

# AN ECHO, RESOUNDING

LORDSHIP AND WAR IN UNTAMED LANDS

*By KEVIN CRAWFORD*

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To what shall I compare life?  
It is like an echo,  
Resounding through the mountains  
And off into the empty sky.  
- Ryokan

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# INTRODUCTION

## THE WINDS GIVE ME

*The winds give me  
enough fallen leaves  
to make a fire.*  
- Ryokan

Heroes thirst for glory, and crave the fame that does not die with their flesh. Some seek it in legendary deeds of war or sorcerous prowess, roving the land to overcome such foes as will win them a place in song and story. Others desire a different sort of immortality, one memorialized in teeming cities and proud castles. How can a Labyrinth Lord help those heroes who desire to carve their mark on the thrones of kings?

*An Echo, Resounding* provides Labyrinth Lords with tools to create vibrant campaign regions, establish PC and NPC-run domains, run mass combat in a quick and easy fashion, and explore the aid a powerful adventurer can lend to an allied domain. Along with these mechanical aids, a fully-developed campaign region is provided as a worked example.

*Domain Play in a Campaign* discusses the nature of domain-level play and some of the pitfalls that face a Labyrinth Lord interested in adding this dimension of play to his or her game. Some players may have justified concerns about expanding the scope of their game to include political and military matters, and it is important that the Labyrinth Lord be able to deal with these hesitations in a way that keeps the game fun for all involved.

*Creating Campaign Regions* provides step-by-step instructions on how to assemble a campaign region. This organizational tool allows a Labyrinth Lord to embed elements of domain-level play into the game from the very start. By establishing the important information about cities, towns, ruins, sinister lairs, and raw resource locations in the area, the Labyrinth Lord can seamlessly accommodate the domain-level activities of the PCs. It's no longer necessary for the referee to simply estimate the benefit of seizing the troll-infested copper mines for the PC's new barony- he knows it's a Resource location and what that means for the fief's economy. When the PCs successfully root out the demon-cult infesting the ancient Tower of Pale Thorns, the Labyrinth Lord doesn't need to hesitate over the consequences- he knows that it means one more Lair is dispatched and its raiders will no longer scourge the countryside.

*Domain Management* gives a Labyrinth Lord a simple, straightforward system for defining the qualities and abilities of a domain. Whether a keep on the borderlands, a humble village manor, or a city-state with vaunting ambitions, the domain system gives the Labyrinth Lord the tools necessary for playing out actions on the level of princes and nobles. Aside from the value to PC rulers, they also give the Labyrinth Lord help in generating local events and useful plot hooks for the players.

*Mass Combat* deals with the last argument of kings and common men. This system extrapolates the standard individual combat system of *Labyrinth Lord* up into the clash of military units. A vast battle can be diced out quickly in a few minutes, or players can involve themselves more deeply in the fray and end up captaining particular units for the glory of the cause.

*Heroes* is a chapter devoted to the might of experienced PCs. Upon reaching a certain level of accomplishment, PCs are crowned as Champions, men and women capable of lending great aid to a domain simply by their willingness to ally with it. PCs gain Champion levels in parallel to their normal progression, and each level allows them to pick a new ability with which to benefit a domain. Experienced fighters aid the military organization of their allies, sage sorcerers teach deep secrets to their pupils, and stout dwarves call the aid of their kinsmen to bring axe and hammer against their foes. Truly legendary Champions might even become Heroes, dread titans of battle who can smash enemy units by the sheer force of their terrifying prowess.

*The Westmark* is a worked example of the rules in this book, a thorough detailing of the Westmark region of Sine Nomine's *Red Tide* campaign setting. While the details of it will be most familiar to those who possess the Red Tide campaign toolkit and setting sourcebook, it's a simple matter to translate it into the terms of a more conventional borderland, or strip it for parts and locations useful for your own games.



# DOMAIN PLAY IN A CAMPAIGN

## ENOUGH FALLEN LEAVES

With the purchase of *An Echo, Resounding*, it can be presumed that you have some interest in adding domain management and mass combat into your *Labyrinth Lord* game. Before we discuss ways of building a region full of quarreling domains and sanguine battlefields, however, it's best to detail some of the benefits and dangers associated with domain-level play in a campaign.

### WHAT IS DOMAIN PLAY?

Conventional *Labyrinth Lord* play tends to revolve around personal-scale adventures, with PCs struggling to attain gold, glory, and their own private goals. Domain-level play broadens the scope of a game to deal with major political powers and important local rulers, while giving the PCs the opportunity to make themselves a part of the local power structure. Traditional adventuring usually involves small bands of PCs out to achieve individual goals for personal benefit, while domain-level play introduces the goals of cities and the hungry ambitions of states. PCs may be lords among these domains or they might simply be important agents of the ruling powers. Whatever their precise role, their actions reflect directly upon the prosperity and fates of hundreds or thousands of common subjects.

At this level, domains become significant actors in the events of the campaign world. The anger of a baron or the restive rebellion of a border chieftain can set off a chain reaction of chaos and disruption that cries out for heroes to resolve the situation. Lords have enemies that need smiting, treasures that need retrieving, mysteries that need solving, with all such labors directed toward advancing the interests of their domain. Domains set off events, and sandbox-campaign PCs can choose to become involved in them or simply watch them play out from the sidelines.

The interaction of domains can be meaningful even when the PCs are relative nobodies. A war here, a catastrophe there, a rebellion up the way... all these things provide grist for any level of adventurer, either in dealing with the fallout or trying desperately to avoid becoming collateral damage. A *Labyrinth Lord* can use domain-level conflicts to drive the sort of coherent, persistent activity that helps give verisimilitude and weight to the world outside the PCs' concerns. Even when the PCs choose to stay clear of events, the simple fact that they are happening adds another thread of substance and cohesiveness to the campaign world.

Embedding domain-level play in a campaign from the very start also allows a group's relationship to the local powers to grow in an organic fashion. Low-level PCs might be bedeviled by a tyrannical city-state, or have multiple run-ins with ruthless occupation forces sent to seize a local market town for a distant ruler. Conflicts are born from these actions, and while the PCs may be too weak to do significant harm to the domain unaided, it sets up an obvious motivation to become powerful enough to make their displeasure known. In the same fashion, friendly lords can become long-standing allies and sources of support, and the PCs can feel both a practical and emotional interest in ensuring that their domain does not topple into chaos when some disaster or rival strikes at its security.

Finally, a campaign history of active political powers makes a group's eventual transition into powerful local rulers and heroes a more natural process. Rather than simply handing the party a plot hook for rulership at 9th level, from the very beginning the PCs are given reasons to want a power base of their own and a chance to become educated in the local power structures and important rulers. The natural desire for power and the chance to wield it





against old enemies can make even the most independent-minded PC into a potential lordling.

A fierce swordswoman who claims the hill village of Yellow Toad Well as a free barony isn't simply doing so because she's hit 9th level- she's doing it because she saved the village from a demon three levels ago and the locals are desperate to have a powerful protector in residence. Furthermore, the village is near the ruins of a rich iron mine that dates back before the Ravaging, and the neighboring Daifu Wen-Liang is an old friend who can keep the savage raiders of the Red Daimyo away from the village long enough for her to build up defenses. Once she has made the village strong and prosperous, she can use it as a staging area for her campaign of vengeance against the infernal lord, that she might at last make him and his dark legions pay for the massacre of her friends when they unwisely opposed him during a youthful adventure.

## DOMAINS AND LABYRINTH LORDS

Domains aren't a toy exclusively for the enjoyment of the players, either. A Labyrinth Lord can initially set up local domains and rulers even without any particular buy-in from the players. Even if the players have no interest whatsoever in involving themselves in local politics or striving for their own lordships, active domains provide a steady stream of background events and adventure hooks.

*Creating Campaign Regions* discusses the process of creating and placing domains in a new or existing campaign, and a Labyrinth Lord can go through the procedure even before he or she has had a chance to discuss such elements with the players. At this level, domains are tools for the Labyrinth Lord, and not necessarily meant to interest the players. If the players *are* interested in eventual rulership or the toppling of dark lords, then all the better- but the initial steps are there to benefit the designer as much as the players.

Don't hesitate to add these elements to your own game, even if you don't expect the players to take an interest in politics. You might end up handling domain interactions between sessions, choosing courses of action and rolling out results. At the start of the next session, you can simply pass along whatever rumors or news the PCs might have heard from afar. If particular events cry out to be used as an adventure hook, the players might well take an interest in influencing events even if they don't especially care about the powers behind the conflict.

In the absence of player interest, the reason to use domain play is to make life easier for you as a Labyrinth Lord. You can plug in the local rulers, handle their quarrels through a formalized set of rules between sessions, and end up with a systematic and coherent way to produce background political events for your campaign. Maybe your players will change their minds about getting involved, but even if they don't, the coherent and consistent political situation will help build a feeling of verisimilitude in your campaign and provide you with easy plot hooks for their future escapades.

## DOMAINS AND PLAYERS

It could be that the players take a more active interest in local political affairs. They might like the thought of becoming a powerful local lord, or their backgrounds or adventuring experiences might point them to a deathless hatred for some cruel-handed oppressor in need of a revolution's sharp end. In this case, domain play provides a whole new suite of rewards and challenges you can use with your players.

A clear political landscape that exists from the start of the campaign makes it much easier to grow PCs into positions of power in a smooth, organic fashion. Traditional game pacing tends to give PCs automatic landholding opportunities around 9th level, or assume that rule and authority naturally go along with a certain degree of experience. A well-developed region allows opportunities to grow organically at any point in an adventuring career.

At any level, PCs can be useful minions of a powerful lord, and might well earn a fief of their own simply by virtue of their competence and accomplishments. Their efforts might be turned toward rooting out one of the Obstacles described later in order to make a town tractable to its lord, or sabotaging a military asset in advance of a campaign, or even taking the field as a mighty hero and leader of warriors against some savage foe. Even relatively low-level PCs can be granted positions of importance and responsibility. Their individual prowess on the battlefield may not be much to inspire the bards, but their ability to recognize and resolve political problems hinges more often on good player choices than on hit point totals.

Whatever the specifics, players who want to engage with a world's political situation should be encouraged in their efforts. Any time that your players want to have more to do with your world, you should give them the chance. The more deeply entwined their characters are with the campaign's current situation, the easier it is for them to pursue entertaining ambitions and find easy fun in play. While first level characters in *Labyrinth Lord* games are still very fragile, any adventuring PC has a degree of drive and competence noticeably superior to that of an ordinary commoner. By the time they reach third or fourth level, they've clearly distinguished themselves from their peers, and few rulers have so many good agents that they could easily afford to neglect their services.

In some cases, however, you'll run into situations where a few players are deeply interested in political maneuvering while the rest have goals that have nothing to do with lordship or quarreling domains. A certain degree of flexibility is necessary in such cases. You don't want to condemn the disinterested part of the group to perpetual adventures in support of the aspiring lord, and you don't want to force the would-be Machiavelli to put aside their ambitions forever in favor of the goals of their less political friends. The easiest way through this is to simply ensure that whatever course of action the disinterested want to accomplish has some concrete benefit for the political creature as well. Their lord might need something out of the ancient hold that a dwarven comrade wants to clear, or the Shou-hating scourge that wants the skull of a mighty Shou witch-priestess might end up clearing the district so thoroughly that a new village can take root there... one in need of a proven bailiff. Be ready to bend things when needed to make

sure all the players have their own fair chances to pursue their goals.

## SELLING YOUR GROUP ON EMPIRE

Role-playing games work best when everyone involved shares similar goals for the game. Whenever introducing a new element into your game, it's usually necessary to make sure the rest of the group shares your interest and is willing to explore the new sphere of play. While the domain rules and mass combat guides provided here can be useful to a Labyrinth Lord even if players never take an interest in matters of state, it's all the better if they find enjoyment in participating in high affairs of rulership.

One worry that sometimes crops up with a player is a feeling that lordship and political play simply have nothing to do with their character. Their chosen hero might be a freebooter, thief, vagabond, or lordless man interested only in his own advancement or the settling of personal scores. He has no time for matters of politics or patient diplomacy, and the thought of being chained to a throne is both unpleasant and irrelevant to his character concept. For these players, the idea of adding domain-level play can be actively threatening, because it promises a dilution of the game with elements that have nothing to do with their fun.

It's theoretically possible that these players will suddenly find the business a great deal more interesting when they realize that rule opens entirely new avenues of personal heroism, but it's more often best to simply accept their concerns at face value. Some players honestly and truly aren't interested in being a lord or ruler and this disinterest shouldn't be argued away by a Labyrinth Lord. Instead, you should make it clear to the player that you understand his or her concerns and that you have no intention of railroading them into forced nobility. The group will still be able to have the adventures and personal quests that the player enjoys. No PC is going to be left bolted to a palace. If the player is willing to give fifteen or twenty minutes of each session to the ruling PCs in need of choosing their domain actions, then they can be assured that the rest of the evening will be spent in personal adventures.

Other players will worry that the rulers in the group will personally overshadow the other PCs. A character who succeeds at rulership will have entire armies at their command and the treasuries of cities to support their goals. Other players might feel as if their own contributions become trifling unless they too become lords, even if the prospect isn't terribly interesting to them. It can appear that their fellows are gaining huge amounts of personal power simply because they have a different desired play style.

Against this worry a Labyrinth Lord can point out that mighty princes and great lords always seem to have use for heroes, even when they have armies at their disposal. The problems that a ruler faces that can be effectively answered by armies and relief subventions are usually the mundane, ordinary, banal problems of any rough-hewn border state. The problems that pinch hardest are the ones that always seem to require elite operatives able to penetrate trackless wastes and sniff out hidden treachery. The Obstacles that a domain lord faces can be solved by sufficient amounts of brute force, money, or propaganda, but the best solution almost always

lies in the dispatch of canny heroes such as the PCs. They have the personal power, flexibility, and precision necessary to solve a problem without tramping a heavy legion through a restive town or killing half the aldermen of a corrupt village. For these players, you can assure them that for the problems that really matter, the best solution will always be in their own personal prowess.

When you're just starting a new campaign, some players may not see the point in considering domain-level play for their newly-minted characters. A party full of first level adventurers is going to have a tough time simply staying alive, let alone worrying about matters of regional hegemony. In one sense, these concerns are completely correct- those PCs really do have more immediate things to worry about. Still, there is substantial long-term utility in making sure the players are all aware that lordship is a real possibility for those PCs who work toward it.

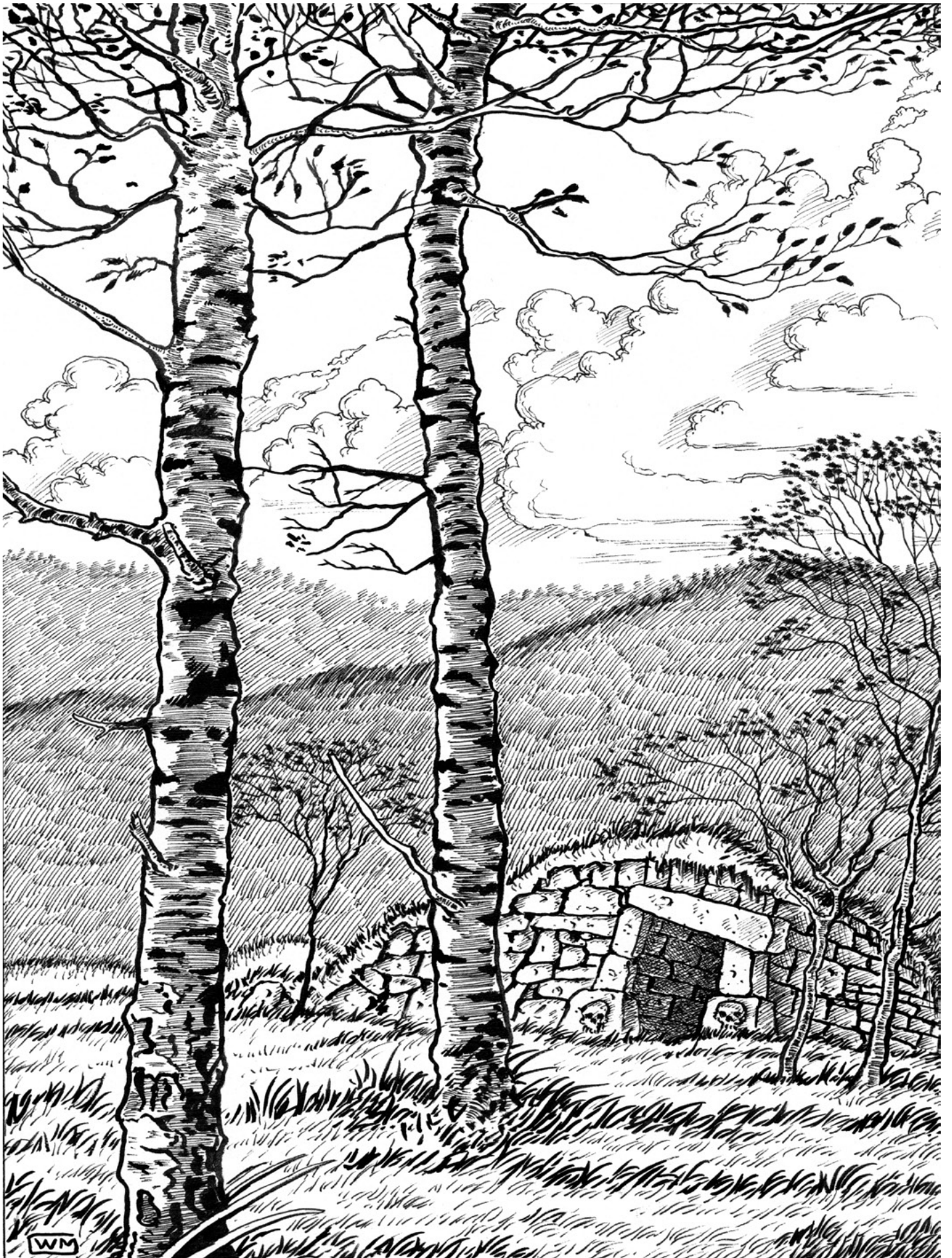
Even in the purest sandbox games, players will tend to instinctively edit their character's goals in response to the perceived limits of the campaign. A skilled Labyrinth Lord can provide a huge number of possibilities in a sandbox campaign, but he or she can't provide support for every conceivable agenda, and most players will have the courtesy and cooperativeness not to push things in a direction unsupported by the sandbox's designer. In order to make these players comfortable with the idea of seeking political power, you need to make it clear that such attempts are perfectly acceptable and anticipated. You need to give them permission to think like an aspiring lordling before these well-behaved players will allow themselves to prioritize it as a goal. Even at first level, knowing that such plans are anticipated and supported will give them the freedom to pursue such ambitions as the opportunities arise.

## CLASH OF THE TITANS

The domain rules given in this supplement assume largely regional powers, usually ones that directly rule no more than a few market towns and perhaps a great city and its satellites. They may be the hegemonies of their particular hundred miles of borderland, but politics and events still take place on a relatively modest scale. City-states, village federations, decaying remnants of empire, and other similar domains are assumed at this size.

In most cases, this level of government is the most useful at the table. Truly gigantic empires or continent-spanning kingdoms tend to be so remote or sweeping that individual PCs can see no way at all to influence them, and if every political power in a region is under the thumb of a single government it can make for comparatively dull politics and a regrettable lack of bloodshed. A more personal level of government is usually more fruitful for play at the table, where armies are measured in thousands rather than millions and nobles can plausibly be approached.

It may be that your game outgrows such a scale, however, and it starts to make sense to think on grander politics. *Domain Management* discusses ways of scaling up your domains as PC influence increases. The same techniques and tools that are used to depict a half-tamed reach of wilderness can be used to map the quarrels of continental empires. and vast kingdoms can yet be within your grasp.



# CREATING CAMPAIGN REGIONS

## TO MAKE A FIRE

This chapter gives a Labyrinth Lord tools for creating a useful and flexible sandbox for a new campaign. In particular, it is meant to show you techniques for embedding late-campaign content into the very foundation of a game. Rather than obliging you to start creating the details of political, economic, and military powers all at once when the PCs reach a sufficient level to forge their own domains, this chapter shows you how to work those elements into the initial structure of the campaign. As time goes on, you can gradually grow the sophistication of the setup as your needs require, allowing you to maximize the return on your design efforts.

For the sake of making your campaign manageable, it's best to start with a single region within your world. The PCs might well venture far from home during the course of their adventures, but if you begin with a sufficiently spacious region a campaign can go for quite some time before the players have any inclination to venture off the map. A good beginning region gives the group plenty of adventure to discover right where they are.

It's important to build for the long term when constructing your first region. It's not always sufficient to simply slap down the traditional starting village and a few points of interest in the nearby countryside. True, that kind of building will get you through your first few sessions of a low-level party, but as the group grows in power and makes their own ambitions in your world, they're going to need greater challenges. Your life as a Labyrinth Lord will be much easier if you have the basic framework already in place, and have had the time to build bigger foes up through foreshadowing and earlier encounters.

Despite this, it's important not to overbuild in the early stages. Most Labyrinth Lords would collapse under the strain of meticulously keying a hundred thousand square miles of savage wilderness, and if a campaign isn't as much fun for the Labyrinth Lord as it is for the players, it's doomed from the start. Your energy and enthusiasm has to be directed toward the elements you find exciting and interesting, and you can't afford to waste it on scripting page after page of material that is of no use to the players and no fun to you.

The following system of region generation is intended to allow you to create a large chunk of adventuring terrain in an afternoon, along with its corresponding political structure. You will lay down the major population centers, important ruins, significant monster or bandit lairs, and areas of vital resources. You'll establish the major political domains in the area and pick out a half-dozen significant villains or antagonists that could serve to occupy more powerful PCs. By the time you're finished, you'll have a good bare-bones framework that you can then elaborate in the ways that you find entertaining or useful for your next session.

### BASIC CONCEPTS

A *region* is simply the particular area in which you expect your campaign to spend the largest amount of time. A single kingdom, island, continental chunk, or other geographic unity works best for a region, at most 300 miles on a side or so. That much space is plenty to keep the PCs occupied for a long time. Eventually they might wish to strike out for new lands, but by then you'll have had enough time and forewarning to prepare region information for whatever new area catches their attention.

The basic building block of a region is a *location*. A location is simply any place on the map that is interesting to the PCs or strategically valuable to a ruler. Thriving villages, rich hunting grounds, good farmland, unlooted ruins, secret temples, or the only pass through the towering mountain range might all qualify as locations. In the most essential sense, locations are where interesting things happen. PCs venturing through the wilderness might run into bandits, monsters, or natural hazards by chance, but they *will* find something interesting if they go to a location.

Locations have Military, Wealth, and Social values. While these values can be largely ignored by individual heroes, they can be important in guiding the goals and policies of city-states or tribal nations. Each value represents a different facet of the site: *Military* value represents the location's contributions to its owner's martial prowess, *Wealth* value indicates the value of the crops, treasure, or craft expertise of the locals, and *Social* value reflects the able-bodied population and their general morale and social cohesiveness. A small town might have modest Wealth and Social values, while providing no direct Military benefit at all. A fortress might grant powerful Military advantage, but be an actual drain on the Wealth of polity that controls it, and give no Social benefit to the owner.

Locations often also have *traits*. Traits indicate special qualities about the location that set it off from others of its type. Sometimes these traits are beneficial, granting bonuses to the location's values or giving it a special benefit. At other times, these traits are purely negative, and can make a location an active liability for the polity that wants to control it. For a Labyrinth Lord, these traits also provide easy hooks for adventures and encounters in the area.

Locations can also have *obstacles*. Obstacles are traits that make the location uncontrollable until they have been suppressed or destroyed. No polity can take full control of a location until it has crushed the local bandit warlords, driven out the monstrous hordes, unearthed the secret societies that haunt the natives, or expunged the blood cult that preaches gory rebellion. Some of these obstacles can be crushed by force of arms, while others are better fought by social evangelists or a judicious injection of wealth. Untamed locations always have at least one obstacle, and obstacles can appear in formerly pacified locations if bad luck or hard times strike. While they exist, the Domain takes a penalty

to the values of the location until they have been beaten back or subdued.

Finally, locations have *assets*. Domains can use mobile assets such as soldiers to attempt to seize other locations, to overcome obstacles that arise within their own lands, or to dissuade rival polities from moving in on their lands. Immobile assets such as schools, shrines, or social traditions instead provide advantages to the location that owns them. Assets often have an upkeep cost in military security, wealth or social cohesion, and a polity that runs out of available resources will lose any assets it cannot support.

When you create a region, you will be creating a set of locations, equipping them with traits, determining obstacles for each, and finally setting up any local Domains that you wish to use in play. As the game progresses, you may then use these rules to play out conflicts between the Domains and determine new obstacles that crop up, all aimed towards giving the PCs a vibrant and lifelike background for their adventures and explorations. Eventually, the PCs may be in a position to take control of their own Domain, and seek to bring a unified peace to the region- or a ruthless chastisement to those who have tormented them for so long.

## SETTING UP THE MAP

The first step in creating the region is to sketch out the regional map. Some Labyrinth Lords prefer to work from a hex-grid map of the area, while others prefer a more free-form map. Even a simple sketch map will suffice, with the general contours of the terrain scratched out in roughly accurate relation to each other. Strictly speaking, you could even set up a “map” with no map at all. Given the primitive nature of cartography in most worlds, the PCs will be in no position to argue over details.

The map should be at a scale comfortable to your planned campaign. Something about the size of *Red Tide’s* Westmark is a good starting point, as it’s roughly 40,000 square miles of terrain of varying types in a square region 200 miles on a side. This region is doubtless only a small portion of the greater world, but those broader outlines can be ignored for the moment. The only important factor to keep in mind is whether or not your region is abutting some great power off-map that could be expected to influence it. If no such powers exist or if they have no particular interest in your region, you can safely ignore them.



## PLACING THE POPULATION CENTERS

Not every village and tribal campsite needs to be qualified as a location. It’s possible that PC action during the course of the game will make the place a location by making it the center of some sort of intrigue or plan, but most such minor outposts of humanity can be ignored until they become consequential. At this stage, you are concerned only with the major City and market Town locations of your region.

Pick a likely location and put down a City. These City locations should be placed along rivers, or along seacoasts where a river empties into the ocean. Every city needs about ten times as many peasants producing food for the urbanites or starvation is inevitable. It is impractical to move such massive amounts of food any great distance overland, so water transport by barge or ship is necessary to feed cities.

Most borderland regions only have one settlement worthy of being called a city. Still, for particularly populous or well-developed lands, there might be as many as three or four such metropoli. Try to place cities far apart from each other. Putting them in close proximity is apt to strain the surrounding farmlands and fisheries too greatly, unless the region is remarkably rich. Particularly desolate stretches of wilderness might not have any true cities at all, but most campaigns profit by having at least one place suitable for locating urban adventures and finding specialist hirelings.

Most cities on the outskirts of civilization should have ten to fifteen thousand occupants, though the teeming metropoli of a well-tamed and sophisticated land might boast populations of as many as a hundred thousand. Numbers beyond that imply the existence of a massive empire with an advanced economy capable of shipping in the vast amounts of food needed by such a population center.

Now place four Towns for each City on the map. These are smaller market towns, often the mercantile center of surrounding farming villages, fisheries, and forest hamlets. As they usually consist of one or two thousand souls, they can usually get by on the produce of their immediate neighbors and needn’t always be placed directly on major rivers or seacoasts. Spread them out fairly evenly across your region. Rivers, lake shores, and coasts are good locations, but don’t hesitate to put one out on the edge of civilization. If there’s a large “blank” space on your region devoid of market towns, there’s probably some excellent and hideously voracious reason why no people want to live there.

Both Cities and Towns will be fleshed out further later in the creation process. For now, all you need to do is mark down their locations on the map.

## PLACING THE GREAT RUINS

Once you’ve set down the population centers, you can begin placing the Ruins locations. These Ruins represent lost cities, crumbled fortresses, stygian dungeon, plundered temples, abandoned towers of wizardry, and all the other decaying locales so beloved of adventurers. Other ruins might exist elsewhere on the map, but

these ones you are placing now are the biggest or most interesting of them.

Start by planting five Ruins for every City in the region. For the typical war-torn borderlands or ancient and long-settled domain, you can assume that one to three of them represent places that were once major human habitations, or you may just roll their natures off the Ruin table later in this chapter as you go along. Locate these urban ruins next to rivers or other natural resources that might once have attracted settlers. Particularly ancient sites might be found on raised mounds, or “tells”, made of accumulated trash and rubble built up over their long lives. Lost cities will only appear in the middle of wastelands if the local terrain was very different back in their heyday, or some great sorcery or engineering was used to make the place habitable.

The rest of the Ruins should represent wizards’ towers, lost temples, pre human ruins, failed outposts, plundered estates, or other likely locations. These can be planted almost anywhere on the map, and you should put them fairly distant from the locations you’ve placed thus far. In neither case should you feel obligated to work out the site in detail just yet. Simply placing the site is plenty for this stage of development. You’ll be fleshing a site out with detailed particulars once it becomes more important to the game.

Five Ruins for every City is a good starting point, but some Labyrinth Lords will prefer to have more. For now, go on with the process, but feel free to sprinkle a few more Ruins in if circumstances eventually recommend it.

## ESTABLISHING RESOURCES

Resources are locations that have something valuable or useful to the Domain that controls it. Perhaps it’s a rich fishing ground, or has good farmland, or sturdy ship-building timbers, or precious ore. The actual resource may spread out from around the area, but the location represents the strategic heart of the area and the Domain that controls it effectively controls the entire resource.

Take a number of Resource locations equal to the number of Towns and place them on the map, roughly equidistant from each other. Try to put them a little distant from any towns or cities. If they’re too close, it becomes too easy for a settlement to exert its control over the resource, and it becomes harder to have an interesting struggle for its control with other unfriendly neighbors.

An area rich in resources might actually take up a significant amount of land, but for convenience you’ll want to fix its location in a single hex or area representative of its nature. A single farming village might have a commanding position in a rich grassland, for example, or a particular mining tunnel might be the main route down into the treasures of an ancient tomb. Fixing the location’s main point of control in a single area makes it easier for the players to conceptualize the place and simpler to set up conflicts involving its control.

In some cases, the particular resource provided by the location will be obvious. For those that aren’t so clear, don’t worry about the

specifics right now. You can randomly generate them later once you start assigning traits to your locations.

## PLACING LAIRS

The last type of location to be set are Lairs. These locations house the wicked and the bestial, dens for the bandits, monsters, renegades and savages that scourge the wilderness. These locations are a constant thorn in the sides of their neighbors and exist in a parasitical fashion, plundering nearby settlements and resources to sustain their existence. Not all Lairs are necessarily full of monstrous reavers, but there’s usually something fundamentally repugnant about the locals. If peaceful dealings with their neighbors were very likely for the inhabitants, they wouldn’t be classified as a Lair.

Look at the map and identify the obvious land and water routes between cities and towns. Along each route, place a Lair roughly equidistant between the settlements. The savages of the wilderness are one of the main reasons that travel is so dangerous in most regions worth an adventurer’s time. They feed off of the reckless souls that dare the lonely roads between cities, and anything resembling a trade route will have its share of predators.

Once that is accomplished, look at the map and identify any resource locations that are remote from a town or city. Such isolated areas are ripe for drawing the attention of plunderers, and you can place three or four Lairs where they might have the best access to under-defended resources.

Finally, inspect the map and check for “holes” in it, where there are stretches of land without any location of interest. Fix these holes by placing a Lair in the barren area. It could well be that the area is empty because of the depredations of its occupants.

Again, right now you don’t need to worry about deciding what exactly is lurking in the Lair. All you need to do is identify the spot as being a good place for something bad, and later in the process you’ll flesh it out to whatever degree of detail is necessary for your game.

## ASSIGNING TRAITS AND NAMES

Once you have a map and have placed the locations, you can begin to flesh them out with traits. Each type of location that possesses traits has its own table. For Cities and Towns, you can roll on the Origins table to learn why that settlement came to exist, and the Activities table to get an idea of the sort of goods or services the place provides that make it so important to the surrounding villages. For Resources, you can roll once on the Type table to find out what manner of wealth the place provides its holder. For Lairs, you’ll want to roll on the Nature table to find out what dark forces are gathering in the wilderness.

In all cases you should feel free to simply pick choices off the trait lists, or ignore any results that don’t seem to make sense in context. The randomized trait system is simply a convenience for Labyrinth Lords who need to produce a lot of interesting places in a hurry.



Names will vary with the campaign. The culture-based location names provided in the *Red Tide* sourcebook can provide coherent place names for settlements that tend toward a particular culture, but quick recourse to an atlas or Google can also provide names to fit any flavor. You should usually try to make the names of a given location “match” in most circumstances- if one town is named Vosges, another is named Willborough, their neighbor is named Voslek, and the fourth is named Chi Fan you’re apt to have your players looking around for a melting-pot mix of different ethnicities. For some worlds or locations, this is exactly the case, but it should generally be avoided when the locals are all of the same general culture.

You also shouldn’t feel obligated to detail all these locations at the start of the campaign. Simply choosing the names, rolling the traits, and knowing their position on the map is usually plenty for the start of a game. You’ll want to flesh out those locations nearest the party’s starting point first, and then elaborate the others between sessions as it becomes fun or necessary.

## PLACING OBSTACLES

If it weren’t for the natural entropy of a harsh and pitiless world, the region would have made itself a rich province by now. But in a world scourged by plague, famine, deranged wizards and blood-crazed zealots, nothing is ever simple.

For each City, Town, and Resource, roll one or more Obstacles. These cabals or situations hinder the location’s usefulness and make it impossible to draw it into a larger Domain until the Obstacle is solved or removed. Rich farmland might be useless if the local villagers are ignorant of good farming techniques, and a city might be ungovernable from outside so long as its councils are ruled by a sinister secret society. Any polity that plans to take control of such a place is going to have to clear away such impediments to their rule.

Each Obstacle has a level, indicating how bad the problem is. A minor flare-up of quarreling might be level 1, while an ancient and powerful blood cult dedicated to the sacrifice of unbelievers might be level 8. If no particular level seems obvious for a problem, simply assign it one with a roll of 1d6+2.

Lairs don’t normally get Obstacles, because lairs *are* Obstacles. They are a constant source of harassment for surrounding locations, and the only ways to deal with them are to either burn them out or somehow turn them away from whatever habits make them so intolerable to their neighbors. Actually making a useful and advantageous asset out of these savages and monstrosities is theoretically possible, but it’s something that requires discussion and work between a player group and the Labyrinth Lord.

If you’re using the site tags from *Red Tide*, now’s a good time to roll them up for each border town and city- you might use them to get a better idea as to a place’s Obstacle, or you might wish to brew up a custom misery unique to that particular place.

## ESTABLISHING DOMAINS

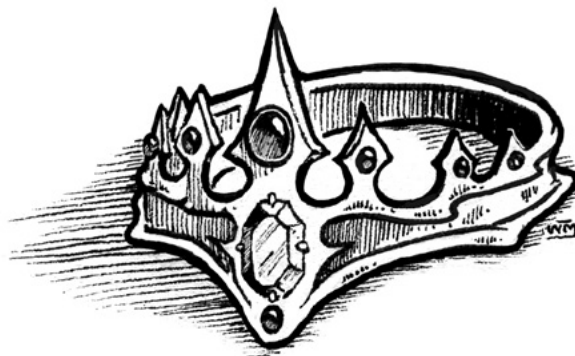
With your map properly drawn and fleshed out, you can now take a moment to look at it and decide what kind of Domains you wish to establish in it. Domains are those polities that act as a single political unit, usually under the rule of a noble, headman, chieftain, wizard-king, high priest, or other figure of importance. The Domains in your region might be the fiefs of some distant empire or pluckily independent confederacies of free villages, but it is assumed that outside powers are too weak, too distant, or too indifferent to interfere with the Domain’s operation.

It is not necessary that every settlement in your region be established as part of a Domain. Doing so can be counterproductive, taking up time and attention that is more enjoyably spent elsewhere. Instead, only establish Domains that you intend to use in play- the ones that will be active and purposeful during the course of the campaign. Other cities and towns doubtless have their nobles and rulers, but they don’t matter for the purposes of your campaign and can be assumed to be self-absorbed.

Domains in most regions worthy of adventure are very rarely large. Most of them should consist of nothing more than a single city-state or town with dreams of future glory. A few might be humble villages or noble manors that only claim the nearby Resources as the source of their power. More expansive Domains can be difficult to manage at first, until a Labyrinth Lord has had time to grow accustomed to the rules of their operation and growth. It’s best to start simple and build up from there as you feel comfortable and as events in your campaign progress.

Choose one or more settlements to serve as capitals of the Domains. Unless you intentionally plan to set up a lone Domain as being the first spark of organized civilization to be struck in the region, you should set up Domains in neighboring pairs or triads, so that conflict is ensured between them as they struggle to control nearby resources. This rivalry doesn’t need to be open violence, but might just be the natural tension of neighbors interested in the same resource. If a convenient rival is lacking, you can make sure that they end up near one or more Lairs or Ruins.

You can assume that the Obstacle of each city or settlement owned by an Domain has been overcome by its current rulers. They may still exist, but if so, they’ve been tamed and coopted by the Domain leadership and are no longer a force in opposition to their plans. If the PCs or some other power means to take over the location, however, they’re going to have to make their own terms with the local afflictions.



## ORGANIZING YOUR HALL OF INFAMY

The “hall of infamy” is a simple technique for stocking your region with a suitable range of perils and malevolent foes. It’s not strictly necessary, but it can make a Labyrinth Lord’s life much easier down the road as you are forced to deal with the gradually increasing power of PC group. Formulating challenges for low-level parties is relatively simple, but when PCs start to become figures of real power in their own right it can be difficult to explain where all these mighty foes were when the heroes were still novices.

This is not to say that in a sandbox game players shouldn’t be largely responsible for picking their own challenges. Every party should be looking at their prospects and scouting out possibilities for survivable excitement, but if all you initially create are antagonists of an approachable power level, it’s functionally identical to a world where all the challenges are gated to the group’s prowess.

By building serious foes early on in the campaign’s progression, the party feels genuinely rewarded for paying attention to their surroundings and taking threats seriously. When reconnaissance shows that a foe is too powerful for them, they can simultaneously feel that their foresight produced useful information and that the world around them really does exist separate from their personal advancement paths. Even when the party has to learn these things the hard way, those who live have a reason to have a grudge against the foe and a downfall to be sought as the survivors rise in power.

Aside from this, it’s also much easier on the Labyrinth Lord if major enemies and powerful foes are established up front. If these figures are lacking, the group runs the distinct risk of asking hard questions about why this undead archmage they’ve just defeated hasn’t actually been mentioned by anyone until they reached 12th level... or why the brutal tyrant of the region’s chief city has gone entirely unnamed and unremarked until they started their own Domains. Fitting these major foes in early gives you more time to foreshadow them and work their lesser minions into early sessions.

When stocking your hall, don’t bother establishing any purely local, self-contained threats. If a specific village or town or remote locale has some buried evil beneath it, a psychopathic chieftain, or a wizard meddling with unclean powers, it’s not necessary to write them up beforehand so long as their activities are restricted to that location. PCs can arrive at such a place and be legitimately surprised at the situation, provided you give them a chance to scout the circumstances and avoid forcing them into a confrontation. If the foe has obvious reasons to keep to itself, some very powerful enemies can be found in out-of-the-way locations without provoking hard questions.

Don’t bother establishing petty perils, either. Not every bandit chief, Shou witch or roaming chimera deserves to be foreshadowed. Many of the problems that novice PCs face might be incredibly important to the local villagers but of little or no consequence beyond their borders. Granted a rough and untamed wilderness setting, a Labyrinth Lord can create an almost unlimited number of these minor foes without taxing a player’s suspension of disbelief.



When building the hall, you start at the top. Pick a threat to be the biggest, nastiest danger in the entire region. This might be a lich, a divinely-graced tyrant, a sleeping evil that even now begins to wake, a zealous priest preaching blood and ruin to the infidel, or a burgeoning Tide Cult that threatens the take over the area. This danger doesn’t have to be an imminent threat to the area, but it should be doing *something* that the PCs can notice early, even if they don’t understand who’s really behind the events. Even if the PCs are not of the heroic stripe inclined to actually contest the Prime Evil on moral grounds, the typical megalomaniacal urges involved will likely interfere with the long-term plans of the party.

To have a reasonable chance of defeating this Prime Evil, the PCs are going to have to be the toughest, canniest, most experienced heroes in the region. Peg the anticipated difficulty level to the maximum PC level you expect to reach with this campaign. Of course, that sort of reasoning is always a wild guess given the fragility of most campaigns, but it’s much easier to scale down a threat from greater to lesser than to inflate a petty peril into something worthy of legendary heroes. This grand danger is best placed in a Ruin or Lair, as it is otherwise likely to overshadow the character of a city or town, and it’s rare that a Resource location has anything of special interest to it. Still, if you like the idea of an entire town or city being indelibly colored by its dark ruler, you might plant a Prime Evil there.

Once you’ve picked the Prime Evil of the region, pick two lesser threats, the sort of thing that would require intervention by name-level PCs of around 9th level in order to defeat. These threats might be entire organizations operating below the public notice, secret cults or sinister cabals all dedicated to power and assorted unclean ends. Major monsters capable of forming retinues of lesser servitors work well here also, or snatching the Big Bads from free or published adventures suitable for that level of PC. These do well in being attached to Cities, Lairs or Ruins, either as cancerous cabals within an unsuspecting city’s wall or ruthless lords of some distant and desolate place long-storied in local legend.

Beneath these lesser threats, establish four significant perils that can be faced by mid-level PCs. Major Shou warbands or witch-



priestesses, aspiring warlords, maniacal wizards, and other such perils are suitable at this level, where the PCs can be expected to be able to survive some rough handling and have the firepower to deliver a serious threat to any single foe. These threats can often be assigned to Lairs, as they represent the kind of problems that can usually be found preying on the lifeblood of human commerce.

Beneath these significant perils it's not generally necessary to work individual villains into the framework of your region. Foes less impressive than bandit chieftains and mid-level wizards are common enough that no one will wonder why they haven't heard of them earlier. The seven villains you've established so far should give the PCs a wide variety of options in confronting the forces of darkness once they become powerful enough to actually pick and choose their enemies.

If you want more, however, just repeat the process from the top, creating another Prime Evil, two major threats, and four significant perils. More than this will very rarely be necessary. It's hard enough to do active foreshadowing for that many loci of evil-doing, and if you really need more nefarious foes, you can simply pull them in as elements of the enemy organization that the PCs haven't yet seen.

## LOCATIONS APPEARING IN PLAY

Your map is now complete, but it isn't unchanging. As the PCs roam the grim wilds of the untamed borderlands, they might well end up creating new locations in play through their choices and interests. A prehuman ruin that they clear and use as a base of operations is surely significant enough to them to merit inclusion on the map. A lost monastery might have only a handful of surviving monks, but if the PCs return there repeatedly for advice and recovery it might well deserve to be its own location as well. Conversely, if a town or resource is razed to the ground it might cease to be of significance in the region and lose its value as a population center.

