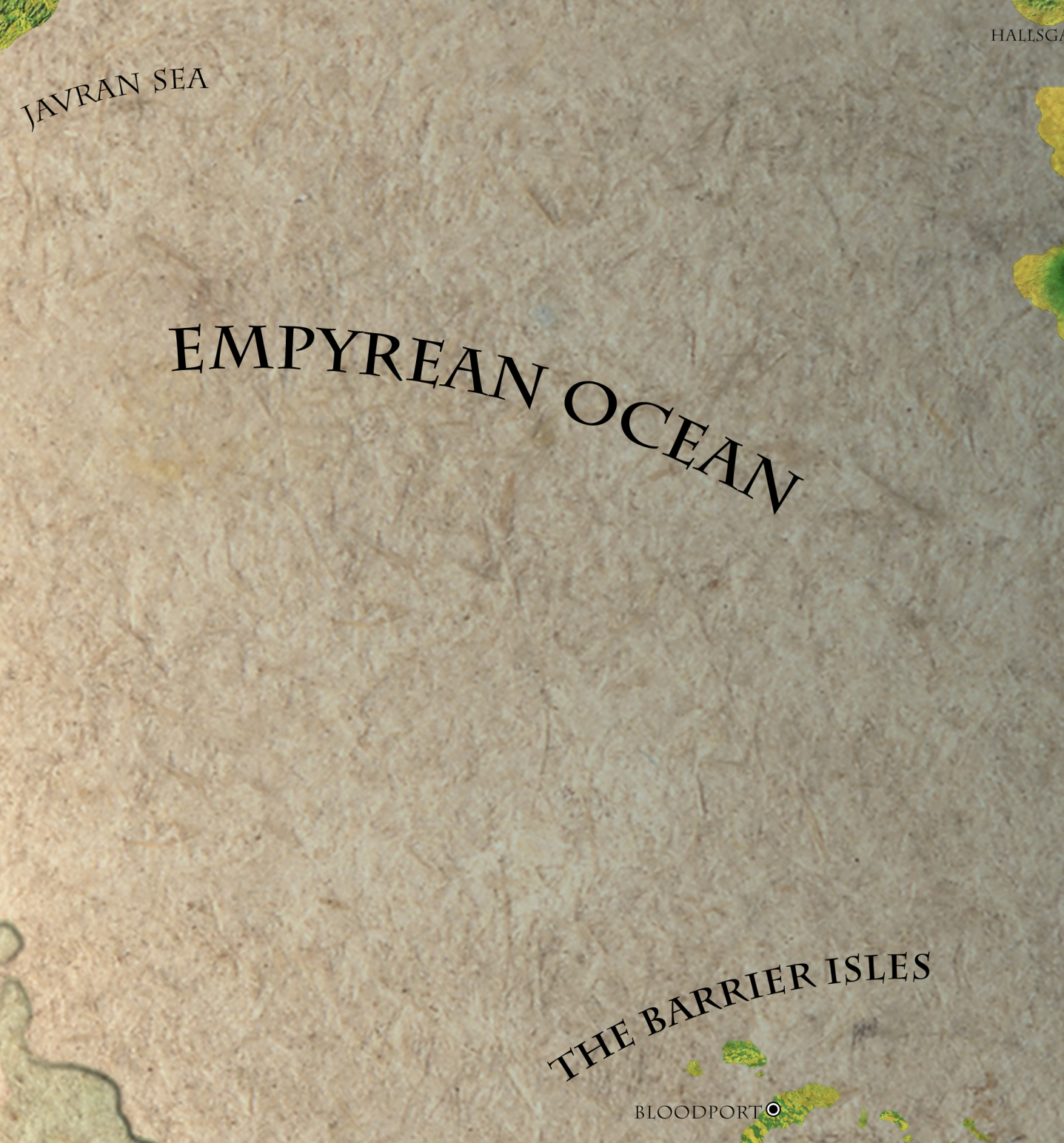
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Dungeon Crawl Classics #35
Gazetteer of the Known Realms

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by Mike Ferguson, Jeff LaSala, and Harley Stroh

the
World
of
Áereth
GM's Guide

Dungeon Crawl Classics #35

GM's Guide to the Known Realms

Contents

Introduction 2
Chapter 1: Creation and Early History 4
Chapter 2: Deities, Demigods, and Infernal Powers 16
Chapter 3: Bestiary of the Known Realms 49
Chapter 4: Setting Rules 75
Chapter 5: Rogues' Gallery and Hall of Heroes 97
Chapter 6: Zero-Level Characters 117
Chapter 7: Paths of Adventure 123
Appendix 1: DCC Index 127
Credits and Afterword 133
Legal 135
DCC Character Sheet 136

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Introduction

Welcome to the Known Realms, a world of adventure, arcane secrets, and untold riches, where a sharp sword and a shirt of mail are a warrior's only defense against wicked mages, monstrous hordes, and fierce dragons of yore.

Culled from the pages of an ancient tome, the Known Realms represent the scribes' world simulated by the d20 rule system. Whether the codex is the spurious work of a dark-age madman or a medieval tome of esoteric conjecture will never be known. What is certain is that it provides a wealth of information for the modern gamer.

During the arduous process of translation, concessions were made to fit the Known Realms to the d20 system, but otherwise the spirit and tone of the tome was left unchanged. Until such a time that the lost companion tomes are discovered and translated, it falls to you, the GM, to answer the lingering mysteries and fill in the unknown realms.

A World of High Adventure

The world of Áereth is foremost one of legendary adventure. Noble knights ride to the ends of the earth questing against legendary dragons and wicked warlords. Mighty wizards wage eldritch battle atop high mountain peaks and in the halls of lonely towers. Cunning rogues creep along rooftops of smoky cities, stealing past lethal traps and demonic sentries. Devout priests fight for the common good, bringing freedom to enslaved masses. Fearless adventurers unearth forgotten tombs and plumb the depths of endless caverns, ride at the head of armies, and cast powerful spells that shape the very nature of reality.

The Known Realms are vast. Many of its locales are recorded in the Dungeon Crawl Classic series of adventure modules, but these are only the first, tentative steps into the world of Áereth.

Looking for a shadowy port to sell your ill-gotten loot? Wicked Punjar beckons. Craving high intrigue and backstabbing politics? The Council of Lords awaits your petition. Hungry for the wail of war horns and the crash of armies? The armies of Leherti cry out for your command. Want to carve out your own fief from the untracked wilderness? The wild borderlands call. Eager to sink your glowing blade into the gullet of a dragon and ransack its fabled trove? Look no further. All these adventures and more are contained herein.

While the scribes of the codex outlined their world, it falls to you and your players to bring the Known Realms to life. Bind it to your home campaign, ravage its lands with the march of armies and dragon fire, make its people come alive through the heroics of your players.

Our work with the codex is finished. The legends of Áereth have only begun.

Styles of Play

Just as PCs gain levels and face more challenging puzzles and foes, so too must a campaign world evolve to paint an ever-broader horizon, luring heroes with treasures and ambitions just beyond their reach. As a world, Áereth can accommodate any number of styles of play, ranging from classic dungeon crawl to convoluted court intrigue. GMs need simply hold to a simple rule: Always make the PCs the focus of your world.

With this in mind, consider the following adventure suggestions for your evolving campaign:

Low-level PCs: Beginning and low-level PCs spend their time exploring nearby ruins, working as caravan guards, serving wizened sages, studying beneath noble knights, and fighting in merchant companies. Most settlements in the Northlands are isolated from their neighbors, and are forced to turn to unproven young heroes in times of desperation and need. The PCs might undertake short wilderness journeys, or the GMs may choose to simply assume that PCs begin their adventures at the

entrance of the dungeon. A band of low-level PCs can spend their first few levels simply exploring the surrounding lands, mapping out the wilderness and clearing dungeons and cave complexes of wicked creatures.

Mid-level PCs: Mid-level characters are often heroes who have carved out names for themselves. While not yet legends, they have established themselves as dangerous foes worthy of respect. These adventurers often travel far and wide, exploring the Southlands and Lostlands in the service of kings and regents, secret societies and knighthoods, or simply in the search of greater wealth and power. As renowned heroes, PCs quickly attract the notice of those more powerful than themselves. Some of these powers may choose to recruit the heroes to their noble causes; others may perceive the PCs as threats, and work to eradicate or corrupt the heroes before they grow into powerful threats.

High-level PCs: No longer the servants of emperors, high priests, or guildmasters, high-level PCs are these rulers, conquering existing kingdoms or carving new ones from the wilderness. Gathering wisdom, power, and fame, PCs undertake epic quests, riding at the head of armies, challenging dragons and demons alike. Only the fiercest or most numerous of foes present a challenge to a party of high-level PCs. As living legends, the heroes are responsible for defending their people from threats that can span entire planes. High-level games can also focus on the subtle plots of courtly intrigue, where a single careless phrase can plunge entire nations into war and chaos.

Epic-level PCs: Epic-level PCs can reshape the face of Áereth at their whim, rallying entire races to their cause, or laying waste to whole empires. Epic-level PCs are on the path to becoming minor divine powers and masters of Áereth. At this level, PCs can expect to regularly draw the attention of gods and infernal powers, working either with or against the PCs as suits their moods.

Contained Herein

The Known Realms are comprised of three continents: the Northlands, a collection of isolated kingdoms, faded empires, and majestic forests and mountains; the Southlands, a land of dense jungles and forgotten cities occupied by drakon and the ancient nagas; and the Lostlands, once the cradle of civilization, now a place of fearsome monsters and ancient, sand-swept ruins.

This boxed set contains the following:

Gazetteer of the Known Realms: a reference guide to the three continents, detailing the myriad nations, cultures, and monsters;

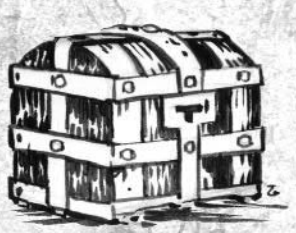
GM's Guide to the Known Realms: the book you hold in your hands, containing secrets and information crucial to running a campaign set in the Known Realms;

Dungeon Crawl Classics: Halls of the Minotaur: an introductory adventure designed to bring 0-level characters to 1st level and beyond;

Dungeon Crawl Classics: Vault of the Thief Lord: a challenging adventure designed for expert players and character levels 4-6, set in the deadly city of Punjar;

Three full-color maps detailing the vast sweep of the Known Realms; and

The Player's Map to the Known Realms, an incomplete map of the world for the players to complete in the course of their adventures.



Chapter 1
Creation and Early History

The summation below is gathered from the creation myths of many of Áereth's religions and cultures. No single church will cite this information in such a concise, comprehensive form, but if one made a painstaking study of the clergies of the Sancturn Pantheon, interviewed disciples of numerous demigods, and consulted scholars of the Triad, one might gather an account similar to the one below.

GMs are encouraged to alter this mythology as they see fit to better accommodate their campaigns. This is merely one possibility regarding the origins of Áereth.

In a formless age measureless to mortals, there arrived a clan of beings that theologians would one day name the Greater Gods. Leading them was the Triad, and the eldest among them was Choranus, the Seer Father and the figurehead of Law. At his side was his equal and consort Ildavir, the Giver of Form, and his brother, Centivus the Shaper. When the Triad and its kin entered the Void, its sole occupant, a being of Chaos known as Zhühn, fled before their luminous presence.

With the help of his children, Choranus began the creation of the world, a place of light, water, and air. He designed laws to govern the course of nature and the powers that could suspend them, setting the stage for impending life. Yet even as the Greater Gods forged this world, Zhühn extended his hands and unmade it, for ever was destruction swifter than creation. Again and again they fashioned their world anew and Zhühn, their Great Enemy, broke it apart. Choranus sought to bring order into the vast expanse, but Zhühn would allow only entropy.

After the Triad took counsel, they welcomed an assemblage of other gods to take part in creation. Most pivotal was the Sancturn Pantheon, divinities who sought refuge from the ruin of their previous home. The Triad granted them their protection and magnified their power. These divinities, later named the Lesser Gods by theologians, were exemplars of good, evil, and neutrality—moralistic ideologies carried over from their former home. Once the Sancturns had settled themselves among the Outer Planes, the Triad invited them to take part in its designs.

With their collective work, Choranus oversaw the construction of a ghostly new world—a place of raw magical convergence suffused with the spirit of nature and the collective power of the Greater and Lesser Gods. Under the direction of Ildavir, the gods gave physical substance to the world by drawing upon the Inner Planes, and Choranus set it spinning within the spiral arrays of the Material Plane.

Though he fought to unmake it, Zhühn's power was outmatched. Dwelling in the corners of his diminishing Void, Zhühn recoiled at the sight of such enduring creation. To him, the existence of anything but the Void itself was a blasphemy, for he was a being of chaos and oblivion and knew only those. Now light and life flourished, spoiling the endless gloom. This new world, having survived the Great Enemy's will to destroy, has come to be known in the current age as Áereth—derived from a phrase in the Old Giant tongue meaning "where we walk."

Seeing it safe from Zhühn's negation, Choranus at last asked Centivus to devise the first creatures to inhabit Áereth. As his brother set to work, the Seer Father and Giver of Form rejoiced at his artistry and lent their skills to his. From the hands of the Triad, many beings entered the world. This was an antediluvian age of legendary beasts, a time when rocs alone soared the skies, krakens swam the depths, and colossal worms bored the earth unchallenged. Ever was Centivus the artist, his divine imagination given free rein to shape new beasts. This he did with the counsel of Ildavir, whose knowledge of nature and balance lent focus to his work. It was she who infused his creations with life and substance, giving each the ability to proliferate its own kind. At last, Choranus decided which would be given sentience, sharp intellect, or the gift of magic.

The three gods continued to create, experimenting with flesh and blood to set a multitude of strange and monstrous creatures free to roam all the lands. From these

beginnings the animal features of the Known Realms find their origin. When Centivus designed the first felines, Choranus marveled again at his brother's skill, and he gave the most powerful among these features like those of he and his consort: fair faces crowned with flowing hair. These became the first sphinxes, and they were graced with wisdom and prescience. The next creatures were serpentine, and Choranus smiled at their colorful, scaled bodies, and he gave them, too, faces like the gods' own. These became the nagas, and they were graced with cunning and a talent for sorcery.

Seeing the need for greater balance in the world, Ildavir began to populate Áereth with a host of lesser forms, taking her inspiration from the great works of Centivus. These became the animals, and they would thrive in all climates and terrains and rule the wild places. From sphinxes, Ildavir created lions and great cats of all varieties. From nagas, she created reptiles and all species of serpents. From rocs, she created birds, and from the great ocean dwellers, she created fish. These new beasts were at first larger than their eventual progeny, and are known in the present world as dire animals.

Then Choranus crafted a race formed fully in the gods' own image. This effort took the form of titans, large of stature and great in strength. Intending the titans to rule over all others, he found that they did not obey the edicts intended for them. They became a race of discord—seeded, perhaps, by the subtle hand of Zhühn—and the titans went their separate ways and withdrew to the mountainous corners of the world. The magic within them adapted their bodies to the regions in which they chose to dwell, and their power slowly declined. They became the giants, lesser forms of the titans. Lost in their own selfish struggles, the giants abandoned their heritage and forsook the gods.

Disappointed in the fallibility of the titans, Choranus turned to Centivus again. He asked him to devise a ruling race, one that perfected on the forms that came before. As his younger brother set to work on these next creations, Choranus delighted at the beauty of their draconic form. Cunning as the nagas, they possessed the strength of titans and the wisdom of sphinxes. Ildavir gave them life in the cradle of a mountain valley, and Choranus gave them sovereign minds. The Seer Father also granted them profound skill with magic that they might shape their civilizations and defend themselves against enemies who would supplant them. These beings were the first dragons.

As the most intelligent creatures on Áereth, and possessing breaths of deadly elemental power, dragons lorded over all others. At their head, Choranus placed four avatars shaped much like the titans but draconic in feature. These were the Dragon Kings, ambassadors of the gods, given the task of relaying the laws of Choranus to the dragons and those in their charge.

At this time, Choranus longed to recreate his attempt with the titans, this time on a smaller, more numerous scale. Taking inspiration from his own family, he created the smaller humanoid races that would serve the dragons in their mighty empire. In the likeness of Ireth, his sagacious, eldest daughter, he fashioned the elves. For Daenthar, his stout and industrious eldest son, Choranus hewed the dwarves. From the image of Poderon, his good-humored, hard-working son, he forged the gnomes. For the harmony of Olidyra, his diminutive, wayward daughter, he conceived the halflings. Foreseeing the eventual rise of these humanoid races, Choranus at last created humans, a people who would embody the virtues—and failings—of all others. One by one, these five races revealed themselves, and they were at first wary of the great beasts that ruled the land. As they increased in number, the intelligent creatures that came before began to contend with them. In time, some adopted the humanoids as a master might foster an apprentice, beginning with the dragons. As intended, the elves, dwarves, gnomes, halflings, and humans became as servitors to the wiser, more powerful dragons.

Watching the works of their superiors, some of the Lesser Gods grew jealous and began to experiment with the powers of creation, giving rise to goblinkind and many others. Hags, harpies, ogres, and trolls numbered among the many monstrous denizens. Affronted by these bastard creations, Ildavir appealed to her consort and his brother. With their approval, Ildavir countered with new creations of her own. Beings such as centaurs, merfolk, satyrs, sea cats, treants, and all things fey came from this time.

The ethics of law and chaos, loyalty and disobedience, were in flux within Áereth. Each race fought for its place in the young world and many refused to bow to the lordship of the Dragon Kings, sovereignty decreed by Choranus himself. Zhühn, seeking to subvert the work of creation, sent forth his mightiest servant, a fallen titan named Cadixtat that the Great Enemy had fostered since that race's birth. Once instrumental in the titans' defiance against the gods, Cadixtat, the most powerful of his kind, now marched across the face of Áereth sewing chaos and disloyalty wherever he went. Empowered with a portion of Zhühn's own anarchic power, even the Dragon Kings dared not challenge him. Unwilling to allow the Great Enemy this heavy-handed stratagem, Choranus sent forth a sentinel of law named Teleus to defend Áereth, imbuing him with some of the Seer Father's own axiomatic power.

The battle between Teleus and Cadixtat spanned the world and carried far into the Reign of Dragons, as the

law of Choranus and the chaos of Zhühn sought to rule the fate of Áereth. This Great Conflict of ideologies, physical, and spiritual power never knew a victor, however, for when Teleus at last disarmed Cadixtat of his Axe of Unmaking, Choranus recalled his champion. Content to allow the absence of both ethical extremes, the Triad commanded the rest of the Greater Gods to stay their influence as well. In their place, they charged the Sancturn Pantheon to watch over the mortal races of Áereth and allow their morals of good, evil, and neutrality to hold sway. The Greater Gods would remain only the distant figureheads of creation.

Unable to exert his power physically upon the world again, Zhühn endeavored to dissolve it slowly, piece by piece, with the patience only a creature of the Void could understand. Though he was great in power, many of the gods of good and evil would forever oppose him.

The time had come for mortals, not gods, to shape the course of the world.

Early History

The Reign of Dragons

From the moment they entered the world, the dragons were lords, and at their head were placed the immortal Dragon Kings. Cast in the likeness of the gods themselves and infused with draconic might, they were paragons of virtue who ruled over the dragons and their great empires. Embodying the elements of fire, lightning, cold, and acid, each was affiliated with a direction of the world itself.

In addition to their roles as rulers, the Dragon Kings served as mediators between the gods and mortals, delivering divine will to Áereth. Under their wisdom, the dragons' dominion flourished during a time of peace and discovery. Many beautiful things were wrought and many magics woven. Mountainous cities were constructed like vast aeries and sprawling temples were raised in swamplands, fertile steppes, and secret valleys. There was no soil on the surface of Áereth that had not felt the talons of a dragon walk upon it.

As the eons passed, the gods began to look to their newer creations, and the influence of the Dragon Kings over their own vassals waned. Sensing their own fading power, they erected the Vault of the Dragon Kings deep within the Frosteye Mountains. It became a haven for dragons who wished to hold onto the glory and virtues that their empire once held dear. Within lay the Pool of

Dreams, a reliquary that cared for the souls of dragons that passed from the mortal world. The Pool would preserve the collective knowledge and memories of the dragons until the gods favored the world's firstborn again.

In the creation of the Pool of Dreams, the Dragon Kings of the East and West sacrificed their power and succumbed to death. Unforeseen by the remaining two, this tumultuous event divided dragonkind as never before, for now dragons had witnessed the frailty of their lieges. Some retained their loyalty to the remaining Kings, while others claimed that a new era had begun and sought to grab the power for themselves. From this ideological rift, their magic became manifest. With the march of time, each faction evolved into the variances of metallic and chromatic. Abandoning the Kings and the gods they served, the rebellious chromatic faction began to lose their luster, their scales dulling to the matte hues of the color spectrum.

When the transformation was nearly completed, a great red wyrm named Sevrylascarethiin—or Sunscratch in the Common tongue—rose to prominence. Together with his brethren, he waged war against the remaining Dragon Kings and their followers and personally struck down the King of the South at its outset. The King of the North in turn slew Sunscratch but himself fell gravely wounded in the struggle.

With the death of their champion, the chromatic dragons fled the ancestral valleys, while the remaining Dragon King retreated into the Vault and barred its doors. The metallic dragons disbanded, disillusioned by their loss, and left their homeland as well. As the centuries passed, the Vault was lost and its memory passed from common knowledge into legend.

The Reign of Cats

When the dragons ruled Áereth with their great empires, many intelligent and ambitious creatures vied for petty dominance under their expansive shadow. When the Dragon Kings and their vassals fell from power, the first to walk abroad uncontested in the world at large was the sphinx.

Believing themselves to be paragons of physical and mental perfection, the sphinxes saw themselves as caretakers of the world. They used their wits and their appetites to maintain order among the lesser races by devouring those who could not answer their riddles. In the eastern deserts and hills, the collective might of the sphinxes elevated them above all others. Building upon the ruins of the dragons who came before and studying their abandoned works, the sphinxes united as a single power. Any enemies who attempted to challenge them were swiftly cowed or devoured.

Seeing the need for servants, the leonine race ceased devouring the numerous humanoids and began to subjugate them instead with the persuasive acuity only a sphinx can employ. They coaxed the elves from the forests of Ahna-Vithyre with cryptic promises of magic

and bribed the dwarves from the Gorzeruun Mountains with promises of mithral and gold. With riddles and promised knowledge, they lured the gnomes from their overrun homeland, and the halflings of Gadjarria dwelt already upon the doorstep of their desert home. Humans, a race of uncertain desires, were brought under wing with sheer aggression. Even great numbers of hobgoblins, haler than their goblin cousins, were seized by the sphinxes for their own purposes.

Some resisted. The dwarves who refused the lure retreated to depths into which they knew the sphinxes would not venture, and these would become deep dwarves and duergar. Some gnomes, upon reaching the sphinx homeland, found hidden tunnels in the earth and delved deeper still, eventually becoming the svirfneblin known today. Those elves who refused to leave their forests were the wood elves, while sea elves retreated deeper into their waters when the sphinxes approached.

With the lesser races in tow, the sphinxes carved a vast empire throughout the Lostlands and named it Khonsuria after its first pharaoh. The humanoid servants were viewed as pets or pack animals to the sphinxes; useful, even affectionately cared for at times, but patronized nonetheless. While some humanoids were afforded a measure of esteem within Khonsurian society, even the greatest among these were considered beneath the lowliest of sphinxes. The empire expanded its borders north and west, reaching its paws partially into the Northlands.

A family of androsphinxes ruled the young empire, and the third such pharaoh was a brutal tyrant whose cruelty tested the loyalty of his own kind. His daughter, however, was a high priestess of Amun Tor and was beloved by her people and even their humanoid servants. Legends say that Amun Tor himself consorted with the beautiful gynosphinx and that their child was destined from conception to rule the gilded empire. Whatever her origin, the last and most enduring sovereign to rule the Khonsurian Empire was a Queen. With the approval of the sphinxes and the gods themselves, she dethroned her wicked father and took his place.

Her name was Ankharet the Blessed, an immortal gynosphinx who ruled the Empire for prosperous millennia. She took as her consort the great gold wyrm Kozuragen, who had served the Dragon Kings in his youth and fought against the armies of Sunscratch in his prime. Now he sat at Ankharet's side and offered the council and wisdom of his long life.

Under the Queen's guidance, each species of sphinx was given a role within their society. The noble androsphinxes became the empire's prophets, leaders, and priests, serving as councilors and interpreters of the Queen's law. Gynosphinxes served as Ankharet's ambassadors, and carried her diplomacy into foreign lands. The bloodthirsty hieracosphinxes served as the warriors of the empire, defending it from all enemies. Criosphinxes carried the Queen's directives to her humanoid subjects, overseeing the construction of pyramids and monuments to the glory of Khonsuria and its Queen.

The empire was not without its insurrections. A faction of elven rebels sought freedom from the desert sands and searched in vain for the tunnels that the early svirfneblin had used long before. When their brethren refused to join them in their escape, the rebels named them traitors. The sphinxes, deigning not to risk their own against the insurgents, sent the loyal elves to retrieve their wayward kin. The Kindred War ensued, and the rebels found their only escape to be an ominous rift called the Devil's Cauldron. Corrupting fumes seeped into the elves, seeding their hearts with evil and initiating a slow change within their bodies. Fleeing into the chthonian depths, the rebel elves found their own dark paths in history, heard the call of a goddess, and would one day be known to the surface world as the drow.

The Reign of Serpents

Shortly after the rise of Khonsuria and across the Surya Sea, another creature came into its own. On Zimala, the Island of Obsidian, the totemic nagas had united their tribes and established their own budding empire. Though the dragon empire that preceded them had been unrivaled in its power, the nagas held conviction that they had been created first, that the limbless serpentine form was one of perfection. The god Madrah, they knew, had been charged to oversee the lands of the west, and though the nagas themselves varied in their chosen virtues, all paid homage to him and the spirits he engendered.

With the help of lizardfolk, marsh-dwelling neighbors north of Zimala whom the nagas had coerced into alliance, the nagas began to expand their lands. As their empire grew, the god Madrah took an empress to be his consort and from her egg was hatched a female they named Cynhuara. When the empress died suspiciously, he took a consort of common blood and she hatched a male they named Axaluatl. Immortal nagas of great power, the two half-siblings were revered by their kind as gods, and in their name stately temples were raised even before their coming of age.

Eldest of the two, Cynhuara was given the Zimalan Empire to rule as her own. However, she eschewed the role of Empress, instead establishing the Naga Council. Populated with all species of nagas, it was predominantly comprised of wise and benevolent teotl-nagas (guardian nagas). Axaluatl became an emissary for the Council who traveled abroad and explored beyond the

empire's borders. Incredulous that his half-sister would relinquish the power of regency, he plotted in secret to become Emperor. Axaluatl's conspiracies included a number of tlanti-nagas (dark nagas) of sinister power.

The Naga Council was given the task of overseeing all aspects of the Zimalan Empire with a view toward its eternal preservation and the needs of its subjects. Cynhuara herself sat at the Council's head, and together they led the Empire into a peaceful coexistence with many races for long years. Within Zimala and some of the lands north of the Island, the nagas were dominant, and those who challenged them were struck down with fang and spell. Within naga society, the tlanti-nagas served as explorers and military leaders along with the ehecatl-nagas (spirit nagas). The mali-nagas (earth nagas) and atl-nagas (water nagas), by far the most numerous, served as warriors on land and sea whenever force was required.

Under the teotls' guidance—and against Axaluatl's—the humans of neighboring lands were taken into Zimalan protection. Existing formerly in a loose society of feuding tribes, the humans were inlaid into naga society like an intricate mosaic and were taught minor magics and the arts of medicine and industry. As with nobles of modern Áereth, nagas and their human retainers would often form strong bonds of friendship. As apprentices and servants, the humans helped the nagas build their glorious cities and raise pyramids and temples in devotion to Madrah and his divine offspring, Cynhuara and Axaluatl.

The Clash of Empires

Both the Khonsurian and Zimalan Empires contended with many hostile creatures, for they were wealthy and harbored many coveted secrets. Humanoid and monstrous enemies arose and fought to raise their own nations, but the might and magic of the Serpents and Cats put down every challenge.

Yet the two great empires remained unaware of each other for centuries, with only the whispered rumor of a faraway empire ever crossing the ocean that divided them. Ankharet the Sphinx Queen forbade her people to fly west across the sea, for they believed that only the Realm of the Dead lay there. To travel to where the sun met its demise each day was to join the Accursed. The Naga Council, meanwhile, did not seek to expand its holdings beyond their own continents and the far north was filled with barbaric peoples not worth the effort to conquer. They had little desire to sail the oceans.

The ventures of Axaluatl, however, brought him at last to the far north, where he heard still more rumors of the Khonsurian Empire. With his entourage of supporters, he crossed the Surya Sea and there at last met the outlying sphinxes. When Ankharet learned of the Zimalan Empire, she embraced the discovery. Her people believed then that the gods had pushed the Realm of the Dead further to the west and in doing so had revealed new allies.

In the minds of some, the discovery prompted dreams of invasion and further conquest. Yet Cynhuara and the

Naga Council extended the tail of alliance and mutual trade. Ankharet responded in kind. Though they were great rivals in power, each empire agreed to maintain peace, for neither desired the other's land and there was much they could share.

For long years, both empires prospered. Beseeching the gods of the earth and sea, the nagas and sphinxes called upon great elemental magics and drew up a chain of islands across the Surya Sea. With the labor of millions, nonpareil magic, and a technology now lost from the world, the nagas and sphinxes constructed Ayoxatlan, a causeway of colossal scale that stretched across the miles of the sea. Using the god-given islands as their primary support, the bridge allowed for easy passage between the two empires. Though a sphinx could fly the distance unladen, the journey was overly taxing and they welcomed the convenience of a paved roadway where they could cross the water with their humanoid attendants and other trade goods. In the tongue of sphinxes, the marvelous span was known as Harak Manu, or "bridge to the west."

This golden era came to a close, however, when corruption entered the heart of Ankharet the Blessed. What led to the great Queen's fall none can accurately say, whether she was lured into darkness by the whisperings of Zhühn or whether her soul had been steeped in depravity from the very beginning. Perhaps it was her acquisition of the mysterious Shadowcrown that darkened her heart or the many potent gifts given her by the nagas. Yet even as the final stones were laid in place within Ayoxatlan, so did Ankharet and the wicked Axaluatl agree to a secret plan of mutual benefit.

In secret, Ankharet began to prey upon the servitor races—and even her own kind—as a vampire would its victims. Her deepest crime was the murder of her own consort, Kozuragen. To disguise her sin and set in motion her plans with Axaluatl, the Queen publicly accused the Naga Council for his death, claiming it had sent assassins to kill both she and her consort in a bid to sow confusion for an inevitable naga attack.

The sphinxes' faith in their revered Queen was absolute. Without hesitation, the sphinxes turned baleful eyes upon the Serpents across the sea. Led by the Queen's own daughter, Meraph the Golden, the Khonsurian Empire launched a vengeful crusade against the Zimalan Empire. Fury at the death of her father burned in the heart of Meraph.

The nagas were ill prepared for the invasion. Cynhuara, shocked at Ankharet's accusation, sought to calm the attacking sphinxes and clear away the misunderstanding. When she confronted the arriving Meraph, Axaluatl at last betrayed his half-sister and used his magic to silence her. The half-dragon sphinx, blinded by rage and unwilling to hear diplomacy, killed Cynhuara with the help of her elite warriors. The Naga Council fought back, but half its members were slain outright. An all-out war had begun between the powerful races. The nagas collapsed the bridge Ayoxatlan to prevent easy access for the Khonsurian armies. As if both empires had lost the favor of their gods, the isles upon which the great causeway had been built sank into the sea again.

Axaluatl, whose agreement with Ankharet only included the removal of Cynhuara and the Naga Council, realized that the Queen had betrayed him. She sought now to eliminate the Zimalan Empire altogether. Enraged at her duplicity, Axaluatl led his subjects in frequent counterattacks. For years, the two empires struggled against one another, Serpent against Cat. The nagas were nearly annihilated in the great war.

The War of Brothers

An androsphinx of prophetic power named Khubsheth, who was a disciple of Choranus and the consort of Meraph, discerned the corruption of the Sphinx Queen. He saw the Naga Council to be innocent of the crime for which the war had been waged, and revealed the truth to Meraph and her wrathful armies on the eve of the nagas' destruction. When the sphinxes halted their attack, Meraph, stunned by the magnitude of her mother's treachery and the genocide Meraph herself had begun, fled in grief. Khubsheth pursued his beloved and asked her to return with him and confront the Queen.

Yet Ankharet's loyal subjects were many, and sphinx turned against sphinx in a great civil war known as the War of Brothers. Years of bloody conflict ensued, ending at last when Meraph and her followers were victorious. Ankharet's defenders were routed and the Queen herself captured. During the conflict, however, the servitor races had found their freedom and the sphinxes' many enemies had advanced on the weakening empire. The surviving sphinxes from both sides, thousands strong, disappeared from the Lostlands almost overnight, a mythic event that modern historians cannot explain. The few sphinxes that remained chose solitary existence over the united civilization they once ruled.

Meraph, Khubsheth, and their few remaining allies were left standing with their shackled Queen. Divinely protected from her own kin, Ankharet the Cursed could not be slain. Khubsheth, granted divine foresight, determined that those destined to slay Ankharet would not be born until thousands of years later. Until that day, he knew, the Queen would have to be bound. And so the Tomb of the Sphinx Queen was built, the last monument to a once-great empire and a prison for its traitorous Queen.

Meraph insisted upon interring herself within the tomb to await the prophesized heroes and the death of her mother. Khubsheth, granted immortality for his vigilance, would wait through the passage of centuries for that fated time.

The Khonsurian Empire itself was no more, brought low by its own beloved Queen.

The Wrath of Serpents

Meanwhile, the nagas nursed their wounds in the aftermath of their war with the sphinxes, struggling to recover from the devastating losses. The dark nagas found an opportunity in the chaos to reshape what little remained of the Zimalan Empire. Seeing that the actions of Axaluatl had led to the slaughter of his own people, his former devotees renounced him. Once a strong disciple of Axaluatl, a dark naga priest named Zuyuan seized political power and led a revolt against the Shadow Serpent. Unable to slay the immortal—for he, too, was divinely protected like Ankharet—Zuyuan outlawed his worship. Those who professed loyalty to the betrayer were slain, and Axaluatl, diminished in status and power, was forced into seclusion.

Excited by his success and lusting for more power, Zuyuan led a campaign of persecution against the Naga Council for failing to perceive the sphinx threat. With great support, he dissolved the now-impotent Council and exiled the teotl-nagas who had backed it. Into this void of power, Zuyuan established the Dark Council. Staffed with his chosen cohorts, he rebuilt the struggling Zimalan Empire into a regime of tyranny. Zuyuan insisted that magic and intrigue, not peace and diplomacy, were the tools of survival for their kind. Unwilling to trust anything that was not a naga, they tightened their coils on their human servants until they become little more than slaves and chattel.

As the years passed, the humans grew restless. Rumors reached Zimala that the servitor races of the far east had been freed by the fall of the sphinxes. The once-great Khonsurian Empire was fast fading into mere legend, and elves and dwarves began to rise in great numbers in the Northland regions. It seemed to the wise that the gods now favored beings that walked on two legs. Unable to recover their former might, the nagas grew cynical and jealous. Hearing the stories of freedom, the nagas' human slaves began to chafe against the oppression of their masters.

Realizing that the future belonged to these lesser, more numerous races, the Dark Council decided to breed their own humanoid species in a bid to retain dominance. If humanoids were to inherit Áereth, then the nagas would control those who ruled them. Inspired by the lizardfolk race but desiring a people of greater power, the nagas sought to create a race in their own serpentine image. Zuyuan supported experiments with human slaves and captured lizardfolk, infusing them with foul sorcery and the blood of reptiles. From these unholy trials came inphidians and tzopiloani, evil human-reptile hybrids. When the nagas began to use their own sorcerous blood in the experiments, they spawned their greatest achievement, and also their ultimate downfall: the drakon.

Possessing the same ambition as humans, the innate magic of nagas, and a sinister lack of fear, the drakon eventually rebelled against their progenitors in a conflict known as the Wrath of Serpents. With the inphidians and tzopiloani on their side, the drakon threw down the Dark Council. In the chaos, the nagas were unable to maintain constriction of their slaves. The humans slipped their bonds and fled toward the northern reaches of the old empire and the wide peninsula known as Xulmec. Some believe it was the exiled teotl-nagas lurking beneath the earth who first broke the humans' shackles to set them free. The Naga Council of old, after all, would never have enslaved their humanoid servants.

Even as they struggled against the nagas, the drakon sought to replace them as slavers of the humans. Assassins were sent against Huamec, the human slave who dared to lead his people to freedom, but they fell at his hand. Locked as they were in the death throes of naga might, the drakon could spare no further attempts against the refugees.

And so the Zimalan Empire was no more, destroyed by its own desperation and insolence. The nagas that survived the Wrath of Serpents withdrew from the politics of the world and hid away in dark places, coiled in hate. Only the teotl-nagas, though few in number, remained seekers of peace. They laired in the tombs of their ancient civilization, lived the virtues of Cynhuara, and guarded the secrets of their once-mighty empire.

The Homecoming

While the Xulmecs sought to establish their own civilization bereft of naga rule, the former servants of the Khonsurian Empire had migrated north into the vast, unspoiled lands whence they had first emerged before sphinx rule. The remnants of long-vanished draconic realms riddled the lands that they settled into. Each race found its own path, contending whenever another's presence threatened.

As the elves wandered, they sensed the familiar presence of Ireth, goddess of verdure and wizardry. Following her voice they settled once again in the forests of Ahna-Vithyre, for there it was that elves had first awakened in

Áereth. In the Foresthome, Ireth taught them the deepest secrets of magic and forestry. This tutelage came to the elves as memories long buried, for their time among the sphinxes had suppressed their origins. When they returned to the woods, they met again their wild kin in the deepest groves and their sea-dwelling cousins in Ahna-Vithyre's coast.

Guided by the rhythmic intonations of Daenthar, the earth god of industry, the dwarves climbed back into the mountains. With his mentoring, they resumed their ages-old love of mining and crafting amidst their native stone, and steadily the dwarven kingdoms forged strong alliances with one another. The mightiest of these nations was the mountain kingdom of Amonzadd, whose great stone windows looked down upon the vast forests of Ahna-Vithyre.

The savage tribes of humans dispersed among the Northlands, trading eagerly with their neighbors but never making enduring allegiances among their kind as did the dwarves, nor did they settle in large numbers like the elves. Without exception, no race ever exhibited as much diversity in culture as humans. They were vast in number but largely divided, and so their inherent desire for expansion could not include the holdings of the stronger races.

The gnomes had no homeland to return to, for their gem-laden hills in the far northeast had been largely depleted of their mineral wealth and the lands were rife with goblinoids. Never a people to despair of the past, the gnomes settled wherever commerce was good, serving as mediators and tradesmen between towns, cities, nations, and races. Poderon, the earth god of levity, became their patron, and gave them the optimistic worldview that gnomes still enjoy.

The last of the servitor races to leave the Lostlands—and the only to regularly return—were the halflings. Despairing at the malignance their homeland had become, the music of Olidyra, the goddess of travel and exploration, called to them and instilled in them a love for the open road. Gypsies and vagabonds all, the halflings chose a life of constant wandering and could be found in all realms. Traditionally, halflings returned each year to Gadjarria, where they weep at their loss and sing of their freedom.

Explorers of all races began the long journey across the Empyrean Ocean and rediscovered the humans of the Southlands that they had once met when the sphinx and naga empires had been allies centuries before. Culturally, the Xulmecs were considered primitive and the coastlines were riddled with dangerous creatures. The threat of drakon and lizardfolk lurked deeper within the jungles, and few explorers would approach the remote Island of Obsidian, Zimala.

Powerful with magic and crafts reminiscent of the old naga and sphinx empires, the elves and dwarves exerted their influence across the lands. The greatest human wizards apprenticed themselves to the elves of Ahna-Vithyre to refine their art. Master blacksmiths of the human lands studied in the hold of Amonzadd. Gnomes and halflings, for their part, wound their way as peaceably as possible through all racial societies. Whenever the ambitious humans pushed their borders too far, they were swiftly reminded with overwhelming force that their dominions existed only at the behest of elven and dwarven mercy. Goblinoids occasionally emerged from the plains, hills, and mountains, but the concerted effort of local territories inevitably drove them back.

With this influx of magic and artistry, the elves and dwarves grew haughty over the years and made enemies of jealous races—and even each other. Humans continued to study at the foot of their trees and mountains and some sought ways to steal their arts for themselves. Nations began to war with one another even as they fought off the ever-persistent hordes of goblinkind.

The War of Divine Right

Far from civilized lands, a young storm giant named Aeshotal grew restless from the turbulence of Áereth and its bloody conflicts. He set off on a pilgrimage around the Known Realms. Giantkind in its many, scattered tribes had dwelt outside of the march of history, and the troubled Aeshotal sought a place for his people. The storm giant's quest led him to the monasteries and libraries of many kingdoms, yet always his search found no answers.

At last, in the deepest catacombs of a mired temple in the Great Swamp, Aeshotal heard a disembodied voice address him from the shadows. The voice told him to find the Cave of Truth in the Frosteye Mountains, a place labeled on no map nor named in any tome. With nowhere else to turn, Aeshotal journeyed to the Cave and found a great door guarded by a curious sentinel. The strange human tried to convince the giant to turn away, explaining that only death and the ruin of Áereth lay beyond.

In his mind, the mysterious voice whispered to Aeshotal that the smaller races were hiding the truth from his kind, and that the destiny of giantkind lay within. Conflicted and angry, Aeshotal struck at the man with lightning, only to find the energy passing harmlessly through him. When he struck at him with his greatsword, he found that this, too, could not pierce him. Aeshotal simply stepped through the ghostly man, wrenched open the door, and entered the darkness beyond.

Within he found a network of chambers with ancient lore etched into stone walls in thousands of glyphs, bas-

reliefs, and even sculptures. He spent years meditating here, attempting to decipher the glyphs, aided only by his patience—and the mysterious voice. At last he found the answer to his quest: the knowledge that giants, formerly the titans, had been created by the gods *before* the smaller races, and had in fact come before the Dragon Kings themselves. With this knowledge came the conviction that giants were *meant* to reign over all others. Cold, logical madness gave Aeshotal the answer he'd long sought. If the giants united now, as their godless ancestors had failed to upon their creation, they could bring order to the world and rule as they were divinely decreed.

Aeshotal left the chamber and began his campaign to unite the giant tribes. He spoke of prophecies and the divine mandate that giants were sovereign to the smaller races. Highly charismatic and growing in power as he went, Aeshotal was seen as a visionary and messiah, and most giants were easily seduced into joining his dream of righteous conquest. In the frigid reaches of the Northern Wastes, he won over the frost giant jarls. In the fiery mountains of the east and west, he found support with the fire giant kings. The primitive hill giants from the Valley of Xyr Muthal and stone giants from around the Northlands flocked to his banner, though some cloud and storm giants were not as easily swayed. After more than fifty years, he'd established an insurmountable force at his disposal in all corners of the Northlands, the vast majority of giantkind poised at his command.

United as never before—and never since—the giants of the Known Realms laid siege upon the humanoid kingdoms in the War of Divine Right. On many fronts and in terrains advantageous to the giants, they laid low city after city, destroying those who refused to surrender to their authority. For the first time since their service in the Khonsurian Empire, the elves, dwarves, and humans banded together against the collective might of the giants—against which they steadily lost ground. Even gnomes and halflings joined their fellows and fought against the giants with guerilla-style warfare, excelling as they always had against large opponents.

During these years, each side searched for every advantage as battles took place in every part of the civilized world. While the humanoid races struggled to unite, the giants persuaded other monstrous and giantish creatures to join in their war. Ogres and ettins swelled their armies against the elven realms, while trolls and gargoyles emerged from the mountains to assail the dwarf holds. Kapoacinths and scrags joined the storm giants against the sea elves and coast-dwelling humans. Cloud giants threw their magic against the nations' capitals. Chief among Aeshotal's supporters were the sinister and wealthy Stormbringer family of storm giants and the Stone Wings, an extensive clan of fiendish gargoyles summoned from the hellish Outer Planes.

As the Northlands were steadily subdued by his persistence, Aeshotal sent storm and fire giants across the sea to conquer the humans of Southlands, whom he regarded as impotent primitives. Even united against the onslaught, the Xulmecs were unprepared for the attack and lost many lives. They called upon Madrah and their god-kings to save them. When death seemed inevitable, it was Huamec, the first Xulmec god-king, who answered. He instructed his priests to build an icon in his image carved in pure obsidian. Constructed of immense size, Huamec possessed the idol and led a counter-attack against the giants. The giants in the Southlands were soundly defeated, but Huamec himself was slain in the endeavor and the monolithic idol itself was cast down.

In the Northlands, the humans of the Abylosian Empire, in an attempt to halt the advance of giants east and south, enlarged a river valley into a gorge of titanic proportions with the concerted efforts of druids, wizards, and countless slaves. Becoming a permanent scar in the land, the barrier worked only too well, funneling the full strength of the giants back toward the elven Foresthome and surrounding lands. The frontiers of civilization were either smashed flat or conquered by the giants, their people enslaved.

Against Aeshotal's hordes, the crafts of the dwarves and the arcana of the elves were sorely tested. Working together now efficiently, the greatest dwarven artisans and elven wizards crafted golems of stone and iron to counter the strength of the giants, while elven sorcerers bargained with genies for elemental conjurations to use against them. These efforts slowed the giants but could never push them back.

The War of Divine Right raged on, with the smaller races continuing to lose ground each year. Aeshotal and his greatest forces eventually surrounded Ahna-Vithyre and Amonzadd in the land of Lirea, enclosing the power bases of both elf and dwarf civilizations within his grip. Once the defenders' lines broke, the giants would swarm into their capitals and lay claim to all of Áereth. The elders of the elves and dwarves formed the Eldritch Coalition, an alliance comprised of archmages, high priests, and generals of both peoples. They came together in desperation, ready to discuss new strategies, contingencies—or even surrender to Aeshotal.

At this time, a cloud giantess named Jathra fought her way through the elf and dwarf fortifications, subduing but not killing every guard who dared to arrest her infiltration. When the slender, white-skinned giant broke into the council chamber of the Eldritch Coalition, the elves and dwarves thought they had come to their end at last and prepared to fight. Instead, Jathra bowed and intro-

duced herself to them, speaking words of peace and pacifism. She had not been sent by Aeshotal, she explained, but represented a faction of giants who opposed the war.

Desperate, the Eldritch Coalition listened to the giant, but some among them doubted her intentions, so full of hate for giants that they were blind to her offers. Jathra presented to them a cache of scrolls she'd recovered from the fabled Vault of the Dragon Kings, relics that harbored magics that she believed could end the war peacefully.

The scrolls contained the arcana needed to construct the Pillars of Expulsion, artifacts that could exert powerful enchantments that could forcefully compel the giants to leave the region and scatter their armies. Originally conceived by the Dragon Kings to mercifully defeat Sunscratch and his followers, the project had been abandoned in favor of the Pool of Dreams. The Pillars had therefore never been created, but the lore to build them lay now in the hands of the Eldritch Coalition. It was Jathra's belief that the giants were never meant to rule; they were meant to dwell in remote places and offer guidance to the smaller races who sought them out. The scrolls offered the means to bring peace to the land again.

The construction of the Pillars—adamantine obelisks carved with complex runes and woven with many spells—would represent the ultimate achievement of the artifice of elves and dwarves. The elves of Parhokk, a city famous for its enchanters, were called upon to imbue the Pillars with the compulsion magic that was their core.

When the obelisks were complete, Jathra explained that the placement of the Pillars of Expulsion was vital, and that they would have to be arranged in a great ring around the land outside the giant encampments. She spoke of sacrifice and honor, and such virtues struck a painful cord within the hearts of the long-lived people of Ahna-Vithyre and Amonzadd.

Once they were built, the greatest elven and dwarven champions carried the obelisks, at great risk, through the enemy lines. Though most of these heroes fell at giant hands, the Pillars were placed without exception in a great ring around the land of Lirea, fully encircling the giant forces. When the time was right, the Eldritch Coalition called upon their gods and their magic and activated the Pillars of Expulsion as Jathra had instructed.

Had the Coalition worked in concert, the plan might have succeeded. But doubt gnawed at the hearts of some, who feared that Jathra was as evil as the rest of her kin and was deceiving them. Some tales say that the surreptitious hand of Zhühn was at work within them, corrupting them as he may have Ankharet the Blessed, Aeshotal, and countless other across the ages. These elf and dwarf dissenters dared to believe that they could alter the magic of the Pillars, to transform their compulsion magic into energies deadly to the giants. They channeled their magic and their hate into the whole, and the Pillars of Expulsion came to life.

Thus polluted, it was not enchantment magic that flared from the obelisks, but another power altogether that rent

apart the elements around them. The fabric of the Material Plane was torn asunder in the immediate vicinity of each obelisk, turning into a churning mass of deadly elements. Much was drawn back into the elemental planes even as portals to the same planes were opened nearby. Fire, lightning, cyclones, and great torrents of water poured through. Tremors shook all the land within the circle of Pillars, and great caverns beneath the earth collapsed.

As a result of this cataclysm, the land known as Lirea slowly sank into the sea as portals to the Elemental Plane of Water spilled onto the landmass. Ocean waters from the Empyrean Ocean flooded inland, spilling over the Foresthome of the elves and the dwarven hold of Amonzadd. The devastation was vast and thorough. Giants, elves, and dwarves—along with numerous other creatures in the crossfire—were swallowed up.

The land sank too fast to save the nations but slowly enough to horrify those looking on from outside the deadly ring. In the end, Aeshotal and the giants had been defeated, but at a cost greater than anyone ever imagined. What once crowned the land in magic and majesty now dwelt at the bottom of a vast bay that would later be named the Lirean Sea. Ruins of the elves' and dwarves' former glory were held now in the dominion of the world's oceans and its denizens.

In time, the elemental portals were closed, and the wild storms were tamed by druids and clerics. Those elves and dwarves that survived the cataclysm were those who'd settled in outlying forests and mountains beyond Lirea. Though many humans had lost their lives in the devastation, there were countless more scattered throughout the land, greater in number than any other. The remaining elves and dwarves could not recover their former might, nor repopulate their own kind as swiftly as humans. Gnomes and halflings, like humans, could be found in all countries and never built their own kingdoms. Sea elves, who once dwelt along the coasts of Ahna-Vithyre, now swam the newly formed Lirean Sea and kept a vigil over the ruin of their homeland, to protect its secrets from treasure hunters.

With the sudden end of the giant-led war and the fall of Lirea, the thinking races of the Known Realms knew that an era had ended. Seasons passed differently now, distant threats seemed more ominous. Great magics had been wrought and cast down upon the mortal world, and devastation could come swiftly. The dwarves and elves formed solid treaties in honor of the Eldritch Coalition, living tributes to their fallen heroes and sovereigns. In the aftermath of the War of Divine Right, it was clear to all who was left standing stronger than all others.

The era of humans had begun.

Chapter 2
Deities, Demigods, and Infernal Powers

The races of Áereth pay homage to many powers, beliefs, and divinities. Though the gods themselves are many, only some—arguably the most well known—are described here. The names given are merely the most common. Almost every god has at least a dozen names—some have many more or none at all—which stem from the languages and cultures that revere them.

GMs should feel free to alter the pantheons to suit the needs and themes of their campaigns. Whereas an epic story set in the Southlands might make frequent use of the Xulmec demigods, another campaign set in the Lostlands may never make mention of those endemic gods across the ocean. GMs are certainly invited to include new pantheons of their own or those borrowed from other mythos. This chapter assumes that the Sancturn Pantheon—many of whose members have been gathered from the DCCs—is the primary spiritual authority in the world of Áereth.

Other pantheons could be assigned to other Material Plane worlds, but still count followers from among the people of Áereth. Conversely, the gods of various pantheons could share dominion over this world. Finally, pantheons may be intermingled with the Sancturns, or the names used by the gods can vary to accommodate all gods in one. Variag, for example, may also be the same as the Norse god Ymir. Odin may be another name by which Choranus is known, and Tyr may be the same as Gorhan or Thormyr.

The Triad and the Greater Gods

According to a consensus of belief, above all divinities is the Triad, the eldest of the Greater Gods whose mighty works begat the world. They are Choranus the Seer Father, his consort Ildavir the Giver of Form, and his brother Centivus the Shaper. The children of Choranus and Ildavir are Ireth, Daenthar, Poderon, and Olidyra. At least five other gods of great power were invited to have a hand in the world's creation. These were Amun Tor, Auzarr, Madrah, Ahriman, and Ormazd, beings of unknown origin.

The arrival and subsequent creations of these beings were an offense to Zhühn, the Dweller in the Void, a creature of such power that he would later be worshipped as a Greater God himself by the nihilistic and the mad. Knowing only nonexistence and timelessness, Zhühn is the antithesis of creation itself.

The Sancturn Pantheon

Áereth has been the battleground for the lofty ideals of the gods since its first dawn. Before the doctrines of Good and Evil began their eternal struggle, the ethics of Law and Chaos sought to dominate the course of the world. Eventually recognizing the need for a balance of the two—and the need for choice—the Triad withdrew its overwhelming influence from the world, and today seldom intercedes in Áereth directly.

Instead it is the Lesser Gods of the Sancturn Pantheon who hold the greatest sway in everyday life. Refugees from their own long-vanished cosmos, the Sancturns now give the mortals of Áereth the capacity to shape their own world. Once led by Ôæ, these gods now answer only to the Triad. Given power over the provinces of Áereth, the Sancturns keep at bay those mortals whose ambitions would threaten to unseat the cosmic order—and indeed, disorder—of the multiverse itself.

Demigods

Though the Greater Gods remain as they are, the powers of the Lesser Gods can wax and wane. As well, some deities have taken mortal creatures as consorts and from such unions demigods have been formed. Other, less understood means exist to create new divinities.

One such source is the lifeblood of the gods themselves. When Áereth was still young, Zhühn sought to sabotage its existence by attacking those who gave it life. The

Great Enemy, in his naïveté, dealt a grievous blow to the body of Ildavir, the Giver of Form. From the wound sprang the goddess Elyr, fully formed. In her wake, Ildavir's injury was healed, and Zhühn had gained a serious new enemy.

Seeing that his aggression only resulted in the bane of new life, Zhühn learned that divine flesh was both malleable and enduring. When the ocean goddess Pelagia gave birth to a son aeons later, the Great Enemy seized the child and wrenched his body in two. Unable to perish so easily, the sundered halves of the newborn god still shriveled under Zhühn's touch and became the twin demigods of Narrimunâth and Nimlurun. Legends tell of other occasions where divine interference has created new divinities, intentionally or otherwise.

Though the slaying of a god is difficult, at best, many have been altogether forgotten or shunned. Meelkor, once the god of humility, was accused of complicity in unforgivable divine crimes by Zhühn centuries ago and was forcefully driven from the cosmos. Sothulth, a demigod of paranoia, represents another such exiled divinity, though he has attempted to return to mortal memory.

Outer Gods

Referred to collectively as the Outer Gods, these blasphemous beings are believed to exist outside of the known planes. Worshipped on Áereth only by the most aberrant creatures, the insane, or the misguided, they are abominations among gods. Zhühn himself is sometimes affiliated with the Outer Gods insofar that he may have had a hand in their making—or he may be one of them who broke away, a pariah among corruptive gods.

Infernal Powers

Devils and demons do not fit neatly into the scheme of mortals and gods. Ancient beings of evil power, some may have been wrought from the detritus of failed worlds when the Triad first began creation. Others may be older still, creatures possessed of law, chaos, and evil long before such words had meaning. Or perhaps they're merely the manifestations of the cumulative sins of free-thinking beings. Whatever their origins, the fiends prey upon mortal souls of the Material Plane, finding sustenance from their misery, despair, and every choice sin. They only bring death upon a mortal when doing so also siphons his soul, or when they have been denied it altogether.

A mere sampling of ten archdevils and demon princes are described below, though a great deal many more fiendish lords look upon Áereth with voracious, soul-craving appetites.

A Final Note

The gods are not the celestial bodies they care for. Ildavir is not the earth, but she is its caretaker. Shul is not the moon, and Pelagia is not the ocean itself. The gods stand apart from their creations and their charges, yet none knows a sculpture as well as the sculptor, none a child as well as its parent.

The GM is encouraged to use the gods to give flavor to his or her campaign, for the clergies of all gods have agendas of their own, for good and ill. The church of Gorhan could serve as the driving force behind a PC cleric, to help guide her and the adventures she accepts. The evil cults of the Hidden Lord could provide a steady stream of antagonists for the PCs. The machinations of the Great Enemy, Zhühn himself, could dwell behind the scenes in a campaign destined to become epic. But GMs should not use any of these too heavy-handedly. Although gods influence the world, they do not themselves move it. That is the job for the heroes.

If the god's alignment in the accompanying table (following page) has a smaller letter in parentheses after it, that means the ethos of the religion often leans in that direction (for example, "g" for Good).

Mictlan

Mictlan is the Underworld of Xulmec belief. Drawing their culture from the provinces of the former Zimalan Empire, the humans of the Xulmec city-states maintain that upon a man's death, his spirit is drawn into Mictlan, the Land of the Dead, a subterranean landscape.

Northland scholars make the obvious comparison between this spiritual realm and the Underdeep itself, but while many similarities between the two exist, fundamental differences abound. Scholars of the arcane and planar lore surmise that Mictlan is simply the name given to that portion of the Ethereal Plane or the Plane of Shadow that overlaps the upper regions of the Underdeep beneath the nations of the Southlands.

The Triad

Name	Align.	Portfolio	Gender	Domains
Centivus	N	Creation, Artistry, Possibility	m	Creation, Knowledge, Protection, Travel
Choranus	LN	Creation, Destiny, Magic	m	Creation, Knowledge, Magic, Protection, Strength, Travel
Ildavir	N	Creation, Life, Nature, Animals	f	Animal, Creation, Earth, Plant, Protection

Greater Gods

Ahriman	CE	Death, Disease,Darkness, Suffering	m	Chaos, Death, Destruction, Evil
Amun Tor	N	Mysteries, Riddles	m	Air, Fire, Knowledge, Magic, Weather
Auzarr	N	The Transitive Planes, Teleportation, Psionics	f	Knowledge, Magic, Travel
Daenthar	LG	Earth, Industry, Vows, Trust	m	Earth, Good, Law, Protection
Ireth	CG	Astronomy, Forestry, Wizardry	f	Air, Animal, Earth, Good, Knowledge, Magic
Madrah	N	Earth, Sky	m	Air, Earth, Magic, Travel, Weather
Olidyra	N(g)	Travel, Exploration, Adventure	f	Luck, Plant, Trickery, Travel
Ormazd	LG	Creation,the Sun, Prophecy	m	Creation, Good, Law, Sun
Poderon	NG	Earth, Commerce, Festivity	m	Animal, Earth, Good, Trickery
Zhühn	CE	Deception, Corruption, Falsehood	m	Destruction, Evil, Magic, Trickery

Lesser Gods

Delvyr	NG	Knowledge, Learning, Light	m	Glory, Good, Knowledge, Sun
Denithae	N	Agriculture, Harvest	f	Earth, Plant, Protection
Elyr	CG	Healing, Life, Succor	f	Good, Healing, Liberation, Luck
Fenwar	N	Fire, Lightning, the Hearth	m	Air, Fire, Sun
Gil'Mâridth	CE	Nightmares, Fear, Night Terrors	f	Dream, Evil, Trickery
Gorhan	LG	Valor, War, Chivalry	m	Good, Healing, Strength, War
Hidden Lord	CE	Secrets, Misdirection, Forbidden Lore, Shadows	m	Darkness, Evil, Knowledge, Trickery
Justicia	LG	Justice, Mercy, Defense	f	Good, Healing, Law, Protection
Klazath	LE	War, Subjugation	m	Destruction, Evil, Law, Strength
Lasheeva	NE	Undeath, Murder, Affliction	f	Death, Destruction, Evil
Myna	CN	Chance, Circumstance, Fortune	f	Chaos, Luck, Trickery
Neshti	CG	Thievery, Trickery, Vigilantism	f	Chaos, Good, Luck, Trickery
Ôæ	NG	Dreams, Imagination, Storytelling	m	Dream, Good, Protection
Pelagia	N	Oceans, Seas, Music, Travel	f	Protection, Travel, Water
Rathul	CN	Lies, Dissimilation	m	Chaos, Knowledge, Trickery
Shul	LN	The Moon, Measurement, Tradition, Literacy	m	Air, Knowledge, Law
Soleth	LN	Peaceful Death, Solitude	m	Healing, Law, Protection, Repose
Tororthun	N/CE	Subterrane, Denizens of the Underdeep / Malice, Spiders	f	Drow*, Earth, Poison*, Spider* / Drow*, Evil, Poison*, Spider*
Ulesh	LG	Peace, Pacifism	m	Good, Knowledge, Law, Protection
Valdreth	LN	Time, Longevity, Integrity	m	Law, Magic, Protection
Variag	N	Ice, Winter, War	m	Air, Strength, War, Water
Wyshalar	CN	Survival, Vitality	f	Protection, Travel, Trickery
Xeluth	NE	Violence, War, Strife	m	Destruction, Evil, Strength, War
Yvyn	NE	Conspiracy, Holy War, Rebellion	f	Evil, Trickery, War

Demigods

Ahpuchac	N	Maras, the Underworld	m	Earth, Protection, Repose
Anahuara	NG	Amoya, the Moons	f	Good, Healing, Magic, Repose
Ankharet	NE	Khonsuria, Sphinxes	f	Destruction, Evil, Knowledge, Trickery
Aristemis	NG	Strategy, Diplomacy	f	Good, Knowledge, War
Axaluatl	LE	Zimala, Nagas, Reptiles	m	Evil, Death, Law
Bargúl	LE	Death, Undead, Drow	f	Death, Drow*, Law, Undead*
Bobugbubilz	CE	Evil Amphibians	m	Chaos, Evil, Water
Cadixtat	CE	Chaos	m	Chaos, Destruction
Calchoti	CG	Kaatlan, Rain, Charity	f	Good, Healing, Plant, Water
Chondri	NG	Marine Life, Aggression	m	Good, Strength, Water
Coatlimict	NE	Kaatlan, War, Carnage, Undeath	m	Death, Evil, War
Cynhuara	LG	Zimala, Nagas, Reptiles	f	Good, Healing, Magic
Elas	NE	Marine Life, Ambush	f	Evil, Trickery, Water
Gadraak	CE	Territorialism, Violence	m	Chaos, Evil, Strength, War
Huamext	NG	Xulmec, Protection	m	Earth, Good, Protection
Ilhuicatl	NG	Athua, the Sea	m	Good, Protection, Travel, Water
Ilquot	CN	Cold Waters, Marine Predators, Retribution	m	Protection, War, Water
Kagnar	CE	Savagery, Animality	m	Destruction, Evil, Strength
Lagos	CE	Antagonism, Reptiles, Savagery	m	Chaos, Destruction, Evil, Strength
Malotoch	CE	Scavengers, Ruin, Cannibalism	f	Air, Chaos, Death, Evil
Molgrem	LE	Militarism, War	m	Evil, Destruction, Law, War
Narrimunâth	LE	Disease, Vermin	m	Death, Destruction, Evil
Nimlurun	CE	Filth, Pollution	m	Death, Destruction, Evil
Septych	LE	Avarice, Tyranny	m	Evil, Law, Trickery (current)
Sothulth	CN(e)	Paranoia, Insanity	m	Chaos, Destruction, Knowledge, Trickery
Teleus	LG	Law	m	Good, Law, War
Thalass	N	Terrestrial Waters, Music	m	Animal, Protection, Water
Tlachinozal	LE	Chuzec, Fire	m	Earth, Evil, Fire
Thormyr	LN(g)	Honor, Duty, Protection	m	Healing, Law, Protection, Strength
Traitor	CE	Betrayal, Chaos, Madness	m	Chaos, Healing, Madness, Trickery
Urath	CE	Terror, Voracity	m	Chaos, Destruction, Evil

Infernal Powers

Lords of Hell

Amzolol	LE	Deception	m
Bei'thor	LE	Cruelty, Sadism	m
Jezuel	LE	Pain, Torture, Indignity	f
Nethruel	LE	Obsession, Addiction	m
Sestyruas	LE	Envy, Covetousness	m

Lords of the Abyss

Azi Dahaka	CE	Storms, Waste	m
Izmaledt	CE	Obscenity, Malformation	m
Obitu-que	CE	Domination, Prepotency	m
Qäyaqiq	CE	Curiosity, Desperation, Suicide	?
Tzitzimitl	CE	Destruction, Ruin	f

** Domains introduced in The Complete Guide to Drow from Goodman Games.*

The Powers

Ahpuchac (The Black Jaguar)

Demigod, N — The Underworld, Maras

Ahpuchac (*oh*-pu-chak), the Black Jaguar, is the patron god of the Xulmec city-state of Maras and the guardian of Mictlan, the Underworld. He is the bringer of balance, ushering good and evil into death and the afterlife that awaits. It is believed by the people of Xulmec that one's destination is determined as much by the journey through the Underworld as by the life one led. Ahpuchac prowls Mictlan to ensure all are given a fair chance on this momentous quest.

Once the tribal chieftain of Maras and the founder of its city-state, Ahpuchac gained the mantle of godhood when he was lured into the depths by a spiritual jaguar sent by Madrah, the Lord of the Earth and Sky. Fulfilling a spiritual need for the Xulmec people, the Black Jaguar now oversees mortality itself, guarding the Underworld from the sabotage of other divinities.

The domains associated with Ahpuchac are Earth, Protection, and Repose. His favored weapon is the razor glove, and his symbol is the depiction of himself in perfect profile.

Ahriman (The Deathbringer)

Greater god, CE —Death, Disease, Darkness, Suffering

Ahriman, the Fiendish Spirit, the Deathbringer, is the ancient god of darkness and destruction, suffering, and disease—and some believe, one of the authors of evil itself. Like Ormazd, his radiant twin, Ahriman is believed to have spawned from an obscure, if powerful, neutral deity named Zurvan. Ahriman merely watched as the Triad and the other deific powers coalesced the world, studying its creation so he could learn how to destroy it again and remake it in his own nightmarish image.

The Fiendish Spirit has given rise to many infernal beings and darkened the hearts of many mortals. During the Reign of Dragons, he sowed the desire for destruction among the mightiest of dragons to bring about their own civil war. When Ahriman's worship was at its most profound, the desert-dwelling people of Abylos named him Angra Mainyu, the Deathbringer. Although the faith of the Fiendish Spirit has waned, his few remaining followers wait patiently for signs of his return. They cling to the prophesied age when Angra Mainyu slays his twin, the god Ormazd, Lord of Wisdom.

Ahriman is the only god willing to treat with Zhühn openly, forging the occasional alliance with the Great Enemy for their mutual benefit—although both mighty gods know that should their schemes of destruction break apart the world, they will vie for dominance. While Zhühn seeks the annihilation of existence itself, Ahriman seeks destruction for its own sake, intending to rebuild again under his administration.

When Ahriman is depicted in religious art, he takes the form of a giant-sized demon with a pair of massive black horns and wielding an oversized kukri. The Fiendish Spirit and his hateful clerics weave hidden alliances among many evil factions, sewing destruction from the darkness and hiding from the followers of Ormazd until Ahriman's return, when he will raze the mortal world undisguised.

The domains associated with Ahriman are Chaos, Death, Destruction, and Evil. His favored weapon is the kukri, and his symbol is a demonic visage with two black horns.

Amun Tor (The Father of Riddles)

Greater god, N —Mystery, Riddles

Amun Tor (*ah*-mun-TOR), the Lord of Mystery, the Father of Riddles, is a mysteriarch among gods, the deity of knowledge, the known and unknown. He is the god once charged by the Triad to oversee the realms now known as the Lostlands. It was Amun Tor who first led the sphinxes to the majesty that was the Khonsurian Empire, and it was Amun Tor who warned his daughter, the immortal Queen Ankharet, from the path that led to its ruin. He watches still over the wind, hills, and deserts of the Lostlands, the unseen lord of every city and desolation.

The Father of Riddles has many followers, mostly among the peoples of the Lostlands, but few real priests

devote their lives to his enigmatic dogma. True worship of Amun Tor is a mystery in itself; an acolyte must study the hieroglyphs of his mazelike temples for many years to discover his doctrines. One of Amun Tor's only known tenets is that true power is worth searching for and is therefore hidden in riddles. The greatest of his temples, usually half-buried in the wilds of the Lostlands, are labyrinthine pyramids hiding divine reliquaries and arcane libraries. Adventurers faced with the prospect of infiltrating one of Amun Tor's temples know that exceptional perils and exceptional rewards lie within.

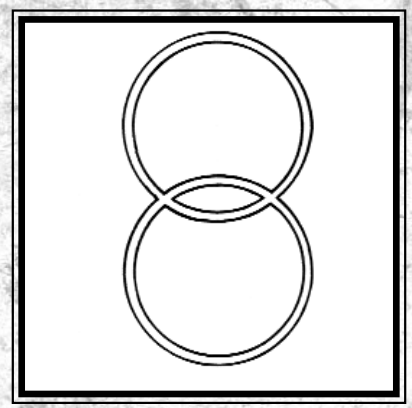
The Lord of Mysteries is depicted differently in each culture of which he is a part. Some see him as a great androsphinx, while others see him as a tall elf gilded like the noble servants of old Khonsuria. Still others represent him only as an eye-shaped glyph.

The domains associated with Amun Tor are Air, Fire, Knowledge, Magic, and Weather. His favored weapon is the quarterstaff. His symbol varies with each culture but often incorporates an image of an eye.

Amzolol

Archdevil, LE —Deception

Amzolol (*ahm*-zoe-lol), the Lord of Deceit, is a cunning archdevil who adheres strictly to the lawful nature of his infernal kind but weaves loopholes into the promises he makes. Mortals who wish to deceive their enemies beseech Amzolol for the guile to swindle, outwit, or frame their enemies, little realizing that the deepest deception and greatest loss is their own. The Lord of Deceit suspends his trickery for his most promising mortal thralls that they might grow in worldly power to carry out Amzolol's will—though the artful promises of the Lord of Deceit are sure to snare them in the end. Most of his human agents are clerics, roguish bureaucrats, and politicians.



Anahuara (the Blessing of Night)

Demigod, NG — Amoya, the Moons

Anahuara (*on*-uh-woh-ra), the Blessing of Night, the Lady Eidolon, the Lucent Guardian, is the patroness of the Xulmec city-state of Amoya and the divine keeper of the Southland moons. To the Xulmec people, where the sun grants the world life only from afar, the moons grant greater vitality the closer they are to the earth. While the Spectral Moon measures time and bestows magic and spiritual balance upon the land, the White Moon keeps the world in physical equilibrium. Anahuara is the guardian of both.

Once the chieftain-founder of the city-state of Amoya, Anahuara now watches over it as a sentinel of life and death and the magic of the Spectral Moon. She is afforded her lunar power by Shul, the Watcher in the Sky, but affinity for the violet-hued Southland moon is hers alone. Anahuara is depicted as she was in life, a tall woman with very long, unbound hair. The mantle of her godhood is represented in the suit of bone armor she wears, and in her hands she carries a mace that glows with the violet light of the Spectral Moon. She is often shown with a nimbus of the moon behind her. Silver, called the Tears of Anahuara, is a holy material to her faithful and is never used as simple currency among the Amoyas. As the moons wax and wane, priests of Anahuara interpret her will for the lay followers. As with most Amoyas, the followers of Anahuara revere death as much as life itself, seeing both as coterminous states of existence. In the dogma of the Lucent Guardian, undeath has its appropriate time and place. More often than not, the undead are considered subversions of the natural order, but there are times when the animated dead are sanctioned by Anahuara.

The domains associated with Anahuara are Good, Healing, Magic, and Repose. Her favored weapon is the light mace, whose head clerics typically coat with alchemical silver. The symbol of Anahuara is formed of both moons in varying positions, usually one half-eclipsed by the other.

Ankharet (the Cursed)

Demigod, NE —Khonsuria, Sphinxes

Ankharet (*on*-kar-ret), the Cursed, the Sphinx Queen, was the demigoddess who once ruled the Khonsurian Empire millennia ago. Once known as Ankharet the Blessed, she was fathered by Amun Tor himself and set upon the throne of the glorious sphinx empire. She ruled for countless years and brought prosperity to her kind, ensuring the Reign of Cats as one of the greatest ages of Áereth's long history.

Yet Ankharet brought her own empire into ruin when she succumbed to corruption and evil. The civil war that came of her crimes resulted in the death of half her kind and drove the survivors into a mysterious exodus. The Sphinx Queen herself was defeated and imprisoned in a massive tomb in the Barren Hills, where she slumbers still under the watch of the androsphinx prophet Khubsheth, and Ankharet's own daughter, Meraph the Golden. According to prophecy, Ankharet will sleep until those destined to slay her arrive—or until the champions of her faith free her to reign again. Within the tomb, Ankharet's power is greatly diminished, but should she escape its mystic confines, she will return to her full glory.

Few sphinxes remain in the Known Realms, and fewer still revere the goddess who brought destruction to their ancient empire. Yet even the sinister dreams of the sleeping Sphinx Queen have inspired humanoid cults devoted to returning her to power. None suspect that the great statue near Prophet's Leap, the mysterious stone sphinx, now hides the Queen's physical body. But it is only a matter of time before her followers find her.

Clerics of Ankharet gather in Lostlands ruins, consorting with evil creatures such as lamia and chimeras. These cultists venerate sphinxes above all, but the magical beasts seldom treat with them, devouring them more often than not. On rare occasions, hieracosphinxes allow themselves to be bribed by these humanoid minions of their ancient queen, perhaps in the tiny hope of seeing their empire reborn one day. Ankharet herself is depicted as a gynosphinx of transcendent beauty, mighty in stature and graceful of body.

The domains associated with Ankharet are Destruction, Evil, Knowledge, and Trickery. Her favored weapon is the razor glove and her symbol is a fair feminine face, adorned with a Khonsurian headdress and a black crown. Often this symbol is paired with an ansate cross.

Aristemis (The Insightful One)

Demigod, NG — Strategy, Diplomacy

Aristemis (uh-*riss*-teh-miss), the Clear Thinker, the Insightful One, the Arrow of Vision, is the demipower of strategy and intelligent combat. She is the patroness of warriors and generals, and sometimes politicians, traders, and even rogues. Alhough Aristemis bears the courage of her lieges, Gorhan and Justicia, she also knows the wisdom of choosing her battles, when to walk away from them, and when to use diplomacy in the place of violence. Generals who redirect their armies in bold maneuvers, engage in daring strategies, or even retreat, call upon Aristemis for her insight. Clerics of the Clear Thinker often serve as war advisors and some multiclass as rangers to serve as military scouts.

Aristemis is portrayed as a woman in robes with piercing eyes, strong features, and short-cropped dark hair. She carries a great bow, but she is seldom shown using it. In religious art, Aristemis is often depicted standing to the right of Gorhan, whispering in his ear.

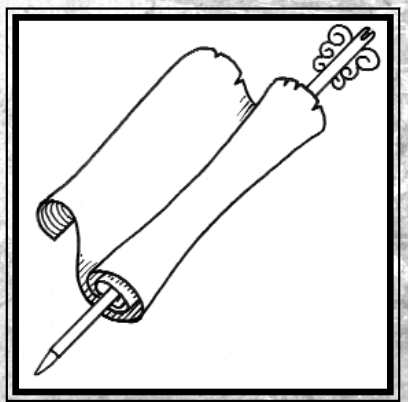
The domains Aristemis is associated with are Good, Knowledge, and War. Her favored weapon is the longbow, and her symbol is an arrow wrapped loosely in a scroll.

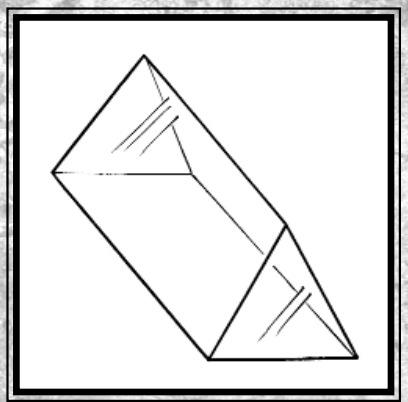
Auzarr (Keeper of the Nexus)

Greater god, N — The Transitive Planes, Teleportation, Psionics

Auzarr (*oh*-zar), Keeper of the Nexus, is the abstruse deity of the Transitive Planes, the conduits between realities, and all supernatural passage. She is the guardian of the fabric of reality and the strands that bind them, maintaining all extra- and nondimensional spaces. Auzarr's mantle of connectivity does not make her church a popular one on Áereth, but even for a Greater God Auzarr is largely apathetic toward mortal worship.

Those who do revere the Keeper of the Nexus understand the need for her work and strive to encourage or limit the magic of spatial relocation. Psionic creatures often pay homage to Auzarr as well, as much of their





power is drawn from astral energies. The Keeper of the Nexus is seldom portrayed in religious art, rendered as a nimbus of radiant energy or a tall, stately woman.

The domains associated with Auzarr are Knowledge, Magic, and Travel. As she has no favored weapon, the few clerics of the Keeper use the unarmed strike in its place. Her symbol is a prism or a silver loom.

Axaluatl (the Shadow Serpent)

Demigod, LE — Zimala, Nagas, Reptiles

Axaluatl (*ah*-shal-*wah*-tuhl), the Shadow Serpent, is the demi-power fathered by Madrah himself to assist his sister Cynhuara with the rulership of the Zimalan Empire. In an effort to usurp control from the Naga Council, the scheming of Axaluatl helped bring about the empire's eventual fall. In the wake of Zimala's war with the sphinxes of Khonsuria, Axaluatl's own disciples turned against him, withdrawing their devotion and slaying his loyal minions until his divinity became impotent.

Alone in the dark for millennia, the Shadow Serpent has slowly garnered support from small cults of lizardfolk, troglodytes, and even dark and spirit nagas still dwelling in the ruins of Zimala. Determined to rise again, Axaluatl seeks to expand his worship to include humans. Rumors have reached followers of the Shadow Serpent that the worship of Cynhuara may draw her back from death, a concern that frightens Axaluatl more than any other. He is determined to stamp out such misguided devotion to his dead sister and slay all remaining guardian nagas. The likeness of Axaluatl remains carved in the ancient temples of Zimala, depicting him as a dark naga of tremendous size. Legends suggest that he exists in physical form somewhere beneath the ruins of Teoyotlan.

The domains associated with Axaluatl are Evil, Death, and Law. His favored weapon, employed by those servants who can grip a weapon, is the garrote. The symbol of the Shadow Serpent is his own body twined around a jeweled sceptre.

Azi Dahaka

Demon prince, CE —Storms, Waste

Azi Dahaka (oz-*ee*-da-*hah*-kah) is a bestial demon spawned by Ahriman himself, one of many evil divinities unleashed upon the world by the Deathbringer to wreak destruction. Considered the spiritual inspiration of the hydra, Azi Dahaka is not a subtle demon prince, caring nothing for deception or cunning. He lives to destroy and suffers mortal thralls only if they promise to carry out schemes that bring ruin and waste to civilization. Long ago, a physical manifestation of Azi Dahaka was imprisoned within an Áerethian desert beneath a dome of enchanted glass. Releasing this multi-headed serpent is only the first step in stirring the bound demon. Like the hydra's head, killing one of Azi Dahaka's physical forms spawns two in its place. Each new body is birthed in the bowels of the Abyss and sets upon one goal: Return to the Material Plane to destroy.

Bargúl (the Sword of Darkness)

Demigod, LE — Death, Undead, Drow

Bargúl (*bar*-gool), the Sword of Darkness, Leader of the Hosts of Thorrin, is the heroine goddess of the drow. When the rebel elves fled from the subjugations of Khonsuria, it was the warrior-maid Bargúl who drove the Kindred Wars to its bloody climax and led her people into the depths of Áereth. Having brought her people so far into the darkness, Bargúl at last found salvation when she heard the call of Tororthun, the estranged goddess of the depths.

Upon her death, the Leader of the Hosts was rewarded with divinity as the necromantic swordmaiden of Tororthun's evil aspect, the Spider Queen—Bargúl brings the only semblance of true law to the otherwise selfish society of her people. Serving now as the drow patroness of death and the undead, the Sword of Darkness is only sparingly worshipped but remains a hero to drow throughout the Underdeep for having freed them from the tyranny of the Overworld.

The clergy of Bargúl are militant warrior-priestesses whose strategy in battle involves animating the dead of their fallen that they may fight anew. Despite this practice—or perhaps to explain it—all drow life is sacred to Bargúl. Her faithful are forbidden to slay other drow in cold blood and

must take care even if forced to fight them fairly. This respect for her own kind is often at odds with the Spider Queen's erratic ways, but Bargúl does not relent on her stance.

The domains associated with Bargúl are Death, Drow, Law, and Undead. Her favored weapon is the long or short sword (clerics must choose one), and her symbol is a skeletal soldier, usually depicted with flowing white hair like her own.

Bei'thor (Centurion of Evil)

Archdevil, LE — Cruelty, Sadism

Bei'thor (*bay*-ih-tour), an arrogant archdevil styling himself the Centurion of Evil, leads an eternal campaign to corrupt mortals with sins of wanton cruelty. When triumphant armies conquer neighboring lands, it is his influence which leads to needless slaughter, wickedness, and privation. Blackguards of Bei'thor are called the Knights of Darkness, a name as vainglorious as the devil they serve. Bei'thor, once a half-fiend mortal, attained the title of archdevil after centuries of unspeakable deeds. Despite his nefarious reputation, Bei'thor is most famous for his legendary defeat at the hands of Tevron. A powerful hound archon and champion of Justicia, Tevron saved the Northlands with his brilliant stratagems, personally sending Bei'thor in retreat to the depths of Hell.

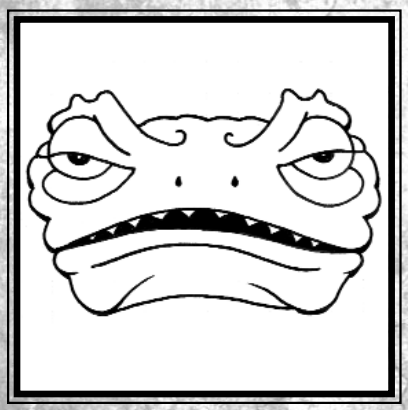
Bobugbubilz (the Toadfiend)

Demigod, CE — Evil Amphibians

Bobugbubilz (bo-*bug*-bub-ilz), the Toadfiend God, is the slimy god of evil amphibians, turbid water and slime, and the mephitis of foul places. A chaotic power of mires and malodorous life, Bobugbubilz is content simply to spread his putrid offspring across the planes and let them multiply and sow discord and misery where they will. The Material Plane is, of course, his favorite realm upon which to inflict his foul progeny. The disgust he and his clergy garner among the fairer races serves only to amuse Bobugbubilz.

The Toadfiend bears no relation to Pelagia, but many of his servants dwell within her oceans and seas. He is served primarily by anomalous members of various amphibious races, including locathahs, scrags, and sahuagin. Human cults spring up now and again in his wake, carrying out deviant rites and spawning new creatures in his name. Appropriately, Bobugbubilz's physical form is believed to be a bloated, toad-like monstrosity of alarming size, his rancid odor preceding his appearance.

The domains associated with Bobugbubilz are Chaos, Evil, and Water. His favored weapon is the whip and his symbol is the leering, malformed head of a toad.



Cadixtat (the Severed Chaos)

Demigod, CE — Chaos

Cadixtat (*kah*-dix-tat), the Sundered Master, the Severed Chaos, was once a deific titan and champion to Zhühn's goals of entropy on Áereth. When Teleus the Obedient severed his hand, his Axe of Unmaking and his great power were lost to him. The balance of Law and Chaos was restored when Teleus was withdrawn from the world, allowing the morals of Good and Evil to contend in their place. Seeing Cadixtat's purpose neutralized, Zhühn butchered the rest of his body and cast it in pieces down upon the world. Thus disarrayed, each part of the once-great titan twisted into a slumbering aberration of near-sentience deep beneath the surface. Over the subsequent ages, cults have coalesced to worship these creatures, laboring with profane magic to awaken them. The consciousness of Cadixtat himself is effectively inactive, dispersed and unknowing, but rumors among some circles of the occult claim that uniting his limbs could resurrect the Sundered Master. What agenda Cadixtat would follow or who he would serve, were he to reform, are a matter of pure speculation.

The domains associated with Cadixtat and his aberrant body parts are Chaos and Destruction, though Zhühn himself likely grants any spells from his worship. The favored weapon of Cadixtat is the battle axe and his symbol is simply a mesh of crisscrossing lines in random directions. Children who scribble are often scolded for accidentally evoking the sign of Cadixtat.

Calchoti (the Rain Queen)

Demigod, CG — Kaatlan, Rain, Charity

Calchoti (*kal*-cho-tee), the Rain Queen, the Virgin Water, is the magnanimous patroness of the Xulmec city-state of Kaatlan. She is the bringer of rainfall and verdant life, playing a vital role for the crops the Xulmec harvest. The Rain Queen is a deity who teaches that life is sacred and not to be wasted; one must offer friendship and charity to one's neighbors and even one's enemies.

Any day of rainfall is a hallowed day to her clerics, and even violent storms are regarded with wonder and fear of her power. The clergy of Calchoti shares an oddly symbiotic relationship with that of Coatlimict the Skull-Father that none outside of either faith can understand. While each god will hold greater sway than the other during any given season, the two never war with one another despite their strongly opposed tenets. Calchoti is depicted in temple carvings as a small woman with rain falling from her body.

The domains associated with the Rain Queen are Good, Healing, Plant, and Water. Her favored weapon is the *atlatl* and her symbol is a pitcher pouring water.

Centivus (the Shaper)

Greater god, N — Creation, Artistry, Possibility, Conjuration, Transmutation

Centivus (*sent*-ih-vus) the Shaper, the Great Artist, is the embodiment of imagination and possibility, a deity of Creation as one of the Triad. Lesser known than Choranus and Ildavir, Centivus is a humble god, caring little for mortal worship. He is the incidental patron of all artists and wizards who study the schools of conjuration and transmutation. Though few worship him directly, many offer prayers to the Great Artist when in need of inspiration. Centivus is less adamant in his opposition of Zhühn, but the Shaper, as the ultimate purveyor of creativity and inventiveness, is still anathema to the Great Enemy.

The domains associated with Centivus are Creation, Knowledge, Protection, and Travel. His favored weapon has changed over the years; lately, it is the light crossbow. The symbol of Centivus varies with each culture in which he is revered.

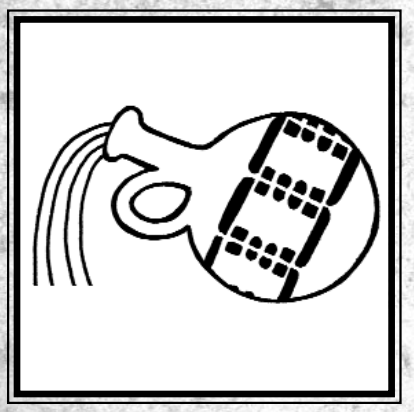
Chondri (the Voracious)

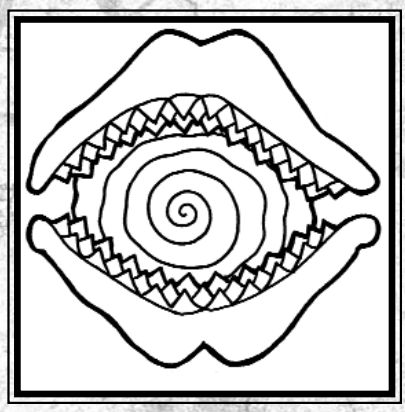
Demigod, NG — Deep-dwelling Marine Life, Aggression

Chondri (*chon*-dree), the Voracious, Seraph of the Deep, the Sea-Angel of Blood, is the twin of Elas as a god of deep waters. Often considered an aspect of Pelagia, he is in fact merely one of many children of the Coral Queen. He is a patron of the natural animals of the deep sea, most often associated with sharks.

Chondri is depicted as a gigantic shark with a flattened, skate-like head and fitted with a terrifying, serrated snout like that of some monstrous sawfish. Though his form strikes horror into the hearts of all who see him, the respectful have nothing to fear of this goodly deity.

The domains associated with Chondri are Good, Strength, and Water. The favored symbol of the Sea-Angel is the trident and his symbol is the open jaws of a shark.





Choranus (the Seer Father)

Greater god, LN — Creation, Destiny, Magic

Choranus (*kor*-uh-niss), the Seer Father, is arguably the most powerful being known to Áereth. Most races and cultures in the Known Realms speak of a god that first created the world, and most point to a power like him. He watches Áereth remotely, concerned with its future perhaps more than its past, delegating present concerns to his children and the lesser gods.

Though his worshippers are few, Chroranus is often invoked by prophets, seers, and wizards for his divine omniscience, and by all those who seek the knowledge that one's own destiny imparts. Followers of Choranus maintain that every spell or psionic power that glimpses the future—be it mere seconds or long years—must meet approval with the Seer Father. He alone, they believe, can perceive the enormity of the future and decides what portents to divulge to the mortal world. In a thousand cultures Choranus is given a thousand names and a thousand representations. As a member of the Triad, he is the consort of Ildavir and the elder brother of Centivus. Choranus is the chief enemy of Zhühn, whose empty Void the Seer Father invaded with his very presence.

The domains associated with Choranus are Creation, Knowledge, Magic, Protection, Strength, and Travel. He has no favored weapon. The symbol of Choranus varies with each culture in which he is revered.

Coatlimict (the Skull-Father)

Demigod, NE — Kaatlan, War, Carnage, Undeath

Coatlimict (ko-*aht*-li-*mikt*), the Serpent-Haired, Skull-Father, Prince of the Summer Harvest, and the Reaper of Men, is the Xulmec god of carnage and undeath. Once a mighty king of Kaatlan, Coatlimict was a favored disciple of Calchoti who turned from the peace and altruism of her faith. The final years of his tyranny ran red with the blood of his enemies. After Coatlimict was slain, his many pacts with the Lords of Hell earned him a tenuous position as a demigod. The god of bloodshed and undeath, the Skull-Father is the patron of warriors, necromancers, and blackguards.

Despite his fall into evil, the clergy of the Skull-Father bears an enigmatic state of peace with the priesthood of the Rain Queen, allowing both faiths to coexist within Kaatlan. Coatlimict is usually depicted as a giant, overly muscled human with a fleshless head and living serpents for hair, wearing a cloak of feathers and bearing his favored weapon. Clerics of the Skull-Father are frightening to behold, as they often wear the flayed skins of their victims and adorn their temples with the animated, severed heads of their enemies mounted upon pikes.

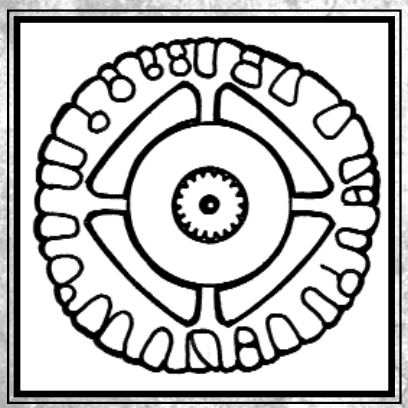
The domains associated with Coatlimict are Death, Evil, and War. His favored weapon is the two-handed *macuahuitl* and his symbol is a stylized skull from which serpents slither like the rays of the sun.

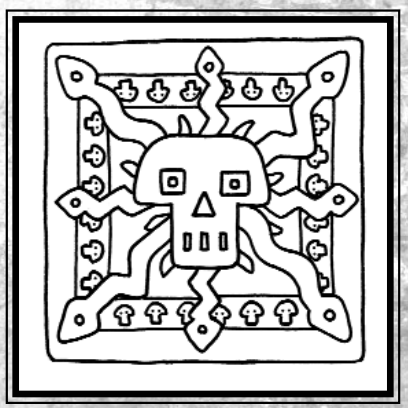
Cynhuara (the Radiant Serpent)

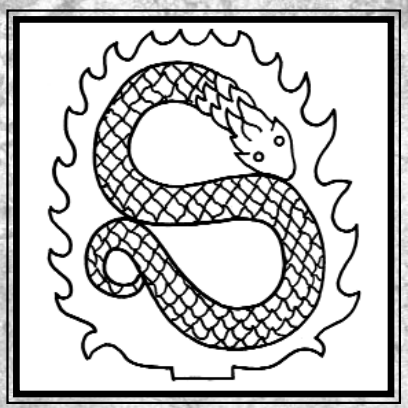
Demigod, LG — Zimala, Nagas, Reptiles

Cynhuara (sin-*wahr*-uh), the Radiant Serpent, was a demi-goddess sired by Madrah to rule the Zimalan Empire. When she came of age, she created the Naga Council, a democratic assembly that gave greater voice to her subjects. With the Radiant Serpent at its head, the Council begat an age of peaceful expansion and magical progress. The peace came to a terrible end when Cyhara's brother, Axaluatl, betrayed her and the Council, bringing war from the Khonsurian Empire that decimated the population. In the attack, Cynhuara herself was slain by Meraph, the half-dragon daughter of Queen Ankharet.

Yet divinity is not so easily extinguished. Cynhuara has lain in the slumber of death for millennia, but the rumor of prophecy has begun to circulate among the guardian nagas who live today and a handful of devoted cults of the Radiant Serpent.







Asserting that the goddess can be returned from death, the disciples of Cynhuara have come to understand that only one person, a young human female, can avail this prophecy: Itlanexca, the adolescent queen of Teotcoatlan. Herself only a young acolyte of the Radiant Serpent, the queen is unaware of her destiny and of the enemies who would see her dead to prevent it.

Clerics who worship the slumbering goddess have their spells granted by Madrah himself—until the goddess's rebirth. The domains associated with the Radiant Serpent are Good, Healing, and Magic. Her favored weapon, for those of her followers who can grasp one, is the flail. Her symbol is a serpent surrounded by a halo of flame.

Daenthar (the Hallowed Forge)

Greater god, LG — Earth, Industry, Vows, Trust

Daenthar (*dane*-thar), the Hallowed Forge, the Mountainlord, is the earth god of industry, blacksmithing, and oaths. He is the patron of miners and all who draw from the rock to shape tools of defense and war. Dwarves were hewn in the image of Daenthar, and it is indeed the Hallowed Forge that most of the Bearded Folk venerate. Yet other races pay their respects to him as well, particularly mountaineers, blacksmiths, and those who work with their hands. The Mountainlord, a stern god of unwavering law, is well known for his promised word; when an oath is made by him or his clerics, one can be assured the oath will be fulfilled. Though seldom are curses made in his name, vows of love, justice, and revenge are common.

Daenthar is one of the Greater Gods, and the most serious-minded of his siblings. He is an earth god like Poderon, but he is dour by comparison, lacking the levity of his younger brother. Gaining the friendship of Daenthar is a promise of security, for the Mountainlord defends his own. Daenthar is widely acknowledged but his clergy is small; clerics of the Hallowed Forge are found mostly within stony temples deep within mountain holds. In ceremony, they are clad in full battle armor that varies with each temple, but the everyday vestments of the Mountainlord's clergy resemble well-tailored workman's attire that is uniform across the Known Realms. When the likeness of Daenthar is carved in religious art, he always appears as a stout human or tall dwarf, either standing over a forge or arrayed in heavy battle armor.

The domains associated with the Mountainlord are Earth, Good, Law, and Protection. His favored weapon is the warhammer, while the symbol of Daenthar is a forging hammer set against a cracked mountain.

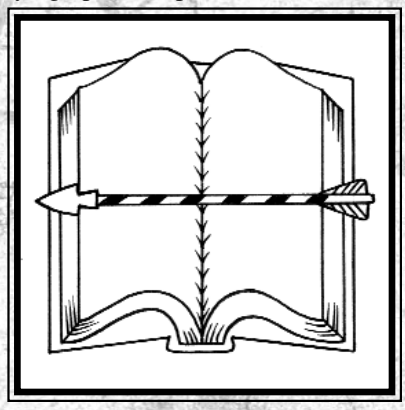
Delvyr (the Luminous)

Lesser god, NG — Knowledge, Learning, Light

Delvyr (*del*-veer), the Luminous, the Revealing Light, the Hallowed Docent, is the deity of education, knowledge, and radiance. He is the patron god of scholars, librarians, educators, and warriors who fight for the preservation of truth. Learned bards and chroniclers revere Delvyr above others, for he strives to reveal all secrets and unmask the guises of evil and all those who would bury knowledge. He is also the god of sunlight and exposure, the purveyor of open truth and unclouded opinion. Clerics and paladins who serve Delvyr are chief opponents of the undead, bringing purifying sunlight to bear against them. Monks, bards, and scholars devoted to the Revealing Light often spend long hours in research, although Delvyr does not seek to hold up his followers in dusty libraries forever. The search for knowledge is an active one; the Church of Delvyr often funds expeditions to recover lost lore, forgotten mythos, records from fallen civilizations, or even magics buried by the ages.

In religious renderings, Delvyr is always shown dwelling in places of lore, such as libraries, archaeological digs, and council chambers. Within these environments, he is shown in four stages of life: a child, a youth, a middle-aged man, and an elder to depict one's need to learn throughout one's life. Delvyr is a known enemy to the Hidden Lord, whose shadows he intends to illuminate, whose secrets he aims to reveal. Though a deity of undisputable good, Delvyr believes in truth for truth's sake; even harmful or blasphemous lore is best brought to light and carefully guarded, rather than left hidden for the unwary to find.

The domains associated with Delvyr are Glory, Good, Knowledge, and Sun. His favored weapon is the shortbow and his symbol is an arrow lying upon an open book.



Elas (the Lurker)

Demigod, NE — Deep-dwelling Marine Life, Ambush

Elas (*ee*-loss), the Lurker, She-Devil of the Deep, is a wicked and capricious terror of the ocean floor. Ever at war with her brother Chondri the Voracious, together they rule over the deep seas and its most fearsome creatures.

Elas is a deity of extreme cunning and a mistress of ambush. She is depicted as a colossal manta ray with the head and notorious jaws of a massive moray eel. When Elas takes physical form within Áereth's ocean, she is a true monster of the deep. While her dorsal side is perfectly camouflaged against the seabed, her ventral is an otherworldly wash of prismatic effulgence. Those who look upon it are irresistibly drawn into her waiting jaws of death. Her numerous tails are long, barbed, and poisonous. She spends most of her time resting on the ocean floor, laying in wait for prey deserving of her interest. Clerics of the Lurker are primarily sahuagin and locathahs.

The domains associated with Elas are Evil, Trickery, and Water. The favored weapon of Elas is the trident and her symbol is a manta ray or a sand dollar rimmed with spear points.

Elyr (the Healing Touch)

Lesser god, CG — Healing, Life, Succor

Elyr (*el*-eer), the Healing Touch, the Maiden of Life, the Binder of Wounds, the Sustainer, is the goddess of continued life, the purging of sickness, and the binding of all hurts. She is the patroness of those who give aid to others, be they home-dwelling healers or warriors who brave enemy territory to rescue captives. Born immaculate from the blood of Ildavir, Elyr takes her mother's devotion to life to a zealous extreme, believing that life should be sustained at all costs and is worth any risk.

Elyr's well-meaning, uncompromising dogma is often at odds with the tenets of Soleth, which state that there is a time for merciful death. Clerics of the Healing Touch are a blessing to the wounded and those in peril, but often a bane to the dying who prefer the release of death. Elyr does not enjoy suffering, but her drive to stave off death outweighs the need to relieve pain. Accordingly, the Maiden of Life abhors the undead, and her clerics often join the faithful of Delvyr in their crusades to destroy them. Elyr wages great opposition to the machinations of Zhühn, for she adores creation and the restoration of life in all its forms. The Maiden of Life is usually depicted as a radiant young woman in simple robes, tending the sick and wounded. No matter what armor or vestments they wear, clerics of Elyr are recognizable by their very long, well-groomed hair, vowing never to cut it once they join the clergy, as a symbol of long and enduring life.

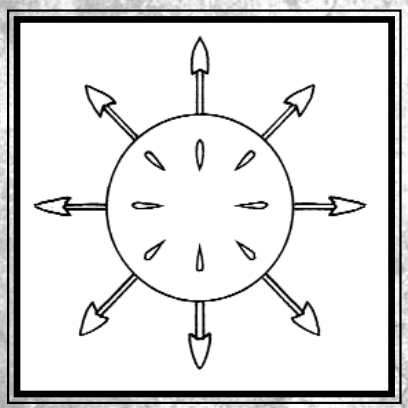
The domains associated with Elyr are Good, Healing, Liberation, and Luck. Her favored weapon is the sling. The symbol of the Maiden of Life is a radiant hand, sometimes shown clasping or touching the palm of a withered hand.

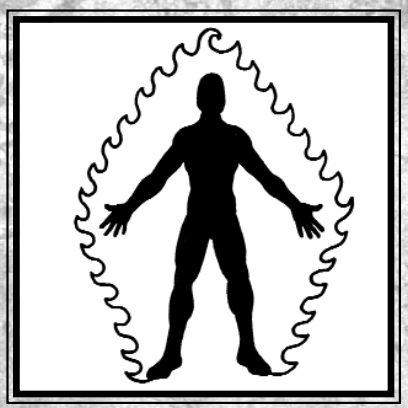
Fenwar (the Firelord)

Lesser god, N — Fire, Lightning, the Hearth

Fenwar (*fen*-wahr), the Firelord, the Blazing King, is the god of forest fires, lightning storms, hot springs, and the kinetic energies of nature wherever they manifest—volcanoes, auroras, fireflies. He is the patron of creatures inured to fire or lightning, but also of simple people who rely upon the fires of the hearth to keep their homes warm. As a god in service to Ildavir, Fenwar maintains the balance of nature with his phenomena of heat and flame.

Known for his temper, Fenwar does not tolerate those who abuse his dominion. Clerics and druids of the Firelord never cause forest fires, but they do permit them to run their course as part of Áereth's cycle of life. They do investigate such holocausts, however, if they have reason





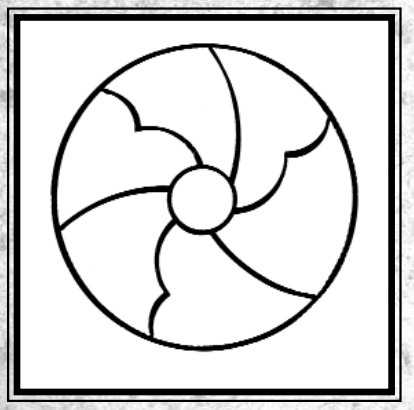
to suspect mortal instigation. Temples of Fenwar, though uncommon, are great lodges of stone with windows open to the sky. Altars, resembling massive hearths, are usually guarded by fire, magma, or steam mephits. Holy days are observed during lightning storms, when Fenwar is the most active.

The domains associated with Fenwar are Air, Fire, and Sun. His favored weapon is the halberd, and his symbol is a man-shaped figure wreathed in flame or electricity.

Gil'Mâridth (the Torment)

Lesser god, CE — Nightmares, Fear, Night Terrors

Gil'Mâridth (gil-*mahr*-idth), the Torment, the Great Hag, the Dread of Night, formerly a being of unmatched evil and power in the Sancturn Pantheon's homeworld, refused to be lowered beneath Áereth's greater gods. Instead, she escaped into the Dream held aloft by Ôæ where she reigns rivaled only by Ôæ himself and, like him, exists almost without body or awareness beyond that imagined realm. Out of sight to most dreamers, Gil'Mâridth and her cult of shanghaied dreamers wage a tireless battle with Ôæ and his faithful in an effort to reclaim the Dream and shape it to her liking, just as she has since before the dawn of Áereth. The Great Hag's dominion within the Dream is a realm of unimagined horror, and she will not relent until every dream has been made part of her nightmare.



With the near-consummate power of Ôæ, however, Gil'Mâridth's aim is not an easy one. Yet the march of fear and misery in the waking world disquiets dreamers' dreams, inviting the Torment's terrifying intrusion. Unbelieved if not unknown by most mortals, the war she wages threatens very real repercussions for every dreamer in the waking world should she achieve her frightening designs. For the Cult of Mâridth, the enormity of potential misery brought on from such troubles as plagues and wars—and especially the Northlands' Scourge—gives them hope.

The unquiet clerics of the Torment are recruited by senior priests of the faith who enter their nightmares and drive them to the edge of sanity until they come to understand the creeds of Gil'Mâridth. These disturbed believers live anonymously and work diligently to poison the waking lives of dreamers with terror they should carry with them in their sleep. Most of them function independently, haunting individuals according to instructions received in their own tortured dreams, but elite sects of the Cult of Mâridth exist, often in coordination with other evil faiths. The spread of mental anguish—and hence, troubled dreams—fuels the Torment's power within the Dream. The Dread of Night is the antithesis of hope and safety, fulfilling a dreamer's worst imagined horror. By default, she is depicted as a night hag, a creature commonly connected to her faith.

The domains associated with Gil'Mâridth are Dream, Evil, and Trickery. She is no purveyor of death, preferring the sedation and unconsciousness of her enemies to ensure their arrival in her dominion. For this reason, clerics of the Torment employ poisons such as oil of taggit and blue whinnis. When forced into combat, they wield the sap, Gil'Mâridth's favored weapon. Her symbol is a dark spiral or vortex reflecting the reoccurring image central to her priests' nightmares.

Gorhan (the Helmed Vengeance)

Lesser god, LG — Valor, War, Chivalry

Gorhan (*gor*-han), the Helmed Vengeance, the Brave One, He Who Fights First, is the deity of assertive combat and valorous accomplishments. He is the patron god of those who fight with courage against the lawless and corrupt. Nonhumans often favor Gorhan in their darkest hour, but usually know him by a different name. Most of the Brave One's faithful are paladins and cavaliers, and even elves have founded knightly orders in his name. His fervor against evil often outweighs his reason, and his followers evince the same trait.

Gorhan is always depicted as a slender knight in luminous, golden armor, a radiant longsword and shield in hand. The visor of his helm always hides his face, revealing him as neither human nor elven in countenance. Gorhan is the husband of Justicia and embodies the emphatic force that carries out her righteous decrees. When forgiveness or reprieve are no longer options for the guilty, the Helmed Vengeance becomes the executioner. Clerics of Gorhan respect valor above all, and

those who've proven their courage against the face of true evil earn the right to wear armor emblazoned with their deity's sacred symbol. Though they wear standard vestments within their temples, clerics and paladins of the Brave One favor the anonymity of visored helms on the battlefield.

The domains Gorhan is associated with are Good, Healing, Strength, and War. His favored weapon is the longsword, and his symbol is such a sword stained with black blood. Those temples that honor both Gorhan and his wife merge their symbols together as one.

Hidden Lord

Lesser god, CE — Secrets, Misdirection, Forbidden Lore, Shadows

The Hidden Lord, the Cloaked One, the Keeper of Forbidden Lore, or He of Many Names is a deity of the shadows, an unseen master of dark places and darker secrets. Those mortals who seek heretical writings and buried truths inevitably find themselves coveting the power of the Hidden Lord—whether they know it or not. The Cloaked One is one of the few gods who do not openly preach their tenets, for his ways are by their very nature concealed. His clergy, the Hidden Path, is a well-organized secret society that carries out its evil agenda through clandestine means, feigning the worship of other gods and communicating to each other with complex codes. In every land he is known with a different name—such as Nuurifar, Crypticus, or Salderast—and whenever one of these names become fairly established, his clergy renames him.

The Hidden Lord is never portrayed in any form; any depiction of him is intended to mislead. Some affiliate the Hidden Lord with Zhühn due to his secret agendas, but this is inaccurate; the Hidden Lord seeks power, while Zhühn seeks to remove all power. There is no common appearance among his faithful. If there is a means to identify a cleric of the Hidden Lord, they do not share it outside their own. Any priest who turns from the Hidden Path is marked for death.

The domains associated with the Cloaked One are Darkness, Evil, Knowledge, and Trickery. His symbol, very rarely seen, is a black cowl concealing a wispy visage and a pair of glowing eyes. A cleric of the Hidden Lord can use the holy symbol of any neutral or evil deity to channel their spells. The Hidden Lord's favored weapon is a wavy-bladed dagger.

Huamext (The Restored)

Demigod, NG — Xulmec, Protection

Huamext (*woh*-mesht), the Guardian and Preserver, is the reincarnation of the hero-turned-god Huamec the Deliverer. Once a chieftain of his people, Huamec first led the human slaves to freedom from the naga empire of Zimala. After establishing them in the Xulmec peninsula, Huamec ascended into divinity, only to sacrifice his immortal life to save his people in the War of Divine Right. Centuries later, Huamec emerged again, revived by one of his descendants, a priestess named Ixtique. Having achieved divinity herself with the sole purpose of resurrecting her ancestor and god, her spirit fused with his and a new aspect of both exists in the form of Huamext. Huamext is the god of vigilance for all of Xulmec, a deity keeping surveillance on the lands and its people.

Huamext is often considered the eldest human son of Madrah, for he gives of himself more than any of Madrah's progeny. Although he is worshipped primarily in Teotcoatlan, Huamec is a legend and hero to all tribes of Xulmec, and shrines to Huamext exist in every city so the people can pay him their respect. In his temples, the Guardian is depicted as he was in life, a bear of a man wielding a massive warclub and sometimes wearing armor made from the scales of a dragon; at his side is always a young girl, representing the spirit of Ixtique who gave Huamec renewed life. Nevertheless, both are worshipped as Huamext, a single deity. Priests of the Guardian and Preserver are open-minded, willing to form allegiances with foreigners but never willing to risk the security of all Xulmec. Huamext and his clergy disapprove of the infighting that often exists between the city-states, a state of attrition they cannot foil. It was priests of Huamec who were first taught the rites to create living idols (see Chapter 3), and for this reason every temple to Huamext is guarded by one of the idols.

The domains associated with Huamext are Earth, Good, and Protection. His favored weapon is the greatclub and his symbol is a quetzal-feathered phoenix.

Ildavir (The Giver of Form)

Greater god, N — Creation, Life, Nature, Animals

Ildavir (*il*-duh-veer), the Giver of Form, the Mother of Essence, is often overlooked but is no less powerful than the others of the Triad. It was Ildavir who first gave corporeal form to the creatures of Áereth, setting them into the cyclic arrays of nature and granting them the ability to procreate. As a goddess of Creation, Ildavir stands aloof from the world, seeing that it moves as intended only on a global scale. Even so, some choose to worship her directly. Clerics and druids of the Old Faith, as it is called, know the Mother of Essence to be the foremost god of nature itself, the origin of all earthly life. They place great value in physical creatures, objects, and places. Simultaneously materialistic and humble, Ildirians preach the value of the world and its workings and strive always to protect nature and its children. Farmers, agriculturists, and even hunters regularly offer tribute to the Giver of Form.

When depicted, Ildavir is envisioned as a winged dryad or sylph and bearing the antlers of a caribou or gazelle. She stands always apart from the world, and yet in contact with it, providing nourishment. She is the consort of Choranus and the mother of Ireth, Daenthar, Poderon, and Olidyra. The goddess Elyr is her youngest progeny, who sprang fully formed from a wound dealt her by Zhühn, her foremost enemy. The gods who despoil nature, such as Malotoch, Nimlurun, and Narrimunâth, are often the objects of her anger.

The domains associated with the Mother of Essence are Animal, Creation, Earth, Plant, and Protection. Her favored weapon is the scythe and her symbol is a leaf, frond, or tree.

Ilhuicatl (Lord of the Reef)

Demigod, NG — Athua, the Sea

Ilhuicatl (il-*hwee*-kotl), Lord of the Reef, is the patron god of the Xulmec city-state of Athua, given divine status by Madrah and fostered by the ocean goddess Pelagia. To the Athuans, he is the personification of the sea itself, though even they recognize the existence of Pelagia as the motherly, oceanic goddess above him. Ilhuicatl is the protector of all goodly, marine-dwelling creatures, including merfolk and tritons.

Ilhuicatl is depicted as a noble triton with the Southland features of a Xulmec human. According to legend, as a mortal man he fell in love with a mermaid who beckoned him into the sea, where he joined with the spirit of Pelagia herself. Porpoises and dolphins are sacred animals in the faith of the Lord of the Reef, and human clerics of Ilhuicatl maintain strong contact with the clerics of merfolk and tritons who also revere him.

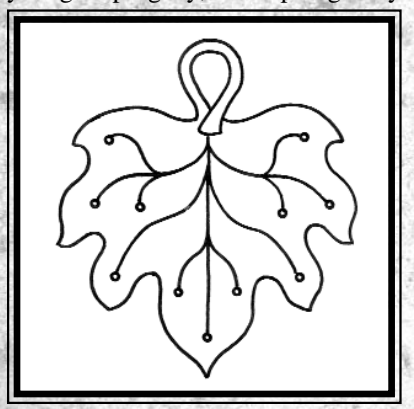
The domains associated with Ilhuicatl are Good, Protection, Travel, and Water. His favored weapon is the spear, and his symbol is a conch.

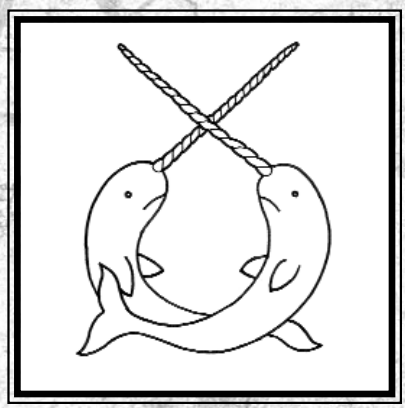
Ilquot (The Bell in the Deep)

Demigod, CN — Cold Waters of the North, Marine Predators, Retribution

Ilquot (*il*-quot), the Bell in the Deep, the Bellowing Bray of Night, is the fierce and jealous protector of the frigid northern oceans. He is the patron not only of those living upon the northern coasts but also the predators that keep their fragile ecosystems healthy. Ilquot is, in fact, their top predator, a rare and unseen hunter letting no beast take more than its fair share.

Like his brothers and sisters, Ilquot watches over a realm bequeathed to him by his mother Pelagia. Among them, his reputation is the dourest, yet his spirit is as ferocious within the seas' krakens and orcas as it is gentle with its puffins' chicks. The savage clerics of Ilquot must live a life as wild and brutal as his favored children, the creatures of the icy waters, though their numbers are few and dwindling. Without the presence of Ilquot's clerics as wardens of the cold northern seas, local priests have had to take special care not to





infringe upon this gelid divinity's simple yet easily disregarded tenets. When a larger number of mortals are disrespectful of the sea, Ilquot is quick to bring retribution upon them, inciting his faithful to war. The Bell in the Deep is usually depicted as an intimidating humanoid with the head of some great animal of the arctic seas, typically a walrus, polar bear, or octopus.

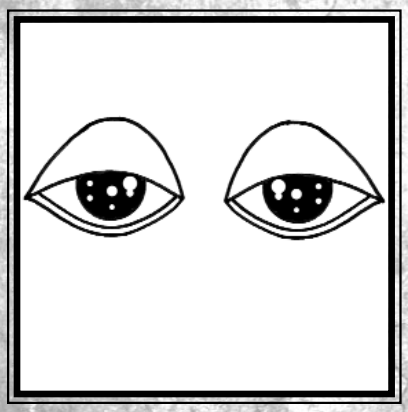
The domains associated with Ilquot are Protection, War, and Water. The favored weapon of Ilquot is the harpoon, interchangeable with the javelin. His symbol is a pair of crossed narwhal tusks, often frozen in ice.

Ireth (the Starmistress)

Greater god, CG — Astronomy, Forestry, Wizardry

Ireth (*eer*-ith), the Starmistress, the Stargazer, the Verdant Mantle, is the goddess of the night sky, woodlands, and magic. She is the patroness of astronomers, navigators, and woodsmen who respect the balance of nature. Ireth is the primary deity worshipped by the elves of Áereth. The elven race was fashioned in her image, reflecting her virtues, love of knowledge and art, and fascination with magic. Though possessed of a disciplined mind, Ireth is nevertheless whimsical, a trait bestowed upon the elves at their creation.

Eschewing formal temples, the Stargazer's places of worship take many forms, from *hallowed* forest glades open to the sky to stargazing observatories and sky-lit libraries. Elves, studious wizards, and those who look beyond Áereth itself into the stars themselves all pay their respects to the Starmistress. She is a mystic deity who embodies both worldliness and the unearthly mysteries of existence itself.



Ireth is the eldest child of Choranus and Ildavir. When she is rendered in religious art, Ireth appears as a slender wizard in modest, voluminous robes with long, flowing tresses. She is often shown with a spellbook in hand and a sheathed sword at her hip—or else wielding the sword with the book under one arm. She is typically depicted as elven, half-elven, or human.

The domains associated with Ireth are Air, Animal, Earth, Good, Knowledge, and Magic. Her favored weapon is the longsword and her symbol is a pair of eyes with star-flecked pupils.

Izmaledt (the Lord of Many Forms)

Demon prince, CE — Obscenities, Malformation

Izmaledt (*iz*-muh-let), the Lord of Many Forms, is the demon prince of physical blasphemies, the purveyor of putrid flesh, and the hybridization of unnatural horrors. Those who find the loathsome worship of Nimlurun too systematic for their tastes often find themselves thralls to Izmaledt, for the Lord of Many Forms offers obscenity without reason. Usually stricken with contagions themselves, cultists of Izmaledt are typically found in the company of the fouler creatures of Áereth, such as otyughs, gibbering mouthers, or oozes. Wizards in the service of the Lord of Many Forms experiment with the flesh of their enemies, stitching and rearranging limbs from one creature to another, and a liberal use of transmutation magic is a common pastime for such depraved souls.

Jezuel

Archdevil, LE — Pain, Torture, Indignity

Jezuel (*jez*-ooh-el), a sadistic she-devil who calls herself the Queen of Tribulation, seeks always to bring physical and mental anguish to mortals. She alleviates the suffering of her worshippers while they live, only to bring it a hundredfold upon them when their souls are in her grasp. To earn her protection, the depraved cultists of Jezuel must inflict agonies upon others, but her demand for torment does not end with physical pain. Indignity and shame are her favorite afflictions to work upon the mortal mind, and for this reason she spends a great deal of her effort spreading misery like a plague. The father who cannot feed his starving children, the soldier whose terror leads him to abandon his comrades when they are in need, the midwife who fails to save the newborn child—these Jezuel names her greatest triumphs.

Justicia (the Helmless Vigil)

Lesser god, LG — Justice, Mercy, Defense

Justicia (jus-*ti*-shuh), the Highest Magistress, the Restoring Flame, the Helmless Vigil, is the goddess of mercy, justice, and defensive combat. As the patroness of judges, lawmen, and knights, she oversees justice in all its forms, be it in a court of law or the field of battle. As the patroness of guardians and the beneficent, Justicia seeks to remedy all hurts and redeem all evil. Those who admit their crimes can find forgiveness with the Restoring Flame, but when evil fails to repent, she burns with a purifying fire. Though she

favors the moral virtues of good, Justicia usually remains impartial to the laws of the land in which she is revered.

Justicia is the wife of Gorhan—she is the voice of reason behind his unwavering valor. She is depicted as a statuesque knight in silver armor. In one hand, she holds the scales of justice, and in the other, a gilded longsword. Long dark hair spills from her head. She never wears a helm, preferring to look into the eyes of those she judges. When armored, clerics and paladins of the Highest Magistress shun the use of visors, preferring open-faced helms as they march into battle.

The domains associated with Justicia are Good, Healing, Law, and Protection. Her favored weapon is a longsword. Her symbol, a shield bearing radiant eyes with a longsword held against its face, is often merged with that of her husband's in joint worship.

Klazath (the Crimson Banner)

Lesser god, LE — War, Subjugation

Klazath (*klah*-zuth), the Crimson Banner, the Rain of Death, is the god of glory through violence, conflict, and war for its own sake. He is the patron of conquerors, tyrants, and martial governments, as well as individual soldiers who believe that the honor of battle itself outweighs all consequences. Followers of Klazath consider peace an enervating state, a stagnation that weakens all parties. The dogma of the Crimson Banner demands the necessity of war, citing nature—the design of Ildavir herself—as a model for unending violence. The weak, Klazath teaches, must be slain so they do not consume the resources needed for the strong. Barring that, they must be subjugated to serve the interests of the conquerors. Klazath is not a popular god in many lands, but generals and kings often rally in the name of the Crimson Banner to justify their means. Be it true piety or lip service, the clerics of Klazath welcome all bloodshed in his name.

A god of needless war, Klazath is the current consort of Yvyn, the Righteous Slaughter. He is also a prime enemy of Justicia and Gorhan, whom he enjoys luring onto the battlefield. Klazath is depicted as a warrior in black plate armor, half spattered with blood, wearing an elaborate plumed or horned helm. In his mailed fists, he carries a great war axe. The war priests of the Crimson Banner smear their own blood on their armor before a battle, signifying their willingness to bleed for their faith.

The domains associated with the Rain of Death are Destruction, Evil, Law, and Strength. His symbol is a bloodstained, double-headed axe of black metal. Accordingly, the battleaxe is his favored weapon.

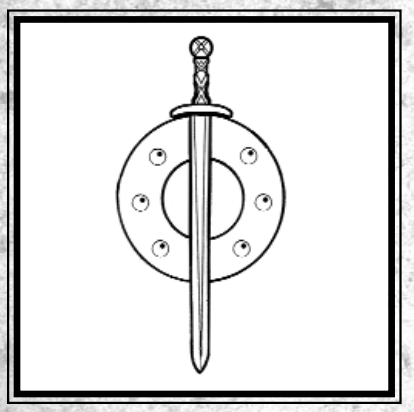
Lagos (the Scaly God)

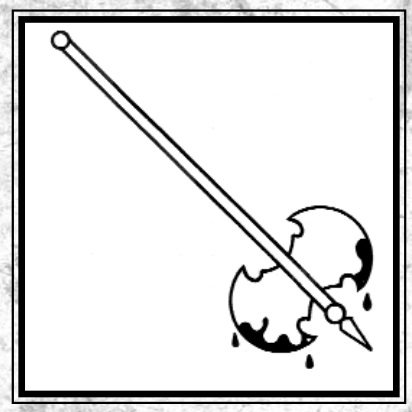
Demigod, CE — Antagonism, Reptiles, Savagery

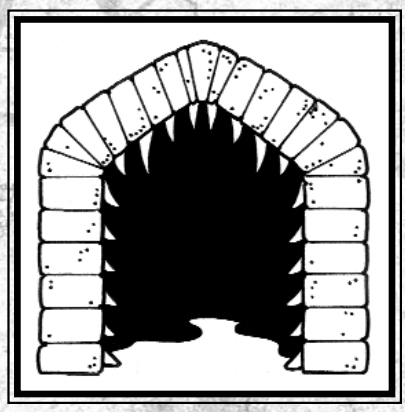
Lagos (*loh*-gos), the Scaly God, the Scaled One, is the demigod of reptilian creatures and subterranean caves, violence, and battles for supremacy. The hostility Lagos exhibits is fierce but brief, and this trait is common even among those he lords over. At the core, he is indolent and selfish, offering his favor only in passing and very little else. It is believed that he will personally devour those who displease him, and Lagos is not known for his patience. He is given to fits of rage and lustful indulgences.

Lagos is portrayed as a tremendous wide-mouthed reptile with a long tongue, razor claws, and a thick, club-like tail. His green-blue, scaly hide is scarred and peeling, and he is always depicted in acts of aggression. His servants, appropriately, are mostly troglodytes, kobolds, or evil-minded lizardfolk. Cave-dwelling humans have been known to worship Lagos as well, primitive barbarians as violent as the reptiles the Scaly God represents. Spiritual leaders of such tribes who serve Lagos are usually shamans and adepts, offering regular blood sacrifices at crude shrines.

The domains associated with Lagos are Chaos, Destruction, Evil, and Strength. Most of his followers







would rather use teeth and claws in combat; when forced to wield a weapon, the morningstar is the god's favored choice. The symbol of the Scaly God is a stony archway lined with reptilian teeth.

Lasheeva (Lady Dissolution)

Lesser god, NE — Undeath, Murder, Affliction

Lasheeva (lah-*shee*-vuh), Lady Dissolution, the Cold Seductress, the Black Desecration, the Daughter of Nightmares, is the goddess of undeath and the termination of natural life. When mortals first felt the cold grip of death upon them, it was Lasheeva who offered an attractive, if macabre, alternative. Granting choice creatures her chilling touch, the goddess personally introduced the curse of undeath to Áereth. Lasheeva is the unequivocal warden of the Negative Energy Plane and thereby gives new, "blessed" life to the dead. With this defiance of the gods' despotic mandate of mortality, she seduces countless souls into her dark fold.

Priests of opposing faiths theorize that Lasheeva was Áereth's first and most powerful lich who ascended to divinity with the support of a cabal of evil gods, but clerics of Lasheeva know that it was Lady Dissolution herself—an ancient princess of the Sancturn Pantheon—who bestowed the mantle of lichdom upon willing mortals and personally crafted the first phylacteries that sustain her greatest protégés. Even the most impious of intelligent undead acknowledge Lasheeva as the goddess of their own unliving existence, but many revere her outright. The largest temples of the Lady Dissolution, subterranean crypts desecrated in her name, are guarded by mummies and liches of the foulest sort. High priests and priestesses are, in fact, required to choose the path of either undead form at an hour appointed by Lasheeva herself. Her shrines are infamously rife with ghouls, zombies, and skeletons.

Lasheeva is the daughter of Gil'Mâridth and the immortal enemy of Soleth. Her followers are Áereth's quintessential purveyors of undeath, hoping to spread negative energy across the world like a plague. Lay followers of Lasheeva are almost always dabblers of necromancy and often find themselves targeted by paladins. Even the all-hating followers of Zhühn oppose her faithful, for undeath cheats the Great Enemy of the obliteration he craves for all life.

The domains associated with the Black Desecration are Death, Destruction, and Evil. Her favored weapon is the falchion and her symbol is a black, jawless skull set with open, living eyes.

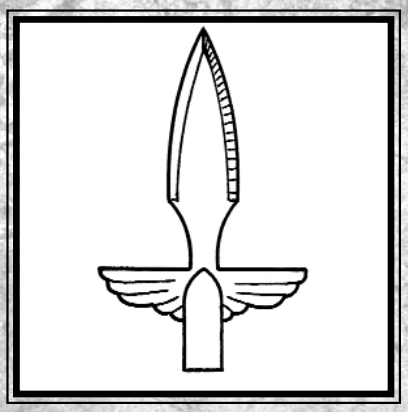
Madrah (Lord of the Earth and Sky)

Greater god, N — Earth, Sky

Madrah (*moh*-druh), the Lord of the Earth and Sky, Heart-of-Sky, the Mighty Eye, is a greater god of terrestrial life and aerial forces. Though his dominion technically reaches across all Áereth, he was charged by the Triad to oversee the continent and islands that make up the Southlands. Accordingly, he is seen by most natives of that land as the overlord of all gods. The Mighty Eye fathered the demigods Cynhuara and Axaluatl, the immortal rulers of the long-faded Zimalan Empire, and granted divine ascension to the gods of Xulmec. Madrah is powerful but equivocal, his incarnations as numerous as the cultures that worship him. While the humans of Xulmec believe he is the savior of all existence—the only being capable of keeping the Sun from burning the world to ash—the drakon of Ssorlang believe he is a great lord of reptiles preparing the world for serpent rule. Such varying aspects, tenets, and origins of the Lord of the Earth and Sky can be found carved in temple walls throughout the Southlands in the form of simple glyphs and vast, intricate mosaics. Though nearly every thinking creature in the Southlands pays some form of homage to him, few worship Madrah directly, instead worshipping the many spirits, demigods, and divine progenies who serve him.

Those few clerics who venerate Madrah directly, many of whom are druids, are as inscrutable as their god, often found wandering the breadth of the Southlands on an unceasing pilgrimage, like caretakers of his dominion. The faithful of Madrah can be found in many forms: in city streets, garbed in rags and muttering ancient incantations backwards, braving the isles of Dujamar in the raiment of dragonhide armor, or counseling the drakon Emperor in silken robes. Northland theologians are never certain what to make of this elder god, his esoteric ways, or his oracular priests.

The domains Madrah is associated



with are Air, Earth, Magic, Travel, and Weather. His favored weapon is the shortspear. The symbol of the Lord of the Earth and Sky varies with every culture in which he is revered.

Malotoch (the Crow God)

Demigod, CE — Scavengers, Ruin, Cannibalism

Malotoch (*mal*-uh-tock), the Carrion Crow God, the Mother of Ruin, the Mistress Defiler, the Crow Witch, is the patron goddess of scavengers, cannibals, and all those who practice unclean rites. She is the demonic mistress of the living and undead who feast upon carrion or otherwise benefit from the loss of mortal life. Like poisonous mushrooms that thrive on decay, so Malotoch thrives on the ruin of life. Living monsters such as hags, harpies, and rooks (see *DCC #5: Aerie of the Crow God*) pay homage to her, as do cannibalistic undead such as ghouls and ghasts. Where great battles end and the glorious fallen lie, there Malotoch and her foul children are drawn.

The Crow Witch is always depicted with the curvaceous body of a woman and the head and legs of a monstrous crow. Clerics of Malotoch frequently keep the company of zombies and ghouls and adorn their armor with the bones of carrion birds or their latest victims. Among the profane rites performed by Malotoch's cults are the corruption of birds of prey into anathemas of nature, and evils of this sort often draws the ire of druids. Unsurprisingly, Malotoch is despised by most gods, although she garners a grudging respect from Nimlurun and Narrimunâth. The clerics of all three gods work in concert to achieve loftier, fouler plots than any of their clergies could alone.

The domains Malotoch is associated with are Air, Chaos, Death, and Evil. Her favorite weapon is the short sword. Cultists who serve Malotoch and nearly all undead raised in her name have a bloodstone imbedded in place of their left eyes. The bloodstone, often surrounded by cracked bones, is one of her symbols; the other is a crow perched atop a skull.

Myna (the Maid of Fortune)

Lesser god, CN — Chance, Circumstance, Fortune

Myna (*my*-nuh), Fortune Herself, the Lady of Weal, is the goddess that many turn to when prayers to the other gods have gone unanswered. For some mortals, Myna's name hangs upon their lips every day, ever coveting a change in fortune. As the divine embodiment of fortune itself, Myna is an elusive deity whose intercession is often unwelcome to lawful deities of the Sancturn Pantheon. She tips the scale on small and large affairs, offering good fortune to the underdog or withdrawing her favor from the advantageous or those predisposed to victory. She is whimsy incarnate, and none can discern the patterns of, or requirements for, her favor. The immortal power that controls the dice, Fortune Herself makes plays at both good and evil, law and chaos, and the only certainty in her dogma is the need for perpetual change.

Once, Myna's faith was known to few outside of an exclusive cult of the serendipitous and the secretive, but gradually her capricious dogma resolved into theism. Clerics of the Lady of Weal, most multiclassed as rogues or bards, are seen as smaller versions of the goddess herself, frustrating and fickle yet bearing good fortune. Their blessings, however, are always welcome, and for this reason her church has grown wealthy from the tiny donations of countless peasants and considerable contributions from nobles rich with coin. When Myna is depicted in religious art, she is seen as a flighty young woman, dancing or casting dice.

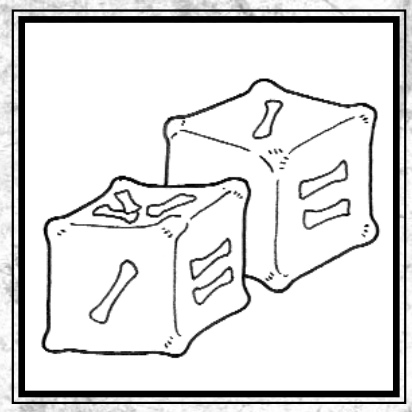
The domains associated with the Lady of Weal are Chaos, Luck, and Trickery. Her favored weapon is the dart, and her symbol is a stylized bullseye or a pair of dice made of bone.

Narrimunâth (the Lord of Disease)

Demigod, LE — Disease, Vermin

Narrimunâth (nar-ih-moon-*ahth*), the Rat God, the Lord of Disease, the Venerable, is the twin brother of Nimlurun and a demigod twisted to evil by the hand of Zhühn. He is the god of plagues and debilitating illness, the patron deity of wererats, those who would spread sickness, and other forms of vermin.

Narrimunâth is half of the god born of Pelagia, intended to be a god of purity. Zhühn's sabotage of the birth resulted in the sundering of the newborn deity, resulting in the twin gods



of sickness and filth. Narrimunâth gets along well with Nimlurun as well as can be expected between evil gods, and together they often scheme with Malotoch the Crow God. The Lord of Disease is always depicted as a half-man, half-rat abomination with a naked rat's tail, razor claws, and glowing red eyes.

The domains Narrimunâth is associated with are Death, Destruction, and Evil. His favorite weapon is the sap, and his symbol is a mangy, dead, or undead rat.

Nethruel

Archdevil, LE — Obsession, Addiction

Nethruel (*neth*-roo-el), the Fervent Lord, is a canny archdevil who feeds the sins of obsession among the mortal world. He is the devil of extremes, of ceaseless, unhealthy devotion. The veteran who looks for absolution in a bottle, the maiden who quits the company of her true friends in pursuit of a disreputable paramour, the wizard who neglects his family to focus on his magic—all these may have come under the influence of Nethruel. Cultists of the Fervent Lord, themselves victims of the demon prince, seek to afflict others with addictions and the debilitating reliance on objects, other people, or even ideas.

Neshti (The Stealthmaiden)

Lesser god, CG — Thievery, Trickery, Vigilantism

Neshti (*nesh*-tee), the Veiled Thief, the Stealthmaiden, the Lady of Shadows, is the goddess of thievery, malfeasance, and most pursuits on the wrong side of the law. She is the patroness of rogues, vigilantes, and peasant heroes, all those willing to stand against tyranny and cruelty. Many crimes are committed in her name, but the Stealthmaiden is only willing to grant her blessings on those who do so for the right reasons. A thief who steals bread to feed his children, a bard who swindles a cruel city official, and a sorceress who charms a miserly noble into granting a bit of his fortune as alms to the poor may all offer a prayer to Neshti—in the hope that she will veil their crimes so they will live to commit more. The Lady of Shadows offers no apologies, and will use any means necessary to see the greater good done, possessing no misgivings about stabbing her enemies in the back. Neshti and most of her faithful do not care for fair fights, as evil seldom does either. Although averse to murder, she is willing to deal violence upon her enemies and if death is the consequence of villainy, so be it.

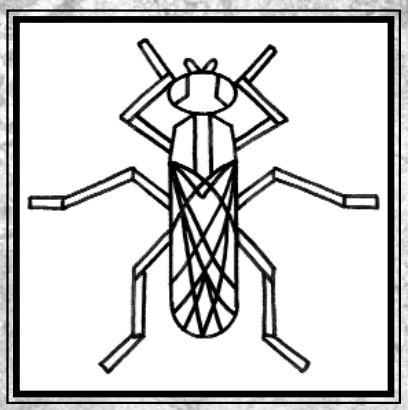
The Stealthmaiden's underhanded dogma is controversial among other goodly deities. In religious art, she is depicted as a hooded adolescent girl with raven-black hair, and is sometimes seen hiding from Justicia and Gorhan. Neshti does not care for temples and open worship, so her faithful usually gather in guildhalls or in small, nondescript shrines out of plain sight. There is no uniform appearance among her faithful; the black-clad, rooftop-dwelling burglar, the well-armed adventuring wizard, and the nondescript neighborhood cobbler could all be followers of the Lady of Shadows. Many of Neshti's clerics multiclass as rogues.

The domains associated with Neshti are Chaos, Good, Luck, and Trickery, and her favored weapon is the punching dagger. Neshti's symbol, more often seen tattooed in out-of-sight places than rendered on religious architecture, is a depiction of a blindfolded female face.

Nimlurun (The Lord of Filth)

Demigod, CE — Filth, Pollution

Nimlurun (*nim*-luh-roon), the Lord of Filth, the Holy Defiler, the Unclean One, was corrupted along with his brother Narrimunâth by Zhühn to bring further decay to the world. He is the god of refuse, putrescence, and all things unclean. Only the sick-minded and destitute pay deliberate homage to Nimlurun, but people who seek purity often speak the Lord of Filth's name in an attempt to placate him and avoid his attentions. His clerics seek to foul the skies of the world, pollute its waters,



and despoil the earth. As such, they often inspire the anger of druids and the gods of the earth.

Nimlurun is the twin of Narrimunâth, born of Pelagia and intended to be a god of purity. Zhühn's interference in the god's birth resulted in the making of two demigods of disease and despoilment. Nimlurun works often with his brother, and together they are known to treat with Malotoch, whom they reluctantly regard as an equal. Like his brother, Nimlurun is depicted as a half-man, half-rat beast, though his mangy fur is always coated in slime.

The domains he is associated with are Death, Evil, and Destruction. His favorite weapon is the light mace, and his symbol is an insect, usually a dung fly.

Ôæ (The Dreamer)

Lesser god, NG — Dreams, Imagination, Storytelling

Ôæ (*aw*-uh), the Dreamer, is the god of mortal dreams and imagination, the patron of wistful lovers, the downtrodden, and all who long for a better place than the waking world offers. Once the caretaker of the Sancturns before they arrived in primeval Áereth, the Dreamer forwent the gifts of the Triad to persist only within his memory: the Dream, that perpetual afterimage of their lost home.

Because of Ôæ's all-consuming preoccupation with sustaining the

The Dream

When the Sancturn Pantheon fled the ruin of their homeworld (see *Chapter 1*), a small impression of this transcendental place was preserved within the mind of their caretaker, Ôæ. Though this quality was not physically compatible with Áereth, its boundless wonderment was eagerly welcomed by the Triad as a blessing upon their creation. Ever since, the gift of dreaming has been bestowed upon all thinking beings—mortals and gods alike—as a nocturnal, fantastical playground. This is Ôæ's Dream.

Spatially limitless, the Dream is a world of pure imagination with its designs owing as much to Ôæ's memory of their home as it does to the sleeping fantasies of every dreamer since the dawn of Áereth. With each dreamer's dream, a slight aspect of this realm is upturned and reshaped in ways that may defy any waking sense of logic. But as extravagant as a mere dream may be, the changes to the Dream itself are mostly fleeting and rarely significant by themselves. But the sheer number of ever-churning dreams upon the dreamscape, each leaving their impressions, means Ôæ's Dream is a plane in constant flux.

The regular immersions into the Dream that each dreamer experiences are often forgotten (at least on a conscious level), and awareness of one's dreams as existing within the Dream is rare. Even the knowledge in the waking world that one's dreams take place within Ôæ's Dream is of little consequence once asleep. But for the followers of Ôæ, Gil'Mâridth, and other entities focused on the Dream, it is a world as real and potentially dangerous as any other.

Unbeknownst to most dreamers, the Dream at large is not the paradise it ought to be. A great war wages between the Knights of Ôæ and the crazed votaries of Gil'Mâridth who would transform the Dream into an infinite dreamscape of horrific insanity. Being Ôæ's Dream, he will always have the upper hand, for the hearts of good dreamers have long overcome fear and despair. However, Gil'Mâridth's influence cannot be overstated. Her domain within the Dream is vast and now situated at its very heart. By all accounts, it is an enormous black swirl of frantic nightmare. No dreamers—not even her most horrific mortal minions—have ever safely ventured deep within her realm. It is from this unspeakable stronghold that the Great Hag commands her agents of terror: the Cult of Mâridth, diverse denizens of both the Dream and the waking world, and if the rumors are true, more than one of Áereth's shadowy gods secretly bows to the Dread of Night as their queen.

Despite the horrors associated with Gil'Mâridth, her power does not dominate the Dream. For the most part, the Dream is a realm of benign wonders and mind-boggling scenarios with perils rarely in plain sight. Great dreamers and native entities alike can be found roaming its ever-shifting vistas. Races and civilizations unheard of on Áereth carry on in war and in peace in distant realms even the oldest of its dreamers may never see. Meanwhile, Ôæns guide lucid dreamers through their master's imagined terrain where the dreams of dogs, gods, and children revel and reel, touting and trumpeting their splendors into the Dreamer's living memory of home.

Dream, he is a god without body or awareness outside of the Dream itself. But within, he is an immensely powerful being, watching over his select flock of devotees and the dreams of all creatures alike. In the waking world, Ôæ's clergy rarely congregate or hold any formal shrines, and they wear no special vestments. They are characteristically imaginative daydreamers who have come into the faith after being approached by Ôæ himself in their sleep. Ôæns typically lead simple lives as artists and storytellers, encouraging children to hone their imaginations and jaded adults to reclaim their restless dreams of youth. In this, they hope to foster avid dreamers for Ôæ to bring into his fold. Clerics of Ôæ occasionally multiclass as bards, and many find that adventuring fuels their imaginations and enriches their dreams. Ôæns dedicate themselves to opposing the misdeeds of Gil'Mâridth and her clergy, a war that is waged only partially in the waking world. Within the Dream, these Knights of Ôæ assemble in imagined temples within holy cities of utterly fantastic design. There they work to protect and maintain this slice of their patron's—in fact, all of the Sancturn Pantheon's—ancient home.

The Dreamer is usually portrayed as a handsome, robed archmage or hierophant with his eyes closed. As the caretaker of the memory of their home, most gods of the Sancturn Pantheon look upon Ôæ fondly, but the Dreamer wages eternal war with Gil'Mâridth.

The domains Ôæ is associated with are Dream, Good, and Protection. His favored weapon is the sling, and his symbol is a closed eye set against a cloud, often with some fantastic dreamscape etched within. While priests of Ôæ must prepare their spells like any other cleric, their meditative state is much more of a vivid daydream.

Obitu-que

Demon prince, CE — Domination, Prepotency

Obitu-que (*oh*-bih-too-kay), Lord of the Five, is a demon prince who dreams of rulership and dominance over every living thing in existence. Though this vague desire is not uncommon among demons, the sheer focus and belief to which Obitu-que adheres is extraordinary. A lord of fire, slavery, and destruction, Obitu-que was once a mere balor among many, commanding demonic armies against the devils of Hell. After centuries spilling the ichor of the lawful fiends and his own kind, he carved for himself the Abyssal principality. Experimenting with loathsome magics, he mutated his own body and looked with new eyes—all five of them—upon the Material Plane with conquest in mind. Obitu-que met with brief success, personally razing and sacrificing whole villages, but his body was slain by the last of a line of noble human barbarians.

Yet centuries later, the spirit of the Lord of the Five lingers still, causing blight where his body remains. The demon prince is patient, and finds a great spiritual hold over like-minded mortals with dreams of predominance and tyranny. Nothing satisfies Obitu-que more than the feeling of domination, the subversion of his victims' wills.

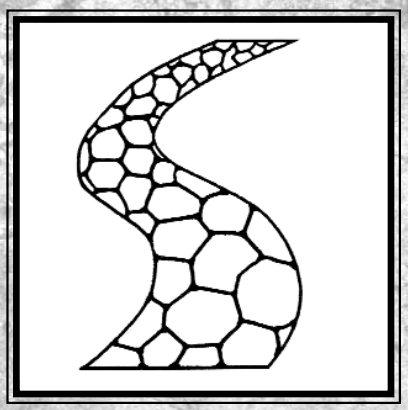
Olidyra (the Dauntless)

Greater god, N — Travel, Exploration, Adventure

Olidyra (*oh*-lih-*deer*-uh), the Dauntless, Lady Pathfinder, the Wanderess, is the goddess of exploration, adventure, and discovery. She is the patroness of wayfarers, vagabonds, fortune-hunters, and all those willing to make risks or venture into the unknown. Olidyra is worshipped primarily by halflings, the race whose creation she inspired, but all travelers and most adventurers know a brief prayer or two that entreats Lady Pathfinder for safe journeys.

The faithful of this wayward, roguish deity believe that Olidyra often breaks the mandates of the Triad, choosing to wander Áereth in mortal form simply to subvert its law and explore the ever-changing world. Such headstrong desire and naked curiosity are seen most often in halflings, who carry small shrines to the Wanderess in their wagons. Permanent temples to Lady Pathfinder are exceptionally rare, though the remnants of hastily built tributes of rock and wood are often found along well-beaten paths. Olidyra gets on well with most other gods, except those who seek to harm or imprison others. She is considered the only deity who "understands" the wiles of Myna, and is always quick to share a joke with her brother Poderon. Accordingly, clerics of Olidyra are on especially friendly terms with the faithful of these gods. When the Wanderess is depicted in religious art—typically painted in bright colors on the sides of wagons—she appears as a female halfling, human, or half-elf, with either a walking stick or a bow in hand.

The domains associated with Lady Pathfinder are Luck, Plant, Trickery, and Travel. Her favored weapon is the shortbow and her symbol is a winding or forked road.



Ormazd (the Changeless)

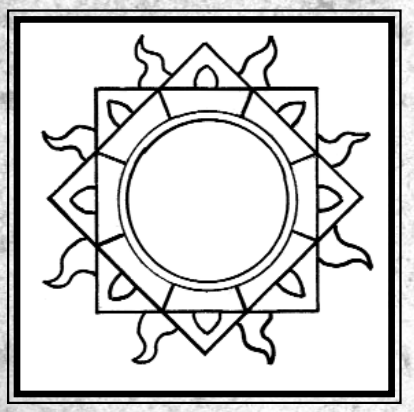
Greater god, LG — Creation, the Sun, Prophecy

Ormazd (*or*-mahzd), the Changeless, the Lord of Wisdom, is the creation god of sunlight, a mysterious deity of great power seldom heard in the current age. If Choranus is the god of destiny, then Ormazd is the god of the prophecies it engenders. Like Ahriman, his dark twin, Ormazd is believed to have spawned from a neutral deity named Zurvan, of which very little is known. Commonly associated with angelic beings, Ormazd is said to have sponsored a celestial host that once temporarily purged the world of evil when Ahriman's faith was as its greatest. Ormazd's skills of creation were paramount in the formation of Áereth, but his many battles against his brother have reduced his power over the ages and diminished his worship in the mortal realms.