If the PCs pay attention to an area and might end up visiting it again, it can be useful to mark it down on the map as a Place. Places usually have no Military, Wealth or Social value. They might have traits simply to describe the particular situation of the Place, but these locations are too minor for the traits to have any influence on the area's values. Usually Places are trivial enough that any Domain that cares to send in a unit can seize them for their own, but there's rarely any reason for them to do so. Most villages and farming hamlets qualify as Places. If you need to establish



them in play for some reason, just jot them down on the map so as to keep things consistent if the PCs ever return.

Places can become more, however, if events and PC choices build them up. That isolated monastery might have only a handful of occupants, but if the PCs lead a nomad tribe to build a settlement in the shadow of its walls and manage to use the monastery's agricultural knowledge to open up formerly-barren fields with nomad labor, they might end up creating a Town out of nothing at all. Such transformations are ultimately up to the Labyrinth Lord, but they should be possible if the PCs are determined to accomplish it.

## SPECIAL CASES

The following guidelines cover some of the special situations and specific concerns that might arise in using these region creation guidelines.

### VENTURING AFAR

One potential disadvantage of a region is that it is probably possessed of a limited number of different cultures and terrains. Even a big swath of land three hundred miles wide isn't enough to cover the full range of strangeness and exoticism that some groups prefer, and some Labyrinth Lords like to keep their campaign focus spread out widely on a world. Handling these peregrinations isn't difficult if you employ a few simple tricks.

First, when your party decides to head off the map, figure out whether they're going to a specific place to accomplish a specific purpose, or whether they're simply seeking adventure in new fields. In the former case, you don't really need to develop anything but the specific location that the PCs are to visit. If they need to venture into the frozen mountains of the north to unearth the ancient barrow of an exiled Skandr king, then all you need to worry about creating is the barrow and perhaps the coastal village where the PCs' ship lands. For these quest-based expeditions, don't bother building anything more than will be specifically needed, unless you find the process to be fun for its own sake.

If they're venturing to new lands for the sake of a different kind of adventure, or to gather allies and power with which to return to their old home, then you need to build a fresh region for them. The same region creation process can be run for the new land, though likely on a smaller scale. Unless the PCs have Domains back home that are acting in their absence you can usually just leave the former political situation unchanged and save your attention for the new region so long as the PCs are knocking about there. By focusing on only one region at a time you save your energy and attention span to go where it will do the most good.

Of course, you can always create these satellite regions beforehand, perhaps even before there's any suggestion that they're necessary. If they're genuine fun for you to create, they can make for some of the Labyrinth Lord-specific entertainment that can help keep a campaign running enjoyably for all involved. As with all things sandboxish, however, you shouldn't bother to do so unless the process is enjoyable for you or your expect to need the information for the next session. Sandbox Labyrinth Lords should never bother with an aspect of world creation unless it's either fun or needed for the next game. There's just too much you *could* be doing, and you'll burn out quickly if you try to hammer out the dull and irrelevant parts of creation as precisely as the fun and important bits.

### RETROFITTING AN EXISTING MAP

Some readers will already have campaigns in full swing. They don't have the luxury of writing a region from scratch, or they might want to apply the guidelines to a specific fictional area or setting. Creating a region from scratch gives you the most control over the results, but if you've already got something to hand, here's how you can retrofit it with these rules.

Take your campaign area and identify the main area where play occurs. Mark it out as its own region. Your players might well wander far afield from there, but treat those satellite areas under the "Venturing Afar" guidelines given above. Don't bother fleshing them out yet unless you expect to need them for the next session.

Once you've identified the region where the PCs are now, put in City and Town locations. A lot of settings will have a comparative abundance of cities and urban areas, so many that it seems like there should be dozens of these locations. Resist the temptation. Plant no more than three or four cities and at most twelve towns in the region, choosing those that are most important and most appropriately spaced on the map. The other towns and cities still exist, of course, but they're of no real benefit to the Domains that hold them for whatever reason you might establish. You can cite corrupt councils, insurmountable Obstacles, plague, famine, oppressive lords, bad luck, insistent tradition, or whatever other reasons are necessary. You might even treat the other cities as Towns and only apply the City name to the biggest and most important urban areas. Your goal is to focus attention on a more manageable number of important urban locations. A region that is too big and complex for you to handle is as bad as a region with no structure at all; in both cases, you're not getting any structural benefit from the work you've put into it.

Once you've placed your population centers, continue with the region creation process as if you were making a fresh area. Play and the setting's own history will guide you as to the placement of Ruins or Lairs. Resources are often neglected or handwaved away in fantastic settings, so put the recommended numbers of Resource locations where they'll incite the most interesting conflict among the local Domains.

For the last step, simply turn existing power structures into Domains. On some maps, the entire area might be under the control of some imperial power or a single mighty kingdom. This is absolutely no reason not to divide it up into conflicting Domains anyway—conniving governors, quarreling vassals, restive client chieftains, and all the other combative lieutenants can contrive to leave an empire riddled with strife. For those mono-governmental situations, identify those cities, towns, and leaders that have conflicting interests and divide the region up among them. These vassals might not dare to openly war upon each other, but there is a wealth of trouble they can inflict on neighbors when it promises to improve their own stature or impress some distant master.

## DETERMINING SPECIFIC POPULATIONS

Some sandbox creation guides spend significant effort in helping the creator establish a specific population number for an area, and then work backward from that number in placing cities, towns, and determining other factors.

*An Echo, Resounding* avoids this tactic by default, as a region built by rigorously extrapolating from real-world demographic parallels isn't necessarily all that useful for actual gaming. Such a technique tends to produce comparatively tiny cities that rarely match most players' expectations of the fantastic, and dictate vast numbers of peasant farmers for each urbanite or artisan. Moreover, most players have no real interest in such totals in play, and are perfectly content with being told that such-and-such a region is "sparsely populated" or "teeming with people". Allowing such things to remain vague gives the Labyrinth Lord one fewer variable to track, and it's almost always preferable to ignore factors that don't impact a sandbox's enjoyment.

Still, some players and Labyrinth Lords get real pleasure out of constructing their regions from first principles and enjoy the feeling of verisimilitude that comes from calculating plausible population levels. With that in mind, here's a quick and dirty way to get a reasonable population total for a particular stretch of land.

First, divide your region into three types of terrain- good farmland

HEX AREAS	
Hex Width	Area in Miles
1 mile	0.87
5 miles	21.65
6 miles	31.18
25 miles	541.25
36 miles	1,122.34

such as plains and light forest, marginal lands such as hills, heavy forests and jungles, and barren lands such as mountains, deserts, swamps, and tundras. The quick way is to just count hexes of each type of terrain. Coastal hexes should be counted as a full hex if any land at all abuts the water, as fisherfolk work the lakes and seas.

Then multiply the number of hexes of each type by the area of the hex. The table provided here gives quick areas for the more common hex widths, but you can calculate odd ones by squaring the width of the hex and then multiplying by 0.866. This will give you the total areas of each of the three types of land.

Then multiply each type of land by its carrying capacity. For a typical harsh borderlands region where the locals are under regular siege from monsters, bandits, and rapacious lords, the carrying

capacities might be around 40 people per square mile of good agricultural land. Marginal terrain might support 20 people per mile, and barren lands might feed 5 for each mile. Civilized and well-developed regions might double these totals, while truly wretched wastelands might support only half as many.

Once you have the total population, separate out whatever portion are intelligent nonhumans or nomads, such as Shou, lizardfolk, bandits, wandering tribes, kobolds, gnolls, or whatever other significant humanoid presence might exist in the area. One good rule of thumb in areas not too overrun with such beings is to assume that half or more of the marginal and barren terrain's population is actually made up of these sullen tribes. It's unlikely that any of them will form urban centers, so their numbers can be ignored when calculating the number of cities and towns the region supports.

City and town-dwellers will make up about 5% of the remaining population. A region with 800,000 occupants, therefore, will have 40,000 urbanites. The rest are needed to grow the food to support these centers of population. Extremely sophisticated and advanced cultures might be able to support as many as 10% of their population as city-dwellers and artisans, but most realms just don't have sufficient surplus to allow for that many agriculturally unproductive members.

Divide this urban total into a desired number of cities, saving out a quarter of them to make up the market towns. Each city should have about ten thousand occupants at a minimum. Any fewer, and the players are apt to find the place too small to support the kind of intrigues and urban adventures expected of a city. Market towns usually have one to five thousand inhabitants, and should number at least twice as many as the number of cities.

Thus, give our example of 40,000 city-dwellers, we take out 30,000 of them and decide on two significant cities, one of 18,000 and the other of 12,000 people. The remainder we divide into five market towns of 2,000 inhabitants each.

The vast 95% not living in urban areas are spread out in countless small farming villages and fisher-ports, each one usually ranging from two to eight hundred souls. These places are too modest to provide any real services to adventurers, though a local peasant can usually offer a dry place under his roof and a meal of sorghum gruel in exchange for a copper coin.

## CITIES AND TOWNS

The proud cities of a region are the chiefest of its prizes to aspiring warlords and ambitious rulers. The lord who controls the cities of a region is often accounted its master, however short his reach beyond his city's walls. The citizens who dwell within their walls know the value of their allegiance, and they sell it dearly.

Towns have less dignity than their greater brethren, but they are far more common and more likely to be a point of interest for an up-and-coming hegemon. The citizens of a market town in the borderlands come up against the hard edge of the wilderness on a daily basis, and are no strangers to Shou hordes and savage monsters from the depths of the wilds. A half-day's march from their palisades might put an adventurer in the belly of any number of abominations, and those who dare to live so close to danger do so for very good reasons of their own.

Towns grant their Domain **+2 Wealth** and **+2 Social** points. Cities provide **+4 Wealth** and **+4 Social** points. Both scores are modified by the origins and current activity of the community.

### CITY AND TOWN ORIGINS

Every community was founded for a reason, and the reasons behind the building of a city or town have much to do with its current condition. The following are ten common reasons for having built the settlement, each of which modifies the location's value. If you choose to create your own custom origin for a location, you should assign a +2 bonus to the most relevant related value.

1D10	ORIGIN	1D10	ORIGIN
1	Ancestral Land	6	Outcasts
2	Ancient Industry	7	Rebels
3	Defensible Site	8	Religious Community
4	Ethnocentrists	9	Survivors
5	Innovators	10	Trading Hub

#### Ancestral Land +2 Wealth

The citizens have been here for centuries, though the original settlement might have been little more than a riverside farming hamlet. The locals have had a long time to develop the wealth and infrastructure of the town, and they rely on many works of their ancestors.

#### Ancient Industry +2 Wealth

At one point this city or town was a major industrial site, one focused on the production of some widely-used commodity: pig iron production, precious metal smelting, fishing, logging, shipbuilding, or some other product in line with local capabilities. The present day may or may not see it still producing such things, but the legacy of the industry is increased wealth.



#### Defensible Site +2 Military

The original settlers chose this site because it was unusually defensible. A town perched at the edge of some high plateau might have springs of fresh water forced up from the stone, or a riverside town might have the flow wrapping around three sides of the town walls and a boggy marsh guarding the fourth. The locals have spent a good deal of time considering the military ramifications of their location.

#### Ethnocentrists +2 Social

The first citizens were determined to save their culture from the devastation of the Red Tide, and founded this city to embody the customs and traditions that survived the exile. Most such settlements have no special animosity or scorn toward their neighbors, but they are grimly opposed to any mixing with "outsiders". This dedication produces an unsurprising degree of social unity.

#### Innovators +2 Wealth

The founders of this place wanted to do something new; they wanted to abandon the shackles of their former homes and strive to find an enlightened and wiser way to live. Most such surviving towns still have relics of that initial, idealistic period in the form of governmental quirks or odd customs, along with the wealth that came from a successful eagerness to try new things. Those innovators who chose less wisely can usually be found among the local Ruins.

#### Outcasts +2 Social

The first settlers were the dregs and unwanted of a greater society. Perhaps they were bandits or low-caste laborers, or the unwanted and oppressed followers of some weakened culture. They came here to start a new city, one where they would be in the ascendant, and this sense of shared burden before an unfriendly world has given them strong social bonds.



## Rebels

+2 Military

The initial settlement was involuntary. Some usurper lost a war, or a legitimate lord was driven out by a pretender, or a religion made too many assumptions about how far the local ruler would tolerate their demands. The losers of the quarrel ended up here, and they've built their town on the memory of that exile. The martial heritage and tradition of fighting that comes with them tends to make such places distinctly more militant than most.

## Religious Community

+2 Social

The site was originally composed of earnest believers in a particular religion, elven Creed, or esoteric philosophical school. This religion may or may not have become watered-down over the years, but it leaves its traces firmly stamped on the town's character and laws, along with a sense of shared belief that helps tie the locals together.

## Survivors

+2 Military

The first inhabitants were the survivors of some nearby catastrophe, often the fall of another city to Shou warbands or human infighting. Those who lived fled their old lives to settle here. The weak had already died along the way, and the tough, ruthless core of the remnants still pass down traditions of martial stoicism and a keen awareness of the kind of actions necessary for survival.

## Trading Hub

+2 Wealth

The settlement stands at a confluence of cultures or trade routes, and developed out of the rich profits to be had from commerce. Such communities tend to be somewhat mercenary-minded and flexible in their policies, always trying to keep on good terms with the various groups that trade there. Communities that command some valuable trade route can be more overbearing, greedily extracting the wealth that comes from their exclusive control of a trade river or isolated mountain pass.

# CITY AND TOWN ACTIVITIES

For a community to have survived to the present day, it must be fulfilling some useful function for the surrounding region. Towns and cities are expensive things, draining to the local agriculture and demanding in their requirements. The community has to be providing some sort of service or utility for it to have remained prosperous. The following ten activities are a sampling of common activities for a town or city, each with their own modifier to its values.

1d10	ACTIVITY	1d10	ACTIVITY
1	Councils	6	Missionary Zeal
2	Destined Conquerors	7	Mutual Defense
3	Educational Tradition	8	Production Center
4	Expert Artisans	9	Strong Society
5	Martial Tradition	10	Vigorous Trade

## Councils

+2 Social

Most major settlements are firmly under the control of a lord or a local oligarchy of the most powerful families, and the wishes of the common people are largely irrelevant outside of such outrages as might provoke riot or rebellion. This settlement is unusual in that it provides the common people with some less violent means of influencing community policy. A city council stocked by more than the great families is one possibility, as are venerable traditions that give local citizens the right of voting or other such exotic privileges. While such public input can produce contention and quarreling, it also strengthens the feeling of unity and shared membership among the citizens.

## Destined Conquerors

+2 Military

Something about the settlement's current society or leadership has convinced it that it is destined to ultimately rule its surrounds. Ambitious captains, the zeal of a new religion, or the simple detestation of neighboring debauchery or chaos might all provoke the community to take arms against resisters. Not all such settlements will be actively seeking combat, but they tend to spend a great deal of time and effort in preparing for the inevitable clash.

## Educational Tradition

+2 Wealth

The locals have a profound respect for learning, and even commoners might be expected to have the rudiments of literacy. Some such settlements might have one of the small magical academies that have survived since the early days of the exile, while others could have grown from a central school of scholars or literary students. Some might focus on more practical concerns, such as engineering or innovations in agriculture. Whatever the specifics, the eagerness to learn brings uncommon wealth to the town- and perhaps the occasional small disaster as a clever new idea gets out of hand.

## Expert Artisans

+2 Wealth

The settlement is abundantly supplied with expert crafters. Dwarven delves might have numerous skilled craftmothers at their forges, while human communities might nurture old skills and generations of polished expertise in a particular calling. Most such settlements specialize in transforming a readily-available local resource into something precious enough to draw distant gold to their markets.

## Martial Tradition

+2 Military

The locals fight, have fought, and will fight again. Every family can boast of its scars and sacrifices, and the trade of the blade is honored and cultivated by the natives. Unlike simple nests of unruly rabble, these locals have some deeper tradition to organize and focus their martial exertions, perhaps as descendants of some ancient military unit gone to civilian life or as disciples of some martial religious faith. Even the dullest commoner can be expected to know the rudiments of handling a spear and maneuvering to the sound of drums, trumpets and gongs.

### **Missionary Zeal**

+2 Social

The natives have something magnificent, and are bent on sharing it with others- occasionally whether or not the others are interested in having it. A vibrant local religion, a particular cultural tradition, an idealistic founding principle or a general sense of civic superiority infuses the locals and leaves them eager to share their bounty with their neighbors. This sense of mission can bind the common folk together in a feeling of shared destiny.

### **Mutual Defense**

+2 Military

The settlement has numerous allies among the surrounding villages and hamlets, and this diplomacy may even extend to intelligent nonhumans in the nearby area. The settlement may have a tradition of open-handed generosity to its neighbors, or the luck of being sited near uncommonly reasonable nonhumans, or simply a very supple-tongued corps of diplomats. Whatever the specifics, these allies can be expected to lend their spears when trouble rises for the community.

### **Production Center**

+2 Wealth

A town full of expert artisans is a community that brings forth exquisite marvels. A city famed as a production center simply makes a *lot* of something. Rice, iron, timber, fish... the community is a major source of some basic commodity. It may or may not produce some finished goods along with the raw supplies, but the largest part of its wealth comes from the export of its most abundant resource. The merchants and land-owning lords who control this resource often have unusual power over the community's governance.

### **Strong Society**

+2 Social

The community has been tested in the past but it has come through its trials unbowed. Many of the typical fissures and feuds that lace any significant population center have been resolved to at least grudging acceptance by all involved and the common folk have worked out the worst of their differences with their rulers. In some cases this may have been the product of wise-headed civic elders, and in others it may have been the consequence of a horrifically bloody purge such as leaves the natives shuddering at the very thought of returning to such chaos. While their current condition is somewhat less dramatic, such civic stability leaves the locals able to focus their efforts with minimal infighting.

### **Vigorous Trade**

+2 Wealth

The settlement may or may not have been founded as a trade hub, but it has recently found mercantile wealth. There may have been a new mineral strike, a new trade route cut through the wilderness, or some long-lost ruin's rediscovery calling freebooters from afar. Other settlements have worn their wealth for a longer span, their original founding purposes smoothed out under a flow of trade.



## **CITY AND TOWN OBSTACLES**

Every town and city has an obstacle, some circumstance or affliction that prevents easy rule of its people. Those communities that begin the campaign under the rule of a Domain are presumed to have made some sort of accommodation with the trouble, but any new power that seeks to seize the city will have to beat down the obstacle before they can take advantage of the city's resources. Until the problem is resolved, the troubles of the settlement will make it more of a difficulty than it's worth to a prince.

To determine the magnitude of the problem, roll 1d6+2 to get the level of the obstacle. A full description of each and how they might best be overcome is included at the end of the chapter.

1D20	OBSTACLE	1D20	OBSTACLE
1	Bad Reputation	11	Flooding
2	Class Hatred	12	Mercenary Populace
3	Contaminated Land	13	Monsters
4	Corrupt Leadership	14	Pervasive Hunger
5	Crushed Spirits	15	Recurrent Sickness
6	Demagogue	16	Riotous Thugs
7	Destructive Customs	17	Secret Society
8	Disunity	18	Shou Raiders
9	Ethnic Feuding	19	Tide Cult
10	Exceptional Poverty	20	Xenophobia

## RUINS

Once there was something precious about the place where the old bones lie. Once there were towers and gilded halls. Once there were shining jewels and deep vaults of dwarf-gold. Once there were tomes of puissant sorcery and fanes to open-handed gods. Once there was something dear in these empty houses, and it is for present hands to come and take it back.

Rulers hunger for the wealth and usefulness of these ancient places, and what was valuable once can be valuable yet again. Adventurers are often enlisted to clean out the detritus of ages, but there are times when the challenge is better answered by a forest of soldiers' spears.

By default, Ruins grant **+2 Wealth** to their owners.

## RUIN NATURES

Every ruin was something else, once, and the options below detail some of the more common origins for these festering piles of masonry and bones. For *Labyrinth Lords* using the *Red Tide* sourcebook, the Ruin Site tables there might offer ideas as to how the site's downfall came to pass. The nature of a ruin modifies its default value to a Domain, and exceptionally rich ruins might offer even greater prizes to the power that manages to take them for their own.

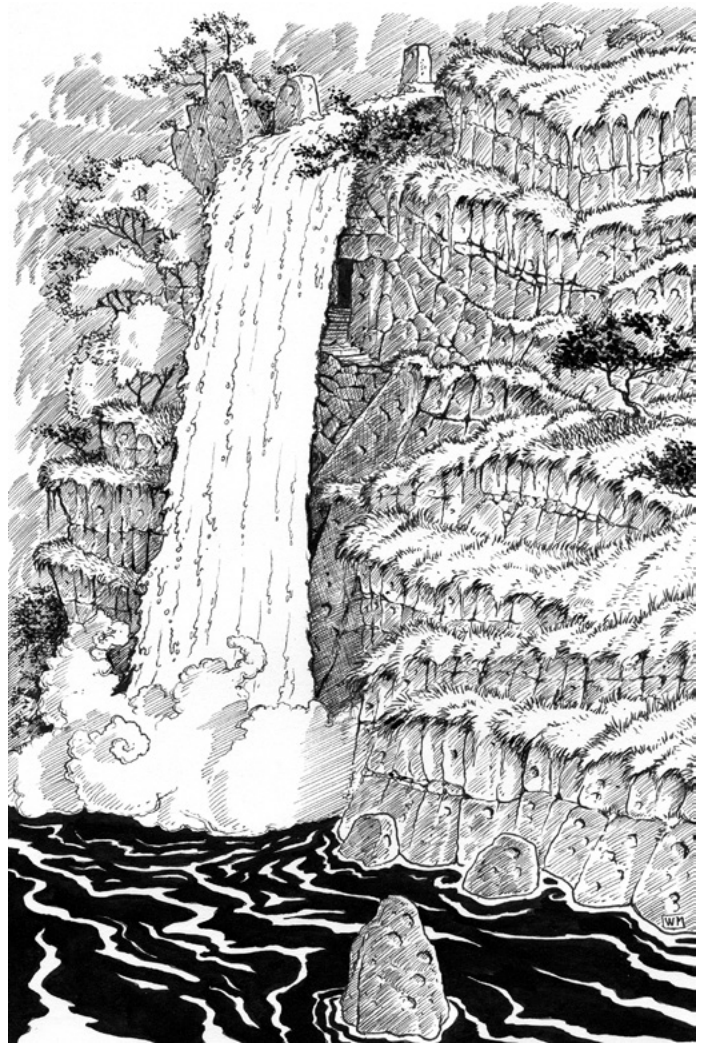
1d12	NATURE	1d12	NATURE
1	Abandoned Town	7	Failed Colony
2	Ancient Settlement	8	Forsaken Outpost
3	Broken Temple	9	Lost Mine
4	Crumbled Fortress	10	Plundered City
5	Dwarven Hold	11	Prehuman Ruins
6	Empty Tower	12	Shattered School

### Abandoned Town **+2 Wealth**

The ruins were a prosperous town once, but disaster or encroaching hardship drove out the original inhabitants. Perhaps the water supply failed, or plague ravaged the populace, or trade routes shifted and starved the people. Natural disasters such as mudslides, earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, or tsunamis might have smashed the buildings and left the survivors fleeing for less accursed soil.

### Ancient Settlement **+2 Wealth**

The ruins date back long before the exile, having once housed some band of interlopers that dared the Sunset Isles in ages past. Their descendants might still jealously hold their ancestral home, or the rigors of the Isles might have left their halls filled with Shou, wild beasts, and the bones of the restless dead. Most such groups had very good reasons for seeking the isolation of the Isles, and many were inclined to pursue ends less acceptable in civilized lands.



### Broken Temple **+2 Social**

Whether a monastery, shrine, pilgrimage site, or seminary, this ruin was once the center of a powerful local faith. It may have been a remote outpost of missionary zeal, manned by daring priests seeking to provide a foothold in the wilderness. It may have been the last remnant of a failed colony, the survivors huddled at the feet of their mute idols. Such places often have lingering power, and can attract those entities that seek to feed on the ashes of the numinous.

### Crumbled Fortress **+2 Military**

The ruins were a potent fortress once, a castle, keep, walled tower, or military camp pledged to some local power. War or poverty broke its walls at last, however, and the impossibility of maintaining it has let other things find homes in the empty halls. Such ruined fortifications are a favorite haunt of bandit warlords.

### Dwarven Hold **+2 Wealth**

The dwarves of the Sunset Isles have dwelled there for centuries, but even before they came there were delvings that seemed to be of dwarven make. None know what became of these ancient ones, but their houses of stone deep in the earth remain to tempt



hungry-handed adventurers. More modern delvings are occasionally destroyed by relentless Shou attacks or the creeping tide of monstrous evil that wells up from deep below.

### **Empty Tower** +2 Military

Perhaps it was a wizard's lair once, or a bandit's favored watchpost, or the nucleus of a castle that has long since fallen to rubble around it. Such ruins are favored by necromancers, devil-worshippers and other such sinister figures who prefer isolation and a home small enough to be maintained by a few loyal minions but defensible enough to be held against most interlopers.

### **Failed Colony** +2 Wealth

Many towns and youthful cities were founded in the early decades of the Exile, while the Shou were still scattered and taken aback by the strange intruders. Some of these settlements were quite successful in their season, prospering with the resources of untouched lands. When the Shou stormed out of the west in years past, many of these young cities and towns were put to the torch and ravaged by the furious humanoids. Men and women of later days tend to shun them for fear of the restless dead, still furious over unburied bones and an uncertain afterlife to come.

### **Forsaken Outpost** +2 Military

Many domains have tried to push back the wilderness, and the wilds are dotted with the ruins of their outposts. Crumbling buildings, tottering border towers, and caves reworked into makeshift barracks are all to be found in the untamed lands, their original occupants long since dead or withdrawn. These outposts were usually placed near fresh water and significant military points, and so often attract less scrupulous tenants.

### **Lost Mine** +2 Wealth

The mountains and hills of the Isles are rich with precious metals and useful ores. Sometimes this bounty provokes hungry men to dare deeper into the wilderness than they ought to go, and the natural perils take them before they can get the pleasure of their new wealth. The caves and tunnels they leave behind make homes for many creatures, and smelted ingots of gold and silver can still be found tucked away in hidden vaults.

### **Plundered City** +2 Wealth

An abandoned town is left empty by the cruel dictates of nature, but a plundered city was smashed purposefully by men. The city somehow ended up on the wrong side of a war and its ruination was crushing and complete. It may have been the last stronghold of some incurably militaristic refugee group, or victim to the mad zeal of some conquering religion, or simply sacrificed to oncoming hordes of Shou in favor of fighting them at a more defensible location. The swift destruction often leaves a great many valuables in among the bones of the unquiet dead.

### **Prehuman Ruins** +2 Wealth

The Sunset Isles knew civilized inhabitants long before the coming of men. The black basalt cities of the ancient lizardfolk can be found deep in the jungles, and the strange, harshly elegant lines of cities unknown to men can still be found within the mountain valleys. Some lunatics insist that these cities were actually the work of ancient Shou, but more sober scholars credit such places to demons, for the artifacts found within are often strange and terrible in their effects.

### **Shattered School** +2 Wealth

Isolation is often profitable for the study of magic, and the consequences of mistakes are less injurious when bystanders are scarce. Sometimes these little errors result in sundered buildings and hideously-warped faculty. At other times the mages are driven from the school by infuriated locals, or struck down by hostile lords or rampaging Shou bands. In all cases, the remains are likely to be crusted over with unpredictable artifacts of spoilt magic and festering sorcery.

## **RUIN TRAITS**

Once a ruin's basic nature has been decided, it's necessary to spice it up with some interesting quality that would make it of value to an ambitious ruler. There are ruins that are totally worthless, of course, mere tumbles of stone and memory, but these ruins rarely attract the attention of the great.

1d12	TRAIT	1d12	TRAIT
1	Ancient Armory	7	Lost Techniques
2	Buried Treasure	8	Pre-Exile Relics
3	Commanding Location	9	Rich Resources
4	Forgotten Sorceries	10	Scattered Heirs
5	Glorious Dead	11	Seat of Legitimacy
6	Great Art	12	Willing Recruits

### **Ancient Armory** +2 Military

The ruins have substantial stores of unlooted weapons, armor, or siege engines. Some might even have usable squadrons of war-golems keeping a perpetual vigil over the decay of centuries. Ancient dwarven delves might maintain hidden vaults of killing tools, while haunted battlefields might have infused their corroded blades with the unholy vigor of their unquiet masters. Whatever the specifics, the power that seizes the ruins will gain significant military benefit from the remains.

### **Buried Treasure** +2 Wealth

There is loot to be had in the wreckage, often of a kind too cumbersome to offer practical plundering opportunities to small bands of adventurers or raiders. Great jade pillars, massive doors of black bronze, wall panels of gilded brass, and other such costly, heavy furnishings might have proven too burdensome to be levered away centuries ago, but will yield up their value to a Domain able to dispatch a sufficient number of workers to salvage the ruins.



### **Commanding Location** +2 Military

The ruin is placed at a military strong point. The site likely has ample access to fresh water, an elevated view of the surrounding land, and a restricted means of approach sufficient to prevent easy rushes. If an organized military power is able to take control of the place, they'll have a superb base for exerting their influence on the surrounding countryside.

### **Forgotten Sorceries** +2 Wealth

The inhabitants of the ruins were puissant sorcerers, versed in secrets and subtleties that have long since been lost to the world. There may be tomes of hammered copper pages and spines of blackened iron, or clay tablets of some prehuman race, or bas-reliefs illustrating the arcane pandects of lost gods. Most such secrets rely on elaborate constructions or the magical significance of the ruins, making it impractical to practice them away from the site. Study of these occult leavings requires time and effort but promises significant advantage to a Domain

### **Glorious Dead** +2 Military

A great and magnificent battle took place in the ruins. Some such struggles involved substantial magical energies or the interference of some divine power, while others were simply the product of ferocious valor and exemplary martial courage. The shades of these heroic warriors remain present to a degree, and can be propitiated with the correct sacrifices and reverences to their memory. The Domain capable of winning the blessing of these ancient heroes will find subtle but significant advantages in their wars.

### **Great Art** +2 Social

The ruin is adorned with exquisite art, usually in some medium that can be expected to survive the grinding years. Statuary, bas-reliefs, frescoes, work in bronze and other enduring metals, and mosaics are all common examples. Possessing ownership of the site confers prestige and cultural esteem on the Domain in control of the ruins, and can be expected to inspire local artists to new heights of innovation.

### **Lost Techniques** +2 Wealth

The original inhabitants of the ruins were privy to unique techniques of metalwork, smelting, porcelain-making, medicine, architecture, or some other profitable art. Many of these techniques might be reliant on engines or resources found only within the ruins, and most require substantial investments in research and undisturbed experimentation to replicate. The Domain that manages to bring them back into use can expect to profit.

### **Pre-Exile Relics** +2 Social

The ruin contains substantial caches of artifacts dating back before the coming of the Red Tide, often including precious books and cultural artifacts. Many such tokens were common or trifling in the days before the crimson mist, but now they serve as some of the few strands that connect the present days to a lost and glorious past. Possessing these relics and their ancient home brings pride and renewed hope to the Domain that controls them.

### **Rich Resources** +2 Wealth

Precious metals, rare clays, unique drug plants that grow only under the influence of the ruin's specific feng shui, or other valuable raw materials can be found in or near the ruins. The dangers of the place may have fended off more casual colonists, but the Domain that can clear and hold the ruins can gain much profit from their extraction.

### **Scattered Heirs** +2 Social

The ruins were once the seat of a powerful noble house, lineage of sorcerers, scholarly family, dwarven clan, or other strong organization. These heritors have since scattered, but a Domain capable of reclaiming the ruins and rendering them habitable once more can win these heirs to their cause and benefit from the fierce loyalty of exiles returned to a home once lost.

### **Seat of Legitimacy** +2 Social

Long ago the ruins were the capital or cultural seat of the surrounding countryside, or a sacred place beloved of a powerful local cult. The rule of the place was broken in times past, but if a Domain is able to retake the place, it can benefit from the aura of legitimacy and rightful rule that possession confers upon a ruler.

### **Willing Recruits** +2 Military

Either in or near the ruins are a significant number of strong, warlike souls who could be turned to a Domain's service if the ruins are successfully taken. Violent inhabitants might cheerfully turn their destructiveness on the enemies of their new masters, impressed by their show of might- or they might be a neighboring folk, grateful for being freed of the constant threat of the ruin's inhabitants.

## **RUIN OBSTACLES**

Ruins are naturally problematic for aspiring rulers. They tend to attract savage beasts and outlaws who cannot bear the yoke of civilized society, and even when they aren't infested with powerful enemies, they usually suffer from malign influences and sinister supernatural blights. Cleaning out a ruin to restore it to useful service is a task that can test a kingdom's will- or kill scores of adventurers in the attempt.

1d20	OBSTACLE	1d20	OBSTACLE
1	Ancient Curse	11	Monsters
2	Angry Dead	12	Murderous Heirs
3	Barren Surroundings	13	Relic Golems
4	Conquering Heirs	14	Severe Damage
5	Dark Wizards	15	Shou Raiders
6	Destructive Customs	16	Sinister Cult
7	Disputed Possession	17	Taboo Land
8	Exiled Lord	18	Things From Below
9	Human Raiders	19	Tide Cult
10	Inaccessible	20	Tidespawn

## RESOURCES

The harsh borderlands have little to recommend them to the softer folk of a settled domain, save for the relative abundance of unclaimed land and unexploited resources. Good timber, lodes of precious metal, furs to keep warm in winter and orchards of silkworms to ease the summer heat- all these things await settlers bold enough to venture into the unknown... granted, at least, that they can best their neighbors in taking them.

Resources grant **+2 Wealth** to those Domains that hold them.

### RESOURCE TYPES

Ideas for the particular resource they grant are given below. All of the examples increase the Wealth of the site, but there's no reason that a colony of sorcerous artists might not add Social points, or a mine filled with hidden dwarven weaponry might not improve Military. It's up to the Labyrinth Lord to determine the qualities of such unique finds.

1D10	RESOURCE	1D10	RESOURCE
1	Fertile Land	6	Lush Pasture
2	Good Fishing	7	Medicinal Plants
3	Good Hunting	8	Old Industry
4	Good Mine	9	Rich Gathering
5	Good Timber	10	Sorcerous Materials

#### Fertile Land +2 Wealth

The soil is remarkably rich or suitable for growing food crops. A remote location or its habitation by groups of violent nomads may have kept it from being effectively used, or it may be that a number of small farming villages already exist on the land.

#### Good Fishing +2 Wealth

Great schools of fish teem here and make an inviting stop for any village's boats. Unfortunately, such rich hunting also tends to suit aquatic monsters, and pirates who wait for their chance to take some luckless captain's fishing boat and catch all together. Such resources often center around a small fishing village.

#### Good Hunting +2 Wealth

The forests teem with game, or the plains are rich with herds. Such places often attract tribes of Shou or nomad human bands, and the killing between those who would claim control of this good hunting ground can be far more bloody than the mere reaping of game.

#### Good Mine +2 Wealth

The land here is exceptionally rich in mineral wealth, perhaps offering vast sums of iron ore or veins of rarer, more precious metal. Getting a mine into working order requires a great deal of effort, expertise, and willingness to endure the loss of human life. Dwarves are past masters at mining and might have set up a delve here, or human wildcatters may be jealously protecting their "strike".

#### Good Timber +2 Wealth

Tall, strong timbers are needed for housing and shipping alike, and in an island archipelago the latter is never a trifle. A vast number of things vital to the survival of a community are carved out of tropical hardwoods or supple northern pines, and control over the harvesting of a rich stand of timber can bring neighbors into open conflict.



### **Lush Pasture** +2 Wealth

Man cannot live on bread alone, and these pastures offer rich grazing to herds of cattle, sheep, or other livestock. The abundance of food attracts such herd animals, but it also attracts those creatures big enough to prey on them.

### **Medicinal Plants** +2 Wealth

Precious few people are rich or lucky enough to be able to call upon magical healing, and so medicinal plants and careful herbal applications are their only real helps. This site has abundant growths of medicinal herbs and auspicious flora for those knowledgeable of its use. Such plants are sometimes dangerous to harvest, however, or attract creatures of sinister or supernatural nature that feed on the rare blooms.

### **Old Industry** +2 Wealth

The place was once a major work site, with massive industrial structures for the production of some useful resource. Quarries with heavy cranes and lifting tackle, dwarven smelters with great ore-grinding engines, or even workshops manned by rows of endlessly diligent golem laborers might all fall under this heading. The equipment is usually either too large or too integrated with the local environment to survive removal, so use of it hinges on taking and controlling the surrounding area.

### **Rich Gathering** +2 Wealth

The land is abundant with numerous varieties of food plants and wild game. Even a fumbling city dweller can find enough here to survive, and a tribe of more practiced hunter-gatherers could feast on a regular basis with the produce of the place. Such abundance naturally draws men and Shou to fight over it, and beasts to prey on the abundant game.

### **Sorcerous Materials** +2 Wealth

The place provides some substance of use to wizards, necromancers, or other practitioners of the arcane arts. It may be geomantically-infused water, stones, or other fragments of landscape, or it might be some precious mineral or plant extract prized by sorcerers. It could be an ancient catacomb filled with innumerable perfectly-preserved corpses for a necromancer's use. Whatever the specifics, it's common to find some wizards already in residence and jealous of any interlopers.



## **RESOURCE OBSTACLES**

If the resource was free for the taking, someone would have taken it by now. Rich lands and precious ores attract all manner of attention from the greedy and the ambitious, and most resource areas will force aspiring owners to deal with these problems before the area can be successfully worked.

To determine the magnitude of the problem, roll 1d6+2 to get the level of the obstacle. A full description of each and how they might best be overcome is included at the end of the chapter.

1D20	OBSTACLE	1D20	OBSTACLE
1	Bad Feng Shui	11	Monsters
2	Bad Reputation	12	No Workers
3	Contaminated Land	13	Recalcitrant Locals
4	Covetous Polity	14	Recurrent Sickness
5	Failed Settlement	15	Relic Golems
6	Flooding	16	Shou Raiders
7	Harsh Conditions	17	Taboo Land
8	Hazardous Resource	18	Toxic Process
9	Human Raiders	19	Undeveloped
10	Inaccessible	20	Wasted Production





## LAIRS

Every untamed borderland has its share of sinister lairs. These locations are dens of evil, ruins infested by powerful and malicious foes, or camps of ruthless bandits. Unlike a ruin location, lairs are active threats to surrounding settlements and commonly send forth raiders and plunderers to take their due. These thieves rarely attempt to destroy an entire town, as even if they are strong enough to do so they have no wish to kill their cattle. Rooting them out usually requires either a brave band of adventurers willing to cut out their leaders or a sufficient weight of troops to crush the threat. Once a lair has been smashed it usually reverts to a mere place on the map, though the Labyrinth Lord might decide that the site itself has some practical value to its conquerors.

### LAIR NATURES

As deplorable as lairs may be for surrounding settlements, they are a common stop for adventurers. The list below offers twenty common types of lairs and an overview of the sort of enemies that might be found within. For Labyrinth Lords that are making use of the domain rules, each also includes some idea of what sort of malevolent raiders might be produced by the lair, and what forces might need to be overcome in order to stamp it out. Adventurers may well be able to do the job more directly by decapitating the site's leadership, but there are times when brute force may be the only recourse.

These raiders are not suicidal, and even the mindless attackers are unlikely to hurl themselves blindly at a fortress. If you generate a raid and there is no nearby location suitable for the attack, simply make a note of it. The next time a nearby location becomes plausibly vulnerable, the raiders strike.

As always, individual lairs will vary in fearsomeness. However they're stocked, they should be strong enough to explain why nearby communities haven't simply wiped them out with the troops on hand.

1D20	NATURE	1D20	NATURE
1	Ancient Evil	11	Magical Gate
2	Ancient Fort	12	Malevolent Creed
3	Aspiring Warlord	13	Monster Nest
4	Bandit Camp	14	Renegade Outpost
5	Cruel Vowed	15	School of Dark Sorcery
6	Cult Shrine	16	Shou Tribe
7	Cursed Earth	17	Splinter Group
8	Demonic Master	18	Thieves' Stronghold
9	Dwarven Outcasts	19	Tidespawn Infestation
10	Mad Wizard	20	Vicious Humanoids

### Ancient Evil

Something terrible lurks in this lair, and always has. Such evils are usually fairly reclusive, striking out only at nearby interlopers and convenient intruders rather than roaming far afield for fresher prey. Some such things are creatures crawled up from the belly of the world below, while others are ancient constructs of some long-lost sorcerer or demented priest. The lair itself might be a kind of monster, something sentient and hateful squatting in the darkness of the wilds.

**Assets:** Each turn, roll 1d6. On a 6, the lair sends foes equivalent to a Dead Legion unit to raid a nearby location. If the legion is not defeated, it destroys one asset before disbanding.

If the lair is attacked, most ancient evils can muster defenders equal to 3 Dead Legions, 1 Warbeast, and 1 Necromancer.

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### Ancient Fort

This was a proud castle or fortified keep once, but it's long since fallen into decay and desolation. New tenants have made it a base for their depredations, and its master might fancy himself a kind of free lord over the surrounding terrorized villages. In time, such pretensions might become actual fact.

**Assets:** Each turn, roll 1d6. On a 5+, the lair sends foes equivalent to a Light Infantry unit to raid a nearby location. If the unit is not defeated, it destroys one asset before disbanding.

If the lair is attacked, most warlords can muster defenders equal to 3 Light Infantry, 2 Archers, 2 Barriers, 1 Tower, and 1 Veteran Sergeant.

---

### Aspiring Warlord

Some warrior chieftain or mercenary captain has taken the measure of the countryside and finds it ripe for a new master. Whatever companies he or she leads now plot to drive out all competing powers, usually as the first step on some grandiose plan for sweeping conquest. Such schemes almost invariably end in gory failure, but countless innocents can find themselves sacrificed to these ambitions before they meet their end.

**Assets:** Each turn, roll 1d6. On a 5+, the lair sends foes equivalent to a Light Cavalry unit to raid a nearby location. If the unit is not defeated, it destroys one asset before disbanding.

If the lair is attacked, most warlords can muster defenders equal to 2 Light Cavalry, 1 Horse Archer, 1 Heavy Cavalry, and 1 Pikemen.

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### Bandit Camp

The lair is a nest of thieves, ruffians, and reavers, none of which dream more grandly than of their next feast and their next woman. Such camps are usually under the leadership of a bandit chieftain, though even the strongest bully often needs to juggle assorted factions of murderous blackguards in order to keep his or her seat. The bandits sometimes have connections with outside traders willing to bring in supplies and buy stolen wealth.

**Assets:** Each turn, roll 1d6. On a 4+, the lair sends foes equivalent to a Bandit unit to raid a nearby location. If the unit is not defeated, it destroys one asset before disbanding.

If the lair is attacked, most bandit chiefs can muster defenders equal to 3 Bandits, 1 Archer, 1 Scout Team, and 1 Assassin.

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### Cruel Vowed

The serene monasteries and temples of the Vowed are commonly places of peace, introspection, and humble labor. Not every sect is content with these things, however, and some rapacious abbots throw over self-discipline in favor of sinister practices and decadent indulgence. These monasteries are a scourge on the surrounding villages, demanding tribute and slaves for their "blessings" - the chiefest of which is their temperate forbearance from killing everyone in your village.