When Ormazd's worship was at its peak, the desert-dwelling people of Abylos named him Ahura Mazda, the Lord of Wisdom. Such civilizations, believing him to be the sole creator of the world, are buried now in the desert sands. Yet in recent years, small clergies of Ormazd have sprung up in the Northlands, sometimes affiliated with the church of Delvyr and theologians of the Triad.

When Ormazd is depicted in religious art, he resembles a winged bull with the face of a bearded man and the blaze of the sun behind him. Ormazd and his prophetic clerics work always to oppose the designs of Ahriman, vigilant for traces of the evil god's influence. Priests of Ormazd inspire renewed interest in Áereth's distant past and the unknown, eastern lands.

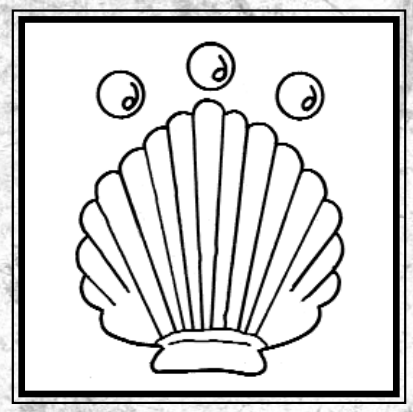
The domains associated with Ormazd are Creation, Good, Law, and Sun. His favored weapon is the kukri and his symbol is a blazing sun.



Pelagia (of the Singing Sea)

Lesser god, N — Oceans, Seas, Music, Travel

Pelagia (pehl-*ah*-gee-uh) of the Singing Sea, the Coral Queen, the Fish of Argent, the Maiden Voyager, is the goddess of the seas and oceans of Áereth, music in all its forms, and travel. She is the patroness of bards, fishermen, and folk who ply the sea for their livelihood. Though she can be as capricious as nature itself, Pelagia favors those who respect the waters of Áereth and the creatures within them. Whales are especially sacred animals in her faith, and their song is always considered a good omen. While many evil creatures make a home in the depths, Pelagia respects their right to dwell there, in keeping with the balance of nature and the morals of Áereth. The faithful of the Coral Queen never seek to destroy such wicked creatures but are permitted to defend themselves when necessary.



With the whole of the world's waters her dominion, Pelagia has delegated the aegis of each oceanic region to one of her many children. Most of them are demigods; Chandri, Elas, Ilquot, and Thalass number among the many. Pelagia names Zhühn her greatest enemy, for when she gave birth to a son, the Great Enemy tore him asunder and spawned the twin gods Narrimunâth and Nimlurun. Deities of filth and disease, her corrupted children often try to spoil the waters of Pelagia's dominion. Consequently, clerics of the Coral Queen seek to destroy every cult and shrine to the destitute demigods.

Pelagia's island-temples are scattered across the seas of Áereth, and most of her clerics live upon coastlines or aboard ships. Nearly every sailor offers a prayer to the Coral Queen when setting out to sea, whether it's a quick jaunt up the coastline or a voyage across the Empyrean. Rare shells and pearls are highly valued by clerics of Pelagia and make excellent religious donations. Particularly religious captains drop such natural baubles into the sea at the midpoint of their journeys. Music also plays a large role in the Pelagian faith. Clerics of the Coral Queen may sing sonorous anthems with the morning tide, while a devoted sailor sings a common sea shanty hymn during his nightwatch. The Maiden Voyager is usually depicted as a fair-haired mermaid adorned with coral jewelry, though in some lands she appears as a selkie with raven tresses.

The domains associated with Pelagia are Protection, Travel, and Water. Her favored weapon is the rapier and her symbol is a sea shell of any kind, usually a conch or cockleshell.

Poderon (the Deep Delver)

Greater god, NG — Earth, Commerce, Festivity

Poderon (*poe*-der-on), the Deep Delver, the Jovial Miner, is the earth god of commerce and merrymaking. As an earth god, he is the patron of miners, gemcutters, and merchants, but all those who purvey or seek merriment look to Poderon. Though the gnome race was first cast in his image and revere him more than any god, others pay homage to the Deep Delver as well, particularly those whose livelihood comes from the earth itself. Although his commitment to hard work and the preservation of the earth cannot be disputed, Poderon is best known for his optimism and appreciation for comfort—a trait seen everyday in the gnomes of Áereth. The Delver is famous for his sense of humor, but he becomes a dangerous foe when the happiness of his subjects is threatened.

Although he is one of the Greater Gods, the Deep Delver is more willing than his siblings to intercede in mortal affairs, a fact that often incurs the scrutiny of his father, Choranus. As a son of Ildavir, Poderon has a fondness for earth-dwelling animals and wooded realms. His places of worship exist in many places, from metropolitan sanctuaries to sylvan shrines, though his formal temples are kept well-hidden. Such hallowed chambers are reliquaries for as many rock samples as Poderon's clergy can procure. These stones vary from everyday granite and coal to the purest of sapphires and diamonds.

Gnomish clerics of Poderon follow a loose hierarchy of gemstone titles. Acolytes may be malachites, azurites, or garnets, while more senior priests may be topazes or jasmals. When the Deep Delver is rendered in religious art, he usually appears as a slender human teenager or a middle-aged gnome with a hammer or pick in hand. Just as often, Poderon is shown as a large badger or in the company of one.

The domains associated with the Deep Delver are Animal, Earth, Good, and Trickery. His favored weapon is the heavy pick, and his symbol is a mining pick and a halved geode.

Qayaqiq

Demon prince, CE — Curiosity, Desperation, Suicide

Qäyaqiq (*kah*-yuh-kik), the Fatal Dream, the Shaded Door, is a demonic power which prays upon sleeping souls. The Fatal Dream is a straightforward yet little understood entity, which coexists within the Abyss and the Dream, and is thus an enemy to both Ôæ and Gil'Mâridth alike. One thing is certain, however: Qäyaqiq hunts the souls of dreamers by a means unvaried since time immemorial. Appearing in their dreams as a gate or doorway cloaked in shadow, the Shaded Door beckons the curious to enter. What fate lies beyond that door may only be suspected, but once entered, neither men nor gods can account for the lost soul. Many lullabies and nursery rhymes warn young sleepers to "shun the Shaded Door."

According to mortal thralls, Qäyaqiq employs a clergy of one: Each is a deranged, suicidal dreamer believing that he alone is favored by Qäyaqiq and must find a worthy successor before finding absolution. Once this is done, the madman may enter the Shaded Door that night where a glorious reward supposedly awaits.

Sestyruas

Archdevil, LE — Envy, Covetousness

Sestyruas (ses-*teer*-ooh-us), a mendacious archdevil who calls himself the Lord of Ardor, aims to fan the flames of envy among mortals, driving them to crimes of jealousy and passion. He whispers to those who crave what they cannot have, offering only enough power and satisfaction to string them along until death brings their souls to the foot of his sulphurous throne. His mortal thralls are depraved clerics and rogues who treat frequently with erinyes, the chief servants of Sestyruas. Proficient liars, some multiclass as bards to better employ their forked tongues.

Septych (the Blackhammer)

Demigod, LE — Avarice, Tyranny

The Septych (*seph*-tish), the Dark Dwarven Gods, the Seven As One, are in fact seven aspects in a single deity. Once seven dwarven brothers, their concerted pursuit of immortality spanned centuries and the ruthless butchery of innocents. But in the end, each turned against his brother in the final grab for divinity. As punishment for their brutality and greed, the brothers were granted godhood only as a single entity. Since that day, only the personality of one of the seven brothers manifests at any given time, one brother for each period of seventy-seven years. While one rules, the other six wait, impotent, for the passage of centuries for their next "turn." Gods of avarice and blood-soaked tyranny, the Septych is worshipped in secret by thieves, assassins, evil warriors, and any

dwarf given over to the greed to which his race is often accused.

Currently, it is Sodoutym (so-*dooh*-tim), the Blackhammer, the Dark Foe, Hellbeard, whose mind rules the Septych. Like his brothers before him, Sodoutym spends his time searching for the means to separate his soul from the rest, and he will likely do so for eternity. To this end, the Blackhammer demands blood sacrifice from his followers as he scours the face of Áereth for the prophesied soul that can release him from his deific bondage. Sodoutym is depicted as a well-muscled dwarf with the outstretched wings of a bat and writhing tentacles instead of a beard. His clerics lair in caves, sharing the company of dire bats and foul aberrations.

The domains associated with the Blackhammer are Evil, Law, and Trickery. The favored weapon of Sodoutym is a seven-tailed scourge, though the other six Dark Dwarven Gods possess favored weapons of their own. The symbol of the Dark Foe is a swarm of attacking bats. The symbol of the Septych is a stylized version of the Dwarf rune for 7, which has made it an unlucky number among dwarves.

Shul (the Watcher in the Sky)

Lesser god, LN — The Moon, Measurement, Tradition, Literacy

Shul (*shool*), God of the Four Phases of the Moon, the Watcher in the Sky, the Glistening Orb, the Lawgiver, is the god of measurement, tradition, literacy, and the moon itself. Credited as the deity to give Áereth the standard, twelve-month calendar and Ùr, the oldest written language from which most humanoid languages descended, Shul is the patron god of educators and disciplinarians who follow strict curricula. Though his name is remembered in the modern age, true worship of the Lawgiver has faded.

In religious writings, Shul's name appears, but often only through his epithets. The Watcher in the Sky is an ally to Valdreth, the Enduring, and their collective clergies once worked with one another to record the passage of time. He is the sponsor of the Xulmec goddess Anahuara, a divinity he admires but cannot entirely fathom for her sepulchral dogma.

The Watcher in the Sky is depicted primarily as the moon itself, or the moon with a human male face. The faith of Shul was largely destroyed centuries ago, but small cults of the Lawgiver still dwell in remote places, maintaining the same traditions and rituals during precise phases of the moon. Such hermitic cults observe the march of time and preserve dead languages in carven stone. The holiest of days for all of the faith are lunar eclipses.

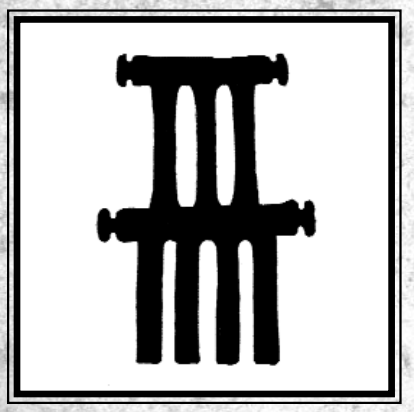
The domains associated with Shul are Air, Knowledge, and Law. His favored weapon is the dagger, and those used by his clergy are usually made from sharpened stone. The symbol of Shul is the moon.

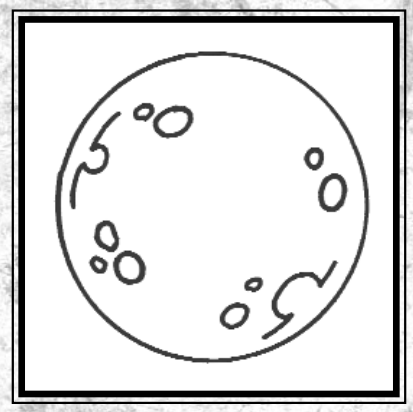
Soleth (the Silent Death)

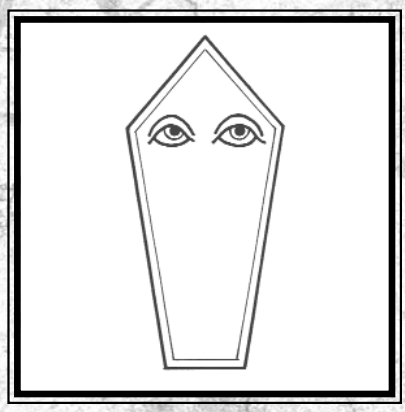
Lesser god, LN — Peaceful Death, Solitude

Soleth (*so*-leth), the Silent Death, the Merciful One, is the god of merciful, dignified death. He is the patron of morticians and healers who cannot save the dying. The somber-shrouded clerics of the Merciful One are a misunderstood lot, for they appear when there is no hope of continued life. Though they heal when they can, they are practitioners of euthanasia, and give last rites to those on their deathbeds to help usher them painlessly into the beyond.

Soleth teaches that death should be a quiet, dignified event. This belief is often at odds with the tenets of Elyr, whose fervor for life outweighs the need for its release. For this reason, the Silent Death's faithful seldom get along with the faithful of the Maiden of Life. However, like Elyr and Delvyr, Soleth abhors war and all forms of undeath. The Merciful One opposes the machinations of







Lasheeva at every opportunity, for she represents everything he despises.

Clerics of Soleth brew a special draught that they administer to the dead of their faithful which protects them from the taint of evil necromancy. Clerics and monks who serve the Silent Death wear grey and black robes and sashes, but clerics don heavier armor when questing or adventuring. Temples of Soleth are as solemn catacombs, their chambers and galleries furnished with sarcophagi, funeral biers, and rock-hewn graves. As grim as they appear, few places are as free from the touch of undeath. Respect for the dead and the living is Soleth's greatest tenet, a virtue best exemplified by a clerical sect known as the Threnodim. Multiclassed as bards, they compose impromptu eulogies for the unnoticed deaths of common men and perform great requiems for fallen heroes.

The domains associated with the Silent Death are Healing, Law, Protection, and Repose. His favored weapon is the bastard sword; his faithful loathe violence, but they are quick to dispense it to prevent further death. The symbol of Soleth is a stone coffin etched with a pair of open eyes.

Sothulth (the All-Seeing Orb)

Demigod, CN(e) — Paranoia, Insanity

Sothulth (*so*-thoolth), the Great Eye, the All-Seeing Orb, is a largely forgotten deity banished from the planes by the Sancturn Pantheon for a divine crime few can remember. Though exiled to the fringes of the multiverse and the Astral Plane, Sothulth is still able to make brief sojourns to the Outer and Material Planes. It manifests only long enough to carry out one of its erratic plans and move on again.

Once a more popular deity whose mantle was better understood, Sothulth offers very little to its worshippers, so the few cultists of the Great Eye are usually as insane as it is. An unpredictable god, the All-Seeing Orb will grant generous boons or afflict great curses upon its own followers. Some loremasters hypothesize that Sothulth was once implicated by Zhühn for a great crime, and its subsequent banishment drove it to the state of madness it is known for today. Usually depicted as a large purple or black eye emerging from a dark nebula, in any form Sothulth takes, a single staring eye remains its dominant feature.

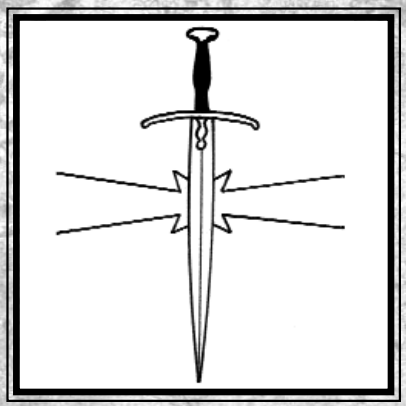
The domains associated with Sothulth are Chaos, Destruction, Knowledge, and Trickery. The favored weapon of the Great Eye is the scythe, and its symbol is an eye.

Teleus (the Obedient)

Archangel, LG — Law

Teleus (tel-*lee*-us), the Obedient, the Trusting Light, is the angelic champion of Law established by Choranus himself when Áereth was young. Charged with countering the chaos of Zhühn with order and unity, Teleus challenged the corruptive power of the titan Cadixtat. After their world-spanning battle, Teleus at last threw his enemy down when he severed Cadixtat's hand with his sword. Still, Cadixtat survived, and thus neither Law nor Chaos completely triumphed. Satisfied with the balance of the two, Choranus ordered Teleus to quit Áereth. A lord among solars, Teleus is sometimes worshipped as a god himself. Too humble to allow this, Teleus works to shift his clerics' devotion to another, like-minded god of law, such as Gorhan, Justicia, or even Choranus.

When mortals devote themselves to Teleus, the domains associated with his worship are Good, Law, and War. His favored weapon is the greatsword and his symbol is the same sword surrounded by parallel rays of the sun or held against a nimbus of light.



Thalass (the River Father)

Demigod, N — Terrestrial Waters, Music

Thalass (*thal*-us), the River Father, the Lakelord, the Purifying Flood, is the deity of inland waters, lakes, and rivers. He is the patron god of those who draw life from the water, rewarding those who respect nature with abundance. The Purifying Flood responds with deluges and violent rainstorms against transgressors.

Clerics and druids of Thalass often dwell near forest springs and lakes, sometimes consorting with nymphs, called the Daughters of Thalass. Always vigilant against the pollutions of Nimlurun, they have been known to hire adventurers when their waters are threatened by aberrations or enemy clerics. The River Father is said to resemble a noble satyr with garments of pure water, wielding a bow that fires arrows of crystal. Thalass is one of the many children of Pelagia, and his faithful often worship at the banks of rivers, for all rivers lead to the dominion of the Coral Queen.

The domains associated with Thalass are Animal, Protection, and Water. His favored weapon is the shortbow and his symbol is the syrinx, a set of hollow reed panpipes.

Thormyr (the Loyal)

Demigod, LN(g) — Honor, Duty, Protection

Thormyr (*thor*-meer), the Loyal, the Dauntless Warrior, is the god of duty and honor, especially in the face of evil. He is the patron of soldiers, guardsmen, and all men-at-arms who protect the innocent from the lawless. A stern, serious god, Thormyr rewards loyalty above all, granting his blessing to the steadfast and valiant and promising spiritual deliverance to the fallen.

Centuries ago, as a virtuous paladin in service of Justicia, Thormyr's unswerving duty to her laws drove him on a quest into Hell itself. The crusade led to an assault against archdevils, the saving of countless innocents, and the recovery of a holy relic—and to Thormyr's torture and death. After bargaining for the release of his soul, Justicia and Gorhan elevated the fallen warrior into divinity. Entrusted with the mantle of duty by the Greater Gods, Thormyr was forced to adopt a more neutrally inclined role as a deity.

The Dauntless Warrior is always depicted as a towering warrior in silver scale mail, holding a ranseur as he did in life. His lay followers often serve as bodyguards or court protectors, while his clerics are charged with vigilance against evil. Despite Thormyr's adherence to neutrality as the god of honor and duty, most of his followers are of good alignment. Paladins who serve him often refer to him as Honorus, the Duty and the Flame.

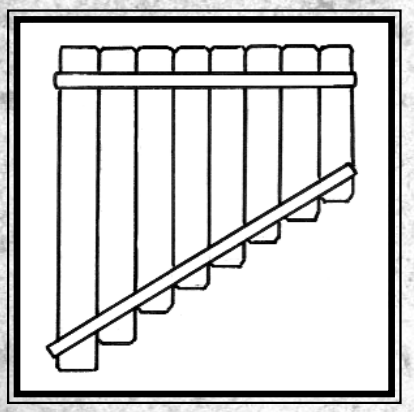
The domains associated with Thormyr are Healing, Law, Protection, and Strength. His favored weapon is the ranseur and his holy symbol consists of the polearm laid slantwise across a silver shield.

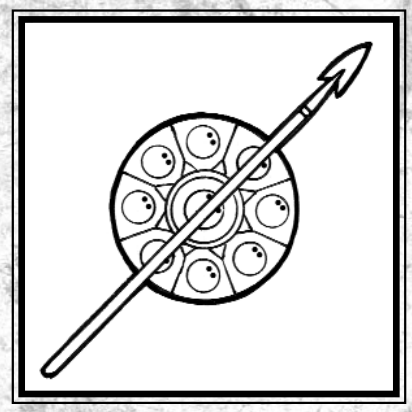
Tlachinozal (the Scorched God)

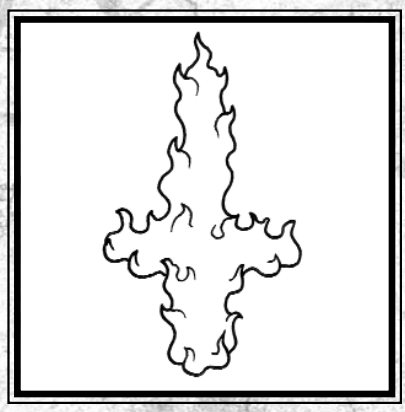
Demigod, LE — Chuzec, Fire

Tlachinozal (tla-*chin*-o-suhl), the Scorched God, the Fire Requiem, is the patron god of the Xulmec city-state of Chuzec. Having deposed the former goddess of Chuzec, whom he claims failed to protect his people from volcanic eruptions a thousand years ago, Tlachinozal is a militant deity of fire and earth. He teaches that fire can either destroy or strengthen that which it touches; infidels and foreigners will burn, while the faithful will endure and be reshaped like Chuzec itself. The Fire Requiem demands sacrifice in the form of captured enemies, whose hearts are taken from them and cast into braziers of holy fire.

Acolytes of Tlachinozal must learn to speak Ignan, then brand their bodies with sigils of their god. More dedicated priests of Tlachinozal often undergo a ceremony known as the Cleansing, whereby their skin is ritually burned but thereafter pro-







vides a stronger resistance to fire. Despite the xenophobia his militarism breeds, the Scorched God was the first Xulmec deity to approve of foreigners' art of forged metal, and many of his followers are metallurgists and blacksmiths. When his image is burned into the walls of his temples, Tlachinozal is depicted as a large, muscular man with red skin whose appearance suspiciously resembles that of an efreeti.

The domains associated with Tlachinozal are Earth, Evil, and Fire. His favored weapon is the shortbow, with arrows usually set aflame. His symbol is a shard of fire resembling an arrow, knife, or sword.

Tororthun (The Stone Spider)

Lesser god, N/CE — Subterrane, Denizens of the Underdeep / Malice, Spiders

Tororthun (toe-*ror*-thoon), the Stone Spider, the Eight Legs of the World, the Queen of the Damned, is the goddess of the cavernous depths of Áereth, the narrow, stygian passages, and all the crawling denizens of the Underdeep. When the rebel elves fled from the sphinxes millennia ago, it was Tororthun who called to them, lured them into the abyssal chasms of her dominion, and embraced them. As the fumes from the Devil's Cauldron slowly transformed them into the drow, the Stone Spider sheltered them from the scrutiny of the Overworld. Yet some say Tororthun is a goddess stricken mad, for she occasionally flies into a fury of senseless evil. Calling herself simply the Spider Queen during such spells, she retreats to her illimitable web in the demonic planes of the Abyss. Capricious and cruel, the Queen sets her minions against one another, favoring and disfavoring on a whim. Some sages familiar with the faith of Tororthun speculate that the evil of the drow infected their own matron deity, making a demon out of a goddess, while others say that Tororthun was stricken by a binding curse from Zhühn himself in an effort to undermine yet another of the gods' creations. When she is lucid, Tororthun is a fierce protector of her chosen followers, watching over the dark elves who have made a home in the earthen womb of her Underdeep dominion.

An uneasy ambivalence exists between Ireth, whom surface elves worship above all, and Tororthun. The Starmistress does not approve of the darkness the drow have embraced or the violent society they have spawned, but she is grateful that the Stone Spider has taken them under her care. Ireth, however, despises Tororthun's demonic alter ego, and ever searches for the means to "cure" the goddess of this affliction, hoping to steer the wicked drow back from evil. While priestesses of Tororthun are willing to treat with other faiths of neutrality, the clergy of the Spider Queen see all other deities as unworthy enemies. The Spider Queen has made a fierce enemy of the Xulmec god Ahpuchac, whose dominion of the subterranean world does not please her. Tororthun is depicted as a massive arachnid, a hybrid of chitin and solid stone, crawling perpetually through the Underdeep. Her Spider Queen persona is seen as a drow female of ravishing beauty and cruel countenance, or as a whip-wielding drider.

Those clergy who worship the Stone Spider have access to the domains of Drow, Earth, Poison, and Spider, while those who worship her demonic aspect have access to Drow, Evil, Poison, and Spider. The favored weapon of Tororthun is the longsword, while the favored weapon of her Spider Queen persona is the whip. Her symbol is an image of herself, a stony spider usually rendered symmetrically.

The Traitor (The Undying Lord)

Demigod, CE — Betrayal, Chaos, Madness

Once a mortal wizard named Thandric, the being known as the Traitor ascended to divinity centuries ago. Thandric and his brother, princes of a forgotten kingdom, were sent on a quest to find a legendary Elyrian potion called the Draught of Ages that could heal their dying father, the king, who was stricken with a magic curse. The people, beset on all sides by their enemies, needed their warrior-king to lead them from destruction. On their quest, Thandric heard rumors that the Draught could grant its imbiber eternal youth, and this desire germinated within him. When the princes returned with the potion, their father lay on his deathbed and the armies of the enemy had reached the gates of their capital city. Fearing for his own life in that moment, Thandric grabbed the Draught from his father's hand. Thandric drank the Draught, hoping to achieve eternal youth and save himself. As the

enemy breached the gates, Thandric watched his home overtaken and his people slain. When they attacked Thandric, his body sustained grave injuries but he would not die. He had gained immortality…and the curse of godhood.

For his betrayal, Thandric was "awarded" the immortal mantle of chaos. His identity as a man long since shattered, the Traitor is now the patron god of treasonists, betrayers—and of course, traitors. As a purveyor of chaos, the Traitor is infamous for his dark whimsy, and even his own followers are not immune. Sometimes he withholds spells, while at other times he aids his followers' enemies. His true name largely forgotten, he now has many names and titles, including Chaotor, the Undying Lord, and the Regenerating One. He is worshipped by medicine men, witch doctors, and shamans of evil bent. Those who forsake their former deities often find a twisted home in his service. The Traitor is usually seen as a kindly old man with subtle, disturbing bestial traits. Some believe the Traitor is an office more than an entity, that he whose betrayal outweighs that of the current Traitor will take his place.

The Traitor's domains are Chaos, Healing, Madness, and Trickery. His favored weapon is a staff of Caduceus (quarterstaff) with a hidden stiletto blade concealed beneath its cap. The symbol of the Traitor is a vial of poison, usually shown unstoppered and half empty.

Tzitzimitl (The Queen of Air)

Demon princess, CE — Destruction, Ruin

Tzitzimitl (tsih-tsi-*mitl*), the self-titled Queen of Air, is the demon princess of destruction and ruin, the patroness of outcasts and criminals who seek vengeance against the righteous. Selfish, cruel individuals turn to Tzitzimitl for worldly power, finding retribution in the fell rites of her worship. Among the Lords of the Abyss, Tzitzimitl is the mistress of vrocks, and it is usually these vulture-headed demons that her mortal followers endeavor to summon with their rituals. Sufficient blood sacrifice and evil deeds allow the cultists to summon a vrock to the Material Plane for greater lengths of time than spells would normally permit.

In the Southlands, where Tzitzimitl's thralls are greater than number, she is opposed by the humans of the city-state of Amoya—and their goddess, Anahuara. Of great import to cultists of Tzitzimitl is the March of Lightless Despair, the five moonless days at the end of each year, when it is believed that Tzitzimitl takes physical form on the Material Plane and battles Anahuara. Demonic allies of the Queen of Air also visit the land, as the magic of mortals wanes during the absence of the Spectral Moon. The demon princess and her allies have always been defeated, however, and punishment usually falls upon her worshippers for their insufficient devotion.

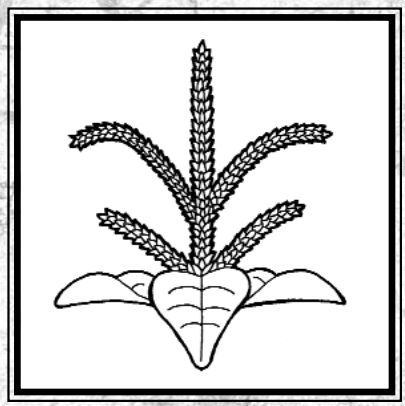
Valdreth (The Enduring)

Lesser god, LN — Time, Longevity, Integrity

Valdreth (*vahl*-dreth), the Enduring, the Unchanging One, is indisputably the oldest of the Sancturn Pantheon. Before Valdreth's arrival, time as it is understood did not exist in the Triad's creation. He is the god of the everlasting and the caretaker of time itself. A dying father who wishes to impart knowledge to his children, a desperate general who waits for reinforcements before the enemy horde appears, and a wizard in short possession of a valuable book may each beseech Valdreth to grant them more time. Yet the Unchanging One rarely stops the great march of time itself, teaching his faithful instead that they must take care to use what time they do have wisely.

Clerics of Valdreth are patient men and women who know well just how long an hour can be—and how short a lifetime. In religious art, the Unchanging One is depicted as a clear-eyed sage, sometimes middle-aged, sometimes venerable. Temples of Valdreth are known for selling *unguents of timelessness*, usually finding buyers in wizards, scholars, and those who wish to preserve frail writings otherwise subject to the ravages of time.

The domains associated with Valdreth are Law, Magic, and Protection. His favored weapon is



the light mace, and his symbol is an amaranth or a timepiece of any kind.

Variag (the Icelord)

Lesser god, N — Ice, Winter, War

Variag (*var*-ee-og), the Icelord, is the god of brutal winter and cold winds. He is the patron of those who thrive in the frozen tundra and relish the sound of cracking ice. Barbarians of the Frost Barrens revere the Icelord, mostly to placate him into relenting his frozen embrace. It is said that when winter descends upon Áereth, Variag is allowed to venture forth and bring storms of ice to lands normally forbidden to him. Winters longer and colder than normal are said to be the indulgences of the merciless Icelord. He is also a god of war, loving the clash of cold steel and the spilling of blood upon the snow.

Variag is not evil or malicious, but he cares little for those frozen by his administrations. His reign of ice is always kept in check by Ildavir, who ensures the balance of nature in all things. In the mountainous realms of Áereth, frost giants worship Variag, as do any humanoids willing to endure arctic conditions and glacial environs—for in such remote places few other clergies venture. Druids and rangers of the frozen north usually choose wolves as animal companions, for they are sacred to the Icelord.

The domains associated with Variag are Air, Strength, War, and Water. His favored weapon is the greataxe, and his symbol is the silhouette of a wolf etched into the blade of such an axe.

Xeluth (the Ravager)

Lesser god, NE — Violence, War, Strife

Xeluth (zel-*ooth*), the Ravager, is the god of violence and the brutality of war. He is the patron of all who use force to achieve their ends, those who delight in slaughter, and those who grow stronger with conflict. Xeluth cares more for the fight than the spoils, more for war itself than triumph or even its outcome. Although he shares many tenets with Klazath, Xeluth usually contends with the Crimson Banner for the attentions of Yvyn—a battle the Ravager seldom wins.

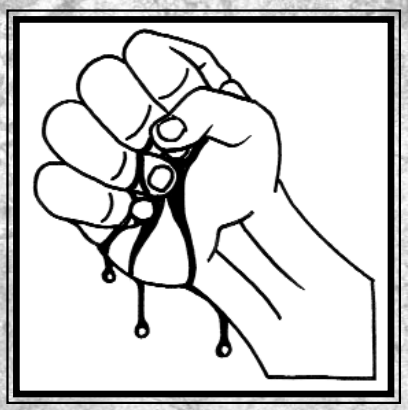
The conquests and schemes of Xeluth, often aided by other evil powers, have led to the spawning of several bloodthirsty demigods commonly worshipped by monstrous humanoids. These including Kagnar, the god of animality and rage (served by gnolls and minotaurs), Gadraak, the god of territorialism (served by orcs and ogres), Molgrem, the god of militarism (served by goblins and hobgoblins), and Urath, the god of mindless slaughter and fury (served by trolls). Often these very same humanoids turn directly to Xeluth, and for this reason his clergies are diverse. Fearless human priests in polished, spiked platemail and spear-wielding, hide-clad shamans from an orc tribe might both serve Xeluth. Given the Ravager's dogma, such disparate clerics are as likely to ally with one another as do battle. Advancement through challenge or assassination is common in Xeluth's brutal faith. The Ravager himself is depicted as a helmed warrior, his face concealed with a death's head mask. In his burly arms, he wields a great flail whose spiked ball resembles a black sun with a nimbus of fire.

The domains associated with Xeluth are Destruction, Evil, Strength, and War. His favored weapon is the heavy flail and his symbol is a skull, usually bloody or pierced with a blade.

Yvyn (the Righteous Slaughter)

Lesser god, NE — Conspiracy, Holy War, Rebellion

Yvyn (*ee*-vin), the Curdled Trust, the Vicious Cycle, the Holy Preemptor, the Righteous Slaughter, the Mastress Cabal, the Whisper in the Darkness, is the goddess of conspiracy, insurrection, and the evils of xenophobia. When each great race first emerged and feared the wonders of the world they did not understand, it was Yvyn who whispered into their ears, warning them of the treachery of their strange new neighbors. The Mastress Cabal nourishes the seeds of doubt and mistrust which bloom and grow until cries for war reach



fever pitch and great crusades are unleashed in the name of other gods. To her followers, the leaders of the land are corrupt, deserving to be dethroned. Yvyn ever champions the underdog, yet only until he is redeemed—then she moves onto the new underdog who wishes to usurp her prior darling. She is the Vicious Cycle churning whirlwinds of paranoia into great storms of bloodshed.

Very often, the Holy Preemptor seeks out other gods—great and small—with whom to conspire, caring not whether they be good or evil. Yvyn, whose causes are rarely her own, seeks only bloodshed and the joy of usurpation. In turn, every god knows that Yvyn is the first one to turn to when a violent alliance is required. Yvyn allies herself with the Hidden Lord more than any other deity, for the two share many of the same modi operandi. Indeed many of Yvyn's own secret and ferocious cultists are likely devotees of the Cloaked One as well. Her cults count among their members clerics from all walks of life and stations within society; yet their only true allegiance is to the Mastress Cabal and to each other. Their mission is singular: to foment insurgency in the name of the Righteous Slaughter. Yvyn is seldom rendered in art, but when she is, she is seen as a middle-aged woman looking upon a battle from afar, clutching in her hands a military fork.

The domains associated with Yvyn are Evil, Trickery, and War. Her favored weapon is the trident (a pitchfork to the rebellious peasant) and her symbol is a clenched fist dripping blood.

Zhühn (The Great Enemy)

Greater god, CE — Deception, Blight, Corruption, Poison, Falsehood

Zhühn (zeun), the Great Enemy, the White Sepulcher, the Faceless Lord, the Dweller in the Void, is an opportunistic being of surreptitious means and great, overshadowing power. He is the power who answers when there is no other to hear, who plays the role of any invoked deity, be it false or imagined. Very few of Zhühn's servants are aware of their service to him, for they know their god by different names (e.g., Entropy, *DCC #10: The Sunless Garden*). Whenever a false idol is served or an unknown deity is called upon, it is Zhühn who fills the empty void, grants the spells to the idolater, and beguiles the unwary.

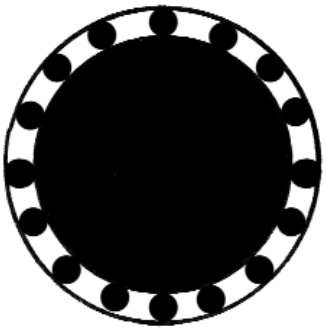
Zhühn desires nothing less than the eradication of all sentient life, the complete undoing of Creation. He dwelt in the Void before the Triad interrupted the darkness, and Zhühn will not rest until all is unmade. His plots are numerous, many-layered, and may take centuries to reach fruition. He is content to save a village of innocents if he can poison the entire kingdom; he will spare a nation if he can destroy the continent. Often those who fall from grace unwittingly find Zhühn picking up the slack. Blackguards and corrupted clerics of good frequently result from Zhühn's subtle administrations. So far-reaching are his machinations that even the most virtuous clerics often second guess their own actions, asking whether they are serving their god's will or the Great Enemy's.

Zhühn names no allies among the gods—and surely none can trust him. His greatest adversaries are Choranus and Ildavir, while Elyr, a product of his own ignorance, perseveres as a painful thorn in his side. To carry out his goals of corruption, he despoiled the newborn god that became Narrimunâth and Nimlurun and has designs on other gods as well. When Zhühn is depicted, he is seen as a cowled figure with a single outstretched hand. In such images, he always lurks in the corner or only partially in the frame of the image—never hidden, yet never prevalent. His body is never seen whole, but

The Void

The Void is nothingness, utter emptiness, the very absence of existence. It is not a plane to which one can go. When any being possessed of less power than a god enters the Void, he is eradicated altogether. The Void should not be confused with the Astral Plane, which is an endless space that binds together the Outer, Inner, and Material Planes. The Void is that dimensionless nothingness in which the Material Plane was created.

Spheres of annihilation are, in fact, small holes in existence, errant pieces of the Void itself. Fortunately for everyone but Zhühn himself, the Void is very small now. Creation has replaced it with life and existence, and all that does remain of the Void contains the Great Enemy himself. Expanding it anew remains Zhühn's single-minded pursuit.



rather half-formed from its surroundings, symbolizing Zhühn's manipulation of existing material and his refusal to create things anew.

The White Sepulcher does have a few mortal agents who serve him knowingly. These individuals, such as the Ruin Knights, are frightening indeed and usually bereft of their humanity. They are the shadow figures who hide behind the puppetmasters who hide behind the proxies. Elder priests of all faiths often warn their novices against the whisperings of Zhühn. Indeed, his name is often invoked when accusations of corruption are made, whether the Great Enemy is truly to blame or not. Zhühn sponsors no formal temples and his servants are difficult to unmask. The nihilistic clergy of the Great Enemy, when not carrying out local schemes to subvert creation, experiment with arcana to disintegrate reality itself. *Spheres of annihilation* and *rods of cancellation* are only two of the many dangerous instruments to come of such fell research.

The domains associated with the Faceless Lord are Destruction, Evil, Magic, and Trickery. His favored weapon—if indeed one is ever shown—is the dart (usually poisoned). Zhühn cares for no symbols, but to channel his power, his clerics must deface the holy symbol of another god to use as his own.

Favored Deities by Race

With the exception of some demigods, the many races of Áereth revere the gods whose ideologies appeal to them the most. The list below shows what gods many of the races of Áereth typically worship based on their own dispositions and cultural beliefs. The gods are listed in the order of most likely worshipped.

Race/Monster	Gods
Aberrations	Outer Gods, Narrimunâth, Nimlurun, Zhühn
Bugbears	Molgrem, Kagnar, Gadraak, Xeluth
Centaurs	Ildavir
Doppelgangers	The Hidden One
Dragons	Centivus, Choranus, Ahriman
Dwarves	Daenthar, Fenwar, Centivus
Dwarves (duergar)	Daenthar, the Septych
Elves	Ireth, Centivus, Ildavir, Valdreth
Elves (gray, wild, wood)	Ireth, Ildavir, Centivus, Choranus
Elves (aquatic)	Ireth, Pelagia, Ildavir, Chondri
Elves (drow)	Tororthun, Bargúl
Fey (nymphs, dryads, satyrs, etc.)	Ildavir, Thalass
Gargoyles	Ahriman, Urath
Giants	Daenthar, Fenwar, Poderon, Variag
Gnolls	Kagnar, Xeluth, Lords of the Abyss
Gnomes	Poderon, Fenwar, Ireth
Gnomes (rock, svirfneblin)	Poderon, Daenthar
Goblinoids (goblins, hobgoblins)	Molgrem, Xeluth, Yvyn
Hags	Gil'Mâridth, Malotoch
Half-elves	Wyshalar, Delvyr
Half-orcs	Xeluth, Klazath, Thormyr
Halflings	Olidyra, Neshti, Rathul, Wyshalar, Myna
Harpies	Malotoch
Hobgoblins	Molgrem, Xeluth, Lords of Hell, Yvyn
Kobolds	Lagos
Lamias	Ankharet
Lammasus	Amun Tor, Madrah, Delvyr
Lizardfolk	Ildavir, Madrah, Cynhuara
Locathahs	Pelagia, Elas
Medusas	Lords of Hell
Merfolk	Pelagia, Chondri
Minotaurs	Kagnar, Xeluth
Nagas	Axaluatl, Cynhuara, Madrah
Ogres	Gadraak, Xeluth
Orcs	Gadraak, Xeluth, Klazath
Sahuagin	Elas
Sphinxes	Amun Tor, Ankharet
Treants	Ildavir, Thalass
Tritons	Pelagia, Chondri
Troglodytes	Lagos
Trolls	Urath, Xeluth
Undead	Lasheeva, Malotoch (ghouls)

Chapter 3
Bestiary of the Known Realms

Azure Ooze

Large Ooze
Hit Dice: 5d10+30 (57 hp)
Initiative: –5
Speed: 40 ft., 40 ft. swim
Armor Class: 4 (–5 Dex, –1 size), touch 4, flat-footed 4
Base Attack/Grapple: +3/+10
Attack: Slam +5 melee (1d8+3)
Full Attack: Slam
Space/Reach: 10 ft./10 ft.
Special Attacks: Constrict 1d8+3, improved grab, paralysis
Special Qualities: Blindsight 60 ft., immunity to cold and fire, ooze traits, transparent
Saves: Fort +7, Ref –4, Will –4
Abilities: Str 16, Dex 1, Con 23, Int –, Wis 1, Cha 1
Skills: Swim +10
Feats: –
Environment: Any aquatic or marshes
Organization: Solitary
Challenge Rating: 5
Treasure: None
Alignment: Always neutral
Advancement: 6–8 HD (Large); 9–12 HD (Huge)
Level Adjustment: –

This ooze resembles a giant blob of bright blue slime with a diameter of about twenty feet.

A typical azure ooze weighs about 3,600 pounds. An azure ooze can be found meandering through wetlands and other areas that go near large bodies of water. It feeds on anything that crosses its path, and is not hesitant to feed upon living creatures much larger than itself. Despite their amorphous nature, azure oozes are surprisingly quick, and are equally adept at moving through water as well as land. It can compress its body to fit through fissures and other small areas as small as one inch wide.

Combat

An azure ooze attacks by hitting its opponents with long, gooey pseudopods. If it successfully strikes an opponent, it then attempts to grab that foe and paralyze it. An azure ooze never releases its hold on a victim unless the ooze is killed or until the ooze is finished feeding on its prey.

Blindsight (Ex): An azure ooze's entire body is a sensory organ, which can ascertain prey by any scent or vibration within 100 feet of the creature.

Constrict (Ex): An azure ooze deals automatic slam and paralysis damage with a successful grapple check.

Improved Grab (Ex): To use this ability, an azure ooze must first hit an opponent with its slam attack. It can then start to attempt a grapple as a free action without provoking an attack of opportunity. If it wins the grapple check, it establishes a hold and can constrict.

Paralysis (Ex): An azure ooze secrets a paralyzing fluid that renders its victims completely helpless with prolonged exposure. Any constricting attack automatically deals this paralyzing attack. Any creature constricted by the azure ooze must succeed on a DC 19 Fortitude save each round on the ooze's turn or be paralyzed for 1d6 rounds. The save is Constitution-based.

Ceraton

Large Magical Beast (Cold)
Hit Dice: 3d10+9 (25 hp)
Initiative: +1
Speed: 40 ft.
Armor Class: 11 (+1 Dex, –1 size, +1 natural), touch 10, flat-footed 10
Base Attack/Grapple: +3/+12
Attack: Claw +7 melee (2d4+5)
Full Attack: 2 claws +7 melee (2d4+5) or bite +2 melee (1d6+2)
Space/Reach: 10 ft./5 ft.
Special Attacks: Pounce, rend 2d6+9
Special Qualities: Darkvision 60 ft., immunity to cold, low-light vision, vulnerability to fire, scent
Saves: Fort +6, Ref +4, Will +0
Abilities: Str 20, Dex 12, Con 16, Int 9, Wis 9, Cha 12
Skills: Balance +6, Hide +3, Jump +6, Listen +5, Spot +4
Feats: Alertness, Lightning Reflexes, Toughness
Environment: Any desert or hills
Organization: Solitary, pair, or pack (3–12)
Challenge Rating: 2
Treasure: Standard
Alignment: Always lawful neutral
Advancement: 4–7 HD (Large); 8–12 HD (Huge)
Level Adjustment: –

This nimble, hardy creature resembles a cross between a horse and a crocodile, and is covered with large gray scales.

Ceratons are feared predators in the snowy regions of the Northlands, hunting game when it is plentiful, and closing in on human and demihuman settlements when their regular food supply becomes scarce. They are fearless trackers and hunters, and are masters of finding warm-blooded creatures wherever they might hide. They also run on two powerful hind legs, and are surprisingly fast for their size.

Despite being most commonly found in the colder regions of the Northlands, ceratons are lizards, and thought to be distantly related to dinosaurs. Although countless theories abound as to why these creatures prefer the cold instead of the warmth of jungles, these powerful lizards hate warmth with a passion, and invariably become sick and die if transported to a warmer climate. The steppes of Saramanthia are as far south as the ceratons naturally roam.

Certain warriors in Saramanthia have managed to train the ceratons as mounts. Though difficult to capture and train, ceratons make strong, powerful hunting steeds that are prized by elite warriors throughout the Northlands. Minor wars have erupted between barbarians of the Northlands and the barbarians of the Lostlands over which is the better steed: the ceraton or the shadroquus.

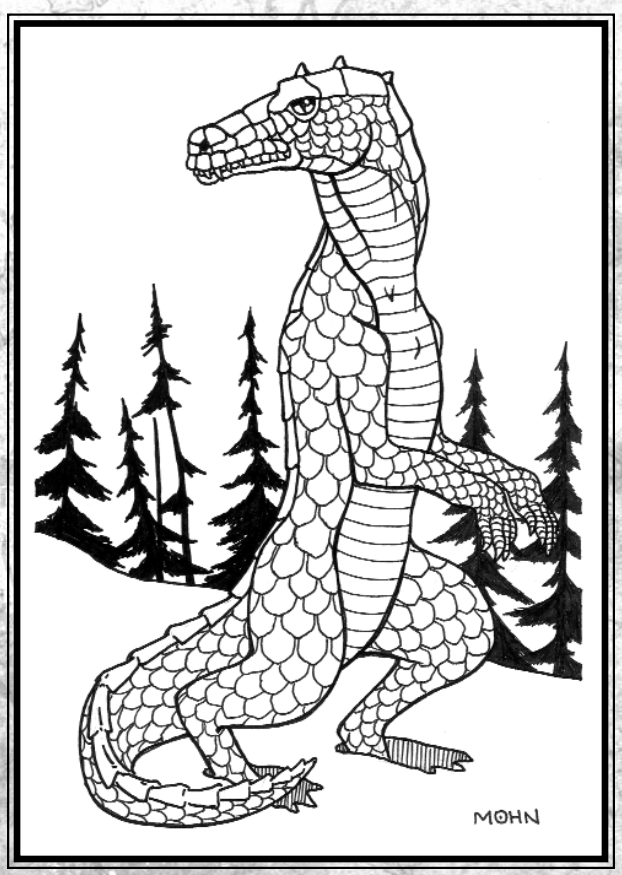
Combat

In the wild, ceratons move about like packs of dire wolves, hunting large packs of game animals and moving mostly at night. They attack in groups of three or more, and only attack those opponents whom they feel fairly certain of slaying.

A trained ceraton moves and attacks at the behest of its rider. If given free rein, it prefers to pounce upon a single opponent; however, it generally follows the lead of its rider and does whatever it is asked.

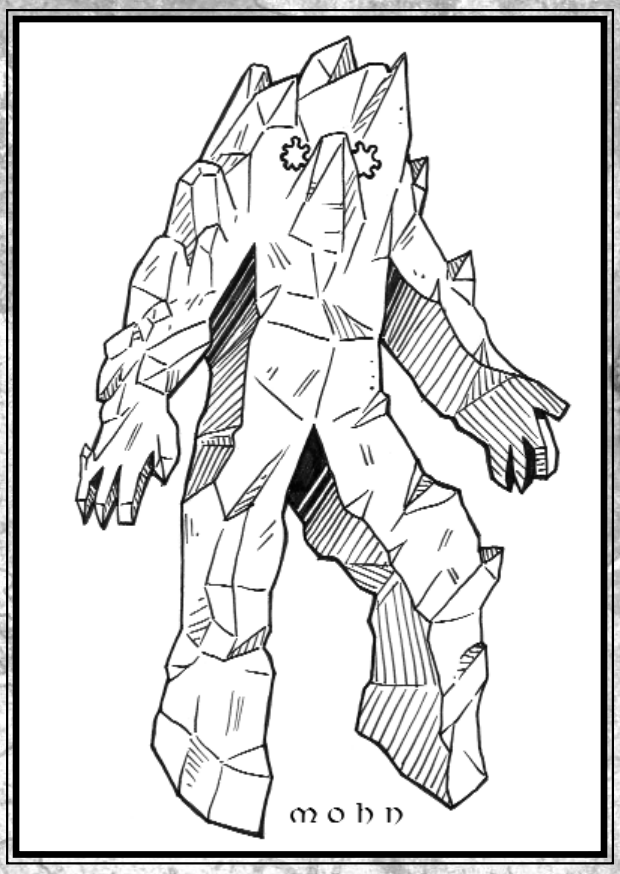
Pounce (Ex): If a ceraton charges, it can make a full attack.

Rend (Ex): A ceraton that hits with both claw attacks latches onto the opponent's body and tears the flesh. This attack automatically deals an extra 2d6+9 points of damage.



Crystal Golem

Large Construct
Hit Dice: 6d10+30 (63 hp)
Initiative: +2
Speed: 30 ft.
Armor Class: 11 (+2 Dex, –1 size), touch 11, flat-footed 9
Base Attack/Grapple: +4/+12
Attack: Slam +7 melee (2d8+4)
Full Attack: 2 slams +7 melee (2d8+4)
Space/Reach: 10 ft./10 ft.
Special Attacks: Blindness
Special Qualities: Construct traits, damage reduction 10/adamantine and bludgeoning, darkvision 60 ft., immunity to magic, low-light vision
Saves: Fort +2, Ref +4, Will +2
Abilities: Str 19, Dex 14, Con –, Int –, Wis 11, Cha 1
Skills: –
Feats: –
Environment: Any
Organization: Solitary or gang (2–4)
Challenge Rating: 5
Treasure: None
Alignment: Always neutral
Advancement: 7–9 HD (Large); 10–16 HD (Huge)
Level Adjustment: –



This man-shaped creature is made from large blocks of crystal quartz. It is ten feet tall and looks to weigh around two thousand pounds.

A crystal golem has a humanoid body hewn from a single piece of transparent crystal. Their bodies are beautiful and glow softly. Their creators typically carve them into the likenesses of classical statues, and they are frequently mistaken for prized works of art.

Combat

Crystal golems are tenacious fighters, attacking relentlessly with their powerful fists. They fight until destroyed, or until their foes are vanquished.

Blindness (Ex): A crystal golem's body can glow extremely brightly, causing great pain to those who look upon its form. Any living creature that gazes at the glowing form of the crystal golem must succeed on a Will save (DC 13) or be temporarily blinded for 2d4 rounds. Any blinded creature that possesses the Blind-Fight feat may continue to attack the crystal golem without penalty, even if the save is failed.

Immunity to Magic (Ex): A crystal golem is immune to any spell or spell-like ability that allows spell resistance. In addition, certain spells and effects function differently against the creature, as noted below.

Any sort of *light* spell cast either upon or within 20 feet of a crystal golem acts as a healing spell for the creature, healing up to 2d8+8 hit points of damage.

Any sort of *darkness* spell cast either upon or within 20 feet of a crystal golem has the opposite effect, causing great harm to the golem. *Darkness* spells cast near but not directly upon the golem cause 1d4+4 hit points of damage; *darkness* spells cast directly upon the creature cause 2d8+8 hit points of damage.

Any sort of normal or magical fire directed against the crystal golem as an attack causes no damage, but instead acts as a *haste* spell, allowing the golem to move about much more freely. This effect lasts for 1d6 rounds.

Construction

A crystal golem's body is chiseled from a single block of hard crystal quartz that weighs at least two thousand pounds. The crystal must be of exceptional quality, and costs 4,000 gp. Assembling the body requires a DC 14 Craft (sculpting) check or a DC 14 Craft (jewelry) check.

CL 14th; Craft Construct, *antimagic field, continual flame, geas/quest*; Price 80,000 gp; Cost 30,000 gp + 2,000 XP.

Draexodon

Huge Magical Beast
Hit Dice: 7d10+35 (73 hp)
Initiative: +1
Speed: 30 ft.
Armor Class: 13 (+1 Dex, –2 size, +4 natural), touch 9, flat-footed 12
Base Attack/Grapple: +7/+22
Attack: Claw +12 melee (2d6+7)
Full Attack: 4 claws +12 melee (2d6+7) or bite +7 melee (2d4+3)
Space/Reach: 10 ft./10 ft.
Special Attacks: Bull rush, frightful presence
Special Qualities: Damage reduction 5/silver
Saves: Fort +10, Ref +6, Will +1
Abilities: Str 24, Dex 12, Con 20, Int 6, Wis 9, Cha 6
Skills: Jump +12, Spot +7, Swim +12
Feats: Great Fortitude
Environment: Any hills or plains
Organization: Pair or herd (3– 6)
Challenge Rating: 7
Treasure: Standard
Alignment: Usually lawful evil
Advancement: 8–12 HD (Huge); 13–18 HD (Gargantuan)
Level Adjustment: –

This is a mighty reptilian creature, standing more than twelve feet tall at the shoulder and weighing several tons. Its body is covered in brown, knobby scales.

Left to its own devices, the draeoxodon is a relatively harmless and peaceable creature that can be found grazing in the plains of the Northlands. For the most part, the wild draeoxodon herds are ruthlessly hunted and captured by goblinoid bandits, who then train the beasts for their own nefarious purposes. A trained draeoxodon takes on the personality and temperament of its new masters, becoming an evil, vicious beast that is quite dangerous indeed.

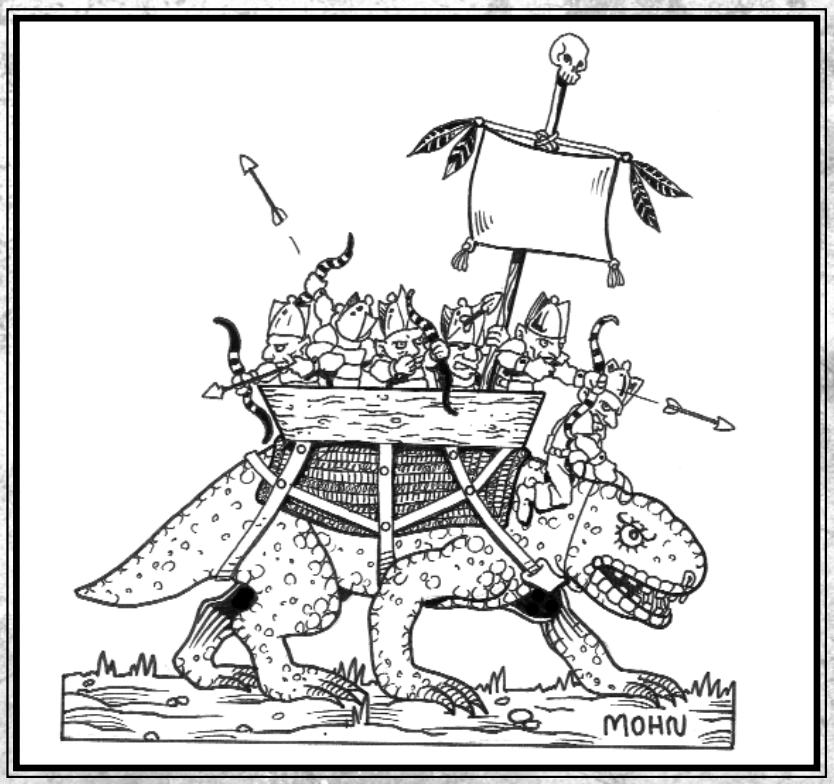
The training of a draeoxodon is a long, laborious process, which can take upward of a year to complete. However, once trained, they respond to the commands—and the whips—of their goblin masters without hesitation. Although used for a number of purposes by goblins, the draeoxodon serves three primary functions for a tribe: to haul materials or weapons, to attack foes, and to act as a mobile artillery station for goblin archers. As many as eight to twelve goblins can ride on a draeoxodon's back, although no more than four can be perched on top of the beast and still be able to take their full actions.

Combat

Wild draeoxodons are gentle creatures, and only fight when cornered. Otherwise, they seek to flee combat where possible. Trained draeoxodons, on the other hand, are savage fighters, immediately charging into combat when possible and ripping their opponents to shreds with their claws after the initial charge. With goblin riders aboard, they show a little more restraint (but barely), letting their riders control their direction in combat and following their leads as to when to charge and when to strike.

Bull Rush (Ex): A draeoxodon begins a battle by charging at an opponent, lowering its head and smashing into opponents with its large, thick skull. In addition to the normal benefits and hazards of a charge, this allows the creature to make a single slam attack with a +12 attack bonus that deals 3d6+6 points of damage.

Frightful Presence (Su): The draexodon can inspire terror by charging or attacking. Affected creatures must succeed on a DC 12 Will save or become shaken, remaining in that condition as long as they remain with 30 feet of the draexodon. The save DC is Charisma-based.



Drakon

Known by as many names as the cultures who fear them—among them anu-zorai, naga-born, and the most common, drakon—these arrogant reptilian humanoids are rightly respected throughout the Southlands of Áereth. Once a loose society of warring tribes and factions, the drakon have only increased in power, rising from the depths of Zimala centuries ago to form the nation of Ssorlang. Despite the failed expansion of their self-titled empire, the drakon remain a constant source of terror in this part of the world, and recent rumblings of drakon militancy have made the civilizations of the Southlands look to their borders.

The drakon are a cunning race, always planning grandiose schemes of domination, and only their constant infighting keeps their power in check. The only creatures that they treat with any true respect are their ancient forebears, the nagas. Though the arcana that gave rise to the drakon has long been lost, most scholars believe that the nagas of the old Zimalan Empire injected their own blood into humanoid subjects in the failed attempt to create a powerful race under their control. The fact that the drakon were birthed by magic—and not divine creation—has led to their narcissistic belief that their race is one of perfection.

Apart from the nagas, most drakon consider all other races beneath their contempt. Although they gladly smile and give promises of great wealth and power to their allies, any friendship or alliance with the drakon inevitably ends with a knife in the back … and a twist of the blade.

Given their mutative origin, a number of different strains of the species exist, but the most common are detailed below.

The drakon speak the Draconic and Common languages.

Combat

The drakon are master tacticians. They rarely enter combat without some sort of cunning battle plan, and will retreat if doing so means that they can survive to deliver revenge another day. Although they believe that violence is the ultimate tool to achieving their goals, the drakon are a patient race and can accept losing a battle or two in order to win a war. Whenever possible, the drakon will first deploy or sacrifice their non-drakon allies in combat, letting these creatures take the heaviest hits in a fight before entering the fray themselves.

Drakon Religion

Most drakon are too imperious to bow before any god, but those who choose the devoted path of a cleric worship the demigods Axaluatl, Lagos, or even the infernal powers—sometimes an amalgam of wicked deities. Such polytheistic drakon clerics have access to two of the following domains: Death, Evil, or War.

Drakon Society

The drakon comprise a hubristic culture, dedicated to the conquest and enslavement of all other creatures, whom they believe to be servitors at best and cattle at worst. Their society is cruel and unforgiving, as likely to turn on itself as on its enemies. Violence, an integral part of drakon life, it is believed to be the best solution to all problems. When direct violence fails, the use of deceit and dissimulation, like a subtle poison, is equally applauded.

Drakon dwell chiefly in the cities and towns of Ssorlang, but many communities reside deep within the jungles and swamps of the Southlands, inaccessible to all but the most hardy of travelers. The drakon venerate the pyramid structure of their forebears—they believe that it symbolizes the steady ascension to power, a concept, they believe, that is lost on their human enemies. As such, nearly every building in a drakon community, no matter how large or small, is usually built in some sort of structure resembling a pyramid, and the triangle or pyramid shape can commonly be found throughout the various aspects of drakon society.

Drakon (Brightvenom)

Medium Monstrous Humanoid (Reptilian)
Hit Dice: 3d8+3 (16 hp)
Initiative: +5
Speed: 30 ft., climb 20 ft., swim 20 ft.
Armor Class: 13 (+1 Dex, +2 natural), touch 11, flat-footed 12
Base Attack/Grapple: +3/+3
Attack: Bite +3 melee (1d4 plus poison) or masterwork composite longbow +5 ranged (1d8)
Full Attack: Bite +3 melee (1d4 plus poison) or masterwork longsword +4 melee (1d8) or masterwork composite longbow +5 ranged (1d8)
Space/Reach: 5 ft./5 ft.
Special Attacks: Charming gaze, poison
Special Qualities: Darkvision 60 ft., deceive, keen senses
Saves: Fort +2, Ref +4, Will +4
Abilities: Str 11, Dex 13, Con 13, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 14
Skills: Concentration +4, Hide +2, Knowledge (arcana) +2, Knowledge (religion) +2, Listen +4, Move Silently +2, Spot +4
Feats: Alertness, Improved Initiative
Environment: Warm forests or marshes
Organization: Solitary, pair, band (3–6), clan (2–12 brightvenom drakon, 2–12 drakon mongrels, and 2–4 darkvenom drakon), or colony (10–200 brightvenom drakon, 10–200 drakon mongrels, and 6–60 darkvenom drakon)
Challenge Rating: 2
Treasure: Double standard
Alignment: Usually neutral evil
Advancement: By character class
Level Adjustment: +2

Upon first glance, the creature resembles a slender human with exceedingly pale skin and a gentle, languid grace. Its reptilian nature is revealed in a patina of fine scales along each forearm, its neck, and even along each temple. Its perfect white teeth are offset by a set of narrow fangs.

The scales of a brightvenom drakon can vary in color and pattern as much as any species of snake, but most possess the red and black bands reminiscent of the spirit naga. Their hair is always fine, usually black and quite straight.

Brightvenom drakon are the emissaries and diplomats of the drakon race. Experts in the art of deception, these creatures frequent travel in the realms of mankind, gathering information and sowing dissension. Brightvenom drakon infiltrating human communities often pose as prophets, teachers, or tradesman, creating mayhem with their silvery, forked tongues—turning the foes of the drakon race against each other with words instead of swords.

Combat

Brightvenom drakon tend to avoid combat whenever possible, and attempt to talk their way out of trouble, using their charming gaze to diffuse potentially violent situations. Only when they have the clear advantage in combat will they display their murderous nature, closing in for the kill with their poisonous fangs and their swords.

Deceive (Su): Once per day, a brightvenom drakon can assume the appearance of a human, elf, or half-elf of the same height and weight as itself. The effect resembles the *disguise self* spell and lasts for 1 hour per character level. The brightvenom drakon gains a +10 bonus on Disguise checks when the ability is used to effect a disguise.

Charming Gaze (Su): As *charm person*, 30 feet, Will DC 14 negates. The save DC is Charisma-based.

Poison (Ex): Injury, Fortitude DC 13, initial and secondary damage 1d6 Con. The save DC is Constitution-based.

Brightvenom Drakon as Characters

Brightvenom drakon characters possess the following racial traits:

— +2 Dexterity, +2 Constitution, +4 Charisma.

—Medium size

—A brightvenom drakon's base land speed is 30 feet.

—Darkvision out to 60 feet.

—Racial Hit Dice: A brightvenom drakon starts out with three levels of monstrous humanoid, which provide 3d8 Hit Dice, a base attack bonus of +3, and base saving throw bonuses of Fort +1, Ref +3, and Will +3.

—Racial Skills: A brightvenom drakon's monstrous humanoid levels give it skill points equal to 6 x (2 + Int modifier). Its class skills are Concentration, Hide, Knowledge (any), Listen, Move Silently, and Spot.

—Racial Feats: A brightvenom drakon's monstrous humanoid levels give it two feats.

— +2 natural armor bonus.

—Special Attacks (see above): Charming gaze (save DC 12 + Cha modifier), poison bite (save DC 12 + Con modifier)

—Special Qualities (see above): Deceive, darkvision 60 ft., keen senses

—Automatic Languages: Common, Draconic. Bonus Languages: Infernal, Orc.

—Favored Class: Rogue (male) or sorcerer (female).

—Level Adjustment: +2.

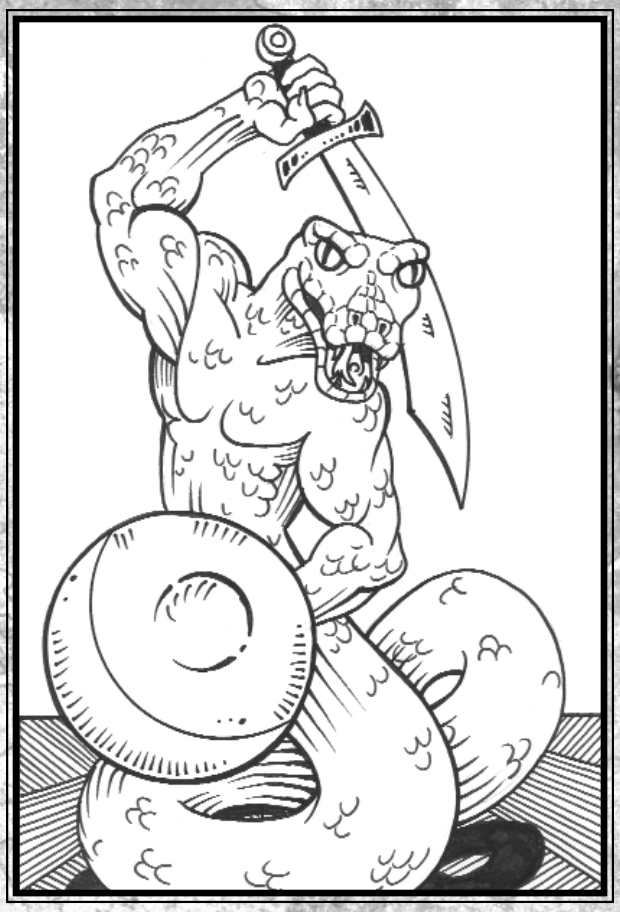
Drakon (Darkvenom)

Large Monstrous Humanoid (Reptilian)
Hit Dice: 8d8+24 (60 hp)
Initiative: +5
Speed: 30 ft., climb 30 ft., swim 30 ft.
Armor Class: 18 (+1 Dex, –1 size, +8 natural), touch 10, flat-footed 17
Base Attack/Grapple: +6/+16
Attack: Bite +11 melee (2d4+9 plus poison) or masterwork composite longbow (+2 Str bonus) +7 ranged (1d8+2)
Full Attack: Bite +11 melee (2d4+9 plus poison) or masterwork greataxe +12 melee (3d6+9) or masterwork composite longbow (+2 Str bonus) +7 ranged (1d8+2)
Space/Reach: 10 ft./10 ft.
Special Attacks: Constrict 1d4+4, improved grab, paralyzing gaze, poison
Special Qualities: Darkvision 60 ft., regeneration 5, transfigure
Saves: Fort +5, Ref +7, Will +10
Abilities: Str 22, Dex 13, Con 16, Int 18, Wis 18, Cha 20
Skills: Climb +12, Concentration +12, Gather Information +8, Heal +8, Hide +8, Knowledge (arcana) +14, Knowledge (religion) +14, Listen +14, Move Silently +4, Spot +8
Feats: Alertness, Dodge, Improved Initiative
Environment: Warm forests or marshes
Organization: Solitary, pair, band (3–6), clan (2–12 brightvenom drakon, 2–12 drakon mongrels, and 2–4 darkvenom drakon), or colony (10–200 brightvenom drakon, 10–200 drakon mongrels, and 6–60 darkvenom drakon)
Challenge Rating: 6
Treasure: Double standard
Alignment: Usually chaotic evil
Advancement: By character class
Level Adjustment: +6

Massive and fearsome, the serpent-like creature resembles a giant snake with powerful humanoid arms and keen, intelligent eyes. Its sinuous, muscular body is covered in darkly-hued scales glittering with a reflective sheen.

Though their coloration may vary, most darkvenom drakon possess scales of deep blue or darkest green. In rarer cases, a darkvenom drakon may possess the deep purple shade of the dark naga. Their bodies range from 9 to 15 feet in height and weigh 300 to 500 lbs.

As the undisputed leaders of the drakon race, darkvenom drakon are ruthless fighters that delight in the utter destruction of other creatures—by any means. They are aggressive creatures, vain even for drakon, and constantly strive to destroy their enemies and rivals.



Combat

More headstrong than their more calculating brightvenom cousins, the darkvenom drakon delight in physical combat and gladly enter melee when they scent an easy victory. Whenever possible, they attempt to use the paralyzing gaze to first weaken a potential opponent, so that they can slowly crush their enemies—literally—and watch them suffer as they die.

Transfigure (Su): Once per day, a brightvenom drakon can assume the form of a humanoid of Medium size. The effect resembles the *polymorph self* spell, but it lasts for only 1 minute per character level.

Constrict (Ex): A darkvenom drakon deals 1d4+4 hit points of damage with a successful grapple check.

Improved Grab (Ex): To use this ability, a darkvenom drakon must successfully hit a Large or smaller creature with its bite attack. It can then attempt to start a grapple as a free action without provoking an attack of opportunity. If it successfully makes the grapple check, it establishes a hold and can then constrict.

Paralyzing Gaze (Su): The gaze of a darkvenom drakon's eyes can paralyze victims within 40 feet who fail a Fortitude save (DC 19). If the saving throw is suc-

cessful, the character is forever immune to the gaze of that particular darkvenom drakon. If it fails, the victim is paralyzed for 2d6 rounds. The save DC is Charisma-based.

Poison (Ex): Injury, Fortitude DC 17, initial and secondary damage 2d6 Con. The save DC is Constitution-based.

Drakon (Mongrel)

Medium Monstrous Humanoid (Reptilian)
Hit Dice: 6d8+12 (39 hp)
Initiative: +6
Speed: 30 ft.
Armor Class: 17 (+2 Dex, +3 natural, +2 masterwork leather armor), touch 12, flat-footed 15
Base Attack/Grapple: +6/+8
Attack: Bite +8 melee (1d6+3 plus poison) or masterwork composite longbow (+2 Str bonus) +9 ranged (1d8+2)
Full Attack: Bite +8 melee (1d6+3 plus poison) or masterwork longsword +9 melee (1d8+2) or masterwork composite longbow (+2 Str bonus) +9 ranged (1d8+2)
Space/Reach: 5 ft./5 ft.
Special Attacks: Constrict 1d4+1, poison, improved grab
Special Qualities: Darkvision 60 ft.
Saves: Fort +4, Ref +7, Will +5
Abilities: Str 15, Dex 15, Con 15, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 16
Skills: Concentration +6, Hide +8, Listen +6, Move Silently +4, Spot +4
Feats: Alertness, Improved Initiative, Toughness
Environment: Warm forests or marshes
Organization: Solitary, pair, band (3–6), clan (2–12 brightvenom drakon, 2–12 drakon mongrels, and 2–4 darkvenom drakon), or colony (10–200 brightvenom drakon, 10–200 drakon mongrels, and 6–60 darkvenom drakon)
Challenge Rating: 4
Treasure: Standard
Alignment: Usually neutral evil
Advancement: By character class
Level Adjustment: +4

This creature has the upper torso of a humanoid and the scaled, lower torso of giant snake. Scales and even banded flesh can be seen along its humanoid half, betraying its heritage.

A subset of the race, drakon mongrels vary the most in their appearance. Their heads and torsos might resemble those of any humanoid, though reptilian features are common to all of them. A mongrel's serpentine lower half displays the coloration of virtually any species of snake, most likely matching those of its brightvenom parent.

Drakon mongrels are the hybrid offspring of humanoid and brightvenom drakon parents. Also known as "mules" because of their inability to reproduce, drakon mongrels are disliked intensely by both brightvenom and darkvenom drakon and indeed aren't even considered part of their race by these "pure" broods. For this reason, they are typically used as bodyguards, foot soldiers, and laborers in drakon society. They are also usually less educated than their drakon cousins, although this does not mean than they are necessarily less intelligent. Most drakon mongrels act subservient to the brightvenom and darkvenom drakon and follow the orders of these "superior" creatures without hesitation.

Unlike brightvenom and darkvenom drakon, drakon mongrels do not have the ability to shift into an alternate form.

Combat

Because of their low value in drakon society, drakon mongrels are usually the "shock troops" in any sort of combat situation involving the drakon. They charge fearlessly into melee combat, using their constricting tails and brute strength to overpower their enemies.

Constrict (Ex): A drakon mongrel deals 1d4+1 hit points of damage with a successful grapple check.

Improved Grab (Ex): To use this ability, a drakon mongrel must successfully hit a Medium or smaller creature with its bite attack. It can then attempt to start a grapple as a free action without provoking an attack of opportunity. If it successfully makes the grapple check, it establishes a hold and can then constrict.