**Assets:** Each turn, roll 1d6. On a 6, the lair sends temple warriors equivalent to a Warrior Monk unit to raid a nearby location. If the unit is not defeated, it destroys one asset before disbanding.

If the lair is attacked, most abbots can muster defenders equal to 4 Warrior Monks, 1 Warmage, and 2 Assassins.

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### Cult Shrine

The Isles are a wild patchwork of religions brought from every corner of the fallen world. Most of these faiths are harmless, feeble, or both. This shrine brings a different kind of believer, however - a hard, ruthless, fanatical sort convinced that the god worshipped here is strong and quick to reward. Such worship often demands blood sacrifice, or the exaction of cruel rents and takings from the surrounding countryside.

**Assets:** Each turn, roll 1d6. On a 5+, the lair sends minions equivalent to a Cultist unit to raid a nearby location. If the unit is not defeated, it destroys one asset before disbanding.

If the lair is attacked, most priests can muster defenders equal to 4 Cultists, 1 Holy Man, and 2 Veteran Sergeants.

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### Cursed Earth

This lair is itself a patch of defiled land, either through misapplied sorceries, divine curses, or exceedingly vile feng shui. Plants grow strangely in this accursed soil, and the beasts are twisted and wild to kill. Few intelligent beings can last long within this abominable grove, and the land itself may have a kind of dull, hateful sentience about it.

**Assets:** Each turn, roll 1d6. On a 6, the lair sends abominations equivalent to an Undead Swarm to raid a nearby location. If the unit is not defeated, it destroys one asset before disbanding.

If the lair is attacked, most evils can muster defenders equal to 2 Warbeasts and 2 Beast Handlers.

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### Demonic Master

The lair is commanded by an experienced devil-cultist, if not an actual demon. Mortal hell priests are coldly calculating men and women, ones who provide the sickening sacrifices their masters demand but keep a steady eye on the wisest and most prudent means of accomplishing their service. When an actual devil is placed in control of a lair, their plans may show superhuman cunning and insight for a time. Still, devil-led lairs almost invariably

degenerate into orgiastic fits of murder and defilement as the demon proves unable to suppress its natural urges.

**Assets:** Each turn, roll 1d6. On a 5+, the lair sends minions equivalent to a Cultist to raid a nearby location. If the unit is not defeated, it destroys one asset before disbanding.

If the lair is attacked, most devil-priests can muster defenders equal to 1 Red Jade Templar, 1 Devil Priest, and 3 Cultists.

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### Dwarven Outcasts

These dwarves have been exiled from their clans. They might be a sullen rebel faction of an existing clan, hating their kinsmen over obscure slights and dwarvish disputes. They may be an unruly mob of murderers, oathbreakers, kinslayers, and other such exiles from numerous clans gathered where they know they will be with their own kind. The worst, however, are the Repenters, those heretical dwarves who have returned to the worship of the Mother Below in hopes of being spared a grim fate in the afterlife. Only the most elaborate rites of self-torture and mass enslavement can hope to propitiate the sundered ghosts of their furious goddess.

**Assets:** Each turn, roll 1d6. On a 5+, the lair sends minions equivalent to a Dwarf Warrior unit to raid a nearby location. If the unit is not defeated, it destroys one asset before disbanding.

If the lair is attacked, most outcasts can muster defenders equal to 3 Dwarf Warriors, 2 Dwarf Crossbows, and 1 Holy Man.

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### Mad Wizard

Some wizards are not content to labor within the limits of the High Path or restrict their studies to clean and goodly sorceries. These amoral students of the arcane are willing to plumb any depth for another scrap of magical power, and their research often requires a steady supply of victims and plundered loot. Other wizards are simply malevolent by their basic nature, like the adepts of the Stitched Path practiced in Tien Lung or the devil-sorcerers of Kitaminato.

**Assets:** Each turn, roll 1d6. On a 6, the lair sends creatures equivalent to a Warbeast unit to raid a nearby location. If the unit is not defeated, it destroys one asset before disbanding.

If the lair is attacked, most wizards can muster defenders equal to 1 Warbeast unit, 1 Necromancer, 1 Warmage, and 2 Dead Legions.

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### Magical Gate

Fractures in the walls between worlds are rare, but something about this location is conducive to allowing extraplanar beings to cross over into the mundane world. Denizens of the Hells, shadows from the celestial spheres, or entities from the gray endlessness might seep through these fissures. It's not uncommon for the gate to be jealously held by cultists or arcanists interested in profiting by its powers.

**Assets:** Each turn, roll 1d6. On a 6, the lair sends magical beasts equivalent to a Dead Legion unit to raid a nearby location. If the unit is not defeated, it destroys one asset before disbanding.

If the lair is attacked, most gates can muster defenders equal to 1 Warbeast unit, 1 Warmage, and 1 Dead Legions.

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### Malevolent Creed

Most elven Creeds are relatively harmless to outsiders. Their esoteric philosophies and strange ethical systems can be disturbing or incomprehensible to others, but most elven communities are peaceful unless provoked. The denizens of this lair are a different breed. Their philosophy is vicious toward outsiders, perhaps considering them mere inferior cattle, grist for some demented magical enterprise, or unalterable enemies to elvenkind.

**Assets:** Each turn, roll 1d6. On a 6, the lair sends raiders equivalent to an Elf Warrior unit to raid a nearby location. If the unit is not defeated, it destroys one asset before disbanding.

If the lair is attacked, most Creeds can muster defenders equal to 2 Elf Warriors, 2 Elf Bowmen, and 1 Elf War Mage.

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### Monster Nest

The lair is precisely that, a nesting ground for savage beasts or dangerous monsters. Something about the place is ideal for their breeding, and some among them may have become older, stronger, and more dangerous than their kind ordinarily may be. Intelligent beings capable of taming the creatures may have found it useful to turn some into war-beasts and pets for their kind.

**Assets:** Each turn, roll 1d6. On a 6, the lair sends raiders equivalent to a Warbeast unit to raid a nearby location. If the unit is not defeated, it destroys one asset before disbanding.

If the lair is attacked, most nests can muster defenders equal to 2 Warbeasts.

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### Renegade Outpost

This place was once an outpost of a strong regional power, but isolated and distant from the nearest help. It has since mutinied and turned from its original loyalties. Some such renegades are little more than organized bandits, aspiring only to more comfortable work than fighting actual soldiers and Shou raiders. Others are led by men and women with dreams of conquest.

**Assets:** Each turn, roll 1d6. On a 5+, the lair sends foes equivalent to a Light Infantry unit to raid a nearby location. If the unit is not defeated, it destroys one asset before disbanding.

If the lair is attacked, most renegades can muster defenders equal to 2 Light Infantry, 1 Archer, 1 Heavy Infantry, and 1 Pikemen.

## School of Dark Sorcery

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One megalomaniacal wizard is bad enough, but this lair is a whole school of them. As many as a dozen sorcerers might be found in such a place, along with their slaves and creations. Such scholars usually practice forms of magic forbidden in more civilized lands, or are taking special advantage of the location's potent feng shui or strategic location. Their attitude toward the surrounding people tends to range from casual depredation to that of a farmer toward his livestock.

**Assets:** Each turn, roll 1d6. On a 6, the lair sends foes equivalent to a Dead Legion unit to raid a nearby location. If the unit is not defeated, it destroys one asset before disbanding.

If the lair is attacked, most sinister schools can muster defenders equal to 6 Light Infantry, 3 Warmages, 2 Guardian Mages, and 1 Necromancer.

## Shou Tribe

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Unlike most Shou tribes, this band is relatively sedentary, and has set up a permanent camp at the lair. Some tribes might even have gone as far as to build crude fortifications, while others have taken advantage of abandoned human structures. They might be present in order to extract a rich vein of godbone, or simply find it easier to raid an established trade route rather than roam the hills and jungles for their prey. In either case they are unlikely to move until given a sufficient push.

**Assets:** Each turn, roll 1d6. On a 4+, the lair sends foes equivalent to a Shou Orc unit to raid a nearby location. If the unit is not defeated, it destroys one asset before disbanding.

If the lair is attacked, most Shou can muster defenders equal to 5 Shou Orcs, 2 Barriers, 1 Veteran Sergeant, and 1 Witch Priestess.

## Splinter Group

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These marauders were once members of the nearest major population center until a failed coup, abortive usurpation, intolerable heresy, or bitter feud drove them out into the wilderness. They nurse a ferocious hatred of the old tormentors and will often raid and attack the place even when it is tactically unwise. They might be willing to deal peacefully with strangers, but any hint of sympathy toward their old enemies is sure to be met with immediate violence.

**Assets:** Each turn, roll 1d6. On a 5+, the lair sends foes equivalent to a Light Infantry unit to raid a nearby location. If the unit is not defeated, it destroys one asset before disbanding.

If the lair is attacked, most exiles can muster defenders equal to 4 Militia, 1 Light Infantry, 1 Heavy Infantry, and 1 Veteran Sergeant.

## Thieves' Stronghold

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Common bandits rove along the trails and trade roads. These thieves are more sophisticated, and have tendrils of influence in nearby towns and cities. They move stolen goods where they can be sold without suspicion and arrange for the corruption of troublesome officials. Such strongholds are usually well-equipped with vicious highwaymen and footpads of their own, however, and intruders can expect to be dealt with in a lawless fashion.

**Assets:** Each turn, roll 1d6. On a 5+, the stronghold sends foes equivalent to a Bandit unit to raid a nearby location. If the unit is not defeated, it destroys one asset before disbanding.

If the lair is attacked, most master thieves can muster defenders equal to 2 Bandits, 2 Rangers, and 2 Assassins.

## Tidespawn Infestation

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The Tide has laid a red touch on this lair. It is infested by deluded Tide Cultists and the crimson mist's dreadful spawn. If not burnt out, it is likely to metastasize into an actual gate through which the Tide can act in the surrounding area, but for now it is restricted to the occasional misshapen horror and the harvest of unbelievers for hideous rites. All but the most demented cults will conceal themselves as some other kind of threat- the horror of the Red Tide is such that any known infestation is enough to draw sworn enemies into a temporary truce for their destruction. Shou tribes in particular will fight the Tide's servants with instinctive zeal.

**Assets:** Each turn, roll 1d6. On a 5+, the infestation sends foes equivalent to three Creeper units to raid a nearby location. If the unit is not defeated, it destroys one asset before disbanding.

If the lair is attacked, most infestations can muster defenders equal to 5 Creepers, 3 Cultists, 1 Warbeast, and 1 Tide Priest.

## Vicious Humanoids

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Shou are not the only intelligent perils on the Isles. Gnolls, hostile lizardfolk, kobolds, trolls, ogres, and other savage folk have their own camps and meeting-places, and this lair is the nucleus of one such tribe's influence. The humans make delicious additions to the tribe's stewpots, and their goods are often finer than the humanoids could make unaided.

**Assets:** Each turn, roll 1d6. On a 5+, the lair sends foes equivalent to a Lizardfolk Warriors unit to raid a nearby location. If the unit is not defeated, it destroys one asset before disbanding.

If the lair is attacked, most humanoids can muster defenders equal to 1 Ogre Warband and 4 humanoid Light Infantry.

## OBSTACLES

Obstacles are those complications and difficulties that prevent a Domain from getting proper use of a location. Their soldiers may stand unchallenged at the heart of the city, but if the locals are bent on quietly driving them out, the community will soak up more effort than it pays in tribute. Until an Obstacle is overcome, a location cannot be taken by a Domain. The severity of an Obstacle is measured by its level, which is usually generated by rolling 1d6+2 if no specific difficulty is in mind.

At the start of the campaign, all locations except Lairs will have their own Obstacles. It's assumed that the Domains extant at the start of a campaign have made their peace with the local difficulties and can cope with them without undue expense. Strangers who try to conquer the place will have to best the Obstacle before they can properly integrate it into their lands, however.

In a similar vein, events or malicious schemes might inspire a new Obstacle to crop up in a location. The owner of the location does not lose control of the place, but it does take a penalty to their Military, Wealth, and Social values equal to half the Obstacle's level, rounded up. This amount may be more than the location is actually worth, as containing the problem starts to soak up resources from nearby locations. In exceptionally bad cases, the Domain might voluntarily retreat from the location until they can send troops or functionaries to calm the unrest.

Quashing the Obstacle can be done in one of two ways. In the first way, adventurers simply go in and deal with the problem. Powerful PC rulers might choose to settle an issue with their own strength and cunning, or regents may enlist adventurers to help settle a festering problem. In this case the Labyrinth Lord can run the attempt as a normal adventure. If the attempt is successful, the Obstacle is removed or weakened.

Otherwise, the Domain must take a *Solve An Obstacle* domain action. This action involves sending a military unit or Support character to the location and bidding them deal with the problem. The Domain must then make a saving throw against the particular bane involved in the Obstacle. The basic saving throw difficulty is 16, modified by any bonus from the Domain's values or the agent's skills, and penalized by the level of the Obstacle. If the save is successful, the Obstacle is lessened by 1d4 levels. If the save is failed, the asset that tried to deal with things gains 1 point of Disruption, making it harder to command. Full details of the process are explained in the Domain Management chapter.

The correct type of unit must be used to handle a problem. Sending a military unit to deal with bad feng shui is unlikely to be useful, nor dispatching a magistrate to quell Shou raiders. The following table indicates which kind of units are needed for which kind of saves.



SAVING THROW	TYPE	UNIT
<i>Disorder</i>	Military	Guardsmen
<i>Uprising</i>	Military	Any military unit
<i>Poverty</i>	Wealth	Merchant
<i>Ignorance</i>	Wealth	Sage
<i>Despair</i>	Social	Prophet
<i>Corruption</i>	Social	Magistrate

Units that are of the correct type but wrong save can attempt to solve the problem, but the Obstacle's level doubled for the saving throw penalty. Units that are of the wrong type and wrong save suffer triple the Obstacle's level as a penalty.



## **Ancient Curse**

## **Wealth/Ignorance**

The ruin suffers under an ancient curse. Some are scourges inflicted by an angry prophet or sorcerer who had reason to hate the former occupants, while others are the product of a dying lord's rage against the destroyers of his people. Such powerful curses are subtle but pervasive, touching everything that takes place near the ruins. Crops fail, craftwork splinters, despair shadows all manner of labors, and misfortune dogs every action. Particularly powerful curses might apply actual penalties to hit rolls or saving throws within the area, or lessen the Morale score of forces compelled to fight in the shadow of their broken walls.

Adventurers can lift the curse by eliminating or purifying the object or circumstance that serves as its linchpin in the mundane world. Usually this involves locating and burying a dead lord's remains, shattering the spear of the Shou warlord that destroyed the ruins, helping a dozen descendants of the original inhabitants survive a month of daily life within the walls, smashing the blood-black altars of the cult that once ruled the city, or some other action that breaks the curse's hold on the site. With many such places, only the most learned sages will be sufficiently wise as to identify the source of the curse's power.

## **Angry Dead**

## **Military/Uprising**

The dead of the ruins are furious. Sometimes these spirits are angry for comprehensible reasons, such as the unburied and unlamented condition of their bodies or the terrible way in which they died. In other cases these angry dead seem to spontaneously erupt from incomprehensible causes and strange tides of evil fortune. Necromancers and other deathworkers are the most common sources of this plague of wrathful corpses.

These terrible creatures usually require the application of brute martial force to purge them from the ruin. However, some of the more powerful varieties of undead can be immune to ordinary weaponry, forcing aspiring exorcists to field specially-trained and equipped cleansing troops or dispatch elite adventurers to eliminate the dark powers behind the uprising.

## **Bad Feng Shui**

## **Wealth/Ignorance**

Perhaps the geomancer who laid out the settlement's original site was incompetent, or the tides of local magical energy have shifted since the location's founding. For whatever reason, the land is sour with pockets of misfortune and inexplicable bad luck. Laborers and farmers struggle against sudden spells of brutal unluckiness and sudden disease, and nothing good ever seems to last very long in such a place. Most of the inhabitants would have moved away if the other options nearby weren't even worse. Instead, they patiently endure their present misfortune rather than abandon everything to risk an even less pleasant lot elsewhere.

Expert sages and geomancers might be able to puzzle out the correct alignment of new fountains, monuments, and structures to deflect the ill-fortune and realign the local energy flows... assuming their arcane engineering doesn't result in the sudden crystallization of an even worse effect. At other times, adventurers might be summoned to root out the cause of the evil fortune, perhaps

dispatching some malevolent supernatural being or hunting down the artifact of curdled magic that has spoiled the local luck.

## **Bad Reputation**

## **Social/Corruption**

The place is a byword for rapacious officials, thieving merchants, vicious peasants, grasping magistrates, and all the worst habits imaginable by their neighbors. No one dares to have any more trade with them than they absolutely must, and the natives of the place are considered one cut better than outright bandits. In some cases, this reputation is entirely deserved, and the locals really are as pure a lot of unmitigated bastards as they are said to be. In other cases the spite is a relic of some ancient quarrel or dusty hate that lives on in mutterings and contempt.

Efficient magistrates can sometimes break the back of the worst corruption in such a place, purging the local government of thieves and venal officials and restoring a rough fairness to the place. Even when the location is unjustly tarred, a magistrate's presence can convince their neighbors that wickedness is at last being tamed by a righteous hand. For those occasions when a magistrate might have a hard time surviving long enough to do any good, some distant rulers send adventurers to take care of the most troublesome elements in a way that is both deniable and exceedingly final.

## **Barren Surroundings**

## **Wealth/Poverty**

Perhaps the place had good crops and abundant resources once, but such sweet days are long in the past now. The land surrounding the location is rocky, arid, infertile, or otherwise barren. Growing crops is a struggle, and few local resources are available to sustain the location. The people are worn down with the hardship of their lives, and almost all their waking hours are devoted to scratching a bare existence from the unhappy land.

Sufficient investment in irrigation ditches, new crop strains, and local industries fashioned to take advantage of what resources exist can lift a location out of the worst poverty inflicted by this state. In many cases the solutions are obvious to the locals, but none have the wealth or security needed to invest in the new infrastructure. Adventurers are sometimes needed to provide that security for a location while the new construction is under way, holding back hungry bandits or thieving locals until the place can defend its new wealth.

## **Class Hatred**

## **Social/Despair**

The poor hate the rich, the rich hate the poor, the farmers hate the herdsmen and the herdsmen hate the farmers. The location is riven with vicious quarrels and mutual despite, as at least two major classes of inhabitants absolutely detest each other. In some cases the merit of one side or another might be relatively clear, but the sheer loathing guarantees that any conventional justice will rapidly degenerate into savage score-settling and brutal reprisal. Most such places exist in a tenuous and bloody balance until one side gets the upper hand and an orgy of violence settles matters for good.

Binding these social wounds requires enormous charisma and diplomatic ability. Only a speaker capable of evoking old bonds and smoothing over fresh hates can hope to carefully knit these

bitter factions together into a grudging peace. Sometimes there are those who will not listen to any degree of reason, however, and for these people a more final reckoning must be arranged. In other cases, the root of the problem lies in a dispute that can only be solved with the strength of brave and impartial heroes.

### **Conquering Heirs**

### **Military/Uprising**

The ruin still has remnants of at least one faction of original inhabitants, and they have vigorous plans for bringing nearby communities under their control. They may be locked away by ancient wards, or kept squabbling amongst themselves until now, or otherwise restrained until relatively recently, but it will be impossible to effectively exploit the ruins so long as their megalomaniacal dreams go uncrushed.

Cold steel works well to deal with most of their kind, with military forces sent in to clear the ruins. This kind of fighting always soaks up men in narrow passages and blind ambushes and the countless evil games a local force can play with invaders, so adventurers are sometimes employed to go in and deal with the most important enemies before the troops are required to mop up the remainder.

### **Contaminated Land**

### **Wealth/Poverty**

The earth is poisoned, either by bitter salts from poor irrigation techniques, a toxin naturally present in the local soil, or the vile influence of supernatural forces. Crops are ragged and sparse, and some lands leave their inhabitants sick with persistent coughs, weeping boils, reddened eyes, or disturbing sorcerous mutations. The locals would have moved away by now, but the fouled earth tends to encourage bandits and robber-princes to stay well away.

Curing such poisoned land is expensive, and usually requires elaborate irrigation systems, geomantic monuments, importation of fertilizers, and new methods for processing foodstuffs. Occasionally heroes are needed to dispatch such beasts as poison the land with their foul breath and excretions, or slay the long-buried evils that fester beneath a humble farmer's swampy fields.

### **Corrupt Leadership**

### **Social/Corruption**

The local leadership is utterly corrupt. All thoughts of duty and selfless obligation have been abandoned in favor of sheer avarice and the pleasures of rule. Nothing can be accomplished without the favor of one of the local leaders, and that approval can only be acquired through bribes and shameful favors. The leaders would rather be unquestioned masters of a poor place than dutiful servants of a wealthy one.

A stern magistrate with sufficient force behind her can sometimes purge a place of these venal masters and ensure that their replacements do not fall prey to their sins. These systems are expert at co-opting those who seek to reform them, however, and more than one magistrate has left her morals at the capital after tasting the pleasures of unchecked avarice. Sometimes adventurers are needed to unravel the tangle of lies and bribes, as the leaders are less likely to recognize the threat they present until it is too late to suborn them.

### **Covetous Polity**

### **Military/Disorder**

The locals simply will not leave their neighbors alone. Some natives are simply greedy, caring only to take the honest fruits of others' labor. Others nurse some belief that they take only what is their due, pointing to ancient agreements of tribute or recent crimes that demand recompense. For whatever reason, these people have an unpleasant habit of robbing their neighbors. If this Obstacle is rolled for a resource location, it means that some neighboring community is vigorously pressing its interests in the site and is willing to use force to take it.

The thieves are not organized in any clear rebel bands, so more careful policing by local watchmen and border patrols is most useful to contain the thievery. The heavy fist of a military unit is too crude a tool to quash the fences and border thieves that emanate from such a location, but sometimes individual adventurers can successfully ferret out the masterminds and bosses behind the local economy of plunder.

### **Crushed Spirits**

### **Social/Despair**

The locals exist in a state of abject degradation. They have suffered poverty, tyranny, or misfortune so long that they can no longer imagine any better existence. Their lives are brutal with privation and many of the kinder and more selfless impulses of humanity have been stamped out by the harshness of their circumstances. They dream of nothing better and hope for nothing more elevated than another day of existence. Even those opportunities that do lie before them often go untried out of simple hopelessness.

Such miserable communities require a new flame to light a path for them, someone to inspire dreams of a better life and some finer hope than simple survival. While zealous religious leaders are the most common torchbearers for this cause, heroic men and women can sometimes jolt a despairing population out of their gloom with striking deeds of valor against their oppressors or the unearthing of new wealth to share with them.



## **Dark Wizards**

## **Military/Uprising**

The location is plagued with wizards of the worst kind. Gory-handed blood sorcerers from Tien Lung, insidious necromantic adepts, demonic pactmakers or mad alchemists- whatever the specifics, the locals are cursed with one or more powerful sorcerers. Attempts to drive off the wizards have failed, and the locals are resigned to suffering under their cruel exactions or capricious experiments.

Against such powers, brute military force is often the best solution. Any wicked sorcerer of consequence is going to have henchmen and creations to defend him, however, and packs of terrible monstrosities can sometimes be found defending their lonely towers and laboratories. For those instances when direct military action seems likely to cause too much devastation, adventurers are sometimes commissioned to deal with the problem on a more personal scale.

## **Demagogue**

## **Social/Despair**

The locals are in the thrall of a zealous demagogue. He or she is preaching some vicious or foolish creed, one that leaves the locals hostile to outsiders or spending all their spare effort towards aggrandizing some strange cause. Productive labors are abandoned in favor of rallies, festivals, and the occasional pogrom against unbelievers.

In order to break this hold a new and better belief must be introduced to the locals. Creeds more amenable to peaceful cooperation and productive work must overcome the blandishments of the demagogue and the locals must be carefully weaned from their folly. When such tenderness fails or is made impossible by local hostility, the same effect can occasionally be obtained by the careful employment of adventurers. Simply killing the demagogue often as not makes a martyr out of him, but investigation can sometimes produce convincing proof of his falseness and venality.

## **Destructive Customs**

## **Wealth/Ignorance**

For uncounted generations the locals have stubbornly adhered to customs and traditions that are ruinous to long-term prosperity. Their surplus goods might be sacrificed yearly to some ancestral deity, or women might be crippled in childhood to demonstrate the wealth of a family that can afford to lose their labor, or a large portion of the population might be ritually forbidden from performing useful work. At some point in the past these customs might have been based on some real need, but now they only serve to keep the people poor and weak.

Defeating this ignorance requires extensive proof that the traditions are not necessary and integral to the native culture, and evidence that abandoning them would lead to so much greater prosperity. The most influential families in the location must be wooed to the enlightened cause, and sometimes these families can be best persuaded by the kind of direct favors that adventurers are best at providing.



## **Disputed Possession**

## **Military/Uprising**

One or more neighboring warlords, chieftains, or communities claims the location for their own, and either their competitors or the location's natives are resisting with force. Whether due to weakness or indifference, the claimants aren't pushing outright war on the location, but the regular raids and subsidized banditry involved makes life cruelly harsh for the locals.

A strong military force can dissuade the outside claims, assuming they can survive the steady erosion of skirmish warfare and guerrilla raids. Lacking that, adventurers can sometimes prove useful as diplomatic envoys sent to resolve the dispute, or military leaders capable of whipping the locals into a force able to defend their own interests.

## **Disunity**

## **Social/Despair**

The community has turned against itself, with families and factions atomized into hostile, suspicious camps. Both great fortune and great misery can lead to such squabbling, either in the division of a windfall to the community or the remorseless need to claim scarce resources for survival. The various groups cannot trust each other enough to pool their efforts toward something better, and old grudges and slights are preserved as reasons to keep tomorrow as suspicious as today.

Speakers and leaders are needed to unwind the mutual hostility and inspire the locals with dreams of a better future- one that can only be attained through shared labor. Patience and diplomacy are the strongest tools in attaining a peaceful resolution, but sometimes adventurers can find employment in dealing with the root causes of the disunity. In the absence of some oppressive

tyrant or ravaging monstrosity, the locals might have the peace and breathing space to think of something more than their own immediate survival.

**Ethnic Feuding** **Social/Despair**

Most settlements in the Sunset Isles get along without significant ethnic tension between the groups that made up the refugee fleet. Old feuds and xenophobia had to be left behind if the survivors were to endure the dangers of the Isles. Still, when multiple ethnic groups in a community have contradictory interests, it's easy for quarreling purposes to turn into blanket condemnations of an entire group. Locations plagued with ethnic feuding have devolved into clannish, spiteful groups convinced that their neighbors are prey to all manner of contemptible vices and that everything will be better once they're driven out to go to their own kind.

Stitching such disputes together requires a leader capable of reminding the locals of their shared interests and old ties, one able to loosen the grip of suspicion on the minds of the people. These peaceful efforts are often most jeopardized by fractional groups of zealots who have no interest in peaceful coexistence. They desire only to drive out the hated others, and sometimes brave men and women must stop them with force before they ignite a bloody reckoning.

**Exceptional Poverty** **Wealth/Poverty**

On the frontier, few people are rich in any conventional sense. Even those with knee-high mounds of golden nuggets and crates full of the pelts of rare jungle animals must make do with coarse food, primitive quarters, and a life of constant peril. Still, most settlements manage to give the necessities of decent life to those with hands for hard work and a few strokes of luck. Settlements laboring under exceptional poverty are not so fortunate. Either because of the cruel exactions of outside lords, the depredations of local rulers, or the miserable infertility of the local soil, the natives are hard-pressed even to find enough to eat.

Skilled merchants and farmers can sometimes be found to rectify the people's poverty with new infrastructure and tools to help them increase their productivity. If the outsiders can survive whatever threats produced the poverty in the first place, their techniques can turn a sand-pit into a thriving town. Still, sometimes adventurers are needed to create the requisite breathing space for a settlement, often by "discouraging" those powers that would like to harvest the locals before their purses are sufficiently ripe.

**Exiled Lord** **Military/Uprising**

Even lords and nobles must answer for certain crimes, ones too heinous to admit of privilege. These exiles almost always nurse a bitter grievance against their former homes, furious at the injustice of being deprived of their rightful lands and titles over some minor, understandable peccadillo. They usually have at least some henchmen and minions still loyal to them, and may have a significant backing in their former home due to old favors or anticipation of new ones should they be restored. Many gather bandits and other rabble around their banner in order to take their old place back by force.

A strong military force can usually crush such aspiring usurpers, though they run the risk of betrayal from partisans of the old regime. Other domains prefer to go with a more targeted response, and send adventurers to root out sympathizers in the location and terminate the old lord's regime. Of course, in some cases the adventurers might learn that the exile was perhaps not as justified as the current rulers would like to claim.

**Failed Settlement** **Wealth/Poverty**

There was once a village or other settlement on this site until some catastrophe or bitter season sent the locals fleeing to more kindly places. The location might still serve as a good place to live if someone could be found to front the expenses necessary to bring in colonists and the vital supplies necessary to refound human habitation.

Merchants and landsellers are best at arranging for a successful recolonization of the place, and most of them are canny enough to ensure that the colonists at least survive long enough to turn a profit on the arrangement. Sometimes the reason that sent the old locals packing can arise again, however, and it becomes necessary to send in seasoned adventurers to deal with the problem before it wipes out the new settlement as well as the old.

**Flooding** **Wealth/Poverty**

In hot climes a monsoon rain can swell the streams, and in cooler ones the spring snowmelt can turn mountain rivulets into roaring torrents. The location is prone to severe seasonal flooding, and the waters are too unpredictable and untamed to allow for easy agriculture. The locals might remain in such a place simply because no outsider has much interest in harassing them there, or because some valuable produce requires the abundant water.

Merchants or engineers can sometimes arrange for the building of dikes and earthworks to protect local fields and turn the waters in less harmful directions. Such major reconstruction of the local terrain tends to disturb creatures, however, and some of them require the swift blades of adventurers to dispatch before they eat an unacceptable number of work crews. Other such work sometimes uncovers long-buried buildings or ancient structures that promise evil things until they are cleared and secured by heroes.

**Harsh Conditions** **Wealth/Poverty**

The land around the site is uncommonly cruel. Rockslides in the mountains, bad water from the springs, mephitic vapors in the wetlands, savage storms that blow in through cursed hill-country valleys... whatever the specific blights, the place is ferocious towards any who dare inhabit the site. Life may be possible there, but little more than bare survival can be expected.

A canny merchant or engineer can sometimes arrange for the works or infrastructure necessary to moderate the bitter conditions. The locals can be equipped with housing designed to deal with harsh climates, and trails and terraces can be cut securely into dangerous terrain. Sometimes these harsh conditions have a decidedly human or monstrous component to them, however,

and in those cases the path can be made smooth by the blades of sufficiently fortunate heroes.

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**Hazardous Resource****Wealth/Ignorance**

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The location has some valuable natural resource, but gathering it is brutally dangerous. Mines might be cut into dangerous warrens of small tunnels, pearl divers may face angry sea creatures, and woodsmen run the risk of angering dark forest spirits. Some resources may even be poisonous or cursed. So long as this hazard persists, only the most reckless or desperate harvesters will dare try to gather the goods.

Properly sagacious counsel can devise means of limiting the risk, plotting out techniques and tools for holding off dangers while the resource is gathered and processed. The wisest sage can sometimes require a breathing space in which to implement his plans, however, and there a group of adventurers can prove useful in stemming the peril long enough for the resources to be secured.

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**Human Raiders****Military/Disorder**

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Wild Shou and savage beasts are not the only dangers on the frontier. Humans are a plague upon their own kind, with brutal bandits and soulless reavers moving from settlement to settlement to shear them of their wealth. They are not soldiers or conquerors who stand to fight a militia or challenge a local lord- they are simply thieves and robbers who strike only when resistance is weak and property is vulnerable to their hungry grasp.

Ordinary military units are poorly suited for dealing with these sneak raiders. Properly-trained watchmen are more effective, able to root out the local networks of supporters and fences that allow bandits to move their ill-gotten gains and disciplined enough to give bad odds to those bands that dare attack what they guard. Adventurers excel at some of the redder work required, however, and there's always use for a band willing to go out and harvest the heads of a bandit chief and his men.

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**Inaccessible****Wealth/Poverty**

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Sturdy travelers with agile feet can reach the location, but wagons or boats find it inaccessible. The site is situated inconveniently for trade, perched atop a high rock or buried deep within an abandoned delving or cave. Reaching it might require climbing a high peak or navigating a noxious swamp. While individuals can make this journey, substantial trade is all but impossible, leaving any residents bereft of the prosperity of the outside world.

Merchants can mitigate this situation, grading better roads, digging canals, and cutting paths through trackless wilderness. Not every community *wants* to be accessible, however, and some local rulers greatly prefer a situation where strangers cannot arrive in force. Sometimes adventurers are needed to "assist" such leaders in understanding the wisdom of cooperating with a domain's plans. Even when local rulers are cooperative, there are still the substantial dangers of the trail to be cleared, and nests of monsters and worse to be cleaned out before the road is safe.

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**Mercenary Populace****Social/Corruption**

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The locals are an honorless and mercenary lot, careless of their promises and interested only in immediate gain. Agreements struck with them are kept precisely so long as they remain profitable, and not a moment longer. The natives might be more trustworthy toward their own kind, but outsiders are viewed as sheep to be sheared. A good offer from a rival will see them turn their coat in a blink.

With such a casually mercenary spirit so prevalent, a stern magistrate is needed to impose a more predictable structure on the location. Even if the natives decline to embrace the value of honorable fidelity to a vow, they can be taught that treachery is not nearly so profitable as they imagine. Some of these magistrates have need of more muscle than their guards can conveniently provide, and in such cases a band of adventurers might find themselves deputized to deliver a righteous chastisement to some turncoat local grandee or to protect some local who is trying to keep faith with the domain in the face of local threats.

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**Monsters****Military/Disorder**

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Brute beasts and hissing things in the night creep about the place, pouncing upon the unwary and doing cruel injury to the flocks and herds of any locals. Travelers cannot follow the trails in safety, and men and women do not open their doors after the sun goes down. These monsters are rarely intelligent, but their animal cunning and vicious hungers are unrelenting as any bandit's cupidity.

Guardsmen are much more effective in handling such beasts than full-fledged military units. The creatures flee from large groups of men, and tracking them back to their lairs requires a familiarity with the terrain and a degree of woodcraft rarely possessed by troops of the line. When guardsmen are in short supply, more expendable personnel are sometimes dispatched to solve the problem- and adventurers fit that criterion perfectly.

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**Murderous Heirs****Military/Uprising**

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The ruins are not as abandoned as one might expect, for within them dwell the ragged remnants of their former owners. Some have managed to retain the culture and sophistication of their better past, eking out an existence in the dust and wreckage as best they can. Others have gone wholly feral, scavenging the bones of the honored dead for anything of use or value. In either case, however, these heritors nurse a burning hatred for the outside world, and respond with ferocious violence to any trespass on their lands.

Raw military force is usually necessary to dislodge them from their ancient home, with the clearing requiring a grim cat-and-mouse game of guerrilla warfare and merciless tunnel fighting. Particularly expansive and elaborate ruins may soak up whole units of trained soldiers just to keep the savages from carving into the troops from behind. In such cramped and bloody quarters, many generals prefer to send in adventurers first, the better to gain scouting information and soften up the enemy before committing more valuable troops.

## **No Workers**

## **Wealth/Poverty**

This resource could be marvelously useful to the domain that claims it, save for the slight problem inherent in its complete lack of a labor force. The resource might have been worked sometime in the past and since abandoned, or it might be freshly-discovered and yet to attract inhabitants. Regardless of the case, no use can be made of it until people are brought in to do the work.

Merchants can usually arrange for enlisting hungry-eyed laborers from the more civilized settlements, men and women without land or the skills to make any better life. It can be difficult to keep them, however, if the surroundings are not cleared of monstrous dangers or vicious raiders. Adventurers are often enlisted to provide security while the new laborers are organized into a community capable of self-defense.

## **Pervasive Hunger**

## **Wealth/Poverty**

The locals suffer often from famine, and many of the natives are marked with the subtle scars of malnutrition. It may be that the surrounding lands are very poor for agriculture, or it may be that the settlement simply has too many people crammed within it. If the land were truly barren the locals would be forced to move or starve, but the harvests are just sufficient to keep most of them alive- and too weary and fearful of worse to pack up and move. The site may provide rich supplies of some other goods or resources that leave the residents willing to put up with their hunger.

Skilled merchants and engineers are needed to create more serviceable farmlands or to arrange for the safe departure of the site's excess population. The cutthroat savagery of local politics can result in these well-meaning gestures being monopolized for the profit of the strongest faction in the settlement if firm hands don't guide it to a more general benefit. Adventurers are often sufficiently unaffiliated outsiders to arbitrate access to these desperately-desired new food sources.

## **Recalcitrant Locals**

## **Military/Disorder**

Every annexed settlement and every town that falls under the rule of a foreign master has its share of grumblers and rebels, sullen at their new masters and willing to do them hurt when their guard is down. This settlement is not content with such petty bushwhacking. Whether due to old hatreds, an invincible sense of superiority, or a ferocious spirit of independence, the natives are absolutely ungovernable until they have been brought in line. Even when overtaken by conquest or annexation, they cause so much trouble to their new lords that they're of no use whatsoever to the domain.

Conventional military forces are of limited use, as the average pikeman or archer is wholly unequipped to sort out the rebel leaders from the sullen bystanders. If a solution more sophisticated than a gigantic pile of skulls is required, watchmen and specially-trained guards must be employed to root out the ringleaders and clamp down on agitators. Adventurers excel at this work, as they often have a great deal of experience at tracking down dangerous men and women who don't care to be found.

## **Recurrent Sickness**

## **Wealth/Ignorance**

There is evil air in the place, or sickly water, or a confluence of geomantic influence propitious to plagues and fever. It may be that a god of disease has a shrine here, his servants diligent in their cultivation of sicknesses that never touch the faithful. Plague spirits may haunt ruins or noisome jungle glens, and their sendings might leave the natives listless with illness and weary suffering.

A sage is most often needed to identify the source of the common sickness and determine the correct actions or rites necessary to clear it away. Wise remonstrance can persuade the less zealous to refrain from propitiation of plague gods or the beckoning of spirits of sickness, and intelligent medical assistance can break the cycles of suffering that taint the place. For those locations that have more active partisans of disease, however, it can sometimes be necessary for brave adventurers to cut out the cancer.

## **Relic Golems**

## **Wealth/Ignorance**

The humans of the exile were not the first to come to the Sunset Isles, and countless failed colonies, prehuman settlements, and long-lost cities can be found within the southern jungles and the high Godbarrow peaks. In these places lurk relic golems of numerous different types. Some are Men of Clay and Jade, mindless servants of a long dead-purpose, while others might be Porcelain Servitors capable of intelligent thought in service of their ends. War-golems also wait patiently for masters who will never return, and stranger beings built by vanished races can make an overgrown plantation or abandoned mine into a place of death for any stranger.

Sages can sometimes manage to puzzle out the correct sequence of words and sorcerous stimuli to reset a long-abandoned golem, or at least to deactivate it for safe removal. The work is dangerous, however, and there is often need for strong heroes to protect the sage during particularly sensitive workings, or to go into the ruins to find vital information on the golems' original owners.

## **Riotous Thugs**

## **Military/Disorder**

The locals are thoroughly unruly, given to brawling, casual violence against enemies, and a careless contempt for legal process. It's all but impossible to extract any sort of useful service or taxation from them so long as they persist in their habits of hostility and tendency to riot.

Conventional troops might be able to butcher them all, but to render them peaceable enough for practical employment, properly-trained guardsmen and watch officers are needed. The right blend of overwhelming force and reasoned guile is necessary to bring the local bosses in line with the ruler's interests and ensure that the violent energies of the place are channeled in more productive fashion. Adventurers can often be useful in applying the sort of focused pressure that clarifies a wavering mind.

**Secret Society****Social/Corruption**

There is a secretive band of conspirators in the place that act as its true rulers. The chieftains or officials who seem to be the local government are no more than catspaws or luckless puppets of the secret society, and the natives are hushed with fear at the thought of incurring their inescapable wrath. Before any outside power can be master here, the society must be broken or coopted to their service.

A magistrate is usually trained to trace the subtle lines of influence to their origin, and the guards he keeps are often sufficient to hold back reprisal long enough to uproot the conspiracy. For those cases when the society is too well-guarded or is empowered by dark forces, adventurers may be needed to apply the force that a civilized magistrate may not find so familiar.

**Severe Damage****Wealth/Poverty**

Something terrible happened to the place in the past, and the ruins still bear the scars of the devastation. Where most ruins are either sufficiently intact or sufficiently exposed to allow for straightforward investigation and plundering, this one has been sealed away by some disaster. Tumbled walls, churned earth, burnt structures, flooded tunnels, and half a hundred other obstacles might all conspire to make the site a useless pile until it has been sufficiently repaired and cleared to admit of real excavation.

Merchants are needed to oversee the laborious work of clearing the site and opening it up to exploitation. The process commonly unearths an ample supply of buried evils, and adventurers are often needed to keep the workers safe long enough to bare the ruin to its new owner.

**Shou Raiders****Military/Uprising**

The savage tribes of the Shou can strike deep into settled human lands, moving fast with their tireless stamina and intimate knowledge of the land. Every Shou old enough to hold a dagger is a dangerous combatant, and they burn with a bitter resentment toward the exiles and their interloping settlements. Some might cluster around ancient ruins, defending them as ancestral holdings or sites of great ritual importance. Whatever the case, this site is plagued by a persistent and relentless band of Shou raiders, ones unwilling to be driven away by ordinary reprisals.

Bare steel is needed to deal with such raiders, and trained soldiers are best used to deal with their incursions. Shou-fighting is always a savage business on the frontier, with no quarter asked and none given. When a tribe takes it into its head to stand its ground it becomes a certain matter of unending bloodshed, with knives in the dark of the moon and ambushes in every forest thicket. Sometimes adventurers are needed to break the back of the resistance by finding and eliminating the tribe's chieftain and witch-priestesses.

**Sinister Cult****Social/Corruption**

The location is under the control of a nefarious band of cultists associated with some bloodthirsty god or malevolent supernatural being. It may be that the cultural relics of some ancient faith have come down in bits and pieces to form the outline of some gruesome sect. The cult may or may not be a matter of public admission in the area, but everyone knows that it and its hierarchy are the true masters of the place, and any resistance to its dictates is sure to be punished with blood and hideous afflictions.

Magistrates can apply some of the same techniques they use to root out Tide Cults in order to burn out this spiritual infection, but some cults have priests that are too powerful or patrons capable of exerting their own dark will over an ordinary official of the state. Adventurers are needed in such cases to crush the head of the serpent before the place can be freed of its shadow.

**Taboo Land****Wealth/Ignorance**

The place is forbidden to common folk. It may be that an ancient curse has dissuaded them, or some recent catastrophe, or the stern prophecies of local religious leaders. For whatever reason, no common laborer will dare to live here and the extraction of resources or valuables will be impossible unless carters and workers can be convinced that the land is no longer forbidden.