Poison (Ex): Injury, Fortitude DC 15, initial and secondary damage 2d4 Con. The save DC is Constitution-based.

Earth Naga

Medium Aberration
Hit Dice: 4d8+12 (30 hp)
Initiative: +3
Speed: 40 ft. (8 squares), burrow 20 ft.
Armor Class: 17 (+3 Dex, +4 natural), touch 13, flat-footed 14
Base Attack/Grapple: +3/+6
Attack: Bite +6 melee (1d6+3 plus acid) or acid spit +6 ranged (1d4 plus acid)
Full Attack: Bite +6 melee (1d6+3 plus acid) or tail slap +1 melee (2d4+1) or acid spit +6 ranged (1d4 plus acid)
Space/Reach: 5 ft./5 ft.
Special Attacks: Acid bite, acid spit
Special Qualities: Darkvision 60 ft., resistance to charm
Saves: Fort +4, Ref +6, Will +4
Abilities: Str 16, Dex 16, Con 16, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 18
Skills: Bluff +8, Gather Information +10, Intimidate +10, Listen +6, Sense Motive +6, Spot +2
Feats: Alertness, Lightning Reflexes
Environment: Warm forest or mountain; underground
Organization: Solitary, pair, or nest (3–4)
Challenge Rating: 3
Treasure: Standard
Alignment: Usually neutral evil
Advancement: 5–6 HD (Medium); 7–12 HD (Large)
Level Adjustment: –

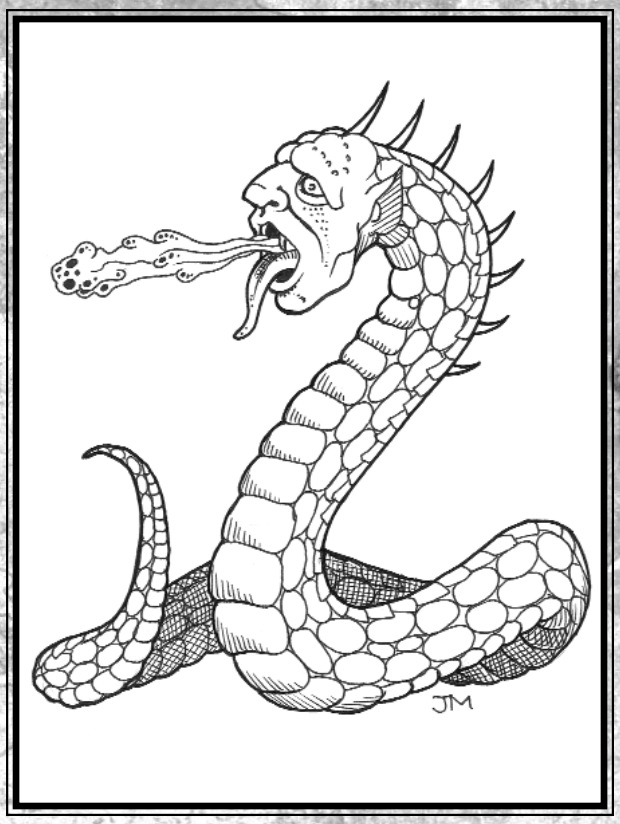
This loathsome serpent has a dark, scaled body banded in stripes of black and indigo.

Physically resembling other naga, earth naga are smaller and faster than others of their species. Their reptilian scales are always colored black and indigo, making them difficult to spot in the darkness.

Once commonly found throughout the Southlands, the foul earth naga is now fortunately a somewhat rare beast typically found lurking in jungles and ruins. For centuries, the earth naga comprised the bulk of the Southlands' mighty armies, crushing the foes of the Zimalan Empire with ease. With the fall of the Empire, the legions of earth naga dwindled away to nearly nothing, making them little more than a dangerous rarity.

Earth naga are impulsive, violent creatures. They are irritated by conversation and become bored easily. This impatience is reflected in their bad temperament and their willingness to fight at a moment's notice, even against each other. They have little respect for anything and take great delight in mindless destruction.

Earth naga speak Common and Infernal.



Combat

Unlike other nagas, earth naga love melee combat. Typically, they rush their opponents immediately, seeking to incapacitate strong opponents with their acid bites as quickly as possible. However, when in trouble, they may try to bluff their way out of danger by pretending that they have magical abilities, hoping that their opponents may believe them to be dark naga or guardian naga. Earth naga also work well with one another in group combat, and try to separate and isolate multiple opponents wherever possible.

Acid (Ex): The fangs of an earth naga drip with a highly potent acid. Any opponent bitten by one of these creatures must make a successful Fortitude save of DC 16 or take an additional 1d6 hit points of damage. The save DC is Constitution-based.

Resistance to Charm (Ex): Earth naga have a +1 racial bonus on saving throws against all charm effects (not included in the statistics block).

Spit (Ex): An earth naga can spit acid 1d6 times per day up to 30 feet as a ranged attack action. Opponents hit by this attack must make successful saves (see above) to avoid the effect.

Ghozali

Medium Aberration
Hit Dice: 6d8+6 (33 hp)
Initiative: +11
Speed: Fly 40 ft. (good)
Armor Class: 19 (+7 Dex, +2 natural), touch 17, flat-footed 12
Base Attack/Grapple: +4/+5
Attack: Tentacle +5 melee (1d10+1)
Full Attack: 9 tentacles +5 melee (1d10+1) or bite +0 melee (1d6+1)
Space/Reach: 5 ft./10 ft.
Special Attacks: Poison gas, improved grab
Special Qualities: Darkvision 60 ft.
Saves: Fort +3, Ref +9, Will +8
Abilities: Str 12, Dex 24, Con 12, Int 16, Wis 16, Cha 14
Skills: Bluff +10, Concentration +10, Hide +16, Spot +10, Survival +12
Feats: Dodge, Hover, Improved Initiative, Mobility, Wingover
Environment: Any mountains
Organization: Solitary, pair, flight (3–8), or murder (9–36)
Challenge Rating: 3
Treasure: Standard
Alignment: Usually chaotic neutral
Advancement: 7–9 HD (Medium); 10–16 HD (Large)
Level Adjustment: –

This flying humanoid appears to remain aloft with thin membranes stretched between long, thin tentacles. Its body is covered in blue and gold scales.

Vaguely resembling bloated, winged humans, ghozali are flying creatures whose bodies are filled with a magical gas, allowing them to remain airborne throughout their entire lives. Thin membranes stretch between their long, thin tentacles, which they use as wings to maneuver deftly through the air. Their bodies are covered entirely in bright blue and gold scales.

These strange, brightly colored creatures spend their entire lives flying through the air, swooping down from the clouds only on rare occasion to attack tempting prey. Ghozali travel in small, roaming tribes. They tend not to occupy a constant territory, but are instead always on the move, drifting and flying as many as a hundred miles per day. Some sages have suggested that there is a method to the ghozali's madness, as they may be visiting hidden places throughout the world to store treasure and other secrets.

Ghozali are sociable creatures amongst themselves and with other flying creatures. If approached in the skies that are their home, they can be quite agreeable and helpful. However, they view ground-dwellers as little more than

prey, and have nothing but contempt for that which cannot fly. As such, they are rarely seen near the earth except to hunt, and even then tend to reserve their feeding grounds to mountaintops or other elevated areas.

Ghozali speak Common and Draconic.

Combat

Ghozali rarely go within melee distance of the ground, unless they believe they have the advantage of numbers or surprise. Their favorite tactic is to grab a non-flying opponent and then fly high in the air, dropping that opponent from a high distance onto sharp rocks. Although the ghozali's poison gas attack is quite deadly, it usually uses it only as a last resort.

Poison Gas (Su): Injury, Fortitude DC 14, initial and secondary damage 1d8 Con. The save DC is Constitution-based.

A ghozali can expel some of the gas that inflates its body and keeps it airborne, creating a 20-foot cone of highly poisonous gas. Each time such a cone of gas is expelled, however, the flying speed of the ghozali is reduced by 10 feet, and its maneuverability class also goes down by one rank. This effect lasts for 1d6 rounds. It may use its gas attack only three times per day.

Improved Grab (Ex): To use this ability, a ghozali must hit an opponent at least one size category smaller than itself with its tentacle attack. It can then attempt to start a grapple as a free action without provoking an attack of opportunity.

Horror of Zamon

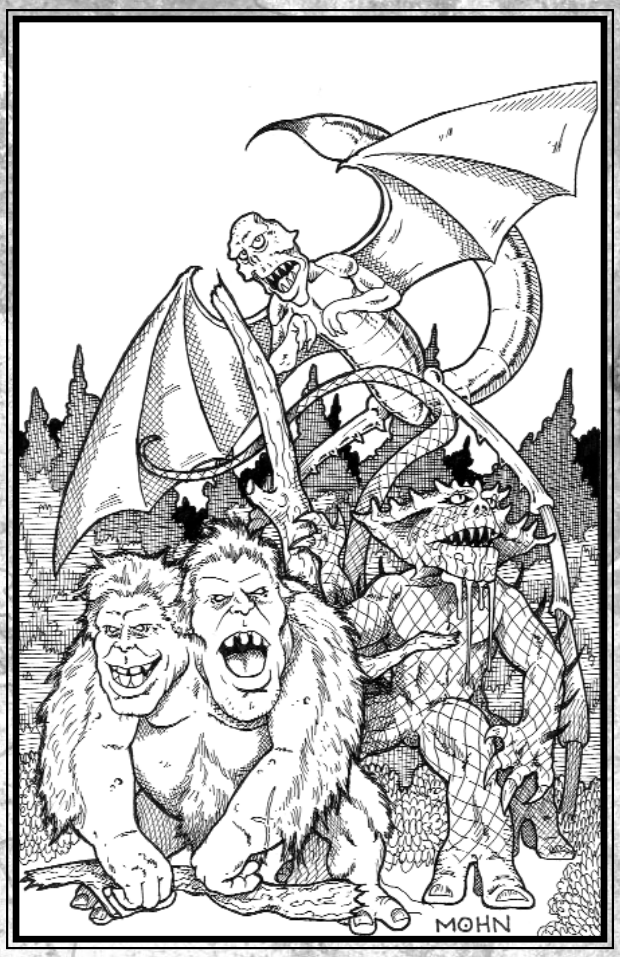
Huge Aberration
Hit Dice: 8d8+64 (100 hp)
Initiative: +0
Speed: 20 ft.
Armor Class: 12 (–2 size, +4 natural), touch 8, flat-footed 12
Base Attack/Grapple: +6/+21
Attack: Claw +11 melee (1d10+7)
Full Attack: 2 claws +11 melee (1d10+7) or bite +6 melee (1d6+5)
Space/Reach: 10 ft./10 ft.
Special Attacks: Constrict, improved grab (see below)
Special Qualities: Phoenix rebirth (see below)
Saves: Fort +10, Ref +2, Will +5
Abilities: Str 24, Dex 10, Con 26, Int 6, Wis 9, Cha 6
Skills: Climb +16, Jump +18
Feats: Blind-Fight, Toughness
Environment: Any forest or mountains
Organization: Solitary
Challenge Rating: 8–12 (see text below)
Treasure: Standard
Alignment: Always chaotic evil
Advancement: 9–12 HD (Huge); 13–18 HD (Gargantuan)
Level Adjustment: –

The Horrors of Zamon are all basically humanoid in shape, and all stand somewhere between ten and twelve feet tall. From there, their appearances all change dramatically from individual to individual, although they always remain terrifying.

Originally created long ago by the experiments of mad alchemists, the Horrors of Zamon are walking beings of dread, wandering through the desolate regions of the Northlands and destroying all that cross their path.

No two Horrors are alike—it is said that their twisted souls are born every time a mortal has a nightmare, making each one slightly different and unique. It is no less surprising to see a Horror covered in flames and feathers than to see a Horror dripping with slime and ice. The width and breadth of their appearance and abilities are as varied as snowflakes in a blizzard.

Although the wandering Horrors can be found scattered throughout the Northlands, they can mostly be found congregated near the Myrwych Forest. The reasons for this are unclear, but it is believed that the first Horrors were created in this forest, and that something mystical may connect the Horrors to this sinister place. Oddly, the number of Horrors sighted near the forest increases during snowstorms.



Creating a Horror of Zamon

Both the final appearance and extra abilities of a Horror of Zamon (if any) can be determined by rolling a d6 on the random tables in the sidebar. A "stock" Horror of Zamon without any additional abilities or attacks has a standard CR of 8; as a rule of thumb, for each additional two special abilities or attacks acquired by the Horror, the CR of that Horror should be increased by 1.

Combat

The Horrors of Zamon, simply put, are mindless killing machines. If they spot a living creature, they attempt to kill it as quickly as possible. They never attempt to ambush or surprise an opponent. Specific individual tactics will vary with each Horror.

Constrict (Ex): A Horror of Zamon deals automatic arm or tentacle damage with a successful grapple check.

Improved Grab (Ex): To use this ability, the Horror of Zamon must hit with a claw or tentacle attack. It can then attempt to start a grapple as a free action without provoking an attack of opportunity. If it wins the grapple check, it establishes a hold and can constrict.

Horror of Zamon Appearance and Abilities

Appearance

Roll once for each category.

Overall Visage
1 – Dripping, drooling
2 – Glaring, intimidating
3 – Twitching, screaming
4 – Fat, lazy
5 – Hanging, flaccid
6 – Rotting, tormented

Head
1 – Triangular
2 – Amorphous
3 – Square and gaunt
4 – Round and soft
5 – Wide and flat
6 – Two-headed

Skin Color
1 – Jet black[1]
2 – Blood red
3 – Yellowish and bruised
4 – Blue and indigo
5 – Bright green
6 – Sickly white

Back
1 – Spine-covered
2 – Scaly
3 – Slimy and hunched
4 – Fur-covered
5 – Bird-winged[2]
6 – Bat-winged[2]

Hide
1 – Fat
2 – Exoskeleton plating[3]
3 – Covered in sores
4 – Thick, matted fur
5 – Lizard-like scales
6 – Soft, thick flesh

Tail
1 – Long, thin, prehensile
2 – Short and stubby
3 – Long and spiked[4]
4 – Long, thick, clubbed[4]
5 – Soft and furry
6 – None

Mouth
1 – Massive tusks
2 – Jagged, long teeth[5]
3 – Small, sharp fangs
4 – Long and needle-like
5 – Flat, crushing molars
6 – Saw-toothed[5]

Legs
1 – Thick and stubby
2 – Telescopig, froglike[6]
3 – Insect-like
4 – Tentacles
5 – Long and gangly
6 – 1d4 additional[7]

Arms
1 – Powerful, muscular
2 – Short, emaciated
3 – Insect-like
4 – Tentacles[8]
5 – Long and hairy[9]
6 – 1d4 additional[8]

[1] Skin color provides a +4 bonus to all Hide checks.

[2] Winged Horrors also gain a flying movement of 20 feet, with good maneuverability.

[3] Exoskeleton plating provides an additional +4 natural armor bonus.

[4] These tails provide an additional tail slap attack (+6 melee, 2d6+6 damage).

[5] Provides an additional d6 to bite damage.

[6] Provides a +6 bonus to Jump.

[7] Increases base movement to 40 feet.

[8] Also provides additional 1d4 claw attacks.

[9] Increases Reach to 20 feet.

Abilities

Roll twice on Main Ability table, then roll as needed.

Main Ability
1 – Immunity
2 – Extra ranged attack
3 – Extra melee attack
4 – Spell-like ability
5 – None
6 – Roll twice more

Immunity
1 – DR 5/silver
2 – DR 10/adamantine
3 – Immune to charm, fear
4 – Immune to fire
5 – Immune to cold
6 – Immune to magical energy type (roll below)

Magical Energy Immunity
1 – Magical fire
2 – Magical cold
3 – Magical lightning
4 – Magical melee weapons
5 – Arcane spells
6 – Divine spells

Ranged Attack
1 – Poison quills, 40 ft. range, +4 ranged attack[1]
2 – *Fireball* 3/day[2]
3 – *Cone of cold* 3/day[2]
4 – *Cloudkill* 1/day[2]
5 – *Chain lightning* 1/day[2]
6 – Breath weapon[3]

Breath Weapon Type
1 – Line, acid, 60 ft.
2 – Line, lightning, 60 ft.
3 – Cone, fire, 30 ft.
4 – Cone, cold, 30 ft.
5 – Cone, caustic gas, 30 ft.
6 – Roll twice again

Melee Attack
1 – Poisoned claws/talons[1]
2 – Festering wounds[5]
3 – Extra mouth (gains another bite attack)
4 – Horns +0 melee (1d8+1)
5 – Rend 2d6+10
6 – Vampiric touch[6]

Spell-Like Ability
1 – Turn invisible, as per the spell *greater invisibility*[2]
2 – Teleport, as per the spell *greater teleportation*[2]
3 – Turn to stone, as per the spell *flesh to stone*[2]
4 – Create earthquake, as per the spell *earthquake*[4]
5 – Wounding touch, as per the spell *inflict serious wounds*[4]
6 – Roll twice more

[1] All poison attacks have the following statistics: Injury, Fortitude DC 22, initial and secondary damage 1d6 Con. The save DC is Constitution-based.

[2] All wizard/sorcerer-based spell-like effects act as though cast by a 16th-level wizard.

[3] All breath weapon types have the following save and damage statistics: DC 22, 3d6 hit points of damage. Once a Horror uses a breath weapon attack, it cannot be re-used for another 2d4 rounds. A successful Reflex save means that the intended victim takes no damage.

[4] All divine-based spell-like effects act as though cast by a 14th-level cleric.

[5] Any damage caused by the Horror can only be healed by magical means.

[6] As a melee touch attack, a Horror of Zamon can steal life force from its foe, as the *vampiric touch* spell (caster level 16th).

Phoenix Rebirth (Su): Ironically, the Horrors of Zamon are perhaps most dangerous when they are about to die. A Horror of Zamon that is reduced to 0 to –9 hit points immediately bursts into magical flame, which surrounds the creature's body in a 20-foot radius. Any creature caught in this area of fire must make a successful Fortitude save (DC 22) or take 2d6 points of damage; a successful save results in only half damage. The Horror of Zamon takes no damage from the fire. If the fallen body of the Horror is not reduced to –10 hit points within 1d4 rounds of bursting ablaze, the body is completed consumed and reduced to mere ashes by the magical flames … and from those ashes emerge two new Horrors of Zamon, fully healed and ready to fight. As with all the Horrors, these two new Horrors are unique and may share no common traits with the fallen creature that created it; statistics for the new Horrors must once more be rolled randomly on the tables on the previous page.

Horse of Parelor

Large Magical Beast
Hit Dice: 4d10+20 (42 hp)
Initiative: +7
Speed: 40 ft.
Armor Class: 14 (+3 Dex, –1 size, +2 natural), touch 12, flat-footed 11
Base Attack/Grapple: +4/+12
Attack: Hoof +7 melee (2d6+4)
Full Attack: 2 hooves +7 melee (2d6+4) or bite +2 melee (1d6+2)
Space/Reach: 10 ft./5 ft.
Special Attacks: Trample
Special Qualities: Darkvision 60 ft., dimension door, low-light vision
Saves: Fort +9, Ref +7, Will +0
Abilities: Str 18, Dex 16, Con 20, Int 12, Wis 9, Cha 12
Skills: Heal +2, Hide +2, Jump +8, Listen +4, Move Silently +8, Sense Motive +4, Spot +4
Feats: Alertness, Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Lightning Reflexes, Track
Environment: Any plains
Organization: Solitary or pair
Challenge Rating: 4
Treasure: Standard
Alignment: Usually neutral good
Advancement: 5–8 HD (Large); 9–16 HD (Huge)
Level Adjustment: –

This majestic steed stands seven feet high at the shoulder and weighs about 1,800 pounds.

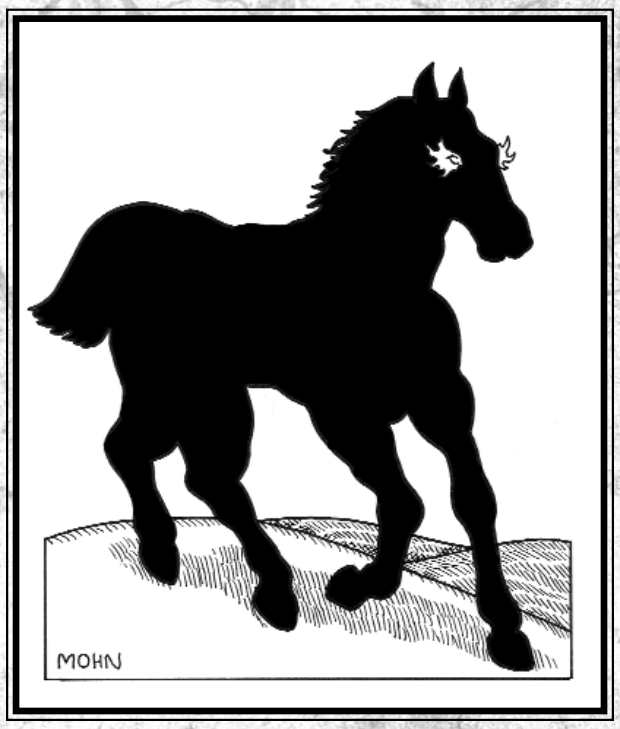
The legendary Horses of Parelor are renowned throughout the Northlands as the finest mounts in the world. Whenever tales of virtuous knights are told, these knights invariably ride the Horses of Parelor into battle and glory. Although in most cases the reputation of the Horses far exceeds their actual abilities, they are still quite powerful creatures, and it is not without good reason that distinguished knights seek their services.

At first glance, the Horses of Parelor resemble ordinary horses, albeit ones that are quite large and well muscled. All have coats and manes black as a moonless midnight. However, the eyes of the Horses betray their true nature—magical blue flame literally burns in their eyes. For this reason, it is often assumed that the Horses are evil or some sort of offshoot of the malevolent nightmare; however, all that the flame signifies is their magical nature.

In the wild, the Horses of Parelor are rare indeed, roaming in small herds through the grassy plains of the Northlands. Even rarer are those that agree to become the steed of a nobleman or warrior. Horses of Parelor are strong-willed creatures, and speak both the Common and Elvish tongues with ease. The Horses cannot be forced like a beast of burden into serving any master; instead, a Horse of Parelor must be convinced to willingly accept a rider. These are not partnerships that the Horses take lightly—most Horses of Parelor accept but a single humanoid rider in a lifetime.

Combat

When alone or only with others of its kind, the Horses of Parelor seek to avoid combat, fighting only when there is no other option. Their teleportation abilities allow them to accomplish this with ease.



With a rider, the Horses use their teleportation ability as an offensive weapon, moving about the battlefield to tactical advantage wherever possible. A favorite tactic of knights mounted upon one of the Horses is to begin a charge from a far distance, and then to teleport into melee range at a full charge. The Horses of Parelor generally follow the lead of their riders; however, they are not shy about acting counter to their rider's wishes when they believe them to be foolhardy.

***Dimension Door* (Sp):** A Horse of Parelor can teleport, as *dimension door* (caster level 10th), once per round as a free action. The ability affects only the Horse of Parelor and a single rider that sits atop the Horse. If the Horse has multiple riders, it is up to the Horse's discretion as to which rider it keeps when teleporting. Both the Horse of Parelor and its rider never appear within a solid object, and both can act immediately after teleporting.

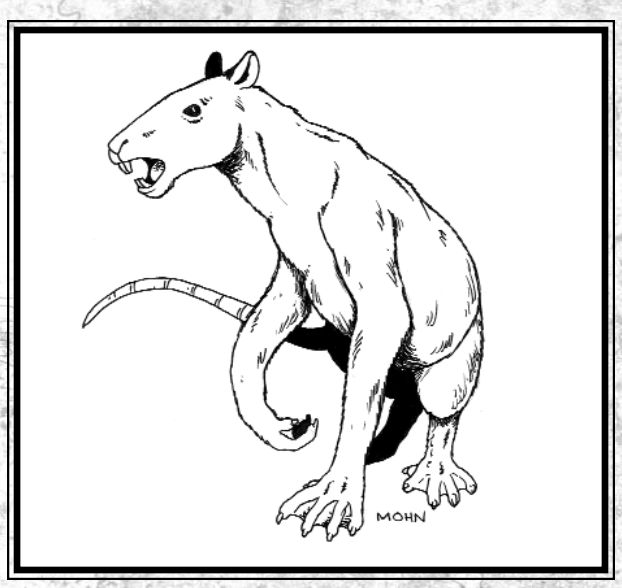
Trample (Ex): Reflex half DC 16. The save DC is Strength-based.

Huezcatla

Large Animal
Hit Dice: 3d8 (16 hp)
Initiative: +1
Speed: 30 ft. (6 squares), swim 40 ft.
Armor Class: 14 (–1 size, +2 Dex, +3 natural), touch 11, flat-footed 12
Base Attack/Grapple: +2/+6
Attack: Bite +5 melee (1d6+3)
Full Attack: Bite +5 melee (1d6+3)
Space/Reach: 10 ft./5 ft.
Special Attacks: —
Special Qualities: Low-light vision, scent
Saves: Fort +5, Ref +5, Will +2
Abilities: Str 16, Dex 14, Con 15, Int 2, Wis 12, Cha 16
Skills: Balance +4, Climb +5, Hide +6*, Listen +5, Move Silently +4, Spot +5, Swim +9
Feats: Alertness, Toughness
Environment: Tropical rainforest, lakes, and rivers
Organization: Solitary, pair, or herd (10–30)
Challenge Rating: 2
Treasure: None
Alignment: Always neutral
Advancement: —
Level Adjustment: —

This strange beast stands almost as tall as a horse, but its body is stockier and covered with thin, coarse fur. Its forelegs are longer than its hind legs, and its feet end in webbed, claw-like toes. The animal's face resembles that of a large rodent, with two large incisors protruding from its mouth, and its long, naked tail resembles a rat's.

Resembling dire cousins of the common Southland capybara, the huezcatla (wess-*kot*-luh) is a peaceful, semi-aquatic rodent of extraordinary size. Usually five feet high at the shoulder, the typical huezcatla is seven feet long and weighs 1,300 lbs. Their webbed digits allow them to swim and maneuver swiftly through water.



Huezcatlas dwell in grasslands and forests along riverbanks and lakes, eating grasses, aquatic plants, melons, and squashes. They are crepuscular animals, active at dawn and twilight, resting most of the day in shallow waters. Close proximity to abundant water is a must for huezcatlas. They issue grunts, clicks, and purrs to communicate with one another, and gruff barks to alert others when predators are detected. Caimans, anacondas, jaguars, and wild dogs will hunt them, but huezcatlas are quick to retaliate when they cannot retreat.

The Xulmec people often train and domesticate huezcatlas for riding and even for combat. A huezcatla can fight while carrying a rider, but the rider cannot also attack unless he succeeds on a Ride check.

Combat

Normally benign creatures, huezcatlas prefer to run or hide than enter combat. They issue gruff barks when threatened, alerting others (and their humanoid masters) to the danger. A huezcatla's front incisors, usually used for gnawing hardy plants, can break skin easily.

Skills: A huezcatala has a +8 racial bonus on any Swim checks to perform some special action or avoid a hazard. It can always choose to take 10 on a Swim check, even if distracted on endangered. It can use the run action while swimming, provided it swims in a straight line.

A huezcatla gains a +4 racial bonus on Hide checks when in the water. Further, a huezcatla can lie in the water with only its eyes, ears, and nostrils showing, gaining a +8 cover bonus on Hide checks.

Carrying Capacity: A light load for a huezcatla is up to 200 pounds; a medium load, 201–400 pounds; and a heavy load, 401–600 pounds. However, huezcatlas are extremely uncooperative if burdened with anything greater than a light load or a single rider. Handle Animal or wild empathy checks are required hourly when the huezcatla is overburdened in this way.

Lightning Giant

Large Giant
Hit Dice: 10d8+40 (85 hp)
Initiative: +7
Speed: 40 ft.
Armor Class: 18 (+3 Dex, –1 size, +6 natural), touch 12, flat-footed 15
Base Attack/Grapple: +7/+17
Attack: Greatclub +12 melee (1d10+6) or slam +12 melee (1d4+9) or rock +10 ranged (2d6+7)
Full Attack: Greatclub +12 melee (1d10+6) or 2 slams +12 melee (1d4+9) or rock +10 ranged (2d6+7)
Space/Reach: 10 ft./10 ft.
Special Attacks: Haste, rock throwing
Special Qualities: Darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision, rock catching
Saves: Fort +11, Ref +8, Will +3
Abilities: Str 23, Dex 17, Con 19, Int 13, Wis 10, Cha 13
Skills: Climb +8, Intimidate +6, Jump +8, Listen +2, Spot +4
Feats: Cleave, Improved Bull Rush, Improved Initiative, Lighning Reflexes, Power Attack
Environment: Any mountain
Organization: Solitary, gang (2–5), band (6–9 plus 35% noncombatants plus 1 adept or cleric of 1st or 2nd level), or tribe (21–30 plus 1 adept, cleric, or sorcerer of 3rd–5th level plus 6–12 dire wolves, and 4–16 orcs)
Challenge Rating: 6
Treasure: Double standard
Alignment: Usually chaotic evil
Advancement: By character class
Level Adjustment: +4

This lean, wiry humanoid is at least a dozen feet tall. It wears bright, garish clothing.

Lightning giants make their lairs in the remote mountains of the world. Adult males are twelve feet tall and weigh about five thousand pounds. Compared to other giants, they appear very lean and wiry. Females are slightly shorter and lighter. Lightning giants can live to be four hundred years old.

Lightning giants are brutal bullies that are constantly in battle, whether with each other or with other creatures. They are also commonly the minions of thunder giants.

Lightning giants are incredibly vain creatures, and usually wear bright, garish clothing. They constantly seek to be

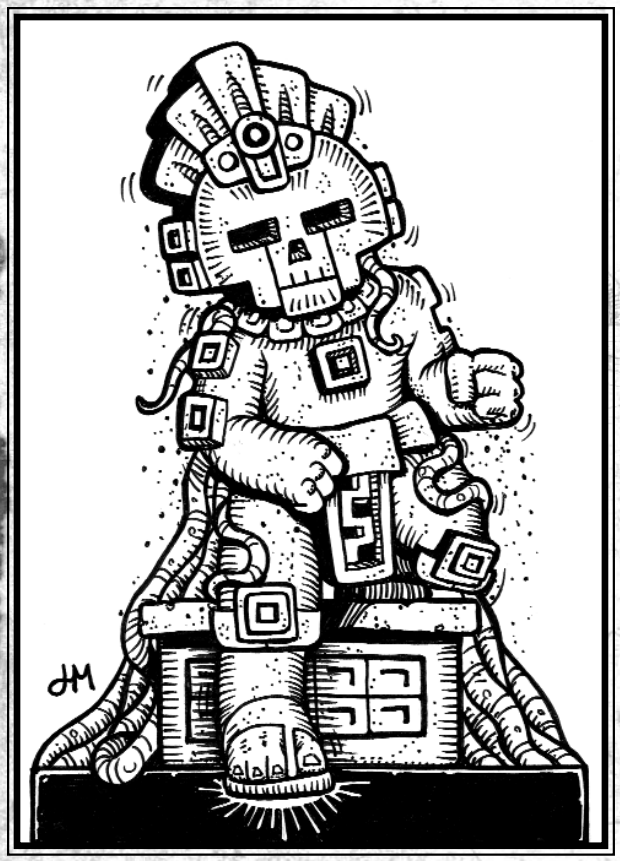
the center of attention, and are incredibly loud. They have a fondness for vulgar jokes and bawdy stories. Only fear can silence these boisterous giants, and the only creature known to strike fear in a lightning giant is a thunder giant. Wherever a thunder giant can be found, there is usually a lightning giant lurking around somewhere in the shadows, following the thunder giant's every command. Like most bullies, lightning giants are easily impressed with displays of power, and will readily submit to any being it believes to be vastly superior to itself. Of course, lightning giants also spend much time bullying and berating the weak, and they typically surround themselves with weaker lackeys, such as orcs or gnolls.

Combat

Lightning giants are surprisingly quick for their size, and use their mobility to their advantage. Frequently, they feign slowness to lull their opponents, and then try to rush in for a quick kill. They are masters of setting up ambushes, and generally fight only on terrain with which they are very familiar.

***Haste* (Sp):** After it has engaged in at least 1 round of combat, a lightning giant can *haste* itself once per day as a free action. The effect lasts 3 rounds and is otherwise the same as the spell.

Rock Throwing (Ex): The range increment is 120 feet for a lightning giant's thrown rocks.



Lightning Giants as Characters

Sly and quick, lightning giant characters are proud and aggressive warriors.

Lightning giant characters possess the following racial traits.

— +6 Strength, +3 Dexterity, +4 Constitution.

— Large size. –1 penalty to Armor Class, –1 penalty on attack rolls, –4 penalty on Hide checks, +4 bonus on grapple checks, lifting and carrying limits double those of Medium characters.

—Space/Reach: 10 feet/10 feet.

—A lightning giant's base land speed is 40 feet.

—Darkvision out to 60 feet and low-light vision.

—Racial Hit Dice: A lightning giant begins with ten levels of giant, which provide 10d8 Hit Dice, a base attack bonus of +7, and base saving throw bonuses of Fort +7, Ref +6, and Will +1.

—Racial Skills: A lightning giant's giant levels give it skill points equal to 13 x (2 + Int modifier). Its class skills are Climb, Intimidate, Jump, Listen, and Spot.

—Racial Feats: A lightning giant's giant levels give it five feats.

— +6 natural armor bonus.

—Special Attacks: Haste, rock throwing.

—Special Qualities: Rock catching.

—Automatic Languages: Giant. Bonus Languages: Common, Draconic, Elven, Goblin, Orc.

—Favored Class: Barbarian.

—Level Adjustment: +4.

Living Idol (Itepixcan)

Medium Construct
Hit Dice: 6d10+20 (50 hp)
Initiative: +2
Speed: 30 ft.
Armor Class: 22 (+2 Dex, +10 natural), touch 12, flat-footed 20
Base Attack/Grapple: +4/+9
Attack: Slam +10 melee (1d4+5)
Full Attack: 2 slams +10 melee (1d4+5)
Space/Reach: 5 ft./5 ft.
Special Attacks: See below
Special Qualities: Construct traits, damage reduction 8/adamantine, darkvision 60 ft., enshrined, fast healing 1, immunity to magic, vigilance
Saves: Fort +2, Ref +3, Will +4
Abilities: Str 21, Dex 14, Con –, Int 3, Wis 10, Cha 1
Skills: Hide +9*, Listen +5, Move Silently +7, Search +1, Spot +5
Feats: Alertness, Iron Will, Weapon Focus (fists)
Environment: See below
Organization: Solitary
Challenge Rating: 7
Treasure: None
Alignment: As per sponsoring deity
Advancement: 6–12 HD (Medium); 13–20 HD (Large); 21–35 HD (Huge); 36-45 HD (Gargantuan); 46-60 HD (Colossal)
Level Adjustment: –

This statue of polished black obsidian is carved to resemble a sandaled, muscular human robed in simple vestments. Atop its shoulders, an oversized skull is crowned with a stony headdress of feathers and its fleshless face stares back at you. After remaining inert within the shadowed alcove, the statue suddenly lurches into motion.

Resembling golems only in the most fundamental of ways, living idols—known as itepixcan (ee-*tep*-ish-kahn) in the Xulmec tongue—are divinely touched constructs that trace their origin to the god Huamec during the War of Divine Right thousands of years ago (see Chapter 1). After his pyrrhic victory against the invading giants, the god was slain—the obsidian colossus he had possessed

and animated lay shattered—and the priests of Xulmec passed along the rites Huamec had taught to them, the secret of giving life to stone. For the demigod's great sacrifice, Madrah, the Lord of the Earth and Sky, approved of the secrets of idol creation, and today living idols now guard the shrines and temples of the Xulmec demigods. Though they are pale imitations of Huamec's titanic avatar, living idols are formidable in their own right.

The construction materials of a living idol can vary greatly. The most common are basalt and obsidian and are typically fashioned into the likeness of a human—often with exaggerated features and always carved with designs appropriate for the god it serves. On rare occasions, more valuable minerals are used, such alabaster, onyx, or jade. Statues that become living idols are usually Medium in size, but larger idols have been found guarding the most sacred of temples and reliquaries. The statistics above represent the most common, weakest form of living idol.

Although clerics perform the sacred rites and supplicate their god to give the construct life, only a deity can animate a living idol and they are only constructed with a god's edict. Once animated, the idol acts as the eternal guardian of an area designated by that deity, hereafter referred to as its shrine. This shrine is typically a temple, burial ground, or sacrificial altar. Sometimes a single object is guarded, and the idol's shrine is the container that holds it.

Living idols must always obey the directives and orders of their sponsored deity. Though their actions are usually compliant with the wishes of the shrine's resident clerics, living idols are bound only to the wills of the gods, not mortals. Since they usually do not speak, any actions they take beyond defending their shrines are subject to great religious speculation. Often, these actions are viewed as portentous, as omens from the gods—a living idol may stand motionless beside the altar of a temple for centuries, then abruptly move six steps to the north for what appears to be no reason at all. Likewise, an idol may relocate itself frequently or manipulate its environment.

Living idols are respected by common folk as operative, vengeful instruments of the gods. On rare occasions, living idols have even been known to slay one of their own attendant clerics, a sure sign of the god's disapproval or the presence of a charlatan of the faith. Living idols seldom speak, but they understand Xulmec, Celestial, Infernal, and Abyssal.

Combat

Living idols serve to defend a holy place or relic for their sponsoring deity. Their fighting tactics are simple—destroy or drive away any threat. They fight until they or their enemies are destroyed and will not pursue enemies that retreat beyond the shrine they guard. Living idols possess a glimmer of intelligence and are capable of discerning between heretics (enemies) and "approved" visitors (allies).

Enshrined (Su): Each living idol is divinely bound to a single shrine and will never stray more than 200 feet from it (a single 5-foot by 5-foot square). This range doubles with each size category a living idol is advanced—for example, a Huge living idol will never stray more than 800 feet from its shrine. Should a living idol ever be forced to move beyond this range, it immediately carries out the malediction ability (see below), whether or not it possesses this ability normally, then reverts to an inanimate state. Returning the idol to its shrine restores its animation.

On rare occasions, the sponsoring deity will allow the living idol to move beyond its shrine. Such occurrences are always of great importance to the faith in question, such as a living idol sent to accompany a chosen cleric on an important quest.

Immunity to Magic (Ex): A living idol is immune to any spell or spell-like ability that allows spell resistance.

Vigilance (Su): At all times, an effect similar to an *alarm* spell is placed within the primary entrance to a living idol's designated area. The living idol is instantly aware of any creature of Tiny size or larger that enters the warded location. It seldom takes action when first alerted; it merely notes the intrusion and cannot be surprised.

Special Attacks: All living idols possess the same special qualities as listed in the statistics presented above, plus one to three special abilities from the list below. GMs may choose or roll 1d8 for these abilities. The save DC against a special attack is equal to 10 + 1/2 living idol's HD + living idol's Wisdom modifier unless otherwise noted.

(1) Earth Glide (Ex): A living idol can glide through stone, dirt, or almost any other sort of earth except metal as easily as a fish swims through water. Its movement leaves behind no tunnel or hole, nor does it create any ripple or other signs of its presence. A *move earth* spell cast on an area containing a living idol flings the living idol back 30 feet.

(2) Healing Suppression (Ex): Damage dealt by a living idol heals only at half the normal rate, whether the source is natural or magical in nature. For example, a *cure serious wounds* spell that would normally heal 15 points of damage will only heal 7 when used to heal a wound inflicted by a living idol.

(3) Malediction (Su): Once per day, a living idol can call upon the divine force that animates it to curse its intrud-

ing enemies. Opening whatever serves as its mouth, the living idol emits a disturbing keen or deep, base pitch, wracking all targets within 60 feet with morale-shattering pain. Targets must succeed on a Will save or suffer a –4 penalty on attack rolls, skill checks, and ability checks for 4d10 minutes. Malediction has no affect on the living idol's allies.

(4) Menacing Visage (Su): Three times per day, as a standard action, a living idol can manifest a horrific countenance (such as an otherwise human head "unhinging" several times to reveal a grinning skull with glowing eyes within) that sends a wave of fear across its enemies. All living creatures within a 50-foot cone must succeed on a Will save or become panicked for 2d4 rounds. This is a necromantic mind-affecting fear effect. A creature that successfully saves against this visage cannot be affected by the same living idol's visage for 24 hours.

(5) Spell-like Ability (Su): 2/day—*dispel magic,* or *searing light, spider climb*.

(6) Spell-like Ability (Su): 1/day—*dimension door* or *dismissal*.

(7) True Seeing (Su): A living idol continuously uses *true seeing* as the spell (caster level 9th).

(8) Improved Grab (Ex): To use this ability, a living idol must hit a creature of its own size or smaller with its slam attack. It can then attempt to start a grapple as a free action without provoking an attack of opportunity. If it wins the grapple check, it establishes a hold and can constrict.

Constrict (Ex): A living idol deals automatic slam damage with a successful grapple check.

Skills: *The Hide bonus increases by +8 when a living idol is concealed against a relief for which the living idol's body is designed to complement.

Nalvor

Medium Humanoid
Hit Dice: 2d8+6 (15 hp)
Initiative: +1
Speed: 30 ft.
Armor Class: 14 (+1 Dex, +3 hide armor), touch 11, flat-footed 13
Base Attack/Grapple: +1/+3
Attack: Scimitar +3 melee (1d6+2) or shortbow +2 ranged (1d6)
Full Attack: Scimitar +3 melee (1d6+2) or shortbow +2 ranged (1d6)
Space/Reach: 5 ft./5 ft.
Special Attacks: –
Special Qualities: Darkvision 60 ft., immunity to charm and fear, low-light vision
Saves: Fort +8, Ref +1, Will +0
Abilities: Str 14, Dex 12, Con 16, Int 10, Wis 9, Cha 10
Skills: Climb +3, Hide +2, Listen +3, Move Silently +2, Spot +2
Feats: Alertness, Endurance
Environment: Any desert
Organization: Patrol (2–5), squad (6–11 plus 1–2 monitor lizards), or legion (20–80 plus 20% noncombatants plus 2–12 horses)
Challenge Rating: 1
Treasure: Standard
Alignment: Usually lawful neutral
Advancement: By character class
Level Adjustment: +2

This striking humanoid has long black hair and olive green skin. Its clothes are ragged and torn, standing in sharp contrast to its physical beauty.

The nalvor are physically striking humanoids, with long, flowing black hair and olive green skin. However, due to centuries of hatred from other races, they believe themselves to be incredibly ugly, and typically dress in rags.

The nalvor are a strange race of hybrid humanoids. Created to essentially be the equivalent of humanoid mules by their sphinx masters, the nalvor have the blood of both elf and hobgoblin flowing through their veins. While this strange combination created a strong and ruthlessly efficient slave, it has also made in modern times a pariah creature hated throughout the world. Elves find the nalvor to be little more than an evil abomination; the goblinoid races, meanwhile, find them to be gutless and

impure. For this reason, the nalvor never left the ruins of their ancestral home; only amidst the ruins created by their former sphinx masters have they been able to find solace from the rest of the world.

The nalvor are socially inept creatures, with no sense of courtesy or manners. They simply take what they want and do as they please. The only exception to this is when they are confronted with someone or something they believe to be their superior—usually, something associated in some manner with their former sphinx masters. Then they become polite to a fault, and always defer to that "superior" being, no matter how ludicrous or suicidal its demands may become.

Nalvor are incredibly patient creatures. Although abandoned centuries ago by the sphinxes, they still fervently believe that their sphinx masters shall return to them. For this reason, the nalvor are regarded by most other creatures as being far too passive—they seem incapable of making any sort of quick decision, and generally try to resolve any situation or problem in terms of how their sphinx masters would want that situation resolved. It is the rare nalvor indeed who can act as a leader and not a follower; it is even rarer when that nalvor shows a spark of imagination or tactical thought. As a result, the nalvor cities are often attacked by bandits, who know that their prey will be slow and their reactions predictable.

Combat

Nalvor are unimaginative fighters, and generally deal with threats in the most direct manner possible. Ironically, they often confuse their enemies, as their incredibly poor tactics can be easily mistaken for trickery. However, what they lack in cunning, they certainly make up for in sheer determination. Nalvor are notoriously stubborn and do not retreat unless commanded to do so. They typically fight to the death.

Immunity to Charm and Fear (Ex): All nalvor are immune to charm- and fear-based spells and magic.

Nalvor Society

The society of the nalvor is a bureaucratic nightmare. Meticulous to a fault, the nalvor always try to follow the ancient laws of their sphinx masters to the letter. Unfortunately, many of these laws conflict with one another, leading to confusion and indecision. Nalvor cities are governed by ruling councils, which debate endlessly, as they seek to interpret ancient law and to find universal consensus … effectively paralyzing their society. For this reason, nalvor society has evolved little since the halcyon days of the Khonsurian Empire, and it is rare indeed when a confident, decisive nalvor leader can emerge and unite all nalvor with authority.

Nalvor as Characters

Nalvor characters possess the following racial traits.

—Strength +4, Dexterity +2, Constitution +6, Intelligence –2, Charisma –2.

—Medium size.

—A nalvor's base land speed is 30 feet.

—Darkvision out to 60 feet; low-light vision.

—Racial Hit Dice: A nalvor begins with two levels of humanoid, which provide 2d8 Hit Dice, a base attack bonus of +1, and base saving throw bonuses of Fort +3, Ref +0, and Will +0.

—Racial Skills: A nalvor's humanoid levels give it skill points equal to 5 x (2 + Int modifier). Its class skills are Climb, Hide, Listen, Move Silently, and Spot.

—Racial Feats: Nalvor automatically receive the feat of Endurance. Additionally, a nalvor's humanoid levels give it one bonus feat.

—Automatic Languages: Elven, Goblin. Bonus Languages: Common, Draconic, Orc.

—Favored Class: Ranger.

—Level Adjustment: +2.

Oneiric Creature

Oneiric creatures dwell within the Dream (see Chapter 2), the imaginative realm maintained by Ôæ, although they resemble beings found on the Material Plane. In rare instances when they are translated into the waking world, their appearance is more fantastical than their Material counterparts.

Oneiric creatures are transitory in the waking world. Typically they are called into existence by agents of the Dream, found most often defending sites of sacred importance to Ôæ or Gil'Mâridth.

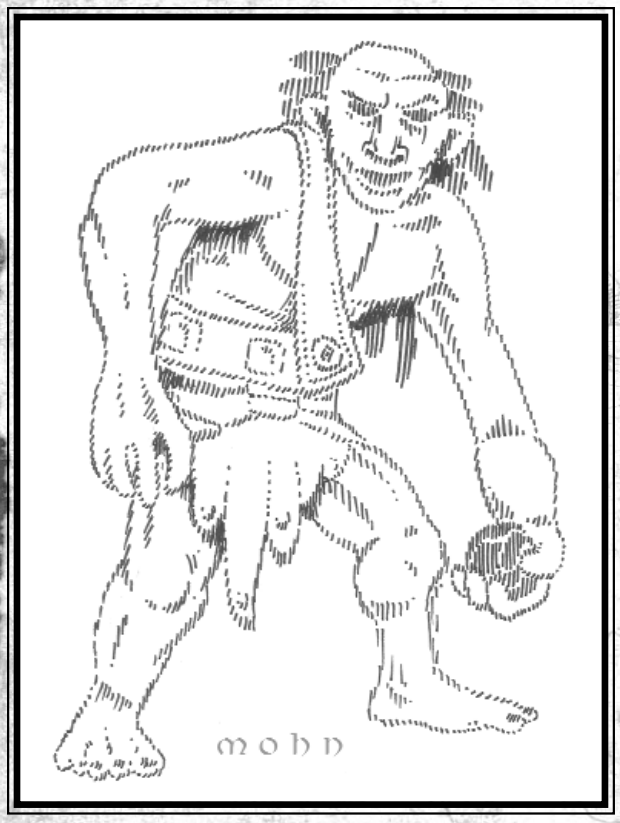
Creating an Oneiric Creature

"Oneiric" is an inherited template that can be added to any creature (referred to hereafter as the "base creature"). An oneiric creature uses all the base creature's statistics and special abilities except as noted here.

Size and Type: The creature's type changes to outsider. It gains the dream subtype.

Special Attacks: An oneiric creature retains all the special attacks of the base creature and also gains the following special attack.

Phantasmal Strike (Ex): Twice per day, an oneiric creature can make a devastating attack that belies its strength



and speed. It can make a normal melee attack to deal extra damage equal to twice its HD total (maximum of +20 points) against a foe. If the oneiric creature's foe makes a successful Will save (DC = 10 + 1/2 oneiric creature's HD + oneiric creature's Cha modifier), the attack is disbelieved and no damage is suffered.

Special Qualities: An oneiric creature has all the special qualities of the base creature, plus the following special qualities.

Doubt Vulnerability (Ex): If an opponent is made aware of an oneiric creature's phantasmal nature, he can attempt to disbelieve it as a standard action that does not provoke an attack of opportunity as long as he has line of sight with the creature. If the opponent succeeds on a Will save (DC = 10 + 1/2 the oneiric creature's HD + its Cha modifier), he deals 1d8 points of damage to the oneiric creature.

Ephemeral (Ex): When an oneiric creature reaches 0 hit points, all traces of its body (including blood or other vitals) dissipate as though it never was. Additionally, half of all ability score or hit point damage dealt by the oneiric creature returns at the rate of 1 hit point or ability score point per round. For example, a fighter who suffered 22 points of damage from an oneiric hill giant would be restored 1 hit point per round for 11 rounds following its death. Creatures slain by an oneiric creature do not, however, return from death.

Fearless (Ex): An oneiric creature knows that it is ephemeral in the waking world and cannot be intimidated or persuaded. It is immune to all mind-affecting spells and effects.

Spell Resistance (Ex): An oneiric creature has spell resistance equal to its Hit Dice +10.

Abilities: Increase from the base creature as follows: Wis +2, Cha +6.

Challenge Rating: HD 3 or less, as base creature; HD 4 to 7, as base creature +1; HD 8 or more, as base creature +2.

Alignment: Usually neutral.

Level Adjustment: Same as base creature +1.

Pteral

Medium Monstrous Humanoid
Hit Dice: 3d8+6 (19 hp)
Initiative: +3
Speed: 30 ft., fly 60 ft. (good)
Armor Class: 15 (+3 Dex, +2 natural), touch 13, flat-footed 12
Base Attack/Grapple: +3/+5
Attack: Claw +5 melee (1d6+2)
Full Attack: 2 claws +5 melee (1d6+2) or sting (1d4+1 plus poison)
Space/Reach: 5 ft./5 ft.
Special Attacks: Poison
Special Qualities: Regeneration 5, telepathy
Saves: Fort +3, Ref +6, Will +3
Abilities: Str 14, Dex 17, Con 15, Int 9, Wis 11, Cha 7
Skills: Climb +3, Hide +5, Move Silently +4, Spot +2
Feats: Flyby Attack, Hover
Environment: Any temperate or warm forest
Organization: Solitary, pair, squad (3–12) or colony (20–100 plus 20% noncombatants plus one 9th-level sorceress queen)
Challenge Rating: 2
Treasure: Standard
Alignment: Always lawful evil
Advancement: By character class
Level Adjustment: +3

These violent and merciless wasp-men stand six feet tall. They have jet back hides with reddish markings, large transparent wings, and long, sharp stingers.

A powerful and destructive race of creatures, the pterals have an unrelenting need to consume and destroy all that they can find. Fortunately, these creatures are seldom active, and hibernate for years at a time.

Ordinarily, pterals pose little threat to the rest of the world, as their hives are dormant, and virtually all of the

pterals in the hive are in deep hibernation. During these times, only one or two squads of pterals stay active to defend the hive. However, for reasons unknown, once every seven years the entire hive awakens and enters a feeding cycle. During this time, the creatures seek to consume as much food as possible, preferring the flesh of animals above all other types of sustenance. Their appetites are legendary—a single hive has been known to slay every living creature within a hundred miles. Fortunately, feeding cycles only last for little more than a month; after that, the pterals return to their hives and become dormant once more.

Pteral colonies live in massive structures called blood hives, named for their crimson hue. Blood hives are massive organic spheres capable of supporting over one hundred pterals, and can easily measure over a quarter mile in diameter. It is not known exactly how the blood hives are created, but however the process occurs, it is quick—new blood hives have been known to spring up in less than a fortnight.

Each hive is ruled by a pteral queen that never physically leaves the hive. The queen is always female and always a sorceress of immense power. The queen is the undisputed ruler of all the pterals that inhabit her hive, and her commands are always obeyed. Should a queen be killed, the remaining pterals of her hive quickly disband, scattering throughout the region in search of new hives to join.

Combat

Pterals fight primarily to defend their hive and their queen. However, during their feeding cycles, they move swiftly across the land surrounding their hive, consuming all living creatures that they encounter and destroying everything else. They tend to fight in pairs, using their flight ability to their advantage over land-based opponents.

Poison (Ex): Injury, Fortitude DC 14, initial and secondary damage 1d6 Constitution. The save DC is Constitution-based.

Regeneration (Ex): Fire and cold deal normal damage to a pteral. If a pteral loses a limb or body part, the lost portion regrows in 2d6 minutes. The creature can reattach the severed member instantly by holding it to the stump.

Telepathy (Ex): Pterals can communicate telepathically with others of their own race at will, as per a *helm of telepathy*. They cannot extend this ability to creatures of other races, nor does this mean that they can automatically communicate with other telepathic creatures.

Pteral Society

Pteral society revolves around two simple concepts: propagate the species, and protect the hive queen at all costs. They are highly organized creatures, and operate in a ruthlessly efficient manner. Those too old, sick, or weak to further help the hive are summarily executed. A pteral queen rules over her hive with ironclad authority, and her minions obey her every command. While it is not unheard of for a lone pteral to go rogue and to break away from its hive, to do so is essentially a death sentence, as that rogue pteral will be hunted down by warriors from its hive until the end of its days.

Pteral as Characters

Pteral characters possess the following racial traits.

—Strength +2, Dexterity +3, Constitution +2, Intelligence –1, Charisma –2.

—Medium size.

—A pteral's base land speed is 30 feet, and has a flying speed of 60 feet with Good maneuverability.

—Darkvision out to 60 feet; low-light vision.

—Racial Hit Dice: A pteral begins with two levels of humanoid, which provide 2d8 Hit Dice, a base attack bonus of +1, and base saving throw bonuses of Fort +3,

Ref +0, and Will +0.

—Racial Skills: A pteral's humanoid levels give it skill points equal to 6 x (2 + Int modifier). Its class skills are Climb, Hide, Move Silently, and Spot.

—Racial Feats: A pteral's monstrous humanoid levels give it two feats.

—+2 natural armor bonus.

—Special Qualities: Poison, regeneration 5, limited telepathy

—Automatic Languages: Pteral. Bonus Languages: Common, Goblin.

—Favored Class: Fighter.

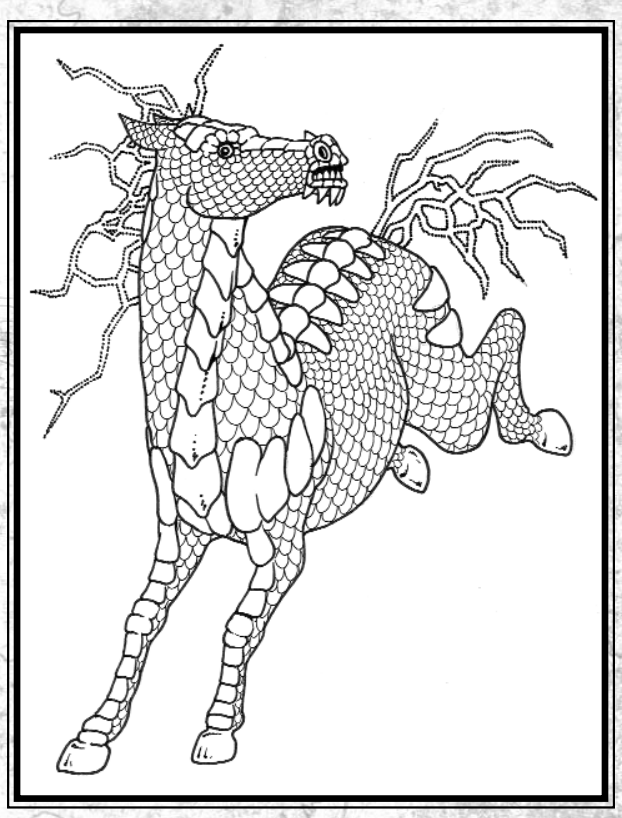
—Level Adjustment: +3.

Shadroquus

Medium Dragon
Hit Dice: 3d12+9 (28 hp)
Initiative: +9
Speed: 30 ft.
Armor Class: 16 (+5 Dex, –1 size, +2 natural), touch 14, flat-footed 11
Base Attack/Grapple: +3/+10
Attack: Hoof +5 melee (1d6+3)
Full Attack: 4 clawed hooves +5 melee (1d6+3) or bite +0 melee (1d4+1)
Space/Reach: 10 ft./5 ft.
Special Attacks: Breath weapon, charm person
Special Qualities: Darkvision 60 ft., immunity to sleep and paralysis, low-light vision, scent
Saves: Fort +6, Ref +8, Will +3
Abilities: Str 16, Dex 20, Con 16, Int 14, Wis 11, Cha 13
Skills: Climb +9, Hide +7, Jump +9, Spot +6
Feats: Endurance, Improved Initiative, Lightning Reflexes
Environment: Any desert
Organization: Solitary, pair, or herd (3–12)
Challenge Rating: 3
Treasure: Standard
Alignment: Always neutral good
Advancement: 4–7 HD (Large); 8–12 HD (Huge)
Level Adjustment: –

These large, enchanted horses have dark blue scales, not fur; and their white manes and tails are in fact constant surges of crackling, magical lightning.

It is said that long ago, the mightiest of sphinx sorcerers in the Khonsurian Empire sought to create the ultimate horse by combining the traits of desert stallions and blue dragons in a single creature: the shadroquus. Although



the truth behind this tale is somewhat debatable, the fact remains that herds of these creatures roam free across the deserts of Xa Deshret and the Vermilion Steppes, and that they are amongst the most beautiful—and deadly—creatures to be found in the region.

Occasionally, they can be tamed by riders in the Vermilion Steppes, although it is a fairly rare occurrence. Only the best of the riders among the Tribes actually manage to bend a shadroquus to their will. Although still highly temperamental, once trained and broken, shadroquus become loyal, obedient steeds, and remain inseparable from their riders until death.

Combat

Shadroquus are relentless fighters. In the wild, they prefer to swarm around an opponent, hitting it with their breath weapon attacks and letting the occasional lone shadroquus hit with a quick melee strike. As a trained mount, the shadroquus follows the lead of its rider, although it still has a preference for its lightning breath attack whenever possible.

Breath Weapon (Su): The breath weapon of a shadroquus is a 40-foot line of lightning. It is usable once every 1d4 rounds, deals 3d8 points of damage, and allows a DC 17 Reflex save for half damage. The save DC is Constitution-based.

***Charm Person* (Sp):** When a shadroquus gazes upon an opponent with its magical flaming eyes, it has the oppor-

tunity to charm that opponent. The effect works as a *charm person* spell with a 40-foot range; a successful Will save (DC 12) negates the effect. The save DC is Charisma-based.

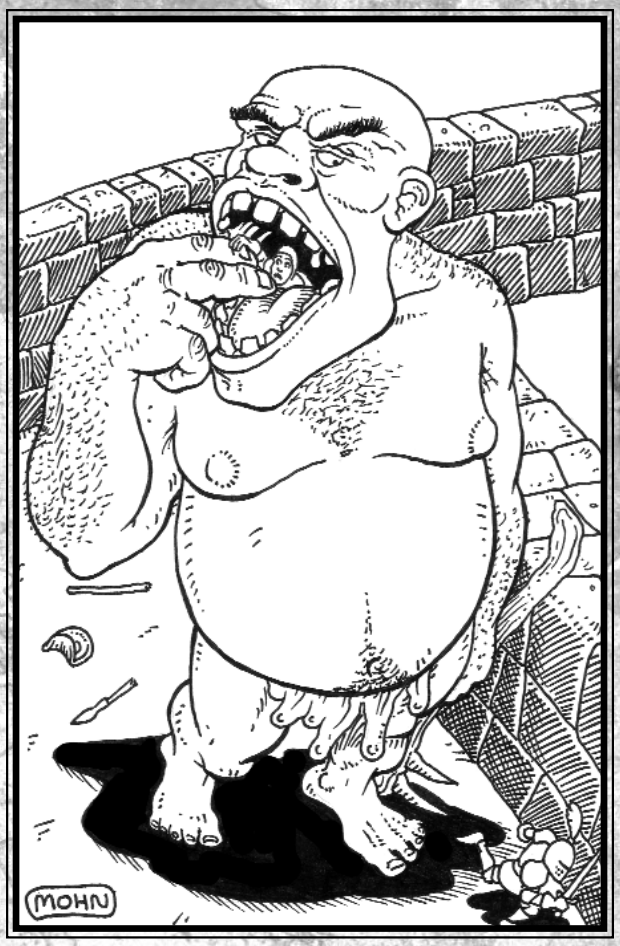
Thunder Giant

Gargantuan Giant
Hit Dice: 24d8+216 (324 hp)
Initiative: +1
Speed: 40 ft.
Armor Class: 23 (+1 Dex, –4 size, +16 natural), touch 7, flat-footed 22
Base Attack/Grapple: +18/+47
Attack: Greataxe +31 melee (4d6+17) or slam +31 melee (1d8+25) or rock +10 ranged (4d6+17)
Full Attack: Greataxe +31 melee (4d6+17) or 2 slams +31 melee (1d8+25) or rock +10 ranged (4d6+17)
Space/Reach: 20 ft./20 ft.
Special Attacks: Improved grab, rock throwing, rush, snatch, swallow whole, trample
Special Qualities: Darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision, rock catching
Saves: Fort +23, Ref +9, Will +10
Abilities: Str 44, Dex 12, Con 28, Int 12, Wis 15, Cha 18
Skills: Climb +20, Concentration +10, Craft (any) +2, Handle Animal +6, Intimidate +6, Jump +18, Listen +5
Feats: Awesome Blow, Combat Reflexes, Great Cleave, Improved Bull Rush, Power Attack
Environment: Any mountains
Organization: Solitary, pair, family (3–6), or tribe (6–10 plus 1 barbarian leader of 7th–9th level plus 1–4 dire bears, and 1–4 lightning giants)
Challenge Rating: 16
Treasure: Double standard
Alignment: Usually neutral evil
Advancement: By character class
Level Adjustment: +10

This towering, malevolent warrior is a giant among giants. It stands well over thirty feet tall and looks to weigh several tons.

Thunder giants are moody, capricious individuals that love secrets more than gold. They constantly plot against "the small ones": any humanoid smaller than themselves that may live within one hundred miles of their lair. Thunder giants are usually only found on the highest of mountains or in the deepest depths below these peaks; mercifully, this makes them a rare evil to most of the world.

Thunder giants believe themselves to be witty, intelligent creatures. They love to talk, and will speak at length to any creature capable of understanding them—even their enemies, in the heat of combat. Though they are no doubt sharper than most of their giantkin cousins, thunder



giants are not nearly as clever as they believe themselves to be. They love riddles and puzzles, and often present these riddles to those that they capture as proof of their own cleverness. However, thunder giants are not terribly original, and are usually dumbfounded when they find their riddles solved—or themselves outwitted—by a shrewd rogue or bard. Of course, that is when thunder giants lose their temper and start reaching for axes …

The "cleverness" of the thunder giants also extends to their lairs. Built within extensive caverns, thunder giants turn their lairs into sprawling, winding labyrinths, filled with magical traps and puzzles. It has not been unknown for a thunder giant to create a lair that is *too* deadly, inevitably slaying its giant master and leaving hordes of treasure trapped but waiting for intrepid explorers.

Combat

Thunder giants, although incredibly powerful, rarely like to directly enter combat. It is often why they surround themselves with hill giant or lightning giant minions—to "soften up" potential foes before having to enter combat themselves. Once in combat, however, they are fierce, determined warriors who certainly know how to use their immense size to their advantage. Like other giants, they

use their rock throwing abilities to attack foes from afar, and their powerful greataxes in melee. They also have the gruesome habit of eating opponents alive, though more oftentimes than not, this particular tactic backfires upon them in combat.

Improved Grab (Ex): To use this ability, the thunder giant must hit a Huge or smaller opponent with its slam attack. It can then attempt to start a grapple as a free action without provoking an attack of opportunity. If it wins the grapple check, it establishes a hold and can try to swallow the foe the following round.

Rock Throwing (Ex): The range increment is 200 feet for a thunder giant's thrown rocks.

Swallow Whole (Ex): A thunder giant can try to swallow a grabbed opponent of Medium or lesser size by making a successful grapple check. Once inside, the opponent takes 1d4+4 points of crushing damage plus 1d4 points of acid damage per round from the thunder giant's digestive juices. A swallowed creature can cut its way out by dealing 25 points of damage to the thunder giant's digestive tract (AC 20). Once the creature exits, muscular action closes the hole; another swallowed opponent must cut its own way out. The thunder giant's stomach can hold 1 Medium, 2 Small, or 4 Tiny or smaller creatures.

Trample (Ex): A thunder giant has the ability to trample opponents that are underfoot. The save for this trampling attack is Reflex DC 40, with a successful save resulting in only half damage; the save DC is Strength-based.

Thunder Giants as Characters

Powerful and cunning, thunder giant characters rarely step foot in the rest of the civilized world.

Thunder giant characters possess the following racial traits.

— +16 Strength, +4 Dexterity, +8 Constitution, +2 Wisdom.

— Gargantuan size. –4 penalty to Armor Class, –4 penalty on attack rolls, –12 penalty on Hide checks, +12 bonus on grapple checks, lifting and carrying limits four times that of Medium characters.

—Space/Reach: 20 feet/20 feet.

—A thunder giant's base land speed is 40 feet.

—Darkvision out to 60 feet and low-light vision.

—Racial Hit Dice: A thunder giant begins with twenty-four levels of giant, which provide 24d8 Hit Dice, a base attack bonus of +18, and base saving throw bonuses of Fort +23, Ref +9, and Will +10.

—Racial Skills: A thunder giant's giant levels give it skill points equal to 27 x (2 + Int modifier). Its class skills are Climb, Concentration, Craft (any one), Handle Animal, Intimidate, Jump, and Listen.

—Racial Feats: A thunder giant's giant levels give it five feats.

— +11 natural armor bonus.

—Special Attacks: Rock throwing, trample.

—Special Qualities: Rock catching.

—Automatic Languages: Giant. Bonus Languages: Common, Draconic, Elven, Goblin, Orc.

—Favored Class: Barbarian.

—Level Adjustment: +10.

Xochatateo

Xochatateo are filthy undead humanoids, often still covered with the gore from their own death and from the eviscerations of their many victims.

Created when a sacrifice goes horribly wrong, a xochatateo is a tormented creature cursed to exist between the realms of life and death, constantly seeking the hearts of the living to replace the one that once beat within its chest.

It is unclear as to exactly why the xochatateo are created. Some scholars argue that they are created when a sacrifice ritual is conducted incorrectly; others believe that they are created when the subject being sacrificed simply refuses to die. A few cynics even believe that xochatateo are nothing more than a cruel god's joke. Regardless of the reasons why the undead creature is created, there is no disputing how they come into existence: During a sacrifice ritual, when the still-beating heart is ripped from a humanoid creature's chest, for some reason that creature does not die. Instead, it is reborn as a cruel, savage creature with a taste for mortal flesh.

While exhibiting cannibalistic behavior, the xochatateo are most infamous for their obsession with hearts. After a killing frenzy, they typically rip out the hearts of their victims and horde them as treasure. Although it is unclear as to why the xochatateo are so obsessed with hearts, survivors of xochatateo attacks have reported that the creatures often place their new trophies inside their own chests, as if to replace the hearts that were torn out of them.

Xochatateo are generally filthy creatures, typically covered with gore. They frequently inhabit graveyards or lurk near temples where sacrifices may occur, hoping for easy access to the hearts of the living. For this reason, they are

often mistaken for ghouls. However, as they retain some of their memories and intelligence, they may still attempt to contact living creatures that seem familiar from their former lives, and occasionally exhibit some semblance of humanity in their otherwise vicious behavior.

Xochatateo are almost always loners, preferring to keep to themselves and to stay away from other creatures. They have a pathological hatred of other undead creatures, particularly other xochatateo, and will immediately attack such creatures if suddenly confronted by them.

Xochatateo speak any languages that they knew in life.

Creating a Xochatateo

"Xochatateo" is an acquired template that can be added to any humanoid or monstrous humanoid creature (referred to hereafter as the base creature).

A xochatateo uses all the base creature's statistics and special abilities except as noted here.

Size and Type: The creature's type changes to undead (augmented humanoid or monstrous humanoid). Do not recalculate base attack bonus, saves, or skill points. Size is unchanged.

Hit Dice: Increase all current and future Hit Dice to d12s.

Speed: Same as the base creature. If the base creature has a swim speed, the xochatateo retains the ability to swim and is not vulnerable to immersion in running water.

Armor Class: The base creature's natural armor bonus improves by +2.

Attack: A xochatateo retains all the attacks of the base creature and also gains a slam attack if it did not already possess one. If the base creature can use weapons, the xochatateo retains this ability. A creature with natural weapons retains those natural weapons. A xochatateo fighting without weapons uses either its slam attack or its primary natural weapon (if it has any). A xochatateo armed with a weapon uses its slam or a weapon, as it desires.

Full Attack: A xochatateo fighting without weapons uses either its slam attack (see above) or its natural weapons (if it has any). If armed with a weapon, it usually uses the weapon as its primary attack along with a slam or other natural weapon as a natural secondary attack.

Damage: Xochatateos have slam attacks. If the base creature does not have this attack form, use the appropriate damage value from the table below according to the xochatateo's size. Creatures that have other kinds of natural weapons retain their old damage values or use the appropriate value from the table below, whichever is better.

Size	Damage
Fine	1
Diminutive	1d2
Tiny	1d3
Small	1d4
Medium	1d6
Large	1d8
Huge	2d6
Gargantuan	2d8
Colossal	4d6

Special Attacks: A xochatateo retains all the special attacks of the base creature and gains those described below. Saves have a DC of 10 + 1/2 the xochatateo's HD + its Cha modifier unless noted otherwise.

Weakening Touch (Ex): A xochatateo can severely weaken its victims merely by touching them for an extended period of time. Should a xochatateo make a successful grapple check against an opponent, it pins the foe, dealing 1d6 points of Constitution drain each round the pin is maintained.

Special Qualities: A xochatateo retains all the special qualities of the base creature and gains those described below.

Blood Frenzy (Su): Upon reducing a foe to 0 hit points, a xochatateo gains temporary Strength and Constitution bonuses by feeding upon either the blood or the heart of that foe. This feeding frenzy takes 2 full rounds; after this time, the foe that is being consumed reaches –10 hit points and is permanently slain. The victim cannot be raised, reincarnated, or resurrected (though a *limited*

wish, wish, miracle, or *true resurrection* spell can restore life. No other actions may be taken by the xochatateo while it is in a blood frenzy. Once the frenzy is complete, the xochatateo gains a temporary bonus of +4 to both its Strength and Dexterity scores for an additional 2d6 rounds.

Blood Healing (Su): Upon entering a blood frenzy, a xochatateo's hit points are magically restored to full levels, healing the creature completely.

Damage Reduction (Su): A xochatateo has damage reduction 5/silver and magic. A xochatateo's natural weapons are treated as magic weapons for the purpose of overcoming damage reduction.

Turn Resistance (Ex): A xochatateo has +2 turn resistance.

Weakness to Holy Symbols (Su): See below.

Abilities: Increase from the base creature as follows: Str +6, Dex +2, Wis –4, Cha +4. As an undead creature, a xochatateo has no Constitution score.

Skills: A xochatateo has a +6 racial bonus on Hide, Listen, Move Silently, and Spot checks. Otherwise same as the base creature.

Feats: A xochatateo gains Alertness, Dodge, and Improved Initiative, assuming the base creature meets the prerequisites and does not already possess these feats.

Environment: Any; usually same as base creature.

Organization: Solitary.

Challenge Rating: Same as the base creature +1.

Treasure: Standard.

Alignment: Always evil (any).

Advancement: By character class.

Level Adjustment: Same as the base creature +4.

Xochatateo Weaknesses

Despite their power, the xochatateo also have a number of weaknesses.

Slaying a Xochatateo: Holy objects (symbols, water, etc.) of good origin cause immense harm to a xochatateo. The mere sight of a holy symbol automatically causes the xochatateo to make a Fortitude save of DC 16 or suffer a temporary loss of 1d4 Strength for 1d6 rounds or until the object disappears from its sight. A specific symbol or item's presence may only affect the xochatateo in this manner once per day. Additionally, striking a xochatateo with either a holy symbol or holy water of good origin causes double damage; a magical holy item (such as a *holy avenger*) causes triple damage.

Xochatateo Characters

Xochatateo are always evil, which causes characters of certain classes to lose some class abilities. In addition, certain classes take additional penalties.

Clerics: Xochatateo clerics lose the ability to turn undead (if they possessed it) but gain the ability to rebuke undead. A xochatateo cleric has access to two of the following domains: Chaos, Destruction, Evil, or Trickery.

Sorcerers and Wizards: Xochatateo are incapable of casting spells that are not of a divine nature. A wizard or sorcerer that becomes a xochatateo loses all ability to cast spells; however, all other skills and abilities are retained.

Chapter 4
Setting Rules

The Known Realms are home to a wealth of cultures and races. Lost empires, barbarian raiders, mad archwizards, and marauding hordes have all left their indelible mark on the world. Memories of Áereth's past live on in the blood of her people, from the mightiest king to the common serf.

The world is also a changing one, vibrant with life. Traders smelling of strange spices bring new traditions and weird magics from foreign lands, while priests in dark temples interrogate fiends in their search for forbidden knowledge. New challenges demand new heroes—courageous champions who can take up arms in the defense of good.

As heroes and villains, PCs must be able to stand in both the spider-haunted Áereth of old and the wild frontiers of today. This chapter details weapons, feats, and spells born from Áereth's storied past and savage present.

Feats

The feats in this chapter supplement the feats in the *PHB*. Follow the rules in the *PHB* to determine when feats are acquired.

Some of the feats require that a character be raised in a particular region of Áereth. Others are designed for evil NPCs who worship the infernal powers of Áereth, and are suited for PCs only when playing in an evil campaign. Because of the impact these feats can have on a game, players should consult their GM prior to taking these feats.

Any feat with the [Fighter] descriptor may be selected as one of a fighter's bonus feats.

Assess Enemies [General]

You have learned to size up your enemies.

Benefit: You can make a standard action to appraise your enemies and determine which is the most powerful. Only enemies that you can see within 60 feet are considered during the attempt, and only one such opponent at any given time can be determined. You make a DC 15 Wisdom check. If you succeed, you can gauge which opponent has the highest CR.

Special: A dwarf fighter may select Assess Enemies as a bonus fighter feat.

Ancestral Weapon [General, Fighter]

You have inherited your family's ancestral weapon, a masterwork item with a long and storied history.

Benefit: Choose a masterwork weapon during character creation. This item is sacred to your family, and as the family's scion and the bearer of the item, you are held to exacting standards.

At the GM's discretion, the masterwork weapon may later "awaken" to magical properties. Activating even the least of such properties should be the goal of an epic quest.

Special: This feat can only be taken at 1st level.

Capture [General]

You have been trained to subdue your enemies for capture.

Prerequisite: Combat Expertise

Benefit: You can deal nonlethal damage with most weapons at no penalty on the attack roll.

Normal: Without this feat, you take a –4 on your attack rolls when you use a melee weapon that deals lethal damage to deal nonlethal damage instead.

Special: A human or half-elf from the Xulmec city-states may select Capture without meeting the prerequisite.

Fiend Slayer [General, Fighter]

You have studied fiends and faced them in battle, giving you an intuitive understanding of their combat style.

Prerequisite: Dexterity 13, Knowledge (chosen enemy) 5 ranks.

Benefit: You gain a +2 dodge bonus to your Armor Class when fighting against one chosen enemy: aberrations, demons, devils, or undead. Any time you lose your Dexterity bonus (if any) to Armor Class, such as being caught flat-footed, you lose your dodge bonus as well.

Special: This feat may be taken multiple times, selecting a different foe each time.

Infernal Corrupion [General]

Close association with infernal powers has altered your physical body.

Prerequisite: Infernal Pact.

Benefit: Each time this feat is taken, roll 1d12 and consult the following table. This feat may be taken multiple times. Re-roll any duplicate effects.

Roll	Corruption
1-2	*Eyes of the Grimalkin:* Your eyes become like those of a cat, granting low-light vision that permits you to see twice as far as a human in starlight, moonlight, torchlight, and similar con-

New Feats

General Feats	Prerequisites	Benefits
Assess Enemies	–	DC 15 Wis check to identify highest CR
Ancestral Weapon*	–	Gain masterwork weapon
Capture	Combat Expertise	Deal nonlethal damage with weapons at no attack penalty.
Fiend Slayer*	Dex 13, Knowledge (chosen enemy) 5 ranks	+2 Dodge bonus to AC against chosen enemy
Infernal Pact	Knowledge (demonology/devilry) 5 ranks, spellcaster	Access Infernal spell list
Infernal Corruption	Infernal Pact	Varies
Infernal Sworn	Infernal Corruption, Infernal Pact	Resistance to fire, cold, or electricity 5
Siren Cry	Female, Perform (singing) 3 ranks, divine caster level 1	Attack similar to harpy's captivating song
Regional Feats	**Prerequisites**	**Benefits**
Poisoner	Southern Province, Freeport, Scourgelands	No risk of poisoning self when using poison
Savage Born	Cinai, Frost Barrens, Icenwastes, the Wilds, Saramanthia, Scourgelands	+2 in Diplomacy, Sense Motive, Intimidate with savages
Summon Horde	Savage Born, Leadership, character level 7th	Summon hundreds of barbarians
Metamagic Feats	**Prerequisites**	**Benefits**
Key of the Moon	Arcane spellcaster	Caster level changes with moon phases
Seer	Spellcraft 5 ranks	Spell slot requirement reduced by –1
Lore Caster	Seer, spellcraft 10 ranks	Spell slot requirement reduced by additional –1

** A fighter may select this feat as one of his fighter bonus feats.*

ditions of poor illumination.

3-4 *Kiss of the Serpent:* Your saliva becomes poisonous to others (Contact DC 13, Initial 1d4 hp, Secondary 1d12 hp). Once per day you can either spit venom as a standard melee touch attack, or lick your weapon, thereby applying poison to your weapon. You remain susceptible to all other poisons but your own.

5-6 *Talons of the Vulture:* Your fingernails grow into razor sharp claws, allowing you to inflict 1d6 points of damage as an unarmed attack.

7-8 *Horns of the Goat:* A pair of small horns emerge from your temple and a palpable aura of wickedness hangs about you, granting a +2 circumstance bonus to Intimidate checks.

9-10 *Child of the Wyrm:* Your skin grows a hard coat of scales, granting a +1 natural armor bonus.

11 *Blood of the Maggot:* You gain a +1 bonus to your Constitution score, but your body constantly reeks of rotting meat.

12 Roll twice, ignoring any 12s and re-rolling duplicate effects.

Infernal Pact [General]

You have sold your soul to a demon or devil in return for infernal spell powers.

Prerequisite: Knowledge (demonology/deviltry) 5 ranks, arcane or divine spellcaster.

Benefit: You have access to the Infernal spell list in addition to your regular spell list. If you already have access to the spell on the list, your caster level for the duplicate spell is +1. Evil clerics can worship infernal powers in addition to evil deities.

Regular: Worshippers of infernal powers (demons or devils) are not granted spells.

Special: The character cannot be brought back from the dead without additional indenture or promise of sacrifice.

Infernal Sworn [General]

Your infernal liege has made you resistant to certain energies.

Prerequisite: Infernal Corruption, Infernal Pact.

Benefit: You gain fire, cold, or electricity resistance 5. This feat may be taken multiple times, taking different energy types, whose benefits do not stack.

Key of The Moon [Metamagic]

Your spellcasting abilities are tied to the phases of the moon.

Prerequisite: Arcane spellcaster.

Benefit: For the three days preceding and following a full moon, your effective caster level is increased by +1. For the three days preceding and following a new moon, your effective caster level is decreased by –1.

Infernal Spell List

0-level: *inflict minor wounds, guidance*.

1st-level: *bane, cause fear, divine favor, doom, inflict light wounds, protection from good, summon monster II**.

2nd-level: *aid, augury, death knell, inflict moderate wounds, summon monster II**.

3rd-level: *inflict serious wounds, prayer, summon monster III**.

4th-level: *divine power, inflict critical wounds, planar ally (lesser)*, summon monster IV**.

5th-level: *contact other plane, commune, dispel good, slay living, summon monster V**.

6th-level: *harm, legend lore, summon monster VI**.

7th-level: *destruction, summon monster VII**.

8th-level: *summon monster VIII**.

9th-level: *gate, miracle, summon monster IX**.

*Cast as an evil spell only.

Lore Caster [Metamagic]

You are a master of ancient forgotten lore. The might of the universe courses through your spells.

Prerequisite: Seer, Spellcraft 10 ranks.

Benefit: When altering a spell with a metamagic feat, the spell slot requirement of the feat is reduced by –1, for a total of –2 when stacked with the Seer feat. A spell slot requirement cannot be reduced below the spell's original level.

Poisoner [General]

You hail from a culture with a practice of poisoning and are accomplished in its use.

Prerequisite: Raised in Southern Province, Freeport, or Scourgelands.

Benefit: You are trained in the use of poison and never risk poisoning yourself when applying it to a blade or otherwise readying the poison for use.

Normal: A character has a 5% chance of exposing himself to a poison whenever applying it to a weapon or otherwise readying the poison for use. Additionally, a character who rolls a natural 1 on an attack roll with a poisoned weapon must makes a DC 15 Reflex save or accidentally poison herself with the weapon.

Savage Born [General]

You have an innate kinship with barbarians.

Prerequisite: Raised in Cinai, Frost Barrens, Icenwastes, the Wilds, Saramanthia, Scourgelands*.

Benefit: You receive a +2 bonus on all Diplomacy, Sense Motive, and Intimidate checks made on savages. At the GM's discretion, additional groups may qualify.

Special: You may only take this feat as a 1st-level character.

*Half-orcs and monstrous humanoids only.

Seer [Metamagic]

A devotee of esoteric lore, you are able to attune your spells to the turning of the cosmos.

Prerequisite: Spellcraft 5 ranks.

Benefit: When altering a spell with a metamagic feat, the spell slot requirement of the feat is reduced by 1.

For example, an *enlarged fireball* would normally use up a 4th-level spell slot. When cast with the Seer feat, the spell would use up a 3rd-level spell slot.

Siren Cry [General]

You can sing to captivate your opponents.

Prerequisite: Female, Perform (singing) 3 ranks, ability to cast at least one divine spell of 1st level or higher.

Benefit: Once per day, you can make a special attack similar to a harpy's captivating song. As a standard action that does not provoke an attack of opportunity, you utter a sonorous cry that causes one or more creatures to become captivated. Each creature to be captivated must be within 60 feet, be able to see and hear you, and must make a successful Will save to negate the effect. This is a sonic, mind-affecting charm effect. The DC to resist the siren cry is equal to 10 + your Charisma modifier. The save DC is Charisma-based.

A captivated creature walks toward you, taking the most direct route available. If the path leads into a dangerous area (over the edge of a ship in shark-infested waters, or the like), that creature gets a second saving throw. Captivated creatures can take no actions other than to defend themselves. (A victim cannot run away or attack but takes no defensive penalties.) A victim within 5 feet of you stands there and offers no resistance to your attacks. The effect continues for as long as you sing and for 1 round thereafter. A bard's countersong ability allows the captivated creature to attempt a new Will save.

Special: A member of the Sirens of Pelagia may select Siren Cry without possessing any divine spells.

Summon Horde [General]

A legend amongst your people, you can summon a barbarian horde.

Prerequisite: Savage Born, Leadership, character level 7th.

Benefit: This horde can only be summoned in the homeland of the PC, from among his barbarian kin. A horde is limited by the population of an area, and can number up to the PC's Leadership score (character level + Charisma bonus) times 500.

While a horde can be raised for any number of causes, its success is ultimately judged on the amount of loot pillaged, be it in the form of grain and livestock, gold, or even slaves. Chaotic and undisciplined, hordes quickly disband unless led by a masterful (and successful) general.

A horde takes one month to gather, and can be kept together for a number of weeks equal to the PC's

Leadership score. At the end of this time, the PC must make a DC 15 Diplomacy check.

Modifiers may apply to Diplomacy check, as shown on the table below.

Diplomacy Check Modifiers to Summon Horde

Condition	Modifier
Leader's Reputation	
Cowardice	–10
Failure	–5
Generous	+2
Heroic	+5
Treasure Shared	
None	–15
Partial, late, or unfair	–10
Average	–5
Above average	+0
Exceptional, gift items	+5
Horde's Success in Battle	
Defeat	–10
Stalemate	–5
Victory	+0
Overwhelming victory	+5

If the PC fails the check, the horde disbands, the barbarians return to their homelands, and the PC may not call a horde until one year has passed. At the GM's discretion, certain conditions may have to be met before the commander of a failed campaign can rally another horde to his cause.

If the PC succeeds on the Diplomacy check, the horde remains together for another week, after which the PC must make another DC 15 Diplomacy check. The cycle continues until the horde disbands or the PC elects to dismiss the horde.

A PC dismissing a horde after a successful campaign must also wait a year before summoning another horde, but will find it easy to recruit eager barbarians to his cause.

In rare instances, a legendary barbarian might have several generals serving beneath him who have all rallied hordes to their banners, placing multiple armies beneath the command of the single horde-master. In such cases, it is the single horde-master who must succeed on the Diplomacy check.

Equipment

Conch: The conch is a brightly colored seashell of spiral design. Bards of the Xulmec city-state of Athua often choose the conch as the favored wind instrument for use with their bardic music. Playing the conch relies upon the insertion and placement of the hands as well as embouchure, the manipulation of the musician's lips, to produce a loud if mellow sound. Though several pitches can be achieved, some conches have been carved to yield a greater variety of sounds; these customized conches are always masterwork and of the finest quality.

The conch is spiritually ingrained in the culture of the Xulmec city-state of Athua. If the conch is blown by a user with at least 2 ranks of Perform (wind instruments) during the first round of combat, all allies of Athuan nationality within 30 feet are granted a +1 morale bonus on attack rolls for the first 3 rounds of combat. Blowing into a conch in this way is a standard action that provokes an attack of opportunity. Cost: 1 gp, masterwork 100 gp. Weight: 1 lb.

Drum, Xulmec: Two varieties of percussion instruments are native to the Xulmec city-states. The first is the teponaztli, a drum fashioned from the trunk of a hardwood tree, played horizontally and common among religious ceremonies. The other is the huehuetl, a vertical drum with an animal skin drawn across the top and left open at the bottom. Both are decorated with intricate carvings, often depicting historic scenes. Cost: 10 gp, masterwork 100 gp. Weight: 5 lb.

Quipu: Quipus are recording devices fashioned by the Amoyas but have become more commonplace throughout Xulmec. Originally used for textile counting, the quipu has been adapted by wizards to serve as an alternate form of spellbook. Consisting of spun and dyed knots woven from llama or alpaca hair, the complex network of strands represents arcane syllables that only a wizard proficient with its use can interpret. Mastery of the quipu requires at least 2 ranks in Knowledge (local) for the Amoya region or 5 ranks in Knowledge (arcana) and a Dexterity of 13 or greater. A single quipu contains only thirty pages worth of spells, but it is effectively weightless and a wizard can possess more than one to accommodate his repertoire of known spells. Immersion in water does not harm the quipu. Cost: 20 gp. Weight: —

Threnody Chimes: Though largely associated with the Threnodim—bardic priests of Soleth who developed and perfected this peculiar class of instruments—most bards fortunate enough to come across threnody chimes will seek to acquire one. The chimes come in a wide variety of sizes and designs, but the principle behind them all is the same; inside a wooden box-like resonating chamber is a complex mechanism of metal chime rods tuned to somber keys in the smaller hand-held instruments and capable of a full musical range in larger ones. Typically small enough to be worn with a strap about the neck and held gently in the arms like the performer is laying a dying loved one to rest, the right hand is laid within a hand-shaped impression on its upward face with a striking key beneath each finger. These keys strike the chime rods currently in position while the fingers of the left hand diligently work an intricate array of levers, buttons, or slides on the opposite side to retract, dampen, and replace the sets of chime rods into striking position. The result is a sound as haunting as it is sorrowfully beautiful—a darker, swimming timbre akin to both clavichord and clock chimes.

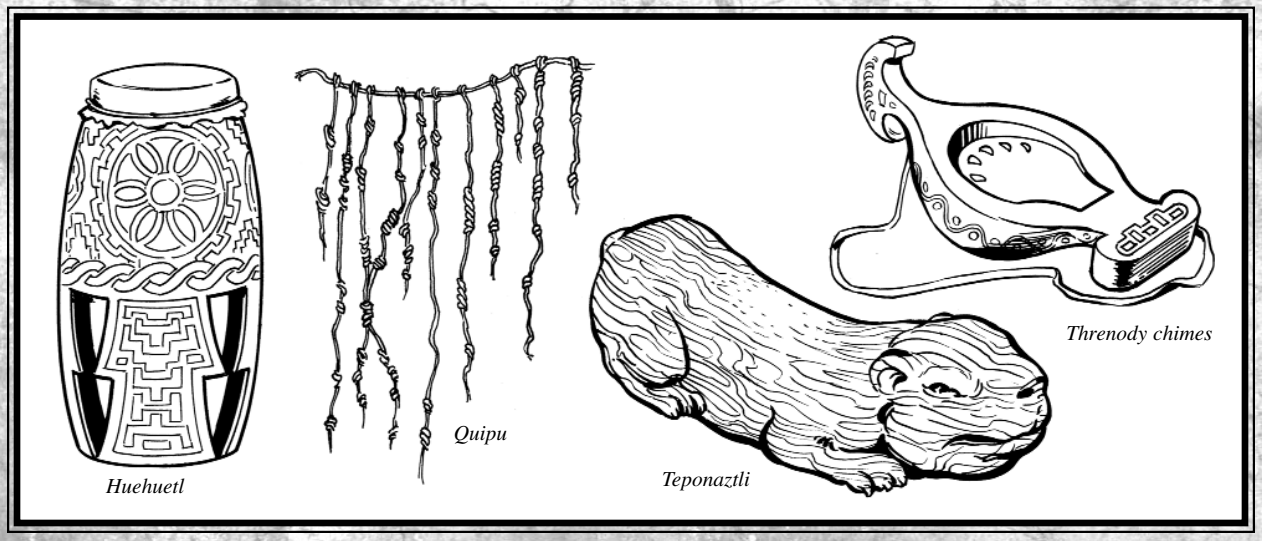
Externally, threnody chimes are usually decorated with ornate, morbid designs reflecting the tenets of Soleth. Some are even fashioned to suggest a humanoid body reclining at the moment of death. Furthering this image, Threnodim customarily play the chimes in a half-kneel with head bowed, though this posture is rarely assumed by most other bards. Cost: 80 gp, masterwork 200 gp. Weight: varies.

Tlahuiztli: The tlahuiztli is a Xulmec tabard, a tight-fitting cloth garment worn over the ichcahuipilli (see below). Its color marks the status of the warrior who wears it, and must be earned on the field of battle. In the Xulmec culture, slaying an enemy does not earn the same respect as capturing one. Multicolored feathers of many birds adorn the suit and matching helmet, with various combinations meant to represent different animals. When a Xulmec captain wears a legitimately earned tlahuiztli in the company of soldiers in his command, each soldier within 30 feet is granted a +1 morale bonus on attack rolls. Cost: 5 gp (but must be earned).

Weapons

Atlatl: Originally used for hunting waterfowl and fish, the atlatl is now used by the Xulmecs as an effective instrument of war. Consisting of a two-foot-long hardwood board and hook, which is used as leverage, the atlatl propels a large, obsidian-tipped dart with greater force and accuracy than that of a hand-thrown spear. To natives of the Xulmec city-state, the atlatl is a martial weapon, but it is exotic to anyone else. Darts that miss their target have a 75% chance of breaking.

Keris: Originating from the Shadowed West, this exotic dagger has come into more common use in the nation of Ssorlang and even the people of Darawan. No two keris blades are alike, unique by their very nature and the mystic ways of the bladesmith. The keris is considered a very



New Weapons

Exotic Weapons	Cost	Dmg (S)	Dmg (M)	Critical	Range	Weight[1]	Type
Light Melee Weapons							
Keris	320 gp	1d3	1d4	19-20/x3	10 ft.	1 lb.	Piercing
Razor glove	5 gp	1d4	1d6	x2	—	1/2 lb.	Slashing
One-Handed Melee Weapons							
Macuahuitl, one-handed	20 gp	1d6	1d8/x3	x3	—	7 lb.	Slashing
Two-Handed Melee Weapons							
Macuahuitl, two handed	50 gp	2d4	2d6	x3	—	13 lb.	Slashing
Tepoztopilli	50 gp	1d6	2d4	x3	—	10 lb.	Slashing
Ranged Weapons							
Atlatl	1 gp	1d6	1d8	x3	80 ft.	2 lb.	Piercing
Darts (5)	3 gp	—	—	—	—	—	—

[1] Weight figures are for Medium weapons. A Small weapon weighs half as much, and a Large weapon weighs twice as much.

New Armor

Armor	Cost	Armor Bonus	Max Dex	Check Penalty	Spell Failure	Speed (30 ft.)	Speed (20 ft.)	Weight[1]
Light armor								
Bonemail	90 gp	+4	+4	–1	20%	30 ft.	20 ft.	15 lbs.
Ichcahuipilli	8 gp	+2	+7	0	5%	30 ft.	20 ft.	8 lb.
Shields								
Chimalli	5 gp	+1	—	–1	5%	—	—	6 lbs.

[1] Weight figures are for armor sized to fit Medium characters. Armor fitted for Small characters weighs half as much, and armor fitted for Large characters weighs twice as much.

personal weapon that can bring good fortune to its owner—and misfortune to thieves. The length of the blade varies, but it is usually asymmetrical and often forged of iron or steel in a wavelike, serpentine fashion. The hilt is ornate, and acid is used to bring out the luster or darkness of the metal blade. The keris is considered a monk weapon, provided the monk takes the Exotic Weapon Proficiency feat to become proficient with it. All keris blades are masterwork. If used as a thrown weapon, the keris incurs a –2 circumstance penalty on the attack roll.

Macuahuitl: The macuahuitl (usually called a "macana" by Northlanders) is a flat, hardwood club with extremely sharp blades of flint or obsidian set along its edges. A weapon native to the Xulmec city-states, the macuahuitl can be used to cleave through flesh and bone or subdue opponents. Created in both one- and two-handed varieties, it is a martial weapon to Xulmecs but exotic to anyone else.

Razor Glove: The razor glove comes in many designs, typically employed by jungle-dwelling warriors to emulate the fighting style of great cats. Usually fashioned with stiff leather, the glove fits over the entire hand much like a gauntlet, while curving, metal blades run along each finger and are supported at the wrist. The blades cannot be retracted, and wearing the gloves while using any skill requiring the use of one's hands to manipulate objects incurs a –4 circumstance penalty. The wearer's opponent cannot use a disarm action against the razor glove. The cost and weight given are for a single glove. An attack with a razor glove is considered an armed attack.

Tepoztopilli: Resembling a pole-arm counterpart of the macuahuitl, the shaft of the tepoztopilli (called the "top-illi" among Northlanders) is wooden, and its flared head is set with razor-sharp obsidian blades. The tepoztopilli has reach. Wielders can strike opponents 10 feet away with it, but they cannot use it against an adjacent foe. Natives of Xulmec city-states treat the tepoztopilli as a martial weapon, but it is an exotic weapon to anyone else.

Armor

Bonemail: See *Magic Items of Áereth* below.

Chimalli: The chimalli is a wooden Xulmec shield, always brightly painted to reflect the wearer's spiritual and national allegiance, including symbols representing the status within his unit or city. Xulmec fighters and warriors often create and adorn their own shields, taking at least 1 rank in Craft (armorsmithing) for this reason

alone. A Xulmec who crafts, paints, and feathers his own shield receives an additional +1 morale bonus to AC when fighting defensively or choosing a total defense action.

Ichcahuipilli: The ichcahuipilli (called the "cahuipi" among Northlanders) is a heavy, quilted body armor common among Xulmec warriors. Often soaked in brine for greater durability, it offers greater protection than standard padded armor and more flexibility than leather.

Regional Masterwork Items

While any craftsman with enough time, skill and materials can create a masterwork item, certain regions of Áereth are renowned for their signature arms, armor or equipment. The reputation of a smith might hinge on his ability to craft a certain type of sword, and seedy merchants may try to dupe naïve heroes into paying masterwork prices for regular equipment, claiming, "They were born in the devil-fire forges of Zamon," or some other such nonsense.

Apart from their sheer monetary value, regional masterwork items can also inspire the admiration and envy of savvy onlookers. Such recognition cuts both ways: A noble scion wielding a fabled blade of Criestine steel might rally a routing army, while a peasant found with the same weapon may be imprisoned and executed for the crime of carrying a weapon above his station.

The true nature of an item can be discerned with an appropriate Craft check (DC 15). While superior forgeries can make this check more difficult, such items are rare, since making a masterful forgery requires nearly as much skill as crafting a masterwork item.

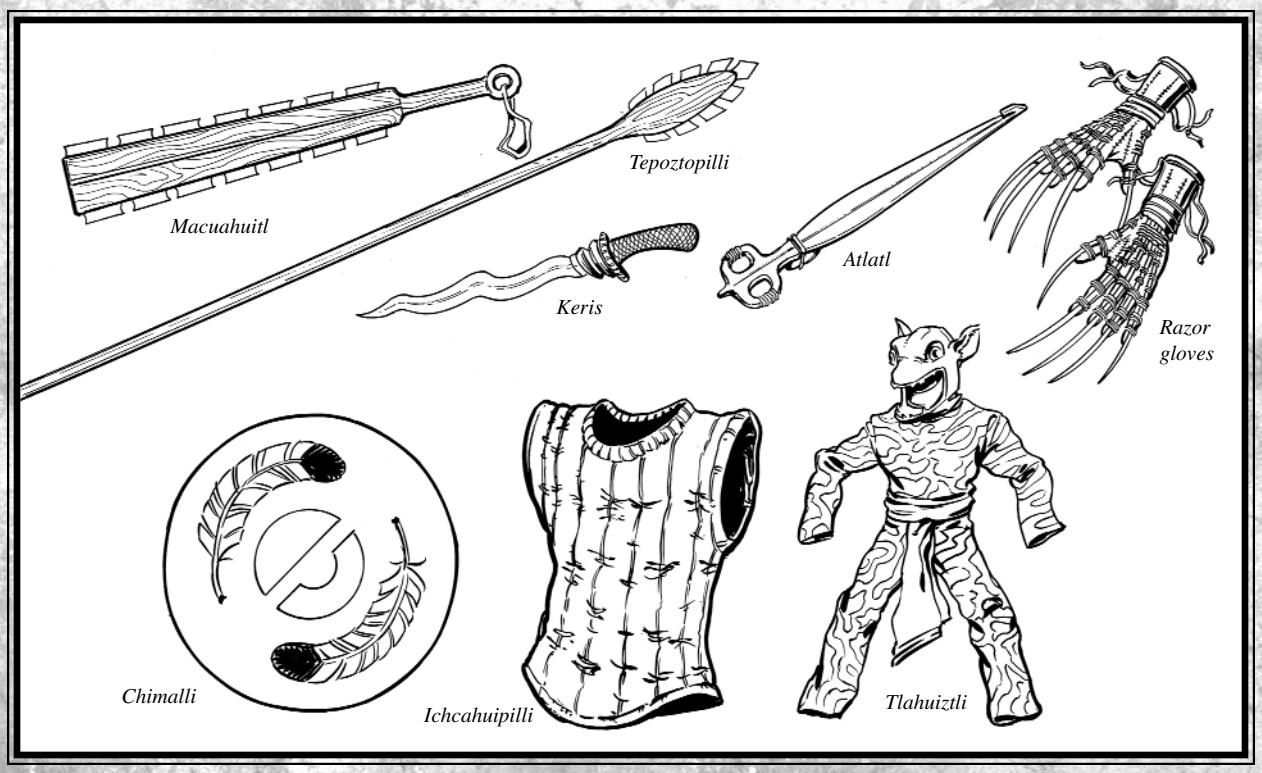
As per all masterwork items, you cannot add the masterwork quality after an item is created; it must be crafted as a masterwork item (see the Craft skill, *PHB*). Similarly, unless otherwise noted, regional masterwork items are far more expensive than their mundane counterparts.

Regional Masterwork Weapons

Blackore Longsword and Lance: In the empire of Crieste, the finest warriors have always armed themselves with weapons forged of blackore steel. Iron mined from the Blackore Hills is highly prized by Criestine weaponsmiths, and all the legendary weapons of the empire were forged of the precious metal.

When a warrior of Crieste achieves knighthood, he is awarded with a blackore longsword and lance, presented by his liege. The weapons are symbols of a warrior's honor, and the distinctive steel, shot through with wavy bands of black and azure, is immediately recognizable to any Criestine citizen. For a non-knight to carry a blackore weapon is a high crime against the crown, punishable by execution.

It is illegal to sell a blackore weapon, though tragic ballads tell of warriors, desperate for gold, selling their weapons to villains who proceed to masquerade as



knights. Illegal blackore weapons are highly prized by enemies of the empire, who are willing to pay exorbitant amounts (up to twice the going rate for a masterwork item) to obtain them.

Game Notes: A lance or longsword forged of blackore steel has the same stats as a masterwork weapon of that type. If worn openly, it also grants its owner a +1 circumstance bonus to Intimidate and Charisma checks made with Criestine commoners. (Nobles, accustomed to dealing with knights, are seldom impressed by knighthood alone.)

Cinai Waraxe: The horse lords of the Cinai are feared for their reckless courage and savage ferocity. Their smiths of the Lion have mastered the creation of the waraxe, forging long curved blades with remarkable strength and sharpness. Designed to be wielded one-handed while mounted, or in two hands by foot troops, a master of the weapon can kill with a single blow and strike another target before the first hits the ground.

Waraxes are traditionally attached to shafts of polished ironwood, and are protected with cases made from the cured skins of chimeras or wyverns. The creation of a waraxe is a sacred act, and only undertaken by master smiths who destroy any axes that fail to meet their exacting standards; thus every Cinai waraxe is a masterwork weapon. Waraxes are revered as family heirlooms and commonly bear names referring to their greatest battles. A waraxe might gain three or four names during its life, as its owners are driven on to ever greater deeds. Losing a waraxe is a great dishonor to the entire clan, and many warriors have devoted their entire lives to recovering an ancestral weapon.

Waraxes are never sold by the Cinai people. When the axes turn up on the black market, they are quickly bought by collectors, often for as much as 600 gp or more.

Game Notes: The Cinai waraxe shares the same statistics as a masterwork dwarven waraxe. Like the dwarven waraxe, it is too large to be used in one hand without special training, and is thus an exotic weapon. A Medium character can use a Cinai waraxe two-handed as a martial weapon. Humans raised in the tradition of the Cinai Lions treat the waraxe as a martial weapon even when wielded in one hand.

Shadowstone Weapons: When the Shadow Star fell into the Lostlands and created the Devil's Cauldron, molten debris from the dark comet spread across all Áereth as it blazed across the sky for the final time. Most of this debris—along with the smoldering remains of the original comet—are located in the Cauldron; however, significant chunks of the comet are also scattered in the Mountains of the Fifth Prince and the Lostlands. Small remnants can be found in the Northlands and Southlands as well.

Although the debris from the Shadow Star is commonly called "shadowstone," this is something of a misnomer. Shadowstone is actually a metal. The material has a dark purple hue and a dull, flat texture. It is often found in chunks, ranging from the size of a human fist to that of an elephant. It only melts at extremely high temperatures and is notoriously difficult to work with, but certain smiths in Xa Deshret still know the secret for forging shadowstone.

The sphinxes of the Khonsurian Empire unlocked the secrets of the stone centuries ago. Shadowstone has impressive magical properties, and can be used to create powerful weapons. Prolonged exposure to the stone causes madness. This initially created great problems for the sphinxes, who sent slaves to mine and harvest the largest stone fragments from the Mountains of the Fifth Prince. At first, the sphinxes sent dwarves to do this work—however, the dwarves mutated and went insane, eventually transforming into the derro that lurk in the Underdeep. Elven slaves were next, but they proved to lack the hardiness necessary for the brutal work; hobgoblin slaves then followed, but they lacked the finesse to effectively excavate the material, hacking the huge chunks of ore into tiny, unusable fragments. It was for this reason that the sphinx wizards eventually bred the nalvor race. The sphinxes had hoped to combine all of the positive qualities of elf and hobgoblin for mining shadowstone.

Most weapons forged from shadowstone are still found within Xa Deshret and the swirling sands of the Ghetrian Desert. These are typically ancient relics or family heirlooms, and already in the hands of a skilled warrior. Many of the most powerful magical objects in all of Áereth are forged from shadowstone, such as the legendary *Shadowcrown* of the sphinx and the blade known as *Shadowstar*, which was wielded long ago by the drow sorceress Khetira.

At the present time, at least three nalvor smiths in Xa Deshret are capable of forging new weapons from raw shadowstone—a task easier said than done, as they all remain hidden in the darkest recesses of the Mountains of the Fifth Prince.

Game Notes: Any weapon forged from shadowstone is a masterwork weapon. The chaotic nature of shadowstone weapons also affects their wielders in two ways. Firstly, the material eventually causes a certain degree of madness in those who remain in prolonged exposure to it. After the first 30 days of possessing a weapon forged of shadowstone, the wielder acts as if affected by a *confusion* spell each time the weapon is drawn. The spell acts as if cast by a 20th-level caster. This effect can be temporarily negated by a *dispel chaos* spell.

Secondly, the fluctuating chaos magic contained within the shadowstone weapon can increase or decrease on any

given day, strengthening or diminishing the weapon's power. Each day of game time, there is a 1 in 6 chance that the power has changed. On each day, the player should roll a d6 for the weapon. If the result is a 1, the PC is aware that a change has taken place, but not necessarily what that change would be until the weapon is wielded in battle. The GM should then roll a d4 to determine the exact nature of the change.

Roll	Result
1	–1 to all magical bonuses; loss of any/all additional magical abilities
2	+1 to all magical bonuses
3	+2 to all magical bonuses; range and duration of any/all magical abilities doubled
4	+3 to all magical bonuses; random gain of 1d4 intelligent item lesser powers

Should a weapon forged from shadowstone have its magical bonuses reduced to 0, it should still be treated as a magical weapon in combat. A shadowstone weapon cannot have a magical bonus of greater than +5.

Vermilion Longbows: Known for their cunning and utter ruthlessness in battle, the warriors of the Vermilion Tribes are also noted for their unique longbows. Made from the enchanted wood of darkfyre trees, the Vermilion bows actually appear at first glance to be two longbows that are crossed over one another, as if in the shape of an X. However, the Vermilion longbow is a single piece, albeit a very complex one. The weapon also has two drawstrings. The arrow to be fired from the bow is nocked at the intersection of the two drawstrings before being released. Despite its complexities, the warriors of the Vermilion tribes use the weapon with great ease, often firing it from horseback with deadly precision while riding at a full gallop.

Although initially crafted by Vermilion bowsmiths, each bow is then individualized by its user, with ornate designs carved into the wood of the bow. These carvings generally represent victories in battle or tributes to long-ago ancestors, which are drawn in great detail. The bows of the greatest warriors of the Vermilion tribes are massive, almost unwieldy weapons, as more wood is grafted to the bows for depicting the victories of these legendary fighters.

Vermilion longbows are among the most prized of possessions to the Tribe warriors, and are never found far from their grasps, ready to fire. Although highly esteemed and revered, they are not ever used by more than one warrior, or even passed along as family heirlooms. Warriors are buried in death with their bows, to ensure good hunting in the afterlife.

Warriors of the Vermilion Tribes never sell their longbows, under any circumstances. Should a member of the Vermilion Tribes be caught stealing another warrior's bow, whether to sell on the black market or for personal use, it is a crime punishable by death. Should a bow ever appear on the black market, they can fetch upwards of 750 gp or more.

Game Notes: A Vermilion longbow shares the same statistics as a masterwork longbow, save for its range, which is doubled. Its unwieldy nature makes it too difficult to handle properly in battle without special training, and should therefore be considered an exotic weapon. Elves or humans raised in the Vermilion Tribes have significant advantages in learning how to use this special bow, and it should only be considered a martial weapon in their hands.

Regional Masterwork Armor

Holdfast Plate: The dwarves of the Holdfast are famous for their breastplate, half-plate and full plate armors. Dwarf smiths devote entire centuries to the various aspects of metallurgy, smithing, and practical battle experience with a single goal in mind: to forge the finest heavy armors in the Known Realms.

Each is a unique work of art, fashioned for a particular warrior, and stylized according to the nature of the armorsmith. Certain smiths fashion armor in the likeness of demons and dragons, some emboss their armors with sparkling gems and inlays of gold and silver, while others carefully etch each plate with acid.

The dwarves are happy to sell their masterpieces, which always command a high price on the market (up to three times the normal cost of masterwork armor), but the true worth of Holdfast plate can only be known by wearing a suit specifically forged to the user's physique. These tailored suits are commonly worn by Holdfast generals and dwarven heroes. Occasionally, a suit may be forged in thanks for deeds done in service of the empire, or as a gift to neighboring regents.

Game Notes: Like regular masterwork armors, the armor check penalty of Holdfast plate armors is lessened by 1. If the armor that has been crafted specifically for that wearer, the armor check penalty is lessened by 2.

New Cleric Domains

An asterisk (*) indicates a new spell described later in this chapter.

Creation Domain

Granted Power: Cast conjuration (creation) spells at +2 caster level.

Creation Domain Spells
1 *Create water*
2 *Minor image*
3 *Create food and water*
4 *Minor creation*
5 *Major creation*
6 *Heroes' feast*
7 *Permanent image*
8 *True creation**
9 *Genesis**

Darkness Domain

Granted Power: Free Blind-Fight feat.

Darkness Domain Spells
1 *Obscuring mist*
2 *Blindness*
3 *Blacklight**
4 *Armor of darkness**
5 *Summon monster V* (only summons 1d3 shadows)
6 *Prying eyes*
7 *Nightmare*
8 *Power word, blind*
9 *Power word, kill*

Dream Domain

Granted Power: You can draw upon your memories of the Dream to gain supreme confidence as a supernatural ability. You gain an enhancement bonus to Charisma equal to your cleric level. Activating the power is a free action, the power lasts 1 round, and it is usable twice per day.

Dream Domain Spells
1 *Sleep*
2 *Daydream**
3 *Deep slumber*
4 *Dreamscrying**
5 *Symbol of sleep* (good or neutrally aligned clerics) or *nightmare* (evil-aligned clerics)
6 *Symbol of fear*
7 *Oneiric form**
8 *Mind blank*
9 *Weird*

Glory Domain

Granted Power: Turn undead with a +2 bonus on the turning check and +1d6 to the turning damage roll.

Glory Domain Spells
1 *Disrupt undead*
2 *Bless weapon*
3 *Searing light*
4 *Holy smite*
5 *Holy sword*
6 *Bolt of glory**
7 *Sunbeam*
8 *Crown of glory**
9 *Gate*

Liberation Domain

Granted Power: The character gains a +2 morale bonus on all saving throws against enchantment spells or effects.

Liberation Domain Spells
1 *Remove fear*
2 *Remove paralysis*
3 *Remove curse*
4 *Freedom of movement*
5 *Break enchantment*
6 *Greater dispelling*
7 *Refuge*
8 *Mind blank*
9 *Unbinding*

Madness Domain

Granted Power: The character gains an Insanity score equal to half his or her class level. For spellcasting (determining bonus spells and DCs), the character uses his or her Wisdom score plus his or her Insanity score in place of Wisdom alone.

For all other purposes, such as determining skill and save modifiers, use Wisdom minus Insanity in place of Wisdom.

Once per day, the character can see and act with the clarity of true madness. Use the character's Insanity score as a positive rather than a negative modifier on a single roll involving Wisdom. Choose to use this power before the roll is made.

Madness Domain Spells
1 *Lesser confusion*
2 *Touch of madness**
3 *Rage**
4 *Confusion*
5 *Bolts of bedevilment**
6 *Phantasmal killer*
7 *Insanity*
8 *Maddening scream**
9 *Weird*

Repose Domain

The Repose domain is similar to the Death domain, but is granted by good-aligned deities whose clerics are barred from casting evil spells.

Granted Power: The character may use a *death touch* once per day. The *death touch* is a spell-like ability that is a death effect. The character must succeed at a melee touch attack against a living creature (using the rules for touch spells). When the character touches, roll 1d6 per his or her cleric level. If the total at least equals the creature's current hit points, it dies (no save).

Repose Domain Spells
1 *Deathwatch*
2 *Gentle repose*
3 *Speak with dead*
4 *Death ward*
5 *Slay living*
6 *Undeath to death*
7 *Destruction*
8 *Surelife**
9 *Wail of the banshee*

Weather Domain

Granted Power: Survival is a class skill.

Weather Domain Spells
1 *Obscuring mist*
2 *Fog cloud*
3 *Call lightning*
4 *Sleet storm*
5 *Ice storm*
6 *Control winds*
7 *Control weather*
8 *Whirlwind*
9 *Storm of vengeance*

New Spells

Armor of Darkness

Abjuration [Darkness]
Level: Darkness 4
Components: V, S, DF
Casting Time: 1 action
Range: Touch
Target: Creature touched
Duration: 10 minutes/level
Saving Throw: Will negates (harmless)
Spell Resistance: Yes (harmless)

The spell envelops the warded creature in a shroud of shadows. The shroud can, if the caster desires, conceal the wearer's features. In any case, it grants the recipient a +3 deflection bonus to Armor Class plus an additional +1 for every four caster levels (maximum bonus +8). The subject can see through the armor as if it did not exist and is also afforded darkvision with a range of 60 feet. Finally, the subject gains a +2 bonus on saving throws against any holy, good, or light spells or effects. Undead creatures that are subjects of *armor of darkness* also gain +4 turn resistance.

Blacklight

Evocation [Darkness]
Level: Darkness 3, Sor/Wiz 3
Components: V, S, M
Casting Time: 1 action
Range: Close (25 ft. + 5 ft./2 levels)
Area: A 20-ft.-radius emanation centered on a creature, object, or point in space
Duration: 1 round/level (D)
Saving Throw: Will negates or none (object)
Spell Resistance: Yes or no (object)

The caster creates an area of total darkness. The darkness is impenetrable to normal vision and darkvision, but the caster can see normally if within the blacklit area. Creatures outside the spell's area, even the caster, cannot see through it.

The spell can be cast on a point in space, an object, or a creature. If cast on an object or creature, the spell's effect radiates from that target and moves with it. Unattended

Damage from Bolt of Glory

Creature's Origin/Nature	Damage	Maximum Value
Material Plane, Elemental Plane, neutral outsider	1d6 per 2 levels	7d6
Negative Energy Plane, evil outsider, undead creature	1d6 per level	15d6
Positive Energy Plane, good outsider	—	—

objects and points in space do not get saving throws or benefit from spell resistance.

Blacklight counters or dispels any *light* spell of equal or lower level. The 3rd-level cleric spell *daylight* counters or dispels *blacklight*.

Bolt of Glory

Evocation [Good]
Level: Glory 6
Components: V, S, DF
Casting Time: 1 action
Range: Close (25 ft. + 5 ft./level)
Effect: Ray
Duration: Instantaneous
Saving Throw: None
Spell Resistance: Yes

This spell projects a bolt of energy from the Positive Energy Plane against one creature. The caster must succeed at a ranged touch attack to strike the target. A creature struck suffers varying damage, depending on its nature and home plane of existence, per the table on the previous page.

Bolts of Bedevilment

Enchantment [Mind-Affecting]
Level: Madness 5
Components: V, S
Casting Time: One action
Range: Medium (100 ft. + 10 ft./level)
Effect: Ray
Duration: 1 round/level
Saving Throw: Will negates
Spell Resistance: Yes

This spell grants the caster the ability to make one ray attack per round. The ray dazes one living creature, clouding its mind so that it takes no action for 1d3 rounds. The creature is not stunned (so attackers get no special advantage against it), but it can't move, cast spells, use mental abilities, and so on.

Collapsing Cavern

Conjuration (Earth)
Level: Drd 4, Sor/Wiz 4
Components: V, S, M
Casting Time: 1 standard action
Range: Medium (100 ft. + 10 ft./level)
Effect: 120-ft. line
Duration: 1 round + 1 round/level (D)
Saving Throw: Reflex half; see below
Spell Resistance: No

This spell rips large rocks away from the ground and sends them as missiles toward a single target point chosen by the spellcaster. The conjured rocks originate from a point chosen by the spellcaster anywhere within the spell range, and are then directed against a single target point chosen within that same spell range (measured from the spellcaster's position at the time of casting). Any creature caught in the path of the flying rocks between the point of origin and the target square is affected. If cast underground or inside a man-made structure, the rocks may strike from any direction, including the ceiling above, thus giving the spell its name. Once the rocks strike a target, they shatter—they cannot be reflected off of other objects or creatures. The target area cannot be changed once the spell is cast.

Collapsing cavern deals 4d6 points of damage to any creatures that it may strike. Additionally, creatures struck by the flying rocks may be knocked prone to the ground, and be unable to take any actions during the round subsequent to being struck. Affected creatures making a successful Reflex save remain on their feet; however, they still take half damage from the rocks.

The spell does not function underwater.

Material Component: A feather and a handful of pebbles.

Corruption

Necromancy [Fear, Mind-Affecting]
Level: Sor/Wiz 5
Components: V, S, F
Casting Time: 1 standard action

Range: Medium (100 ft. + 10 ft./level)
Area: One 40-ft. cube/level (S)
Duration: 1 round/level (D)
Saving Throw: Will negates; see below
Spell Resistance: Yes

This spell fills an area with a cold, negative energy. Once cast, everything within the area of effect turns a sickly gray-green color. All plants in the area begin to wither, and any creature with an Intelligence score of 2 or less automatically flees the area in terror, and may take no other actions until at least 100 feet away from the area of effect.

Those creatures that remain within the spell's area of affect may be filled with a sense of utter dread. For each round that a creature remains there, it suffers 1d4 hit points of damage, as well as 1d4 points of temporary Strength damage. The creature automatically loses all initiative rolls and suffers a –4 penalty to all Concentration checks. All creatures affected by the spell are also considered to be flat-footed for combat purposes. A successful saving throw negates all spell effects. A *remove fear* spell or the like immediate negates all effects except hit point damage.

Focus: A silver necklace with a spider insignia, worth at least 50 gp.

Create Vampire

Necromancy
Level: Sor/Wiz 9
Components: V, S, M
Casting Time: 1 hour
Range: Touch
Target: Dead creature touched
Duration: Instantaneous
Saving Throw: None; see text
Spell Resistance: No

With this sinister spell, the caster brings a creature back from the dead in the form of a vampire. The spell, which only affects a humanoid or monstrous humanoid subject, acts similarly to a vampire's energy drain. The primary difference is that the *create vampire* spell only affects a subject that is already dead, although for no longer than 10 days. Should *create vampire* be cast upon a still-living creature, or on a creature dead for longer than 10 days, the spell has no effect whatsoever.

Once created by the spell, the new vampire becomes the minion of the spellcaster that created it, and remains enthralled until the destruction of its maker. A vampire created by this powerful spell retains any class abilities, feats, or skill ranks it once possessed in life; however, it remembers little of its former life, save for its name. The base level of the affected creature (or Hit Dice) is reduced by 2. If the subject was 1st level, the corpse's effective Constitution score is reduced by 4. (If this reduction would put its Con at 0 or lower, the creature remains dead and cannot be transformed into a vampire.) This level/HD loss or Constitution loss cannot be repaired by any means. The base class, base attack bonus, base save bonuses, and hit points are otherwise unchanged. Once the base abilities and statistics of the affected creature are recalculated, the vampire template can be then added to it. Regardless of level, all creatures affected by this spell return as vampires, not vampire spawn.

The spellcaster immediately suffers 2d6 points of temporary Constitution damage and 1d6 points of temporary Strength damage after casting *create vampire*. Recovery of these points cannot begin until one full day after the spell is cast, unless a *wish* or *miracle* spell is utilized. The spellcaster can create a maximum number of vampires totaling no more than twice his own level; should the spell be cast upon a subject after this maximum is reached, the spell has no effect. The spellcaster cannot voluntarily free one of his existing enthralled vampires in order to create a new vampire; only when one of these vampires is destroyed completely can the caster begin again to produce new monsters.

Material Component: The severed hand and heart of a vampire spawn.

Crown of Glory

Evocation
Level: Glory 8
Components: V, S, M, DF
Casting Time: 1 full round
Range: Personal
Area: 120-ft.-radius emanation centered on caster
Duration: 1 minute/level
Saving Throw: Will negates
Spell Resistance: Yes

The caster is imbued with an aura of celestial authority, inspiring awe in all lesser creatures.

The caster gains a +4 enhancement bonus to his or her Charisma score for the duration of the spell. All creatures with fewer than 8 HD or levels cease whatever they are doing and are compelled to pay attention to the caster. Any such creature that wants to take hostile action against the caster must make a successful Will save to do so. Any creature that does not make this saving throw the first time it attempts a hostile action is *enthralled* for the duration of the spell (as the *enthrall* spell), as long as it is in the spell's area, nor will it try to leave the area on its own. Creatures with 8 HD or more may pay attention to the caster, but are not affected by this spell.

When the caster speaks, all listeners telepathically under-

stand him or her, even if they do not understand the language. While the spell lasts, the caster can make up to three suggestions to creatures of fewer than 8 HD in range, as if using the *mass suggestion* spell (Will save negates); creatures with 8 HD or more aren't affected by this power. Only creatures within range at the time a suggestion is given are subject to it.

Material Component: A gem worth at least 200 gp.

Daydream

Illusion [Mind-Affecting]
Level: Dream 2
Components: M, DF
Casting Time: 1 standard action
Range: Close (25 ft. + 5 ft./2 levels)
Target: Varies (see text)
Duration: 1 round/level (D) (see text)
Saving Throw: Will negates
Spell Resistance: Yes

The caster projects oneiric images from the target's mind into the air or upon any surface within range. While the spell is often used for demonstration or entertainment, the caster can also use the spell in combat in one of two ways:

Bolster: The next spell cast within 2 rounds is cast as though the caster were 2 levels higher due to the *daydream's* fantastic dramatics and the surge of power it borrows from the Dream.

Distract: The *daydream* projects fragments from the caster's own nightmares that can distract a single opponent capable of dreaming. The target must make a successful Will save or suffer a –1 penalty on all attack rolls and is required to make a successful Concentration check to cast any spells or make any skill checks. This effect lasts only 1 round per caster level or until a successful Will Save is made.

Material Component: A scrap of rice paper or vellum.

Dreamscrying

Divination (Scrying)
Level: Dream 4
Components: V, S, DF, F
Casting Time: 10 minutes
Range: See text
Effect: Magical sensor
Duration: 8 hours
Saving Throw: Will negates
Spell Resistance: Yes

Dreamscrying allows the caster to see and hear a specific creature as he dreams, requiring the spell to be cast immediately prior to normal rest time. The spell functions like *scrying*, except as noted above and with the following limitations.

The caster receives only vague, dreamlike images and sounds based on the whereabouts of the subject throughout an 8-hour period. He can hear only brief excerpts of conversation, as allowed by the GM, and no other spells can be cast during the spell's effects (as the caster sleeps). Although the spell is technically cast before the caster begins to rest, its effects take place during an 8-hour period and counts against him for purposes of determining the number of spells he may prepare the following day.

The spell will only function during the caster's normal period of rest. If he is awakened at any point during the duration, the spell ends. If the caster is an elf, his trance endures for a full 8 hours, during which *dreamscrying* takes place. If he is not, he sleeps soundly throughout the duration. The spell does not function if the caster is affected by a *nightmare* spell.

Within the oneiric realms of Ôæ (for good- or neutrally aligned clerics) or Gil'Mâridth (evil-aligned clerics), the caster looks upon the subject of the spell as through a fantastical gateway or pool. He can see the subject with astonishing clarity, but immediately upon awakening, only the vague sounds and images allowed by the spell are retained.

Divine Focus: A silken blanket worth at least 70 gp, in which the caster must be wrapped.

Genesis

Conjuration (Creation)
Level: Creation 9
Components: V, S , M, X P
Casting Time: 1 week (8 hours/day)
Range: 180 ft.
Effect: A demiplane on the Ethereal Plane centered on the caster's location
Duration: Instantaneous
Saving Throw: None
Spell Resistance: No

This spell creates an immobile, finite plane with limited access—a demiplane.

Demiplanes created by this power are very small, minor planes. A character can cast this spell only on the Ethereal Plane. When he or she casts it, a local density fluctuation precipitates the creation of a demiplane. At first, the demiplane grows at a rate of a 1-foot-radius per day to an initial maximum radius of 180 feet as the fledgling plane draws substance from surrounding ethereal vapors and protomatter or astral ectoplasm.

The character determines the environment in the demiplane when he or she first casts *genesis*, reflecting most

any desire he or she can visualize. The caster determines factors such as atmosphere, water, temperature, and the shape of the general terrain. However, the spell cannot create life, nor can it create construction. If desired, these must be brought in by some other fashion.

Once the basic demiplane reaches its maximum size, the character can continue to cast this spell to enlarge the demiplane if he or she is inside the boundaries of the demiplane. In such a case, the radius of the demiplane increases by 60 feet for each subsequent casting.

If the spell is cast again while outside an existing demiplane, the casting creates a separate bubble that does not touch or overlap any previously created demiplane.

XP Cost: 5,000 XP.

Leyhar's Obsessive Focus

Illusion [Mind-Affecting]
Level: Sor/Wiz 5
Components: V, S, M
Casting Time: 1 standard action
Range: Close (25 ft. + 5 ft./2 levels)
Target: One living creature
Duration: See text (D)
Saving Throw: Will negates
Spell Resistance: Yes

Created by the legendary Quaysarrian illusionist T'Rhos Leyhar, this spell allows the caster to reveal an illusionary image of an object to a specific target. If the target fails a Will save, the target is forced to immediately go forth and search for that object, as per a *geas* spell. Finding this object becomes paramount to the target, and takes precedence above all other things. Only by finding the object shown by the caster can the target end the spell.

The object shown by the caster to the target must actually exist; it cannot be a figment of the caster's imagination. Should the object be destroyed in between the time that the spell is originally cast and when the target would be able to find it, the target is fated to forever search for the object of the obsession in utter futility, unless the caster releases the target from the spell.

Material Component: Five gold coins and a lock of the target's hair.

Leyhar's Tempting Lure

Illusion [Mind-Affecting]
Level: Sor/Wiz 3
Components: V, S, M
Casting Time: 1 standard action
Range: Touch
Target: One living creature
Duration: 1 round/level (D)
Saving Throw: Will negates; see text
Spell Resistance: Yes

This spell produces the illusion of something incredibly attractive to the target. This object is also constantly in motion and always seems just out of reach to the target. Should the target fail to make a successful Will save, the object of the illusion must be relentlessly pursued for the entire duration of the spell, or until the caster chooses to end the spell. Only the target affected by the spell can see the illusion.

The caster of the spell may also select the path taken by this constantly moving illusion, thereby also directing the path taken by the pursing target. The path chosen by the caster cannot deliberately lead into obvious danger, or the spell is broken. Should the creature affected by the spell be stopped or held back from pursuing the illusion, the target makes every effort to break free from its constraints and to continue its pursuit for the remaining duration of the spell.

Material Component: A handful of bread crumbs.

Maddening Scream

Enchantment (Compulsion) [Mind-Affecting]
Level: Sor/Wiz 8, Madness 8
Components: V
Casting Time: One action
Range: Touch
Target: Living creature touched
Duration: 1d4+1 rounds
Saving Throw: None
Spell Resistance: Yes

The subject cannot keep him or herself from behaving as though completely mad. This spell makes it impossible for the victim to do anything other than run around shrieking.

The effect worsens the Armor Class of the creature by 4, makes Reflex saving throws impossible except on a roll of 20, and renders the creature incapable of using a shield.

Oneiric Form

Illusion [Mind-Affecting]
Level: Dream 7
Components: V, S
Casting Time: 1 standard action
Range: Personal
Target: Caster
Duration: 1 round/level (D)
Saving Throw: See text
Spell Resistance: No

When casting this spell, the caster assumes the physical appearance of his favored dream persona along with a

number of abilities. The effect is phantasmal, but the caster's absolute belief in this dreamlike shape makes it real to him. His allies and opponents can recognize the transformation as illusionary with a successful Will save, but no attempt to disbelieve it can deny the caster the protection the *oneric form* affords.

The spell functions like *disguise self*, except as noted above and with the following additions. The caster's creature type changes to outsider (dream). He gains a +4 inherent bonus to Armor Class, Charisma, and all saving throws. The caster gains darkvision out to 60 feet and damage reduction 5/–.

Primordial Transformation

Transformation
Level: Clr 6, Drd 6, Sor/Wiz 6
Components: V, S
Casting Time: 1 standard action
Range: Touch
Target: Creature touched
Duration: 1 min./level
Saving Throw: Fortitude negates
Spell Resistance: Yes

The affected creature undergoes a tremendous transformation into a hairy, primitive brute, becoming much larger, stronger, and faster than normal. However, the mental capacity of the creature becomes greatly diminished at the same time. The spell grants the subject a +6 enhancement bonus to Strength, Dexterity, and Constitution, and –6 penalties to Intelligence, Wisdom, and Charisma. These ability changes also affect hit points, saving throws, ability checks, and so on, as appropriate.

Additionally, the spell changes the affected creature's size category to the next largest one. The creature also gains increases to base movement of 10 feet, a natural armor bonus of +2, and 10 temporary hit point bonus. An affected creature whose size increases to Large has a space of 10 feet and a natural reach of 10 feet. The spell has additional adverse effects, though: Affected creatures are robbed of the ability to cast arcane spells, and they lose the ability to verbally communicate with others.

Rage

Enchantment
Level: Madness 3
Components: V, S
Casting Time: One action
Range: Touch
Target: Creature touched
Duration: 1 round/level
Saving Throw: Will negates (harmless)
Spell Resistance: Yes (harmless)

The caster can put a creature into a blood frenzy. In this rage, the creature gains +4 to Strength, +4 to Constitution, and a +2 morale bonus on Will saves. (Unlike a barbarian's rage, there is no penalty to AC, and no fatigue period occurs after the rage is over.)

Sandstorm

Conjuration (Creation)
Level: Drd 6, Sor/Wiz 6
Components: V, S, M
Casting Time: 1 standard action
Range: Medium (100 ft. + 10 ft./level)
Effect: Cloud spreads in 20-ft. radius, 20 ft. high
Saving Throw: Fortitude half
Spell Resistance: No

A storm of blinding sand erupts from a starting point selected by the spellcaster, slashing and cutting all creatures caught within its reach. The storm obscures all sight beyond 10 feet, including darkvision and low-light vision. Creatures within 5 feet of the blinding storm have total concealment (50% miss chance, and attackers trapped within the *sandstorm* cannot use sight to locate their opponents). Additionally, all creatures within the spell's area of effect take 1d6 points of damage per caster level (maximum 10d6).

A moderate wind (11-20 mph) disperses the *sandstorm* in 2 rounds; a strong wind (21+ mph) disperses the spell in 1 round. The spell does not function underwater, or in arctic climates.

If cast in a natural desert region, the *sandstorm* gains strength. Base damage for an enhanced *sandstorm* increases to 1d10 points of damage per caster level (maximum 10d10).

Material Component: A handful of sand and a pinch of sulfur.

Surelife

Abjuration
Level: Repose 8
Components: V, S, M
Casting Time: 1 round
Range: Personal
Target: The caster
Duration: 1 minute/2 levels
Saving Throw: None
Spell Resistance: No

This spell allows the caster to protect herself against some condition that would ordinarily cause certain death. The character can only protect herself against a natural occurrence or condition, not against a spell or the action of a creature. The character must specify the condition against which she wishes to protect herself, and the spell is effective only against that condition. Should the character be subjected to that condition during the duration of the spell, she feels no discomfort and takes no damage from the condition. However, the spell does not protect any items carried on the caster's person. At the end of the spell's duration, the condition has full normal effects if the character is still subjected to it.

Symbiosis

Conjuration (Healing)
Level: Brd 4, Clr 4, Drd 5, Pal 5, Rgr 5, Healing 4
Components: V, S
Casting Time: 1 standard action
Range: Touch
Target: Creature touched
Duration: Instantaneous
Saving Throw: Will half (harmless)
Spell Resistance: Yes (harmless)

By laying hands upon another living creature, the spellcaster transfers life essence to another being. The recipient of the spell temporarily receives all of the hit points, skills, spells, and spellcasting abilities of the caster. If the recipient and the caster share common skills, the recipient uses the higher of the two bonuses for the skill. The number of spell slots available to the caster should be added to those of the subject of the spell (if the subject has any). However, the recipient of the spell does not receive any of the memories or additional knowledge of the caster. Any damage taken by the spell recipient during this time comes first from the spellcaster's transferred hit points, then from the subject of the spell.

Once cast, the spellcaster goes into a temporary coma, falling to 0 hit points for the duration of the spell. The spellcaster is unconscious and immobile during this time, and may take no actions at all. If the spellcaster takes a single hit point of damage during the spell's duration, the spell is broken and the recipient immediately loses all temporary bonuses. Additionally, the spellcaster's remaining hit points (if any) are not transferred back if the spell is broken in this manner, and the caster remains below 0 hit points until healed. Should the spell expire naturally, any of the transferred hit points that are left instantly return to the caster without incident.

Touch of Madness

Enchantment [Mind-Affecting]
Level: Madness 2
Components: V, S
Casting Time: One action
Range: Touch
Target: Creature touched
Duration: 1 round/level
Saving Throw: Will negates
Spell Resistance: Yes

The caster may daze one living creature by making a successful touch attack. If the target creature does not make a successful Will save, its mind is clouded and it takes no action for 1 round per caster level. The dazed subject is not stunned (so attackers get no special advantage against it), but it can't move, cast spells, use mental abilities, and so on.

Touch of Slime

Transmutation
Level: Clr/Drd 5, Sor/Wiz 6
Components: V, S
Casting Time: 1 standard action
Range: Touch
Target: Living creature touched
Duration: Instantaneous; see text
Saving Throw: Fortitude negates; see text
Spell Resistance: Yes

By casting this spell, the caster's hands begin to drip with a highly toxic slime similar to that of an aboleth's, allowing the caster to inflict great pain upon an opponent with a successful melee touch attack. A creature hit by the spellcaster must succeed on a Fortitude save or begin to quickly mutate over the next 1d4+1 rounds, with the skin of the affected creature becoming covered entirely with a clear, watery slime. At the end of this time, affected creatures must remain completely immersed in water or take 1d4 points of damage each round. The slime reduces the creature's natural armor bonus by 1 (but never to less than 0).

A *remove disease* spell cast before the transformation is complete will restore an afflicted creature to normal. Afterward, however, only a *cure serious wounds, cure critical wounds, heal*, or *mass heal* spell can reverse the condition.

True Creation

Conjuration (Creation)
Level: Creation 8
Components: V, S, M, XP
Casting Time: 10 minutes
Range: 0 ft.
Effect: Unattended, nonmagical object of nonliving matter, up to 1 cu. ft./level
Duration: Instantaneous
Saving Throw: None
Spell Resistance: No

The caster creates a nonmagical, unattended object of any sort of matter. Items created are permanent and cannot be negated by dispelling magics or negating powers. For all intents and purposes, these items are completely real. The volume of the item created cannot exceed 1 cubic foot per caster level. The caster must succeed at an appropriate skill check to make a complex item.

Unlike the items brought into being by the lower-level spells *minor creation* and *major creation*, objects created by the casting of true creation can be used as material components.

XP Cost: The item's gold piece value in XP, or a minimum of 1 XP, whichever is more.

Undeath to Death

Necromancy
Level: Sor/Wiz 6, Clr 6, Repose 6
Components: V, S , M, D F
Casting Time: 1 action
Range: Medium (100 ft. + 10 ft./level)
Area: Several undead creatures within a 50-ft.-radius burst
Duration: Instantaneous
Saving Throw: Will negates
Spell Resistance: Yes

Undeath to death snuffs out the animating forces of undead creatures, killing them instantly. The spell slays 1d4 HD worth of undead creatures per caster level (maximum 20d4). Creatures with the fewest HD are affected first; among creatures with equal HD, those closest to the point of origin of the burst are affected first.

Material Component: A gem worth at least 500 gp.

Magic Items

Bonemail: The Xulmecs of the city-state of Amoya revere their dead in ways that foreigners find macabre at best. Warriors of sufficient prowess, wealth, or status with the clergy of Anahuara may be given armor fashioned from the very bones of one or more of his or her ancestors. Known as *tomioquan* by the Xulmecs, such armor is more commonly known as bonemail. Infused with the dead warrior's spirit, it grants the wearer insight on the battlefield and courage against his enemies. This necromantic practice has since been replicated by other cultures, but is found predominantly in western Xulmec.

Crafted by clerics and imbued with the blessings of a god, the bonemail armor is further calcified and strengthened by a wizard's art. Effectively as strong and durable as masterwork scale mail, bonemail armor provides the wearer a +1 divine bonus on all attack and damage rolls and saves to resist fear. Additionally, the spirit or spirits possessing the bonemail can grant the wearer an *augury* once each day. The divine bonuses and spell-like ability only function for wearers of the bloodline from whose bones the armor is constructed. The statistics listed in the table on page 81 reflect a suit of bonemail armor, which is always masterwork, before the additional enhancement bonuses to AC, cost, and creation are applied.

Moderate necromancy; CL 9th; Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *speak with dead, augury*; Price 16,500; Cost 9,750 gp + 850 XP.

Flying Guillotine +4: This highly specialized weapon is only used by the vampires of the Vanguard of Eternal Doom. Ordinarily, the weapon appears as a magical heavy flail with six long, black chains, and acts as a *heavy flail +4* in battle. However, the longest of the six chains has a black silk sack attached to one end. The perimeter of the opening of this sack is surrounded with hundreds of tiny silver blades. Should a *flying guillotine +4* strike an opponent with a critical hit, that opponent must make a successful Reflex save (DC 20) or be slain instantly, as the sack covers the head of the opponent and rips it free from its body. The body instantly falls lifeless with –10 hit points; however, the head remains magically alive and able to communicate for an additional day following this decapitation, allowing the owner of the flying guillotine to interrogate the head. Both body and head must be reattached if the slain creature is to be raised or resurrected.

The *flying guillotine +4* is always found in the possession of the vampires of the Vanguard; there is no other known source for this weapon.

Strong necromancy and transmutation; CL 18th; Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *keen edge*; Price: 75,315 gp; Cost 30,500 + 4,800 XP.

Magic Weapon Properties

In addition to enhancement bonuses, weapons can have one or more of the special abilities detailed below. A weapon with a special ability must have at least a +1 enhancement bonus.

Dreamforged: A dreamforged weapon was fashioned by clerics of Ôæ within the Dream itself (see Chapter 2), but through great spiritual effort has been translated into the waking world. In appearance, it resembles a normal weapon but it leaves a fleeting afterimage in its wake when it moves quickly. The first time a creature is damaged by a dreamforged weapon, it must succeed on a DC 14 Will save or suffer an additional 1d4 points of damage. On the second round, the creature will suffer an additional 2d4 per strike, and on the third round and each round thereafter, the additional damage remains at 3d4. A creature who succeeds on the saving throw is impervious to the dreamforged weapon's phantasmal damage for 24 hours.

Moderate illusion (phantasm). A dreamforged weapon cannot be created by any conventional means.

Dysmorphic: A dysmorphic weapon leaves horrid welts and scars and saps the confidence from its victims. Any living creature struck by a dysmorphic weapon suffers 2 points of Charisma damage and must succeed on a DC 14 Fortitude save or contract red ache. Simply holding such a vile weapon incurs a –2 profane penalty on the wielder's own Charisma. Favored by the deviant followers of gods like Narrimunâth, Nimlurun, and Bobugbubilz, these corruptive weapons are considered holy relics.

Moderate necromantic; CL 12th; Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *contagion*; Price +2 bonus.

Lucent: A lucent weapon constantly sheds a pale, luminous glow that illuminates a 5-foot radius at all times. Upon command, it illuminates a 40-foot radius with clear, white radiance, and creatures that take penalties in bright light also take them while within the radius of this magical light. In addition, a creature damaged by a lucent weapon must make a successful DC 14 Fortitude save or be limned with the same luminous glow that radiates from the lucent weapon. This effect replicates the spell *faerie fire*, although the glow is white in color and lasts for 1 minute. Creatures with spell resistance are unaffected. A creature that successfully saves cannot be affected by the same lucent weapon's *faerie fire* for 24 hours.

Moderate evocation; CL 10th; Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *light*; Price +1 bonus.

Silent: A silent weapon bestows the effect of a *silence* spell upon its wielder, though the effect only occurs when the owner grasps the weapon in hand. Although it negates all sounds made by the wielder, effectively resulting in automatic success on Move Silently checks, the wielder is also unable to cast spells that require verbal components or communicate audibly.

Moderate illusion; CL 10th; Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *silence*; Price +2 bonus.

Spectral: A spectral weapon can reach into the Ethereal Plane to strike its wielder's opponents. For melee weapons, the spectral weapon bypasses all armor and shield bonuses. Bows, crossbows, and slings so crafted bestow upon their ammunition the ability to bypass only cover bonuses. In the case of a target having full cover, a miss chance of 50% is applied instead, provided the wielder of the spectral bow, crossbow, or sling knows which space the target occupies. Despite these abilities, a spectral weapon also shines like a beacon to incorporeal creatures, even unequipped and stowed. The owner of the spectral weapon incurs a –4 circumstantial penalty to AC against such opponents and any miss chances the owner might benefit from are negated.

Moderate illusion; CL 13th; Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *ethereal jaunt*; Price +3 bonus.

Stealth: A stealth weapon allows its wielder to become invisible once per day equal to the enhancement bonus for attack and damage rolls. For example, a *+2 stealth longsword* allows its wielder to become invisible twice per day. Activating this power is a free action, and the duration is a full round. As with the spell *invisibility*, the effect ends if the wielder attacks an enemy, but he gains the benefits of *invisibility* during that action (+2 on the attack roll and enemies are denied their Dexterity bonus to AC).

Moderate illusion; CL 10th; Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *invisibility*; Price +1 bonus.

Truculent: A truculent weapon is predisposed to violence and will suffer no hesitation from its wielder. In the hands of an owner proficient in its weapon type, a truculent weapon replicates the effects of a speed weapon, allowing the wielder to make one extra attack when making a full attack action. The attack uses the wielder's full base attack bonus, plus any modifiers appropriate to the situation. (This benefit is not cumulative with similar effects, such as a *haste* spell.) In addition, the wielder is granted a +4 enhancement bonus to initiative checks. However, for every round (not counting the first) the wielder fails to deal damage to an opponent during combat he or she suffers 1d6 points of nonlethal damage from the weapon itself.

Moderate transmutation; CL 13th; Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *haste*; Price +3 bonus.

Coins of the World Before

Many nations mint their own coins, each nation's currency being roughly equivalent to those of her neighbors. But the treasure hordes discovered by adventurers and explorers are seldom so tidy, nearly always containing a handful of exotic coins forged by forgotten empires and ancient kingdoms.

As a general rule of thumb, the GM can always rule that a gold piece is simply a gold piece, but when heroes raise their torches above sparkling hordes of ancient currency, finding the treasure is often only the beginning.

Abylossian Coin Chain: Known to adventurers as "gold snakes," the coin chains of Abylos were the nomad's answer to the coin purse. The crudely minted coins, often little more than a flattened gold nugget, all have a hole punched through their center, permitting the coins to be threaded onto leather straps. The barbarian nomads would string a chain of gold coins, and hang them from their saddles as symbols of strength and glory in battle. Pictographs show the barbarians exchanging the chains like units of currency, betting and gambling over piles of the snakes, and trading in exchange for arms, slaves, and armor.

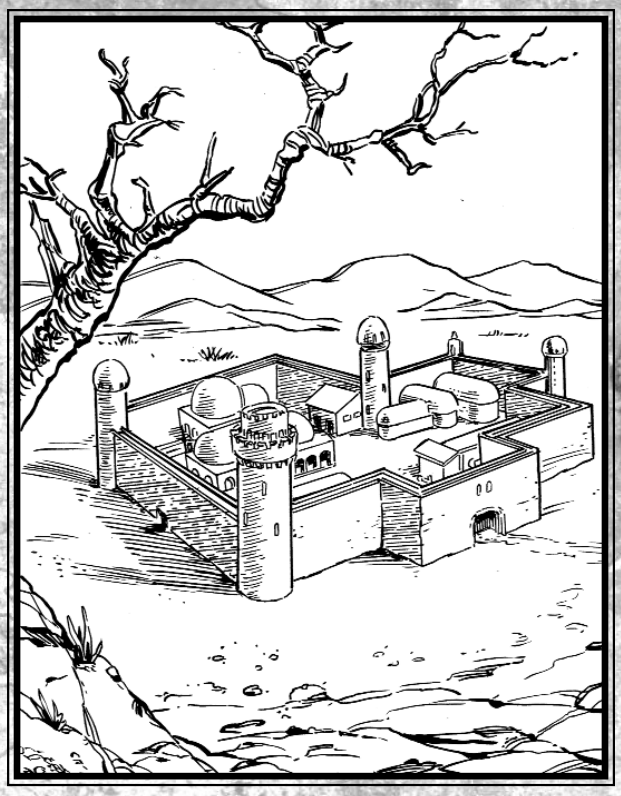
The coin chains are most often found in 10, 20, and 50 coin chains, and are usually worth their weight in gold. Legends tell of a "master chain" made of one hundred enormous coins hung on a chain of iron and born by the slaves of an Abylossian warlord.