Sages are best suited to reasoning with the populace and performing the necessary elaborate and showy rites to convince them that the taint has been fully cleansed. In conjunction with these geomantic efforts, it's not unknown to hire adventurers to go in and make certain that there are no more tangible threats waiting in the area to punish sacrilegious interlopers.

**Things From Below****Military/Disorder**

The earth is maggot-eaten with passages and caverns, and there are things beneath the sunlight's reach that wait and hunger. Monsters breed in these dark places and creep out at night to snatch livestock and unwary travelers. These beasts are usually feral things without higher thought, but some are intelligent enough to treat the human natives as livestock. Those who remain docile and obedient are culled infrequently, while those who try to resist or flee the site are captured and devoured.

A tough and determined group of guardsmen can often root out these beasts, tracking them back to their lairs or ambushing them as the beasts gather their prey. Conventional military forces usually lack the flexibility and ability to work with the locals that watchmen have, but adventurers can often prove useful in going in after the worst of the beasts. The savage tunnel fighting takes a bitter toll of less capable warriors.

<b>Tide Cult</b>	<b>Military/Disorder</b>	<b>Undeveloped</b>	<b>Wealth/Poverty</b>
Despite the universal revulsion for the Red Tide and its servants, the frontier is sparsely-settled enough for some places to become nests of Tide worship and gateways through which the sinister red mist might extend its nightmarish influence. This site suffers from a dangerously advanced Tide Cult, with a priesthood approaching sufficient power to open a way for an influx of Tidespawned abominations. Local natives may hate the cult, but they are powerless to resist it.		The site is remote from civilization and devoid of any of the necessary tools or equipment for extracting useful resources. Everything that is required to harvest the flora, dig the earth, or fish the seas must be fabricated elsewhere and brought in over nonexistent roads and dangerous trails. Until someone goes to the trouble of building a proper infrastructure for extracting the resource, the site is useless to its possessor.	
Guardsmen make the best solution for such cases, trained as they are to find the hidden connections between cult cells and sufficiently armed to cull the ordinary run of half-mad Tide worshippers. Against priests of the Tide they sometimes find their steel lacking, and in such cases itinerant adventurers are sometimes “enlisted for the good of the Isles” to assist in eliminating these crazed heresiarchs.		Merchants and engineers can usually accomplish the work, provided nothing happens to set back their efforts. Given the value of the resource, it’s highly likely that there’s some kind of danger or problem that has prevented others from taking advantage of the site, and adventurers can often be useful in dealing with such unfortunate business complications.	
<b>Tidespawn</b>	<b>Military/Uprising</b>	<b>Wasted Production</b>	<b>Wealth/Ignorance</b>
A cult has grown strong enough to open a way for the Red Tide to send forth its monsters. The gate may still be open or it may have guttered out after emitting a wave of misshapen horrors. In either case, the Tidespawn are so strong and numerous that they are certain to overwhelm any ordinary colony or labor camp. The site is uninhabitable until they are cleared.		Something is wasting most of the resources available at the site. Bog crocodiles might infest good rice-paddy flats, monsters might feed on precious flowers or wild plants, or sullen locals might painstakingly gather precious substances in order to burn them in sacrifice to strange gods or vengeful spirits. The surplus provided by the site is trivial until this wastage is stopped.	
Military forces are the most common tool for such cases, though the cost in life and sanity can be horrific. Most soldiers are not lacking in zeal to fight these loathsome creatures, but the great powers among the Tidespawn are often more than a match for ordinary troops. Against the leaders of the swarm, the blades of heroes are often needed to stem the Tide’s advance.		Sages are most useful in identifying the beasts or phenomenon responsible for the wastage and developing ways to circumvent it. They can design crocodile-proof fencing, identify monstrous breeding nests for clearance, and persuade the locals that different and altogether cheaper sacrifices are just as pleasing to the gods. Sometimes actually implementing these plans requires a little more vigor than most sages are granted, and in such cases adventurers can find themselves carrying out the peculiar labors required.	
<b>Toxic Process</b>	<b>Wealth/Ignorance</b>	<b>Xenophobia</b>	<b>Military/Disorder</b>
Whatever resource this site offers can only be gathered through a poisonous process that leaves many of the workers dead or crippled. The resource itself may be toxic, or the smelting or refining process may involve poisonous chemicals or gruesomely inauspicious geomantic rituals. Only slaves or the desperate can be found to work under such conditions, and those who presently control the resource may well be responsible for such cruelties in order to get the precious prize.		The locals despise foreigners of every stripe. Cities will tend to deal only with those villages and market towns composed of their own culture or ethnicity, while towns might hold themselves haughtily apart from trade with “inferior foreign cities”. Most such settlements are notably poorer than others of the same size, as they accept only trade from tolerable merchants. Outsiders of the wrong sort are rarely permitted within the walls, and even then are often restricted to a particular “foreign quarter” neighborhood. Until this xenophobia is broken the city is of no use to a polity composed of more variable folk.	
A sufficiently clever sage can often develop techniques of refinement and gathering that do not require the dangerous components, or else devise some way to protect the workers from the worst of the process. This ingenuity is not always welcome by those who currently operate the gathering, and sometimes the sage must be protected against those who would keep a monopoly on the product. At other times the solution may hinge on a rare substance or long-lost artifact that requires adventurers to successfully retrieve it.		This deep-seated contempt can’t be broken quickly, but it can be forced into abeyance by vigilant guardsmen enforcing even-handed laws. The locals may detest outsiders, but they can be compelled to deal honestly with them. Some locals may be unable to bear this burning indignity, and in such cases adventurers are sometimes needed to calm important hotheads before they do something unforgivably rash.	





# DOMAIN MANAGEMENT

## IN LIGHT SNOW, THREE THOUSAND REALMS

*In light snow, three thousand realms.*

*In these realms, light snow falls.*

*- Ryokan*

Domains represent the important fiefdoms and independent states within a region. Some are created at the start of a campaign, while others might come into being as the PCs increase their power and personal influence. At higher levels of play, PCs might serve as rulers or important agents of a Domain, while even low-level PCs can find useful adventure hooks from the interplay of quarreling border states.

This chapter describes the mechanical structure of a Domain and shows the Labyrinth Lord how to construct and operate them. The Domain rules are fairly simple. A small Domain's details might fit completely on an index card, and even a major regional power rarely occupies more space than a character sheet. Handling Domain affairs is something that should not require more than ten or fifteen minutes at the end of a session. Interacting with the Domain mechanics is intended to provide hooks for future adventurous deeds rather than as a substitute for a more conventional evening's play.

### DOMAIN CONCEPTS

Domains have three point totals: *Military*, *Wealth*, and *Social*. The Military score represents the Domain's martial aptitude and skill at war. Domains with high Military values are capable of fielding large numbers of troops and maintaining heavy fortifications. Wealth values represent both the material prosperity of the Domain and its academic and educational resources. The Social value measures the availability of free manpower, the cultural sophistication of the Domain, and the common peoples' willingness to sacrifice for their neighbors.

Possession of useful locations and profitable assets adds points to these totals. Many assets also involve an upkeep cost, and a Domain cannot sustain more troops, infrastructure, or random catastrophes than its point totals allow. Upkeep costs do not subtract from a Domain's scores- a sprawling Domain with a score of 30 in Military and 28 points of Military upkeep is vastly more

martially powerful than a border fief with a Military score of 5 and an upkeep of 1, even if the latter has fewer committed points. A value's total determines a modifier which is applied to certain rolls. When a value check is made, the ruler rolls 1d20 and adds that value's modifier to the roll. Some heroic rulers might grant additional benefits to such rolls.

VALUE MODIFIERS	
Value	Modifier
0-5	+0
6-10	+1
11-15	+2
16-20	+3
+5	+1 more

Domains also have *saving throws*, much like that of a PC, with a default difficulty of 12. There are six, two for each value: Military saving throws are saves versus Uprising, to represent the use of brute military force to solve a problem, and Disorder, to indicate the employment of more subtle policing techniques when a clear enemy is lacking. Wealth saving throws are versus Poverty, when the Domain struggles against the penury of a place, and Ignorance, when it tries to overcome supernatural afflictions or the foolishness of an injurious custom or belief. Social saving throws are versus Despair, when the Domain's citizens feel that effort is hopeless and their neighbors are merely another kind of enemy, and Corruption, when the Domain's own officials and agents become parasitic leeches on the people. Saving throws are rolled when a Domain wishes to overcome an Obstacle or other problem, and are modified by the Domain's relevant value modifier.

Domains also possess *assets*. An asset may be a military unit, such as a detachment of mounted knights, or it may be a physical structure such as a school or market hub, or it may even be an intangible custom such as a powerful respect for education. Assets often add points to a Domain's statistics, but many also come with upkeep costs. If a Domain's total upkeep costs for a given statistic exceed its available points the Domain must sacrifice assets until the upkeep is bearable.

Domains are managed in *domain turns*, during which they perform one or more *actions*. A domain turn is an arbitrary amount of time chosen by the Labyrinth Lord, usually amounting to a month or so. Shorter turns might be used during some time of high drama, while more quiescent eras might be measured out in quarterly turns. Actions represent specific types of activities that the Domain can perform. PC-ruled Domains can perform two actions per turn, while NPC Domains make up for their greater numbers with a mere one action per turn. The domain actions of NPC Domains often provide a useful framework of background activity to add flavor and complications to even the least politically-interested party's adventures.

### CREATING A DOMAIN

To create a Domain, the Labyrinth Lord first chooses a location to be the chief seat of the polity. Usually this is a Town or City location, though some manorial estates might be located on a Resource, and a few humble Domains might be placed in a location that has no special virtue at all, relying instead on the income of other sites it controls. Once the Domain's capital is chosen, additional nearby locations might be placed under the Domain's control, or noted down as being flashpoints of contention with neighboring monsters or rivals.

Locations often have modifiers attached to them, such as a City that is noted as having been founded as a Trading Hub with an Educational Tradition. These modifiers add to the base value of the location.

The Labyrinth Lord then places one or more additional assets from the table provided in this chapter, making certain that the population centers have enough military muscle to explain why they haven't been summarily looted yet and enough infrastructure improvements to fit their histories and roles in the region. The sample locations given in the Westmark gazetteer chapter demonstrate what a major metropolis or hard-bitten border town might reasonably possess. Most long-standing Domains will have had time to build or recruit as many assets as they can comfortably sustain.

Finally, the Labyrinth Lord adds up the total points granted in Military, Wealth, and Social scores and compares them to the total upkeep costs for each. Income and expenses are spread throughout the Domain. It is not necessary that a specific location support all of its assets so long as the Domain's total income is sufficient to cover the need. If the Domain has too many claims upon its resources, the Labyrinth Lord removes excess assets or upgrades existing sources until the numbers match. Most Domains will keep a few unspent points on hand in case of some sudden loss.

Finally, note down the modifiers for the Domain's Military, Wealth, and Social values. They will be applied when making checks using the value or saving throws against relevant troubles.

## THE DOMAIN TURN

Usually at the end of every session's play, the Labyrinth Lord will call for a domain turn. These turns usually represent a month of game time, though that average can be stretched in either direction if the players are moving particularly quickly or slowly in their adventures.

PC-run Domains act first during the domain turn, with the NPCs acting afterwards in whatever order the Labyrinth Lord wishes. A PC-run Domain may make two actions during their turn, while NPC Domains can manage only one. Some PCs with remarkable abilities of leadership might even grant their Domains additional actions during the turn.

If more than one PC is contributing to the rule or aid of a Domain, they take turns assigning actions during the turn. If there are two PCs involved in running a Domain, for example, each makes the final choice on how one of the Domain's two actions will be spent. Their peers can suggest worthy uses of their discretion, but the final choice remains with the PC.

The list provided includes the most common domain actions. Other activities can be performed at the Labyrinth Lord's discretion.

## TAKING AND LOSING LOCATIONS

A Domain requires at least one location under its control. Without some geographic seat for its power, it can exist only on the sufferance of greater lords. Most rulers have an avid interest in expanding their holdings, and for those not content to gradually build up their local infrastructure, this means conquering new lands.

## ADVENTURING AND DOMAIN ACTIONS

The domain actions are simply provided as a quick mechanic for resolving an activity that doesn't merit the full attention of a play session. If the PCs want to take a personal hand in affairs, their adventures should have as least as much consequence as any domain action.

For example, if they want to establish a shrine in their domain's market town, then they should be allowed to try to accomplish this feat any way that seems reasonable to the Labyrinth Lord. They might seek out an accomplished priest who lacks a temple of his own, or do a favor for some holy hermit, or reclaim the haunted monastery outside the town, or any other angle that seems plausible. As a rule of thumb, a session's worth of adventuring should probably be able to accomplish anything that a single domain action could do, though exceptionally dramatic interventions might do more still. Most parties can accomplish about one adventure between domain turns.

One caveat for PCs is that simply throwing gold and magic at a problem is unlikely to be successful. Ruling a domain is about *leadership*, and brute-force solutions that involve simply paying people off or bewitching an issue into abeyance tend only to push the problem down the road. Simply paying a city priest to come set up a shrine in their home town may work temporarily, but bonds of gold are brittle and prone to fracture at the first strain. More than that, they also tend to be dull to play out. Labyrinth Lords should let cash and sorcery play a role in solving Domain issues, but if they're the whole solution that's being offered, it should be treated as a normal domain action and diced out.

At the start of a campaign, it's likely that most locations will be neutral or independent, and will have Obstacles to interfere with aspiring conquerors. Before a Domain can seize a location, it must defeat the Obstacle there. The PCs might make an adventure of it, going there to sort out the local problems and establish themselves as worthy givers of order and security, or they might send an asset to perform the *Solve an Obstacle* domain action. Until the Obstacle has been removed, the location is effectively ungovernable even if conquered by military force and will provide no benefits to a possessor.

It's not impossible that the PCs may find a rival Domain working to resolve the Obstacle at the same time as their own attempts. Such coincidences may result in the two groups working together to defeat the Obstacle, or it may end in mutual sabotage. If such attempts are not played out as part of an adventure, the Labyrinth Lord may treat sabotage attempts as a normal saving throw, save that success *increases* the Obstacle's level by 1d4, up to a maximum of 8.

Once the Obstacle has been erased, the Domain may negotiate with the location's leadership. In some cases, as with a Resource or a Ruin, there may be no leadership to speak of, and in that case the annexation is automatic so long as the Domain maintains at least one asset there. In other cases, such as Towns or Cities, the locals are apt to have a firm opinion about the value of foreign

entanglements, and probably have military assets of their own to dispute any hasty claims. The process of solving the Obstacle might have been enough to convince the locals that they should join the Domain, or the PCs may need to apply more persuasion to bring the public around to their side.

The last argument of kings consists of an outright attack upon the location with the rules given in the mass combat chapter. If the defenders are overcome and the location is seized, the victors gain the benefits of owning the site. Usually, all of its assets are destroyed in the process of conquering it, as even those that haven't been physically eradicated have had their staff scattered and the people fearful and reluctant to help. The mass combat chapter discusses the ramifications of rebuilding a pillaged city.

Even if a location is brought around through diplomacy, it's not necessarily the case that all of its assets will be transferred to its new masters. Old friendships and relationships between important local personages aren't so easily fungible, and the new masters may need to rebuild these ties to gain the benefits of local temples, schools, or merchant guilds. It's at the Labyrinth Lord's discretion how many assets may be transferred to the new rulers and whether the old ones must be completely rebuilt or merely coaxed into obedience.

Finally, there are times when events might spark up new Obstacles in long-held holdings. If an Obstacle appears in a location already held by a Domain, it drains the Domain's resources to hold it in check and maintain rule. The Obstacle applies half its level, rounded up, as an upkeep penalty to the Domain's Military, Wealth, and Social values. Sometimes these Obstacles are set off by the machinations of enemies or the happenstance of natural disasters, but a few of them are intentionally goaded by rulers who expect to lose the location to conquest. True, bands of heavily-armed guerrillas may make present tax collection difficult, but the enemy will have to stamp them out entirely before he can take control of the conquered city. Of course, so would the original ruler if he ever wanted to take the location back, but present spite can cloud such long-term considerations.

Most locations to be taken must be at reasonably accessible from lands already held by the Domain. Even if it's theoretically possible to send a unit of cavalry halfway across the region to pluck up an undefended resource, the locals on the way are apt to interfere intolerably. To take a location, the Domain must defeat or subdue any locations in the way.

## THE LURE OF ATROCITY

Most PC rulers will be relatively decent and clement lords, and are unlikely to start building skull pyramids in their courtyards. Other kings may be less tolerant of human frailties. These less kindly rulers may commit atrocities in order to terrorize a restive populace or goad their minions into more frantic service.

Life in a border kingdom is harsh, and most people are accustomed to a certain level of brutality. Summary executions, slavery, ruthless taxation, and the occasional judicial torture are not welcome parts of life, but the common people can tolerate

such things. A ruler who has recourse to atrocities, however, intentionally violates the accepted boundaries of punishment and inducement. He shows his people that there is absolutely nothing he will not do in order to bend them to his will, and that he is very creative about imagining ways to hurt them. He overawes them with his terrible wrath and shows that the only safety is in perfect and eager obedience.

The level of savagery in such a Domain is measured in Atrocity points. Most kings, even cruel and ruthless ones, will have no points. A ruler who gives in to the temptation of such tools will gain them in the course of hurrying asset creations, quashing Obstacles, and otherwise making the job of a ruler easier. After a value check or saving throw is made, a ruler may add Atrocity points to the die roll sufficient to make the roll a success. For example, if a Military check to raise a new unit of light infantry fails by 2 points, the ruler may decide to crucify a few dozen peasant children to encourage their communities to place less pressing value on the lives of their sons and daughters, adding 2 Atrocity points and turning the check into a success.

A Domain with any Atrocity points at all suffers a 2 point upkeep penalty to Military, Wealth, and Social values as the commoners are too frightened to work efficiently or trust their neighbors. For each 4 full points of Atrocity, this penalty increases by 1; the harder the ruler squeezes his people, the more effort they put into avoiding his wrath rather than doing their work. Removing Atrocity points happens only when the ruler is able to convincingly pin the blame of the outrage on a scapegoat or when the ruler himself is deposed. The *Punish Atrocity* action provides the former, while the latter is a matter of game play. Some assets also allow for a certain number of points of Atrocity to be ignored, usually because the populace has become numbed to the horror. If these assets reduce the effective points to zero, no penalty at all is applied for the evils.

Domains built on a foundation of horror breed monsters of their own. If a ruler is deposed or an effective revolt breaks out against the ruler, the Labyrinth Lord should take the Atrocity point total and use it as a pool of upkeep points for buying military units representing rebels, bandits, regime survivors, and desperate townsfolk. For example, a unit with upkeep costs of 2 Military, 1 Wealth and 0 Social would count for 3 Atrocity points. These



units will tend to rampage around and otherwise make locations ungovernable until they are put down or subdued by the new regime.

## FOUNDING AND DESTROYING DOMAINS

Founding a Domain requires nothing more than the Labyrinth Lord's permission. If the PCs decide to make a stronghold of some grubby, friendly village of charcoal burners and huntsmen deep within the western foothills, the Labyrinth Lord may well permit them to make it so. The village is marked as a location, the complete lack of any assets or point values is noted, and the PCs are welcome to try to make something of their incipient empire. Powerful PCs will often have the ability to turn even these unpromising starts into the seeds of glorious success, and some of these abilities are detailed in the *Heroes* chapter.

Destroying a Domain is equally simple- their enemies merely need to conquer all the locations claimed by the Domain. The tattered remnants of the former regime might retreat to become bandits and seething pretenders, but the Domain ceases to exist as a meaningful force in the region.

## PRIVILEGES OF DOMAIN LEADERSHIP

Many PCs will want to know what sort of practical advantages they might claim from owning their own fief, or from their position as honored officials of some other ruler. Most of these advantages are of the sort most appealing to pampered aristocrats, but some of the perks are useful even to a hard-bitten lot of adventurers.

A ruler or high official has lodging, servants, and a lifestyle in line with the dignity of his or her position. The headman of a jungle hunting village might simply have the finest hut and prettiest maidservant in the hamlet, while the prince of a proud metropolis might be heir to a palace and a phalanx of expert servants. These minions will perform all ordinary services for their master or mistress, but cannot be relied upon for dangerous or questionable duties without additional inducements or special loyalty.

Such a dignitary also has access to a personal guard, usually composed of a dozen or so soldiers from each of the military units possessed by the Domain. Depending on the military forces employed by the Domain, these may be humble spearmen detailed to guard the lord's manor, or they might be a detachment of fanatical elven zealots sworn to defend their mistress to the death. These soldiers can be trusted to face any ordinary martial peril, and exceptionally high-Morale troops might be willing to face even worse. Still, few of them are well-suited for dungeon delving, and they are best reserved for guard work, portage on wilderness expeditions, and general application of muscle. Larger numbers of troops can be dispatched by duly-empowered officials, but such major military movements require the use of a domain action.

In addition, a ruler or high official can automatically call upon a certain supply of goods and services commensurate with their position and the wealth of their realm. For any given domain turn, the official may call upon one hundred gold pieces worth of goods and services for each Wealth point possessed by the Domain. Thus,

a Domain with 15 Wealth points allows its ruler to simply requisition 1,500 gold pieces worth of materials or aid every domain turn. These purchases may include anything reasonably available in the Domain or its markets. This total includes all expenditures by the PCs during the turn, so a Domain with more than one PC official must divide the total among them. This allowance can be converted into gold if desired, but the common people are apt to grumble about the leeching of their taxes if no obvious good comes of the expense.

Finally, the ruler can use the Domain's assets in whatever way he or she thinks fit, within the capabilities of the asset. A temple asset can be expected to offer healing, a school will instruct a promising pupil sent along by the ruler, a unit of light infantry can smash a minor bandit camp, and a naval transport will carry the ruler and his companions to distant shores. This cooperation assumes that the ruler is using the assets within their normal scope of operation and isn't monopolizing their activities. Pushing them beyond their usual scope is not normally possible; the town priest will cure mummy rot, but he's not going to go down into the dungeon with the PCs and he's not going to spend all month patching up their friends unless given suitable inducement. A unit of light infantry will patrol a bandit-infested wood, but they're not inclined to charge a demon prince unless a mighty warrior king is leading them from the front. A skilled magic-user will be glad to cast spells on the ruler's behalf, but he's not going to throw open his spellbooks for the ruler to copy out his hard-won lore.

## DOMAINS AND VICEROYS

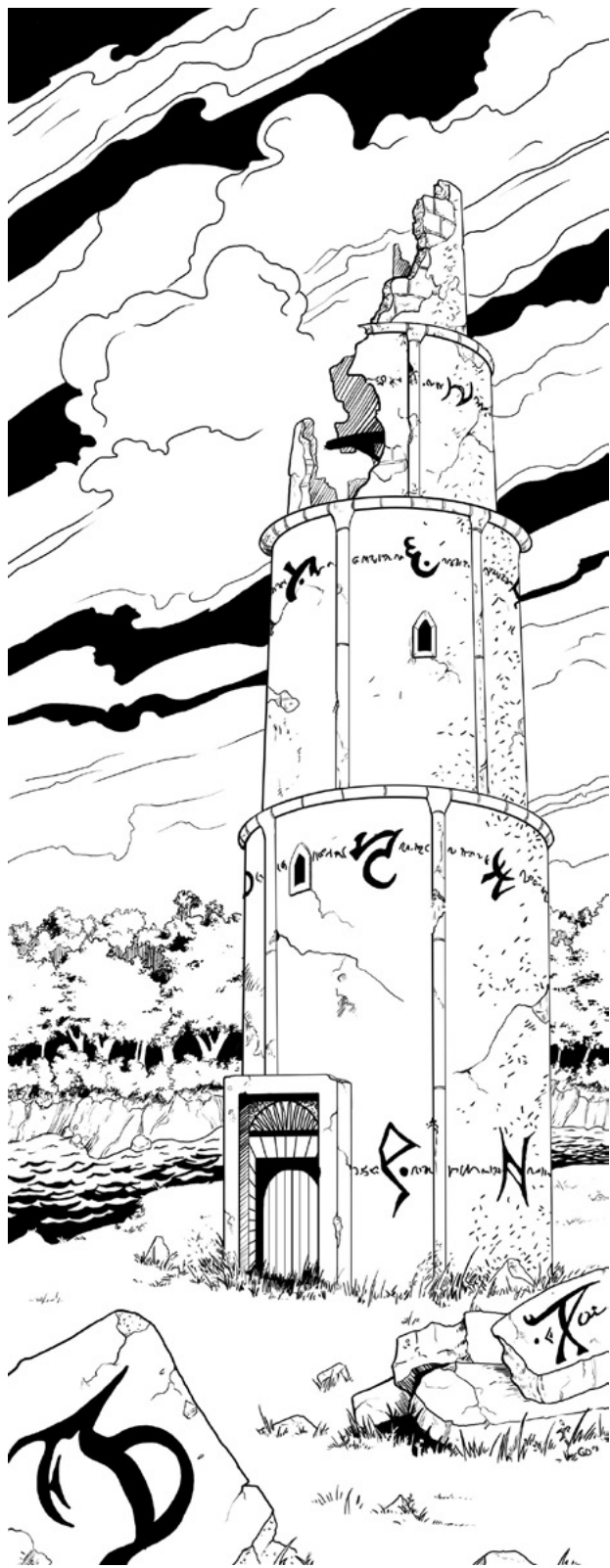
Adventurers lead active lives, and not many of them will want to spend all their time sitting in their manor house listening to arguments over sheep and taxes. For the sake of maintaining game play, it's assumed that PC rulers can continue to maintain their Domain with only occasional days spent tending to important business. If the PC leaves the area for months on end and is unable to communicate with their viceroy, the Domain may lose the special benefits granted by powerful PC leaders, but it will still carry on as best it can until its lord returns or all hope is lost.

Also for the sake of convenience, it is assumed that a PC's advisors and officials are no more than ordinarily corrupt in their dealings. Treachery from within may well occur, but it will be due to a lord's past exploits and enemies rather than the product of a random die roll. PCs generally do not need to worry about their generals and viziers turning traitor unless they've done something in the past to invite such treachery, or made enemies willing to exert themselves toward turning their nearest allies. Of course, very few powerful adventurers get to that point without making *some* enemies of that kind, so a certain degree of caution may still be recommended....

## WHEN NOT TO USE DOMAIN RULES

In the process of creating a region, it's likely that the Labyrinth Lord will have substantially more cities, towns, and other communities than he or she actually wants as Domains. It may also be that a town has been depicted with temples and schools and squads of guards, and it may seem excessive to grant all of these powerful assets to a PC who has just newly attained lordship of the community.





Just because an asset exists doesn't mean the local lord controls it or can profit by it. A powerful temple may exist in a lord's town, but if the priests are uncooperative or bristly in their independence the temple may not actually be any more use to the lord than any other random patron. These assets exist, but until they are bought and built through domain actions they are operating for their own purposes and no help to the Domain at large.

By the same token, if a Labyrinth Lord has no interest in making a city or place into a Domain, then there's no need to do so. It has all the usual elements and resources of a city, but these are not organized in terms of the Domain rules and its activities are assumed to be absorbed in internal politicking and pastimes irrelevant to their neighbors. If a neighboring power does turn hungry eyes on it, then the Labyrinth Lord can take the time to stat it out as a proper Domain, but until it becomes important or interesting it's not worth handling.

## VAST DOMAINS

The rules given in this section are aimed toward handling regional powers and small fiefdoms. They work best in handling the clash of thousands of troops and the struggles of city-states and small kingdoms. For some games, however, the Labyrinth Lord will want to work on a larger scale, handling the intrigues of continental powers or the thunderous battles of tens of thousands of warriors.

The easiest way to handle this need is to simply scale everything up. A City location is no longer simply a single city, it's a heavily urbanized section of a province. A Town might be the major city of a rural area, whereas a Resource might refer to the iron mines of an entire mountain range. Only the greatest Ruins and most terrible Lairs appear on this larger map. In general, the Labyrinth Lord simply repeats the regional creation process on a continental scale, or whatever vast scope they are using for their campaign.

Military units might represent blocks of 1,000 or even 10,000 men instead of the usual hundred. Assets are likewise scaled up, so that a Temple that might be a well-staffed shrine in a smaller-scale game will become a major cathedral on a continental scale, and a Great Temple might be the holiest sanctum of the faith. In all cases, the Military, Wealth, and Social points and upkeep conferred by a location or asset remain the same. As the scale is universally larger, it's not necessary to adjust them.

In the rare case that the Labyrinth Lord needs to interface a large-scale Domain with a smaller-scale one, common sense is usually sufficient. The entire region of the smaller Domain might simply qualify as a Resource on the large-scale map, or it might be so war-torn and afflicted as to qualify as a region-sized Ruin. If the local hegemon decides to defy the continental power, each large-sized military unit sent to subdue the rebels might count as ten or even a hundred of the smaller-scale units, making victory nigh-impossible- unless the rebels are led by the kind of legendary heroes who can best whole armies single-handedly, or dare to infiltrate the tyrant's golden palace and kill him on his jeweled throne.

Sometimes a PC lord will dream of continental hegemony starting from a humble village manor. If the PC succeeds in bringing an entire region under his or her command, the Labyrinth Lord might see fit to change the scope of the campaign, turning the entire region into one or a few locations on a new continental map and tweaking any existing assets accordingly. There's no need to worry about this until the process is well along, and by that time the Labyrinth Lord will have had plenty of time to prepare a larger arena for the PC's ambitions.

## DOMAIN ACTIONS

### ACCUMULATE TREASURE

The Domain makes a Wealth check against a difficulty of 8 plus its current Treasure. On a success, 1d4 points of Treasure are accumulated. Simply throwing gold at the Domain is of limited utility, because Treasure represents not only raw precious metals and jewels, but also the infrastructure and materials necessary to actually get something done. Treasure can be spent on any value check or saving throw made by the Domain, with 1 point granting +1 to the roll, up to a maximum of 5 points of Treasure spent on one roll. Treasure may be spent after the roll is made, but it then costs 2 points of Treasure to raise the roll by 1 point, up to a maximum of 4 points spent.

PCs can spend money to improve the odds of building up usable reserves. By spending 1,000 gp per point of Wealth value possessed by the Domain, a failed *Accumulate Treasure* check can be rerolled. A sufficiently wealthy lord can keep throwing money at the attempt until a roll finally succeeds. Failure at such efforts simply indicates that the money was dissipated by ineptitude, misfortune, misjudgment, or fraud.

### ATTACK A LOCATION

The use of military assets on the battlefield is covered in the next chapter. Any troops can be used against a target location provided that they can plausibly reach it within a domain turn. However, troops dispatched from different locations will not all arrive in perfect synchronization. Each individual group must face the defenders one at a time. For this reason, most generals prefer to establish a base camp near the front lines and mass their troops there for a unified advance.

### DISBAND AN ASSET

One or more assets cease to exist. Customs cannot be normally be disbanded unless the society can no longer afford their upkeep and no other assets remain to disband. A ruler may forcibly suppress the custom, but such an assault upon the basic beliefs of the community is going to outrage the people and may produce rebels and Obstacles at the Labyrinth Lord's discretion.

### ESTABLISH AN ASSET

Building a usable asset takes time, effort, and a significant amount of good luck. The more dramatic the benefits or cost of an asset, the harder it is to pull it together. Every asset requires three successful value checks- one for Military, Wealth, and Social. The asset must be recruited or provided with suitable security, the raw materials and pay for the participants must be gathered, and it must be successfully integrated with the Domain's society so as to be a productive and orderly asset to the community.

The difficulty for each check is equal to 12 plus the absolute value of the asset's benefit or upkeep cost for that value. Thus, for a Great Temple that has no Military production, a 2 point Wealth upkeep, and an 8 point Social production, the rolls are at difficulty 12, 14, and 20. Each use of an *Establish an Asset* action allows the ruler to make one roll. Once all three rolls are successful, the asset

has been recruited or built. Consistent effort eases the process. Each failed roll for a value decreases all difficulties by 1 point, provided the Domain continues to try to establish the asset each turn.

A Domain can build as many military units and Support personnel as they can afford to maintain. With regard to fixed structures and institutions, however, multiple assets of the same type cannot be built in the same location- a town can have one School, but not two. Additional such establishments may exist there, but only one can actually benefit the location.

Customs are a special case, and cannot normally be established without Labyrinth Lord permission. They represent deep-seated values of the dominant culture that aren't amenable to easy changes. The customs that allow friendship with demihuman races might require special adventures to win their favor before they can be built, while other cultural customs might require facing and overcoming the local powers that influence the people in a different path. Once a custom is built, it applies its special advantages to all locations in the Domain, though its upkeep cost and value benefits are applied only once.

Some assets require existing infrastructure if they are to be built. Some assets are given a type and a number- such as "Temple 1", or "Barracks 2". Assets with a level higher than 1 can only be built if an asset of a level one less is already present, and the building consumes the lesser asset. Thus, to build a Great Temple, which is a Temple 3 asset, a ruler must first build a Shrine (Temple 1), upgrade the Shrine to a Temple (Temple 2), and only then can upgrade it to a Great Temple. Only one structure of a given type can exist in a location- once you have a Temple, you cannot build a Shrine in the same place. It's always up to the Labyrinth Lord as to whether a particular location is suitable for a given asset. Building a Market in the middle of a Ruin may not be overly productive, nor establishing a Temple in the midst of a howling wilderness.

### ESTABLISH OR ERASE A LOCATION

The ruler makes a particular site important in some way, perhaps using it for the site of a new summer palace or a forward military camp. Trails or roads to the site are established and a modest official presence is located there. Such scratch-built locations usually have no Military, Wealth, or Social value, and are marked simply as a convenience for organizing military activities or diplomatic events. Most cannot support the construction of significant assets such as Temples or Schools, and these makeshift sites are not sufficient to hold off a domain's destruction if all of its "real" locations are seized by an enemy.

Alternately, this action can be used to raze a site, if such an action is plausible within the domain turn. A town might be burnt, or a city transformed into ruins, or a mine collapsed under half a mountainside. Undoing such destruction requires 1d6+6 domain turns of an *Establish Location* action, assuming the Labyrinth Lord judges it possible at all.



### MOVE AN ASSET

Buildings and institutions cannot be moved; shifting them to another location is so much stress and disruption that it's just as expensive as rebuilding them in a new place. Units can be moved, moving up to their normal overland movement for whatever time frame is involved in the domain turn.

### PUNISH ATROCITY

The Domain leader strives to convince the populace that a past atrocity was the fault of some suitable scapegoat, and that such perfidy is being righteously punished. In order to succeed in this action, the domain first has to manufacture an otherwise useless Scapegoat asset using the *Establish an Asset* action. The difficulty for each check is equal to 5 plus the domain's current Atrocity. Once the Scapegoat has been created, the ruler may use the *Punish Atrocity* action to disband it fatally and remove 1d4+2 points of Atrocity. This action can be taken only once a year.

### RECTIFY DISRUPTION

The leader straightens out whatever situations have led to the recent degradation in an asset. The Domain may remove 1d4+2 points of Disruption from one or more assets, dividing the points as he or she sees fit.

### REPAIR AN ASSET

The Domain can heal as many hit points on damaged assets as it has points of Military value, dividing the total as desired. Healing assets with the Scarce quality costs 2 hit points for every one healed, and Rare assets cost 4 hit points for every one healed. Units that are cut off from supply cannot be repaired.

### SOLVE AN OBSTACLE

The ruler can send a military unit or agent to a location to overcome an Obstacle. The agent must make a saving throw against the Obstacle, with the precise type of the throw determined by the kind of Obstacle. The saving throw takes a penalty equal to

the Obstacle's level and a bonus equal to the relevant domain value's modifier. If the unit or agent is the wrong type but correct value, such as making a Merchant roll a save versus Ignorance, the magnitude penalty is doubled. If the unit or agent is both the wrong type and wrong value, such as sending a military unit to fend off Despair, the magnitude penalty is tripled.

Any military unit can be sent to deal with an Uprising. A unit needs the Guardsman quality to deal with a Disorder, the Merchant quality to deal with Poverty, the Sage quality to deal with Ignorance, the Prophet quality to deal with Despair, and the Magistrate quality to deal with Corruption. Most such agents qualify as Support units, and their cost in upkeep is given on the unit tables in the following chapter.

On a success, the level of the Obstacle is reduced by 1d4. The Obstacle is eliminated once it reaches 0. If the saving throw fails, the unit or agent gains a point of Disruption. Every turn a Disrupted unit is ordered to do something, 1d6 must be rolled; if the roll is equal or less than the unit's total Disruption, it ignores the order and does nothing that round, wasting the action. Failing to overcome certain Obstacles might produce other unpleasant consequences.

Obstacles recover if not pressed. For each turn an Obstacle is left unmolested, it regains one point of lost magnitude, back up to its original level.

### WITHDRAW TREASURE

The Domain ruler converts tithes, fees, taxes, and tribute into hard coinage. 1 point of Treasure can be immediately converted into a sum of gold or goods equivalent to 500 gp per point of Wealth possessed by the Domain. More than one point of Treasure can be converted in a single action, but each successive extraction requires one more point of Treasure than the one before- 1 point for the first, 2 for the second, 3 for the third, and so forth. Spending multiple turns withdrawing the wealth allows the local economy to endure the expenses more easily.

## ASSET DESCRIPTIONS AND BENEFITS

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**Academy:** Whereas a common market-town school concerns itself with the essentials of an education, an academy is respected as a center of learning and esoteric wisdom. At least one member of its faculty is likely to be a 7th level wizard willing to perform non-dangerous services for the Domain's ruler.

**Barracks:** Building a proper barracks allows these troops to be kept disciplined and ready for deployment. One military unit based in the city may eliminate its upkeep cost.

**Brutal Tyranny:** The people are accustomed to savagery from their lords, and are beaten down to a numb obedience. Atrocity points may be spent as normal by the ruler, but only half of them, rounded down, are added to the Domain's Atrocity point total. If the ruler's grasp ever slips, however, the results are explosive- triple the Domain's Atrocity points for determining rebel units.

**Burning Creed:** The Domain has befriended a powerful and ardent elven Creed, one that teaches a martial engagement with the world. While these philosopher-knights may espouse strange and unsettling principles, their value as warriors is unquestioned. The Domain may recruit elven military units, and these units lose the Scarce quality. The Rare quality remains, however.

**Community Aid:** A mesh of private charity and public alms helps to tie the community together. For every 2 points of Wealth upkeep taken by the aid, 1 point of Social value is generated. The aid cannot consume more Wealth than its location produces, but it can be changed at the lord's discretion.

**Democratic Traditions:** The Domain has a custom of taking the counsel and wishes of the common people into account. Whether councils of elders, town aldermen, public voting, or more informal mechanisms, the ruler accepts certain limits in exchange for the help of the governed. Once per domain turn, the ruler may add +3 to a saving throw or value check before rolling, to represent the benefit of this counsel. If a saving throw or value check results in a natural 1, however, the next domain turn is lost in dealing with local politics and factional quarreling.

**Devil Worshipers:** The people of this Domain are devout servants of the Hell Kings, and follow their depraved laws and cruel customs. The Hell Kings grant wealth and martial blessings to their servants, and the Domain's Atrocity points decrease by 1 each turn as the people grow numb to such cruelties. Domain locations produce no value points, however, unless a military unit is present to keep it in line.

**Dwarf Friend:** This Domain has a lasting tie of affinity with nearby dwarven clans. In addition to the material benefits of trade, the Domain may recruit dwarven units, and such units lose the Scarce quality. Dwarves will have nothing to do with Domains that practice the Slavery custom, as such servitude is blasphemous to them.

**Great Academy:** This institution plumbs the deepest recesses of the past and the most intriguing questions of the present. Even wildly esoteric puzzles have some chance of solution, and there is always at least one 9th level magic-user present who will perform safe spellcasting work for the Domain's ruler.

**Great Temple:** Whether holy Makerite cathedral or venerated pagoda to the Nine Immortals, this temple is renowned throughout the region. Its high priest is at least an 11th level Cleric.

**Halfling Affinity:** The Domain has a long custom of friendship with local halfling communities, who will allow their young folk to be recruited into military units.

**Hell Shrine:** This is an open and public temple to the Hell Kings, and savage rites are performed there to propitiate the devils. These sacrifices provide blessings to the Domain, and each Hell Shrine in the Domain allows the ruler to treat its Atrocity point score as 5 less than it really is, as the people learn to be indifferent to the sufferings of their neighbors. Every time the ruler rolls a natural 1 on a saving throw or value check, however, the Domain's Atrocity points increase by two as the failure results in a bloody attempt at expiation or blame-shifting.

**Layered Walls:** This location has multiple walls encircling it, usually with a curtain wall around the widest extent and an inner fortification protecting the heart of the place. With such powerful defenses, the Domain may now build Citadel fortification assets in that location.

**Market:** Farming villages and hamlets of fisherfolk can provide for most of their necessities, but a market town is vital for the bar stock, complex metalwork, and foreign luxuries that cannot be had in a village. This market supplies all the ordinary wares and services to be found in the *Labyrinth Lord* core book.

**Mercantile:** The custom of this Domain's people is to seek out profit and new commercial opportunities, and even their children can tally the interest on a loan. The Wealth value benefits of their Markets, Trade Centers, and Mercantile Guilds are doubled.

**Mercantile Guilds:** The location is the home to powerful guilds that include numerous wealth merchants and prosperous enterprises. Their work enriches the Domain substantially.

**Military Spending:** This asset arranges mechanisms for funneling tribute and taxes into military spending without losing the money to fraud and corruption. For every 2 points of Wealth upkeep taken by the spending, 1 point of Military value is generated. The spending cannot consume more Wealth than its location produces, but it can be changed at the lord's discretion.

**Militia Muster:** The locals have been trained to fall out for battle in case of a raid or invasion. If the location is attacked, the defenders gain 2 Militia military units automatically to use in its defense.

These units do not exist outside the battle, and any damage or loss is recovered at the start of the next domain turn.

***Necromantic Cult:*** A sinister cabal of necromancers or death priests has been invited into the location, and operates with the blessing of the authorities. While necromancy is not strictly forbidden in most cities, commoners view the defiling of their ancestors' bones with horror. The ruler may recruit Necromancer, Undead Swarm, and Dead Legion units for their forces, but each unit recruited inflicts 2 Atrocity points on the domain as the locals recoil at such dealings.

***Organized Militia:*** As Militia Muster, but more locals have been organized and drilled into the militia. Four Militia units are now deployed when the location is attacked.

***Palisade:*** The location has managed to erect some sort of wall or trench defenses around its important parts, though it may be something as simple as a palisade of sharpened tree trunks. The location may purchase Barrier fortification units.

***Processing Camp:*** Whether a logging camp, a rocky shale for drying cod, or an iron-smelting installation, this camp translates the raw wealth of a Resource into other forms. It can only be built at a Resource location, and for every point of Wealth upkeep it inflicts, it grants 1 point of either Military or Social benefit. The upkeep cannot exceed the Resource's production, but the ruler can change the amount expended and the mix received.

***Religious Fervor:*** Few on the Isles have much faith in gods when the Red Tide roils so close, but the people of this Domain have a custom of fierce belief. The Social benefits granted by Shrines, Temples, and Great Temples are doubled.

***Resource Extractor:*** The raw materials of a Resource location are valuable, but this camp or processing facility improves the local workings and increases the Wealth produced by the site.

***School:*** Most common folk might hope to pick up their letters and numbers from family, but even those cultures that highly esteem education can guarantee it to their children. This school is dedicated to providing the people of the location with a firm grounding in literacy and numeracy, and such practical skills as the local artisans cannot teach their apprentices. There is usually a 5th level magic-user in residence willing to perform services for the local ruler, provided they are not dangerous tasks.

***Shrine:*** Small temples to half a hundred obscure gods are not uncommon on the Sunset Isles, but this one is rare for having an actual Cleric of consequential power serving the local believers. The local priest or priestess is usually 7th level, and willing to cast spells on behalf of the ruler.

***Siege Supplies:*** A long siege can break the back of the mightiest defenders, and these supplies will hold off that grim fate. 20 hit dice worth of supplies can be stored and used as given in the Siege section of the mass combat chapter. These supplies are replenished the first domain turn the siege is lifted. Unlike other building assets, a location can build up to two Siege Supplies.

***Slavery:*** Indentured servitude is not uncommon in the Isles. The Mandarinate forces criminals to work on public projects, and many small border states are unconcerned with emancipation. This Domain is different, however- it vigorously embraces a culture of slavery, like the cruel sorcerer-lords of Tien Lung or the brutal Hell worshippers of the Shogunate. These unfortunates are treated worse than beasts, and their lives are spent cheaply in labor. As a benefit, one asset in each location in the Domain is free of any upkeep costs. Dwarves will hate the Domain, however, as they despise slavery as a blasphemy against their ancestors.

***Spartan Culture:*** Every border polity has to be comfortable with warfare, or it won't last out a year. This Domain has a culture that exalts the glories of disciplined martial valor. All Barracks, Training Grounds, and War Academies have their Military benefits doubled.

***Temple:*** This dignified and widely-renowned temple is one of the most powerful in the region, and is led by a 9th level Cleric. The patriarch or matriarch is usually willing to serve the ruler with spellcasting services, provided they do not involve personal danger.

***Trade Center:*** The merchants of this location have traveled far and wide to find exotic wares and the produce of distant lands. The trade brings great wealth to the Domain, and almost anything desired can be found here by a inquisitive buyer.

***Training Grounds:*** Troops are drilled and accustomed to discipline on the broad sands of the training ground. Two military units based in the city may eliminate their upkeep costs.

***United Efforts:*** The community's sense of unity encourages personal sacrifice.. For every 2 points of Wealth upkeep taken by the aid, 1 point of Social or Military value is generated. The aid cannot consume more Wealth than its location produces, but it can be changed at the lord's discretion.

***Veteran Guard:*** The local militia has been drilled so well as to equal regular field troops when in defense of their homes. The asset functions as does Organized Militia, but the troops are treated as Heavy Infantry.

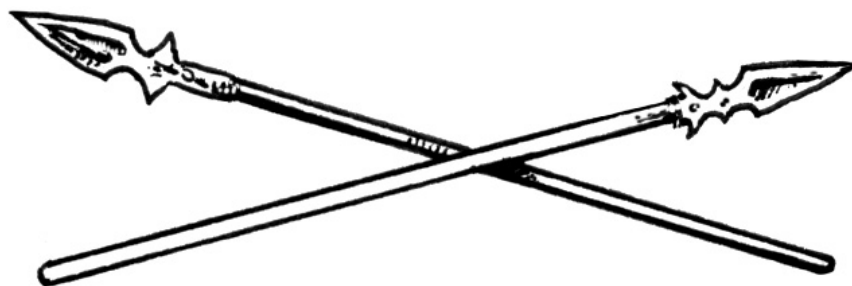
***Wall:*** The location has established a strong wall and stonework defenses around its vital points. The location may purchase Barriers, Towers, and Harbor Chain fortification assets.

***War Academy:*** The officers of the Domain meet here to discuss new tactics and techniques for integrating large numbers of troops. Four military units based in the city may eliminate their upkeep costs.

***Well-Educated:*** The Domain has a custom of reverence toward learning, and even the common folk try to teach their children the rudiments of literacy and counting. The learned are expected to use their knowledge for practical ends; Schools, Academies, and Great Academies provide double the normal Wealth benefits.



ASSET	VALUES			TYPE	DESCRIPTION
	M	W	S		
<i>School</i>		2		School 1	<i>Schools encourage literacy and new skills in their students.</i>
<i>Academy</i>		4	-1	School 2	<i>An impressive institution known throughout the region.</i>
<i>Great Academy</i>		8	-2	School 3	<i>Sages and scholars come from far away to study here.</i>
<i>Barracks</i>	2			Barracks 1	<i>Barracks allow a community to maintain more standing troops.</i>
<i>Training Grounds</i>	4	-1		Barracks 2	<i>The kinks of larger commands are worked out in maneuvers.</i>
<i>War Academy</i>	8	-1	-1	Barracks 3	<i>New techniques for marshalling and leading troops are studied.</i>
<i>Brutal Tyranny</i>	4			Custom	<i>The people are cowed; Atrocity point gains are halved.</i>
<i>Burning Creed</i>			4	Custom	<i>Zealous elven allies allow recruitment of elven troops.</i>
<i>Democratic Traditions</i>		2	2	Custom	<i>Common voices guide the state, giving +3 to one roll per turn.</i>
<i>Devil Worshipers</i>	4	4		Custom	<i>The natives are devout worshippers of the Hell Kings.</i>
<i>Dwarf Friend</i>		4		Custom	<i>Dwarven allies can be enlisted as troops.</i>
<i>Halfling Affinity</i>		2	2	Custom	<i>Friendly halfling communities will answer a call for troops.</i>
<i>Mercantile</i>		4		Custom	<i>The people love trade, and all Market asset benefits are doubled.</i>
<i>Religious Fervor</i>			4	Custom	<i>The people are devout, and all Temple asset benefits are doubled.</i>
<i>Slavery</i>		4	-2	Custom	<i>Slavery is widely practiced; one asset per location has no upkeep.</i>
<i>Spartan Culture</i>	4			Custom	<i>The people relish war, and all Barracks assets benefits are doubled.</i>
<i>Well-Educated</i>		2	2	Custom	<i>The people respect education, and all School asset benefits double.</i>
<i>Palisade</i>	2			Fortifications 1	<i>The location can build Barrier fortification units.</i>
<i>Wall</i>	4	-1		Fortifications 2	<i>They can also build Towers and Harbor Chains.</i>
<i>Layered Walls</i>	8	-2		Fortifications 3	<i>They can also build Citadels now.</i>
<i>Market</i>		2		Market 1	<i>A bustling local market serves nearby villages.</i>
<i>Trade Center</i>	-1	4		Market 2	<i>Even other cities send traders to this market.</i>
<i>Mercantile Guilds</i>	-1	8	-1	Market 3	<i>Powerful and wealthy merchant princes help fund this location.</i>
<i>Militia Muster</i>	1			Militia 1	<i>Two Militia units leap to the location's defense when needed.</i>
<i>Organized Militia</i>	2	-1		Militia 2	<i>Four Militia units now answer the call of need.</i>
<i>Veteran Guard</i>	4	-2		Militia 3	<i>The defenders are now four Heavy Infantry units.</i>
<i>Shrine</i>			2	Temple 1	<i>A modest temple served by a 7th level Cleric.</i>
<i>Temple</i>		-1	4	Temple 2	<i>A powerful 9th level Cleric aids the devout here.</i>
<i>Great Temple</i>		-2	8	Temple 3	<i>A mighty 11th level Cleric is the high priest of this fane.</i>
<i>Community Aid</i>				No Type	<i>Converts the Wealth of the location to Social benefits.</i>
<i>Hell Shrine</i>	2	4	2	No Type	<i>Allows the Domain to ignore 5 points of its Atrocity score.</i>
<i>Military Spending</i>				No Type	<i>Converts the Wealth of the location to Military advantage.</i>
<i>Necromantic Cult</i>			-2	No Type	<i>Allows undead legions to be enlisted, at the cost of Atrocity.</i>
<i>Processing Camp</i>		2		No Type	<i>When built at a Resource, it turns Wealth into Military or Social.</i>
<i>Resource Extractor</i>		2		No Type	<i>When built at a Resource, it improves efficiency.</i>
<i>Siege Supplies</i>	-2			No Type	<i>Stores 20 hit dice worth of supplies for sieges. May be built twice.</i>
<i>United Efforts</i>				No Type	<i>Converts the Social value of the location to Military or Wealth.</i>



## EXAMPLE DOMAIN PLAY

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The mighty warrior Torvald has finally wearied of the depredations of Grettir, the daifu of the market town of Shen Yu. The dissipated lordling sends his men to inflict cruel exactions on the surrounding countryside, and the far-distant lords in Xian do nothing to restrain his appetites. Worse still, it was Grettir who hanged Torvald's roguish friend Su Yin over a trifling and entirely inconsequential theft not long after her adventuring career began.

Torvald's companions share the grudge against Grettir. They've debated the prospect of simply killing the witch-daifu in his sorceled estate, but the snake is familiar with the ways of assassins and the prospects of success are dubious. Even if they do manage to cut the devil's heart out, who is to say the next lord won't be even worse? This land needs a new master, and as Torvald is the most charismatic and popular of their band, they agree that he ought to be the one to lead it. They will all share in the guidance of the domain, but Torvald will be their spokesman.

With these high resolutions in place, all the adventurers now need is someone to actually follow them. Fortunately, their adventures have recently left the fishing village of Hjalmarsund deeply in their debt. The village is sufficiently distant from Shen Yu to make it difficult for Grettir to send his troops to smash it, and the elders of the fisherfolk agree that Torvald would be a better and stronger leader. They swear their loyalty to the warrior, and the domain of the Free Coast is born.

The Labyrinth Lord has categorized Hjalmarsund as a Resource with Good Fishing, for a total Wealth value of 4. The poor villagers have no other assets, but a check of the Heroes chapter shows that powerful adventurers grant mighty benefits to their domains. Torvald adds Martial Glory, granting +4 Military points. His elven companion Lahach-min summons his Creed's fellow believers to aid him, granting the Burning Creed custom and adding +4 Social points. Abbot Hanzo's holy renown attracts a disciple to found a Shrine in the village, and the wisdom of the astrologer Muireach brings in the apprentices that make up a School.

Simply by being the focus of a powerful adventuring party's efforts, the humble village of Hjalmarsund now has a Shrine, a School, and total values of 4 Military, 6 Wealth, and 6 Social. Its Military check modifier is +0, and its Wealth and Social modifiers are +1. For now, the Labyrinth Lord decides that Grettir can't be troubled to concern himself with their plans, but it won't be too many more turns before the sorcerer starts to take the rebels seriously. The party is going to have to act quickly if they're to strengthen the village sufficiently to withstand the lord of Shen Yu.

As a PC-run domain, the Free Coast gets two domain actions. Torvald chooses the first one, and decides the first order of business is a Palisade. It will strengthen the village's military value and allow it to build Barricades. To build the Palisade, he needs to pass three checks, Military, Wealth, and Social. The difficulty for each is 12 plus the asset's absolute production or upkeep in that value- so for the Palisades, the difficulties are 14, 12, and 12. The Establish an Asset action allows him to make one roll, so he makes it against the Military check, rolling 1d20 and succeeding with a 15.

Abbot Hanzo gets to decide the next action, and elects to keep at the Palisade construction. He rolls the Wealth check for it, adding a +1 bonus due to the domain's Wealth modifier. Alas, the check fails with a roll of 6. The lessons learned help, however, and so the difficulties of both Wealth and Social checks are decreased by 1. So long as the Free Coast keeps trying to build the Palisade, this bonus continues to accumulate until they succeed on a roll.

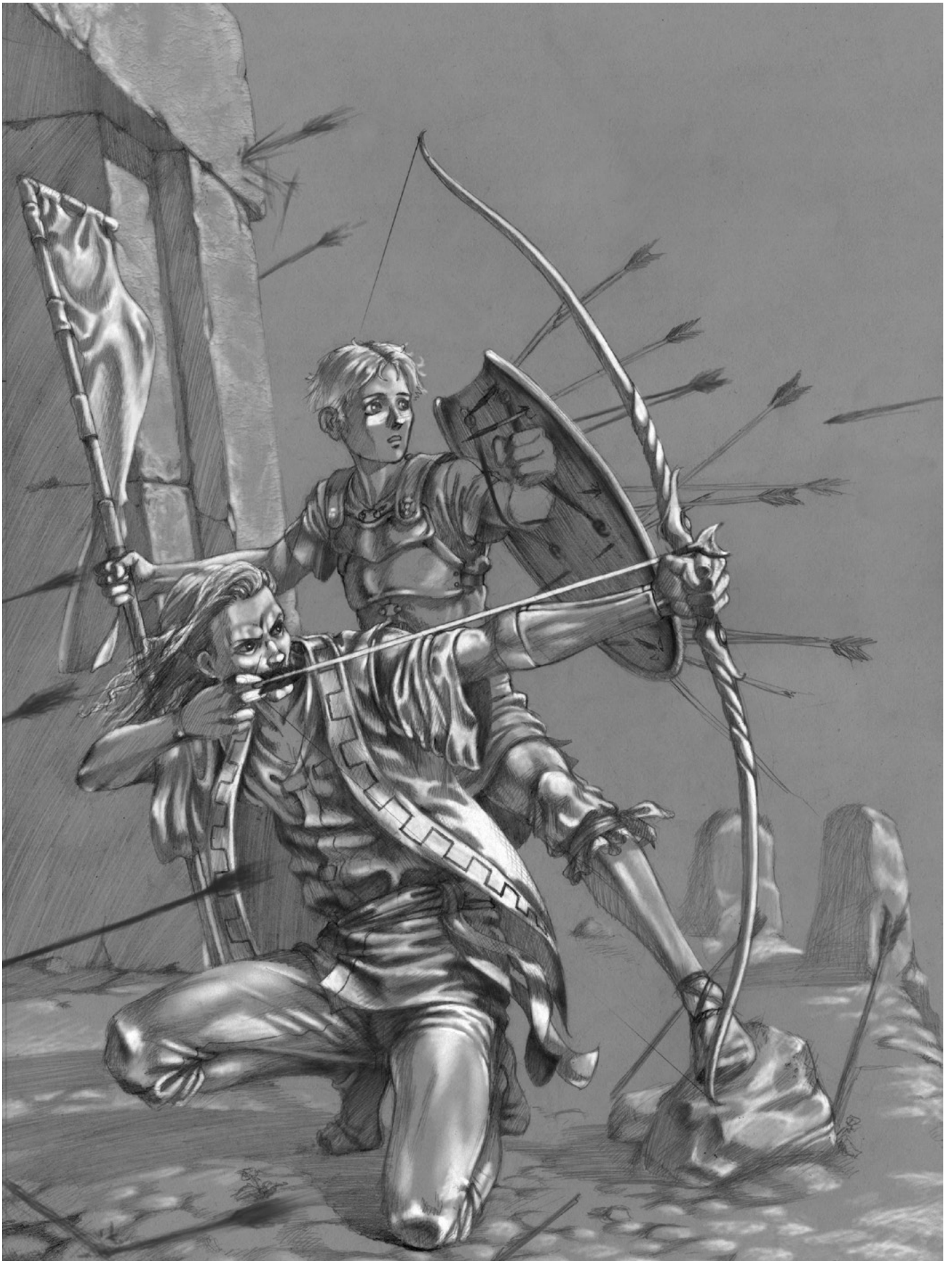
While their faithful vassals are working to construct the palisade around the village, the heroes decide that they need some hearty warriors to man their new walls. The Gadaal mountaineers in the nearby peaks are known to hate Grettir, so perhaps they can be persuaded to help. The party advises the Labyrinth Lord of their plans, and during the downtime between sessions the referee creates an adventure revolving around that ambition. The next session is spent impressing Gadaal clan-chiefs and retrieving a precious astrological artifact from an ancient barrow. The Labyrinth Lord decides their efforts were successful, and the locals agree to dispatch a unit of Gadaal Scouts to defend Hjalmarsund. Their upkeep costs are 1 Military, 1 Wealth, and 1 Social. The Labyrinth Lord makes note of this, but the Free Coast still has plenty of uncommitted resources. Their value modifiers remain unchanged, as upkeep costs do not count against their determination.

With the Gadaal assistance secured, the party now runs a second domain turn at the end of the session. It's Lahach-min's turn to decide what they do, and despite the importunings of his friends, he insists on trying to Accumulate Treasure. He rolls a Wealth check against a difficulty of 8, and succeeds, gaining 3 Treasure points for the Domain. The fishing was evidently very good that month.

For the second action, Muireach decides that the domain can't afford to lose their bonus on constructing the Palisade, so he rolls a Wealth check against the new difficulty of 11. The roll is a 10, so close... and Lahach-min smugly points out that he can spend 2 of their new-gotten Treasure points to push the roll over the line to success. Muireach grudgingly allows that the acquisitive elf wasn't entirely in the wrong, and spends the points accordingly. The Palisade is almost finished.

Still, Hjalmarsund is in no condition to withstand the anger of a powerful daifu. A militia is needed to help defend the walls, but it could take turns to raise a Militia Muster asset. If they had better trainers they might be able to do it faster. After some discussion, they remember a retired Xianese general on a distant estate whom they helped with a problem some years ago. Resolved to gain her help, they saddle up for the next session's adventure, leaving the Labyrinth Lord to plot out the complications and challenges they might face in persuading the old warhorse to stand against a lawfully-constituted noble of the Mandarinate.

And in the west, Grettir begins to stir, uneasy at the flurry of productive activity on the coast. After the players have gone home, the Labyrinth Lord reaches for his own dice....



# MASS COMBAT

## IN THESE REALMS, LIGHT SNOW FALLS

The basic goal of this chapter is to lay out a simple, coherent system for quickly resolving mass combat. It is not intended to force a full-fledged war game onto the table every time the PCs want to send a reprisal raid against an enemy fort or clear out a bandit nest in the mountains. The players should be able to tell at a glance whether a given force has much chance of success in a battle, and their hard-won adventurer's instincts about a winnable fight are fully applicable in the waging of war.

Labyrinth Lords should take the following system as a guide to handling the most common varieties of battlefield engagements. When the players pitch something bizarre at you- and they most certainly will- you should feel free to simply make the same sort of spot call you'd make in a dungeon brawl and move on from there.

### UNITS

The basic element of mass combat is the *unit*. A unit commonly consists of roughly 100 humanoid troops of the same type. Monstrous entities have units of fewer individuals, usually corresponding to the number found in a lair of the creatures.

A unit has the same scores and attributes as the individual creature that comprises it. For example, a warband of eight hill giants has an Armor Class of 4, 8 hit dice, a Morale score of 8, and so forth. A well-rested unit at full strength always has maximum hit points for their hit dice. Thus, the warband in question would have 64 hit points when at full strength.

Units retain whatever movement rates and abilities their basic type possesses. Giants can throw rocks, pegasi can fly, trolls regenerate, spellcasting monsters can use their magical abilities, and so forth. In most cases, these abilities are simply handled as written. Spellcasting on the battlefield and the use of unique magical powers is covered later in the chapter.

Some units have *Support*. Support elements consist of small teams of specialists, field artillery, attached mages, or other small groups that assist the unit and grant special benefits. Support elements cannot operate away from a unit; they're just too fragile to survive an engagement with a hundred screaming attackers. Low and mid-level PCs often qualify as Support to a unit they are leading, with special benefits listed in the Heroes chapter of this book.

A few titanic beasts or exceptionally ferocious champions are mighty enough to stride the battlefield unaided. These Heroes can fight alongside a unit or make their own way across the bloodied ground. Whereas most individuals would simply be swept under by a swarm of lesser foes, Heroes use their own full, normal statistics while in mass combat, including their attacks, damage, and normally-rolled hit points. Unless specifically noted otherwise, Heroes are treated just as any other unit, with the same rules and handling. High-level PCs and truly horrific monsters often qualify as Heroes.

### ORDER OF PLAY

Domain combat plays out in a very similar way to individual combat. Military units and special characters have almost precisely the same statistics and qualities as their individual-scale components, and attack rolls, saving throws, and damage rolls are all done exactly as they would be for an individual.

#### 1. *Roll Initiative*

Each side in a battle rolls 1d6 for initiative at the start of each round, with each side acting from highest to lowest roll. Unlike individual-level combat, however, any ties should be rolled off between the sides involved.

#### 2. *Move Units*

The side that won initiative may move their units up to their normal listed movement rate. Units that pass within twenty yards of an enemy unit willing to melee them must stop and engage the foe. Such units are immediately placed adjacent to each other without concern for remaining movement.

#### 3. *Missile Attacks*

Units that possess missile weapons or ranged attacks may make them. Units can't normally fire ranged weapons while meleed. Firing into a melee is possible, but the Labyrinth Lord randomly determines the target unit after the hit roll is made.

#### 4. *Spellcasting*

Units capable of spellcasting or using spell-like abilities may use them, if they have not made missile attacks. Most spells and similar abilities are of limited use on a battlefield scale- see "Spellcasting in Mass Combat" for details. Casters cannot normally cast while involved in a melee.

#### 5. *Melee Attacks*

Units that have neither cast spells nor made missile attacks may perform melee attacks against an adjacent enemy. Usually, no more than four units may attack the same unit target in melee, one for each side of the target's formation.

#### 6. *Other Sides Act*

After the winner of the initiative roll completes steps 2-5 for each of his or her units, the next side takes their turn.

#### 7. *Repeat*

After all sides have acted, initiative is rolled again as the sequence of play starts over with step 1.

### SETTING UP THE BATTLE

Some groups will prefer to run their battles on tabletop maps and make use of miniature figures to represent the units. This can certainly be done, but the system really requires nothing more than a rough sketch of the battlefield and a basic sense of scale. Movement and maneuvering is expressed with roughly the same

precision as might be had during a normal combat encounter, with units moving next to things, behind things, around things, and otherwise just establishing general locations.

If miniatures are used, single figures should represent each unit and Support element. Most battles take place on a scale where it is not generally necessary to establish formations and unit lines. Units that engage in melee combat should be moved into base-to-base contact.

**MOVEMENT**

In a mapped battle, units may move their normal outdoor movement rate. A unit with a movement rate of 90', for example, may move up to 90 yards in a round. Crossing difficult terrain such as forests, swampy ground, or steep hills costs double the normal movement. Crossing very difficult terrain such as thick jungle, waist-deep water, or narrow cliff trails costs four times the normal movement. As always, the Labyrinth Lord adjudicates any special cases, but most deep water, fortifications, or steep cliffs cannot be negotiated at all under battlefield conditions.

Movement is automatically ended for a round if a unit comes within 20 yards of an enemy unit or Hero willing to melee them. Some units with poor hand-to-hand abilities may choose not to engage, though the moving unit can always choose to initiate the attack. The attacking unit is moved adjacent to the defender and the two are considered to be in melee. This forced clash does not count against the movement allotment of either unit.

If a unit engaged in melee combat wishes to move away, it must pass a successful Morale check during its movement phase in order to withdraw. If it fails, it must either remain where it is or voluntarily Rout, fleeing for the nearest egress from the battlefield.

**ATTACKING ENEMY UNITS**

Units engaged in combat make attack and damage rolls just as characters do. Units in melee cannot normally use ranged weapons, and missile troops can only fire on targets within range of their armaments.

In most circumstances up to four melee units can attack the same target, one on each side, along with any number of Heroes. These attackers must get within range of their targets, and two melee units cannot normally attack the same side of an opposing force. Any number of missile troops can attack a target within range, but missile troops shooting into a melee have equal chances of targeting any unit or Hero involved in the scrum.

Only one unit of melee troops at a time can attack an unattached Hero. There simply isn't room to pile in any more manpower against a single warrior or monstrous foe. There is no limit to the number of ranged units that can engage, though the rules for firing into a battlefield melee apply as normal.

Heroes may be mighty, but even they can be dragged down by numbers. ***Heroes always take normal damage when attacked by a unit, whether or not the attack roll hits.*** If it does hit, the hero takes maximum damage. Some truly indestructible Heroes

***FLANKING***

For simplicity, units are assumed to have no particular facing, and can fight equally well on all sides. Labyrinth Lords who want to include flanking in their battles should assign facing to the units, and grant a +2 bonus to enemies attacking from the flanks and a +4 bonus to an attack from the rear. Facing can be changed whenever the unit moves and once between their rounds, such as when they are attacked by another unit. Optionally, a simpler rule can be applied that says that any melee units attacking from opposite sides gain +2 on their hit rolls. In both cases, Heroes can neither induce flanking nor be flanked.

might take less damage from missed unit attacks. Heroes can only be intentionally targeted when unattached. Attacks that inflict area damage or the strikes of units with special targeted assassination abilities can injure even attached Heroes.

Units can gain the benefit of cover, concealment, higher ground, or any other situation that might normally benefit a combatant. Most such modifiers should grant -2 bonuses to Armor Class, or +2 bonuses to hit. It is the Labyrinth Lord's discretion as to what circumstances lend such advantages.

**MORALE**

Morale is a vital resource in battle. Even a fresh, untouched unit can be turned into a disorganized mob of fleeing men if they become convinced that defeat is inevitable. Units normally use the Morale score of their base creature type. Heroes are immune to Morale considerations, and always automatically pass any checks. If they are attached to units that break, however, they must either flee with the rest or separate from the unit.

The following rules indicate when a morale check must be made. When they refer to "units", they refer both to military units and Heroes. Where the rules indicate "half", round up.

A UNIT MUST MAKE A MORALE CHECK WHEN...
An allied unit is first destroyed or Routed.
Half of its allied units have been destroyed or Routed.
It suffers damage for the first time during a battle.
It is reduced to one-half or less of its original hit points.

Units that fail a morale check become Shaken, suffering a -2 penalty on attack rolls and a -2 penalty on further morale checks. Shaken units that fail a morale check become Routed. Routed units immediately attempt to flee, can no longer attack, and take double damage from any incoming source of injury.

Units cannot regain lost morale on the battlefield without the use of special abilities or spells. Once a unit becomes Shaken or Routed, it remains that way unless some ability is used or the Labyrinth Lord finds an event to be conducive to rallying the troops.



## WITHDRAWING FROM BATTLE

A military unit or special character may withdraw from battle if prudence recommends it. Units that have Routed *must* withdraw as quickly as possible.

If the battle is being conducted on a map, withdrawal requires the unit to reach a map edge. If the battle is being managed abstractly, a unit may withdraw as long as they are not engaged in melee combat with an enemy.

At the end of the battle, each surviving victorious unit with the Chase characteristic may select one withdrawn enemy unit to attack. Units which withdrew in good order may fight back, and initiative and attacks are determined normally. Units which routed automatically lose initiative and cannot fight back. Only one round of Chase combat is allowed, after which the prey will have either fled beyond reach or suffered destruction.

## INDIVIDUALS IN BATTLE

Lone individuals and small Support elements must be attached to military units when on the battlefield. Only a Hero can stand against scores of hostile warriors, and those without such prowess are automatically killed if they are attacked by a military unit or Hero. If the unit to which they are attached is destroyed, they must make a saving throw against Death or also suffer destruction. Support units and individuals save as 1st level Fighters, at 14 or better, if not specified otherwise. Those elements that do succeed at their saving throw are assumed to have successfully fled.

While attached to a unit, a Support element usually grants a special benefit listed under its entry. Any number of Support elements or individuals can be attached to a unit, but duplicate Supports grant their benefit only once. If multiple Supports grant the same kind of benefit, only the best applies. Low to mid-level adventurers often qualify as Supports and allow for certain special benefits based on class, as given in the Heroes chapter.

Support elements can freely detach from a unit during that unit's turn, provided the unit is not engaged in melee combat at the time. Most Support elements can move at a rate of 120' per turn, though the Labyrinth Lord may rule otherwise for elements that are burdened with heavy siege gear or who are mounted. If a Support element ends its turn adjacent to another unit, the unit can integrate it by spending its entire turn arranging its ranks to receive them. This does assume, however, that the unit has had experience working with the Support element and is familiar with its employment.

Heroes can operate freely on the battlefield, but may choose to integrate with a unit. Heroes often grant special benefits to their units, as listed in the appropriate chapter, and may make independent attack rolls when their unit engages an enemy. Heroes can always use their full range of weaponry, including ranged weapons while in melee combat. Heroes cannot normally be targeted individually while attached to a unit; there are simply too many bodies between them and a coordinated attack. If their unit is destroyed while they are attached to it, the Hero automatically suffers maximum damage from the attack that destroyed it.



## SPECIAL ABILITIES IN BATTLE

Some units will have special abilities based on their training or monstrous nature. Units may use these abilities normally in battle—a squadron of trolls will regenerate, a team of giants can throw boulders, wraiths will drain the life force of those they hit, and so on. Spellcasting and the use of spell-like powers is a special case, and discussed later in the chapter.

Some Heroes or units have characteristics that allow them the use of a certain special ability as a combat attack. Use of a characteristic counts as the unit's attack for the round; it cannot both attack and trigger these abilities. Other abilities can be used freely without sacrificing the unit's other actions.

## SIEGES

Sieges are almost always handled in the abstract, as they involve long stretches of tedious excavation and encirclement punctuated by brief, savage engagements. Once a location's fortifications are actually broken down, it might be worthwhile to have a mapped battle around the breach or fallen gate, but the preliminaries work best when handled abstractly.

Defenders cannot force a siege unless the location has some kind of fortification asset. An unwallled village or herb-gathering camp just isn't sufficiently imposing to keep off hostile forces, and they must engage any attackers in the field.

Attackers engaged in a siege can choose any number of their units and Heroes to assault the defenses of the target, dividing up the targeted fortifications between attacking units. Attacks against fortifications automatically hit, and damage is done normally. Some fortifications may be exceptionally resistant against ordinary troops, and subtract points from incoming damage rolls. Such defenses can lower an attack's damage to zero. Some fortifications

also inflict attacks or outright damage on assailants. The attacker always chooses which units are to receive each attack or damage, but each injury is resolved on a unit before the next is assigned a victim.

Besiegers can launch only one round worth of attacks for each domain turn. If any fortifications are still standing after the attackers have assailed them, the siege continues. If all the fortifications are destroyed, any or all of the attacker's forces may conduct an immediate battle against the defenders. As a general rule, all defenders should gain a battle-long +2 bonus to hit rolls to reflect the time they've had to organize and prepare the location for combat.

Defenders can be starved out if not adequately supported. Heroes and special characters can always find enough to eat in a location, but all defending units automatically lose one hit point per hit die to hunger and attrition for each domain turn they remain besieged. Some assets allow a location to lay in a certain number of hit dice worth of supplies beforehand. Defenders may draw from this stockpile, each hit die of troops consuming a hit die worth of supplies each turn until they are exhausted. The Labyrinth Lord may optionally inflict more or less damage on besieged units depending on the exact situation.

Attackers must maintain their own supply lines as well. At least one line of transportation must be drawn between the attackers and an allied town, city, or other supply source. For most small armies at this scale, land transportation over wagon-navigable terrain will suffice. For armies of a thousand or more humanoids, only water transport or remarkably good roads provide the volume necessary to keep them all supplied. If enemy units get between the attackers and all their feasible sources of supply, the attackers begin to suffer attrition just as would the besieged- one hit point per hit die of damage to all units each domain turn. Any unit or Hero can disrupt an unguarded supply line, forcing the attackers to dispatch forces to quell the disturbance or guard the line.

## NAVAL BATTLES

Under most circumstances, naval battles are conducted just as any other conflict, with each naval unit representing one large or a few small ships and their crews.

Most naval battles stem from attempts at raiding or blockading an enemy location. Ships alone are unable to plunder sites, but some can carry other military assets to launch sea-side invasions of coastal settlements. A quick viking raid can send a ship full of marauders rampaging through an ill-defended city, stealing everything that isn't nailed down and making it back to the ships before local forces can be mustered to repel them. Granted sufficient strength, the invaders might choose to stay, seizing the place for a distant master and relying on the sea lanes to keep them supplied while they pacify the locals.

Blockades are less immediately destructive, but they can be ruinous to settlements that rely on water transport for food imports. Against most locations, a blockade simply prevents any sea units from reaching the location. Against a town or a city, however, the blockade counts as an Obstacle, preventing the settlement's polity from getting any benefit from the settlement and its assets. The blockade must be lifted or destroyed to eliminate the Obstacle. For particularly large cities that are highly reliant on overseas food imports, it might count as a siege against military units as well.

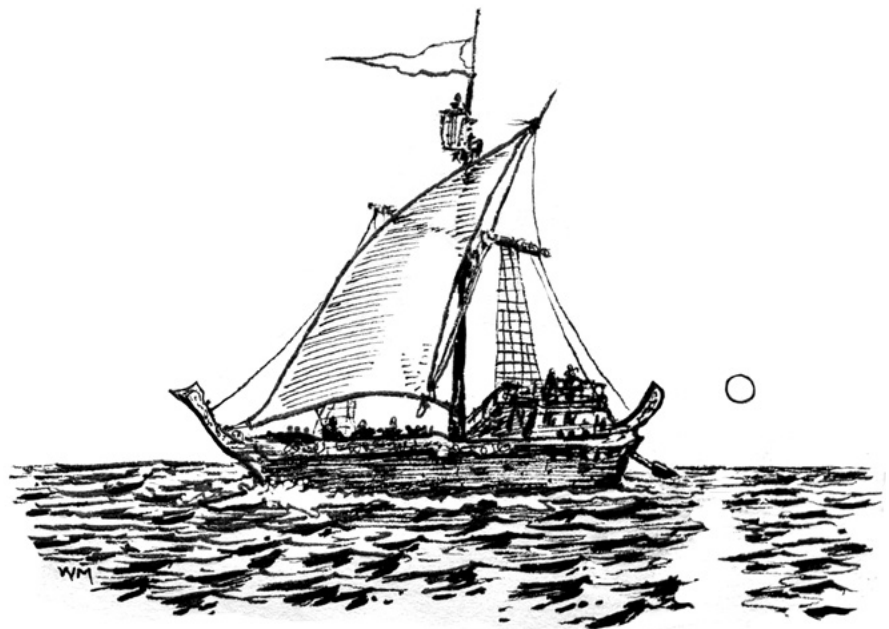
Against both raids and blockades, the best defense is a good navy. Ships stationed at a location can always come out and engage the enemy before the raid can land or the blockade can be enforced. Land forces are not helpful in such circumstances, however, beyond whatever troops can be loaded into the fighting ships.

Cities and towns that are blockaded can build their own sea units to fight back, given time and landward supply, and assuming the rest of the domain can subsidize the upkeep costs. By the same token, locations with military units present can fight off raiders before the marauders get a chance to plunder. Landward fortifications are of no use against a sea borne attack. Only special sea fortifications can be used to force a naval group into a siege.

## CONSEQUENCES OF BATTLE

Most battles will end with one force in command of a location and the rest fled or destroyed. Units that have been Routed or that have withdrawn are placed just outside the location. On their turn, they will likely need to start marching toward the nearest friendly base, lest they be pursued and destroyed by the victors. Conversely, they might remain and launch a counterattack on their turn if they think the odds are with them.

Conquerors in possession of a location immediately raze all the fixed assets associated with it. These buildings and the people that operated them were likely destroyed during the fighting, and even when they remain, it takes a great deal of time and effort to find them, reform them, and put them to effective service for their new



masters. Some special assets might even cause instant Obstacles to crop up for foes who conquer a place, representing guerrilla resistance or stubbornly recalcitrant locals. Conquered locations immediately become owned by the invading Domain.

Rebuilding ruined assets tends to be easier than starting from scratch, however. Any attempt to rebuild an asset ruined by conquest gains a +2 bonus on the roll. This is in addition to any cumulative bonus from successive turns spent rebuilding.

Some conquerors are only interested in plunder. They'll burn the place to the ground, loot it for everything portable, and ride off into a smoking sunset. A plundered location immediately loses all its assets. The conqueror gains 1 Treasure point, plus 1 more for each asset looted, 1 more for plundering a town, and 4 more for plundering a city. The location immediately gains the Exceptional Poverty Obstacle, and cannot be plundered again by anyone until it is resolved.

Assets destroyed by plundering do not gain the +2 bonus on attempts to rebuild them. The destruction is too complete and intentional, and restoring them takes as much effort as rebuilding from scratch. Plundered locations remain in the possession of their original domains.

## REINFORCING TROOPS

Heroes and other special characters heal as normal for individuals. A single domain turn is usually plenty of time for them to regain any lost hit points. Military units require more time and effort.

Repairing military units requires that the owner take the Reinforce Units domain action. As many hit points can be healed on units as the Domain has Military points. Units that are besieged or cut off from supply cannot be reinforced. The Reinforce Units action presumes that suitable recruits do exist in the domain- for very rare unit types, this may not be a reasonable surmise, or may require additional time and reinforcement actions in order to get the same results.

## SPELLCASTING IN MASS COMBAT

Most spells have limited use in mass combat. The chaos of a battlefield, the frenzied passions of the soldiers, and the tangle of geomantic energies produced by so much death in so short a time combine to render most spells useless on the field. Still, some enchantments have a wide enough effect to influence entire units, or can be very helpful in preparing the battlefield for an impending conflict. The following are some guidelines for helping a Labyrinth Lord adjudicate spell use in the field.

First, single-target or limited-target spells are useful only against Heroes. Launching a single *Magic Missile* or *Sleep* spell into an onrushing horde of Shou is unlikely to be useful, but doing the same to a solitary Tidespawn abomination might be helpful. In the confusion of the battlefield, spells that do damage inflict normal hit point damage, with a saving throw for half when the spell allows it. Spells that *charm*, *paralyze*, *polymorph* or otherwise alter the subject work as expected. Unless the caster has some special ability to single out Heroes in combat, however, they cannot



target a Hero attached to a unit. There are simply too many bodies between the caster and the target. Labyrinth Lords should also be careful to check the range on single-target spells, as many of them require the caster to get uncomfortably close to the target.

Second, area-effect spells can usually affect one unit and any attached Heroes. *Fireball*, *Lightning Bolt*, or the like usually cover enough ground to damage a full unit of enemy troops, provided the targets aren't under cover or otherwise spread out too far to be affected in one blow. Damage is rolled as normal, but cut in half, rounded down. Spells that allow for a saving throw for half damage do one-quarter damage on a successful saving throw. Spells with a small area of effect such as *Bless*, *Invisibility 10' Radius*, or *Protection from Evil 10' Radius* are too narrow in effect to help a full unit of troops. Support elements attached to a unit may make a saving throw versus Spells to avoid immediate death when their unit is hit by an area-effect damage spell, while non-Heroic PCs attached to a unit take the same damage as the unit itself.

Third, each round of mass combat can take up to thirty minutes of actual game time. Spells with a short duration rarely last longer than one round.

Fourth, spellcasters cannot cast when they or the unit they are attached to are engaged in melee combat. It's impossible to maintain uninterrupted focus when the caster is within arm's reach of a hundred screaming Shou warriors or trading blows with an enemy Hero.

Lastly, casters may learn and develop special enchantments meant for battlefield use, ones that tap into the furious psychic energy of an active battlefield to produce effects that are useful on a grand scale. These enchantments are likely to be highly specific in effect and jealously guarded by those war-mages who have managed to invent or recover them. They will operate as per their spell description, and the first and second guidelines above do not apply to them.

## GAINING TROOP EXPERIENCE

Battle-hardened troops improve substantially over ordinary regulars. The standard statistics for a unit reflect an average military unit of their type, neither hopelessly innocent nor exceptionally veteran. As units gain experience, they can learn additional tricks appropriate to their class. Heroes and Support elements do not gain experience through this system, as their advancement is more a matter of personal growth.

Destroyed and routed enemies grant War Experience points. The survivors of both sides gain experience, both victors and losers. Surviving a rout is, in its fashion, a most educational experience for a soldier.

Each unit has a War Experience value equal to its total asset cost. Thus, a unit that costs 2 Military, 0 Wealth, and 0 Social to maintain has a War Experience value of 2. At the end of a battle, add up the total value of destroyed units on a side and half the value of routed units. If the battle resulted in conquering or plundering a location, add the location's asset production values to the total as well.

If a unit does not have an asset cost, such as a random monster or crew of local humanoids that aren't regular troop types, its War Experience value equals its hit dice, plus or minus a few points if it has notable special abilities or unusually large numbers of hit dice for its difficulty.

Divide this total equally among all enemy units that meaningfully participated in the fight. Usually, this means units that actually engaged the enemy, though units that were involved in some non-violent portion of an intricate battle plan might qualify at the Labyrinth Lord's discretion.

As the unit acquires progressively more experience, it levels up- from Regular, to Seasoned, to Veteran, to Elite. A unit cannot rise more than one degree of experience per domain turn. A unit



requires 5 War Experience to become Seasoned, 15 to become Veteran, and 35 to become Elite. Elite units do not advance further, though they take their normal share of experience after each battle.

When a unit advances a level of experience, it gains a permanent +1 bonus to hit on its attack rolls and may choose one of the following benefits, with each benefit allowed only once: +1 to Morale, +1 hit die, the Hardened quality, the Skilled quality, or a -2 bonus to its Armor Class.

## MILITARY UNITS

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The following units are some of the more common types of soldiery to be found in the Sunset Isles. Most Domains will have relatively little difficulty enlisting human troops of one or two hit dice, but more impressive forces or demihuman soldiers may take time and effort to assemble. It's up to the Labyrinth Lord to decide which kinds of troops are available for recruiting, though some PCs may have special abilities that allow them to recruit fitting retainers. Details of these heroic knacks are given in the Heroes chapter.

Aside from the troop types listed below, this section also includes statistics for certain varieties of enemy units that might be found in Lairs or that may be operating under the command of exceptionally vicious NPCs. In most cases, there's no real chance of a PC managing to muster a Shou warband or enlist a pack of foaming Hell cultists into their service. Still, these units are given an entry for the benefit of NPC chieftains and tyrants, and for those rare occasions when fate might offer unusual opportunities to a PC general.

Some players may want to sidestep the slow process of establishing a military asset with domain actions and successful value checks. They might reasonably point out that all they really need to do is buy a hundred sets of arms and armor and dole it out to a band of sturdy bordermen to get a serviceable military unit, or find a mercenary company willing to take some quick coin. In the short term they might well be correct, and the Labyrinth Lord should feel free to use his or her own best judgment for such attempts at immediate results.

Over the long term, however, there's no escaping the need to take care of the hundred and one details that are necessary to turn a mob of armed men into an actual military unit. Troops must be drilled, discipline must be inculcated, familiarity must be acquired with fellow soldiers and the units in which they serve. Supply lines must be arranged to keep the men fed and their equipment in good repair. And perhaps most importantly, the unit must be organized into the Domain's culture in such a way that it remains loyal, obedient, and disciplined.

Scratch units formed of freeswords and quickly-hired mercenaries might serve for a battle or two, but sooner or later they're going to start causing problems. If a Domain needs them badly enough to pay for instant service, it's unlikely to be otherwise well-defended, and the annals of war are full of sellswords who decided that the shortest route to riches was through their former employer's palace. The normal route for establishing a military unit quashes this threat through careful oversight and discipline. Treachery is still possible from a military unit, but it will come due to the machinations of enemies or the consequences of grave abuse rather than simple undisciplined greed.

## UNIT DESCRIPTIONS

**Archers:** Lightly-armored troops equipped with shortbows and daggers. Communities with a strong contingent of hunters can often put together a tolerable unit of archers.