Elven Leaf-Stones: The elves of Foresthome traded in smooth spheres of amber with leaves, flower petals, or droplets of water encased within the stone. The spheres vary widely, leading some scholars to theorize that the value of a stone was determined by its aesthetics, but there is little in the way of evidence to support this theory.

Of more interest to adventurers are the rare leaf-stones that contain spells. Utilitarian leaf-stones enchanted with *light, detect poison*, and *detect magic* are the most common, while leaf-stones with *charm person, mage armor*, and *shocking grasp* have also been discovered. The type of spell can often be determined only by trial and error. A dweomered leaf-stone contains 1 to 4 charges.

Nonmagical leaf-stones are worth as much as 5 gp to collectors. Dweomered leaf-stones are worth anywhere from 50 to 200 gp.

Nimorian Star: The chief currency used by the wealthy Priest-Kings, the Nimorian star is a gold piece with a black star etched into its center. The stars are curiously warm to the touch, and radiate an aura of minor divination if detected. A DC 20 Spellcraft check will reveal that the gold of the star carries the taint of fiendish essence.



Minted as a means of spying on the Nimorian populace, each star serves as a scrying focus. Any creature carrying a star suffers from a –2 modifier to any Will save made against scrying.

Nimorian stars are considered contraband in most good nations, but can be purchased on the black market for 100 gp each.

Of Cities and Citadels

The *DMG* provides guidelines for generating communities, but in a world besieged by violence, certain communities are created for the sole purpose of consolidating military power. These are the castles, forts, fortresses, and citadels of the world, where archers stand guard atop high walls, and knights ride out, lances raised, to thunder across the plains.

Strongholds differ from generic communities in important ways. Strongholds typically have lower populations than regular communities, but a great likelihood of high-level NPCs (most often fighters and warriors). Compared to smaller communities, a stronghold has a higher gold-piece-to-population ratio, due to any stronghold's need of craftsmen, armor, and weaponsmiths. This wealth curve peaks quickly, and unless a stronghold is surrounded by a large community, PCs will be hard pressed to find and

sell truly expensive items.

The largest stronghold is far smaller than a city, although oftentimes a city can spring up around an established stronghold, and a mighty metropolis might be warded by several castles.

The names of the stronghold levels are descriptive in nature, and have little to do with the actual strength of a stronghold. A band of spearmen might call their humble keep the Citadel of Blades, and Brighthawk Castle of the Theocracy of the Lance is actually a citadel. Every grizzled war veteran knows that impressive names often go with the least effectual strongholds, and that the mightiest citadels seldom trouble with such niceties, leaving dramatics to the bards.

The following tables supplement the community rules found in the *DMG*, and should be used in place of the community tables when generating strongholds.

Generating Stronholds

Stronghold Size	Garrison	GP Limit
Fort	10–100	200 gp
Keep	101–350	500 gp
Small Castle	351–1,000	1,500 gp
Large Castle	1,001–5,000	15,000 gp
Citadel	5,001 or more	25,000 gp

Garrison numbers reflect fighting men, usually warriors and fighters. Typical strongholds have an additional population of noncombatant commoners and experts equal to one third its garrison.

Forts: Forts are the smallest and weakest defenses, ranging from muddy encampments defended by ditches and earth ramparts, to wooden stockades with spindly watchtowers. Siege weapons are nearly always nonexistent. Barbarian communities are typically defended by forts.

Keep: The smallest stone defenses, a keep is often a single wall built around a donjon and gatehouse. One or two catapults or ballistae might sit atop towers. Monasteries and strongholds guarding mountain passes or built along the wild frontier are typically keeps.

Small Castle: Defended by a moat house and outer and inner walls, small castles are typically home to a small number of siege weapons, often supplemented by a handful of war wizards and clerics. A small castle might be the home of a knighthood, or a lord and his followers.

Large Castle: Built with outer and inner walls, several levels of towers, and any number of siege weapons, large castles are supported by several high-level war wizards, their apprentices, as well as clerics and their initiates. Large castles are the staging grounds for armies and the homes of great lords and kings.

Citadel: The mightiest of all strongholds, a citadel often dominates the landscape. Defended by concentric walls, multiple levels of towers, specialized siege weapons, and dedicated teams of powerful spellcasters, a citadel may even be defended by magical beasts—dragons, griffons, wyverns, or pegasi, ridden by knights. Citadels are home to the mightiest of regents, and often sit at the center of an empire, surrounded by a city or metropolis.

Stronghold Size	Community Modifier
Fort	–3
Keep	+0
Small Castle	+5 (roll twice)
Large Castle	+9 (roll three times)
Citadel	+16 (roll four times)

A stronghold's community modifier is used to generate the fortress' highest-level locals as per the *DMG*, but care should be exercised to avoid illogical results. In small strongholds especially, not every character class will be represented. For instance, a barbarian fort will rarely boast of a high-level paladin or monk. As always, GMs should tailor the results of their rolls to match the needs and consistency of the campaign setting.

Chapter 5
Rogues' Gallery and Hall of Heroes

The world of Áereth is populated by great heroes and wicked villains alike. Sagacious mages, devout priests, courageous warriors, and cunning rogues have all have left their mark on the cities and wilds. Following is a brief survey of some of the most celebrated and notorious personalities to tread the Known Realms. Only the key attribute scores and class levels of each NPC are listed, to give a sense of power level and strengths; the GM should feel free to scale the NPCs up or down to match the level of their current campaign.

GMs are encouraged to use these NPCs to imbue their own campaigns with a sense of life. Evil wizards and corrupt princes constantly scheme and plot, while courageous paladins ride the borderlands, righting wrongs and bringing justice to the wilds. Despite the allure of introducing these world-shaking personalities to the game, the GM should remember that it is the PC that is the hero of the story, the focus of the tale. No matter a NPC's power or influence, they are all supporting characters to the cast of PCs. Consequently, GMs should adapt the power levels of the NPCs to meet the needs of their particular campaign.

Aban Kaveh

(CG male rakshasa Rog7, Dex 17, Con 14, Int 18)

Loud and boisterous, this outrageous rakshasa merchant can often be heard for miles within the walls of Achaemia before he is seen … and what a sight he makes. Completely covered in indigo-black fur and fond of golden silk clothing, Aban Kaveh is easily the most recognizable and well-known figure in the rakshasa city—much to the dismay of the other rakshasa. He frequently disobeys the laws of the city, flaunting them as he does so, and often deals freely with those the other rakshasa view with disdain: humans, dwarves, and other foreigners. His hatred of the drow is also of concern to the Caliph and the ruling council of Achaemia, as they represent one of the city's strongest trading partners. So long as Aban Kaveh continues to bring coin into the city, his eccentricities are permitted, but the unruly rakshasa merchant is but a small step away from finding his black-furred neck on the executioner's block.

Despite his carefree, freewheeling nature, Aban Kaveh is highly intelligent, and is thought to have some sort of master agenda. Of late, he has divested himself of his traditional trade interests, and has become active in the building of grandships for the Twisted Sea. He is never seen walking the streets of Achaemia without his retinue of elven guards, and always has his enchanted twin scimitars, Trouble and More Trouble, either lashed to his belt or twirling in his hands, ready for a fight.

Acatzalan

(LG male human Ari3/Ftr2, Str 13, Wis 16, Cha 16)

Despised by the aristocracy of Voltigeur, Acatzalan possesses Xulmec blood from his father and the blood of Criestine nobility from his mother. Granting the half-blood the office of mayor to appease the restless citizens, Viceroy Durand has underestimated the love the lower and middle class have for Acatzalan. The young politician understands the duplicitous nature of the Viceroy and the disposition of Lady Mortianna better than they suspect, continually weighing the colonists' separatist ideas against loyalty to the crown. He has a bold vision for the future of the Colonies and a great respect for his Xulmec heritage. Acatzalan, a man known for his open-mindedness, is always willing to meet with visiting adventures of positive repute.

Analee Waveseer

(CG female aquatic elf Clr16, Wis 19, Cha 18)

One of the three leaders of the Sirens of Pelagia, Analee Waveseer is charged with guarding the Temple of the Sacred Wave on the hidden Isle of Argent. With the Isle serving as the only true headquarters of the Sirens, Analee's duties as a high priestess are married to her devotion to the organization.

Analee Waveseer is a sea elf of great beauty and power, consorting with the deep-dwelling beings of the sea and the proxies and petitioners of the gods themselves. She guards the greatest secrets of the Sirens and its most powerful treasures. Not content to remain static, Analee frequently swims the domain of her goddess and personally sees to it that errant captains and vengeful pirates do not locate the Isle of Argent.

Analee is always encountered with her friends and bodyguards, a Huge water elemental named Vaer and a triton lord named Erazaa. In battle, she wields a *trident of warning* and she always carries with her a *decanter of endless water*, enabling her to travel anywhere her faith requires without fear of suffocation.

Ashir the Maul

(CN male human Bbn16, Str 18, Con 19, Wis 13, Cha 14)

The warlord of the Cinai people is a swordsman of unmatched fury and might. A mountain of steely sinew with the reflexes of a lion and the hardened eyes of a raven, Ashir the Maul has led the armies of Cinai to victory time and again. Ashir is not a foolish ruler, but he prefers the absolutes of war and personal combat to the simpering, sycophantic politics of "civilized" countries. In Ashir's eyes, honor is won by courage and a quick blade, and those who shun battle are less than worms.

Aunyx

(LG half-elf female Mnk12, Str 14, Dex 16, Wis 18)

At first glance, the fiery-haired half-elf Aunyx does not appear to be anything other than a young woman of modest, stylish dress, and cheerful demeanor. Yet her prowess as a martial artist is quickly apparent when evil presents itself and her body becomes a fluid weapon. As one of the few known pupils of the legendary master, Joramus, Aunyx is a heroine of grace and precision.

A foundling raised by a wandering tribe of Gadjarrian halflings, Aunyx grew into a spirited lass with a big heart and matching temper. When she reached adolescence, her foster parents brought her to a monastery, hoping to give her the stability and discipline the vagabond halflings could not offer. Aunyx's restlessness could not long endure the inaction of ascetic study. Impressed with her outspoken conviction to bring justice to a world in need, Joramus, a visiting master, took her as his pupil. Together they set out from the monastery and wandered the Northlands for two years until Joramus eventually returned to his solitary journeys.

Aunyx is often found in the company of halflings and typically wanders the land with her friend and mount, a slightly addled light warhorse named Whirlwind. Aunyx wears *bracers of armor (+3)* and favors a *+2 thundering club* when faced with opponents she'd rather not touch—especially oozes, fungi, and most undead.

King Azghaar

(LE male sahuagin Rgr16, Str 19, Dex 16, Wis 16, Cha 16)

A sahuagin mutant unparalleled among his kind in the arts of war, Azghaar V is the king of the Undersea kingdom known as Azghaar-aqin. All who have learned his name fear the sahuagin king, and his sovereignty is a tangible presence within the isles of Dujamar, the Javran Sea, and even the town of Rutuan.

Beneath the waves, his influence reaches further still. Smaller principalities of sea devils pay tribute to him, extant only at his behest. Yet King Azghaar placates the krakens that dwell at the bottom of the Javran Sea, and they provide gifts of magical treasures—culled from the detritus of centuries of shipwrecks—in exchange for the fresh victims he supplies them. Their demands have increased over the years, and King Azghaar's pride will not suffer them indefinitely. Though he looks to the dry lands of Xulmec and the Criestine Colonies for future conquest, Azghaar knows his monstrous benefactors are instrumental to victory. At present, he is torn between bolstering their support or seeking alliances to supplant them.

Azghaar's mate is a malenti assassin named Ivtana—an ambassador from a foreign kingdom of sahuagin with designs against the Lirean Sea elves. Their consortion is as political as it is disconcerting to his kind—she resembling a fragile aquatic elf and he a four-armed mutant. Both keep the company of the cunning priests of Elas and mad cultists of Sothulth.

King Azghaar wields a *+3 icy burst trident* and wears a *periapt of wound closure* and *bracers of armor (+5)*. On his belt, he wears a stolen *horn of the tritons*, its former owner's skull mounted upon Azghaar's gruesome scepter, which functions as a *rod of rulership*.

Black Covey

Comprised of Alunine (CE female annis Sor13, Str 25, Cha 16), Meglea (CE female green hag Sor9, Str 19, Cha 18), and Sayocia (CE female green hag Sor7/Rog5, Str 19, Dex 18, Cha 15), the sisters of the Black Covey are the governing body of the Dujamar town of Rutuan. Approximately twenty years ago, the three hags convened in the marshes of Dujamar from their respective

homes in remote places of the Known Realms. The *crystal balls* they had used to communicate with one another they fused into a single *hag eye* of great power. Dispatching the thuggish rulers of Rutuan, the Black Covey was formed and declared its authority. The bodies of those who resisted their rule still decorate the town.

The hags live in an oversized cottage at the center of town. Guests to the Covey's home who retain their sanity afterward have trouble conveying the unspeakable horrors they witnessed within. A squad of ogres and their imposing boss, the lycanthrope Guloresh, enforce the Covey's laws and disturbing whims. Among their many secrets, the Covey has imprisoned a storm giant in the earth beneath their cottage, warping him with foul magics in the hopes of breeding a new servitor.

Black Dougal

(CN male human Rog14, Dex 20, Int 15, Cha 17)

Every back-alley cutpurse worth his shiv has heard of the infamous Black Dougal, rogue nonpareil. A thin, swarthy rogue with dark curls and black, dispassionate, eyes, the nefarious Dougal has been reported dead on multiple occasions, only to resurface anew with fresh scars and another fortune—which is quickly spent on women and wine.

A master of two-weapon combat, Dougal fights with the elven short sword *Ravenward* and a long knife named *Ironrain*. Both weapons bear multiple enchantments and have histories nearly as illustrious as their master's. *Ironrain*, specifically, is responsible for Dougal's penchant for survival: If the knife's master should ever perish, the blade teleports a portion of his corpse to a holding area until Dougal can be resurrected by a cleric. This also accounts for the speed with which Dougal spends his fortunes.

Black Dougal makes his home in the Free City of Soulgrave and is often found in the company of his master, Boss Bomar. Dougal was last seen riding north towards the Saint's Blood Mountains. Whispers allege he was sent on a quest to breach the legendary Iron Crypt of the Heretics.

Boss Bomar

(LN male half-orc War5/Rog3, Str 13, Int 15, Wis 14)

Unofficial master of the streets of the Free City of Soulgrave, Boss Bomar rules with a delicate balance of crude humor and quick violence. Despite his appearance as a carefree brute, Bomar seldom takes an action without considering its consequences. He simply analyzes situations so quickly that most assume that he doesn't think at

all. The barrel-chested half-orc is seldom seen without his escorts: lovely harlots that double as well-paid assassins.

Caarathyr Amond

(NG female elf Rgr8/Sor5, Dex 17, Wis 16, Cha 15)

One of seven Wardens of the Blackbriar Wood, Caarathyr is tasked with monitoring the game trails and paths leading in and out of the Blackbriar. A merry, lively elf-maid, Caarathyr (or Mistress Caar as she is known to her rangers) is quick to laugh, her voice ringing through the sun-dappled woods like a birdsong. It therefore comes as a surprise to many when evil humanoids or monsters enter the Blackbriar, and this same elf-maid transforms into a solemn huntress.

Caarathyr is deadly with a bow, and—while she seldom boasts of her skill—ranks among the deadliest archers in the North. Her prized possession is a composite bow made of cherry ash and dragon horn. Inscribed with flowing, elvish script, it is said the enchanted bow refuses to be strung by any but its mistress.

Captain Sentri

(LG male human Ftr14, Str 17, Con 15, Wis 14, Cha 15)

Master of the Sable March and General of the Seven Armies, Captain Sentri is renowned throughout the North as a paragon of virtue and righteousness. At heart a humble, loyal warrior of Crieste, Sentri is forced to play games of cloak and dagger to protect his nation's Child-Emperor. To rely on deception galls Sentri, but his plots

are no less cunning for his qualms.

The heir to eleven generations of warrior-lords, Sentri is steeped in the warrior traditions of Crieste. As a young soldier, he proved his skill and courage fighting on the borderlands. Afterward, Sentri traveled widely, serving first as a bodyguard to Criestine nobles, and then as a knight-ambassador to Crieste's far-flung allies. Sentri is loathe to speak of his adventures, but his private chambers bear treasures and trophies collected from across the Known Realms.

A dashing warrior in his early thirties, Sentri is broad of shoulder and a natural leader of men. The Knights of the Sable March are always recruiting upright young warriors, and the captain has an eye for talent. Most at home in a suit of mail on the field of battle, Sentri is less comfortable in the duplicitous courts of Crieste. Among aristocrats, he carries himself with a solemn silence. What the court sycophants mistake for stupidity is actually a warrior's wariness among enemies—and Sentri's suspicions are seldom misplaced.

King Chull'pak

(LN male mummy lord Clr14, Str 26, Wis 21, Cha 17)

The practice of mummification by the Amoya people seldom involves necromancy, but the city-state's need brought its former king back from the repose of death in a divine ritual. King Chull'pak is a mummy lord of solemn, but noble disposition. The protection of his people is paramount to Chull'pak, and he will personally slay any who threatens the holy shrines and sacred relics of the city. As a high priest of Anahuara, the king has been known to offer powerful healing and even resurrection magic to adventurers in exchange for service to his city. Missions against the drakon are more often than not the form such service takes.

Chull'pak wears a suit of *+2 bonemail armor* fashioned from the remains of his great-grandfather and carries a silvered *+4 lucent drakon bane heavy mace*, a weapon he put to considerable use when he lived. Now he wields it like a scepter and rallies his people whenever the snake men from Ssorlang dare venture into the Anduran Mountains.

Queen Citlalli

(NG female human Ari6/Clr4, Wis 16, Cha 17)

It is said that the dazzling Queen Citlalli spends more time aboard her family's longboats than in the city proper, yet the middle-aged queen does not neglect her duties as monarch of the second most powerful Xulmec city-state. The ruling family oversees all maritime trade for Athua, and in such foreign affairs Citlalli demonstrates she is as much a businesswoman as she is a queen. The Athuans fear little in the Surya Sea, but the brooding ruin of Ayoxatlan remains the exception. Queen Citlalli has been known to use her family's wealth to bribe adventurers into exploring its infamous depths to spare her people the risk.

Cozette LeRoux

(NE human female Rog6/Ftr2/Duelist 7, Dex 16, Int 18, Cha 17)

The youngest Barrier Lord the Isles have ever known, Cozette was born in the squalor of Bloodport thirty-one years ago. The daughter of a copperless waif and a murderous pirate, at the age of seven Cozette was sold into slavery. The Sirens of Pelagia soon seized the slave ship and Cozette was eventually dropped off in a Blihai orphanage, where she was adopted by a wealthy couple and given a formal education. At the age of twenty-one, Cozette joined the Sirens. After spending a few years learning all she could about piracy and her own lineage, she murdered the Siren captain of her ship and seized it as her own.

The next ten years she spent making a name for herself, climbing her way up the Imperial Navy's wanted list. Her lust for slaughter, equal to her lust for gold, has made the surname LeRoux one of the most dreaded on the open sea. The fearless Cozette shares rulership of the Isles with Lord Raazt but she is still in the prime of her life, spending as much time at the helm of her schooner, *The*

Banshee, as she does in her opulent manor in Bloodport.

Cozette wears her russet-red tresses loose or braided, and is seldom seen without her black leather coat (which functions as a *cloak of the manta ray*) and her *+3 keen saber*. She possesses many magical items, the best of which are cached in the cellars beneath her manor and guarded with a host of deadly traps. Though she is not proficient in the use of spells, she has an appreciation for necromancy and often employs wizards to animate her dismembered victims.

The Crone

(CN female ogre-mage Drd6/Sor20/Epic5, Str 18, Con 21, Wis 18, Cha 22)

Little is known about the ancient sorceress known as the Crone. Thirteenth and mightiest in a world-spanning coven of witches, the Crone makes her home somewhere in the far reaches of the North, appearing as the mood strikes her and often going unseen for entire decades. The withered, hunchbacked ogre-hag has been known to appear before noble heroes, offering power and wealth in return for assistance on peculiar quests. Compliance is never *demanded*, but those that are foolish enough to ridicule or scorn the Crone are rarely seen again.

Cyn Alfwen

(LE female half-elf Pal8/Blk5, Str 14, Wis 15, Cha 16)

As a commander serving in the armies of Leherti, Alfwen witnessed the Fall of Leherti firsthand. Fleeing from before the rush of the Scourge, Alfwen sought refuge among the bandit lands of the Freeholds. Cyn quickly rose through the ranks of brigands, her feverish self-hatred driving her to increasingly greater depths of madness. Despite the insanity that plagues her, the blackguard is a capable leader and tactician, commanding her small army of brigands with precision and skill. Now the brigand queen of Bald Tower, Alfwen leads regular raids on the Free Cities. The half-elf's single weakness is her seething hatred for soldiers of Leherti.

Cyn dresses in arms and armor appropriate to a brigand queen. She dons spiked half-plate for battle, and fights with a black-bladed bastard sword. The sword is said to be a gift of her demon patron, the half-plate recovered from the corpse of a defeated Scourge general.

Daessa

(CG female brightvenom drakon Ari1/Mnk5/Rog7, Dex 17, Wis 15, Cha 15)

Orphaned by the Brood of Ahzari, Daessa travels the Known Realms in opposition to all assassins. Sometimes called "the assassin killer"—an epithet usually misunderstood—she is attracted to adventurers who challenge authority and champion the less fortunate. Jaded by the arrogance and cruel whims of her own kind, Daessa is not accustomed to trusting even her allies and seldom speaks her intentions directly.

When her aristocratic family was slain by the Brood of Ahzari, Daessa escaped Ssorlang and found temporal peace among the macabre monks of the Lamasery of the Dead. Eventually she returned to the streets of Myashtlan, her ancestral home, and embraced the arts of a thief, studying the Brood assassins from the shadows. Someday she intends to infiltrate the Moryan Temple itself, and she searches always for powerful companions to help her.

When she moves about in Ssorlang society, Daessa plays the part of a flattering courtesan, hoping to insinuate herself into influential circles. When abroad, she plays the part of a Ssorlang ambassador and tries to manipulate others to her cause. Daessa wears a silken *cloak of charisma (+4)* and proudly carries a *+4 stealth keris*, a deadly weapon and trophy she pried from the dead hands of an elder Brood assassin.

Dolgar Thraciov

(CG male gnome Sor5, Int 17, Wis 16)

One of the most sought-after figures in all the dwarven courts of Taijin, this bitter, cranky gnome sorcerer would like nothing better than to disappear into one of the deep catacombs of the Herrenia Mountains. Unfortunately for him, the crown of Taijin will not let him leave the confines of the kingdom. For in Dolgar's possession is a potent artifact—a crystal known as the *Eye of the Bloodwyrm*—capable of seeing the future and of translating the omens and portents of prophecy. Although the gnome sorcerer has little idea of how to control the device, he is able to do so with far better accuracy and results than any other being on Áereth. His abilities with the *Eye* are deemed to be quite important to the kingdom of Taijin, important enough to make the gnome sorcerer a permanent—albeit pampered—guest of the crown.

When not on official business with the courts of Taijin, Dolgar can typically be found in the alehouses and taverns of Raiju Khor, regaling all within earshot with tales of his many adventures. For not long ago, Dolgar was a noted explorer and adventurer, battling his way to fortune and glory. He longs to become an adventureer once more, and to rid himself of the *Eye* and all its power—though he does not long for dwarven soldiers to shove spears in his back as he attempt to escape Taijin. Should he ever cross the path of another adventurer, he eagerly demands details of all their tales and exploits—and should they be sufficiently exciting to his longing ears, Dolgar may tempt fate and try to join his new "friends" in a life of adventure …

Abbot Kallus Wayrenne

(LG male human Mnk3/Clr12, Wis 18, Cha 16)

Ordained as the head of the Abbey of St. Terinmora, Abbot Wayrenne is a man of unflinching piety. His stern demeanor, which seems standoffish with one's first visit to the abbey, is tempered by his compassion for those who seek the absolution of the gods. The Abbot serves Gorhan foremost, but beseeches all the benevolent gods of the Sancturn Pantheon for their protection of his ministries. Even the Xulmecs of the abbey who still practice the rituals of their native gods find Wayrenne to be tolerant of their spirituality.

The Chuzecs would conquer the abbey and sacrifice its inhabitants to their god, but thanks to Abbot Wayrenne's vigilance, it has remained safe. Unbeknownst to all, however, he is dying, slowly falling prey to a divine curse laid upon him by Xolatl, the Fire Priest. Though the Abbot's faith will save his soul, it will not save his life. Wayrenne's search for a worthy successor has him eyeing all visiting clerics with great scrutiny. He has been known to test the faith of adventuring clerics by asking great quests of them in exchange for powerful healing and holy relics.

Abbot Wayrenne carries a *staff of healing* and possesses a *phylactery of undead turning*.

Elarabeth

(NG female half-elf Ftr3/Rog4/Duelist 6, Dex 16, Int 17, Cha 18)

Possessed of emerald green hair, sea-blue eyes, and skin of palest green, the lady mayor of Halcyon presents an impressive figure. Elarabeth is a veteran mariner and retired Siren, but has settled into the politics of Halcyon to preserve the city as a bastion of safety amidst the turbulent, pirate-infested Empyrean.

Elarabeth's father was a Criestine imperial officer killed when she was only a child. Her mother, a sea elf priestess of Pelagia, was tortured and crucified by the pirates of the Barrier Isles, and for this crime Elarabeth opposes them at every opportunity. Whether funding the Sirens' continued efforts or acting as a benefactor for adventurers contesting with the Barrier pirates, Lady Elarabeth uses her family inheritance and personal wealth to make the Empyrean Ocean a safer place for all.

Elarabeth uses a *+3 frost rapier* in combat and wears a *ring of water elemental command*.

Eldren Madrigan (Tirend)

(N male human Ari5/Brd12, Dex 15, Int 18, Wis 16, Cha 19)

Eldren is the gilded heir of the Madrigan estate and along with his twin sister, Gwynathra, guildmaster of the League of Resonance like his father before him. A young man both handsome and arrogant, Eldren is the quintessential aristocrat and a foppish bard, but behind the veneer of indulgence hides a rare cunning. Fully enmeshed in the political aspects of his office, he allows his sister to travel abroad and avoid the entanglements of diplomacy.

Few who look upon the golden-haired Eldren would suspect the strings he pulls among the sovereigns of the Northlands. Fewer still know his secret: he is, in fact, Tirend Madrigan, the founder of the League of Resonance. The same magic that devastated the University of Arven Phael centuries ago transferred his spirit into the body of an absent cousin. The same magic has kept his transient mind alive through each successive

generation. When his body dies, he inhabits the body of his son a number of years afterwards, or his closest male relative. Despite his efforts, Tirend has been unable to break this curse or keep his spirit in one place. Unlike his sister, Maera, he has yielded to the magic and has even grown comfortable with it.

The League of Resonance has been his greatest love since its founding centuries ago, and Tirend intends to see its designs reach fruition. The majority of Áereth's most renowned bards report directly to him, and only a select few know his true identity.

Wealthy and resourceful, Eldren always wears a suit of *+3 glamered leather* altered to resemble the next fashion in courtier attire. He carries a *+4 dancing rapier* at all times and makes frequent use of his *pipes of sounding* to impress fans and enemies alike.

Guloresh

(CE male ogre werecrocodile Ftr8, Str 23, Int 12, Wis 14, Cha 7)

An oversized ogre of disturbing and stolid demeanor, Guloresh reports directly to Alunine of Rutuan's Black Covey. For his impeccable loyalty, the annis called upon spirits of the Dujamar marshes and gifted him with lycanthropy. The ogres that he commands are typical brutes for their kind, but Guloresh keeps them in line with uncompromising intimidation and a marked lack of bravado. Something sinister and collected lurks behind the eyes of this formidable ogre champion, and it belongs to the hag Alunine.

Guloresh wields a *+2 adamantine warhammer* and bears a *+1 heavy wooden shield of arrow catching*.

Gwynathra Madrigan (Maera)

(CG female human Ari4/Brd6/Wiz7, Dex 17, Int 17, Cha 19)

Gwynathra is the golden-haired twin of Eldren Madrigan and guildmistress of the League of Resonance. Though she has great wealth at her disposal, Gwynathra seems a wayward spirit, choosing a life in the saddle over the indulgences of her inheritance.

Yet Gwynathra, like her brother, is more than she seems. Born Maera Madrigan, she was once the beautiful and privileged twin of Tirend Madrigan, patriarch of the family and founder of the League of Resonance. When the magic disaster claimed the University of Arven Phael and the lives of those in attendance, Maera's spirit survived in the body of a relative. The experience did little to change her, however. She remained spoiled and pretentious, seeing the rebirth as another pleasure to enjoy.

The passage of centuries has changed her. Having lived countless lifetimes in the bodies of her own descendants, Maera has grown humble. Witnessing war after war, she has even come to believe in her brother's work and the pacifistic goals of the League itself. While Eldren handles the politics of the Madrigan estate, Maera wanders the Known Realms in the body of the wayward Gwynathra. Even as she carries out her duties as a renowned Resonare, Maera searches always for the means to break the curse. She is weary of stealing the bodies of her own bloodline, and hopes to find release for herself and her brother.

Maera, in the identity of Gwynathra, wears inexpensive travel clothes, but her true wealth is evident in the magical items she possesses. She wields a *rapier of puncturing* and wears *bracers of armor (+3),* a *ring of protection (+5),* and *boots of levitation*. For the research she undertakes, she makes constant use of her *bag of holding (type IV)*.

Imorag the Wise

(LN male nalvor Clr12, Dex 15, Wis 19, Cha 19)

Wandering through the endless sands of the Ghetrian Desert is Imorag the Wise, a powerful nalvor cleric in the service of the god Soleth. How this nalvor from the Lostlands came to be a disciple of Soleth is unknown; however, what is certain is that the desert cleric is one of the god's most faithful—and powerful—servants.

Although the flesh of Imorag the Wise has literally been burned and charred to a blackened husk, and though his tongue has been torn out by fearful nalvor elders, the wizened priest is still an imposing—some would even say frightening—figure. Despite the absence of a tongue, Imorag still speaks with the thunderous voice of angels, able to inspire great hope or great fear with a mere word. He is a stern, imposing individual, dressed only in threadbare robes. He only carries a rusted mace as a weapon.

Imorag travels from town to town, city to city, in the remnants of the old Khonsurian Empire, urging all whom he encounters to abandon the old, corrupt way of the sphinx and to embrace the divine power of Soleth. Though branded as a blasphemer by the government of Xa Deshret, the cleric of Soleth is no longer hunted as a criminal. His power has grown far too great, and all prior attempts to kill Imorag—hanging, burial beneath the desert sands, burning at the stake—have failed, serving only to make the legend of Imorag more powerful than before. Though constantly on the move, Imorag can frequently be found in the poorer sections of the cities of Xa Deshret, healing the sick and fervently preaching the words of his divine master Soleth.

Isolia Seyene

(N female human Rog5/Brd7, Dex 16, Int 15, Wis 16, Cha 18)

Although she was raised in the impoverished, slum districts of Kassantia, one would not think that the cultured, silver-tongued lord-baroness to be anything but a pure-blooded aristocrat. Having studied the wealthy as her prey, young Isolia Seyene quickly learned to emulate their manners to make stealing their fine jewelry an easier feat. But Isolia was whisked away from her childhood crimes by a handsome young bard for a romantic voyage touring the Empyrean Ocean. She enjoyed a wedding at sea, losing her heart to both her new husband and the azure waters of Pelagia's domain. When their ship was scuttled by the infamous pirate lord Raazt, Isolia fell into the sea where she was rescued by merfolk before the sadistic scrag could find her. Rage against the Barrier pirates and her newfound passion for the sea led the anguished Isolia inexorably to the Sirens of Pelagia.

Fifteen years later, Isolia is a Criestine lord-baroness who serves as the Sirens' chief mainland contact. She recruits for new blood and entreats the wealthy and political to donate to their cause. The largest mercantile arrangements for Siren protection pass through Isolia's hands even as she keeps the Sirens from falling into the political intrigues of Lady Mortianna. Out of the public eye, Lord-Baroness Seyene often looks for trustworthy adventurers to carry out the missions her office restricts her from taking.

Queen Itlanexca

(LG female human Ari2/Clr1, Int 18, Cha 15)

At the tender age of fourteen, the young Queen of Teotcoatlan is already a wise asset to her people. Betrothed to King Mactezu, Itlanexca is idealistic but not naïve to the truths of the world; leading Teotcoatlan to continued glory and goodness is a path fraught with many enemies.

Along with the king, Itlanexca is tutored by the wisdom of the guardian naga Nonotzale. She is an acolyte to the virtues of Cynhara in an attempt to raise the goddess from the slumber of divine death. Madrah grants her spells for the time being.

Possessing long hair of radiant silver—an anomaly among her people—the young queen wears upon her head a feathered crown that functions like a *helm of telepathy*. When visited by foreign dignitaries she has a reason to distrust, Itlanexca has no qualms about reading their thoughts.

Jolene Carignan

(CN female human Ftr7/Rog7, Dex 16, Int 16)

To most of the populace of Morena Nova, Jolene Carignan is the attractive third daughter of a minor nobleman. She is also one of the most notorious bandits in the region, robbing the plantations of Morena Nova with daring and style. In recent times, she has expanded the reach of her larcenous greed far past the borders of her homeland, robbing the coffers of Taijin as well as many treasure troves hidden throughout Xa Deshret. Her band of fellow outlaws—the Company of the Black Fox, as they have come to be known—are also the sons and daughters of the Morenan royal court. Though their identities remain secret, each bolder, grander exploit executed by Jolene and her Company brings the threat of discovery ever closer.

In the courts of Morena Nova, Jolene Carignan is a shy and demure lady. When leading the Company of the Black Fox on one of their infamous raids, however, she is vain, arrogant, and known to frequently say a bawdy word or two to her traveling companions. She is one of the best horse riders in all the land, and is renowned—though only behind the black mask of the bandit—for her remarkable skill with handheld crossbows. Of late, she has taken to more and more daring exploits, robbing vaults said to be impenetrable, stealing the biggest and grandest treasures to be found in Morena Nova. Most of what she and her Company steal is either carelessly tossed into caves or given to the poor—for them, thievery is best done for the thrill.

Joramus

(LG human male Mnk18, Str 16, Dex 18, Wis 20)

With his modest appearance and calming demeanor, one would not think the aging Master Joramus capable of the feats to which legends hold. His iron-gray hair and soft blue eyes hide the passions of a fervent hero. But Joramus is not on the road to champion righteous causes—this he did in his youth, and he has moved into the twilight of his years. Rather, this pilgrim is in the business of *making* heroes. As he wanders the Known Realms, Master Joramus constantly searches for pupils on whom to bequeath his arts. His deeds, and the new heroes he has given rise to, have made Joramus one of the most legendary humans in the current age. In some lands, his name is the utterance of myth.

Not all who meet Joramus will find his favor, but those of goodly heart who cross paths with him will be the safer for it. He offers wisdom and advice in soft-spoken tones, never preaching, never forceful. Bardic tales claim that Joramus has visited gold dragons in their remote aeries, has consulted with the sphinxes of long-faded Khonsuria, and has supped with elder nagas of old Zimala. Less well known is the fact that aside from his great martial prowess, Joramus also happens to wear a pair of *bracers of armor (+5)* and puts a pair of *+4 holy merciful nunchaku* carved from the bones of a fallen titan to good use.

Kaede Ryu

(CG female half-dragon [green] Ftr8, Str 22, Con 19, Cha 14)

The undeniable crowd favorite of the gladiatorial fighting pits of Djeser al-Maqqara, Kaede Ryu is both beautiful and deadly. For the most part, her dragon heritage is difficult to detect; only glittering green scales on her forearms and her emerald flowing hair betray the fact that she is not purely human. A slave that was reputedly captured in the jungles of the Southlands, Kaede Ryu is said to be adept with all weapons, though the longspear is her favorite. She knows how to work a crowd, and how to put on a show while fighting to the death—something that has earned her the love of the entire city. Despite the fact that she earned her freedom from the gladiator pits years ago, she continues to fight as a free warrior, commanding hefty appearance fees each time she steps into battle.

Of late, Kaede Ryu has begun her own gladiatorial school, selecting the finest slaves in the city and instructing them in the arts of war. Although it was welcomed at first by the city, Lord Marko Hellmont and other powerful figures in Djeser al-Maqqara have lately grown concerned, wondering if Kaede Rye is forming an army of gladiators … or an actual army. Rumor has it that many of the weaker slaves purchased by Kaede Ryu are simply given their freedom and sent to the Northlands, a thought that the Slavers' Council cannot accept. For the moment, her massive popularity amongst the commonfolk of Djeser al-Maqqara make the dragon warrior untouchable to her enemies.

Lady Kesheba, Magister of the Aurora

(NG female human, Wiz11, Int 17, Cha 14)

Few rulers are as devoted to their people as the baroness of Koranth. The beauty of Lady Kesheba is legendary throughout the North, and she is regularly besieged by suitors. But the devotions expressed by her paramours pale before the love Lady Kasheba bears for her country.

This love is a double-edged blade. Koranth is a nation of free-willed wizards and mages, and rallying the spellcasters to a cause other than their own mystical research can be nearly impossible. Seeing her nation beset on all sides, Lady Kesheba has been forced to seek out magical means of ensuring the mages' compliance.

The fair Magister of the Aurora is desperate for loyal agents who will carry out missions on behalf of Koranth, and will pay handsomely for discrete adventurers with a knack for survival against long odds.

Kashya

(CG female half-elf PsyWar12, Str 16, Dex 17, Wis 16)

As one of the Captains of the Wanderers, Kashya travels the wilds of the Northlands in search of psionic-using creatures in need of liberation. Herself orphaned by abhorrent creatures in a village near the Vermilion Steppes, Kashya is passionately devoted to the liberation of all who suffer from the sins of the wicked. Lately she has taken to attacking slaver caravans bound for the markets of Djeser al-Maqqara. Kashya looks always for allies against the subjugation of the innocent.

Wearing *+3 elven chain* and wielding a *psychic longsword* known as the Revenant Blade, Kashya is a formidable foe, making frequent use of her *claws of the beast* power in conjunction with her sword. With her hair half-braided and woven with beads (and other sundry trinkets), her fiery amber eyes, and dark-skinned, tattooed body, this half-elf appears savage or barbaric to Northland eyes. Kashya's truest friend is her vibrant green psicrystal, Y'na ("hero" personality).

Khorjala the Hawk

(N male human Rgr9/Asn5, Str 15, Dex 18, Con 16, Wis 15, Cha 14)

The leader of the Lehertian resistance is known to be a noble general and natural leader of men, a courageous hero emerging from the ruins of war to serve Leherti in its darkest hour.

Nothing could be further from the truth.

Before the Fall of Leherti, the man calling himself Khorjala was awaiting execution in the dungeons of Araloges. When the Scourge swept over the city, the convict fought his way to freedom, eluding both his captors and the swarming hordes of orcs. Working his way south to the Free Cities, the convict killed Scourge soldiers out of necessity, inadvertently drawing the attention and support of the Lehertian resistance.

For the first time in the assassin's life, he found himself welcomed with open arms. The same crimes that labeled him a criminal now made him a hero of the common people. Arriving in the Free Cities, he adopted the name Khorjala, accepted the promotion to general, and has been taking the fight to the Scourge ever since.

Khorjala's success has not gone unnoticed by Tarkhan Khurzog. The demon-ogre knows something of Khorjala's past as an assassin, and delights in the power he wields over his greatest enemy. It is only a matter of time before the demon-ogre offers Khorjala a choice: Join the Scourge or be exposed as an imposter and assassin.

Khaine Gyles Durran

(NG male human Ftr10, Str 16, Dex 19, Wis 14, Cha 14)

Formerly a proud knight in the service of the Grand Duchy of Leherti, Sir Giles Durran was exiled from Crieste for his supposed failures during the Fall of Leherti. Whether these failures were genuine or trumped-up charges by others, no one can say, for Durran does not speak of his time in Crieste anymore, save to mention that he has a daughter there.

Following his exile, Durran made his way to the Lostlands, where he lived handsomely as a mercenary fighter for many years. His unrivaled prowess with the longbow caught the eye of one of the Vermilion Tribes, who asked him to join their number. Surprisingly, he did, and his blunt, no-nonsense attitude, as well as his legendary ferocity in combat, allowed him to quickly rise in the normally reclusive Tribe society, eventually leading him to become the ruling Khaine of the Huligai Tribe. He has begun to combine the traditional battle tactics of the Vermilion Tribes with those of the armies of the Northlands, turning the Tribes into an even deadlier fighting force. He is a quiet, unassuming man who says little and prefers to lead by example, but those who know him well say that revenge still burns brightly in his heart.

Leton N'Rhyll

(NG male halfling Brd8, Str 14, Dex 18, Int 16)

Leton N'Rhyll is one of the most well-known bards in the entire world. Although not the sweetest singer nor the most skilled with a lyre, there is not a tale or song in the entire world that Leton N'Rhyll does not know. His memory is legendary: The halfling bard has but to hear a song once, or see a scrap of parchment for a mere moment, and it is committed forever to his memory. Although the earnest young halfling has already traveled the realms of Áereth thrice over, he always returns to his humble tent in Gadjarria.

Leton's uncanny memory has made him part of many an adventure, albeit usually against his will. Though the bard would like to say that his appearance in royal courts throughout the world is entirely due to his good looks and sense of humor, the truth is that thieves constantly conspire to enlist his aid in their grandiose schemes. Leton has been kidnapped on well over a dozen occasions by ambitious bandits, hoping that the halfling bard can perhaps memorize a stolen treasure map for them, or recall a line from an ancient prophecy. For this reason, the feisty halfling bard, who possesses an overwhelmingly grand appetite for good food and fine wine, is notoriously wary of strangers with swords, particularly those who seem eager to ask him about tales of adventure.

Linni

(N female halfling Brd8/Psi5, Dex 16, Int 16, Cha 18)

As one of the Captains of the Wanderers, the halfling Linni travels the known roads of the Northlands in order to find psionic-using creatures in need of a home. As a psion and bard, she conceals her psionic talent from the ignorant and proclaims it to those who share it. Linni rides a valiant war pony named Marigold, using telepathic powers and dramatic songs to mislead her enemies and search for those in need.

Linni wears a suit of *+2 glamered leather armor* and favors her *+2 seeking shortbow* when forced into battle. She sings old songs of her ancestry in Gadjarrian and composes new ballads for Elraydia, but Linni's greatest passion finds expression through her masterwork drums. Her everyday companion is her psicrystal, Chenneth ("sympathetic" personality)—which means "grandmother" in Halfling—who has been known to scold Linni when it disapproves of her actions.

Loremer d'Arisseux

(N male human Ari2/Rog1, Int 15)

Motivated by greed and fear of responsibility, Loremer will do anything to ensure his position as mayor of Pleniere. Fortunately, such motivations often coincide with the safety of the town itself. When things are going well for him, Loremer assists explorers in smuggling Southland contraband through the Criestine tax system.

King Mactezu

(LG male human Ari2/Pal1, Wis 16, Cha 18)

Just fifteen years old, the young King of Teotcoatlan is already a proficient warrior on the path to greatness. Mactezu is still impressionable, but his secret mentor, the elder naga Nonotzale, and his betrothed, Queen Itlanexca, are his chief allies against a world of enemies: jealous nobles and foreign powers who would take the rulership of the most powerful Xulmec city-state from his youthful hands.

A paladin of many virtues, Mactezu's skills remain untested against the dangers of the world. He and his queen are guarded by the royal guard, an elite order of fighter/rangers who are always close at hand—except when Mactezu and Itlanexca meet with their serpentine mentor. Nonotzale teaches the young sovereigns the value of tolerance, so King Mactezu is willing to meet with foreigners if they have anything to offer Teotcoatlan, whether in the form of martial prowess, arcane knowledge, or simply information about faraway lands.

The dark-eyed young king keeps a *flame tongue* on his person at all times, a gift from Viceroy Durand. Mactezu is a handsome youth beloved by most of his subjects.

The Maelidoch

(LE male tiefling Wiz16, Dex 14, Con 6, Int 22)

The grim master of the Sireal Citadel is a demon half-blood trapped in a body crippled by an occult disease. The Maelidoch's tiefling traits aren't readily apparent as such, and he wears a black mask and heavy cloak to disguise the deformities that mark him as other than human. The wizard's body is covered in scaled scar tissue born of the disease that burns through his blood and makes his skin hot to the touch. Whether this blood-plague is the physical manifestation of the wizard's infernal ancestry or the result of his wicked experiments is unknown.

The Maelidoch is amoral and indifferent to the suffering of others, but seldom cruel for the sake of cruelty. He per-

forms endless cycles of experiments on the prison's inmates, twisting and shaping flesh like a sculptor shapes clay. The vast majority of Sireal's inmates never see the warden, but those who do cross the paths of the Maelidoch report a tall, silent man-thing cloaked in black, and trailing an aura of death and decay.

The Maelidoch holds himself aloof from the internecine politicking of the lord-barons, ruling his island prison free of corruption and outside influence. Curiously, the Maelidoch bears an unswerving loyalty to the Child-Emperor of Crieste. Like the wizard's crippling disease, the origins of this devotion are a mystery to all but the Maelidoch and his master.

Melisine d'Aurielle

(NG human female Sor8, Dex 17, Int 19, Cha 18)

The brilliant and beautiful Melisine d'Aurielle was tutored with her innate magic from a young age, and she enjoyed a carefree and spoiled life of magic and luxury. After an old mentor recommended she and her sister, Amarante, to the Royal Academy of Sorcery in Kassantia, she found her life changing dramatically. Her vanity and pride paved the way to an impressive reputation and soon the crown assigned her to the prestigious Beryl Conclave in the town of Voltigeur across the Empyrean.

Melisine became one of the arcane protectors of the Criestine Colonies, but she sees the assignment as an insult to her talents. Though well meaning in her station, she dreams of greater ambitions and has taken to researching local legends in hopes of finding the recognition she feels she deserves.

Melisine's inheritance and natural talent has yielded her a number of magical possessions. She wears an *amulet of natural armor (+2), bracers of armor (+4),* a *ring of blinking*, a *ring of regeneration*, and a host of jewelry.

Morgan Ironwolf

(NG female human Ftr9/Rgr4, Str 15, Con 17, Wis 14)

Raven haired, iron willed, and wild eyed, Ironwolf fought her way up from the rank of a common sellsword to the command of her own mercenary company. When the Duchy of Leherti fell to the Scourge, the Company of the Ironwolf was trapped behind the armies of the advancing horde. Morgan Ironwolf and her company of soldiers rallied the citizens of the city of Yithain. Led by the brazen warrior, the company turned the tide of the battle, and Yithain remains free to this day.

A young woman with a quiet temper and a strong sense of justice, Ironwolf leads her warriors by example. Before the Fall of Leherti, she had little reason to risk the wrath of the Scourge. But having witnessed the Tarkhan's cruelty firsthand, Ironwolf's conscience compels her to defend the forsaken refugees of Occupied Leherti.

The warrior commonly wears a fine suit of *elven chain mail* given to her by the elves of the Blackbriar, and carries a shield emblazoned with the company's sigil. She fights with a cunning mix of sound tactics and unrivaled bravery.

Lady Mortianna

(LE female human Ari4/Sor13, Int 14, Cha 19)

The coldly beautiful Lady Mortianna rules Crieste as Vizier to the Child-Emperor. Her plots span the entire continent and even reach into the Lostlands and Southlands. Some of the finest rogues and mages of the North serve as her spies, and very little transpires without the Vizier's knowledge. Her chief frustration is Captain Sentri, who, along with his Knights of the Sable March, has been able to match her schemes, move for move. Mortianna craves the humiliating defeat of her rival, and is always looking for pawns to play against Crieste's loyal son.

As befitting her position, Mortianna dresses in demure obeisance to the Child-Emperor. However, no one looking into her midnight black eyes can mistake the lady's raw ambition and force of personality. Like a marble statue, the lady has a cold, yet undeniable beauty. Many have courted the Vizier, offering to steal, lie, and even murder

on her behalf. An equal number have met their end at an executioner's axe, used and then abandoned by the lady whose affections they hoped to win.

Nentawat

(N male darkvenom drakon Ari2/Clr8, Str 15, Int 18, Wis 19, Cha 16)

The mayor-priest of Angkar is charged as caretaker of the ancient town and the sacred temple of Madrah that it oversees. A degenerate aristocrat in his youth, the drakon's heart has been humbled by decades of visiting pilgrims seeking the hidden truths of Madrah. Though he still possesses a glimmer of his racial arrogance, Nentawat has come to respect the many children of the Lord of the Earth and Sky and now he sees all foreigners as a chance to learn more about Áereth. Visitors to Angkar expecting hostility from the drakon are delightfully surprised by its soft-spoken ruler.

Nonotzale

(LG male guardian naga Clr6, Str 21, Dex 14, Con 19, Int 16, Wis 20, Cha 18)

A guardian naga of considerable power and knowledge, Nonotzale is the wise mentor behind the thrones of the Xulmec city-state of Teotcoatlan. Once a friend to the former queen of the Gilded City, now Nonotzale counsels the young King Mactezu and Queen Itlanexca with an eye to the future of all Xulmec. Lairing deep beneath the royal palace, the naga teaches the adolescent monarchs the virtues of Cynhara and the foresight of Madrah. In a land still wary of the presence of nagas, for now Nonotzale's presence remains a secret. Yet rumors have already circulated far as to the presence of *something* guiding the king and queen, and a time will come soon when the naga must reveal himself.

Hatched beneath the lost Zimalan capital city, Nonotzale spent the first half of his life fighting against the dark and spirit nagas who still haunt the ruins of the long-faded empire. When a young explorer named Cetlana found his home, a friendship was forged. Years later, when Cetlana married the king of Teotcoatlan, she invited the aging guardian naga to live with them in the palace. On her deathbed, she beseeched her old friend to care for her son and his new queen. Nonotzale has done so, and is ever vigilant against threats to his young charges.

Oro Loroth, the Mountain King

(LE male dwarf Ftr13, Str 17, Con 21, Int 14)

Few villains dominate the imaginations of the peasants in the western Northlands like the legend of Oro Loroth, the Mountain King. The renegade dwarf-lord reigns from his nigh-invulnerable mountain fastness, raiding the nations of good at will, carrying off slaves and entire troves of stolen treasure.

Taller than the average dwarf, his body decorated with tattooed runes, and his soot-stained beard as black as charcoal, Loroth cuts a fearsome image. The Mountain King's army is a ferocious mix of renegade dwarves, monstrous humanoids, human mercenaries, and beasts. While far from a match for the legions of the Steel Overlord, the Mountain King has more than enough might to defend that which is his. There will come a time when Loroth oversteps his boundaries and draws the wrath of the Overlord, but until that day he raids the southwestern slope of the Ul Dominors, terrorizing the people of the Sylvan Downs and trading the souls of his captives to infernal beings in exchange for power and demonic allies.

King Oztahua

(NG male human Ari2/Ftr8, Str 16, Wis 16, Cha 16)

King Oztahua of the Xulmec city-state of Kaatlan favors pragmatism above all else. He is predisposed toward peaceful coexistence and open trade with his neighbors,

believing in the tenets of his goddess, Calchoti. But at the slightest provocation from the Chuzecs or untoward actions from folk he does not know, Oztahua is quick to consider bloodshed and the tenets of Coatlimict. While he favors peace, he would rather allow the death of a hundred foreigners to save one of his own.

Prester "Trapmaster" Ungart

(NG male dwarf Rog14, Dex 18, Int 17)

With lockpicks in hand, a worn axe slung over his back, and a crossbow at his side, Prester "Trapmaster" Ungart has forgotten more about traps, tricks, and puzzles than most dungeon delvers will ever know. A master at deciphering lost languages and hieroglyphs, Prester made a name for himself early in his career by surviving traps and ambushes with an almost-intuitive sense for danger. Nearing retirement, the dwarf continues to roam the Known Realms in search of ever greater challenges, sometimes relishing the trap more than the treasure. He has contributed his knowledge to the creation of a handful of dungeons (most notably the Thief Lord's Vault), but Prester's first and last love will forever be exploration, preferably with a great deal of risk and reward thrown in for good measure.

Raazt

(CE male scrag Sor7/Ftr3, Str 25, Con 23, Int 15, Cha 16)

Known among fearful sailors as the Scrag Scuttler, Raazt's name is near the top of the long list of pirates wanted dead or alive by the Criestine Imperial Navy. Though he's owned several galleys, Raazt's favored method of pirating came with a unique use of necromancy: attacking ships via the hollowed-out and animated corpse of an immense dire shark he named *Lesstra*. Raazt's sobriquet stemmed from his reviled strategy of punching through the hull of his victim's ship, then surging up with his men—humans and orc-kin, mostly—through the hold. Lord Raazt made a tradition out of personally devouring the captain of each unfortunate ship as it slowly sank into the sea. Getting on in years now, Raazt has retired from the trade, setting up in Dead Man's Cove and sharing the rulership of the Barrier Isles with Cozette LeRoux, whom he despises and intends to one day kill and eat. Raazt sells his necromancy secrets and occasionally hires out *Lesstra* to wizards he feels are worthy of her.

Once a lithe specimen like most aquatic trolls, Raazt's body has rounded out since retiring from active piracy. Among other gruesome accoutrements, he wears a barbed fisherman's net over his mottled gray skin which functions as a *cloak of resistance +2* and he always keeps his *+3 cutlass of icy burst* on hand. A black leather patch (an *amulet of proof against detection and location*) covers his destroyed right eye, the painful result of an enchanted acidic dagger wound that will not regenerate. The very few who've seen what lies beneath the patch report a melted, fleshy pit that exposes part of his skull. Finding and flaying alive the Siren (see Sirens of Pelagia in Chapter 5 of the Gazetteer) who blinded him remains one of Raazt's major goals. Any lead on her whereabouts often takes priority over any other plot.

Paranoid and cruel, Raazt is in a perpetually foul mood. As a creature from cold waters, he complains constantly about the temperature of the sea around the Barrier Isles, but knows that his lot as a Barrier Lord is preferable to the short and ultimately unrewarding lifestyle of his kind. His quasit familiar, Azt, always perches on Raazt's shoulder and often parrots back the words of visitors in a mocking tone.

Raquelle Clavet

(LG female human Ari2/Ftr10, Str 15, Con 16, Wis 15, Cha 15)

Charged with the defense of the Criestine Colonies from Xulmec aggression, Lieutenant Clavet is a steel-nerved fighter. Given the nickname "princess of the borderline" (though never spoken to her face), Clavet is unwilling to exhibit vulnerability as a warrior or a woman. Her strength at arms is rivaled only by her tongue and tempered by her sense of justice. Yet these virtues and faults are softened foremost by her love for the people in her protection. Clavet is not overly prejudiced against the Xulmec natives, but her zealous devotion to the crown and her Northland kin make her an uncompromising diplomat. A former Knight of the Sable March, Clavet was charged by Captain Sentri himself to handle border disputes with Xulmec on the colonial frontier.

A fixture of Ft. Montsiang now for several years, the Omian Pass has never been safer than it is on Clavet's watch. Her soldiers are well equipped and well trained to handle the aggressions of the Chuzec warriors, but the lieutenant is always willing to hire newcomers to clear the Pass from more monstrous denizens. Such dangerous work is better handled by versatile adventurers than her Criestine soldiers.

Raylen Durand

(LE male rakshasa Rog5, Dex 16, Con 16, Int 16, Cha 17)

The real Raylend Durand was a ruthless courtier from Archbridge who beseeched Lady Mortianna for the role

of Imperial viceroy of the Criestine Colonies. Impressed with his proposals and esteemed career, she had him murdered and replaced him with a trusted otherworldly cohort—the better to control the far-off Imperial colony.

Raj-nirav, a sadistic rakshasa, relishes his guise as the pompous Viceroy Durand. With appraising eyes fixed firmly upon the Southlands, he sends regular reports to Lady Mortianna and in turn she sees to some of his Northland interests. A thorn in his side is Acatzalan, the mayor of Voltigeur, and Raquelle Clavet, the militant commander of Ft. Montsiang, do-gooders he hopes to soon replace with two of his kin, newly arrived from the far east.

The false Raylen Durand wears an *amulet of proof against detection and location* to further conceal his identity, and he keeps a *ring of djinni calling*, delighting in ordering about the noble genie bound to its owner.

Sakda

(LN male brightvenom drakon Ari8, Int 17, Wis 15, Cha 15)

This elderly drakon is the current and longstanding lord of Kanthara. He is a pragmatic ruler, and despite the accusations of human sympathy made against him, Sakda works to boost the living conditions of the slums of Kanthara. Seeking to improve the quality of the slave stock benefits both the humans and the drakon.

Saley Lonesinger

(CG female halfling Ftr7/Rog7)

The stories that surround this renowned pirate hunter seldom portray her as the halfling she is. Nicknamed the Empyrean Terror by bards, the mere sight of her standard—a shattered skull and spyglass—sends most buccaneers retreating at full sail. Saley is unrelenting in her pursuit, however, and those guilty of piracy that do not surrender are slain without mercy. When face-to-face with Saley, her enemies discover that the Empyrean Terror is a mere three and a half feet tall—yet every inch of her is worth fearing.

As leader of the Sirens of Pelagia, Saley has made many enemies. She has personally waged several sea battles against Cozette LeRoux—vicious engagements, many of which only the red-haired piratess and the diminutive Siren have survived. Saley is good humored in her everyday life, but she takes pirate-hunting very seriously. She is often encountered in the company of clerics of Soleth, Pelagia, and Olidyra. The many lives Saley has taken—always unapologetically and in the name of the greater good—has left in the steely halfling a need for frequent

penance among the gods she adores. Likewise, she has lost many friends to the cutlasses of her chosen enemies.

Saley Lonesinger wears a tailored suit of *+3 leather armor of invulnerability* and wields a *+4 human bane rapier,* a weapon she is very careful to keep from her enemies' hands.

Saraas Helsborne, the Steel Overlord

(LG male dwarf Ari3/Ftr14, Str 16, Con 17, Wis 15, Cha 14)

The ruler of the dwarven Holdfast is a passionate dwarf with midnight-black hair and a beard woven with gold and platinum. A mere three hundred years old, Helsborne stands with one foot in the past while looking to the future. This ability to balance tradition and the changing needs of the bearded mountain folk has earned Helsborne the respect and admiration of all the dwarves of the North.

Holdfast armies hold the Ul Dominor Mountains against the advance of the Scourge, a fact that is not lost on the nobles of Crieste. Helsborne trades on his nation's place as the linchpin in the North's war against the Scourge, encouraging trade with the elves and nations of men. The sole chink in Helsborne's armor is the renegade dwarf known as the Mountain King. For reasons unknown to human and dwarven sages alike, Helsborne refuses to war against the Mountain King, instead permitting the tyrannical villain to lurk in the very shadows of Helsborne's Holdfast.

Senth Lavrousse

(NG male half-elf Rgr8, Str 15, Dex 16, Wis 16)

Outcast from the Blackbriar Quarter of Voltigeur because of his mixed blood, Senth Lavrousse turned to the wilds of the Eztenqui Jungle and found himself enamored of its spirits. His accomplishments and zeal in defending the environs of Feronte from the frequent dangers of the jungle earned him the title of mayor from Viceroy Durand. Senth only half-heartedly accepted the position, favoring the active role of town guardian to the role of politician. Nevertheless, the townsfolk obey his wishes, and the young womenfolk vie for his favor. Senth's heart, however, belongs to a dryad sorceress of the Eztenqui who knows the secrets of Mt. Icpitl.

Seremac Beldor, the Black Prince

(LE male human Ari4/Ftr8, Dex 17, Int 14, Cha 9)

The Black Prince of Amin Dor possesses a fierce temper. Though handsome, Beldor's acerbic bitterness drives away friends and family, leaving only foppish toadies hoping to earn gold by association. The prince bears a burning animosity toward his father, the good King Beldor, and does everything in his power to embarrass and shame the aging monarch. The Black Prince is a master of warcraft, having studied at the feet of great military veterans since he could speak, but prefers to do away with his foes through deception and guile.

Serpent Oracle

(N female medusa, Sor12)

A pariah among her kind, the Serpent Oracle is an enigmatic medusa named Vhonistryl who has shunned the company of evil creatures to offer her prophetic powers to those who can find her. Gifted with great prescience even at a young age, Vhonistryl perceived her own kind's murderous jealousy and escaped before the inevitable assassination. Since that day, long ago, she has been unable to foresee her own fate—only those of the pilgrims who come before her.

The Serpent Oracle can see deeply into the future. Yet she is uncertain of the gods' intent with her gift, so she offers her visitors only sparing glances into the future and keeps her words cryptic. She hides within the ruins of Cohuatlizon, praying before a shrine to Choranus, the Seer Father, for insight into her own future. Vhonistryl lives a lonely existence, slaying the envious intruders who would exploit her powers and finding occasional delight—aloof though it must be—in more amiable company. She suppresses her gaze attack frequently, relying on her sorcery more than her heritage to subdue opponents. Nevertheless, over the decades the city's promenade has accrued a vast number of unwilling statues.

Her only regular companionship is a small gang of stone giants who adore her and live on the outskirts of Cohuatlizon. Asking nothing of her for themselves, they have earned her trust and always assist her against her greatest enemies.

Shahriyel Jhek

(CE male human lich Wiz22, Int 30, Wis 20, Cha 24)

In ancient times, the chief advisor to the Sphinx Queen Ankharet of the Khonsurian Empire was a cunning human wizard called Shahriyel Jhek. The evil wizard dared to overstep his bounds one too many times with his queen, and for his arrogance Ankharet walled Shahriyel Jhek up within his own tower, a prisoner for all eternity.

But Shahriyel Jhek was not to be so easily defeated. Using the magicks available to him within his prison tower, Jhek cheated death by transforming himself into an undead monstrosity—a lich. Then luck chose to smile upon the horrid creature. A group of unwary explorers happened upon the wizard's tower, and in opening the gates to his prison, they inadvertently freed him. Jhek made his way back into the realms of the living, which had not seen the likes of his evil for many a year.

Eventually, Jhek wandered out of the desert sands and through the gates of Rhaz al-Khali. He immediately

slaughtered its rulers and assumed command of the city. Jhek has bent the will of the city to his aims, which is to discover the secrets of an ancient prophecy called *The Riddle of Darkest Qartepre*. Only Jhek knows the entirety of the prophecy, and he shares this with no one. Despite his hideous appearance—Jhek still wears the tarnished golden circlet and the black robes that mark his station as an advisor of the Sphinx Queen—he is a gifted speaker and charismatic figure, able to enthrall the masses of Rhaz al-Khali with his silver tongue and powerful spells.

Shatu-murrim

(LG female lammasu Clr7, Str 22, Int 17, Wis 20)

Born in the ruins of Coatopolan, Shatu-murrim is the matriarch of a family of lammasus allied with the paladins of the Miztlani. She personally guards the tombs of Cihuamiztli, the Golden Lady, and her own grandfather, the Naram-sin. Shatu-murrim gives counsel to the Knights of Gold and shares with them the wisdom she has gained from her Lostland visitations and her heavenly contacts, and she even teaches Draconic or Celestial to those willing to learn. Any who would harm her family will find the peaceful lammasu matron to be a vessel of divine wrath.

Sionala Khor

(NE, female half-elf, Bbn8/Drd8, Str 15, Int 14, Wis 17, Cha 17)

As the de facto ruler of the Valley of Xyr Muthal, Sionala Khor is perhaps one of the most powerful figures in all the Lostlands. The barbarian queen wields a mighty artifact, a staff known as the Soulbinder, and with that staff Sionala controls all the beasts within the valley. Dinosaurs, mammoths, primitive dragons—all sorts of mighty beasts obey every whim of the haughty but beautiful barbarian queen.

The true origins of Sionala Khor are unknown, although most sages believe that she may have once been a slave in the markets of Djeser al-Maqqara. Most creatures that know of her think of her as a good, kindly soul—a perfect queen ruling over a gentle paradise. This image is completely false, but it's one that Sionala Khor perpetuates nonetheless. In actuality, she is a cruel, cold despot, who cares nothing for the Valley of Xyr Muthal or its creatures … she only loves the treasures that they can provide for her. Sionala Khor plays the wide-eyed innocent fool with those poor souls she encounters, trying to take advantage of them as best she can—but once they are of no use to her, she cruelly disposes of them.

Sonechki

(CG female human Rog4/Wiz8, Dex 16, Int 18)

The daughter of a Criestine nobleman and a gypsy sorceress, Sonechki has never found peace in the Imperial courts or the wandering caravan of her mother's tribe. A bookish rogue and artful wizard, Sonechki spends most of her time seeking the identity of her father's murderer and the whereabouts of her estranged mother. She collects magical daggers and spells like a miser his gold coins.

Sonechki's best clue to finding her mother is the curious *staff of divination* that once belonged to the elusive gypsy woman. She searches the Northlands for leads, often employing adventuring companies to investigate locales too dangerous for her alone. Her only constant companion is her familiar, an arrogant and ambitious owl named Evvit who looks down his beak on everyone except Sonechki.

Sparkmaker

(CN male tiefling Sor11, Dex 18, Int 17, Cha 18)

A wandering tiefling with an identity crisis, Sparkmaker shuns his given name, choosing instead the nickname given to him by his gnomish master. At a glance, he resembles a nondescript half-elf—and does his best to remain inconspicuous—but up close one cannot miss the preternatural appeal to his eyes and the small, curling horns growing from his temples. His manners twitchy and his paranoia profound, Sparkmaker seldom trusts

anyone too much. Yet he frequently attaches himself to adventuring companies to search for a future that makes sense to him—and to run from his devilish heritage.

Sparkmaker favors electricity spells and *summon monster*. He possesses several *ioun stones* and makes frequent—and at times premature—use of his *+2 shock light crossbow*. Sparkmaker's truest friend is his familiar, a rat named Stin'Kki, who offers him sound advice and appraisals of exotic cheeses.

Tala Revalieth

(N female elf Drd10, Dex 16, Wis 18)

Displaced from Mirdar Forest by the orc hordes that overran it, the wild elf Tala Revalieth now walks the Northland forests to bring Ildavir's justice to those who abuse her children. Favoring animals more than humanoids, she is the friend of all beasts and an enemy to those who would harm them.

Her wheat-colored hair, soft blue eyes, and fair features do little to hide her frosty disposition from strangers—a fact strangely offset by the presence of her friend and animal companion, a people-loving brown bear named Mungo. Despite her ire, Tala is still an elf, delighting in beautiful art and the majesty of the natural world. When sharing her company, other elves find Tala unusually impatient but endlessly resourceful.

Tala puts her *+3 spectral longbow* and *+2 flaming scimitar* to good use against aberrations and undead who intrude in the Northland forests.

Tarkhan Khurzog, Scourge of the North

(LE male half-fiend/ogre-mage Ftr12/Sor9, Str 24, Con 20, Int 17, Wis 14, Cha 19)

The fearsome overlord of the Scourge is a demon-blooded orge-mage of unmatched ambition and cruelty. The unholy offspring of a minor demon and an ogre-mage witch, Khurzog is a master at pitting the nations of the North against one another. By turning the suspicious, untrusting natures of kings to his advantage, the Tarkhan and his armies marched through the Northlands like a storm, toppling ancient nations and razing whole cities for their pleasure.

The kings of the civilized lands look to the North, praying that the Tarkhan's greed is sated, all the while knowing that the next war is not a matter of if, but when. For now Khurzog patiently bides his time in Azmog-Azmennum, studying his enemies and plotting his next campaign. The demon-ogre can afford to be patient: Each day the might of his armies grows and the courage of his enemies weakens.

Terhalien Raalt

(CE male drow Ftr6/Rog6/Asn4, Str 14, Dex 18, Int 16)

This skilled assassin is perhaps one of the most notorious killers on Áereth. Devilishly handsome, this fiendish drow is wanted in at least twelve different kingdoms for his murderous exploits. Although able to kill in any numbers of ways, Terhalien prefers a dagger tipped with an extremely rare poison, one purportedly made from tarrasque blood. The effect of the poison is always fatal and extremely slow-acting, putting its victims in exquisite agony for days before finishing them. The poison fits Terhalien's personality perfectly, as he kills for sport. The gold collected for killing his victims is merely a bonus. Sarcastic and sharp of wit, Terhalien is said to be quicker with his tongue than with his dagger.

Most recently, Terhalien was wanted for the killings of a Morenan duchess, who was flung off the parapets of the royal palace. His whereabouts since then are unknown. If not in a brothel or otherwise in the company of a beautiful woman, he typically can be found in various thieves' guilds, always searching for information, or at least for a situation to use to his advantage. Although he typically works alone, Terhalien is not above teaming up with others. Such "partners," however, rarely live to collect their reward.

Tsurugi Saku

(LG male dwarf Ftr12, Str 17, Con 16, Wis 15, Cha 12)

Also known as the Rock of Raiju, this venerable dwarf is a ferocious warrior and a trusted advisor, serving as a confidante for the past four Taijin kings. Tsurugi Saku is believed to be well over four hundred years old, ancient by even dwarf standards, yet the spry old warrior is still able to beat warriors half his age in duels. He faithfully acts as guardian of the magic seal for the Merchant House of Bakar Joseon each and every day.

In his earlier days, Saku personally led many of the dwarven assaults against their goblin enemies during the Seppuku Cleansing. Far better than any ancient map, Sake personally knows every twist and turn of the vast labyrinth of passageways that run beneath the Herrenia Mountains. He also knows the locations of every lair that ever existed in the mountains, from the largest giant caves to the smallest kobold warrens. A stern but kindly soul, Tsurugi Saku glady helps anyone who treats him with courtesy and respect.

Emperor Vithoon

(CE male darkvenom drakon Wiz15, Str 16, Con 14, Int 21, Wis 21, Cha 19)

Venerable and cruel, the Emperor of Ssorlang has coiled about the Emerald Throne for many long years, and they have taken their toll. Stricken with senility and recurring diseases that his attendants cannot cure for much longer, Vithoon's death is near. He usually defers to the decisions of his son, Prince Zurasak, but moments of lucidity suggest that the old drakon has a few more schemes to hatch—most of which do not include his son.

Volei Ojar

(CE male half-orc Ftr7/Rog6/Asn3, Str 15, Dex 17, Con 16, Int 14)

A slim, tusk-jawed half-orc with hard eyes and a quick blade, Volei Ojar is also one of the North's most wanted assassins—a fact he rues every day. Since the botched assassination attempt on King Beldor two years ago, Ojar has been on the run. The attempts on his own life tapered off after Ojar took up service with the Mountain King, but the half-orc is too cagey to believe that all the bounty hunters have abandoned the hunt.

Ojar is always on the lookout for young assassins to use as pawns, and passes along jobs to those who show promise. Despite his eagerness to rebuild a circle of assassins, the half-orc watches his associates and servants with the jaded eye of a hired killer, knowing that

with enough gold, anyone can be bought.

Xolatl

(LE male human Clr16, Str 17, Wis 18, Cha 18)

Known as the Fire Priest, Xolatl is the king and chief spiritual leader of the city-state of Chuzec. He rules the city with intimidation and frightening piety, his every edict said to be the will of Tlachinozal, the Scorched God. Those who question his orders find themselves—and their families—bound to the sacrificial alters of the Burning Temple.

Xolatl wears a suit of *+3 banded mail* edged with obsidian armor spikes and adorned with red phoenix feathers. The fearless priest wields a *+3 adamantine flaming burst battle axe* and a *+2 shortbow of distance*.

Yaracen Eoth

(LN male human Ftr9, Str 15, Dex 18, Int 17)

Although blind since the day he was born, Yaracen Eoth is a skilled and graceful fighter. Once one of the best pit fighters in all of Djeser al-Maqqara, his freedom was purchased in the slave markets there some thirty-odd years ago by a masked bidder. That bidder turned out to be one of the silent servants of the white apes of Tharnaka, who trained Yaracen Eoth to be his successor. When not on the Isles of Tharnaka, Yaracen Eoth is on the great ships traveling from the Isles to some other destination on Áereth usually conducting business on behalf of the white apes that are his true masters.