**Ballista:** Several heavy ballistas are crewed by siege engineers. While of minimal use against fortifications, they're effective in threatening large, fearsome beasts and breaking up enemy lines.

**Catapult:** Granted an hour's time to set up, the siege engineers of this unit can assemble several catapults. Catapults are light enough to be shifted by their crews in order to fire in a new direction.

**Crossbowmen:** Favored especially for manning walls and fortifications, crossbowmen trade the clumsiness of their weapons for ease in training with them.

**Dwarf Crossbows:** The arcing fire of bows is of limited use in low-ceilinged tunnels, so these dwarves have instead excelled in crossbow work.

**Dwarf Heroes:** The cream of a delve's warrior elite, a squad of dwarven heroes can pulp most ordinary opposition. Their numbers are few, however, and reinforcements hard to come by.

**Dwarf Sappers:** Heavily-armored and equipped with two-handed war picks, these dwarves have a remarkable aptitude for collapsing walls and other fortifications.

**Dwarf Warriors:** Even the rank-and-file of a dwarven hold's warriors are superior to most human troops, well-armored and resolute in their duty.

**Eirengarder Pike:** Pikemen are a tough lot, and the Eirengarders have practiced pike warfare for centuries. Breaking an Eirengarder pike line is possible, but rarely without gruesome casualties.

**Elf Bowmen:** While equipped much as their human counterparts are, elves are much better-rounded combatants, capable of swordwork as well as archery.

**Elf War Mages:** These armored magi can shape the energies of the battlefield to harm hostile troops- and defend themselves in close combat if need be.

**Elf Warriors:** These elves have less interest in battlefield magic, and more in sharp steel. Long experience in fighting spellcasting archers has taught them formations for minimizing these threats.

**Elf Zealots:** These elves are fanatically committed to their Creed, and have honed their abilities through lifetimes of effort. Convincing them to fight for a Domain is often remarkably difficult.

**Foot Knights:** Unmounted knights in heavy armor, often employed to break blocks of pike and other dangerous obstructions.



**Gadaal Scouts:** The mountaineers of the Gadaal have forgotten more about bushwhacking than most folk have ever learned. They excel at quick strikes and retreats.

**Halfling Militia:** Even common halflings make dangerous foes on the battlefield, united in a fearless willingness to fight.

**Halfling Pikemen:** Specialized halfling foot troops, these spearmen wed their natural valor to extensive training.

**Halfling Slingers:** Fast and elusive, halfling slingers can tear apart lightly-armored troops before they have a chance to respond.

**Heavy Cavalry:** These troops are well-armored and experienced fighters who trade a little speed for more offensive punch.

**Heavy Infantry:** Clad in mail and bearing swords and shields, these troops form the backbone of many well-organized armies.

**Horse Archers:** While incapable of the smashing charges of heavier cavalry, these archers are trained in shooting from horseback while pivoting away from oncoming enemies.

**Kueh Samurai:** The valor and determination of the old Kueh samurai are rarely found in the hell-tainted lands of the Shogunate, but some old families still retain the codes in other lands. These tough, armored archers can fight fiercely in close combat as well.

**Levies:** When there's no time to train a militia, raw levies are given a few scraps of armor and a spear and charged with saving the day... or being used as fodder to tire out the enemy before the real troops are deployed.

**Light Cavalry:** Fast, agile, and ruthlessly effective in chasing down fleeing foes, light cavalry excel at slashing strikes.

**Light Infantry:** Cheaper and easier to raise than heavy footmen, light infantry are often a contribution of poorer or less martial communities. Still, they have sufficient training to stick together and use their spears effectively in a group.

**Longbowmen:** Skill in the longbow is hard to find, and these troops are costly to reinforce. Still, if protected, they can rain down plunging fire on far-distant foes.

**Militia:** Many communities have units of militia assigned for local defense. While the harsh border life ensures that they take their training seriously, they muster only when needed, and cannot be moved out of the settlement.

**Mounted Knights:** The elite of most human forces, the knights are often nobles or the sons of wealthy patricians who have taken the sword as their path to glory. Tough, zealous, and clad in heavy

## CREATING NEW UNIT TYPES

It's very likely that a Labyrinth Lord or a PC will eventually want to recruit a new type of troop. Creating these new types is simple in terms of their statistics- just use the normal stats for the creature, and possibly assign it one or two special qualities if it seems appropriate.

To determine the right upkeep cost for the unit, compare it with existing troops. As a rule of thumb, the Military upkeep should not be less than the creature's hit dice. Wealth upkeep should be present if the unit has expensive gear or training, and Social upkeep should be reserved for units that rely on specific cultural or racial heritages.

Most units should consist of about one hundred troops, if they're human or humanoid. Monstrous soldiers should usually be represented by a number equal to their usual lair population. Some monsters are unsuitable for use as troops, such as dragons or major demons. These entities are capable of fighting whole armies at once, and should be treated as individual Heroes.

plate armor, they can smash most lesser obstructions in a single charge.

**Pikemen:** Maintaining a trained, tightly-cohesive force of pikemen is more than many communities can manage, but those that do have a superb defensive unit capable of exacting a dear cost from charging attackers.

**Rangers:** These back-country hunters and scouts have a knack for crossing rough terrain and taking maximum advantage of cover while raining down arrows on the foe.

**Skandr Reavers:** A classic type of heavy infantry, Skandr sailors gave over their oars for axes when the time came to plunder seaside towns and villages. Their armor was more than a match for most militia spears and their bloody-minded ferocity kept them fighting when other troops might have broken.

**Slingers:** Slingers are uncommon, as the weapon requires extensive practice to master. Still, they're cheap to employ and can keep firing as long as there are stones to hurl.

**Trebuchet:** This trained crew can get their trebuchets built with a day of preparation time, and usually need a near supply of lumber. Once established, they can only fire in one direction. Anything in line with this unit, however, is apt to be reduced to a fine smear if one of its massive stones hits home.

**Warrior Monks:** Sober Vowed pledged to discipline and contemplation, these warrior monks train ceaselessly to better focus their spiritual development- and to smash the rib cages of the unworthy.

UNIT	HD	AC	Mv	ATTACKS	Sv	ML	UPKEEP	TRAITS
<i>Militia</i>	1	9	120'	1d6 Spear	NM	6	1M 0W 0S	<i>Garrison</i>
<i>Levies</i>	1	8	120'	1d6 Spear	NM	7	1M 0W 0S	<i>Green</i>
<i>Rangers</i>	1	7	120'	1d6 Spear/Shortbow	F1	8	1M 1W 0S	<i>Ranger, Skirmisher</i>
<i>Gadaal Scouts</i>	1	7	120'	1d6 Spear/Shortbow	F1	9	1M 1W 1S	<i>Ranger, Skirmisher, Skilled</i>
<i>Slingers</i>	1	7	120'	1d4 Dagger/Sling	F1	7	1M 1W 0S	<i>Scarce, Skilled</i>
<i>Archers</i>	1	7	120'	1d4 Dagger/1d6 Bow	F1	8	1M 1W 0S	
<i>Longbowmen</i>	1	7	120'	1d4 Dagger/1d8 Longbow	F1	8	2M 1W 1S	<i>Scarce, Skilled</i>
<i>Crossbowmen</i>	1	6	90'	1d4 Club/1d8 Crossbow	F1	8	1M 1W 0S	<i>Direct Fire</i>
<i>Light Cavalry</i>	2	6	240'	1d8 Sword	F2	8	2M 2W 0S	<i>Chase</i>
<i>Heavy Cavalry</i>	2	4	120'	1d8 Sword/1d6 Lance	F2	9	2M 3W 0S	<i>Charger, Chase</i>
<i>Horse Archers</i>	2	6	240'	1d8 Sword/1d6 Bow	F2	8	2M 2W 0S	<i>Shoot on the Run, Chase</i>
<i>Mounted Knights</i>	3	2	120'	1d8 Sword/1d6 Lance	F3	9	3M 4W 1S	<i>Charger, Scarce, Skilled</i>
<i>Light Infantry</i>	1	7	120'	1d6 Spear	F1	7	1M 1W 0S	<i>Spear Tactics</i>
<i>Pikemen</i>	2	7	120'	1d10 Polearm	F2	8	2M 1W 0S	<i>Hardened, Spear Tactics</i>
<i>Eirengarder Pike</i>	2	5	90'	1d10 Polearm	F2	9	2M 1W 1S	<i>Hardened, Spear Tactics</i>
<i>Heavy Infantry</i>	2	4	90'	1d8 Sword	F2	8	2M 2W 0S	
<i>Skandr Reavers</i>	2	5	90'	1d8 Battle Axe	F2	8	2M 2W 0S	<i>Hardened</i>
<i>Foot Knights</i>	3	3	60'	1d10 2H Sword	F3	9	3M 3W 1S	<i>Scarce, Skilled</i>
<i>Warrior Monks</i>	2	7	120'	1d8 Fist	C2	10	3M 0W 2S	<i>Divine Favor</i>
<i>Kueh Samurai</i>	3	4	90'	1d8 Sword/Longbow	F3	10	3M 3W 2S	<i>Scarce, Skilled</i>
<i>Dwarf Crossbows</i>	1	4	90'	1d8 Sword/Crossbow	D1	9	2M 1W 1S	<i>Direct Fire</i>
<i>Dwarf Sappers</i>	1	3	60'	1d8 Heavy Pick	D1	9	2M 1W 2S	<i>Wallcrusher</i>
<i>Dwarf Warriors</i>	1	4	90'	1d8 Battle Axe	D1	9	2M 1W 1S	
<i>Dwarf Heroes</i>	3	2	60'	1d10 Polearm	D3	10	3M 3W 2S	<i>Hardened, Scarce, Skilled</i>
<i>Elf Bowmen</i>	1	6	120'	1d8 Sword/Longbow	E1	9	1M 1W 2S	<i>Scarce, Skilled</i>
<i>Elf War Mages</i>	2	5	90'	1d8 Sword	E2	9	2M 1W 2S	<i>Scarce, War Magic</i>
<i>Elf Warriors</i>	2	4	90'	1d8 Sword	E2	9	2M 2M 2S	<i>Scarce, Skirmisher</i>
<i>Elf Zealots</i>	4	2	60'	1d8 Sword/Longbow	E4	10	4M 2W 3S	<i>Hardened, Rare, Skilled</i>
<i>Halfling Militia</i>	1	7	120'	1d6 Spear	H1	12	0M 1W 1S	<i>Diehard, Stealth</i>
<i>Halfling Pikemen</i>	2	4	90'	1d8 Halfling Pike	H2	12	1M 1W 2S	<i>Diehard, Spear Tactics</i>
<i>Halfling Slingers</i>	1	7	120'	1d6 Shortswd/1d4 Sling	H1	12	0M 1W 1S	<i>Diehard, Skilled, Stealth</i>
<i>Ballista</i>	1	9	20'	2d6 Ballista Bolt	F1	8	2M 2W 0S	<i>Crewed</i>
<i>Catapult</i>	1	9	None	3d6 Stone	F1	8	2M 3W 0S	<i>Crewed, Wallcrusher</i>
<i>Trebuchet</i>	1	9	None	3d10 Stone	F1	8	2M 4W 0S	<i>Crewed, Wallcrusher, Slow</i>
<i>Sailing Ship</i>	6	7	120'/-	3d6 Catapult	10		3M 5W 0S	<i>Ship, Transport 1</i>
<i>Skandr Longship</i>	3	8	150'/90'	3d6 Catapult	10		3M 3W 1S	<i>Ship, Marines</i>
<i>Transport Ship</i>	2	7	120'/-	3d6 Catapult	9		2M 4W 0S	<i>Ship, Transport 3</i>
<i>War Galley</i>	4	7	120'/60'	4d4 Ram/3d6 Catapult	10		3M 4W 0S	<i>Ship, Transport 1</i>
<i>Barrier</i>	2	n/a	n/a	1d4 defenders	F2	12	0M 2W 0S	<i>Fortification</i>
<i>Tower</i>	4	n/a	n/a	1d8 archers	F4	12	1M 4W 0S	<i>Fortification</i>
<i>Citadel</i>	8	n/a	n/a	3d6 archers	F8	12	3M 6W 0S	<i>Fortification, Diehard</i>
<i>Harbor Chain</i>	2	n/a	n/a	1d4 defenders	F2	12	0M 2W 0S	<i>Fortification</i>

## SUPPORT ELEMENTS AND COMMON FOES

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### SUPPORT ELEMENT DESCRIPTIONS

**Assassin:** Whether ninja, zealot, sniper, or elite squad of special operatives, this specialist is trained to get past the outer screen of bodyguards and pickets to make an attack on an opposing Support or Hero. Use of their Assassination ability takes up the unit's attack for that round.

**Beast Handler:** These professionals come in various types, usually trained in handling a particular type of charge. When attached to an appropriate Stupid unit, the unit can ignore that quality.

**Bodyguard:** A counter to an assassin, a bodyguard faces a rough fate on most battlefields but they can buy a vital support element a little extra time to work.

**Devil Priest:** A zealous servant of the Hell Kings, devil priests can goad compatible worshippers into a frenzy of bloodthirsty hate.

**Guardian Mage:** Versed in innumerable countercharms and wards, this mage can use the energies of a battlefield to defend an entire military unit from magical attacks.

**Harriers:** These mounted troops are trained in checking and driving routed troops, giving slower units a chance to catch up with them and punish them for their flight.

**Healer:** These healers can perform battlefield triage and first aid, helping a unit survive a bloodletting on the field.

**Holy Man:** Unlike many charlatans, this holy figure actually does have the favor of the gods, and can share it with his allies.

**Necromancer:** These necromancers hurl poisonous hexes at their enemies under the shelter of the unit's shields, and can lead undead troops with a living captain's intelligence.

**Sapper Crew:** These engineers help the unit to use its muscle most effectively in breaking walls and bringing down fortifications.

**Scout Team:** A thin perimeter of scouts cast out from the main unit increases the distance at which stealthed units are spotted.

**Tide Priest:** Usually hopelessly insane, these zealots can inflame their cultist flock with a ferocious willingness to fight.

**Veteran Sergeant:** Tough as boot leather, this sergeant has seen the worst of war and is no longer impressed by routs. His presence and his commands help less valiant troops hold the line.

**Witch Priestess:** A Shou tribe with a skilled witch priestess can scourge its foes both with her battlefield sorcery and their own frenzied spears.

**War Mage:** These arcanists know how to harvest the geomantic energy of a battlefield and transform it into a cruel assault upon an enemy unit.

### FOE DESCRIPTIONS

**Ape Soldiers:** Some of the carnivorous apes of the island jungles are almost as intelligent as men- at least sufficiently to train them to the use of clubs and obedience to officers. They retain the instincts of wild beasts, however, and are prone to fleeing when panicked.

**Bandits:** Common and ineradicable rabble, bandits are found wherever there is anything to steal. Sometimes they mass in bands large enough to actually dare take to the battlefield.

**Creepers:** The hideous Tidespawned remnants of children, halflings, and small humans, the Creepers are a mindless swarm.

**Cultists:** Zealous worshippers of some sinister power, these cultists are eager to give up their lives in service of their dark masters.

**Dead Legion:** More than a simple mob of zombies or skeletons, these undead warriors retain vague echoes of their former trade, and respond rationally and fearlessly to the demands of war.

**Hill Giants:** Giants rarely make any appearance in the wars of men, but when they do, their mighty blows and fearsome bulk are enough to send whole regiments fleeing in panic.

**Lizardfolk Warriors:** The lizardfolk are a cold-bloodedly courageous foe, unsophisticated in their fighting but impervious to panic.

**Men of Clay & Jade:** Untutored commanders are sometimes surprised by the speed of these animate constructs. While they often require a mage to control them, they fight without fear or mercy.

**Ogre Warband:** Some of the foul ogres of the Isles have pleasures that involve the red ruin of a battlefield. These monsters can be found hiring out their services to the worst kinds of masters.

**Red Jade Templars:** Devout servants of the Hell Kings, these templars have many of the same skills as the Kueh samurai from whom they are descended, if perhaps less of their courage.

**Shou Bugbears:** Bugbear tribes are rare and tend to reclusiveness, but no other kind of Shou is more feared on the battlefield. Their stealth is remarkable for such hulking foes.

**Shou Goblins:** A common border scourge, goblins lack discipline and are slower on foot than humans, but they are sneaky and come in unending numbers.

**Shou Orcs:** Tough, vicious, and better-disciplined than goblins, orcs are the kind of Shou most likely to launch organized attacks of destruction on human settlements.

**Shou Wolfriders:** A few goblin tribes have mastered the art of breeding great wolves as riding beasts. Such riders are fearsomely fast and much more courageous than is common for their kind.

**Undead Swarm:** Some necromancers call up these mobs of mindless undead, while other packs are simply the undead detritus of some terrible massacre. They are stupid, but their relentless viciousness ensures that any victory will come at a cost in blood.

**Warbeasts:** There are terrible beasts within the jungles and mountains of the isles, and some domains have been able to tame enough of them to make a useful battlefield force. While they are capable of inflicting ferocious carnage on a foe, their animal intellects make directing them a difficult matter.

SUPPORT	HD	AC	Mv	ATTACKS	Sv	ML	COST	TRAITS
<i>Assassin</i>	-	-	120'	None	T5	n/a	0M 2W 0S	<i>Assassin</i>
<i>Beast Handler</i>	-	-	120'	None	F1	n/a	0M 1W 1S	<i>Tamer</i>
<i>Bodyguard</i>	-	-	90'	None	F3	n/a	1M 1W 0S	<i>Protector</i>
<i>Devil Priest</i>	-	-	90'	None	C5	n/a	0M 1W 2S	<i>Maddening, Divine Favor</i>
<i>Guardian Mage</i>	-	-	120'	None	MU5	n/a	0M 2W 0S	<i>Countermagic, Sage</i>
<i>Harriers</i>	-	-	240'	None	F3	n/a	2M 1W 0S	<i>Chase</i>
<i>Healer</i>	-	-	120'	None	C3	n/a	1M 1W 0S	<i>Healing</i>
<i>Holy Man</i>	-	-	90'	None	C5	n/a	0M 1W 2S	<i>Divine Favor, Prophet</i>
<i>Magistrate</i>	-	-	120'	None	T1	n/a	0M 0W 2S	<i>Magistrate</i>
<i>Magistrate, Expert</i>	-	-	120'	None	T5	n/a	0M 2W 2S	<i>Magistrate+2</i>
<i>Merchant</i>	-	-	120'	None	T1	n/a	0M 2W 0S	<i>Merchant</i>
<i>Merchant, Master</i>	-	-	120'	None	T5	n/a	0M 3W 1S	<i>Merchant+2</i>
<i>Necromancer</i>	-	-	120'	None	MU5	n/a	1M 2W 1S	<i>War Magic, Tamer, Sage</i>
<i>Prophet</i>	-	-	120'	None	C1	n/a	0M 0W 2S	<i>Prophet</i>
<i>Prophet, Revered</i>	-	-	120'	None	C 5	n/a	0M 1W 3S	<i>Prophet+2</i>
<i>Sage</i>	-	-	120	None	MU1	n/a	0M 2W 0S	<i>Sage</i>
<i>Sage, Great</i>	-	-	120	None	MU5	n/a	0M 2W 2S	<i>Sage+2</i>
<i>Sapper Crew</i>	-	-	120'	None	F3	n/a	2M 0W 0S	<i>Wallcrusher</i>
<i>Scout Team</i>	-	-	120'	None	T4	n/a	1M 0W 0S	<i>Keen Senses</i>
<i>Tide Priest</i>	-	-	90'	None	C5	n/a	0M 0W 1S	<i>Maddening</i>
<i>Veteran Sergeant</i>	-	-	90'	None	F5	n/a	1M 0W 0S	<i>Rally</i>
<i>War Mage</i>	-	-	120'	None	M5	n/a	1M 2W 1S	<i>War Magic, Sage</i>
<i>Witch Priestess</i>	-	-	120'	None	C5	n/a	1M 0W 2S	<i>Maddening, War Magic, Sage</i>

UNIT	HD	AC	Mv	ATTACKS	Sv	ML	COST	TRAITS
<i>Ape Soldiers</i>	4	6	120'	1d8 Greatclub	F2	7	3M 3W 0S	
<i>Bandits</i>	1	7	120'	1d6 Spear	F1	8	0M 1W 1S	
<i>Creepers</i>	1/2	7	60'	1d4 Club	NM	12	1M 0W 0S	
<i>Cultists</i>	1	8	120'	1d6 Spear	C1	10	0M 0W 1S	
<i>Dead Legion</i>	2	4	120'	1d8 Sword	F2	12	2M 1W 0S	<i>Diehard</i>
<i>Hill Giants</i>	8	4	120'	2d8 Club	F8	8	9M 5W 2S	<i>Wallcrusher</i>
<i>Lizardfolk Warriors</i>	2	5	60'	1d6+1 Spear	F2	12	0M 3W 1S	
<i>Men of Clay &amp; Jade</i>	2	7	120'	1d8 Sword	F2	12	0M 3W 0S	<i>Stupid</i>
<i>Ogre Warband</i>	4	5	90'	1d10 Club	F4	10	1M 2W 4S	
<i>Red Jade Templars</i>	3	4	90'	1d8 Sword/Longbow	F3	9	3M 3W 2S	<i>Scarce, Skilled, Guardsman+2</i>
<i>Shou Bugbears</i>	3	5	90'	2d4 Spear	F3	9	4M 2W 1S	<i>Stealth</i>
<i>Shou Goblins</i>	1	6	60'	1d6 Spear	NM	7	1M 0W 0S	<i>Stealth</i>
<i>Shou Orcs</i>	1	6	120'	1d8 Sword	F1	8	1M 1W 0S	
<i>Shou Wolfriders</i>	2	6	240'	1d6 Spear	F2	9	3M 1W 0S	<i>Charge, Chase</i>
<i>Undead Swarm</i>	2	8	90'	1d6 Claw or Smash	F2	12	1M 1W 0S	<i>Diehard, Stupid</i>
<i>Warbeasts</i>	4	6	150'	1d6 Claw x 2 and 1d8 Bite	F4	9	4M 3W 0S	<i>Stupid</i>

## UNIT ABILITIES

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**Assassin:** This Support allows units to specifically target Heroes, Support, and other special characters attached to a unit. The unit makes a hit roll against the target, using the attached unit's AC if the target has none specified. On a hit, Heroes suffer 8 points of damage, non-Heroic PCs take 3d8 damage, and other Support elements are destroyed. Only one assassin can be attached to a unit at any one time.

**Charger:** The unit excels at making smashing charges. If the unit can move at least half of its standard movement rate in a straight line before meleeing a target, it gains +4 to hit and does double damage, or triple damage with lances.

**Chase:** The unit is fast and responsive enough to run down fleeing foes. If the ability is possessed by a Support unit, it confers the quality on the unit to which it is attached. See the "Withdrawing from Battle" section for details.

**Countermagic:** This Support can protect its attached unit from hostile sorceries. Once per round, it can grant a reroll to any failed save versus Spell made by the unit or an attached character. No more than one countermagic may benefit a unit on any single round.

**Crewed:** The unit consists of one or more engines manned by a crew of artilleryists or engineers. If the unit becomes Routed it is instantly destroyed as the crew flees and the engines are smashed. The extra hands improve accuracy, however, and Crewed units gain a +3 bonus to hit rolls.

**Diehard:** This unit may die, but it never goes down easy. Any unit or Hero that reduces the diehard unit to zero hit points in melee suffers immediate damage as if the unit had struck it with its current melee weapon.

**Direct Fire:** The unit's missile attacks do not arc and plunge as arrows or sling stones do. It cannot fire on an enemy if any allied units, walls, or other impositions exist on the line of sight between the unit and its targets.

**Divine Favor:** This special character confers the blessings of the gods on the attached unit. Once per battle, the unit may reroll a failed attack roll or saving throw. This divine favor may be conferred by the Support only once per battle, and a given unit cannot benefit from it more than once per battle.

**Fortification:** The asset is a fortification, and must be beaten down in a siege or assault before the other units in the location can be harmed. Fortifications are ineffective against naval units, save for Harbor Chains, which function only against ships. Fortifications cannot be moved from their original location.

**Garrison:** The unit protects its home or duty post, but does not travel from it. It cannot be moved to a different location.

**Green:** The unit is reckless and naive in battle. It gains a +1 Morale bonus, but any failed morale check immediately reduces it to Routed status.

**Guardsmen:** This unit has been trained in the measured techniques of police work and peacekeeping, and counts as a Guardsman in overcoming a local Obstacle. If a bonus is given, it is added to any Disorder saving throws the unit may make.

**Hardened:** The unit is hard to shake. It ignores its first failed morale check during a battle.

**Healing:** This Support element is skilled at magical healing or battlefield triage. Once per battle, the element may heal 1d6 hit points for its attached unit. A unit may benefit from this power only once per battle.

**Keen Senses:** This Support excels at scouting out the surroundings. Any Stealthed unit that moves while within 100 yards of the unit must roll 5+ on 1d6 or be discovered.

**Maddening:** If attached to a unit that shares the same zealous faith, the special character can drive them into a frenzy of murderous valor. The special character may trigger this frenzy at any time, but it cannot be quelled for the rest of the battle. The madness grants +2 Morale and a +2 armor class penalty.

**Magistrate:** This Support element may act as a Magistrate to overcome a local Obstacle. If a bonus is given, this number is added to any Corruption saving throws made by the element.

**Marines:** The ship's crew is both numerous and trained for fighting on land. Such ships may disembark their crews to fight on land as if they were a unit of Skandr Reavers. If the crew is completely destroyed, its parent ship is reduced to 1 hit point, assuming it hasn't already been burnt by victorious locals.

**Merchant:** This Support element may act as a Merchant to overcome a local Obstacle. If a bonus is given, this number is added to any Poverty saving throws made by the element.

**Prophet:** This Support element may act as a Prophet to overcome a local Obstacle. If a bonus is given, this number is added to any Despair saving throws made by the element.

**Protector:** Once per battle, the special character with Protector can interpose against a use of the Assassin power on a Support or Hero in the protector's unit. If the assassination hit roll succeeds, the protector is killed but the attempt is a failure. Whether or not the protector lives, the assassin must save versus Death or be killed. Assassins without listed saving throw tables must roll 15+ on 1d20 to save.

**Rally:** The Support can put iron in the spines of wavering men. Once per battle, the Support can grant a reroll on a failed Morale check. A unit can benefit from this ability only once per battle.

**Ranger:** The unit crosses rough terrain effortlessly. Difficult terrain imposes no additional movement cost, and even very difficult terrain only doubles the movement required.

**Rare:** These troops are very difficult to recruit, making it hard to replenish a depleted unit. When a Reinforce Unit domain action is taken, this unit can be replenished by 1 hit point for every 4 spent to reinforce it.

**Sage:** This Support element may act as a Sage to overcome a local Obstacle. If a bonus is given, this number is added to any Ignorance saving throws made by the element.

**Scarce:** These troops are uncommon, and reinforcements are hard to find. When a Reinforce Unit domain action is taken, this unit can be replenished by 1 hit point for every 2 spent to reinforce it.

**Ship:** This unit is a naval craft. Most warships move by means of sails, but some have rowers, with a rowing speed given after the slash.

**Shoot on the Run:** This unit can move both before and after it attacks, up to its normal maximum movement. If it becomes ensnared in melee combat, however, it must make a fighting withdrawal as normal to get free.

**Skilled:** The unit is uncommonly skilled at its work, and gains a +1 bonus to all attack rolls.

**Skirmisher:** The unit excels at open-order combat, and takes only half damage, rounded up, from missile attacks and area-effect damage spells.

**Slow:** The unit finds it difficult to maneuver into position or ready itself to attack. It may attack during the first round of battle and every odd-numbered round thereafter. It may move normally in rounds when it cannot attack.

**Spear Tactics:** The unit is expert at bracing themselves to receive charges and holding an unbroken line against foes. They get an automatic free attack on any unit that Charges them, resolved

before the charge attack. They also gain an automatic +1 to hit so long as they have at least half of their maximum hit points remaining.

**Stealth:** The unit can vanish into undergrowth and rough terrain. Provided there is some kind of vegetation or rubble to conceal them, the unit can forego its attack to disappear into stealth. The unit cannot be targeted by missile attacks or spells while so concealed, but will be revealed if an enemy is within 50 yards. A Stealthed unit that attacks is automatically revealed but gains +4 on their attack roll.

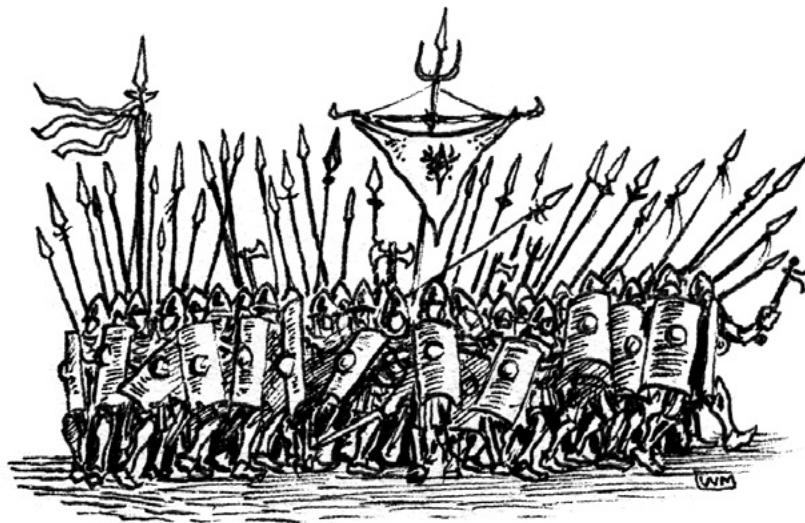
**Stupid:** The unit is feral, moronic, or literally mindless. Every time it wishes to change its current action, it must make a Morale check. On a failure, it continues to do whatever it was doing the prior round- attacking the same enemy, moving in the same direction, and so forth.

**Tamer:** The Support element is accustomed to leading and directing stupid troops. Assuming the troops are of an appropriate kind for their leader, the Tamer allows them to ignore their Stupid quality.

**Transport:** The ship can carry the given number of units- "Transport 1" means one unit can be carried, and so forth. Archers may fight enemy ships within range, and melee troops can engage if boarded or a boarding opportunity arises. A sunk transport takes its passengers to a watery grave along with its crew.

**Wallcrusher:** The unit's attacks are especially destructive toward fortification assets. Any damage it inflicts is doubled.

**War Magic:** The unit can wield the sorcerous energies of the battlefield against its foes. In place of an attack action, it can hurl hostile magic at a target to inflict 1d8 plus the unit's hit dice in hit point damage. A successful saving throw versus Spells cuts this damage in half, rounded up, and the spellcraft has a range of 150 yards. War Magic cannot be used if the unit is in melee. Support units that provide this quality do not add the unit's hit dice to the damage, and use only the base 1d8 damage.







# HEROES

## PLAYER CHARACTERS IN DOMAINS AND ON THE BATTLEFIELD

The difference between the miserable collapse of a kingdom and its glorious salvation often comes down to the acts of a few brave men and women. Kings and princes put their trust in proven heroes of far-famed valor. Humble peasants and village elders pray for the help of wandering swordsmen. Countless aspirants die on the spears of Shou or in the jaws of hideous beasts, but in the end, there are always those few case-hardened freebooters able to stand against the worst a poisoned world can throw at their homes, their families, and their precious chests of loot.

This chapter discusses the ways in which an experienced PC can prove a valuable asset to a Domain. Even beyond their expertise in adventuring and practical problem-solving, hardened adventurers have skills and experience that can help the humblest village or mining camp prosper beyond its wildest hopes. These abilities grow in parallel with their adventuring talents, and as PCs learn the secrets of their chosen profession, they also learn how to use those knacks for less traditional but perhaps more lasting ends.

### CHAMPIONS AND THEIR GIFTS

Once a PC reaches a certain amount of experience, they begin to gain levels as a *Champion*. This advancement happens in parallel with their normal class levels, and no special training is required. The abilities of a Champion are a natural outgrowth of their existing talents, and gradually enhance the PC's value and importance to the Domain that might enlist their aid. If a PC loses experience, such as to an energy draining attack, their Champion levels may be lost as well. Immediate benefits from these levels are lost, but existing domain assets granted by the Champion do not disband unless the Domain can no longer support them.

When a PC gains a Champion level, they are allowed to choose a special ability from the list provided in this chapter. Some abilities have certain class or level prerequisites, while others can be taken by any Champion. The same ability cannot be chosen twice.

A Domain can only benefit once by a special power or value bonus granted by an ability. If two powerful PC fighters both aid the same kingdom, their Martial Glory ability applies only once. If the ability grants a free asset, such as a cleric's Faithful Disciples ability, the ability may be applied more than once if sufficient valid locations are available. Two clerics could both found Shrines, for example, provided that there were two locations in the Domain that were valid for placement of the asset.

NPCs do not normally gain Champion levels or acquire their special abilities. It's too much bookkeeping bother to oblige a Labyrinth Lord to track that many NPCs, and the fact that they outnumber the PCs by such an enormous margin justifies a little extra nudge for the player characters. Still, if the Labyrinth Lord wants to decide that a particular evil overlord makes a valid Hero on the battlefield, or give the evil sorcerer a School of necromantic pupils, there's nothing preventing such a grant.

### CHAMPIONS ON THE BATTLEFIELD

Several of the abilities allow the PC to grant special benefits to a unit when engaging in mass combat. The PC is treated as a Support element, and can be attached to any suitable unit. Most often the PC is the commander of the group and responsible for their leadership in battle. Advantages granted by Champion abilities can only be applied once to any given unit- two PCs with the same ability cannot double up on the same unit.

If the unit is destroyed in combat, a PC must save versus Death or suffer damage equal to half their maximum hit points, rounded up. If the PC survives, they're left somewhere within 20 yards of the slaughter, and their activities beyond this point can be handled under normal game rules. There are a lot of fleeing victims from a shattered unit, and most enemy units will not intentionally pursue the PC unless they are somehow conspicuous in the press. PCs who survive to reach a friendly unit can join up under the usual mass combat rules for attaching Support elements to a unit.

Some Champions may eventually acquire the special ability that transforms them into Heroes. These titans of battle are able to smash whole armies of lesser mortals with their invincible blades and terrifying ferocity. A Hero is a one-man regiment. While they can attach themselves to normal units, they are also able to operate independently on the battlefield. If their unit is destroyed, they need not save versus Death, but instead take maximum damage from the attack that smashed the unit. Whether attached or independent, they can launch their own attacks and the damage they do can wipe out whole squads of enemy troops.

For example, Torvald the fighter has gradually become a living legend in the west, and is a fearsome Hero-king. As a 14th level fighter, he has 56 hit points, an armor class of -3, and wields a sword +3. If he charges into the midst of a Light Infantry unit, he can roll a normal hit roll against their AC 7 and his sword's damage is applied normally to the unit's hit points. In this case, his blade strikes for 9 points of damage, and the enemy unit is smashed. Torvald may not have personally eviscerated every one of the hundred common troops in the unit, but by the time he's rampaged through their ranks like an invincible bearded gorestorm, the unit is totally broken.

Heroes do have their limits, however, and when facing vast numbers of foes it's inevitable that a few of them are going to get lucky. When attacked by a full military unit, a Hero takes maximum damage from any hits the unit might land. Even if the unit misses, the Hero takes normal damage. A few advanced abilities might offer some protection even against these tides of desperate steel.

PCs aren't the only Heroes on a battlefield. Titanic monsters or ferocious enemy NPCs might also qualify as such. If a Labyrinth Lord needs to get some idea of how these legendary warriors might shape a battlefield, it's convenient to simply imagine the fight as if it were the Hero against a number of normal enemies that hit



every round. To grasp the odds of Torvald fighting alone against 8 Shou Orc units, for example, the Labyrinth Lord would consider how Torvald would fare against 8 orcs who happened to hit him every time they swung but could only attack him one at a time. In other words, Torvald would probably be down about 4d8 hit points by the time he'd butchered them all. Against orcish archers, however, who could all attack him every round, he might well die before he could finish them all off.

Some Labyrinth Lords might find the idea of PC Heroes to be excessive, and want to avoid modeling the kind of one-man wrecking balls that legendary warriors often become in story and myth. In that case, they may simply forbid the selection of the Hero special ability.

### CHAMPION LEVELS

Immediately upon reaching first level as a Champion, a PC may choose one allowable ability from the list on the following page. Some abilities have class or Champion level prerequisites. At the Labyrinth Lord's discretion, these prerequisites might be waived if a particular talent is exceptionally appropriate for a character who otherwise would not be able to obtain it.

CHAMPION LEVEL PROGRESSION	
Level	XP
1	25,000
2	50,000
3	100,000
4	200,000
5	350,000
6	500,000
7	650,000
8	700,000
9+	+150,000 per level

In addition, a new Champion gains an automatic benefit based upon their class. If using a version of the game that allows for multiclassing or differences between race and class, the PC may choose to receive the benefits of any one race or class.

CLASS BONUS ABILITIES	
Cleric	Faithful Disciples
Dwarf	Dwarf Friend
Elf	Burning Creed
Halfling	Halfling Affinity
Fighter	Martial Glory
Magic-User	Studious Apprentices
Scion	Burning Creed
Thief	Sticky Fingers
Vowed	Warrior Monks
Other	One appropriate ability

ABILITY	REQUISITES	EFFECT
<i>Administrator</i>	Any	+2 <i>Wealth and Social</i> for one Town or City.
<i>Agile Tactics</i>	Any	PC and attached unit never need to make fighting withdrawals.
<i>Arrow Deflection</i>	Any	PC and unit take half damage from enemy units' normal missile attacks
<i>Assassin</i>	Fighter, Thief, Halfling	Grant Assassin quality to attached unit.
<i>Battlefield Arcana</i>	Magic-User, Elf	Can grant War Magic quality to attached unit
<i>Blessed</i>	Cleric, Vowed	Can grant Divine Favor unit ability once per battle.
<i>Burning Creed</i>	Elf, Scion	Gain the Burning Creed domain custom
<i>Countermagic</i>	M-U, Elf, Cleric, Vowed	Can grant Countermagic quality to attached unit
<i>Courageous</i>	Any except Magic-Users	Can grant the Rally ability once per battle.
<i>Dwarf Friend</i>	Dwarf	Gain the Dwarf Friend domain custom
<i>Dwarven Clansmen</i>	Dwarf	Gain three units of Dwarven Warriors or Crossbows with no upkeep.
<i>Elven Creedmates</i>	Elf, Scion	Gain two units of Elven Warriors with no upkeep.
<i>Evasive</i>	Thief	PC immune to area-effect damage while attached to a unit.
<i>Faithful Disciples</i>	Cleric, Vowed	Gain a Shrine in a suitable location.
<i>Fearless Exemplar</i>	Fighter, Dwarf, Elf, Halfling	Grants +2 Morale to an attached unit.
<i>Financial Genius</i>	Any	Gain the Merchant+3 quality.
<i>Furious Sorcery</i>	Magic-User	Battlefield spellcasting does +1 damage per die and has a -1 save penalty.
<i>Godhammer</i>	Dwarf	Attached unit does maximum damage against extraplanar creatures.
<i>Guild Companions</i>	Thief	Gain two units of Rangers and one Assassin, all with no upkeep.
<i>Halfling Affinity</i>	Halfling	Gain the Halfling Affinity domain custom
<i>Healing Might</i>	Cleric	Heal 2d8 hit points on an attached unit once per battle.
<i>Hero</i>	Champion level 7	Your PC is treated as a Hero on the battlefield.
<i>Inspiring</i>	Any	Gain the Prophet+3 quality.
<i>Invincible Hero</i>	Champion level 8, Hero	Take half damage from all military unit melee attacks, rounded down.
<i>Judicious Mind</i>	Any	Gain the Magistrate+3 quality.
<i>Last Ditch Defender</i>	Halfling	Grants Diehard to an attached unit
<i>Lucky</i>	Any	Gain +4 on value checks or domain saves you make
<i>Martial Glory</i>	Fighter, Dwarf, Elf, Halfling	+4 Military value
<i>Military Acumen</i>	Fighter or Vigilant Watchman	Once per domain turn, automatically lessen a Military obstacle's level by 1.
<i>Overwhelming Sorcery</i>	Magic-User	Battlefield saves against the PC's spells are at -2
<i>Peacemaker</i>	Inspiring or Judicious Mind	Once per domain turn, automatically lessen a Social obstacle's level by 1.
<i>Profitable Sideline</i>	Any	Gain 1 point of Treasure each domain turn.
<i>Relentless</i>	Dwarf	PC and attached unit takes 2 fewer points of damage from every attack.
<i>Sagacious</i>	Any	Gain the Sage+3 quality.
<i>Shieldbearer</i>	Fighter	PCs and Support units in attached unit always make Death saves.
<i>Skilled Apprentices</i>	Magic-User	Gain three War Mage Support units with no upkeep.
<i>Stealth</i>	Thief, Halfling	The PC and any attached unit gains the Stealth quality.
<i>Sticky Fingers</i>	Thief, Halfling	+4 Wealth value
<i>Studious Pupils</i>	Magic-User, Elf	Gain a School in a suitable location
<i>Undead Bane</i>	Cleric	PC and attached unit gain +4 to hit undead and +4 on saving throws.
<i>Vigilant Watchman</i>	Any	Gain the Guardsman+3 quality.
<i>Warrior Monks</i>	Vowed	Gain two units of Warrior Monks with no upkeep costs.
<i>Warrior Retinue</i>	Fighter	Gain a unit of Mounted Knights with no upkeep.
<i>Wealthbringer</i>	Sagacious or Financial Genius	Once per domain turn, automatically lessen a Wealth obstacle's level by 1.
<i>Zealous Followers</i>	Cleric	Gain a unit of Foot Knights and a Holy Man, both with no upkeep.

## ABILITY DESCRIPTIONS

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The following is a more detailed description of the abilities available to an experienced Champion. The Labyrinth Lord should always feel free to add new possibilities to this roster, if a PC's past and campaign events suggest some other expression of their talents.

Some abilities grant benefits to the PC or their attached unit when on the battlefield, such as a bonus to hit undead or damage resistance against incoming attacks. These benefits apply only in the context of mass combat- if the PC gets caught alone in a courtyard as a dozen assassins pop up to fire crossbows, his Arrow Deflection quality isn't going to help him. These talents require the confusion and energy of a battlefield to be employed, and aren't applicable to dungeoneering exploits.

Other abilities grant structure assets, such as Schools or Shrines. If there are no valid locations in the Domain for constructing such an edifice when the PC gains the ability, it can be saved up until the opportunity arises. If the asset is destroyed, the PC can found a replacement after one year or an appropriate adventure.

Some abilities grant military units. These warriors are personally loyal to the PC and require no upkeep. They will serve faithfully and well and face all predictable dangers on the battlefield or elsewhere, but abuse of their trust will result in Morale loss and eventual desertion. A destroyed unit will be replaced in one year, provided their predecessors did not have their lives wasted by an unworthy lord.

**Administrator:** The PC has a great knack for resolving daily minutiae and petty disputes. Their ability to quash problems before they become serious grants substantial benefit when working with large numbers of people. The PC may be placed in charge of a single Town or City, and increases its Wealth and Social values by +2 each.

**Agile Tactics:** The PC wields her troops like a rapier, striking and fading back swiftly. Whether a Hero or attached to a unit, the PC and their unit never need to make fighting withdrawals. They can march directly away from a melee without needing to make a Morale check or suffering attacks of opportunity.

**Arrow Deflection:** Whether by a good shield, agile maneuvers, or sorcerous deflection, the character's unit is very hard for enemy archers to pin. Their unit takes half damage from normal missile attacks, rounded up, or a quarter damage if it also has the Skirmisher quality. If the PC is a Hero, this damage reduction applies to them, too, if fired upon by a military unit. Less Heroic PCs must face the usual consequences of being feathered by dozens of enemy arrows.

**Assassin:** The PC knows how to wedge open enemy formations and get at the tender Support elements inside. The unit to which they are attached gains the Assassin quality.

**Battlefield Arcana:** The roiling geomantic forces of the battlefield can be channeled by this PC, allowing them to grant their

attached unit the War Magic quality. If the PC is a Hero they also gain this quality.

**Blessed:** Some people are just blessed, and this PC is one such. They grant their attached unit the Divine Favor quality, and gain it themselves if a Hero.

**Burning Creed:** The great deeds of this PC have impressed and inspired their elven brethren, and they come to her aid. The Domain the PC serves gains the Burning Creed custom.

**Countermagic:** The PC knows countercharms and disciplines of mystic defiance. The PC grants the Countermagic ability to their attached unit, and gains it themselves if a Hero.

**Courageous:** The deathless valor of the PC inspires those around him. Once per battle, he can use the Rally ability on an attached unit.

**Dwarf Friend:** Kindred dwarves honor the PC's mighty deeds. The Domain which they serve gains the Dwarf Friend custom.

**Dwarven Clansmen:** A band of dwarven kinsmen come to take service with the famed hero. Three units arrive, made up of the PC's choice of Dwarf Warriors and Dwarf Crossbows.

**Elven Creedmates:** The inspiring success of the PC draws the emulation and service of fellow elven believers. Two units of Elf Warriors come to serve them.

**Evasive:** The PC might be unusually talented at employing terrain, or he might just be willing to use comrades as body shields; whatever the reason, when the PC is attached to a unit, he's immune to area-effect damage such as that from spells or breath weapons. If the attack destroys the unit, the PC is left alone on the field but unharmed. Lone Heroes do not benefit by this power.

**Faithful Disciples:** Impressed by the PC's accomplishments and devotion, a priest of the same faith sets up a Shrine asset in a suitable domain location.

**Fearless Exemplar:** With the PC present, their attached unit gains a +2 Morale bonus.

**Financial Genius:** The PC has a remarkable knack for solving Obstacles of Poverty. They gain the Merchant+3 quality.

**Furious Sorcery:** The sorcerer's spells feed off the energy of the battlefield. Damaging spells do +1 damage/die, added after halving. Saving throws versus his spells also suffer a -1 penalty.

**Godhammer:** The dwarves slew one goddess, and they're willing to lengthen the streak. PC Heroes or units led by the PC are automatically able to hit extraplanar creatures, even those requiring enchanted weapons. Their hits always do maximum damage to these creatures.



**Guild Companions:** The thief attracts followers, gaining the services of two units of Rangers and one Assassin.

**Halfling Affinity:** Landless halflings and adventurous youths seek out the PC. Allied Domains gain the Halfling Affinity custom.

**Healing Might:** The PC can revive wounded allies. Once per battle, the PC can heal an attached unit of 2d8 hit points of damage.

**Hero:** The PC is an unstoppable avatar of murder on the battlefield. They are treated as a Hero.

**Inspiring:** The PC's presence and teachings inspire hope in locations plagued by Despair. They gain the Prophet+3 quality.

**Invincible Hero:** Once, an army could kill the Hero. Now it takes two of them. The Hero takes half damage from all melee attacks from military units, rounded down.

**Judicious Mind:** The PC can sniff out corruption with the best of them. They gain the Magistrate+3 quality.

**Last Ditch Defender:** The PC knows how to keep his troops fighting to the last man. Attached units gain the Diehard quality.

**Lucky:** Things just break well for the PC. When it's her turn to choose a domain action, she gains a +4 bonus on any value checks or saving throws she might make.

**Martial Glory:** The hero's mighty deeds of war have inspired those around her. An allied Domain gains +4 Military value.

**Military Acumen:** The PC knows how to solve problems of force. Once per domain turn, an Uprising or Disorder Obstacle sharing a location with the PC reduces its level by 1. If reduced to 0, it is solved.

**Overwhelming Sorcery:** The sorcerer's powers overwhelm their targets when fueled by the blood and horror of the battlefield. Saving throws against the sorcerer's spells take a -2 penalty, one that stacks with Furious Sorcery.

**Peacemaker:** The PC has a talent for unraveling Social problems of Despair or Corruption. Once per domain turn, an Obstacle of those types located at the same location as the PC has its level reduced by 1. If reduced to 0, the Obstacle is solved.

**Profitable Sideline:** The PC knows how to make a copper off the Domain's resources. The Domain automatically gets 1 Treasure point at the start of each domain turn. More than one PC can

use this ability, but the maximum income per turn is equal to the Domain's Wealth modifier plus 1.

**Relentless:** Dwarven tenacity knows no weariness. PC Heroes and any unit attached to the PC take 2 less point of damage from any attack or spell.

**Sagacious:** The PC is versed in esoteric knowledge and occult minutiae. She gains the Sage+3 quality.

**Shieldbearer:** The PC knows how to get between his friends and trouble. If the unit attached to the PC is destroyed, the PC suffers the usual consequences. However, any allied Support elements or PCs automatically make their saving throw versus Death to avoid injury or death.

**Skilled Apprentices:** The arcanist draws the enthusiasm of three bold War Mage Support units to serve as students.

**Stealth:** The PC is so talented at concealment that they can lead their entire unit through unseen ways. The PC and any attached unit gain the Stealth quality.

**Sticky Fingers:** A thief knows how to catch a thief. Thanks to the PC's vigilance, wastage is minimal and the Domain gains +4 Wealth value.

**Studious Pupils:** The opportunity to bask in the PC's wisdom brings students flocking near. Gain a School asset in a valid location.

**Undead Bane:** The PC knows how to fight the restless dead. PC Heroes and attached units gain +4 to hit undead and gain a +4 bonus on saving throws against their spells and powers.

**Vigilant Watchman:** The PC knows how to blend the firm hand of control with careful observation. They gain the Guardsman+3 quality.

**Warrior Monks:** Two units of Warrior Monks come to humbly study at the feet of the PC.

**Warrior Retinue:** The fighter's glory brings warriors desirous of his leadership. A unit of Mounted Knights comes to serve the PC.

**Wealthbringer:** Where others see Poverty and Ignorance, the PC sees opportunity. Once per domain turn, an Obstacle of those types located at the same location as the PC has its level reduced by 1. If reduced to 0, the Obstacle is solved.

**Zealous Followers:** A unit of Foot Knights and a Holy Man come to serve the PC, inspired by her faith and devotion.





# THE WESTMARK

## ASHES NOT YET COLD

This chapter depicts a fully-developed region both as a worked example of the creation guidelines and as a mine of potential ideas for your own campaigns. The locations described in this section were all generated using the guidelines provided in *Creating Campaign Regions*, and they can help in demonstrating the kind of conflicts and points of interest a sandbox game requires.

As a preworked example, however, the Westmark is also a great deal more developed than most a new campaign regions. If a sandbox campaign could only get off the ground with forty-odd pages of preparatory material, precious few sandboxes would ever get made. Instead, the thoroughness is provided because you paid for this book and can expect to have some work done for you.

In making your own campaign region, you should feel free to build much more lightly at first, simply establishing the locations and their basic traits and only really fleshing out those areas which will be needed for the next game session. A Labyrinth Lord can always do more, of course, but only if the creation process itself is entertaining or the material will be needed for the next session of play.

Almost all of the locations are provided with domain statistics. Leaders, traits, and assets are listed, with the assets indicating the Military, Wealth, and Social values associated with that asset. At the bottom, the base and current values of each trait is given, along with the modifier for rolls made by that trait. If assets are gained or lost, just adjust those scores accordingly.

Some locations do not pay upkeep for their assets. Lairs and Ruins do not concern themselves with maintenance costs. They get whatever assets the Labyrinth Lord finds appropriate, and use them in whatever ways seem correct for the lair. If a Domain seizes control of the location it will become necessary to pay the upkeep or disband the asset.

It's up to the Labyrinth Lord to decide what initial Domains will play a role in his or her game. Lintao and Taian are two good choices, perhaps along with whatever market town the PCs might first choose as a base of operations. You might even decide to let the campaign run for a session or two first before choosing those powers that are most relevant to the PCs' interests. Any Domains not chosen can be safely ignored. Their military units and assets remain static unless pushed by some outside power.

By default, the region begins with no location having control over any other location. Aspiring PC monarchs can swoop in and take over whatever turf they are able to command for their own, or possibly even create a new location through their efforts and enlistment of allies. As play goes on, it's likely that powers will start to successfully annex resource sites, ruins, and drive out troublesome Lairs. These events can serve as background news in your campaign, and provide hooks for those PCs keen to curb the power of sinister rivals or encourage noble allies.

### A HISTORY OF DUST

The Westmark is a province located in the Sunset Isles, as depicted in the *Red Tide* sandbox creation toolkit and setting guide. While that guide elaborates on much of the following, it's not a difficult task to relocate this rough borderland into some other world. To aid in translation, the following information describes the basic background of the Red Tide campaign setting.

Two hundred years ago, the world ended in a cataclysmic crimson mist. The Red Tide rolled up from the sea and swiftly consumed the lands of men, filling fallen cities with its hideous aberrations and demonic lords. Only great Archmage Lammach, chief diviner of the Ninefold Celestial Empire, was able to foresee the disaster, and others had laughed at his warnings and his years of patient preparation.

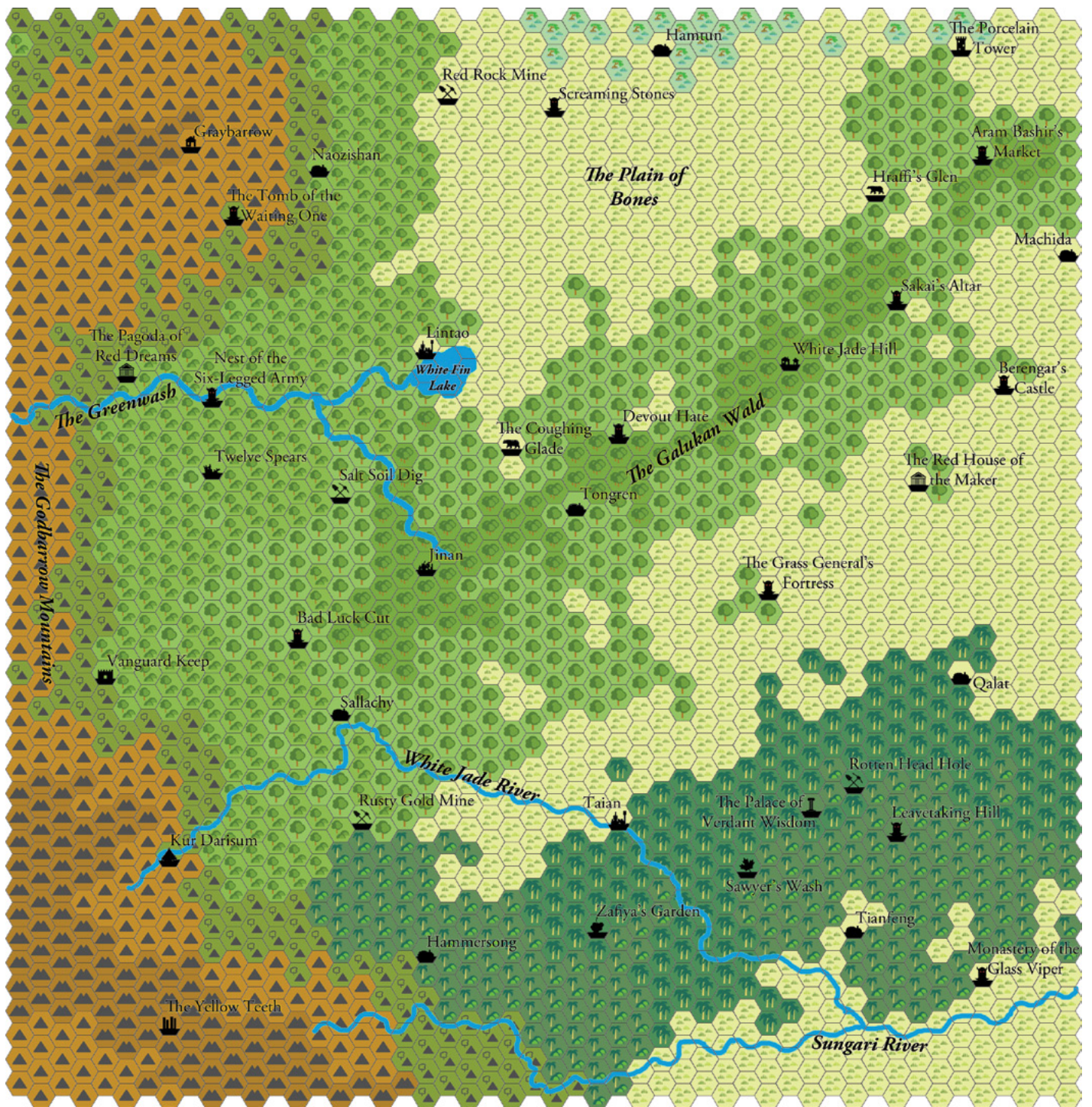
When the time came Lammach had a fleet capable of taking thousands of refugees to the one place of safety that would exist in the world- the Sunset Isles, a remote archipelago studded with ancient ruins and failed colonies. On the way, the refugee fleet took in ships and survivors from countless other cultures aside from the amber-skinned, dark-eyed Imperials. There were the Kueh, austere cousins of the Imperials, the dark Gadaal mountaineers, the peerless horsemen and travellers of the Eshkanti, the Skandr in their wolf-prowed longships, the stern Eirengarder monotheists, and innumerable other smaller bands.

Upon the Isles, the exiles found themselves engaged in a savage struggle for survival against the forces of the native Shou. Called "orcs", "goblins", "bugbears", and "hobgoblins" in the tongue of the Eirengarders, these savage natives could often pass for human were it not for their scars and adornments. They hated the invaders almost as much as the squabbling tribes hated each other, and the disorganized Shou were driven back into the western Godbarrow Mountains. Humans flourished in the cleared lands, and towns and cities grew fat in the Westmark.

One hundred and twenty years ago, the Shou surged back under the leadership of the mighty Witch-Queen Agrahiti. The horde broke like a storm upon the unprepared humans and all that saved any part of the Westmark was their reluctance to pause on their way to the rich capital of Xian in the east. Humanity survived the onslaught, but only barely. The Westmark was left barren of all but a handful of struggling survivors amid the Shou and the wilderness.

Now humankind is growing stronger and more numerous in the east. The proud imperial city of Xian is sending forth men, as is the sober Eirengarder city of Hohnberg to the north, and the cruel blood sorcerers of Tien Lung on the far southern coast. They meet in the Westmark, there to plunder the bones of the dead and seize the promise of a living future. An adventurer can be a lord in such a land, if only he has the will to raise a throne from bitter dust.





### Map Key 1 Hex = 5 Miles

	Forest Hills		Jungle Hills		Good Hunting		Prehuman Ruin		Ruined City		Abandoned Settlement
	Forest Mountain		Light Forest		City		Lair		Ruins		Broken Temple
	Grassland		Mountain		Ruined Dwarf Hold		Shattered School		Empty Tower		
	Heavy Forest		Mountains		Ruined Fortress		Good Timber				



LOCATION	TYPE	DETAILS
<b>Aram Bashir's Market</b>	Lair	A ruined village that serves as a meeting ground for fences and Aram Bashir's bandits
<b>Bad Luck Cut</b>	Lair	Star-cursed Gadaal kidnap strangers to spare themselves from an awful doom
<b>Berengar's Castle</b>	Lair	The Eirengarder mercenary Berengar and his pikemen plot conquest from this ruin
<b>Devout Hate</b>	Lair	The murderous elves of the Ghost Cloak Creed harvest humans for their rites.
<b>Graybarrow</b>	Ruin	A long-abandoned dwarven hold infected by a malevolent magic of animation
<b>Hammersong</b>	Town	The dwarves of this hold fashion armor and weaponry for their long-dead ancestors
<b>Hamtun</b>	Town	An outpost of Hohnberg from the north, the settlers are finding it unexpectedly hard
<b>Hraffi's Glen</b>	Resource	Abundant game has brought a goblin chieftain to hunt men as well as beasts
<b>Jinan</b>	Ruin	Once the provincial capital, this ruined city is now ruled by Shou warlords
<b>Kur Darisum</b>	Town	Strange death-worshipping elves dwell within this mountainous gray fortress
<b>Leavetaking Hill</b>	Lair	Once a plantation for the most troublesome Tien Lungan slaves, now the Tide rules it
<b>Lintao</b>	City	The city dreams of leading a restored Westmark, but it has made many enemies
<b>Machida</b>	Town	Gateway to the Westmark, Machida's proud Kueh want only gold from their guests
<b>Monastery of the Glass Viper</b>	Lair	The sinister abbot teaches perfect honesty and unalloyed cruelty to his Vowed pupils
<b>Naozishan</b>	Town	Eastern merchants push the promise of Westmark, but many are feeling defrauded
<b>Nest of the Six-Legged Army</b>	Lair	Things that look to be both ant and human crawl in the tunnels here
<b>Qalat</b>	Town	These proud, hardy heirs of elite Eshkanti cavalry can agree on nothing
<b>Red Rock Mine</b>	Resource	This iron mine waits for the speculator who can actually convince workers to come
<b>Rotten Head Hole</b>	Resource	Plague and fungal rotting await those who try to work this copper mine
<b>Rusty Gold Mine</b>	Resource	This mine has gold, but the luck of it is so bad that even noble metals tarnish there
<b>Sakai's Altar</b>	Lair	Kueh renegades from Machida who worship the Hell Kings in this hidden temple
<b>Sallachy</b>	Town	Stiff-necked Gadaal isolationists who fashion exquisite jewelry; plagued by monsters
<b>Salt Soil Dig</b>	Resource	The white-streaked dirt here causes boils and fevers for those who mine its silver
<b>Sawyer's Wash</b>	Resource	Vast stands of prized tropical hardwoods have attracted Taian's spite
<b>Screaming Stones</b>	Lair	Dwarven Repenters work horrible experiments on dwarven ghosts in this hold
<b>Taian</b>	City	The Carrion City, a vassal of decadent Tien Lung and scornful of Westmark's rabble
<b>The Coughing Glade</b>	Resource	The wild pigs and antelope here are abundant, but the pollens make men choke
<b>The Grass General's Fortress</b>	Lair	A mad sorcerer in a palace of living wood conducts awful experiments in plant life
<b>The Pagoda of Crimson Dreams</b>	Ruin	An abbot's despair let in the Tide, and its servitors and creations rule here now
<b>The Palace of Verdant Wisdom</b>	Ruin	Once a famed school of sorcery, now quarreling guardians fight over its bones
<b>The Porcelain Tower</b>	Ruin	This tower is sheathed in flawless multicolored porcelain and is guarded by clay men
<b>The Red House of the Maker</b>	Ruin	A heretical Makerite "saint" marshals his Order of the Blazing Hammer here
<b>The Tomb of the Waiting One</b>	Lair	An ancient lizardman priest is entombed here, and his undead shell rages at his people
<b>The Yellow Teeth</b>	Ruin	This prehuman ruin is thick with broken-capped towers and alien devices
<b>Tianfeng</b>	Town	Escaped slaves are being led to their destruction by a fanatical zealot here
<b>Tongren</b>	Town	This town of bitter exiles plots angrily against its neighbors- but the Tide rises within
<b>Twelve Spears</b>	Ruin	Once Westmark's greatest armory, giants now command the forges
<b>Vanguard Keep</b>	Ruin	Bulwark against the Shou, this crumbled fortress was the first to fall in the Ravaging
<b>White Jade Hill</b>	Ruin	This abandoned town once produced vast slabs of jade. Now cultists profane its altars
<b>Zafiya's Garden</b>	Resource	These medicinal plants have attracted strange beasts that devour much of the harvest

## ARAM BASHIR'S MARKET

### Thieves' Stronghold/Lair

<b>Leader</b>	Aram Bashir (T6), merchant turned bandit chief					
<b>Raiders</b>	On 5+, 1 unit of Bandits					
<b>Defenders</b>	3 Bandits, 1 Ranger, 1 Assassin					
<b>Assets</b>	Market (0/2/0)					
<b>Values</b>	<b>Military</b>		<b>Wealth</b>		<b>Social</b>	
	0/0	+0	0/2	+0	0/0	+0

Deep within the northeastern reaches of the Galukan Wald, the ruins of an old market town perch atop a low hill. The walls are long since tumbled and the Shou who destroyed the town left only a few of the sturdiest buildings standing after their torches had done their work. For many years after the Ravaging it was a place of ill omen, and the freebooters who came to pick its bones told stories of furious ghosts and a legion of white-faced spectres that marched from its yawning gates when the sun was low in the west. Still, some cynical residents of Machida say that the real reason no one ever went out to the ruins was that the dead had no more wealth to steal.

Eight years ago, the merchant Aram Bashir was driven from the orderly lands of the east when the town magistrate found the local shrine's golden altar cup in his possession. Aram Bashir slipped over the town wall shortly before the guardsmen arrived to arrest him, and he didn't stop running until he came to the ruins in the forest. Adventurers had seen only picked-over stones in the ruins; Aram Bashir saw profit. Stories of specters and ghosts meant nothing to the hard-headed merchant, and if they meant to interfere with his business they could bring their bones and try it.

In the eight years since his arrival Aram Bashir has turned the ruin into a thriving den of banditry and debauchery. Certain merchants from Machida come out with horses laden with wine and meat to exchange them for the goods of unfortunate travelers. Other buyers seek to make arrangements for the kind of services which are not advertised openly in decent places. Assassins, thieves, panderers and worse can all be found at the Market. As many as a hundred souls crowd the tumbledown buildings when a bandit gang comes in to spend their loot.

Aram Bashir himself takes a portion of every trade conducted in his market, and those who try to cheat him can expect to become the next item of fun for the local scum. A pair of hulking, mute guardsmen are with him at every moment, sleeping or waking, and the denizens claim that he sleeps atop the chest in which he keeps his ill-gotten loot. The master of the market is a grossly fat Eshkanti, with his black hair growing patchy on a scalp scarred by a burning lamp. It was flung by an offended object of his attentions, and her tanned skin is now nailed to the merchant's door.

Two years ago, "Saint" Tancred of the Red House of the Maker approached Aram Bashir for the sake of a secret bargain. Tancred wanted prisoners- many prisoners, as many as Aram Bashir could

sell him. Bashir had never cared much for the slave trade, as a human was far more trouble to keep than a sack of gold, but the glittering gems that the renegade Makerite offered him persuaded him to alter his habit. Since then, Aram Bashir offers his bandit clientele fifty golden coins for each prisoner they bring him, and collects a hundred for each from Tancred. Once every two months, the Makerite sends disguised warriors to bring them south to the Red House, traveling a roundabout way that keeps clear of the common paths through the Galukan.

The people of Machida know of the Market, and have suspicions of Aram Bashir's slaving. Still, there is little enthusiasm for confronting the rogue directly. Bandits rarely trouble the well-defended border town, and the travelers and villagers his bandits take are no kin to the men and women of Machida. Even if they did decide to root out the bandit camp, they run the risk of facing a sudden swarm of brigands and thieves drawn together by Aram Bashir's gold. If they should lose such a fight, Machida would be easy pickings for the raiders. Until Bashir does more to trouble Machida his uneasy neighbors are inclined to leave him alone.

Strangers who seek entrance to the Market can find it easily enough, but they'll need to convince the denizens that they have legitimate business there. If they haven't come for trade or hiring, they're likely to be enlisted as the next morsel of entertainment for the brutish brigands.

### PLOT SEEDS

Aram Bashir's men stole an eastern immigrant's child when they attacked the colonist's caravan. The desperate parent can't afford a ransom now, but they swear they can pay the heroes when they get to their wealthy relatives in Lintao. They may even be telling the truth.

The adventurers meet an escaped prisoner in the wilderness, an old woodsman who knows the Galukan well. The grizzled ranger has realized that the cowed men who take Bashir's prisoners away are going to have to be coming up a particular trail if they're to make it to the Market on time to make the exchange. If the PCs ambush the men on their way back, they could free a dozen prisoners- or they could pounce the men on their way in, and take Aram Bashir's pay for their own purses.

A superstitious brigand chief persuades Aram Bashir to allow an exorcism of the ruins. A drunken ex-priest performs the rite on a night when the PCs happen to be in the Market, and much to everyone's surprise, scores of ghostly defenders on the phantom walls of the ruins ripple into brief visibility before sighing and vanishing forever. Thirty seconds later, a horde of undead Shou roll over the walls, screaming joyously at the disappearance of the ancient guardians who had fended them off for so long. The PCs have to fight their way out through a roil of terrified bandits, possibly with a detour to collect Aram Bashir's plunder as they escape.

# BAD LUCK CUT

At the edge of the foothills that climb up toward the Godbarrow mountains in the west, the great Galukan Wald starts to thin out into a sparse, brushy tangle of hardwoods and bracken. The forest climbs the steep hills toward the skirts of the great gray mountains, and among these hills are narrow valleys washed by springs and trickles of snowmelt. The folk who live in these western hollows are clannish and insular, suspicious of outsiders and constantly at war with bands of roving Shou. But even among them, the dark cleft known as Bad Luck Cut is a place of whispered evils.

The huts and cabins of the settlement are no more foreboding than those of the other hill villages, pieced together of coarse-trimmed logs and clay daub. The men are sullen and the women and children hide from strangers, but they do not drive outsiders away with the threat of drawn bows as some other mountain hamlets do. The eldest among them, wizened old Sawney Mar, will even offer strangers a place by his cabin's fire for the night. Those that accept can expect to be bewitched into slumber by the old man's sorceries, and even those who are wise enough to shun the offer will be hunted by men with padded clubs and nets to take them alive.

Sawney is an astrologer-priest, last of a long line of Gadaal sages. In his youth he was proud of his piercing gaze and powerful magic, and the Cut's elders thought it certain that he'd bring them luck. When he found the old verdigrised copper tablets in a cave to the north, Sawney was sure that the stars were blessing him with secrets for himself alone.

The tablets were written in a language no man of Bad Luck Cut had ever seen before, but Sawney knew charms to unravel the words. The tablets promised to unlock the stars for those initiates who performed the correct rites and offerings, and Sawney easily persuaded the rest of the hamlet to help him perform the ritual. He'd pick the very best of stars to open, and pour out its good luck on the struggling little village.

Folk came from miles around to join in the ritual, and there was singing and dancing and chanting all under Sawney's careful supervision. When all was in readiness, when the men and women were at full cry, Sawney performed the evocation and opened the way for the star he had chosen.

He had not understood the tablet correctly. The star was unlocked, yes, but what came through was not good fortune. He could feel the tide of occult power pressing against the skin of the world, a pressure overwhelming that drove him and the other celebrants to their knees. In a few moments, the power had made a door through the flesh of Sawney's brother, erupting from his body in a hideous mandala of blazing white light and clinging viscera. The people fled, but fleeing did not save them. The surge of celestial light could find them anywhere, and when it did, it made a door of their bodies.

Bad Luck Cut and its dwellers have been cursed ever since that night. Sawney can hold back the power for a time, but sooner

## Cult Shrine/Lair

<b>Leader</b>	Sawney Mar (MU7), a guilt-sick Gadaal astrologer					
<b>Raiders</b>	On 5+, 1 unit of Cultists and a War Mage					
<b>Defenders</b>	3 Cultists, 1 War Mage, and 1 Warbeast					
<b>Assets</b>	Shrine (0/0/2)					
<b>Values</b>	<b>Military</b>		<b>Wealth</b>		<b>Social</b>	
	0/0	+0	0/0	+0	0/2	+0

or later it becomes too much for him, and he must let it make a door. If a suitable victim cannot be found in time it chooses one of the rite's celebrants or one of their children to make its way into the world, to dance in white fire for an hour before fading away. The men and women of Bad Luck Cut snare as many as a dozen outsiders a year to sacrifice to this awful power, the better to save their own kith and kin. The rites are bloody and terrible, but the people have grown hardened to it as a desperate necessity.

Sawney has tried to lift the curse for years, but he despairs of ever seeing success, and must go on with his bloody sacrifices if his neighbors and kinsmen are not to die for his terrible mistake. Worse still, he can feel his powers waning with age, and he can no longer hold back the star's light for as long as he once did. If he were to die without some trained apprentice able to perform the rite the curse of the star would wipe out the hamlet's inhabitants within a few months.

## PLOT SEEDS

The adventurers find a set of verdigrised copper tablets in some ancient ruin or cave. They appear to be the last testament of some prehuman wizard, perhaps one of the serpent men who ruled in the dawn of the world. The writer declares that he is soon to leave the world through a door into the heavens, but that he shall prepare certain spells and wardings on his way to equip those who come after. By his instructions, a sorcerer who performs certain rites with the tablets in hand will be led toward the remainder of the testament. The rites lead directly to Sawney and his hidden tablets, which lacked certain vital pages regarding wards and protections.

A surveying expedition from back east has vanished into the western hills, and the adventurers are hired to go find out where they were last seen. Their course puts them through several hill villages, a Shou raid, and a find of a journal on the fresh corpse of an emaciated expedition member who escaped the Cut before dying in the wilds. The journal mentions the expedition heading for the Cut, but the prisoner had no chance to scribe a warning before he died. A few survivors might still be alive there.

One of the PCs' henchmen or hirelings is particularly reckless and heedless of danger. He or she explains that it's because she's from Bad Luck Cut, and "We're cursed to never die in bed." Over time, the henchman might grow to trust the PCs enough to ask their help to somehow lift the curse- and decide what to do with the survivors of the community.



# BERENGAR'S CASTLE

## Aspiring Warlord/Lair

<b>Leader</b>	Berengar Neustadt (F8), grizzled mercenary chief					
<b>Raiders</b>	On a 6, someone hires them to raid a location with 2 units of Pikemen					
<b>Defenders</b>	2 Pikemen, 1 Eirengarder Pikemen, 1 Archer, 1 Ballista, 2 Barriers					
<b>Assets</b>	Palisade (2/0/0), Barracks (2/0/0)					
<b>Values</b>	<b>Military</b>		<b>Wealth</b>		<b>Social</b>	
	0/4	+0	0/0	+0	0/0	+0

Once an important fortification guarding the roads east into the Mandarinate, the former Jade Road Citadel was overrun during the early days of the Ravaging. The Witch-Queen Agrahti personally shattered the outer walls, hammering the northern face of the fortifications with torrents of sorcerous force. The geomantic aftershocks were so powerful that even now, a hundred years later, no two stones will remain atop each other along the northern face of the fortress. Even mortar and iron bands work loose as the stones frantically squirm away.

The interior structures of the fortress remained relatively intact, as Agrahti did not linger on her way east into the settled lands. A large stone keep dominates the center of the fortress, with a few tottering round towers holding up the remains of the walls. The tainted condition of the land discouraged survivors from taking up residence, and for many years the ruins were desolate and abandoned by all save Shou tribes and the occasional short-lived bandit king.

Twenty years ago, that changed when Berengar Neustadt led his mercenary band south from Hohnberg to take up residence in the ruins. Leader of the infamous Black Pikes, he saw that the increasing press of colonists from the east would make for numerous occasions for employment against the Shou and local survivors. Moreover, his reputation for capricious violence and flexible interpretation of business dealings was rapidly making Hohnburg too hot for him and his men.

For many years now, Berengar has been hiring out his lads to one or another of the local powers, enlisting likely locals to make up his losses, and otherwise prospering on the afflictions of the Westmarchers. But he's getting old, now, and he means to give his son something better than lordship of a half-tumbled ruin and a camp full of bastards. Berengar wants to take control of the eastern Westmark, seizing Machida and Qalat and holding lordship of the farming hamlets of the eastern plains. He's fought for other men long enough. Now it's time to fight for himself.

Privately, he worries that his son Regmund may be too soft to take his place. The lad is bookish, and while he knows the proper use of a sword and the employment of a pike line he lacks the kind of bloodthirsty zeal that Berengar always considered vital for a leader of men. There's no doubt the boy will do what he can to help his father's plans, but Berengar questions whether it will be enough to keep the boy on his throne when his father is no more.

With that in mind, Berengar was willing to entertain certain private assurances made by "Saint" Tancred of the Red House of the Maker. The renegade Makerite was willing to lend his assistance and support to Berengar if the mercenary captain was willing to pay a tribute in prisoners from the lands he was helped in acquiring. The Order of the Blazing Hammer has already sent men to the Castle in order to train alongside the Black Pikes for an eventual assault on Machida. As far as Berengar's neighbors know, the old mercenary is simply beefing up his forces in order to offer his services to the great cities of Lintao and Taian.

Regmund understands what's going on, however, and he's a great deal wiser to the ways of men than his father credits. He knows that Tancred's men are up to something, and he frankly expects them to assassinate his father as soon as Machida is in their grasp. His father waves away such concerns, confident in his ability to stop any treachery before it comes to fruition. Still, Regmund has noticed certain odd artifacts among the Blazing Hammer which he recognizes as being the product of Stitched Path sorcery- the work of the cruel sorcerers of Taian. If their Lady Halah is behind Tancred's plan, Regmund knows his father doesn't stand a chance. He's willing to go to outsiders in order to unearth proof of Tancred's planned duplicity and the real identity of his backers.

Despite his father's cruelty and casual disdain for noncombatants, Regmund does love the old warhorse and would never intentionally betray him. Regmund's no pure-hearted saint, but he's far more temperate and reasonable than his red-handed sire, and if he should come to power in Berengar's Castle, it's quite possible that the Black Pikes could turn out to be good allies of those who have helped their young master.

## PLOT SEEDS

The PCs need a military force, and Regmund's willing to arrange for the Black Pikes to come to their aid- provided they can find out the truth behind Tancred's recent ambitions. PC investigations are likely to reveal that Berengar is plotting with Tancred to seize Machida, however, and the PCs may be moved to think twice about helping his son.

Berengar succeeds in seizing Qalat or Machida- and Tancred arranges his tragic death during the battle's aftermath. Regmund flees, and Tancred's Blazing Hammers "encourage" the Black Pikes to become part of the Makerite army. Regmund wants revenge and the Black Pikes back, and the PCs are the ones to help him.

A squad of local boys has deserted the Black Pikes after finding out what kind of evils they can be expected to perform for coin. After what they've done they can't go home again and they fear the anger of Berengar. They plead with the PCs to act as intercessors for them, using the PC's good offices to convince some village or border town to take them in as guards. The Black Pikes have an evil reputation, but if the PCs succeed, they promise to reveal the location of a cache of loot they hid before they fled... and they will. It's back at the Castle, beneath a loose stone in the keep.

## DEVOUT HATE

Deep in the heart of the Galukan Wald is a sanctuary of vast stone towers skirted by humble farms. The peasants have a strange, dreamy manner and have the look of hungry years despite the prosperous farms they work. There are no merchants or traders to be found among the farms, but they still possess tools and useful goods from throughout Westmark. They refuse to answer questions about their “masters in the towers” and respond meekly even to violence and abuse.

In truth, the humans that work the farms around the towers are mere cattle to their true lords. Within the sorcery-raised spires dwell the merciless elves of the Ghost Cloak Creed, a half-dozen adepts leading hundreds of acolytes, though many are away from Devout Hate at any particular moment. These elves bewitch their human slaves with spells of numbing and obedience, leaving them dull and caring only for the performance of their duties. Those strangers who resist their sorceries, they slay.

The Ghost Cloak is a Creed founded on envy- envy of human sorcery and of the superlative power that an adept human magic-user can wield. Elven souls are permanently entwined with their fleshly forms, and the energies that magic channels through their spirits threaten to char mere meat beyond endurance. As human souls are wholly detached from the physical, the titanic energies can pass through them without causing harm to the magic-user’s bodily form. For elves, even the smaller sorceries are painful, and greatly accomplished sorcerers can be known by the lines of black or silver soul-ash that tattoo their limbs. The greatest spells are simply beyond their power to channel lest they erupt in a living bonfire of silvery flame.

The Ghost Cloaks are one of a number of Creeds associated with the Wearers of the Mantle, an ancient elven tradition of soul-flaying meant to steal the power inherent in a human soul. These greedy sorcerers methodically peel the soul from a human victim before stitching it into a spiritual “cloak”. The greatest of the Wearers of the Mantle have cloaks fashioned of thousands of human souls, and they channel their sorceries through the agonized spirits of their unnumbered victims.

The Ghost Cloaks have no doubt of their superiority over their human chattel. It was only by the perfidious envy of the gods that elvenkind did not ascend to divinity during the great rite that bound their souls to the world, and with the right arts and the right will the elves can someday remedy that ancient fault. Their human slaves are honored by the part they are allowed to play in the work, for what mortal should not be grateful for the opportunity to become a tool of a living god?

The leader of Devout Hate is Ghost Cloak Indesha, a moon-pale and beautiful elven sorceress who rules from the tallest of the six towers that make up the complex. She spends most of her time dealing with the intrigues of her “trusted companions”, as the Ghost Cloaks despise each other nearly as much as they despise humans. Advancement is almost always over the corpse of a former superior, and the elves spend most of their time fighting

## Malevolent Creed/Lair

<b>Leader</b>	Ghost Cloak Indesha (E9), cruel elven sorceress					
<b>Raiders</b>	On a 6, 1 unit of mounted Elven Warriors (move 240', no archery)					
<b>Defenders</b>	2 Elven Warriors, 1 Elven Bowman, 1 Elven War Mage					
<b>Assets</b>	School (0/2/0)					
<b>Values</b>	<b>Military</b>		<b>Wealth</b>		<b>Social</b>	
	0/0	+0	0/2	+0	0/0	+0

over access to the human livestock and quarreling over the “fair allotment” of excess humans. Raids on nearby villages to steal fresh subjects alleviate some of these envies, but the peace never lasts for long. Some are even willing to intrigue with outsiders for the chance to snuff a hated rival.

The six huge towers were raised shortly after the Ravaging by the first Ghost Cloaks in the region, come to harvest the desperate survivors of the Shou invasion. Their intrigues were as bloody then as they are now, and many died with secrets untold of the hidden passages and interconnections between the six great towers. There are concealed entrances and hidden ways in all of the looming stone pillars, and their great size and the Ghost Cloaks’ lessened numbers mean that a sufficiently cautious intruder could go for days or weeks without being noticed if they keep to the disused lower portions.

Outsiders know little of Devout Hate, only that those who travel the Galukan Wald should turn and flee if six huge towers should ever be seen rising from the forest canopy. They also have tales of cruel elven riders who swoop down upon ill-defended farmsteads and humble forest villages to carry off the young and strong. Where these elves come from, none know, but they have chosen their prey with sufficient care to avoid angering any community powerful enough to have any hope of hunting them down.

## PLOT SEEDS

An elven PC flashes a memory of Devout Hate while nearby in the Galukan Wald. Was the PC a Ghost Cloak in a former incarnation? Were they a prisoner or dire enemy of the Creed? Perhaps their own Creed has a bone to pick with the soul-flayers.

The cruel riders of the forest have stolen away someone dear to the PCs. They must track them down and free them before the hapless victim’s soul is stitched into Indesha’s spectral cloak.

The PCs are waylaid by Ghost Cloak riders who gravely underestimate their prowess. After a fierce battle, among the fallen warriors’ possessions are a scroll of some spell unknown to the party magic-users and a letter to an unnamed magician in a nearby town. It appears the elves of Devout Hate are conducting secret business with the wizard, and this scroll was a token of their appreciation for the help he has given them. More awaits him should he come to discuss further cooperation, and the letter includes serviceable directions to the towers.

## Dwarven Hold/Ruin

<b>Leader</b>	The Gray King, intelligent stone golem					
<b>Traits</b>	Forgotten Sorceries					
<b>Obstacle</b>	Barren Surroundings/6					
<b>Assets</b>	None					
<b>Values</b>	<b>Military</b>		<b>Wealth</b>		<b>Social</b>	
	0/0	+0	6/6	+1	0/0	+0

The Sunset Isles are pocked with ancient dwarven ruins, holds that date back long before the founding of the present dwarven kingdoms in Altgrimmr and Angrimmr. The dwarves of the modern day have no explanation for these ancient ones, and their names and clans are largely unknown save where some thousand-year-old artifact preserves these details. As these old ones are no kin of the present dwarves, they do not object to strangers plundering these halls, but the pastime is a dangerous one. The ancients left more than bones and gold in their silent houses of stone.

Graybarrow is one of the larger complexes in Westmark, burrowed high up among some of the tallest peaks in the Godbarrow mountains. Reaching it is a hard, laborious climb, but finding it is not difficult- the land surrounding the complex is devoid of life, with a chalky white dust in place of soil. Not even birds fly over its gaping stone doors, and no lichen grows on the white towers that jut from the mountain's barren flank.

The remote location and evil aspect of the land keeps most adventurers away from the ruins, but a few expeditions have returned with word of golden treasures and walls inscribed with dwarven runes that writhed like living things. They also tell of the dangers of the halls and of traps of fiendish cunning.

In truth, Graybarrow was a originally a hold dedicated to occult experimentation. The ancient dwarves who dwelled in its deeps were hard-pressed by hideous foes from below, and they sought to imbue statues and artifacts with life in order to use them as tireless defenders. In time, they developed means of transferring life force from plants, animals, and even other dwarves into the carved images and tools that they used. These "stone soldiers" were mindless and without individual will, but they obeyed their creator's runes and fought as they were directed.

Unfortunately, the dwarven enchantments worked a little too successfully. Originally, they fed their soul-grinder with plants and still-living fodder, moving on to fish and livestock, and then to outcast dwarves and criminals among them. This constant consumption of life force had an unexpected side-effect- the drain

of it had caught the spirits of the dwarves of Graybarrow. Like a careless butcher who catches his sleeve in a mangle, their souls were slowly dragged into the refining furnace. First the weak leapt into the red-hot gears of the separating pit and then the stronger were drawn in turn. The engine turns still at the bottom of the hold, sucking the life from the surrounding land.

In the long centuries since their creators vanished, the stone soldiers have slowly developed a cold, malicious sort of intelligence. They hesitate to leave the safety of Graybarrow, but when strangers penetrate the deepest levels of the complex, they catch them and use them as fresh grist to make more soldiers. Their lord is an exquisitely-carved statue of the last lord of Graybarrow, a figure simply known as the Gray King to his stony subjects.

The entire complex has a slow sort of intelligence to it. Traps operate not on the basis of timers and weights, but on the animal cunning of the trap itself. Doors shut, mechanisms activate, projectiles fire, all timed to do the worst to intruders. The hold itself has only a blind, unreasoning hunger to consume, and it tries to kill all who enter its halls.