Yaracen Eoth is the guide that many merchants and other travelers seek when heading to Tharnaka. Though he barely speaks above a whisper, the blind, grizzled warrior is slightly more forthcoming about the secrets of the Isles of Tharnaka than most of his blind brethren. He is also cryptic when supplying answers to questions, and can play the part of the helpless, ignorant blind man well—however, he is a sharp and shrewd tactician, and has free rein to negotiate on the white apes' behalf. He also appears to be their most trusted servant, with access to nearly everything in all the cities of the Isles. He also is the only servant known to be able to change the minds of his ape masters, and his ability to mediate is legendary. More than once, hostilities between rival merchants visiting the Isles have been quelled by a few stern but soothing words from the blind warrior.

Yollotl

(CE male darkvenom drakon Ari3/Wiz7, Int 18, Cha 16)

Yollotl is the sadistic and collected lord of the city of Xincayot, and a strong supporter of Ssorlang's Amotuans. He spends most of his time organizing expeditions into the ruins of old Zimala, hoping to increase the influence of his faction with elder magic. Yollotl eschews his own sorcery in favor of the legion of bodyguards, and gives each of his servants who displeases him a single chance for reparation. Failing that, they are impaled, along with enemies of the state, and made to decorate the shoreline outside of the city walls.

King Zacatal

(N male human Ftr10, Str 18, Dex 17, Wis 15)

King Zacatal is the fair-minded monarch of the Xulmec city-state of Maras. In times of war, he personally takes to the field and leads his scouts in guerilla warfare, allowing nothing to endanger his people or the sacred cenotes they guard.

Prince Zurasak

(CE male darkvenom drakon Ftr5/Sor6/Eldritch Knight3, Str 21, Con 17, Int 20, Wis 20, Cha 18)

One of the most dreaded drakon in the Known Realms, Prince Zurasak is the true power behind Ssorlang's Emerald Throne. He advises the venerable Emperor Vithoon, forestalling his father's death as long as he can. Shirking his official duties as prince, Zurasak tours the breadth of Ssorlang frequently and has been known to personally lead raids against the Xulmec city-states, ensuring a villainous reputation long before taking the throne himself.

Prince Zurasak wields a vile artifact known as *Shadowcurve*, an intelligent *+5 unholy scimitar* forged of shadowstone. He often shuns the use of his natural magic in favor of personally slaying his enemies with the blade. The young drakon has foiled numerous coups against his father and looks forward to executing those who rise against him when he is Emperor. Such single-minded pursuits, however, will likely keep Ssorlang from long-term expansion in his coming reign—an ironic blessing for the Southlands.

Chapter 6
Zero-Level Characters

Few roleplaying experiences are more satisfying than playing a character from unschooled youth, to champion, to epic hero. Every culture has its legends of foundlings and orphans, maturing into mighty warriors, rogues, wizards, and prophets. These are the roots of epic fantasy—and of fantasy roleplaying.

Most d20 games assume that characters begin at first level, armed with the knowledge, weapons, armor, and spells necessary to make their mark upon the world. But in ongoing, living campaigns, players often wonder what took place *before* their characters stepped foot on the road to glory. Bereft of powerful special abilities, feats, and skills, 0-level PCs must survive by their wit, cunning, and sheer courage alone. Adventures set during this time can be some of the most exciting and dangerous of a PC's career, with danger lurking around every corner and the question of life or death hanging on the throw of a die.

Playing a PC from 0-level also gives a character the added depth of a personalized back-story, supported by unique skills and abilities. An adept might go on to become an infamous rogue who uses his old spells to lend him an edge over the city watch. An expert weaponsmith might become a fearsome paladin who insists on crafting his own unique weapons, equipment, and armor for use in his crusade against evil. Perhaps before being adopted by the church, the noble cleric was a cutpurse, and to this day the pious soul keeps his old skills in practice … just in case.

How did the elven knight acquire his master's sword, the same blade that drives him to vanquish evil? Why is the rogue committed to thwarting oppression in every form? From what ruin did the wizard acquire the magic staff, and does it really contain the soul of an ancient dragon? Why, in a world of deadly challenges and vicious foes, does a meek peasant take up weapons and stand against the press of darkness?

The answers to these questions, and more, are the adventures of 0-level characters.

Zero-level Player Characters

Zero-level player characters begin with 1 level in an NPC class, but differ from NPCs in that PCs are destined to become heroes. An NPC might spend his entire life gaining levels in Warrior, but a PC Warrior will soon become a Fighter, quickly outstripping her common, non-heroic peers. This can often invite jealousies and vicious rivalries when the smith's daughter returns home, now a celebrated paladin of the realm.

A 0-level PC chooses an NPC class—Adept, Aristocrat, Expert, or Warrior—and begins with –1,000 XP. After gaining one thousand experience points, reaching 0 XP, the PC gains a level and advances to one of the regular PC classes: Barbarian, Cleric, Druid, Fighter, Paladin, Ranger, Rogue, Wizard, or Sorcerer. One level in an NPC class never counts against a PC for purposes of multiclassing (see *PHB*).

The NPC classes available to PCs are outlined in detail in the *DMG* and are summarized here for quick reference.

First-Level Adept

Gifted in the ways of magic, yet unschooled in its mastery, adepts are the witchdoctors, mystics, healers, herbalists, and shamans of Áereth. While NPC adepts grow to become wise men, elders and sages, heroic adepts quickly rise to become champions of their chosen cause, serving a deity as a devoted cleric, or defending the spirits of nature as woodland druids.

An adept casts divine spells, which are drawn from the adept spell list. Like a cleric, an adept must choose and prepare her spells in advance. Each adept must choose a time each day at which she must spend an hour in quiet contemplation or supplication to regain her daily allotment of spells. Time spent resting has no effect on whether an adept can prepare spells. In addition, she receives bonus spells per day if she has a high Wisdom score.

Apprentices and Mediums

Not all adepts advance to become clerics or druids. At their discretion, GMs may permit PC adepts to be apprentices (wizards in training) or mediums (untutored sorcerers). Both sub-classes follow all the rules applying to adepts, with the following exceptions:

Apprentice: An apprentice's key attribute is Intelligence, not Wisdom. To prepare or cast a spell, an apprentice must have an Intelligence score equal to at least 10 + the spell level. The Difficulty Class for a saving throw against an apprentice's spell is 10 + the spell level + the apprentice's Intelligence modifier.

In addition, she receives bonus spells per day if she has a high Intelligence score.

An apprentice must study her spellbook each day to prepare her spells. She cannot prepare any spell not recorded in her spellbook.

An apprentice begins play with a spellbook containing all 0-level apprentice spells, plus three 1st-level spells of her choice. For each point of Intelligence bonus the apprentice has, the spellbook holds one additional 1st-level spell of her choice.

Medium: A medium's key attribute is Charisma, not Wisdom. To prepare or cast a spell, a medium must have a Charisma score equal to at least 10 + the spell level. The Difficulty Class for a saving throw against a medium's spell is 10 + the spell level + the medium's Charisma modifier.

In addition, she receives bonus spells per day if she has a high Charisma score.

A medium can cast any spell she knows without preparing it ahead of time. A medium's selection of spells is extremely limited. A medium begins play knowing four 0-level spells and two 1st-level spells of her choice.

Apprentice and Medium Spell List

0-level: *acid splash, dancing lights, daze, flare, light, ghost sound, touch of fatigue, mage hand, mending, message, open/close, prestidigitation, ray of frost, read magic, resistance*.

1st-level: *alarm, burning hands, cause fear, color spray, comprehend languages, detect secret doors, disguise self, expeditious retreat, feather fall, grease, hold portal, hypnotism, protection from chaos, protection from evil, protection from good, protection from law, obscuring mist, shield, sleep, unseen servant, ventriloquism*.

To prepare or cast a spell, an adept must have a Wisdom score equal to at least 10 + the spell level. The Difficulty Class for a saving throw against an adept's spell is 10 + the spell level + the adept's Wisdom modifier.

Each adept has a particular holy symbol (as a divine focus) depending on the adept's magical tradition.

Hit Points: 6 + Con modifier

Base Attack: +0

Starting Wealth: 2d4 x 10 gp

Fort Save: +0 **Ref Save:** +0 **Will Save:** +2

Class Skills: Concentration (Con), Craft (Int), Handle Animal (Cha), Heal (Wis), Knowledge (all skills taken individually) (Int), Profession (Wis), Spellcraft (Int), and Survival (Wis).

Skill Points: (2 + Int modifier) x4.

Weapon and Armor Proficiency: Adepts are skilled with all simple weapons. Adepts are not proficient with any type of armor nor with shields.

Spells per Day: 0 – 3; 1st – 1.

Adept Spell List

0-level: *create water, cure minor wounds, detect magic, ghost sound, guidance, light, mending, purify food and drink, read magic, touch of fatigue*.

1st-level: *bless, burning hands, cause fear, command, comprehend languages, cure light wounds, detect chaos, detect evil, detect good, detect law, endure elements, obscuring mist, protection from chaos, protection from evil, protection from good, protection from law, sleep*.

First-Level Aristocrat

Aristocrats are the nobles of Áereth, the privileged upper class with access to wealth, tutoring, and training. Squires, princes, scions of merchant-lords, and royal heirs are all aristocrats.

Simply because a character is born of royal or noble blood does not mean that the character can expect to have all his needs and wishes met. While aristocrats may receive preferential treatment by merchants and their ilk, they will also be expected to pay inflated prices. Similarly, many noble families send their scions out into the world, permitting the fledgling aristocrats to return only after they have proven their worth.

Hit Points: 8 + Con modifier

Starting Wealth: 6d4 x 10 gp

Base Attack: +0

Fort Save: +0 **Ref Save:** +0 **Will Save:** +2

Class Skills: Appraise (Int), Bluff (Cha), Diplomacy (Cha), Disguise (Cha), Forgery (Int), Gather Information (Cha), Handle Animal (Cha), Intimidate (Cha), Knowledge (all skills taken individually) (Int), Listen (Wis), Perform (Cha), Ride (Dex), Sense Motive (Wis), Speak Language, Spot (Wis), Swim (Str), and Survival (Wis).

Skill Points: (4 + Int modifier) x4.

Weapon and Armor Proficiency: The aristocrat is proficient in the use of all simple and martial weapons and with all types of armor and shields.

First-Level Expert

Blacksmiths, locksmiths, cutpurses, woodland scouts, and trackers are all experts in their chosen realm. Many occupations fall under the designation of expert. The class is highly versatile, permitting characters to focus and excel in specific areas of study.

Any occupation that is not explicitly a spellcaster, noble, or warrior is likely an expert. NPC experts grow to become master craftsmen and specialists in their fields, but PC experts broaden their fields of study, and thereby become even more skilled and talented because of their understanding of the larger world.

Hit Points: 6 + Con modifier

Starting Wealth: 3d4 x 10 gp

Base Attack: +0

Fort Save: +0 **Ref Save:** +0 **Will Save:** +2

Class Skills: The expert can choose any ten skills to be class skills.

Skill Points: (6 + Int modifier) x4.

Weapon and Armor Proficiency: The expert is proficient in the use of all simple weapons and with light armor but not shields.

First-Level Warrior

Warriors are the mainstays of Áereth. Brave and courageous, they stand watch atop high towers, hunt stags through deep woods, protect the common citizen, and serve in the king's army. Soldiers, watchmen, slave-gladiators, and huntsmen are all warriors.

Warriors are natural leaders, especially during times of danger and strife. In times of peace, excessive warriors can become a liability. Forced to seek their fortunes on the open road, some turn to banditry, while a select few train to become fighters, excelling in the arts of war.

Hit Points: 8 + Con modifier

Starting Wealth: 4d4 x 10 gp

Base Attack: +1

Fort Save: +2 **Ref Save:** +0 **Will Save:** +0

Class Skills: Climb (Str), Handle Animal (Cha), Intimidate (Cha), Jump (Str), Ride (Dex), and Swim (Str).

Skill Points: (2 + Int modifier) x 4.

Weapon and Armor Proficiency: The warrior is proficient in the use of all simple and martial weapons and all armor and shields.

Character Backgrounds

Every PC has a background, a story that explains his core value and beliefs. Backgrounds are much more than occupations, but the following list can provide inspirations for a character's background, along with suggested NPC classes. This register is in no way exhaustive nor could it ever be; a PC's history should be limited only by the player's imagination and the GM's whim.

The classes listed in parentheses should be taken as suggestions, not rules. Exceptions will always exist, and should be encouraged—especially in support of a PC's unique story.

Alchemist (Expert)

Animal Trainer (Expert)

Armorer (Expert)

Astrologer (Expert, Adept)

Blacksmith (Expert)

Brigand (Expert, Warrior)

Caravan Guard (Warrior)

Confidence Artist (Expert)

Cutpurse (Expert)

Entertainer (Expert)

Foundling (any[1])

Fortune-teller (Expert, Adept)

Gambler (Expert)

Gravedigger (Expert[2])

Guild Beggar (Expert[2])

Healer (Adept)

Herbalist (Adept)

Herder (Expert[2])

Hired Muscle (Warrior)

Hunter (Warrior, Expert)

Indentured Servant (Expert[2])

Jeweler (Expert)

Locksmith (Expert)

Logger (Expert[2])

Mercenary (Warrior)

Minstrel (Expert)

Noble (Aristocrat)

Outlaw (Expert, Warrior)

Orphan (any[1])

Royal (Aristocrat)

Savage (Warrior, Expert)

Scribe (Expert, Adept)

Scout (Expert)

Serf (Expert[2])

Shaman (Adept)

Slave (Warrior, Expert)

Smuggler (Expert)

Soldier (Warrior)

Squire (Aristocrat, Warrior)

Street Fighter (Warrior)

Trapper (Expert)

Yeoman (Expert[2])

Watchman (Warrior)

Weaponsmith (Expert)

Weaver (Expert)

Witchdoctor (Adept)

Woodcutter (Expert, Warrior)

Wizard's Apprentice (Adept[3])

Notes:

[1] Both orphans and foundlings adopt classes suitable to their foster families. An orphan taken in by the Thieves Guild will be predisposed to becoming an Expert with a focus in Rogue skills, whereas a foundling adopted by a monastery may show talents as an Adept or Warrior.

[2] With many backgrounds, the NPC class of Commoner in the *DMG* seems a more logical choice. Of the NPC classes, however, Commoner is the weakest, and in these instances it is best to go with Expert, reflecting a PC's exceptional interests and talents.

[3] With the GM's permission, Adepts can also be Apprentices or Mediums. See sidebar above for details.

Zero-Level Adventures

Adventures as a 0-level character can be among the most thrilling that a PC will ever have. Combats are deadly and often decided with the first blow. Without careful consideration by the GM, a string of bad rolls can turn a CR 1 wandering monster encounter into a game-stopping TPK (Total Party Kill). Players with 0-level PCs have to act with caution, creativity, and cunning, frequently coming up with unique solutions to challenges that higher-level PCs would never deign to try. Ad hoc traps, improvised weapons, and dirty tactics are often the only way a party can survive. Whereas stronger parties can rely on their superior armor and hit points to give the PCs time to think, a party of 0-level PCs has to be prepared and ready to act at a moment's notice, or else suffer the consequences.

This constant, on-edge tension is what makes low-level campaigns so enjoyable, but GMs must tread with care.

There are a number of ways to subtly shift the odds in the PCs favor, while still encouraging creative play. As in *DCC #0: Legends Are Made, Not Born*, PCs might overhear a monster before actually encountering it. Variants on this theme include coming across a beast's tracks, encountering the bleached bones of its previous victims, or simply catching the scent of its foul lair. Any of these warning signs will serve as cues for PCs to be on their guard. Of course, if PCs elect to disregard all precautions, their fate is their own!

Similarly, players should be encouraged to use cunning to overcome superior forces. There is no reason to duke it out, toe-to-toe with the ogre, when a rock dropped from the cave's entrance can do the work for you. Similarly, PCs might take the time to construct deadfalls, pit traps, and the like.

Finally, intelligent monsters might elect to take the PCs prisoner instead of slaying them outright. Captured PCs can be sold as slaves or simply reserved to be eaten at a later date. The opportunity to escape from captors, sans weapons or armor, is a challenge worthy of any hero!

Experience Point Awards for 0-Level Characters

PC Level	CR 1/2	CR 1	CR 2	CR 3	CR 4
0	200	400	800	1,200	2,000

Campaign Hooks

Zero-level adventures need not be world-spanning affairs. Simply learning to hunt or fight or acquiring a certain rare spell can become exciting adventures. Often, young heroes serve masters who may send them on challenging errands designed to tutor naïve students in the ways of the world. Having the entire party serving a single master is an excellent way to convince PCs to work together toward a single goal.

Zero-level adventures also present a great opportunity to introduce recurring villains. These arrogant foes are quick to disregard the PCs as nothing but nuisances, setting up rivalries and enmities that can stretch on for years or even decades.

Villains need not be powerful to be memorable. Whereas a higher-level PC might beat a dozen orcs in a battle, to a party of 0-level characters a single orc, hobgoblin, kobold, or goblin can be a terrifying foe. This gives a GM the chance to personalize the opponent, creating a more noteworthy encounter. Physical affects, unique fighting styles, unusual arms and armor can all make a common foe uncommon.

With this in mind, take inspiration from or use one of the following plot hooks as a seed for your campaign:

The Old Man of the Wood: The characters are the servants of Nymoren the White, a wizened mage who lives in a half-ruined tower deep in the Blackbriar Wood. Some of the PCs may be talented apprentices that have been adopted by the old mage, while others are simply the children of servants and were born into his service. Nymoren keeps close watch over his beloved woods and sends his young wards on errands to acquire exotic spell components, rescue the wizard's hapless animal companions, fend off the predations of goblins and kobolds, and perform quests on the old mage's behalf.

Tales of the Canting Crew: The characters are street urchins, beggars, and petty thieves, serving Obo the Beggarmaster. A wicked and corpulent taskmaster with an endless capacity for cruelty and greed, Obo makes certain to keep his wards under his thumb, placing extra pressure on those that show promise. Warriors will be tasked as hired thugs and muscle, experts will trained in the ways of the rogue, adepts will be carefully groomed—and all will be constantly watched for signs of treachery. For all his fiendish ways, Obo makes certain to protect his own, and may go to war with other lords of the underworld in defense of his charges. Adventures can range from petty thievery, to enforcing the Beggarmaster's street edicts, to collecting his tithes, to finally escaping from Obo's sweaty clutches.

Knights of the Realm: The characters are the squires, grooms, assistants, and spearmen of the solemn and virtuous Sir Kameron, Knight Errant of the Lance. Sir Kameron's love was kidnapped by an evil baron seven years ago and now the knight travels the Northlands in search of her. The lovelorn knight is dogged by assassins, evil knights, and foes that would besmirch his honor and lure the good knight into disgrace. Sir Kameron uses the PCs to accomplish what he cannot, going places where he would be noticed, and defending him against all comers while the knight searches the Known Realms for his lady. Adventures could include recovering the knight's stolen sword in time for a tournament, foiling attempts to frame him as a wicked ne'er-do-well, tracking down leads to his lost lady, and thwarting the endless plots of

Mentors

For many GMs and players, it may be a stretch to imagine peasants delving into a goblin lair and emerging, mere days later, as accomplished adventurers boasting of new feats, spells, and skills. Mentors, experts who train PCs in their new classes, can serve to bridge this gap, taking the PCs under their wings and tutoring them in the ways of adventuring.

Any NPC with at least one level in the class the PC wishes to adopt can serve as a mentor. But time spent studying with mentors need not be time wasted for players. For while a mentor may guide the PC along the proper path, nothing can take the place of actual experience. In this way, mentors can best serve as plot hooks, sending the adventurers scurrying off on missions, errands and quests, each challenge designed to test the PCs in their newfound roles.

For PCs that truly dedicate themselves to their studies, GMs should consider awarding PCs a one-time bonus of 1d4 skill points, to be allotted to specialties of the mentor.

the 0-level servants of a rival knight. Traveling with Sir Kameron permits the PCs to visit vast swaths of the North, where every day sees another kingdom and every night reveals another intrigue.

Of Kith and Kin: The Baron is dead and his ancient elven castellan, Essech Ggeredna, scours the lands for the new rulers. Regrettably the Baron had no direct heirs, so obscure bloodlines must be sought out, and the collected heirs resemble nothing so much as a band of uneducated rapscallions, rogues, mercenaries, and wild mages. Nevertheless, the PCs have indeed inherited a small barony placed deep within the wilds of the North, and now it is their task to keep it. This will require quickly mastering the skills necessary to lead a small, isolated community. Predators ranging from wolves to goblins and worse threaten the townsfolk, false heirs lay claim to the throne, and—worst of all—the true seat of the barony is in ruins, home to fearsome monsters and dungeons of untold depths. Who was the old baron and why were his heirs sought out … four hundred years after his death?

Pawns of the Slavelord: During the Fall of Leherti, untold numbers of Lehertians were captured and sold into slavery. The PCs begin their adventures as slaves in the care of Mordeng Skoloth, a wicked slavelord based in the city of Freeport. Mordeng delights in depraved blood sports, and has a special fondness for gladiator combat. The enslaved PCs in his stable are regularly forced to fight wild animals, monstrous humanoids, and even other slaves. Yet the intrigue of Freeport reaches to every segment of the population, so it isn't long before the PCs are thrust directly into the heart of the shadow war between Mordeng and his rivals. The PCs are forced to decide between helping Mordeng against his foes (and earning the foul man's gratitude) or defying his orders and suffering the slavelord's wrath (or even worse, the vengeance of his triumphant rivals).

Final Note: NPCs and 0-level PCs

It can be tempting for GMs to introduce powerful NPCs into the lives of the characters, such as knights and wizards who are always on hand to rescue the PCs when the going gets rough. This could easily overshadow a group of 0-level characters, turning them into the supporting cast for the GM's own band of heroes.

In these cases, remember the golden rule: No matter how weak they may be, the PCs are the heroes of the story. Even during a nation-shattering war, there is enough smaller-scale action for them. In this case, the war would simply provide the backdrop and stage setting for the PCs' adventures.

Áereth is a *world* full of powerful beings, but the *game* is about the PCs. Players want to play, not watch the GM's pet NPCs act out their lives like a historical drama.

Chapter 7
Paths of Adventure

Adventures in the DCC line are designed to be setting neutral, even within the world of Áereth. Every GM should feel comfortable removing the iconic *Dungeon Crawl Classics #1: Idylls of the Rat King* from the humble town of Silverton and placing the adventure wherever it will serve their own campaign the best. As always, GMs should tailor the world to suit their own designs and their group's enjoyment. Every other concern comes second.

Of course, that's all fine if you are an old hand at the game and know precisely the sort of campaign you'd like to run. But with over thirty adventures to choose from, where does an intrepid new GM begin?

Never fear! For those who seek guidance in the ever-expanding world of the Dungeon Crawl Classics, or for those sadistic GMs who must simply roll for *everything*, we present the Adventure Paths: series of modules loosely organized by level, location and theme, and which can serve as narratives to aid GMs in planning their PCs' careers as adventurers.

Note that these paths serve only as guidelines. GMs should feel free to adjust them as necessary for their wicked purposes. Flesh out the skeleton, add your own adventures, make the PCs lords of their own realms, and then lay waste to those kingdoms with armies of wicked monsters – in short, make the world your own!

To begin a campaign, choose your favorite low-level DCC and follow the subsequent titles in the path. Or, if you are truly willing, brave and brazen enough to throw caution to the wind, roll a d12.

If the result is 1-4, go to Adventure Path 1. If the result is 5-8, go to Adventure Path 2. If the result is 9-12, go to Adventure Path 3.

Adventure Path 1: West to Empire

Levels	Adventure
0	**DCC #35A: Halls of the Minotaur:** Humble villagers armed with farm tools venture into the Thornswild Forest to rescue a fallen paladin. There they uncover the ruins of a long-forgotten citadel, a tribe of ferocious kobolds, and Toth-Ror, a deadly minotaur bent on the PCs' destruction.
1-2	**DCC #29: Lair of the White Salamander:** Travelling south, the PCs (now aspiring heroes) come upon the sinking city of Thelport. There they discover a series of sea caves, where they battle their way past crazed cultists to the source of the city's plight: a horrible giant salamander gifted with wicked genius. Having saved the people of Thelport, the PCs can continue their travels west, or catch a ship south to Porthmeor (go to Adventure Path 1A).
1-3	**DCC #1: Idylls of the Rat King:** The PCs press on to Silverton, where a small mining community is being threatened by a wererat menace.
4-6	**DCC #27: Revenge of the Rat King:** The PCs, having deposed the Rat King, now suffer his wrath beneath the streets of Soulgrave. Escaping his clutches, they put an end to his wicked reign.
7-8	**DCC #5: Aerie of the Crow God:** Now heroes in Crieste, the PCs are summoned before Captain Sentri, Master of the Sable March. The Captain awards the PCs titles befitting their class and rank and tells them of the costal hamlet of Carnelloe, where dark secrets work to conceal an ancient tragedy. The Captain beseeches the PCs to act as his agents and investigate the lingering evil.

7-9 **DCC #19: The Volcano Caves:** Recognizing the might of her enemy's agents, the wicked Vizier of Crieste orders the PCs north to investigate the strange rumors surrounding mysterious Mount Rolnith, hoping that the PCs die beneath the dormant volcano. As insurance, the Vizier sends two of her finest assassins to finish what the mountain cannot. There, in the abandoned study of a long vanished wizardress, the PCs find a map leading to...

10 **DCC #30: Vault of the Dragon Kings:** Leaving the ruined Mount Rolnith, the PCs venture deeper into the Frosteye Mountains, in search of the legendary Vault of the Dragon Kings.

9-11 **DCC #12: The Blackguard's Revenge:** Returning triumphant from the Vault, the PCs are met by Khau the Red, magician in service of the Captain of the Sable March. The Cloister of the Ordocar, a sister order to the Knights of the Sable March, is under attack by an army of undead. Can the PCs reach the monastery in time to save the order?

11-13 **DCC #12.5: Iron Crypt of the Heretics:** Though the Cloister of the Ordocar has been saved, the root of the undead army must still be dealt a final blow. Tracking the army back to the Iron Crypt of the Heretics, the PCs must do battle with a nigh-invulnerable menace.

15 **DCC #13: Crypt of the Devil Lich:** The Ebon Egg destroyed, the PCs deliver the Iron Crypt's magical keys to the Monastery of the Dawning Sun. Upon their arrival, they realize that a horrible tragedy has taken place....

Adventure Path 1A: Wild Rovers

Levels Adventure

1-3 **DCC #24: Legend of the Ripper:** The PCs arrive in exotic Porthmeor, only to find the city locked in a grip of terror. The ghost of an ancient fiend has seemingly risen to stalk the city streets. Can the young heroes put the ghost to rest?

4-6 **DCC #35B: The Thief Lord's Vault:** The PCs continue their travels by sea, following the coast west to Punjar. There, in the city's shadowy bazaars, the adventurers catch word of a fabled treasure vault hidden beneath Punjar's grime-stained cobblestones. Investigations prove fruitful, and the PCs discover the entrance to one of the richest treasure vaults in all the Known World. Eluding the Thief Lord's cunning traps, the PCs tumble through a misty green portal to far-flung Voltigeur...

6-8 **DCC #16: Curse of the Emerald Cobra:** ...where the PCs learn of a mysterious artifact called Omihuictli – the Bone Blade, an enchanted bastard sword rumored to have been created from the leg bones of an ancient black dragon. The sword is said to rest in the heart of an extinct volcano, Mount Icpitl.

10-12 **DCC #4: Bloody Jack's Gold:** Sailing home from their savage encounter with the Emerald Cobra, the PCs' ship is blown off course to an island that doesn't appear on any map. One of the sailors recognizes the island from the *Ballad of Bloody Jack*. Investigating, the PCs discover the maze Jack built to protect the greatest hoard of his long and blood-soaked career.

12-14 **DCC #21: Assault on Strormbringer Castle:** Returning to civilization at last, the PCs sail into the town of Argalis, only to discover the town in ruins. Three hurricane-strength storms have struck in as many weeks, sent by a wicked storm giant intent on punishing the town. The townsfolk turn to the PCs. Can the heroes prevail against the Stormbringer?

14-16 **DCC #22: The Stormbringer Juggernaut:** After thanking the heroes for their assistance in defeating Stozari, Lord McDurmott, leader of Argalis, calls them back a week later with disturbing news. There are reports from the distant island of Cairvos of a gigantic warship under construction, led by a Stormbringer storm giant. He hires them once again, sending the heroes to vanquish the renewed Stormbringer threat.

Adventure Path 2: Lords of the Kingdom

Levels Adventure

0 **DCC #0: Legends are Made, not Born:** An ogre is terrorizing the town of Dundraville. Six brave citizens, mere peasants, band together with a plan to put an end to the evil ogre's villainy!

1 **DCC #2: Lost Vault of Tsathzar Rho:** The triumphant commoners, now adventurers, start on the long road to the heart of the Empire, where they will seek their fortunes. The would-be heroes stop for the night at the settlement of Hadler's Gap, where they hear curious tales of

once-peaceful kobolds and an ogre in the nearby hills. The PCs find their reputation as "Ogre Slayers" has preceded them. Will they live up to the stories?

1-2 **DCC #29: Well of the Worm:** Resuming their travels south, the PC come across a war-ravaged village plagued by the legacy of wars past. The elders beseech the PCs to put an end to the horrors.

1-3 **DCC #1: Idylls of the Rat King:** The PCs finally reach the capital of Archbridge, where tales of their heroic exploits have already reached people of power. The Captain of the Sable March offers the PCs their first mission for the crown: root out the goblin menace that has been plaguing the silver caravans from Silverton.

4-6 **DCC #27: Revenge of the Rat King:** Having successfully defended the people of Silverton, the PCs find themselves the target of the Rat King's wrath. In a carefully wrought trap, the PCs are lured beneath the streets of Soulgrave and into the clutches of the Rat King!

7-8 **DCC #5: Aerie of the Crow God:** Back in Archbridge, the PCs are given a hero's welcome, along with a handsome reward and commission from the Captain of the Sable March. Meeting the PCs in secret that evening, the Captain asks the PCs to undertake another dangerous mission for the crown, sending the PCs to the village of Carnelloe to investigate the site of an ancient tragedy.

6-8 **DCC #10: The Sunless Garden:** Returning triumphant once more, the PCs are given titles and the deed to a small, run-down keep on the border of Crieste. Shortly after the PCs assume ownership, the nearest trading post, Garland's Fork, is struck by a horrific curse, and it falls to the heroes to solve the crisis. ***Or:*** The wicked Vizier of Crieste, perceiving the heroes as a threat to her stranglehold on the Empire, commissions a ship for the PCs and orders them to deliver a message to the far-flung colony of Voltigeur. (Go to Adventure Path 2A.)

8-10 **DCC #6: Temple of the Dragon Cult:** With power comes responsibility. Across the borderlands, a dragon has been terrorizing the people of Thire. Lady Aedwyn Cyrean, ruler of the realm, raises an army to defeat the fearsome wyrm, but even they fail. She begs the heroes to finish off what her army could not accomplish.

12-14 **DCC #21: Assault on Stormbringer Castle:** Unnaturally strong storms strike the PCs' lands, ravaging their fields and fortifications. The source of the fearsome gales lies to the south, with the town of Argalis. A terrible storm giant demands tribute from Agalis and the surrounding settlements (including the PCs' manor). If she is denied, she will lay waste to the entire coast.

14-16 **DCC #22: The Stormbringer Juggernaut:** The Stormbringer giants return to threaten the realm once more, unless the PCs are able to stop their scheme from coming to fruition. But are even the heroes, now mighty beyond most, strong enough to stop the Stormbringer Juggernaut?

Adventure Path 2A: Of Pirates and Plunder

Levels Adventure

6-8 **DCC #16: Curse of the Emerald Cobra:** Sent to the end of the Empire by the Vizier of Crieste, the PCs learn of a mysterious artifact called Omihuictli – the Bone Blade, an enchanted bastard sword rumored to have been created from the leg bones of an ancient black dragon. The sword is said to rest in the heart of an extinct volcano, Mount Icpitl.

10-12 **DCC #4: Bloody Jack's Gold:** Sailing home from their savage encounter with the Emerald Cobra, the PCs' ship is blown off course to an island that doesn't appear on any map. One of the sailors recognizes the island from the *Ballad of Bloody Jack*. Investigating, the PCs discover the maze Jack built to protect the greatest hoard of his long and blood-soaked career.

12-14 **DCC #21: Assault on Stormbringer Castle:** Returning to civilization at last, the PCs sail into the town of Argalis, only to discover the town in ruins. Three hurricane-strength storms have struck in as many weeks, sent by a wicked storm giant intent on punishing the town. The townsfolk turn to the PCs. Can the heroes prevail against the Stormbringer?

12-14 **DCC #18: Citadel of the Demon Prince:** Hearing of the PCs' might, his Holiness, the Bishop of the Shining Lance, sends a secret agent, Renshai the Cunning, to meet with the PCs. Renshai, the Bishop's master spy, has uncovered a plot to bring demonic horror into the world. His Holiness begs a boon of the PCs,

asking them to investigate this wicked plot – and put to the sword whatever fiend is behind it.

14-15 **DCC #15: Lost Tomb of the Sphinx Queen:** Taking to the open sea once more, the PCs cross the Lirean Sea to the Great Desert to the south, where rumors lead them to a lost tomb from a long-forgotten empire.

14-16 **DCC #32: The Golden Palace of Zahadran:** Striking out to explore the legendary Lostlands, the PCs uncover a magically sealed dome concealing an ancient, golden palace.

Adventure Path 3: Legends of the North

Levels Adventure

0 **DCC #0: Legends are Made, not Born:** An ogre is terrorizing the town of Dundraville. Six brave citizens, mere peasants, band together with a plan to put an end to the evil ogre's villainy!

1-3 **DCC #28: Into the Wilds:** Seeking their fortunes on the open road, the PCs strike out for the wild borderlands. There they come upon Wildsgate, a frontier keep beset by a terrible curse. Fame and fortune await those courageous enough to venture into the threatening Wilds.

3-5 **DCC #3: The Mysterious Tower:** Fate leads the young heroes east, to the foot of a mysterious tower protected by ancient spells. Investigating a wizard's tower is never easy, but survivors might just return with long-hidden treasures.

4-6 **DCC #17: Legacy of the Savage Kings:** Leaving the mysterious tower, the PCs are met by Venderlos the Green, a druid in service of secret masters. Venderlos, having heard of the PCs' prowess, has come to ask a boon of the PCs. A foul blight has infected the Great Swamp, corrupting the swamp's inhabitants and threatening settlements and forests downstream. Will the PCs investigate and cure this foul disease?

7-9 **DCC #17.5: War of the Witch Queen:** Emerging triumphant from the Great Swamp, the PCs track the fleeing Witch Queen back to her stinking demesne. There, in vaults hidden deep beneath the earth, they put an end to her wicked schemes.

7-9 **DCC #19: The Volcano Caves:** Traveling west on their trek back to civilization, the heroes encounter strange rumors surrounding the mysterious Mount Rolnith. Investigating, the PCs discover that the dormant volcano is not all it seems. In the abandoned study of a long-vanished wizardress, the PCs find a map leading to...

10 **DCC #30: Vault of the Dragon Kings:** Leaving the ruined Mount Rolnith, the PCs venture deeper into the Frosteye Mountains, in search of the legendary Vault of the Dragon Kings.

9-11 **DCC #25: The Dread Crypt of Srihoz:** Returning from the Vault, the PCs come across rumors leading to windswept cliffs and the crypt of an ancient evil.

9-11 **DCC #12: The Blackguard's Revenge:** Upon their return from the Dread Crypt, the PCs receive a summons from Turoch Mas, Overlord of Ternyziem. The ruler tells the PCs of the Cloister of the Ordocar, an order of paladins that keep watch over the north. The order is under attack by an army of undead. Can the PCs reach the monastery in time to save the paladins?

11-13 **DCC #12.5: Iron Crypt of the Heretics:** Though the Cloister of the Ordocar has been saved, the source of the undead army yet remains. Tracking the army back to the Iron Crypt of the Heretics, PCs must do battle with a nigh-invulnerable menace.

15 **DCC #13: Crypt of the Devil Lich:** The Ebon Egg destroyed, the PCs deliver the Iron Crypt's magical keys to the Monastery of the Dawning Sun. Upon their arrival, they realize that a horrible tragedy has taken place....

Appendix 1
DCC Index

This master index lists every place, deity, NPC, spell, object, monster, and organization that has appeared in a Dungeon Crawl Classics adventure module. The index does not include this *GM's Guide* or the *Gazetteer*, but does include every DCC up through the two included in this box. You can use this index to assist in finding adventures to use in your Áereth campaign, whether to match back to the geographic regions where your heroes are traveling, or to tie into NPCs that they have met.

The index is organized alphabetically. The category of each entry (e.g., NPC, monster, etc.) appears after the entry, followed by a number indicating which DCC the entry appears in.

A Soldier's Manual (Object) 26
Aaron Gannu (NPC) 27
Abollar (template) (Monster) 29
Abylos (Place) 23
Abyssal Wolf (Monster) 22
Acid Blood (Spell) 25
Adelaide Bomquis (NPC) 34
Ageta (NPC) 22
Ahandar (NPC) 33
Ahura Mazda (Deity) 32
Akkad (Place) 29
Akyani (Monster) 19
Alachakah (NPC) 33
Alasotur (NPC) 29
Albrecht Skullshank (NPC) 14
Alexander Cresh (NPC) 20
Alexander Montcrief (NPC) 7
Alizio's Book of Adventurers, Vol. VII (Object) 21
Ambroshea Trades (Place) 12
Amokra (NPC) 17.5
Amplify (Spell) 22
Amplify, Greater (Spell) 22
Amulet of Restored Glory (Object) 29
Anathaema Eagle (Monster) 5
Ancilith (NPC) 28
Andrew Vendi (NPC) 33
Angel Effigy (Monster) 18
Angra Mainyu (Deity) 32
Angrabeg's Commanding Eye (Object) 4
Animated Mass Pyre (Monster) 34
Ankharet the Queen (Deity) 15
Anselm (NPC) 5
Anthuria (NPC) 5.5
Anvil of Gyr (Object) 28
Anwar Fadain (NPC) 30
Apketh (NPC) 15
Aquarran (Monster) 19
Archbridge (Place) 1
Arden (NPC) 20
Arden Brightheart (NPC) 14
Ardishir the Magnificent (NPC) 32
Argalis (Place) 21, 22
Ari (NPC) 29
Ari'Al-nuk (NPC) 23
Aristemis (Deity) 12
Armos Plowman (NPC) 29
Aronarg (NPC) 29
Arovarel (Place) 13, 29
Arozza Stormbringer (NPC) 21, 22
Ars Malefice (Object) 17
Arsev ben Traiga (NPC) 15
Ascomoid (Monster) 26
Ash Guardian (Monster) 25
Asha Vahishta (Object) 32
Audun Egillsdottir (NPC) 29
Aurora Pass (Place) 26
Aurumvorax (Monster) 26
Austis Duframe (NPC) 12
Avatar Guards (Monster) 33
Axebury (Place) 5.5
Azi Dahaka (NPC) 32
Azubal (NPC) 28
Azurak ("Titan's Fury") (Object) 5
Back Alley Clah (NPC) 24
Bag of Endless Rats (Object) 14
Bagosh (NPC) 29
Bahdros (NPC) 22
Bakra (NPC) 17
Baldr (Deity) 29
Balti the Sage (NPC) 25
Barak (NPC) 7
Baraz Mahk (NPC) 2
Barbed Javelins (Weapon) 28
BargÏl (Deity) 8
Barracuda (Monster) 4
Barren Hills (Place) 15, 29
Barrowdown (Place) 29
Bastel Branwhip (NPC) 12
Bay of Many Sorrows (Place) 29
Bayard (NPC) 29
Bazaar of Quaysarria (Place) 32
Beastmen (NPC) 35A
Beasts of the Northlands (Object) 26
Bed of Health (Object) 3
Beeton (Place) 29
Behmanesh (NPC) 32
Belross Busex (NPC) 29
Bendel Llandeyr (NPC) 29
Berk (NPC) 0
Bezentaine (Object) 19
Black Dougal (NPC) 12.5
Black Elgor (NPC) 33
Black Pearl (Object) 29
Black Samarkin (NPC) 35B
Black Son (demon) (Deity) 18
Blackburn (NPC) 24
Blackened Pearl of Ages (Object) 14
Blackspine (NPC) 11
Blessings-Be (Place) 14
Blight Blades (Object) 17
Blighted Helm (Object) 17
Blister Beetle, Giant (Monster) 29
Blood Boulder (Monster) 21
Blood Coral (Object) 24
Blood Elemental (Spell) 25
Blood Hawk (Monster) 26
Blood Leech Swarm (Monster) 35B
Blood Whisker (NPC) 14
Bloodlust (Spell) 25

Bloodthorn Vine (Monster) 35A
Bloody Jack Dascombe (NPC) 4
Blubberbank (Place) 24
Boat Hook (Weapon) 29
Bobugbubilz (Deity) 13
Bogie Boys (Organization) 24
Bogris (NPC) 29
Boil Blood (Spell) 25
Bolts of Bedevilment (Spell) 20
Bone Jelly (Monster) 24
Bone Swarm (Monster) 13
Book of Bargúl (Object) 8
Borderlands (Place) 17
Braziers of Necromantic Guile (Object) 13
Breakers (Organization) 29
Breg (NPC) 20
Bromhandle (NPC) 34
Bronwyn (NPC) 7
Brother Aelris Llandeyr (NPC) 29
Brother Mikolas (NPC) 13
Brother Vinetto (NPC) 29
Bruzbid (NPC) 26
Cairvos (Place) 22
Calodek (NPC) 22
Camber Sorethin (NPC) 8
Canticle of the Damned (Object) 13
Capotztic (NPC) 16
Captain Argun (NPC) 28
Captain Balthew (NPC) 29
Captain Esterman Hempstrong (NPC) 29
Captain Grimhook (NPC) 29
Captain Jakob the Leper (NPC) 29
Captain Jared Goldtooth (NPC) 7
Carnelloe (Place) 5, 5.5, 29
Carrick (NPC) 24
Carrion Maggot (Monster) 24
Caryatid Column (Monster) 18
Cave Cricket (Monster) 26
Celthor the Slayer (NPC) 35B
Censer of Weal (Object) 26
Chalonna (NPC) 7
Chalychia the Devil-Lich (NPC) 13, 29
Cham Klein (NPC) 34
Chaotor (Deity) 13
Chaplain Korde (NPC) 26
Charp (NPC) 30
Chinvat Bridge (Place) 32
Chundag (NPC) 14
Clan Axefell (Organization) 28
Clan Deepdelve (Organization) 28
Clan Ember (Organization) 28
Clan Firebrand (Organization) 28
Clan Shieldfast (Organization) 28
Clan Wanderer (Organization) 28
Claw of Shifting Tides (Object) 29
Cloister of the Ordocar (Place) 12
Coatlimict (Deity) 4
Codex Ilyium (Object) 0
Coil (Spell) 16
Coin Devourer (Monster) 23
Cold Harbour (Place) 29
Coleus (NPC) 5.5
Comte du Javaire (NPC) 29
Construct, Kith (template) (Monster) 15
Corsair (Class) 29
Cortaigne (Place) 29
Corwin (NPC) 7
Cosmic Eggs (Object) 33
Coyopultec (NPC) 4
Crazy Klina (NPC) 24
Create Vampire (Spell) 25
Create Vampire Spawn (Spell) 25
Cresh Manor (Place) 20
Criestine Colonies (Place) 16
Criestine Empire (Place) 4, 16, 29
Crimson Ooze (Monster) 26
Crooknek (NPC) 29
Crown of Sett (Object) 17.5
Crown of Wulfrun (Object) 28
Crowngate (Place) 29
Cruel Justice (Object) 5
Crypt of Srihoz (Place) 25
Crypticus (Deity) 11
Crystal Shrine (Place) 29
Crystallis (Object) 29
Cuezpalcuanni (NPC) 16
Cult of the Broken Word (Organization) 18
Cult of the Forgotten Word (Organization) 33
Cybel (Object) 20
Cyrilla (NPC) 7
Dae Shar (NPC) 14
Daeobelinus (Monster) 20
Daeva (subtype) (Monster) 32
Dagger of Souls (Object) 18
Daras the Bold (NPC) 26
Darby Blist (NPC) 29
Dark Valerian (Object) 5
Darkenfold Forest (Place) 29
Darsov Erikson (NPC) 6
Darston "Dart" Isles (NPC) 12
Dawnfast (Object) 25
Deadeye the Imp (NPC) 14
Deadwood Treant (Monster) 10
Decapus (Monster) 26
Demesne of Baba Yazoth (Place) 17.5
Demi-gorgon (template) (Monster) 15
Demon, Aeshma (Monster) 18
Demon, Cambion (Monster) 18
Demon, Daraka (Monster) 18
Demon, Gharros (Monster) 18
Demon, Shadow (Monster) 22
Demon, Vapor (Monster) 14
Demonic Knight (Monster) 22
Denin Crob (NPC) 29
Dennel Batharda (NPC) 29
Deryn the Black (NPC) 30
Desiderius Merope (NPC) 29
Desk of Concentration (Object) 3
Desolation's Glamour (Spell) 15
Devil Fish (Monster) 19
Devil Lizard (Monster) 20
Dewey's Bookshelf (Object) 3
Diamond Carceperis (Object) 12
Diann the Bard (NPC) 25
Dire Polar Bear (Monster) 30
D'Lai Clan (Organization) 22
Doll of Sacrifice (Object) 28
Donner Llandeyr (NPC) 29
Doomtwitch Zombie (template) (Monster) 30
Dorean Llandeyr (NPC) 29
Dorkell (NPC) 29
Dorn Bronzethegn (NPC) 5.5
Draco Faerus (NPC) 12.5
Dracolisk (Monster) 18
Dracomorph (template) (Monster) 30
Dragon Ether (Object) 30
Dragon-blood (template) (Monster) 6
Dragon-kin (template) (Monster) 6
Dragon-kith (Spell) 6
Dragonspire Mountains (Place) 26
Dread Chathless (NPC) 18
Dread Ghost (template) (Monster) 30
Dread Spectre (template) (Monster) 30
Dread Watcher (NPC) 14
Dripping Temple (Place) 29
Drow, Aquatic (Monster) 29
Duchess of Domination (Deity) 29
Duergar Axe-hammer (Object) 5
Dundraville (Place) 0
Dünerain Mountains (Place) 14
Durbin (NPC) 0
Dust Brother (Monster) 23, 29
D'Varr (NPC) 22
Easy Chair of Penmanship (Object) 3
Ebon Egg (Object) 12.5
Edith Lough (NPC) 29
Efferam (NPC) 33
Egg of Autumn (Object) 29
Egg of Spring (Object) 29
Egg of Summer (Object) 29
Egg of Winter (Object) 29
Einaar (NPC) 29
Elemental (template) (Monster) 15
Elemental Plane of Fire (Place) 19
Elemental, Plague Tar (Monster) 5
Elgith (NPC) 29
Elianora D'Lai (NPC) 22
Elmot Kinfeld (NPC) 29
Emery Latigo (NPC) 33
Emperor Crab (Deity) 29
Empyrean Ocean (Place) 29
Erasmus Lore (NPC) 0
Erengoth (NPC) 22
Erik Frause (NPC) 29
Erol Shortshanks (NPC) 7
Euthaskia the Deceiver (NPC) 15
Ewan Treborne (NPC) 24
Exloe Burke (NPC) 33
Exploding Gem (Object) 26

Eye of Osirus (Object) 5
Eye of Tsathzar (Object) 35A
Eyjolfr (NPC) 29
Eztenqui Jungle (Place) 16
Fair Haven (Place) 7, 29
Fairweather (Place) 14
Fantastical Flying Beasts (Object) 26
Farguul's Fiery Finger (Object) 30
Farsis Llandeyr (NPC) 29
Father Alnwick (NPC) 29
Father Motter (NPC) 28
Fatty Blue (NPC) 20
Feasting (Monster) 20
Feldspar the Overseer (NPC) 33
Feodol Batharda (NPC) 29
Fereonte (Place) 16
Ferimax Ularaboo (NPC) 20
Feron "Blackwand" Tanerale (NPC) 35B
Fikk (NPC) 31
Finley's Eye (Object) 33
Fire Snake (Monster) 19
Firefiend (Monster) 18
Flame Paragon (template) (Monster) 30
Flayed Horror (Monster) 29
Flesh to Blood (Spell) 25
Fob Renault (NPC) 10
Foegar (NPC) 13
Foehammer Spires (Place) 28
Forbear the Smith (NPC) 1
Fraedok Hammerfell (NPC) 22
Freehold Thieves Guild (Organization) 17
Freeport (Place) 20
Fresk (NPC) 20
Frogroth (NPC) 0
From Potters Field (Object) 24
Frosteye Mountains (Place) 30
Fungal Mound (Monster) 29
Gaeran Hartson (NPC) 29
Gaff (Weapon) 29
Gar Ebal (NPC) 5
Garland's Fork (Place) 10, 29
Gas Spore (Monster) 26
Gaunt (Monster) 29
Gavuhn Donnell (NPC) 6
Gaze of the Basilisk (Spell) 16
Gefford Azimier (NPC) 33
Ger the Fighter (NPC) 25
Gilles Bier (NPC) 29
Gloomveil (Place) 8
Glorian (NPC) 3
Gnarga, King of the West (NPC) 30
Gnomish Airships (Object) 8
Gnomish Firearms (Object) 8
Godratt the Wise (NPC) 32
Golden Auroch (Object) 29
Golem, Amber (Monster) 25
Golem, Coin (Monster) 13
Golem, Ice (Monster) 19
Golem, Tablet (Monster) 23
Golem, Wizard (Monster) 29
Gondra (NPC) 21
Goren Bloodshaft (NPC) 11
Gorgimera (Monster) 18
Gorhan (Deity) 12
Gorson, the Blood Duke (NPC) 33
Gorung (Monster) 26
Gorwogijiro Gonejethis (NPC) 29
Gown of Allure (Object) 29
Graah (NPC) 17
Grave (NPC) 12
Great Serpent (Deity) 29
Great Swamp (Place) 17, 29
Grendel Knossos (NPC) 29
Grettir (NPC) 29
Grimmur (NPC) 29
Grishnaz the imp (NPC) 4
Grog (NPC) 7
Grussk (NPC) 30
Gudmundr (NPC) 29
Gurnard's Head (Place) 5
Gurt (NPC) 0
G'zogah (NPC) 1
Hadler's Gap (Place) 2
Haedor Hammerfell (NPC) 22
Half-Giant (template) (Monster) 30
Halifa (NPC) 22
Hallrbjorn (NPC) 29
Hammerfell Clan (Organization) 22
Hang Glider (Object) 29
Hared Daen (NPC) 29
Harnaw (NPC) 29
Harpoon Urchin (Monster) 19
Haverthold Asylum (Place) 34
Hb'kir (NPC) 30
He Who Is Fear And Righteous Might (Deity) 33
Headmaster Beaulibre (NPC) 33
Helena Dunraith (NPC) 29
Hellmoth (Monster) 18
Hellscarab Swarm (Monster) 15
Hellthorn (Monster) 18
Hengis (NPC) 29
Henry Crofter (NPC) 24
Heresy of Honor (Object) 12.5
Heresy of Mercy (Object) 12.5
Heresy of the Good War (Object) 12.5
Heresy of Truth (Object) 12.5
Hethvarag, King of the South (NPC) 30
Hilto Foibald (NPC) 28
Holger Kurtz (NPC) 24
Hollow One (Monster) 23
Hollow Spawn (Monster) 23
Holst Stoltsfad (NPC) 18
Honorus (Deity) 14
Hornauer (NPC) 5
House Cadryenne (Organization) 8, 29
House Ereluc (Organization) 12.5
House Faerus (Organization) 12.5
House Llandeyr (Organization) 29
House Malian (Organization) 29
Hroaldr (NPC) 29
Hrumeth (NPC) 15
Hubert Reichfort (NPC) 29
Huelga (NPC) 10
Iaha (NPC) 16
Iasmini (NPC) 24
Iborsum Shatter-fist (NPC) 6
Icy Creature (template) (Monster) 30
Id Ooze (template) (Monster) 30
Idruma (NPC) 31
Ikammanen (NPC) 29
Ikim Vaas (NPC) 34
Ildavir (Deity) 35A
Ilquot (Deity) 29
Immolius (NPC) 19
Immun-drac (NPC) 13
Impaler (Monster) 26
Improved Reduce Person (Spell) 11
Incense of Displacement (Object) 29
Indra Daeva (Monster) 32
Infected (template) (Monster) 29
Inphidian, Cobra-Back (Monster) 16
Instruments of Maddening Cacophany (Object) 23
Iron Crypt of the Heretics (Place) 12, 12.5
Ironflow River (Place) 26
Isle of Faroe (Place) 29
Isle of Tlahuaco (Place) 16
Itlapal (Object) 16
Jadis Wren (NPC) 22
Jarson Tender (NPC) 14
Jengenritz (NPC) 13
Jessa Smiles (NPC) 29
Jingo (NPC) 29
Jingo's Travelling Circus (Organization) 29
John Mossborn (NPC) 29
Jonah Skutle (NPC) 29
Jorah Silverhand (NPC) 16
Jornal (NPC) 29
Jumar Starshine (NPC) 29
Justicia (Deity) 13, 35B
Kaldal (NPC) 28
Kali (NPC) 8
Kampfult (Monster) 26
Kang ("Mercy") (Object) 5
Katachek (NPC) 18
Kay Mossborn (NPC) 5.5
Kayle Braggin (NPC) 8
Kazok-Ilthor (NPC) 29
Keeper of the Ways (NPC) 30
Kelborne Selbrei (NPC) 8
Kelemen the Gentle (NPC) 18
Kerwin Krell (NPC) 0
Khetira (NPC) 13
Khonsurian Empire (Place) 15
Khubsheth the Prophet (NPC) 15
Kih-koth (NPC) 35A
King of the North (NPC) 30
King's Highway (Place) 28, 29
Kinhul (NPC) 26

Klaklin (Monster) 19
Klaklin, Soldier (Monster) 19
Knag'rr the Finder (NPC) 15
Knights of the Ordocar (Organization) 12.5
Kolaracht (NPC) 10
Koldavis (NPC) 16
Kolgot (NPC) 28
Korg (NPC) 20
Kos (NPC) 28
Kostkorian (Monster) 30
Kreeasi (NPC) 30
Krklkkrkl (NPC) 13
Kuga (NPC) 10
Kyleth (NPC) 17
Kyleth the Witch-Queen (NPC) 17.5
Ladman Llandeyr (NPC) 29
Lady Aborn (NPC) 28
Lady Arabella (NPC) 11
Lady Elisabeth Pendour (NPC) 5
Lady Shadron (NPC) 12.5
Laeon River (Place) 23
Lagos (Deity) 26, 29
Lake Shadefell (Place) 29
Larenz Llandeyr (NPC) 29
Lares (Deity) 29
Larissa Batharda (NPC) 29
Lassoo (Monster) 19
Lastever (Place) 26
Laurossil Cadryenne (NPC) 8
Lava Creep (Monster) 8
Lawrence Gannu (NPC) 1
Leashstone (Object) 18
Lerrza Mahk (NPC) 2
Lessian Thrivolt (NPC) 29
Liah (NPC) 28
Lieux-Claren (Place) 16
Lirean Sea (Place) 29
Living Spirit (template) (Monster) 21
Living Tear (Monster) 23
Llandeyr Mausoleum (Place) 29
Llewellyn (NPC) 7
Lodbrag the Ogre (NPC) 2
Lodril (NPC) 35B
Logosan D'Lai (NPC) 22
Loki (Deity) 29
Loo (NPC) 20
Lord Arnost (NPC) 29
Lord Braxus (NPC) 13
Lord Duncan Merriweather (NPC) 0
Lord McDurmott (NPC) 21, 22
Lord Tulwar (NPC) 0
Lorethel (NPC) 29
Lower Innis (Place) 29
Luc Stethenfield (NPC) 34
Macuahuitl (Object) 4
Mad Savant (template) (Monster) 30
Maddening Scream (Spell) 20
Maeve (NPC) 17
Magic Lamps (Object) 3
Malachai's Magical Doors (Object) 22
Malchor (NPC) 11
Maligance (NPC) 33
Malotoch (Deity) 5, 13, 28
Manbreaker (Object) 30
Mantari (Monster) 26
Mar (NPC) 29
Marc Stethenfield (NPC) 34
Mare Stone (Object) 24
Mari Kell (NPC) 24
Maris Zahn (NPC) 29
Marquis de Sablieur (NPC) 29
Marris Llandeyr (NPC) 29
Marshak the Reever (NPC) 28
Masjed-al-Talba (NPC) 32
Mask of the Shadowcat (Object) 35B
Master Bolo (NPC) 28
Master Chief Lorenz Eunni (NPC) 12
Meelkor (Deity) 3
Melisine d'Aurielle (NPC) 16
Melisine dÍAurielle (NPC) 16
Menoden (NPC) 29
Menoden's Tower (Place) 29
Meraph the Golden (NPC) 15
Mergusi Kefon (NPC) 35B
Merry Bastards (Organization) 29
Metadilos (Monster) 29
Micohuani (Object) 16
Mikal (NPC) 20
Millers Court (Place) 24
Mirror of Physical Aptitude (Object) 29
Mite (Monster) 26
Moddar Vich (NPC) 29
Monastery of the Dawning Sun (Place) 13
Monks of the Saint (Organization) 12.5
Moonleaper (Object) 33
Moran Selbrei (NPC) 8
Moray eel (Monster) 4
Mortimer Mortenson (NPC) 7
Mother Green's Rest (Place) 18
Mount Icpitl (Place) 16
Mount Rolnith (Place) 19
Mountain King (NPC) 17
Mountain Troglodyte (Monster) 26
Mourning Cave (Place) 14
Mummy Dragon (template) (Monster) 13
Myerlinda (NPC) 33
Myna (Deity) 0
Myrkjartan (NPC) 30
Narrimunâth (Deity) 1
Narzy Hilspek (NPC) 1
Nazost the Scrivener (NPC) 28
N'dereg (NPC) 17
Necklack of Fangs (Object) 23
Necoctene (Monster) 16
Nicrotis (NPC) 29
Niflheim (Place) 29
Nimlurun (Deity) 1
Ninurta (Deity) 29
Nira Bavisar (NPC) 6
Nockmort (NPC) 10
Noosem (NPC) 33
Northlands (Place) 17.5
Nullsport (Place) 29
Nunsod Llandeyr (NPC) 29
Nykolus Rasslov (NPC) 29
Obitu-que (demon) (Deity) 17
Oblivion Incense (Object) 18
Octagon Gauntlet (Object) 33
Oculum Infernae (Object) 14
Oddr (NPC) 29
Odin (Deity) 29
Odolan (NPC) 14
Ograk, King of the East (NPC) 30
Olive Slime (Monster) 26
Omihuictli (the Bone Blade) (Object) 16
Oolgluur (NPC) 30
Open Hearth (Place) 29
Orden (Place) 26
Osirus (Deity) 5
Oswald Reichfort (NPC) 29
Oszkar the Black (NPC) 18
Outer Gods (Deity) 2
Oz (NPC) 13
Painshrieker (Monster) 29
Parhokk (Place) 2
Pech (Monster) 26
Pelagia (Deity) 7, 29
Phycomid (Monster) 26
Plague Chalice (Object) 29
Plague Wight (Monster) 29
Plantnip Candle (Object) 29
Pleniere (Place) 16
Pomatomus (NPC) 7
Porthmeor (Place) 24
Possessed Object (template) (Monster) 34
Potion of Longevity (Object) 23
Praxis Tome (Object) 33
Prester "Trapmaster" Ungart (NPC) 35B
Professor Yegaa (NPC) 33
Prophecy of Tremaste (Object) 29
Prophet's Leap (Place) 15
Punjar (Place) 35B
Pwalg (Monster) 20
Pyraxus (NPC) 6
Qi ("Focus") (Object) 5
Quast (NPC) 0
Quill of Dictation (Object) 35B
Quintoo (NPC) 33
Radiant Boy (Monster) 20
Radmanish (NPC) 32
Rain of Poison (Spell) 8
Rama Savitri (NPC) 6
Rassylov's Journal (Object) 29
Rathulagon (NPC) 26
Razor Wire Net (Object) 14
Realta Llandeyr (NPC) 29
Red Annie (NPC) 12
Red Wisdom (NPC) 18
Redcap (Monster) 24
Redhorn Hill (Place) 29

Redtooth Troll (Monster) 27
Reichfort Family (Organization) 29
Reizravel (NPC) 12
Relsa Llandeyr (NPC) 29
Renald Stethenfield (NPC) 34
Renna the Midwife (NPC) 1
Reswythe (NPC) 35B
Revenant (template) (Monster) 20
Rezapyros (NPC) 33
Rez-zomar the Goblin Chieftan (NPC) 1
River Saedre (Place) 28
Roe Ramenik (NPC) 33
Rogroakbub the Trollfiend (NPC) 13
Rook (Monster) 5
Roost Dretch (Monster) 5.5
Root of Malotoch (Object) 5.5
Rootshaker (NPC) 10
Rosemergy (NPC) 5.5
Rot Grub (Monster) 26
Rumatugtug (NPC) 33
Rune Stone of Baldr (Sorrow) (Object) 29
Rune Stone of Creation (Blessing) (Object) 29
Rune Stone of Fury (Strength) (Object) 29
Rune Stone of Rebirth (Hope) (Object) 29
Rune Stone of Wisdom (Vision) (Object) 29
Rune Stones of Odin (Object) 29
Rust Spider (Monster) 29
Sacrificial Guards (Monster) 33
Saedor's Guide to Constructs and Living Spirits (Object) 21
Saena Tree (Monster) 32
Saint's Blood Mountains (Place) 12, 12.5
Samuka (NPC) 18
Sand Blast (Spell) 29
Sanguine Stone (Object) 13
Sanguiomancy (School of Magic) 25
Sathsar (NPC) 26
Savage Quenn (NPC) 29
Scepter of Wildsgate (Object) 28
Scorpion Man (Monster) 23
Screaming Skull (Monster) 22
Sczee'zeeian (NPC) 33
Sea of Desperation (Place) 16
Sentinel of Cortaigne (Place) 29
Sepia Snake (Monster) 16
Seraph, grig (NPC) 29
Sergio the Vizier (NPC) 28
Serpentfury (Monster) 23
Serrek Tarn (NPC) 2
Serrenna Valuois (NPC) 1
Sewer Rat (Monster) 24
Sezrakan (NPC) 29
Sha Abbas (NPC) 32
Shadowstar (Object) 13
Shaduar (Monster) 16
Shae'Mae (NPC) 7
Sharktooth (NPC) 24
Sharyn-Ella (NPC) 0
Shed Form (Spell) 16
Shell Shurikens of Crushing (Object) 24
Shuderief (NPC) 10
Shul (Deity) 23
Sickle Rock Grove (Place) 5.5
Silverton (Place) 1
Sir Galwaith (NPC) 35A
Sir Gareth Porthglaze (NPC) 5.5
Skeggi (NPC) 29
Skr'thor (NPC) 7
Skulltop Hillock (Place) 0
Skunge Longtooth (NPC) 29
Slash Wing (Monster) 26
Slate, the intelligent chalkboard (Object) 13
Slazzik Balefire (NPC) 2
Sle'astakk (NPC) 30
Slime Zombie (template) (Monster) 26
Slithering Ooze (template) (Monster) 30
Slysska (NPC) 30
Snake Staff of Baba Yazoth (Object) 17.5
Snapdragon Swarm (Monster) 29
Sodersund (NPC) 28
Sodoutym (Deity) 28
Soleth (Deity) 31
Solgem Fleetfoot (NPC) 6
Solom Quor (NPC) 29
Soloman Black (NPC) 29
Soranna (NPC) 19
Soranna's Universal Elemental Weapon (Object) 19
Sorsha Llandeyr (NPC) 29
Sothulth (Deity) 26
Soul Cauldron (Object) 18
Soul Engine (Object) 18
Soul'daem (Object) 35B
Soulgrave (Place) 1, 27
Soulstone (Object) 18
Southern Seas (Place) 24
Spellsnake (Monster) 29
Spirit of Uru-nuk (Monster) 23
Squid, Land (Monster) 29
Srihoz (Heironeous Uliran Theopal) (NPC) 25
Sslithia (NPC) 7
Ssustre (NPC) 26
Staff of Water Control (Object) 21
Starys Malian (NPC) 29
Static Bat (Monster) 29
Stealth Sword (Object) 26
Stevrock Stormbringer (NPC) 22
Stink-fire Beetle (Monster) 29
Stone of Translation (Object) 29
Stonefriend (Object) 28
Stoneglass Mirror (Object) 31
Stoneshaper Masons (Organization) 29
Stormbringer Castle (Place) 21
Stormbringer Mountain (Place) 21
Stozari Stormbringer (NPC) 21, 22
Straitjacket (Object) 34
Strike of the Cobra (Spell) 16
Stygoth (NPC) 17
Sumer (Place) 29
Summerhold (Place) 29
Sunscratch (NPC) 30
Sute Lore (NPC) 0
Swarm Shuriken (Object) 35B
Swarm, Fine Fire Elemental (Monster) 19
Sword of Barons (Object) 28
Sword of Conviction (Object) 14
Tainted (template) (Monster) 29
Takaritha (NPC) 7
Ta'kira'kerymor ("Sword-breaker") (Object) 5
Talisman of the Great Beast (Object) 33
Tan Mold (Monster) 32
Tarfoot (NPC) 14
Tarik One-Arm (NPC) 0
Tarn Tetherknot (NPC) 11
Tarrak (NPC) 5
Taskmaster Broggab (NPC) 14
Tayanna Serrengriff (NPC) 29
Tazex (NPC) 31
Tecoacualli (NPC) 16
Tellakerry Clan (Organization) 29
Tentacled Horror (Monster) 16
Terisin (NPC) 29
Tharaxis (NPC) 19
The Abyss (Place) 18
The Book of Seven Serpents (Object) 16
The Castellan (NPC) 30
The Champion (NPC) 25
The Forlorn Maid (NPC) 17.5
The Great Beast (NPC) 33
The Greater Keys (Object) 15
The Lesser Keys (Object) 15
The Maw (Place) 17
The mysterious white tower (Place) 3
The Outriders (Organization) 28
The Shadowcrown (Object) 15
The Speaker to Dust (NPC) 15
The Star Arms (Object) 5
The Stepstone (Object) 15
The Watch (Organization) 28
The Wilds (Place) 28
Thedric Branch (NPC) 29
Theland (NPC) 26
Thelias (NPC) 30
Thelport (Place) 29
Thieves' Puzzle Box, Lesser (Object) 35B
Thistle (NPC) 14
Thor (Deity) 29
Thormyr (Deity) 26
Thornblood (Monster) 14
Thornswild Wood (Place) 35A
Thulsa, Stone of Scribes (Object) 23
Thurlo (NPC) 24

T'Klack (NPC) 14
Tlilcohuatl (NPC) 16
Toadspawn (template) (Monster) 13
Tomb of Nicrotis (Place) 29
Tome of the Black Tongue (Object) 13
Tor Barnabas (Blubberbank) (NPC) 29
Torc of Illusions (Object) 15
Torgo the Eye Gouger (NPC) 17
Tormul Serrengriff (NPC) 29
Tororthun (Deity) 8
Torvok Blackspear (NPC) 16
Toth-Ror (NPC) 35A
Totoki (NPC) 21
Touch of Madness (Spell) 20
Tower of the Black Pearl (Place) 29
Transport Obelisk (Object) 33
Tredoksule (Place) 21
True Death (Object) 13
Tsathzar Rho (NPC) 2
Tud (NPC) 29
Tusk (NPC) 7
Tzopiloani (Monster) 16
Ugloshti (NPC) 29
Ul Khaz'kul (Place) 23
Ul-Alam'inic (NPC) 23
Undine (template) (Monster) 24
Unuul (Language) 23
Ur (Place) 29
Urggar (NPC) 26
Urkallan Hills (Place) 2
Urudu River (Place) 23
Uru'Nuk (Place) 23
Valinus (NPC) 13
Vam Doadson (NPC) 34
Vampiric Bloom (Monster) 25
Vault of the Dragon Kings (Place) 30
Velth (NPC) 29
Venaku (NPC) 29
Venom Zombie (Monster) 8
Verdivis (NPC) 31
Verdivis' Catacomb (Place) 31
Vespertiliac (Monster) 20
Vestments of Vilim-Zhula (Object) 29
Vik (NPC) 24
Vile Gate (Object) 20
Vilim-Zhula (Deity) 29
Virkus (NPC) 14
Volosizz (NPC) 19
Voltigeur (Place) 16
Wall of Chill (Spell) 19
Wall of Radiation (Spell) 8
Warded Walls (Spell) 21, 22
Wardrobe of Cleansing (Object) 3
War-worm (Monster) 29
War-worm Queen (Monster) 29
War-worm Zombie (template) (Monster) 29
Wastes of Zamon (Place) 17.5
Weeping Forest (Place) 29
Weird, Lightning (Monster) 22
Welwyn (Place) 11
Westphalen School (Place) 33
Whisker (Object) 29
Whitefang Stronghold (Place) 26
Wildsgate (Place) 28
Will Dunraith (NPC) 29
Winds and Weather (Object) 26
Witch Grass (Monster) 21
Withers (Place) 33
Woodroe (Place) 18
Wrack (Monster) 18
Wulfrun (NPC) 28
Xander (NPC) 5
Xayactl Bay (Place) 16
Xiuhcoatl (NPC) 16
Xogg (NPC) 22
Xulmec (Place) 16
Xulmec city-states (Place) 4
Yasif Cazül, the Lord of Thieves (NPC) 35B
Ydak (NPC) 31
Zabator (NPC) 33
Zadok (NPC) 22
Zahadran (Place) 32
Zamuk the Swift (Deity) 28
Ziz Ka-Seer (NPC) 19
Zoë (NPC) 13
Zolmik Thiat (NPC) 29
Zolmik's Retreat (Place) 29
Zombifying Gas (Object) 17
Zurvan (Deity) 32

Credits and Afterword

Credits

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Special thanks to the many writers and artists who created the DCC adventures that inspired this world.

Afterword: Mike Ferguson

It's been much fun being able to work on the World of Dungeon Crawl Classics … and a childhood dream come true. Many thanks to the following who made the dream possible:

Joseph, Harley, and Jeff – for making this adventure a grand one indeed.

Laura Ferguson – a great sister, and the one who got me traveling down this road in the first place.

Sue Ferguson – my lovely wife, who humors my obsession with swords and sorcery.

Jonathan Day, John Geoghegan, Eric Mee, Rick Schmidt, and Rich Zeitler – the best gamers a GM could ask for. You guys rule.

And to the memory of Doug Cohen – a great gamer and a fantastic person. Requiescat in pace, my friend.

Afterword: Jeff LaSala

Foremost thanks to my wife, Marisa – Argentine gypsy, mermaid, and a friend to all halflings and kobolds. Thank you for your love and patience, for your much-needed distractions, and for dealing with the real world in those moments when I was in another. You are the bestest, to say the leastest. Never stop looking for your unicorn, okay? For now, I give you Cindy, the baby naga.

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Heartfelt thanks to Joseph Goodman, for giving me the opportunity to run amuck in the DCC world – I hope you find the Known Realms of Áereth to be worthy of your standards!

Thank you, Mike, for our shared ideas and for *Curse of the Emerald Cobra*, which gave me an excuse to delve into Nahuatl culture.

And nostalgic thanks to my original gaming group: Dan Arney, Chris Nygren, and Steve Simar. Dan, I still can't believe you used your vorpal axe on a fellow PC…

Afterword: Harley Stroh

Certain adventures only come around once.

Like when the grizzled old warrior decides to go after the dragon, and asks who's coming with him. Or when the dark-eyed sorceress slowly surveys the crowd of peasants, waiting for one to step forward and pull the sword from the stone.

Like many, I grew up studying the glossography of Pluffet Smedger the Elder, and listening to stories at the knee of the Old Mage of Shadowdale. I will always remember taking my first tentative steps into the Caves of Chaos, only to vanish down a darkened pit swarming with diseased rats. So when Joseph Goodman asked if I'd oversee the chronicling of Áereth, the world of the Dungeon Crawl Classics, I knew I had been invited on the adventure of a lifetime.

Our source material? Twenty or so (now thirty!) modules written by some of the brightest minds in the business. Immediately we set about extracting all the heroes and villains, monsters and ruins, drawing connections where there were dots, making them up where there were none. What began as a simple compilation quickly grew to an encyclopedic undertaking. Modules were photocopied and highlighted, maps drawn and re-drawn. Notes were taken, backstories written.

Patterns began to emerge.

Of course, not all of the patterns were good. The original Dungeon Crawl Classics were written as one-shot adventures for generic fantasy settings, with oh-so-brilliant settings like the Great Swamp. (What's so great about it?) By the time we came across the Swamp's sister setting, the Great Desert, I demanded a blood oath from the other writers, striking the word Great from their lexicon. As DCC authors, we can be forgiven; after all, when you named a demonic power after an old roommate in graduate school, no one ever dreamed that it would one day be canonized in the official campaign setting … forever.

But then something began to change. Áereth, compiled from the cultural Zeitgeist of classic sword-and-sorcery adventures, began writing itself. Dates started making sense. Old villains returned to overthrow empires, peasants grew into heroes and then legends. Like an ancient dragon stirring from a thousand-year rest, the world came to life.

Here's the secret about Dungeon Crawl Classics: Sure, they look like the old modules of yore; sure, they have the blue ink maps and the fonts we remember. But if nostalgia were all they had to offer, DCC sales would have withered and died after the first year. Far more importantly, they have risk, excitement, and adventure, the crucial ingredients to any good game of D&D.

Now it is nearly midnight. Tomorrow I will forward the manuscript on to Chicago. Is the world finished? Absolutely not. Given another four months, we could write – record – another two hundred pages. But like Gygax taught us all those years ago, games are meant to be played, not perfected. This gazetteer isn't a crystal ball peering into every corner of the world; it's a magic mirror, offering you a glimpse of a world you've never visited but have always known.

Now all that's left is for you to step through.

So take up your broadsword, blow the dust off your spellbook, and saddle the horses. The mailed Kings of the North are calling out your name, demanding an audience. I leave you to give an answer.

—Harley Stroh, February 2006

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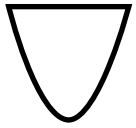
Dungeon Crawl Classics Character Record Sheet

Player's Name _____ **Character's Name** _____

Race _____ **Class** _____ **Level** _____ **Alignment** _____

Speed _____ **XP** _____

Initiative _____ **Spell Save DC** _____



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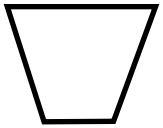

Hit Points

Tch: _____ **Max:** _____

FF: _____ **Nonlethal:** _____

BAB

Melee

2nd Hand

Ranged

Grapple

Strength
Modifier: _____

Dexterity
Modifier: _____

Constitution
Modifier: _____

Intelligence
Modifier: _____

Wisdom
Modifier: _____

Charisma
Modifier: _____

Fort Save

Ref Save

Will Save

Skills & Feats

Equipment & Treasure

Languages & Notes

Spells & Special Abilities

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The World of Aereth

Empire of Crieste

Free Province of Thire

Morena Nova

Criestine Colonies

Ssorlang

The Vermilion Tribes

Taijin

Vivekanika

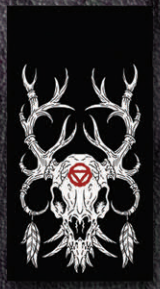
City-State of Porthmeor

Free City of Wildsgate

Free City of Ternyziem

Sires of Pelagia

Djeser al-Maqqara



Scourgelands

League of Resonance

Darawan

Kaatlan

Maras

Miztlani

Amoya

Chuzec

Athua

Teotcoatlan

World of Aereth - PDF

Setup Grid

Top Map (TM)

1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15

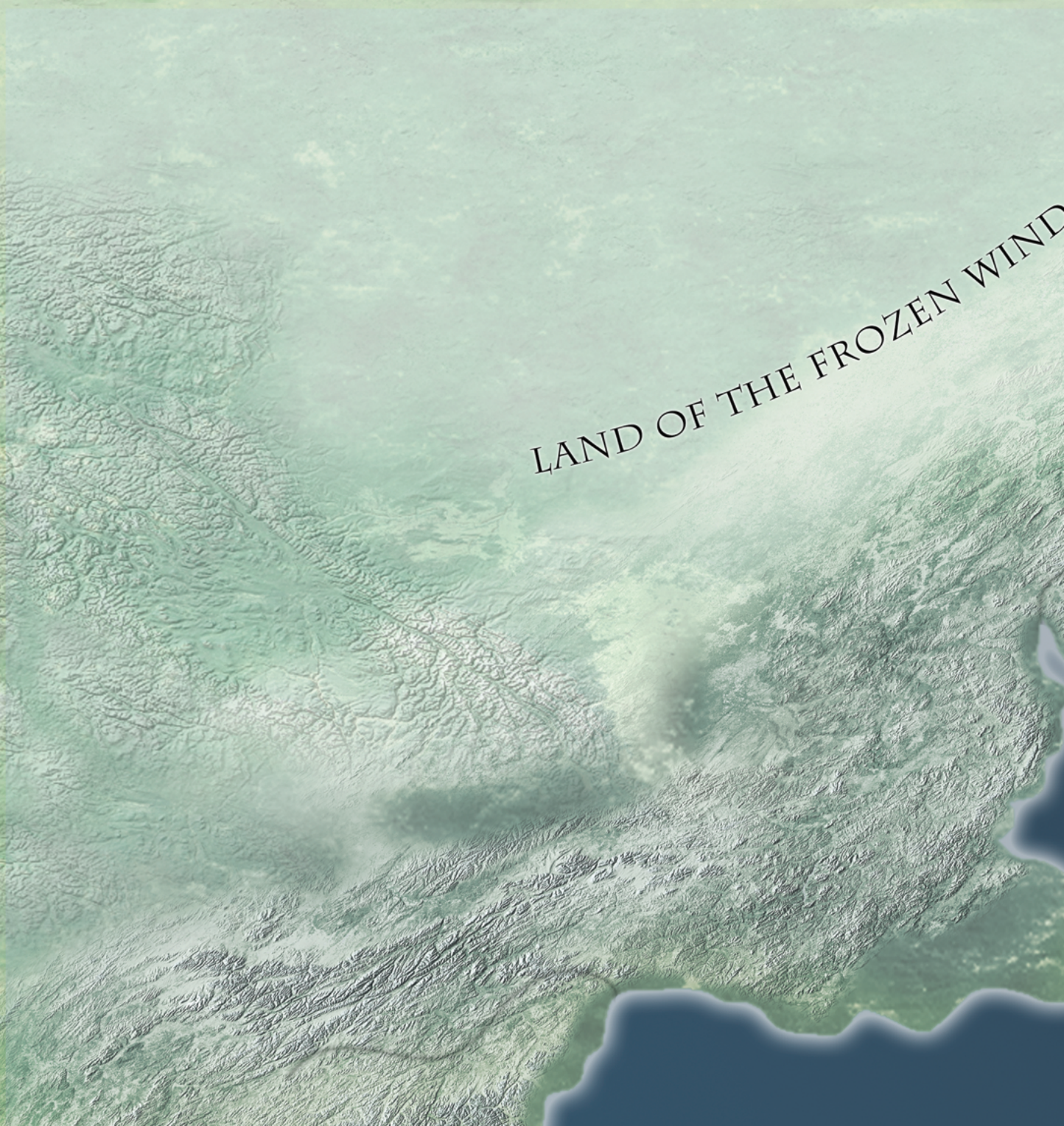
Middle Map (MM)

1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15

Lower Map (LM)

1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15

the World of Aereth Gazetteer


LAND OF THE FROZEN WIND

STRAIT OF GNASHING ICE
TAINS

the
World
of
Áereth
Gazetteer

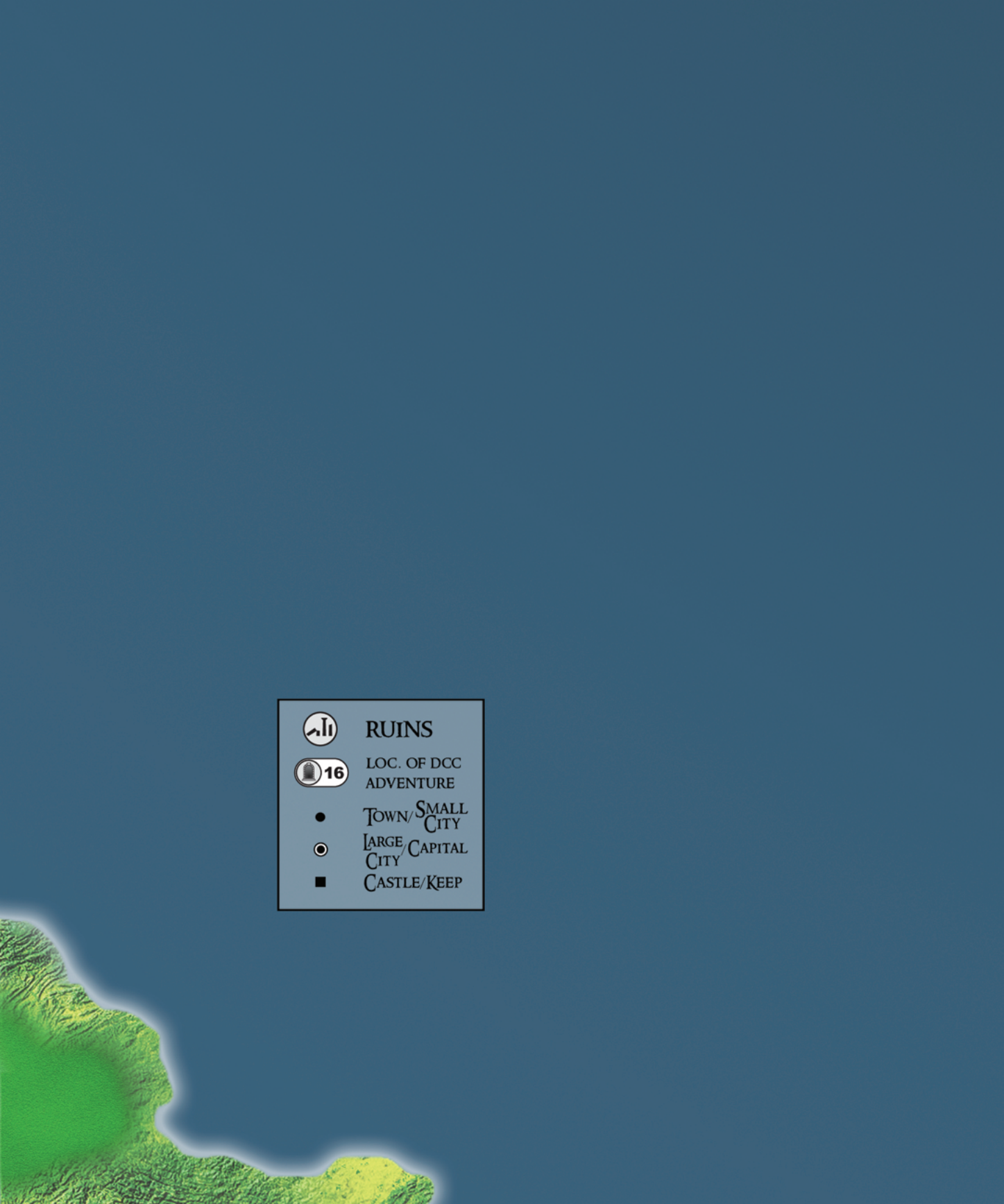
GREAT NORTHER

RN SEA

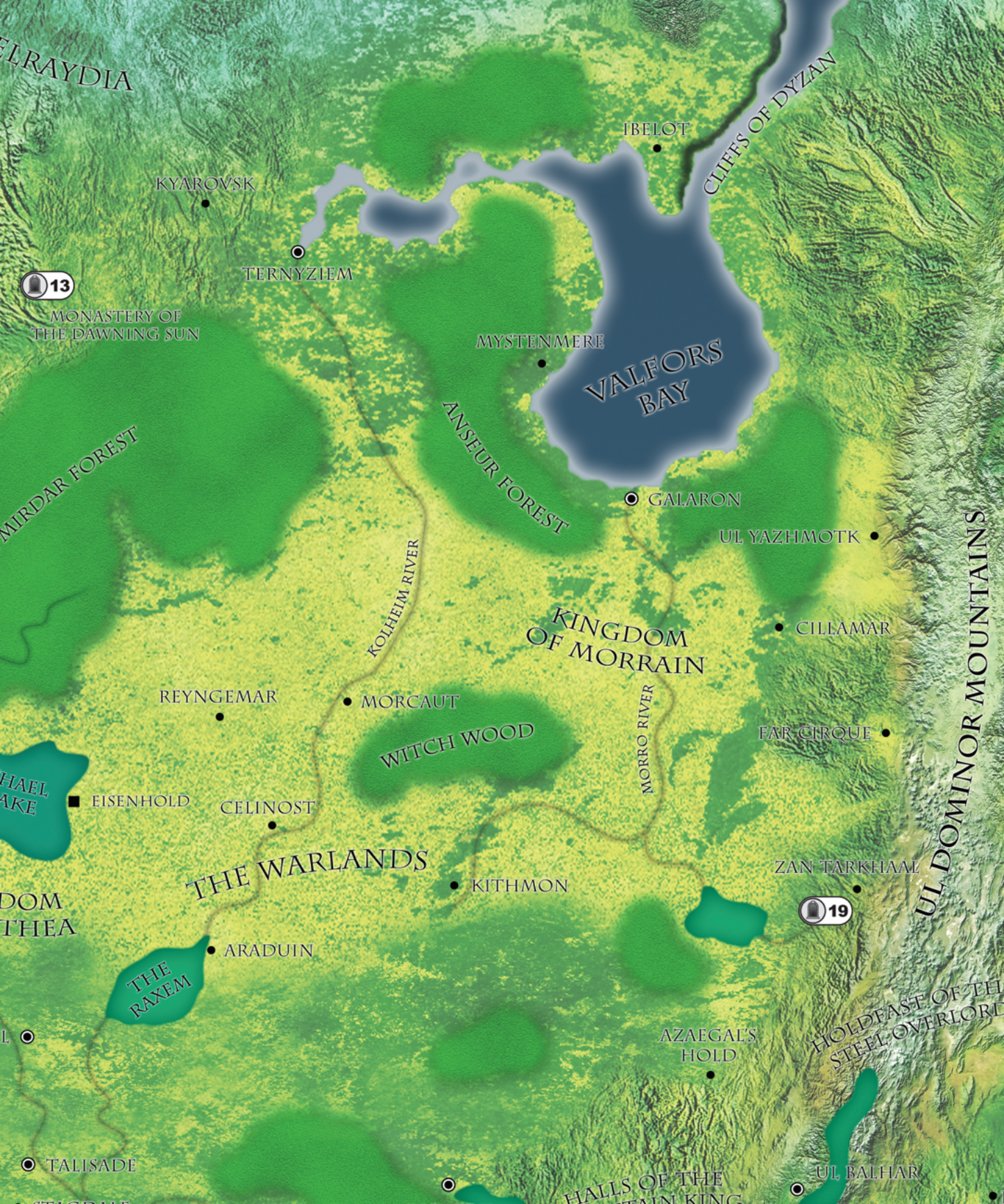
WALEHAVEN
FROST BARRENS
SAINT'S BLOOD MOUNTAINS
25
12.5
12
AMBROSHEA
TRADES

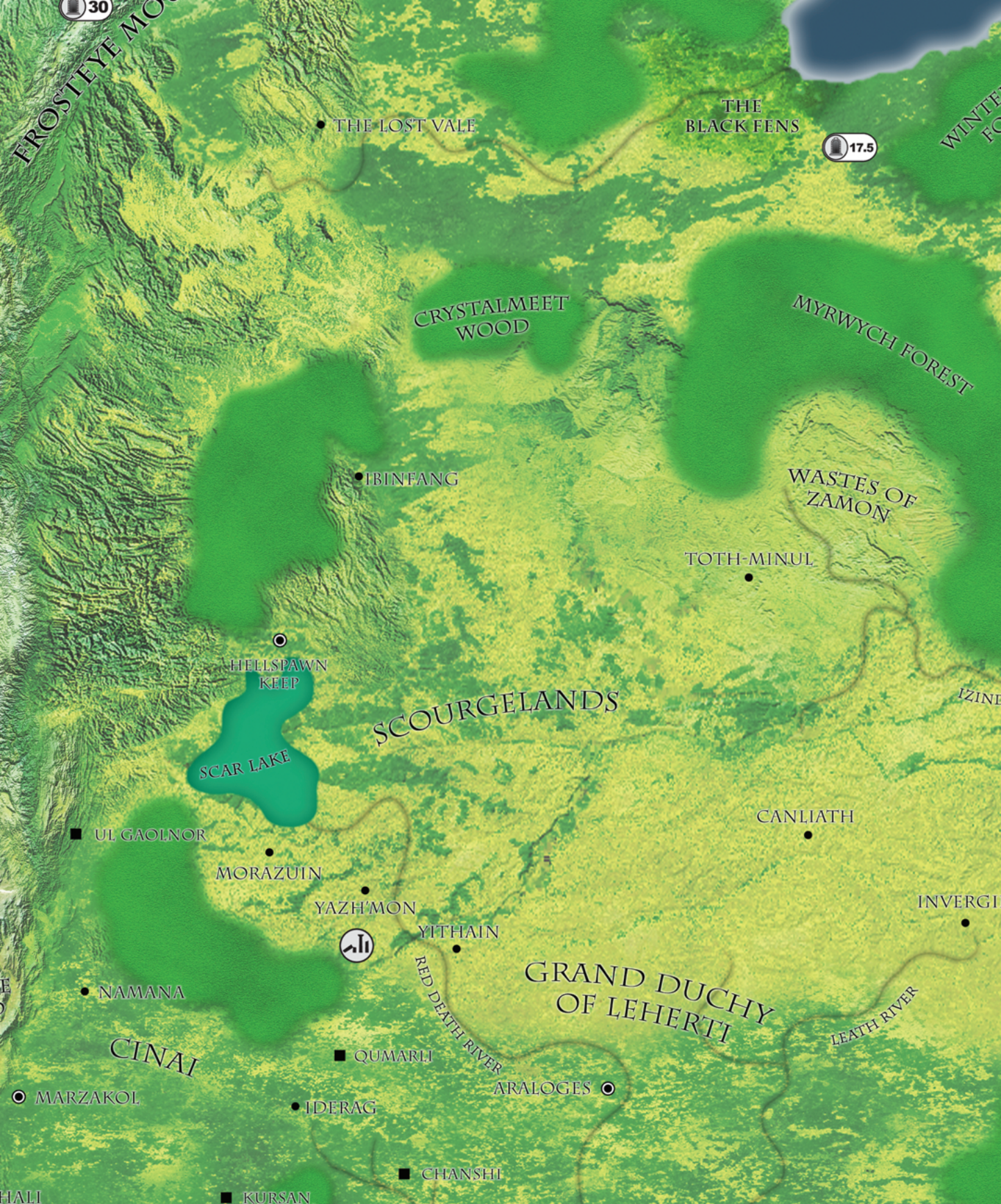
BLACKICE MOUN
DEAD VA
ICENWASTES
UNTAINS

ALES


RUINS
16
LOC. OF DCC ADVENTURE
TOWN/SMALL CITY
LARGE CITY/CAPITAL
CASTLE/KEEP

NYFAIL MOUNTAINS
BAY OF ASUR
WELLWYN
11
CAIRNSWILD


ELRAYDIA
IBELOT
CLIFFS OF DYZAN
KYAROVSK
TERNYZIEM
13
MONASTERY OF THE DAWNING SUN
MYSTENMERE
VALFORS BAY
MIRDAR FOREST
ANSEUR FOREST
GALARON
UL YAZHMOTK
KOLHEIM RIVER
KINGDOM OF MORRAIN
CILLAMAR
UL DOMINOR MOUNTAINS
REYNGEMAR
MORCAUT
WITCH WOOD
MORRO RIVER
FAR CIRQUE
EISENHOLD
CELINOST
THE WARLANDS
KITHMON
ZAN TARKHAAL
19
ARADUIN
THE RAXEM
AZAEGAL'S HOLD
TALISADE
UL BALHAR

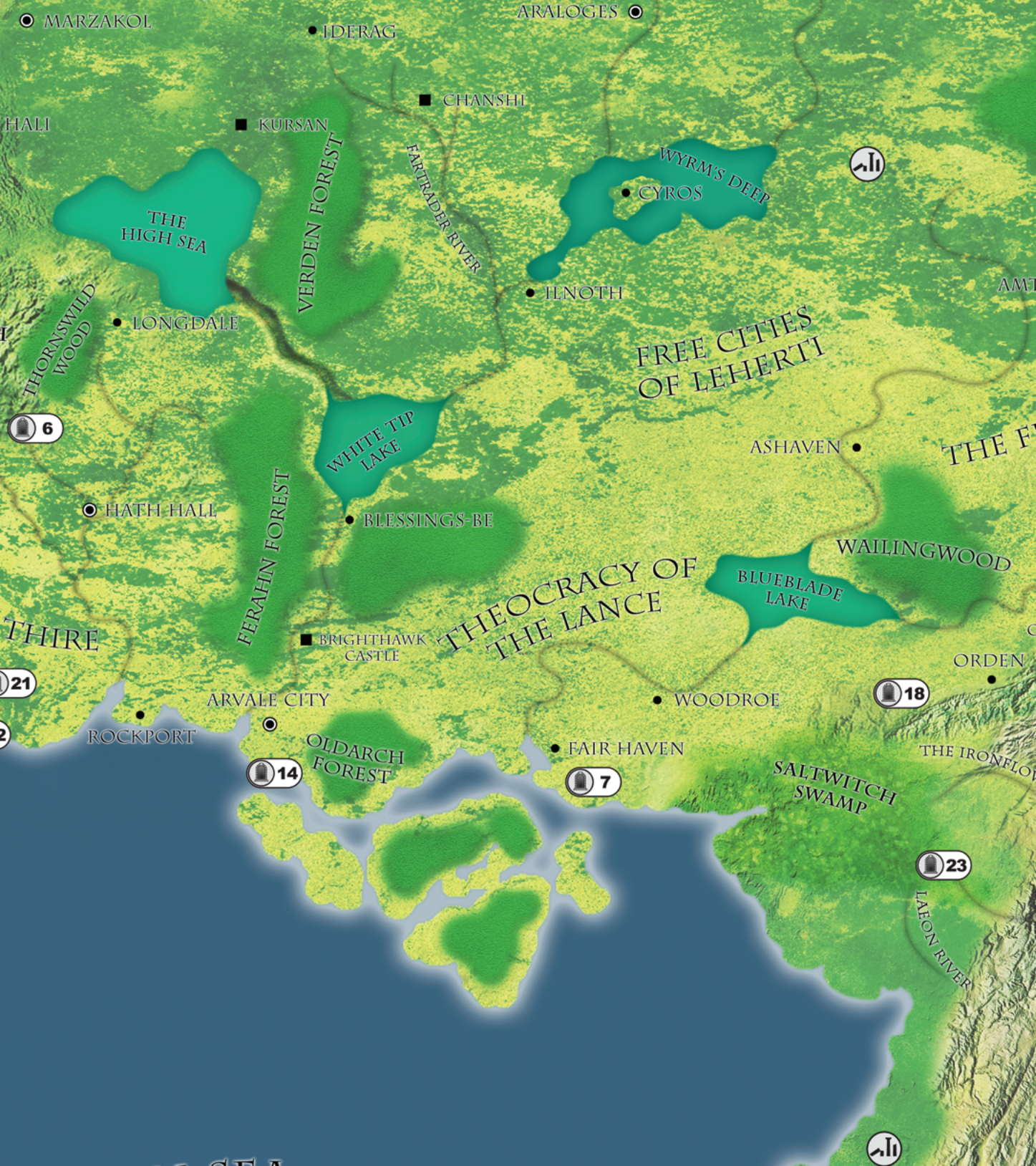

30
FROSTEYE MO
THE LOST VALE
THE BLACK FENS
17.5
WINTE
FO
CRYSTALMEET WOOD
MYRWYCH FOREST
IBINFANG
WASTES OF ZAMON
TOTH-MINUL
HELLSPAWN KEEP
SCOURGELANDS
IZIN
SCAR LAKE
CANLIATH
UL GAOLNOR
MORAZUIN
YAZH'MON
INVERGI
YITHAIN
NAMANA
GRAND DUCHY OF LEHERTI
RED DEATH RIVER
LEATH RIVER
CINAI
QUMARLI
ARALOGES
MARZAKOL
IDERAG
CHANSHI
KURSAN
HALI

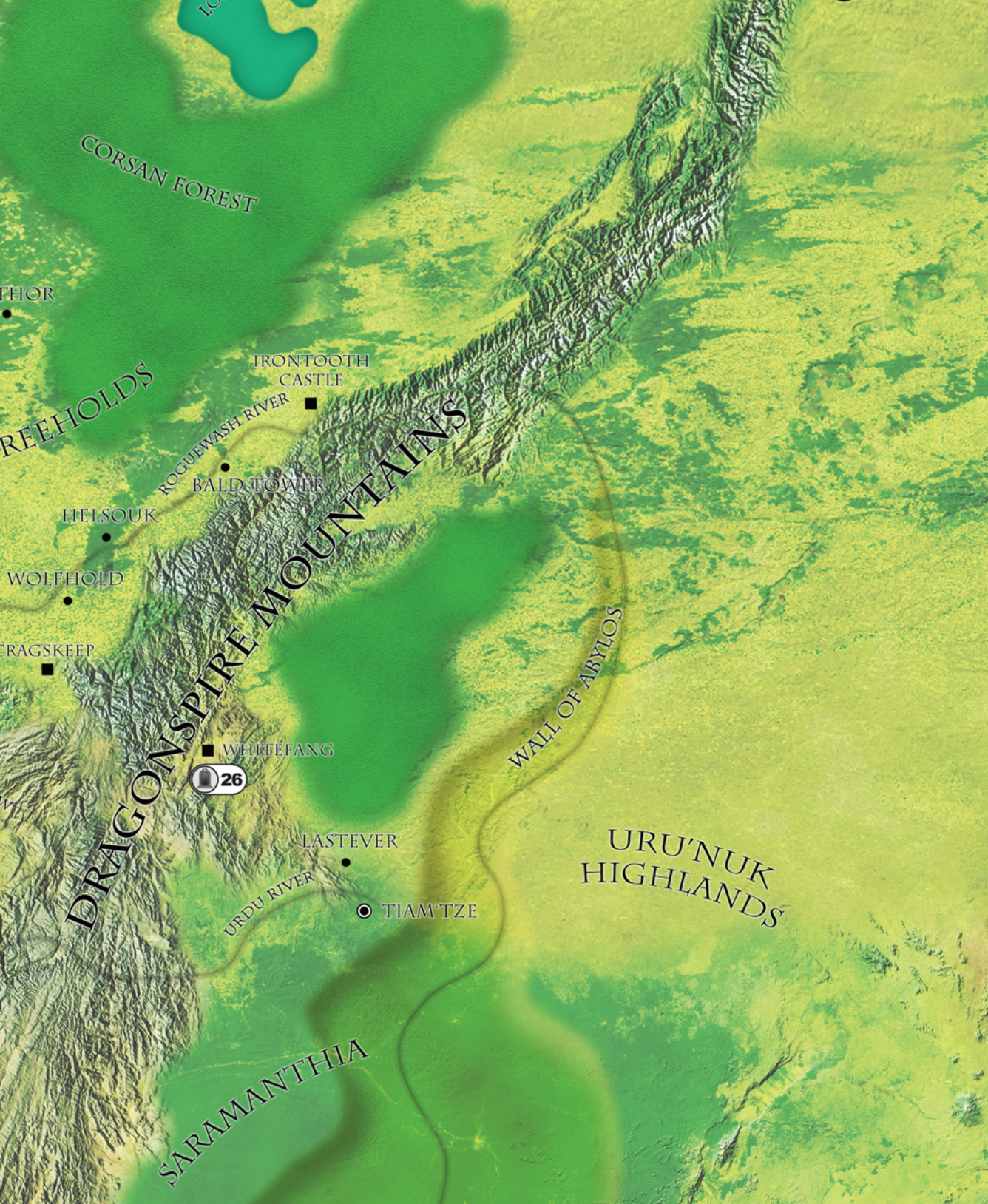
RMERE
OREST
HOARFROST BAY
NORTHWATCH
KEEP
RAKEWIGHT
STROMBLAEN
OOL RIVER
BARONY OF
KORANTH
N
ARDWALL
LOST LAKE
RAVENHOLLOW

TOJAN BAY
SCRAGTOOTH STRAIT

DÛNERAIN MOUNTAINS
KINGDOM OF UTHUR
AMN'O
IRONVALE
3
ISLE OF NOS CAEN
FOLKEVER
WARRINGHILL
HALSGAT
JAVRAN SEA

TALISADE
STAGDALE
RISINOX
HALLS OF THE MOUNTAIN KING
UL BALHAR
ORGEMOUTH
THE WILDS
28
WILDSGATE
SAEDRE RIVER
VELTOS
AVENORS
STALGARD
TROLLTOOTH PEAKS
SYLVAN DOWNS
KALÍA
OAKENMEET
DUNDRAE LAKE
2
SALTMOON
HADLER'S GAP
DUNDRAVILLE
WICHEATH
STRAITS OF YMTAL
BLACKBRIAR WOOD
GREAT SWAMP
17
GARLAND'S FORK
10
STAGWOOD
34
HIGH CROSS
THE BLADE REACH
ARGALIS
ARCHEN RIVER
ARCHBRIDGE
VERNAUT
MOSSWOOD
AXEBURY
1
VAQUEREA
CARNELLOE
SILVERTON
5
33
THE FANGS
SOULGRAVE
27
BLACK ORE HILLS
BLIHAI
TARRASINE
THE GRAVES

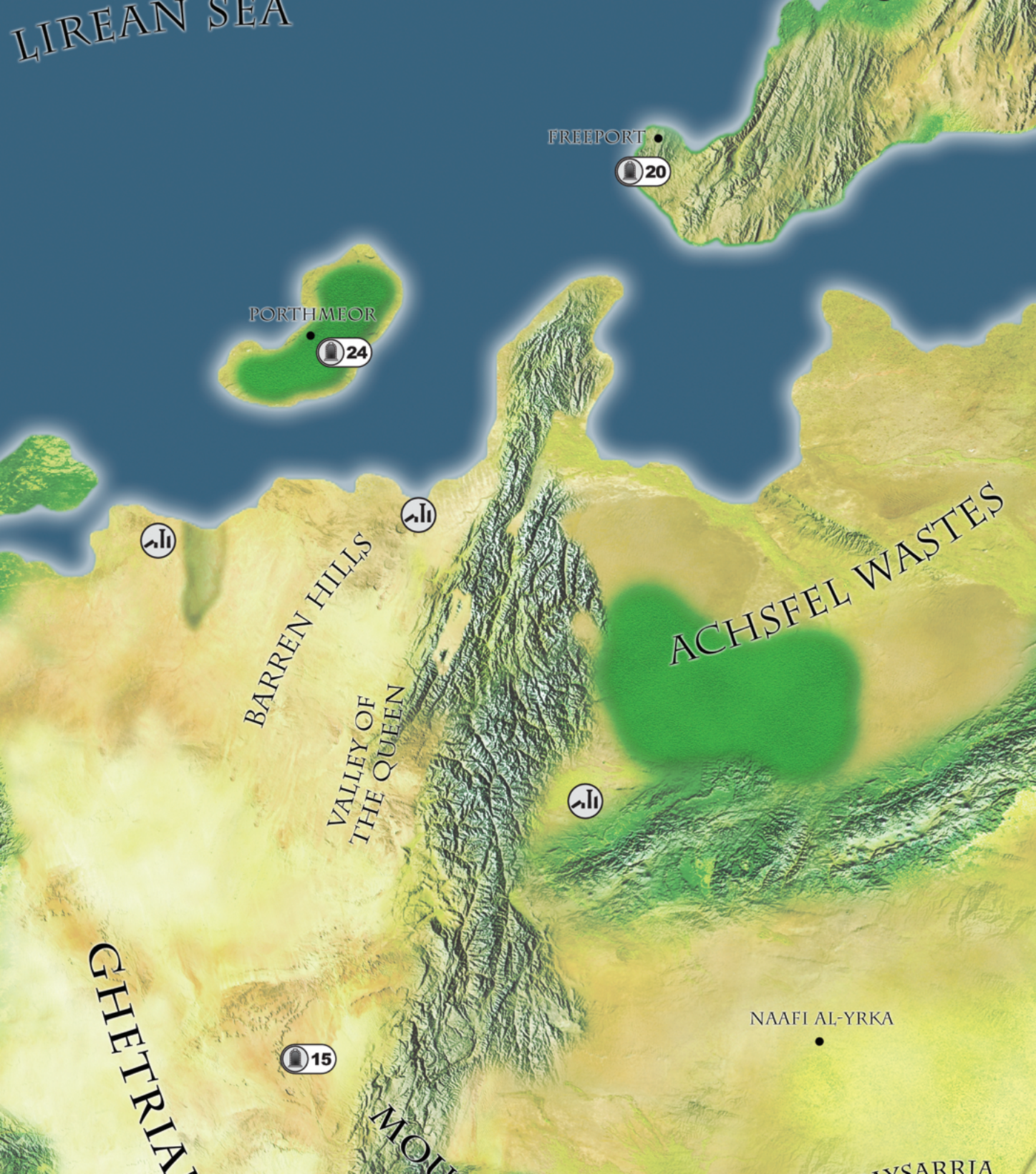

MARZAKOL
IDERAG
ARALOGES
CHANSHI
KURSAN
HALI
THE HIGH SEA
VERDEN FOREST
FARTRADER RIVER
WYRM'S DEEP
CYROS
ILNOTH
LONGDALE
THORNSWILD WOOD
FREE CITIES OF LEHERTI
WHITE TIP LAKE
ASHAVEN
HATH HALL
BLESSINGS-BE
FERAHN FOREST
WAILINGWOOD
BLUEBLADE LAKE
THEOCRACY OF THE LANCE
BRIGHTHAWK CASTLE
ORDEN
ARVALE CITY
WOODROE
ROCKPORT
OLDARCH FOREST
FAIR HAVEN
SALTWITCH SWAMP
LAEON RIVER
6
21
18
14
7
23


CORSAN FOREST
THOR
REEHOLDS
IRONTOOTH CASTLE
ROGUEWASH RIVER
BALD TOWER
HELSOUK
WOLFHOLD
RAGSKEEP
DRAGONSPIRE MOUNTAINS
WHITEFANG
26
WALL OF ABYLOS
LASTEVER
URDU RIVER
TIAM'TZE
URU'NUK HIGHLANDS
SARAMANTHIA

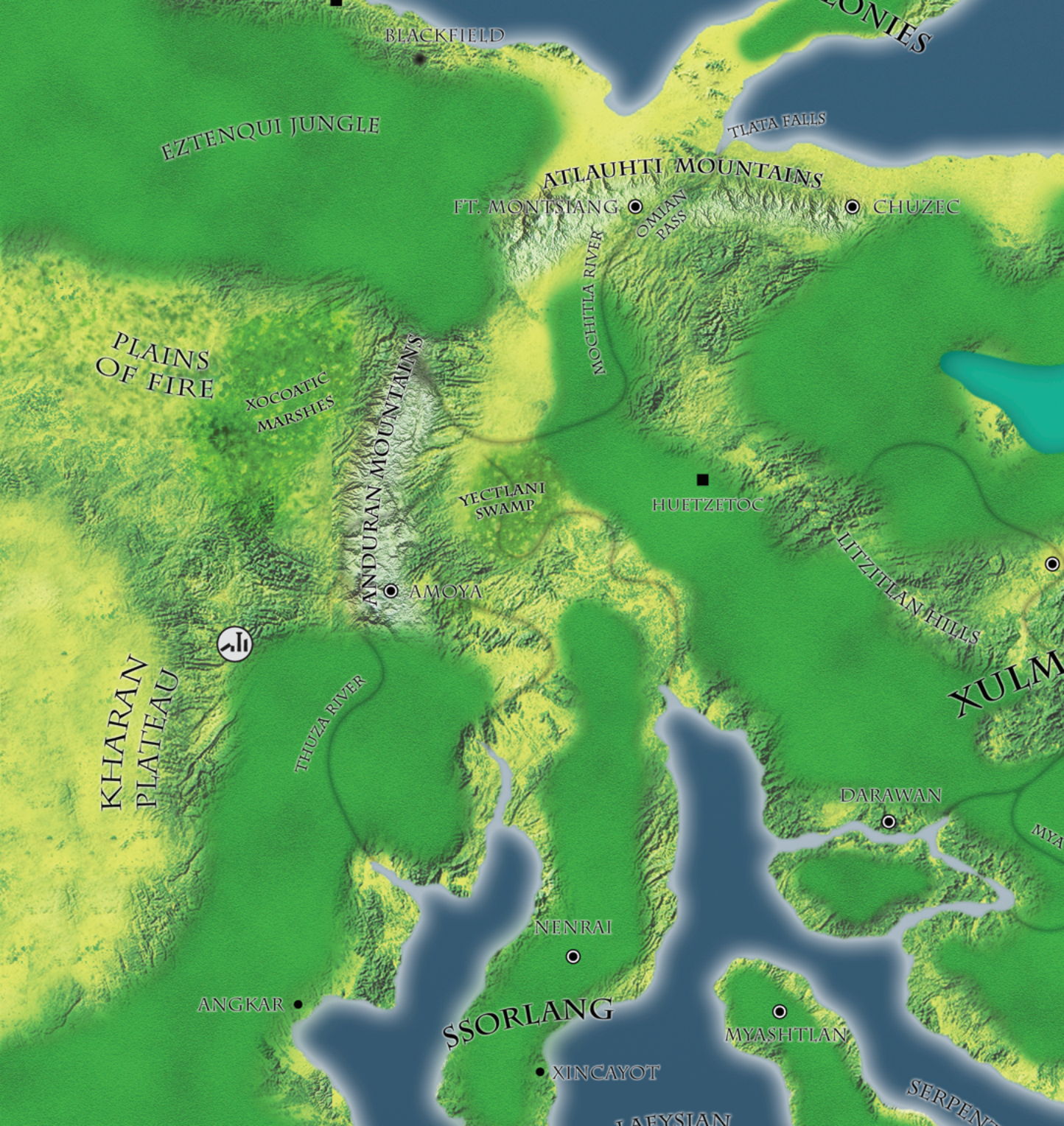
TARRAS
SEA
OF
DESPERATION
DUJAMAR
ISLE OF TLAHUACO
16
FERONTE
VOLTIGEUR
LIEUX-CLAREN
PLENIERE
GERRONOTTE
ST. FERRAU
CRIESTINE COLO

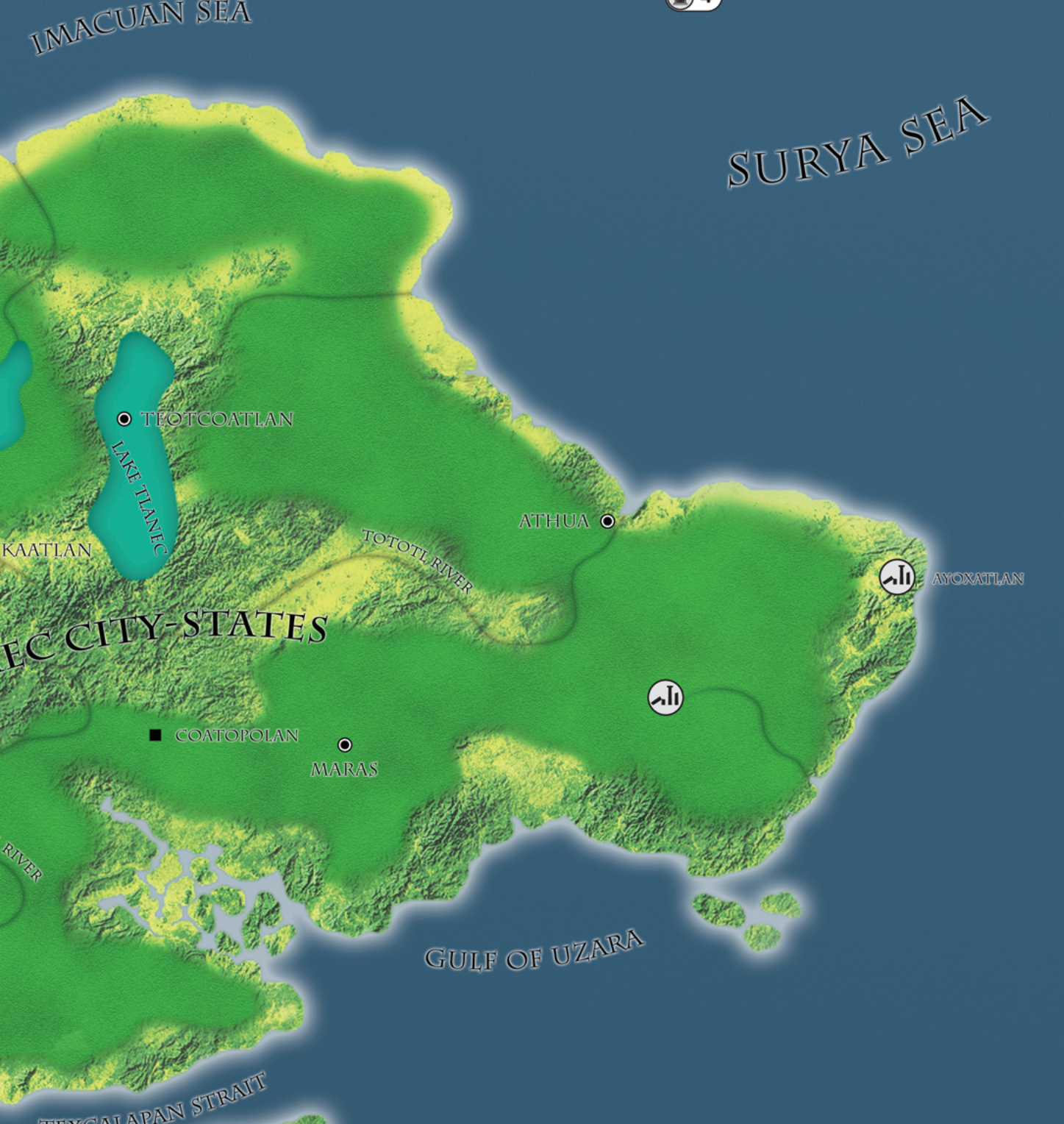
EMPYREAN OCEAN
RUTUAN
THE BARRIER ISLES
BLOODPORT
DEAD MAN'S COV
HALCYON
LAST CHANCE
4

DHAVOSIN
WARDERWOOD
SPARPORT WATCH
THE WRECKERS
KASSANTIA
PUNJAR
AZUR
SOUTHERN PROVINCE
JOLZIN
LONE TOWER
KASTULO
TAKTIAN
GHERDIAN FOREST
THE SENTINELS
GHERDIAN FOREST


LIREAN SEA
FREEPORT
20
PORTHMEOR
24
BARREN HILLS
VALLEY OF THE QUEEN
ACHSFEL WASTES
NAAFI AL-YRKA
15

KITEZHAN MOUNTAINS
TANGHALI
QAZAN
GORYATI
VERMILION STEPPES
8
THE DEVIL'S CAULDRON
CTABAKUL RIVER


BLACKFIELD
EZTENQUI JUNGLE
TLATA FALLS
ATLAUHTI MOUNTAINS
FT. MONTSIANG
OMIAN PASS
CHUZEC
MOCHITLA RIVER
PLAINS OF FIRE
XOCOATIC MARSHES
ANDURAN MOUNTAINS
YECTLANI SWAMP
HUETZETOC
LITZITLAN HILLS
AMOYA
KHARAN PLATEAU
THUZA RIVER
DARAWAN
NENRAI
ANGKAR
SSORLANG
MYASHTLAN
XINCAYOT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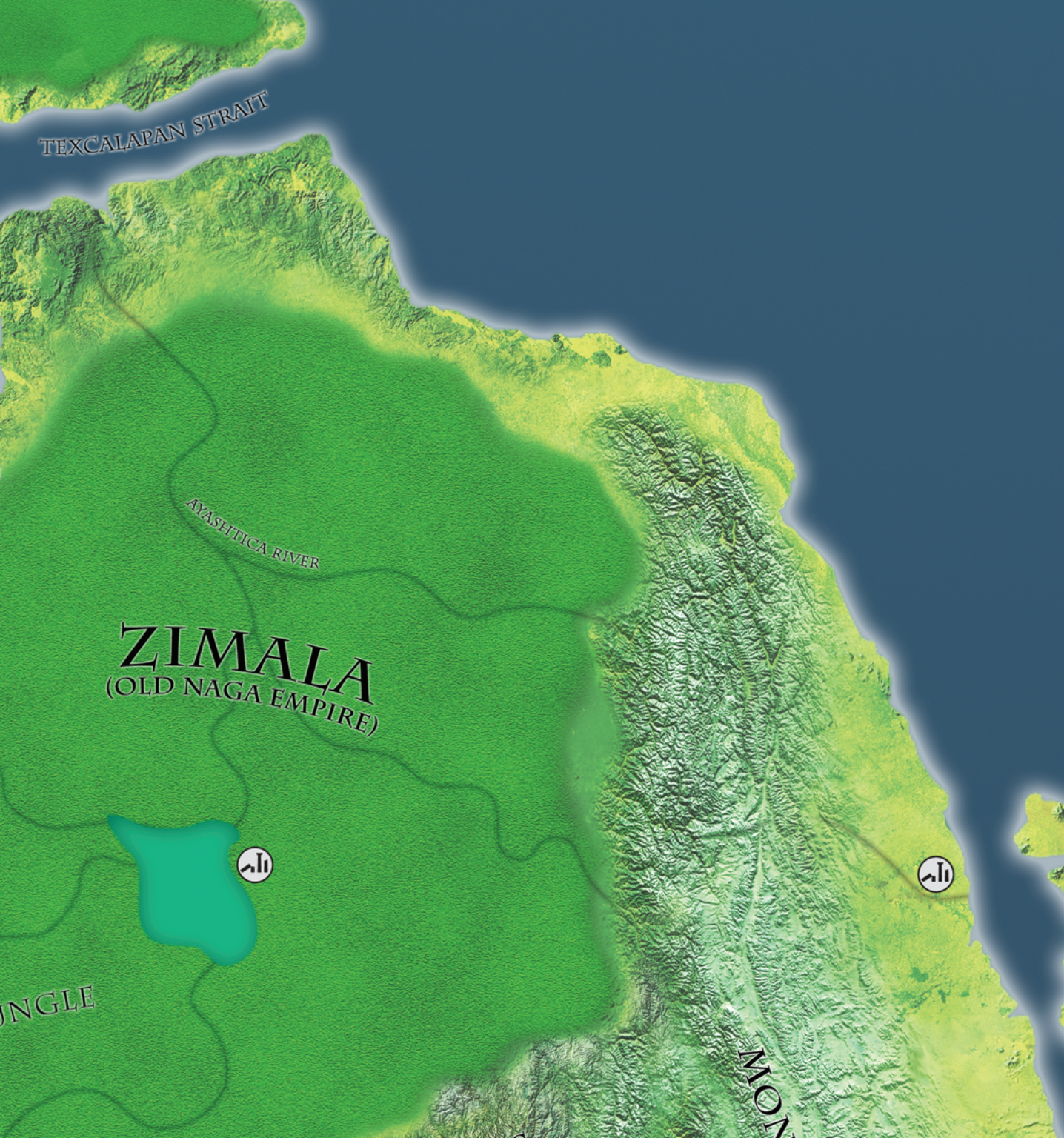
SURYA SEA
TEOTCOATLAN
LAKE TLANEC
KAATLAN
ATHUA
TOTOTL RIVER
AYOXATLAN
EC CITY-STATES
COATOPOLAN
MARAS
RIVER
GULF OF UZARA
ENGALAPAN STRAIT

SPIRES
AKHNETEN RIVER
WARRIORS' GATE
RHEKSU
CITY-STATE OF DJESER AL-MAQQARA
HUATALO
JOMOA
CUNEGONDE
RAIJU KHOR
HERRENIA MOU
THE ISLES OF THARNAKA
SYAXAR
KHIAZAN RIVER
SANDS

N DESERT
NTAINS OF THE
FIFTH PRINCE
QUAYSARRIA
32
SHADHALIA
GLOOM MARSHES
OF TASHGAR
SAKHAEN TAIR
LAKE
TYRGYZ
VALL
BAHADUR
NTAINS
XA DESHRET
JUNGLES OF
SAHAPTIA
ZADJEM
CTESIPHAL RIVER
UKHORVUS NUUR
OF SHANBILAI
THE JESTER'S TAIL

THE BURN
SILVER CITADEL
OF NIRAZ
JHAVITRI
LEY OF XYR MUTHAL
THE TWISTED SEA
CITY-STATE OF
ACHAEMIA
RUINS
16
LOC. OF DCC
ADVENTURE
TOWN/SMALL
CITY
LARGE
CITY/CAPITAL
CASTLE/KEEP

ANGKAR
SSORLANG
MYASHTLAN
XINCAYOT
SERPENT ISLE
LAEYSIAN SEA
KANTHARA
COHUATLIZON
STRAIT OF KAMASHA
CHIAUHTLI DELTA
QUETLI RIVER
CIPACHTLI BAY
POCHECTIC MOUNTAINS
AN SEA
AZCATLEPI JU

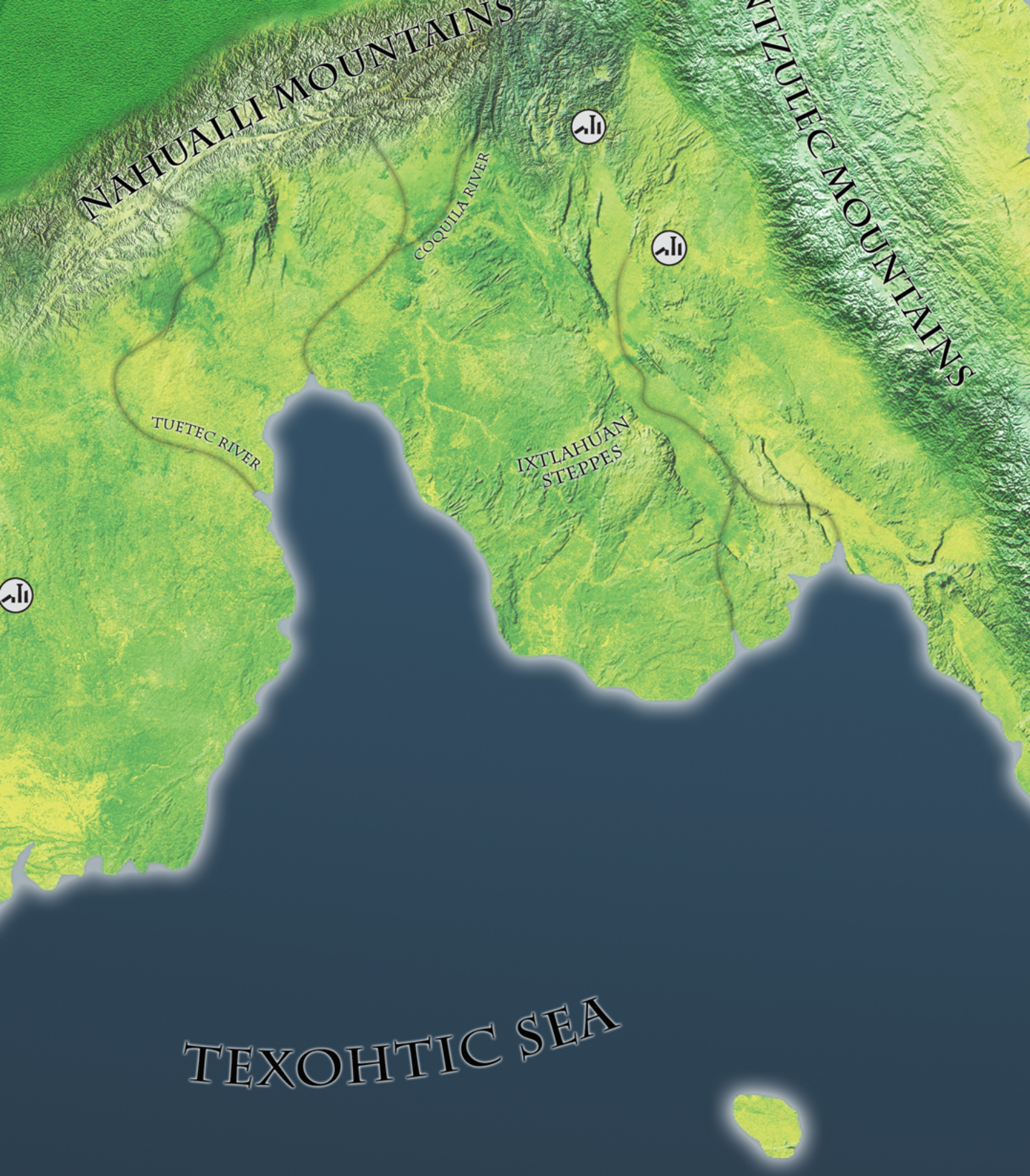

TEXCALAPAN STRAIT
AYASHTICA RIVER
ZIMALA
(OLD NAGA EMPIRE)
JNGLE
MON

SANDS
BOURDONNAIS
MORENA NOVA
DUPLEIUX
CITY O
VIVEKAN

OF SHANBILAT
THE JESTER'S TAIL
RHAZ AL-KHALI
CAVER
MENK
THE CHIMERA'S EYE
F
IKA

NS OF
AUHOR

AYALA
TEOYOTLAN

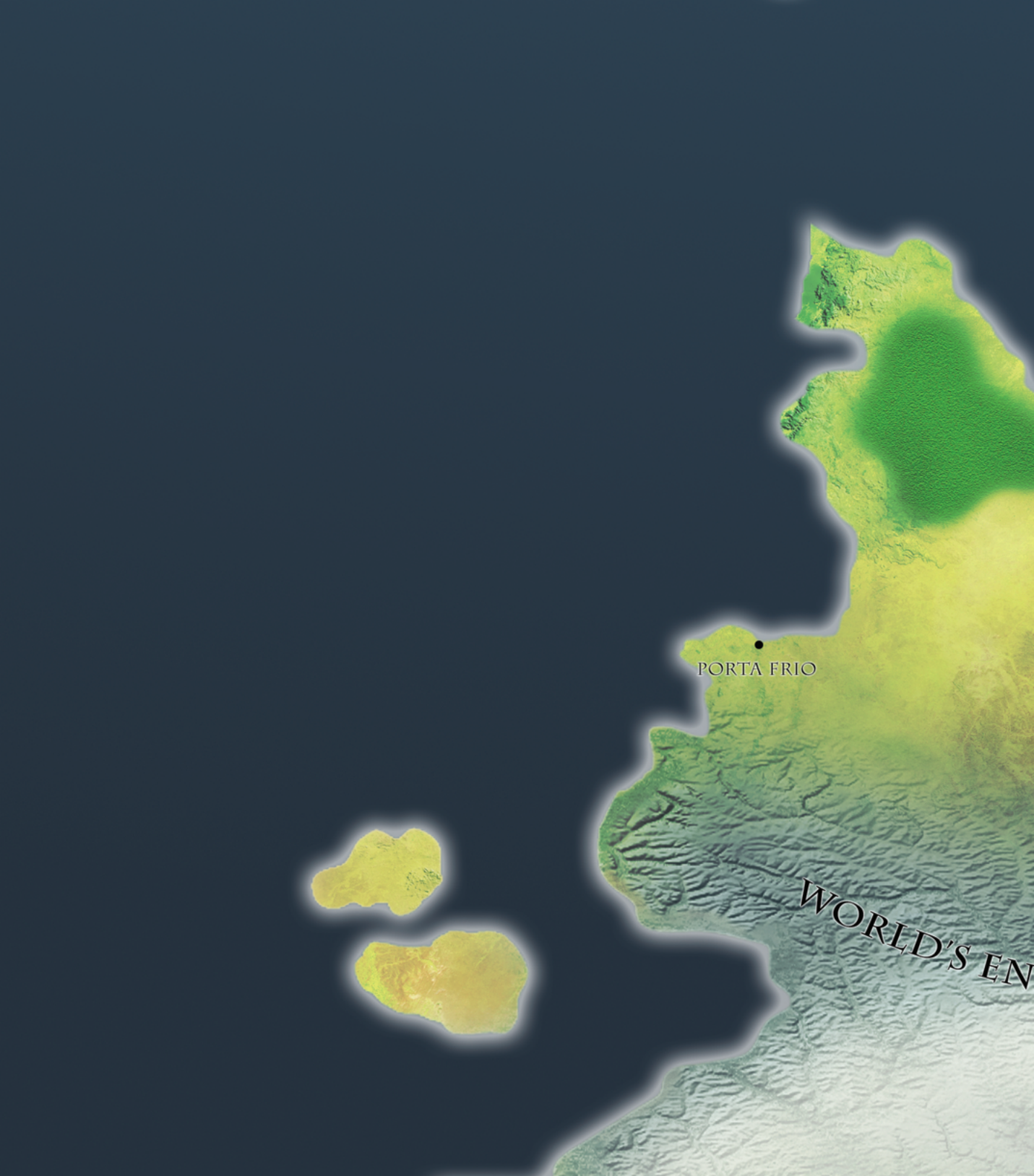

NAHUALLI MOUNTAINS
NTZULEC MOUNTAINS
COQUILA RIVER
TUETEC RIVER
IXTLAHUAN STEPPES
TEXOHTIC SEA

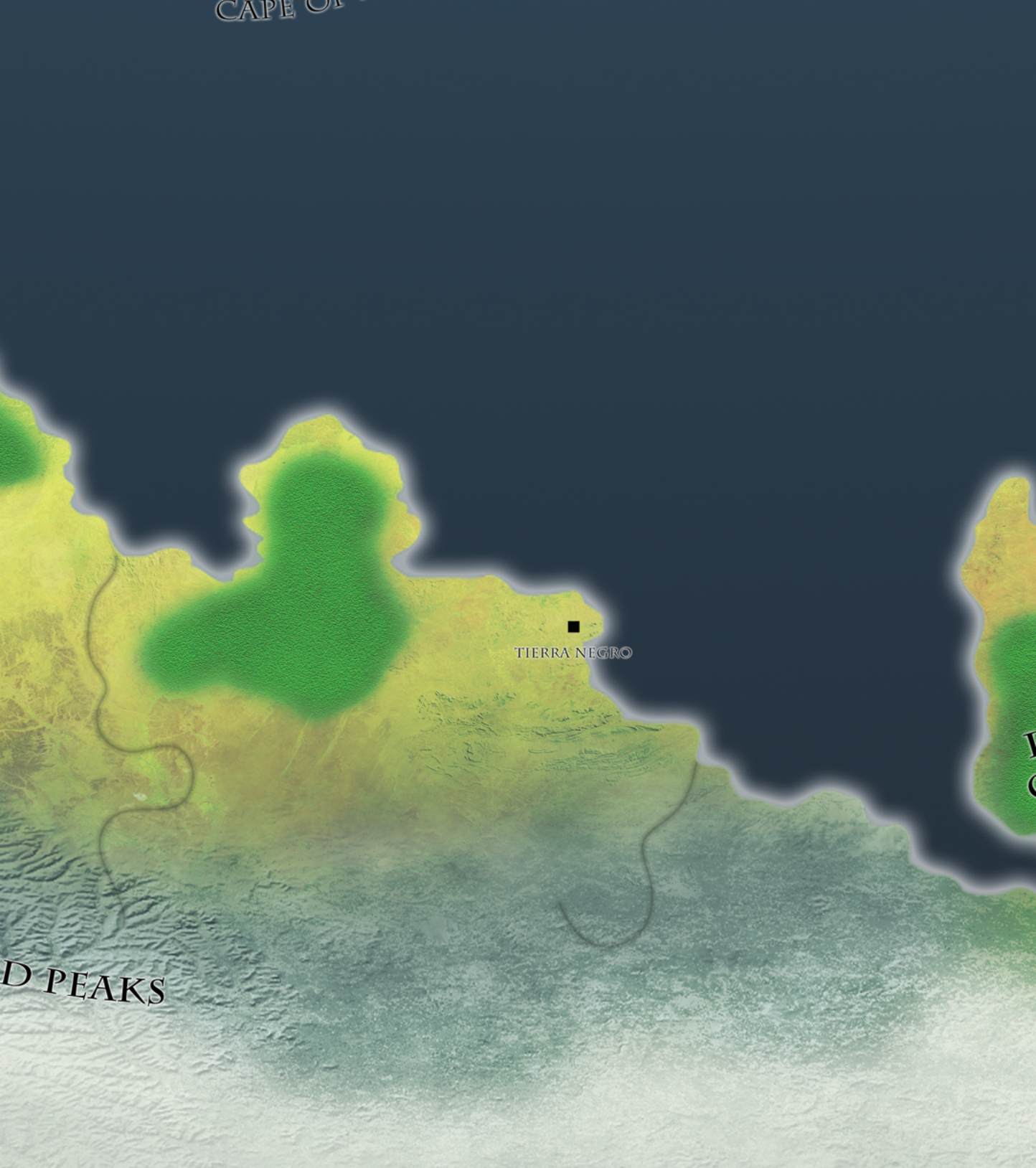
CAPE OF DEMONS

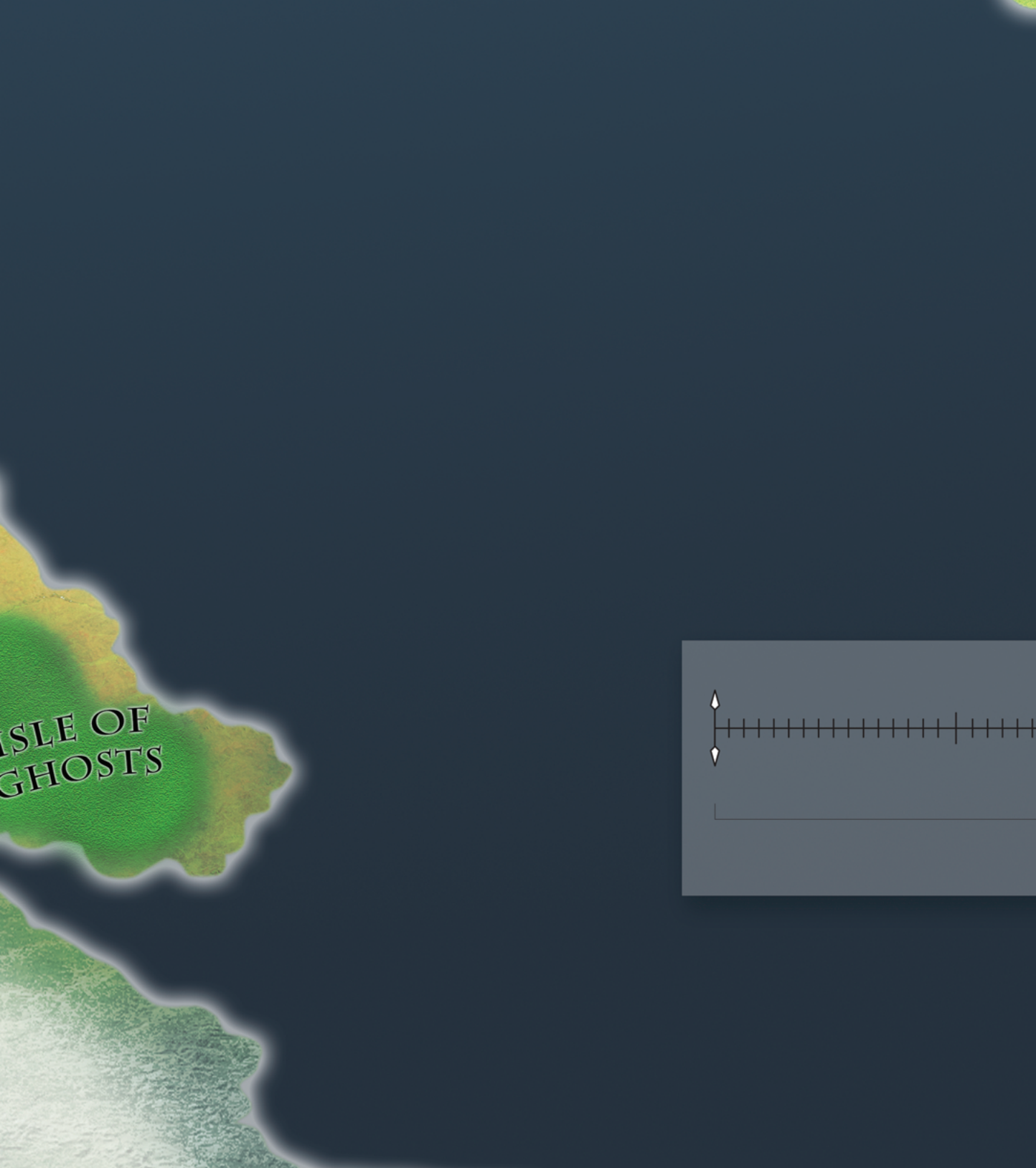
SOUTHERN SEAS

DARKLANDS
SHAARI
ZETH

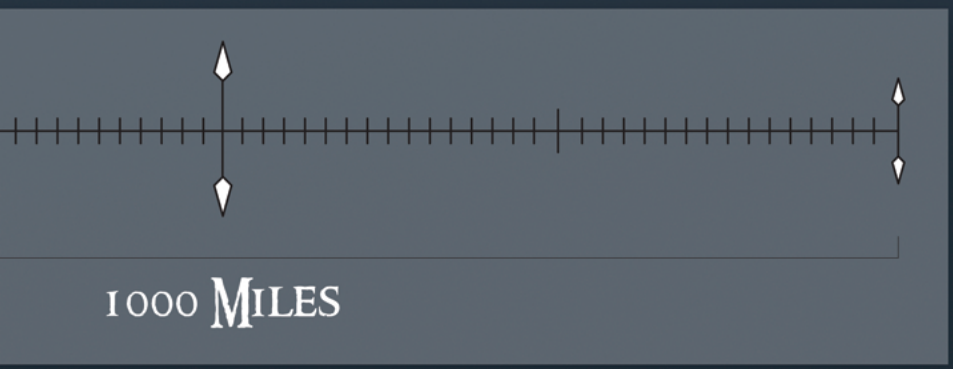
RUINS
16
LOC. OF DCC ADVENTURE
TOWN/SMALL CITY
LARGE CITY/CAPITAL
CASTLE/KEEP


PORTA FRIO
WORLD'S EN


TIERRA NEGRO


ISLE OF
GHOSTS

UDRA'S VALE


1000 MILES

FERONTE
VOLTIGEUR
LIEUX-CLAREN
PLENIERE
GERRANOTTE
ST. FERRAU
CRIESTINE COLONIES
TLATA FALLS
ATLAUHTLI MOUNTAINS
XUI

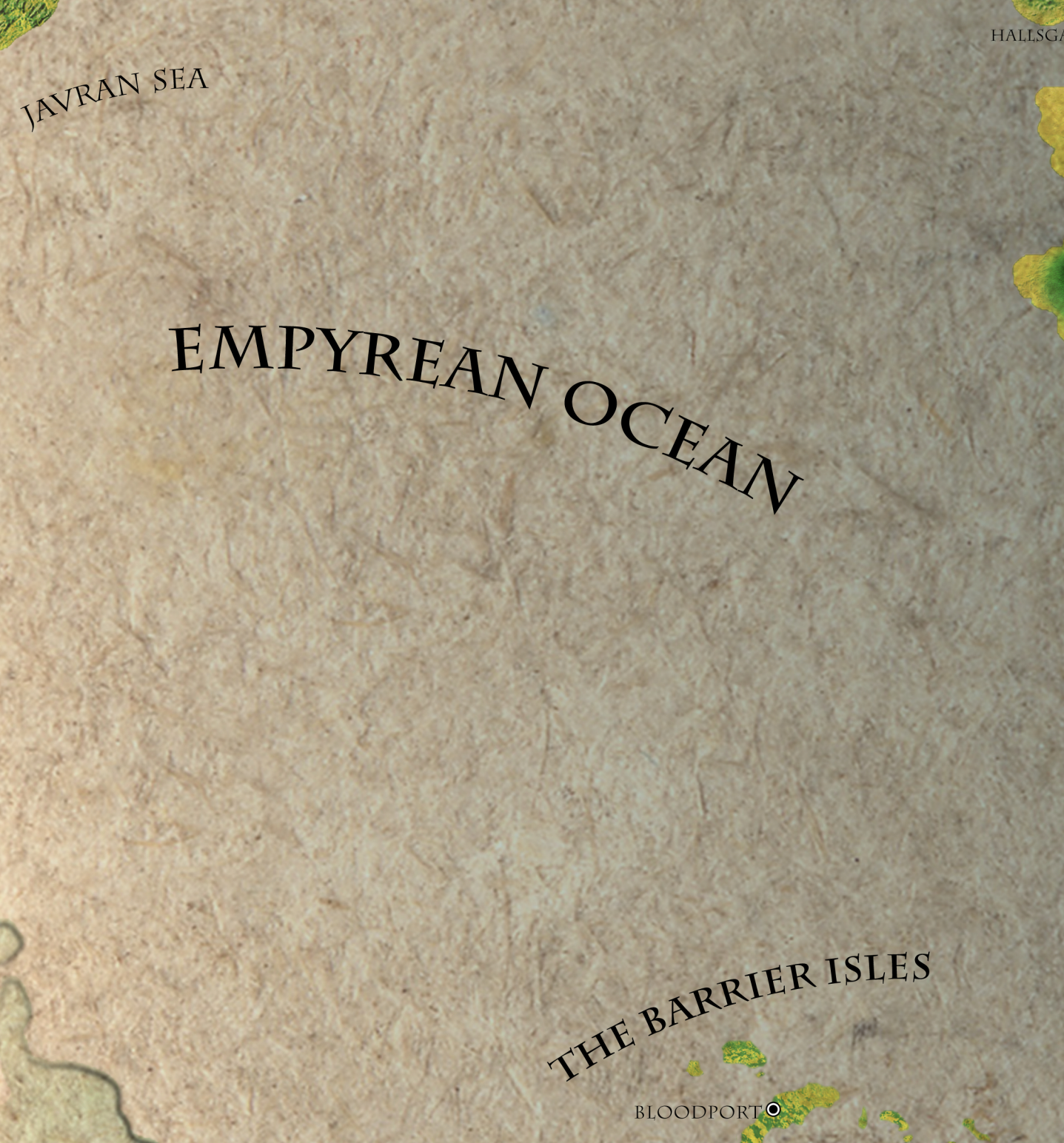
HALCYON
IMACUAN SEA
SURYA SEA
MEC CITY-STATES
L RIVER
AYOXATLAN

THE PEARL SPIRES
GHERDIAN FOREST
ALAK LAKE
HERRENIA MOUNTAI

ETRIAN DESERT
NS
W
Ae
Gaz
Play

yer's Map

TARRAS
ISLE OF TLAHUACO


JAVRAN SEA
HALLSGA
EMPYREAN OCEAN
THE BARRIER ISLES
BLOODPORT

ATE CASTLE
BLIHAI
CRIESTE EMPI
BLAC
TARRASINE
THE GRAVES
DHAVOSON
WARDERWOOD
SPARPORT WATCH
THE WRECKERS
KASSANTIA
PUNJAR
SOUTHERN PROVINCE
JOLZIN
LONE TOWER
GHERDIAN FOREST
THE SENTINELS

LIREAN SEA
FREEPORT
ACHSFEL WASTES

KITEZHAN MOUNTAINS

TOJAN BAY
SCRAGTOOTH STRAIT

DÛNERAIN MOUNTAINS
KINGDOM OF UTHUR
AMN'
IRONVALE
ISLE OF NOS CAEN
FOLKEVE
WARRINGHILL

THE WILDS
ORGEMOUTH
CRITH FOREST
WILDSGATE
SAEDRE RIVER
VELTOS
STALGARD
AVENORS
SYLVAN DOWNS
KALIA
OAKENMEET
DUNDRAE LAKE
SALTMOON
HADLER'S GAP
DUNDRAVILLE
STRAITS OF YMTAL
WICHEATH
GREAT SWAMP
BLACKBRIAR WOOD
GARLAND'S FORK
STAGWOOD
THE BLADE REACH
HIGH CROSS
ARGALIS
ARCHEN RIVER
ARCHBRIDGE
MOSSWOOD
AXEBURY
VAQUERIA
CARNELLOE
SILVERTON
SOULGRAVE

THE HIGH SEA
VERDEN FORES
FARTRADER RIVER
WYRM'S DEEP
CYROS
ILNOTH
AMTHOR
LONGDALE
THORNSWILD WOOD
FREE CITIES OF LEHERTI
WHITE TIP LAKE
ASHAVEN
"THE FREE
HATH HALL
BLESSINGS-BE
FERAHN FOREST
WAILING WOOD
BLUEBLADE LAKE
THEOCRACY OF THE LANCE
THIRE
CRAGSK
ORDEN
ARVALE CITY
WOODROE
ROCKPORT
OLDARCH FOREST
FAIRHAVEN
THE IRONFLOW
SALTWITCH SWAMP
LAEON RIVER

HOLDS
IRONTOOTH
CASTLE
ROGUEWASH RIVER
HELSUK
HOLD
KEEP
DRAGONSPIRE MOUNTAINS
WHITEFANG
LASTEVER
URDU RIVER
TIAM 'TZE
THIA