In some cases, it has reason to do so. The ancient foes of Graybarrow still press upward from below. They are twisted things, worm-bodied creatures with eyeless, faces and maws ringed with teeth. Their arms and legs fold back against their bodies when they creep through holes, but when unfolded, their limbs have a sheen like black volcanic glass, and their claws are terribly sharp. They fight the stone soldiers with crude stone hammers fashioned with the sinews of beasts from regions even deeper than their own. Their depredations keep the stone soldiers busy and often serve to distract Graybarrow itself from the intrusion of small groups.

## PLOT SEEDS

The PCs happen upon a golden flute that bears the marks of Graybarrow's mother-smiths. When breath passes through the gold, it speaks dwarven words, promising those who found it that it shall lead them to a trove of countless other precious instruments that cry out for freedom from Graybarrow's halls. In truth, the flute desires only to lure the PCs to their deaths.

An eager scholar has unraveled certain of the glyphs copied by the survivors of the last expedition to Graybarrow, and he is certain that the halls contain great arcane lore. He has need of protectors- particularly since shortly after the team arrives in Graybarrow, the scholar's experimentation will waken the hold against the group.

# HAMMERSONG

The dwarves have ever been a godless people. In the dawn of the world, they were human slaves of the Mother Below, a goddess who cared only for gold and the abasement of her slaves. In anger, the ancients rose up against her and tore her into a thousand shrieking pieces. Ever since, no other god dares claim the dwarves for their own, and their afterlife is a gray and sober realm of stone and their ancestors' shades.

This afterlife is scourged by the vengeful shards of the Mother Below and the misshapen creatures she has made to torment her rebellious subjects. She is still subject to the power of gold, however, and so gold buried with dwarves may go with them in spirit to be forged into powerful ghost-weapons against the shades. Whole cities of dwarves live on in the afterlife, finding joy in their kinsmen and happiness even in their unending war.

Hammersong is a dwarven hold dedicated to the crafting of tomb-goods and armaments for the use of their ancestors. Gold-chased weaponry and armor, offerings to delight their ancestors' shades, and chants to hearten them in their fight are all offered by the dwarves who dwell here. The objects are given to the ancestors through ritual burial; after a year's time, their spirits have gone forth and the remains can be dug up and reforged into new goods. Every clan in the hold shares this fierce dedication to the aid of their ancestors, though communication with their shades is rare and difficult.

The center of the buried community is the Hall of the Glorious Dead, a temple presided over by High Priest Yevgeny Hammersong. While dwarves do not have priests as humans do, they have crafts and charms to provide many of the same services of healing and curing that could be acquired from a human temple. Yevgeny does not cast spells as a cleric would, but he has a profound link with the shadowed realm that awaits his people beyond.

Five years ago, Yevgeny's young wife Ludmilla was assassinated by a band of dwarven Repenters who had slipped in by posing as a group of pilgrims. Hated by their brethren, the Repenters are a small sect of dwarven heretics who seek to placate the Mother Below with rites of self-torment and punishment of their rebel brethren. Several of them escaped in the aftermath of the attack, and Yevgeny grieved as he prepared his wife's body for burial.

It was only then that he realized that her spirit was not present—the Repenters had stolen it away in one of their blood-runed picks. A secret message soon came to him advising him that if he wished his wife's soul to be spared hideous torment, he would cooperate with the instructions that followed.

There is no dwarven blasphemy worse than service to the Mother Below, but Yevgeny could not bear to imagine his wife suffering the spectacular agonies that the Repenters would inflict upon her spirit. He has been arranging for large amounts of weaponry and armor to be buried where agents of the Repenters can unearth them and carry them away, and the vile dwarves grant him short messages to and from his wife's ghost.

## Town

<b>Leader</b>	High Priest Yevgeny (D9), a blackmailed elder					
<b>Traits</b>	Religious Community, Mutual Defense					
<b>Obstacle</b>	Corrupt Leadership/5					
<b>Assets</b>	Temple (0/-1/8), Market (0/2/0), Wall (4/-1/0), Training Grounds (4/-1/0), United Defense (2/1/-6), Dwarf Friend (0/4/0), Religious Fervor (0/0/4)					
<b>Units</b>	1 Barrier (0/-2/0), 1 Tower (-1/-4/0), 2 Dwarf Crossbows (-4/-2/-2), 1 Dwarf Sapper (-2/-1/-2), 2 Dwarf Warriors (-4/-2/0), 1 Dwarf Hero (-3/-3/-2) Training grounds nullify Hero and Tower costs.					
<b>Values</b>	<b>Military</b>		<b>Wealth</b>		<b>Social</b>	
	2/2	+2	2/1	+1	4/6	+2

Ludmilla wishes him to abandon hope of saving her, but the Repenters naturally have no interest in passing on such messages. She being kept in the hidden hold at Screaming Stones, a spirit-slave to the sadistic Varinka Truefaith, who finds endless entertainment in forcing Ludmilla's ghost to contemplate the tortures being inflicted on other spirit prisoners of the Repenters. Varinka is quite certain Ludmilla's turn will come once Yevgeny's use runs out.

Yevgeny's ancestors have forsaken him for his treachery, and they no longer speak to the priest. Yevgeny is frantic to discover the location of the Repenter stronghold and liberate his wife's soul, but he cannot approach any of the dwarves in Hammersong without his awful secret coming to light. He is resigned to a traitor's death when the truth comes out and to an afterlife marked with unending shame, but he cannot afford to die before his wife's spirit is safe.

## PLOT SEEDS

Yevgeny enlists the PCs to help find the Repenters' stronghold, revealing only that they murdered his wife. They must bring him the red-glyphed pick that slew her if her soul is to be freed from the world, but he will not explain the meaning of the weapon, and will insist that they work secretly, for fear of Repenter agents in Hammersong. In truth, Yevgeny doesn't want his brethren realizing that the soul of their high priest's wife is in Repenter hands and start connecting certain of his recent behaviors.

An ancient portion of the hold is used to store grave-goods during their period of ritual burial. Recent enlargement work broke through into a formerly forgotten section of the hold, and a reeking tide of dwarven undead poured out. They are infesting the chambers of grave-goods, crazed with centuries of terror at their lonely and forgotten deaths. The dwarves of Hammersong are mortified at having somehow forgotten these dwarves, and seek outsiders to do the shameful work of putting their bodies to rest so that their spirits may be tended. Somewhere in the lost section is the awful reason why their names were forever struck from the rosters of the clan.

# HAMTUN

## Town

<b>Leader</b>	Captain Donar Kruger (F7), a rigid pike captain					
<b>Traits</b>	Defensible Site, Destined Conquerors					
<b>Obstacle</b>	Pervasive Hunger/7					
<b>Assets</b>	Shrine (0/0/2), Market (0/2/0), Militia Muster (1/0/0), Palisade (2/0/0), Barracks (2/0/0), Spartan Culture (4/0/0)					
<b>Units</b>	1 Barrier (0/-2/0), 3 Levies (-3/0/0), 2 Eirengarder Pikes (-4/-2/-2) The Barracks eliminates the cost of the Barrier.					
<b>Values</b>	<b>Military</b>		<b>Wealth</b>		<b>Social</b>	
	4/4	+2	2/0	+0	2/0	+0

The rich lands of the Westmark beckon the established powers of the Isles now that their existing lands begin to groan under the pressure of a growing population. The Mandarinate of Xian claims ancient authority over the lost province, but in practice, rule goes to that polity that can actually put soldiers within marching distance. Hamtun is a new market town established only fifteen years ago by the northern city of Hohnberg, the better to gain a foothold.

Hohnberg is a city of soldiers, and their surveyors laid out the town with an eye for defensibility. The town is perched on one of the few hills in the surrounding swampy lowlands, and a number of springs and wells offer good supplies of drinkable water year-round. The numerous bogs and sloughs of the environs make it difficult to march large bodies of troops in without giving Hamtun time to react, and a nearby outcropping of granite provided good stone for the town's important buildings.

Unfortunately, the surveyors were military surveyors, more accustomed to laying out troop camps than farming villages. They made too many assumptions about what the farmers could handle

by way of bog and swamp, and the farms that feed Hamtun are few and poor. The wet land makes hauling foodstuffs a miserable task, and rice in the Hamtun market is easily twice the price as in Machida. Hamtun's residents are wearied with the constant struggle to find enough to eat.

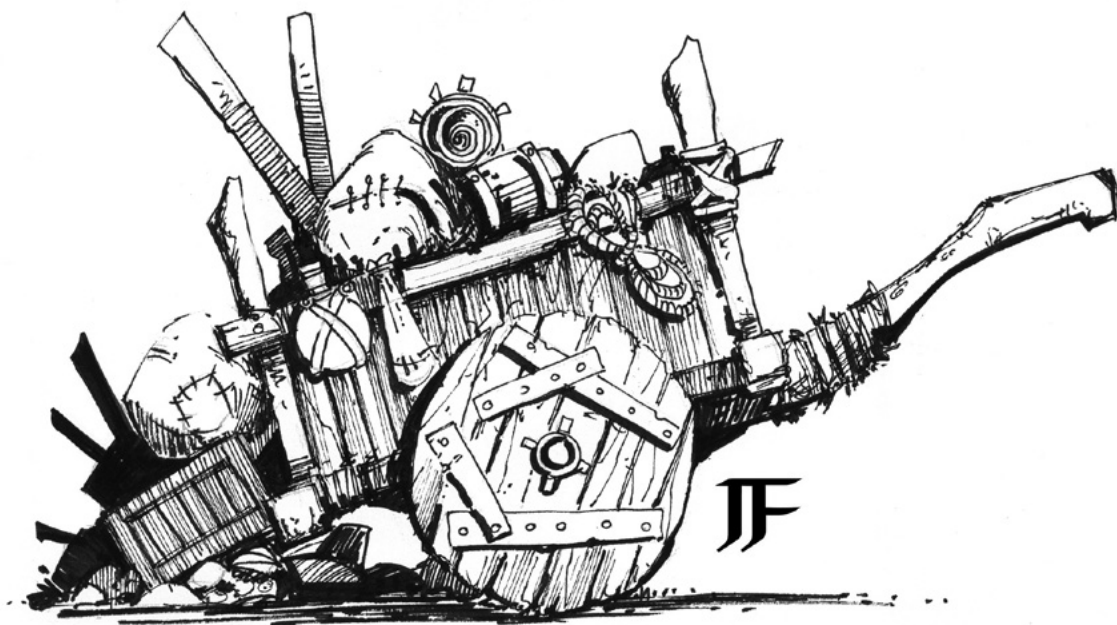
Most of these residents are Hohnberger pikemen and soldiers sent south to support the town. They remain because duty requires it of them, even if their superiors back in Hohnberg appear to have largely forgotten they exist. The leader of the village is a young pike captain, Donar Kruger, who rose to the position after his predecessor died during an attack of malaria. He realizes the vulnerability of his position, and tries to keep the men focused with rigid discipline. This is working so far but the strain is aging the young captain rapidly.

Hamtun welcomes what trade it can get with outsiders, especially those who bring shipments of food to the hungry town. Swamp medicines and tools forged from nearby deposits of bog iron are the town's main exports to those brave enough to make it through.

## PLOT SEEDS

Saboteurs from the Screaming Stones burn down the town granary in an attempt to drive the Hohnbergers back north. Several nearby lakes offer enough fish to keep the town alive until the next harvest, but the lakes are claimed by a particularly vicious tribe of lizard men.

Swamp goblins are picking off ill-defended homesteads, their usual depredations suddenly stepped up dramatically. They're actually in league with a nearby village's headman, a traitorous merchant who seeks to increase the value of his fields' crops by burning out rivals. The goblin tribe is led by a hobgoblin Shou witch with a surprising willingness to work with humans, provided it's in the interest of the swamp goblins.



## JINAN

Once the capital of the province, the mighty city of Jinan was the first target of the Witch-Queen Agrahti. Her sorcery broke its walls, and her horde put its people to the spear. The survivors fled north to seek refuge in beleaguered Lintao or escaped to perish in the Galukan Wald. Such was the force of Agrahti's spells that even the flow of the Greenwash river was altered; a mighty fissure broke open outside the city's walls, and the river plunged into its unknowable depths. Today the great pit is known as the Roar, from the massive waterfall that rims it, and no man knows how deep it might extend.

Most of Agrahti's horde moved further east to find richer pickings, but some lingered to dwell in Jinan's fallen glory. The slender, pearl-pale towers of the city were filled with Shou tribesmen, and the lustrous stones of red and blue and forest green that made up its finest buildings were smeared with Shou glyphs. Over time, Jinan became a capital for Shou rather than men, its possession going to the strongest and fiercest tribe in all the Westmark.

For generations, these Shou have terrorized the surrounding lands, and would have done worse had they not been so absorbed in fighting over control of the city. Until recently, the chieftain of Jinan had been Warad Urash, a goblin chief who had ruled more by strength of his wisdom and exquisite judge of subordinates rather than his personal prowess. He had imposed a remarkable degree of discipline and cooperation upon the tribes of Jinan, and even convinced traditional enemies to make peace long enough to trade with each other.

One such enmitous tribe was the Burning Banner, a small band of Shou orcs who had consistently lost its battles for years. Its chieftain was the young Taribat Nintu, a ferocious warrior but one cursed with recklessness and poor judgment. One night, five years ago, Taribat made a bargain with a cultist from Sakai's Altar whom his tribe had captured. In exchange for his life, the cultist would call up a servant of the Hell Kings to receive Taribat's offer of allegiance.

The demon that came was a minor one, but it recognized Taribat's potential as a catspaw. In exchange for Taribat's pledge of fealty to his master, the Hell King Shemyaza, the orc chief was granted titanic physical strength and a hide that mocked ordinary weapons. On the strength of this unnatural might, Taribat rapidly crushed his rivals and tore Chief Warad's head from his shoulders in a challenge that was not overburdened by proper tribal form.

As a consequence of his victory, Taribat received the wealth of his predecessor- including his wives. One among them was the young witch-priestess Gula, a gobliness who had possessed a true and passionate love for her former lord. She is convinced that Taribat's powers come not from the Shou god Shakun's blessings, but from other, blasphemous beings. She does not dare act directly against Taribat, but she sends her agents out to search for proof of his heresy. Some of these Shou can even pass for human, and are willing to enlist uncommon allies in hope of unseating the usurper.

## Plundered City/Ruin

<b>Leader</b>	Great Chief Taribat (F11), Hell-tainted orc chief					
<b>Traits</b>	Seat of Legitimacy					
<b>Obstacle</b>	Shou Raiders/8					
<b>Assets</b>	4 Shou Orcs, 3 Witch Priestesses, 3 Shou Goblins, 1 Shou Bugbear, 2 Shou Wolfriders, 1 Hell Priest, 2 Warbeasts					
<b>Values</b>	<b>Military</b>		<b>Wealth</b>		<b>Social</b>	
	0/0	+0	4/4	+0	2/2	+0

Taribat himself is learning that his strength is perhaps not enough to prosper as the lord of Jinan. His subjects are growing restive, angered by his reckless commands and contempt for the traditions of the tribes. Rather than seek wisdom, Taribat desires an easier route- he wishes to recover the long-lost Iron Crown of Shakun that was carried here with Agrahti.

The Shou believe the crown was given by Shakun to the mightiest and most deserving of his children so that the others may know and honor their lord. In actuality, it is an ancient Shou discipline device originally meant to control and focus raw recruits during the chaos of combat. The crown imprints on its wearer, and remains useless to another until the current owner dies. While the crown is worn, however, all Shou of 3 HD or less within one mile are subject to the wearer's telepathic commands, and will carry out demands to the best of their ability even if they leave the area. The crown's effects linger for a week after the subject departs.

Once he has the crown, Taribat will be able to force the obedience of his fractious subjects. The fat cities of Lintao and Taian will surely fall then, and the glory of it will bring him the horde he needs to drive east into the soft human lands. With such a magnificent destiny before him, who could begrudge the petty price of a soul?

## PLOT SEEDS

Gula wants the Iron Crown too, the better to avenge her dead husband. She dares not let Taribat realize that she too is seeking its hiding-place in the crumbled underworks of the city, so her agents are quietly recruiting human adventurers for the work. Gula does not realize that the crown will work just as well for a human wearer as for a Shou.

Taribat's blessings come with a price. His infernal patron is demanding increasingly horrific and perverse rituals, and Taribat cannot convince all of his followers that they are simply newly-inspired modes of worship for Shakun. One such doubter spied on the warlord as he discussed a new exaction with a human from Sakai's Altar; the other Shou would never believe his testimony, but the hideous blasphemy of the warlord's acts must be punished. The Shou plots to use human adventurers to root out the heretical worship, and will see to it they have the clues they need to seek answers in Jinan and Sakai's Altar.



## Town

<b>Leader</b>	Sar Jeddak (E10), shaven-headed contemplative					
<b>Traits</b>	Defensible Site, Strong Society					
<b>Obstacle</b>	Bad Reputation/4					
<b>Assets</b>	Layered Walls (8/-2/0), Training Grounds (4/-1/0), Burning Creed (0/0/4), United Efforts (0/3/-6)					
<b>Units</b>	1 Citadel (-3/-6/0), 1 Elf Zealot (-4/-2/-3), 1 Elf War Mage (-2/-1/-2) The Training Grounds eliminates the cost of the Citadel and the Elf Zealot.					
<b>Values</b>	<b>Military</b>		<b>Wealth</b>		<b>Social</b>	
	2/12	+2	2/1	+0	4/0	+1

In the high mountains of the west, the gray spires of Kur Darisum stand alone. Within the winding halls of this massive citadel the elves of the Kuan Amelatu carry out their ancient duties of meditation and study. Some say that the elves of this grim Creed number in the thousands, their true extent masked by the labyrinthine passages of the Kur and the hidden gardens of sorcerous fruit that sustain them. The leader, the Sar, does not discuss their full numbers nor invite curiosity as to their lives within the Kur.

The Kuan Amelatu provoke unease in their neighbors, for they are all devout worshippers of death. They view true death, the death of men and mortals, as being the key to perfect unity with the cosmos. Only in the dissolution of the self and the return of the spray to the cosmic sea can everlasting peace be obtained. The eternal cycle of reincarnation experienced by the elves is a curse, an existence of confusion and pain; only with study and ceaseless labor will they discover a final release from the circles of the world. Their membership is almost exclusively elven, but there are a few humans among them who seek to prepare their souls for the unity that awaits them in the afterlife.

In light of this belief, the worst crime is that of impeding a soul on its path to release. They nurse an unquenchable hatred of necromancers, and the intentional creation of undead is an unforgivable crime. They also despise the Hell Kings for their desire to eternally entrap the souls of the dead; whereas the gods at least permit mortal souls a choice in receiving their paradises, the Hell Kings drag unwilling spirits to a realm of everlasting torment. The use of resurrection spells is considered a sign of spiritual ignorance or great need, but such ignorance is not a sin.

The Kuan Amelatu found outside the Kur are most often on missions of vengeance against necromancers or charged with soothing the grief of some restless spirit. These grim elves are almost tender in their dealings with the confused and anguished dead, and can always be trusted to see to the souls of the fallen as best they can. Mindless undead are freed from their corporeal shells, and thinking spirits disentangled from their snares as swiftly and kindly as the Kuan Amelatu can manage. Grave goods and ceremonies are of small importance to the Kuan, and they will take them so as to give a spirit fewer things to tie it to the world. Their own burials are invariably simple and unadorned.

This devotion to the dead sometimes manifests in long, bloody-handed vengeance sprees against those who so badly wronged a tormented spirit, putting it to rest by achieving its revenge on the living. Human officials are uneasy at the presence of a Kuan, as they are reputed to have far more interest in the wishes of the dead than the concerns of breathing authorities. They are welcomed in times of trouble when spirits and necromancers threaten a community, but most would just as soon see them move on quickly afterwards. The Kuan rarely show any interest in lingering once their work is done.

The Kuan are all accomplished sorcerers, and are possessed of numerous strange and unsettling spells related to death. They are known to have arts for speaking with the unquiet dead, fending off the icy touch of wraiths, and releasing shades from the chains of undeath. Outsiders have sometimes claimed to have obtained this secret lore, but the spells appear to be very dangerous to casters who have not prepared correctly for their use. Without the right meditations and propitiations toward death, the undead may not recognize the caster's authority.

The Kuan do not normally ally with outside powers. Their concern is death and the protection of the souls of the dying, and the affairs of living men are of minimal concern to them. The Shou lack the siegecraft that might threaten the Kur, and the sorcerous gardens within provide all the food the elves require. They are content to keep to their own affairs.

Still, it is not impossible that a sufficiently persuasive outsider might be able to show them value in aiding a foreign domain. Against some great threat of necromancy or the looming rise of the Hell Kings, they might be persuaded to waken their sleeping brethren from long centuries of silence. Their knights might yet rise from their beds of carved stone and put on their armor of old, and their grim legions might yet bring sorcery and steel to avenge the dead upon the evil of the living.

## PLOT SEEDS

One of the Kuan Amelatu has gone renegade, and threatens to bring their secret lore to the Ghost Cloak Creed at Devout Hate. The renegade was very important in the circles of the Kuan Amelatu, and the Sar does not dare let it be commonly known that he has fallen to the temptation of sorcerous power. Some suitably discreet heroes must be found to infiltrate Devout Hate and kill the traitor.

A series of vicious murders are occurring in the town, each victim seemingly unconnected. The town officials are desperate for aid in finding and apprehending the killer. In truth, all of the victims thus far were participants in a particularly hideous murder twenty years ago, and are being killed one-by-one by a vengeful Kuan. The last remaining target is quite personally powerful, however, and the assassin will need help if justice is to be done for the dead—assuming the PCs don't try to turn him in for his extra-judicial executions.

## LEAVETAKING HILL

Even after generations of brutal oppression and sorcerous tyranny, some slaves of Tien Lung simply will not cooperate with their masters. They steal, or fight, or even threaten their lords, and no amount of torment will correct their behavior. For wizards of the Stitched Path, such slaves make serviceable raw materials for their bloody rites, but more mundane owners are often forced to sell the slave on to masters with more effective tools of compliance.

The end of that grim journey is in places like Leavetaking Hill- a jungle plantation fenced about with trained crocodiles and staffed by men and women who did not feel alive unless they were making someone scream. In remote plantations like these, the wretched prisoners are worked to death based on the whims of the flesh trade, their lives measured out only so long as they are worth more breathing. The only human comforts to be had in such a place were in the fortified manor house that served as the barracks for the plantation guards and the home of its cruel master.

Ten years ago, a slave was sold into service in Leavetaking Hill. This slave was unusual, for in his dreams he heard the whispers of the Red Tide, the blandishments of that otherworldly horror that lurked at the edges of the Isles and waited for men to fall. For years, he had rejected the whispers of the Tide and had shunned its crimson promises. After three days at Leavetaking Hill, his only desire was for vengeance. He welcomed in the dreams and performed the secret rites they instructed.

In a different place, it would have ended soon after. His neighbors would have seen the signs and hanged him, assuming he lived long enough for the rope. But in the fetid slave pens and black muck of the fields, the other workers said nothing when his eyes glowed like coals, or when his breath was plumed with a crimson mist. Perhaps they were too frightened of the overseers and their capricious inclination to torture those who dared speak unbidden. Perhaps they too welcomed what was to come.

By the time the overseers realized that a Tide Cult had started right in their plantation, it was too late. The slave had opened the door and the Tide had entered in. The watch-crocodiles became wild for human flesh, hunting the unbelievers and eating their voices, until each spoke in the tongues of those whom it had eaten and cried blandishments to lure out survivors. Those slaves who were not butchered in the coming of the mist became changed as well, becoming creepers and wormwalkers and magistrates of ash.

Among them all walked the slave, changed as the others were changed. His chains had become living sinew and skin embedded within his body, each link blinking with a weeping red eye. He walks now in the company of the other abominations, each one

## Tidespawn Infestation/Lair

<b>Leader</b>	The Weeper (C9), twisted Tide Priest abomination					
<b>Raiders</b>	On 5+, 1 unit of Creepers					
<b>Defenders</b>	3 Creepers, 2 Tide Priests, 3 Warbeasts					
<b>Assets</b>	None					
<b>Values</b>	<b>Military</b>		<b>Wealth</b>		<b>Social</b>	
	0/0	+0	0/0	+0	0/0	+0

seeing the plantation as a place of glorious, dreamy liberty and each imagining themselves strong and happy there. Intruders are seen with the faces of their old tormentors, and they perform upon them the acts that their guards once performed upon the slaves.

The grandees of Taian and the dwellers in the nearby jungle villages know what has become of Leavetaking Hill. All agree that something must be done about the place, that soldiers should be sent and brave warriors commissioned to root out the terrible evil that has swollen there. But Leavetaking Hill is far from the city, and Lady Halah has other things to concern her, and the frightened villagers nearby do not have the men or courage to do the work. For now, they simply wait for help from someone else. And each night, the red mists creep a little further from the manor house, and the slaves dream a little more of sharing their freedom with the tainted world beyond.

## PLOT SEEDS

The nearby villages have finally agreed that something must be done, and have pooled their meager resources in the hope of attracting the interest of a freelance witch hunter or band of adventurers. Some of these villages were in no way displeased with Leavetaking Hill when it was still in operation, however, and some among their elders profited greatly by trading with the manor.

Adventurers near Leavetaking Hill get too close to the manor, and the Tide twists their perceptions to make a prison of the place. They cannot leave the plantation grounds until the Weeper is dead and the cult shattered.

The adventurers find a brittle old testament dating back before the Ravaging. It appears that in those days, the site that is now Leavetaking Hill was the home of a wealthy priest. He constructed a secret vault in the manor's basement that would reveal itself only to the proper passphrase, which he recorded on the parchment in case of accident. It seems most unlikely that the former owner of the manor realized what remained hidden in his basement, and the treasure of the manor awaits those PCs who prove themselves capable of surviving its new occupants.

## City

<b>Leader</b>	Magistrate Quan Ushi (MU5), in over her head					
<b>Traits</b>	Ancestral Land, Strong Society					
<b>Obstacle</b>	Riotous Thugs/5					
<b>Assets</b>	Academy (0/8/-1), Training Grounds (4/-1/0), Well-Educated (0/2/2), Layered Walls (8/-2/0), Trade Center (-1/4/0), Organized Militia (2/-1/0), Temple (0/-1/4), United Effort (2/1/-6)					
<b>Units</b>	Barrier (0/-2/0), Citadel (-2/-8/0), 1 Foot Knight (-3/-3/-1), 4 Heavy Infantry (-8/-8/0), 2 Cross-bowmen (-2/-2/0), 1 Eirengarder Pike (-2/-1/-1), 1 War Mage (-1/-2/-1) Training Grounds removes cost for Citadel and one Heavy Infantry					
<b>Values</b>	<b>Military</b>		<b>Wealth</b>		<b>Social</b>	
	0/1	+3	6/0	+3	6/2	+2

The city of Lintao has dozed on the shores of White Fin Lake for long years, sending out its fishing boats and harvesting the timber from the forest that encircles it. The villages that skirt the edges of the lake send their produce by water to the markets of the city, and strangers come down the Greenwash to trade in the bazaars. It is a young city, fresh-laid when the Ravaging came a century ago, and its people and institutions have a reckless sort of vitality.

It is also a city little-loved by its neighbors. In the days of the Ravaging, when the capital at Jinan fell to the Shou hordes, a great many survivors fled north along the Greenwash to seek refuge behind Lintao's walls. Magistrate Lao Ku ruled in Lintao then, and he dreaded the thought of enduring a Shou siege with so many mouths to feed. The Shou were ferocious, but impatient- if he could hold off the lesser bands for a few months while Agrahti's horde made its way eastward, the city might survive. There was no way he could feed all of Jinan's refugees for so long, however, and so he permitted only a small group of warriors and their families to come within the walls. The other refugees were told to seek what shelter they could find elsewhere.

Most of them died in the wilderness, killed by Shou or wild beasts, or simply starving to death. The survivors clustered in what is now the town of Tongren, and the old hatred there for Lintao's "betrayal" is vivid to this day. Lintao was almost untouched by the Shou, as most bands were still too fired by Agrahti's promise of richer eastern lands to bother with a timber-cutting town. Magistrate Lao Ku stubbornly refused to let refugees in until the threat of a siege was over. By the time he relented, it was too late.

The Jinanese survivors who had been accepted into Lintao's walls were bitter at this coldness toward their kinsmen, and stung by the accusations of abandonment hurled by their former friends and neighbors. In response, they became all the more zealous about asserting their identity as Jinanese, even going so far as to insist that they were the rightful authorities in Lintao, as the former zhuhou of the province had ruled from Jinan.

In the years since, Lintao has been a grudging city in the north. It has a reputation for close-fisted selfishness and treachery, though the natives insist that they did the only thing they could do during the Ravaging. The Jinanese in the city have formed their own neighborhood in the shadow of the walls, and have retained their martial traditions. Their leaders take turns castigating the city's ruler for indifference to the good of its neighbors and insisting that a Jinanese is the only rightful choice for the city's mandarin.

The current mandarin is Quan Ushi, an inexperienced young official recently dispatched by Xian to take office in the city. The natives have accepted the Xianese imposition largely because they are confident she can be ignored, and there has been little evidence to the contrary thus far. Quan Ushi has not the personal power to compel obedience and lacks family ties to supporters among the city's feuding factions. The most Ushi can do is try to contain the regular outbreaks of street violence.

More and more of the locals are beginning to grow uneasy at the rise of Taian in the south. The prospect of Tien Lungan rule in Westmark has little appeal to them, as the Lady Halah is the sort of ruler to make her presence very well known in the lives of her subjects. Yet the factions cannot agree on a unified response; the Jinanese refuse to cooperate until their "just claims are recognized", the old Lintaoan families can't be troubled to act so long as "ungrateful Jinanese usurpers" still brawl in the streets, and the Xianese magistrate and her officials can't control the struggle.

## PLOT SEEDS

The Magistrate needs allies, and she's not going to get them from the locals. She's willing to hire adventurers and other freebooters to take care of problems that require a degree of muscle and deniability she can't get from her own officials. Troublesome faction leaders may need "negotiation", thug chiefs might need to be put down, and villages and towns like Tongren might need ambassadors that aren't so closely linked with the city they despise.

A Jinanese warrior-woman has fallen in love with the young scion of a old-blood Lintaoan merchant family. His family has locked him up to prevent the shame of an unsuitable marriage, and the woman is desperate for agents to go and free the young man from his isolated family estate. Unfortunately, a certain group of Jinanese zealots would just as soon see both woman and young man dead for their "mixing", and they've elected to make their displeasure known to the young man first. They're likely to arrive just as the PCs make their move.

The jade chop of the Zhuhou of Jinan is rumored to have been hidden in the caves around White Fin Lake by a survivor who later perished in the wilderness. Quan Ushi has discovered an old testimony that seems to point to the chop's location, but she dares not send her own people to get it lest the Jinanese get word of the relic's location. The chop is said to have potent but subtle powers of control and discipline, and in the caves a strange hierarchical order of typical vermin and humanoids has developed under the influence of the seal.

# MACHIDA

Perched at the far eastern edge of the Westmark, Machida is a town of refugees, freebooters, and an enduring population of cynical Kueh exiles. For decades they have watched the steady flow of pioneers and fortune-seekers pass west into the wilds, and have made their coin in supplying their wants in trade. They desire nothing more than this, and they have little patience for affairs beyond the circles of their own immediate interest.

Machida was founded shortly after the Ravaging by a band of Kueh samurai and their followers who had fled the Shogunate and its new religion of Hell-worship. The bargain that the Shogun had struck to save his people was abhorrent to them, and they preferred the dangers and hardships of exile to the defilement of their souls. This sense of Kueh cultural purity and rectitude remains fiercely present in their descendants. Most of them have an amused tolerance of “foreign ways”, but they would never dream of insulting their ancestors’ sacrifice by abandoning the ways of their forebears.

As such, Machida’s architecture and social customs have a strong-some would say rigid- Kueh influence to them. The brilliant colors and ornate extravagance of Imperial buildings is exchanged for more subdued and naturally-influenced structures that reserve their art for expressions of polished restraint and balance. The people are blandly polite to even the strangest visitors and tolerant of the most eccentric behavior in outsiders, provided they pay their bills and avoid violence or undue property damage. Most adults sport old-fashioned Kueh kimonos in public, even where their kinsmen have often preferred the cheaper and more hard-wearing trews and tunic of other cultures.

At its heart, however, Machida is a mercenary town. It has seen too many aspiring rulers make too many grand pronouncements, and it no longer credits the ambitions of states or cities as anything but empty words. It does not fear the anger of the distant and overstretched lord in Xian, or the old vengeance of the Shogun, or the machinations of Taian and its Lady Halah. The Westmark has been a wilderness dotted with petty, limited towns and city-states since the Ravaging, and the people of Machida are convinced that it will always remain that way... and that good profit is to be had by selling to all and sundry there.

Neighboring settlements put no trust in Machida’s promises. The town is neither cruel nor malicious, but any agreement with Machida’s daimyo will last precisely as long as it profits his town, and not an hour longer. The permanent residents of the town accept this manner of relation with outsiders; cultivating long-term relationships is futile when so many of the visitors will be dead or distant in a few weeks.

Machida is a hub of trade with the eastern lands. The lack of good water transport and the clannishness of the residents has kept it from growing into a city, but its markets and trading institutions are larger than those of any other town in Westmark. Silks from

## Town

<b>Leader</b>	Ishikawa Shiro (F5), breezily cynical daimyo					
<b>Traits</b>	Ethnocentrists, Vigorous Trade					
<b>Obstacle</b>	Mercenary Populace/4					
<b>Assets</b>	Shrine (0/0/2), Trade Center (-1/4/0), Palisade (2/0/0), Militia Muster (1/0/0), Training Grounds (4/-1/0)					
<b>Units</b>	1 Barrier (0/-2/0), 1 Kueh Samurai (-3/-3/-2), 1 Pikeman (-2/-1/0), 1 Heavy Infantry (-2/-2/0), 1 Light Cavalry (-2/-2/0), 2 Archers (-2/-2/0), Magistrate (0/0/-2) The Training Grounds eliminates the cost for the Kueh Samurai and the Barrier					
<b>Values</b>	<b>Military</b>		<b>Wealth</b>		<b>Social</b>	
	0/0	+1	4/0	+1	4/4	+1

Xian, rare drugs and artifacts from Tien Lung, and steel from Hohnberg forges can all be had in Machida’s central market. There is a particularly lively trade in expeditionary supplies as the locals fit out pioneers, colonists, and adventurers with the gear they need to make a go of their ambitions. Terms are invariably cash-only, and a Machida merchant would no more run a credit line than he’d bow to the Hell Kings.

Such self-satisfied prosperity combined with distinctly mercenary habits has bred dislike of Machida in its neighbors. Its daimyo is obliged to deal with any local problems with his own resources, and much of the shared support and sense of mutual obligation that exist in the wilder parts of the Westmark is unknown around Machida. Some would even be glad to see various gravely unfortunate events happen to the place, the better to teach those “damned treacherous Kueh” the error of their ways.

## PLOT SEEDS

A band of adventurers stumbles across a group of Shou roasting a dead Kueh samurai for their supper. Among their possessions is the warrior’s ancestral sword. The blade is enchanted, but the samurai’s heirs will be looking for it and will deal ruthlessly with any who try to keep it from them. The family will pay a respectable reward for its voluntary return, but if the PCs decline the payment their respect for Kueh customs will win them the lasting friendship of the family.

A young Kueh craftsman has been making porcelain statues styled in a blend of Kueh and Imperial influences. If he were an outsider, this would be no problem, but as he is a native the other locals are distressed by such unacceptable debasement of their pure culture. The craftsman needs someone to guard the fragile porcelain in advance of a showing to a rich eastern merchant due in any day.

# MONASTERY OF THE GLASS VIPER

## Cruel Vowed/Lair

<b>Leader</b>	Abbot Liu (Vowed 8), cruel and decadent monk					
<b>Raiders</b>	On 5+, 1 unit of Warrior Monks					
<b>Defenders</b>	2 Barriers, 2 Warrior Monks, 1 Crossbowmen, 1 Holy Man, 1 War Mage					
<b>Assets</b>	School (0/2/0)					
<b>Values</b>	<b>Military</b>		<b>Wealth</b>		<b>Social</b>	
	0/0	+0	0/2	+0	0/0	+0

This graceful structure of pale yellow stone rises from amid broad rice paddies and pastures full of well-kept cattle. Monks can be seen walking in serene meditation atop the modest curtain wall that encircles the main building, and the peasants in the fields work without visible concern for the dangers of the wilderness beyond their fields.

The peaceful seeming is a lie. The monastery of the Glass Viper is home to a vicious and amoral congregation of monks dedicated to the pursuit of their own earthly pleasures. Their sinister Abbot Liu instructs his pupils in the virtues of the glass viper, teaching that when one exists in a state of flawless, transparent enlightenment, all desires are sinless and perfect. Whatever the monk desires is correct at that moment and in that context, if only he can attain to a requisite level of spiritual development.

In practice, this means that the monastery's novices and unfavored acolytes live lives of harsh austerity and labor while the "enlightened masters" among them enjoy gluttonous delights and every variety of debauchery. Those monks who best serve the masters demonstrate their own growing spiritual enlightenment, and are granted tastes of the pleasures that await them once they have attained perfection through their flawless servitude.

The surrounding villages are naturally viewed as tributaries of the monastery, their crops, gold, women, and children all fit subjects for whatever exactions the monks require. The monastery is cruel with these "tithes", but it takes care not to plunder their subjects more than they can bear, and they can be relied upon to defend their chattel from the depredations of other forces. Some of the villagers are convinced of the truth of the monks' teachings, while others merely hate their cruel protectors. Most recruits to the monastery come from the children taken in tribute, though occasionally the monks can be persuaded to take an older novice who brings suitable offerings.

While the monks are not clerics in the conventional sense, the abbot and his "enlightened master" brethren are known to practice certain dark sorceries during the innermost rites of the sect. Powers are summoned up to grant the elect the blessings of the hearts' desires and smite those rebels who dare to oppose the power of the monks. Villagers share whispered tales of horned devils tearing apart the families of malcontents, or of hideous beetles studded in cruel iron spikes that burrow up to perform slow abominations upon those who dare defy the monastery. The monks do not discuss such secret arts with outsiders, preferring to shelter their deep arcana from the coarse and unenlightened world.

The monastery itself existed long before the first abbot of the order arrived eighty years ago. Some believe it was a daifu's country estate in the days before the Ravaging, while others insist it was a temple tended by good and decent monks. The yellow stone walls have fended off more than one Shou attack, and the few neighboring powers with sufficient troops to threaten the place have no interest in besieging its strong gates. For now, the monks are content in their cruel luxury and their subjects suffer as they must.

## PLOT SEEDS

The PCs are present in a tributary village on a night when one of the demon-beetles is dispatched to slay a malcontent- a man who happens to be in the presence of the PCs when the beetle emerges from the earth. After the battle, he or his surviving friends tell of a secret band of rebels opposed to the monks, and beg the PCs' aid in ambushing and killing one of the enlightened masters who is soon to arrive in the village to receive its annual tribute of food, women, and children. They expect no charity from strangers, and offer the "tribute" to the PCs instead if they succeed. They plan to blame the monk's death and the tribute's disappearance on a bandit raid. They would sooner see their sons and daughters sent with passing strangers than let them go to the monks.

A wonder-working monk and his stoic assistants appear in the town or village that the PCs are currently using as a base of operation, extolling the virtues of the glass viper and sharing around substantial gifts. The monk and his minions try to win over the locals by their aid and defense of the town, and if successful, they'll start the nucleus of a second monastery. Once the necessary critical mass of monks is accumulated, the locals will be taught their proper place.

# NAOZISHAN

Every new frontier has its boom towns, and Naozishan is one of them. Originally founded in hopes of working the rich western mines, the town has ballooned with immigrants and aspiring colonists on their way west to free land and certain prosperity. It sprawls out along the edge of a small stream in a clutter of crude shacks and hastily-built tent houses, and the streets are a mire of churned mud.

The town is led by a consortium of its richest landsellers, three merchants who together worked to found the settlement. Shizuo Nakamoto, Rolf Gunderson, and Salim Hauptman put up the money necessary to convince Xianese bureaucrats to assign them ownership of the land, and together they sold their shares to common buyers and arranged to provide the tools and resources necessary to make a go of farming it. Hundreds of land-hungry eastern families spent their life savings in hope of making a new and prosperous life as a landowner in the west. Life is hard around Naozishan, but most of the buyers have more hope for a better future than they ever had as Xianese sharecroppers.

In the hills around the town rise a patchwork of newly-founded farmsteads, most of them reasonably prosperous. Five miles away, however, at the furthest western edge of the territory claimed by the town, a thick scar of burnt-over earth and ruined stone buildings marks the remains of a former town. The Ravaging was more than a century ago, but such were the hideous torments inflicted upon the citizens there that their ghosts still taint the earth with echoes of suffering and loss.

This land has been a curse on Naozishan in more than one way. Ownership of the tainted land was originally claimed by Rolf Gunderson, who imagined that the ruins would be easily cleaned up and valuable afterwards. Rolf sold the land off in parcels to scores of unlucky buyers, men and women who came hundreds of miles only to find that their promised farms were on ghost-haunted ground. Many of them did not dare to dwell on such inauspicious earth, and are left working as hired hands and menials in a life even worse than they had back east.

Some of them were brave enough to make a start on the blasted ground, but none lasted long. The man now known as Poor Chen brought his entire family to live in an abandoned stone manor house, but two weeks after he'd started his farm, his wife and every one of his children were killed in hideous fashion by angry ghosts. Their wraiths still haunt the farm in tormented confusion.

Poor Chen nurses a ferocious hate against Rolf Gunderson and the other landsellers. He is convinced that they all schemed to foist

## Town

Leader	Shizuo Nakamoto (F5), half-huckster landseller					
Traits	Innovators, Missionary Zeal					
Obstacle	Class Hatred/7					
Assets	Palisade (2/0/0), Trade Center (-1/4/0), Barracks (2/0/0), Militia Muster (1/0/0), Shrine (0/0/2)					
Units	2 Barriers (0/-4/0), 1 Eirengarder Pikeman (-2/-1/-1), 2 Archers (-2/-2/0), 1 Light Cavalry (-2/-2/0) The Barracks eliminates upkeep for the pikemen.					
Values	Military		Wealth		Social	
	0/0	+0	4/0	+1	4/6	+1

off the worthless land on buyers, and all of them are responsible for the agony his family still endures. He hides in the hills and mountains around the town, emerging with a band of his fellow malcontents to launch vicious attacks on the men and holdings of the merchants. His allies, known locally as “Poor Chen’s Brothers”, are found on many farms. Even those farmers that never were cheated would perhaps not mind seeing their debts die with their holders.

Salim and Shizuo had no idea about the cursed land and despise Rolf for what he’s done, but they can’t afford to alienate him. His Eirengarder mercenaries won’t work for “foreigners”, and they’re all that’s keeping order in Naozishan. If their paymaster Rolf left, Poor Chen’s Brothers could see Salim and Shizuo hanged within a fortnight. For now, they scheme to try and find some way to rid themselves of their venal companion without losing the benefit of his warriors.

## PLOT SEEDS

One of the bravest of the eastern settlers took a plot at the very heart of the ruined town, and laid in supplies enough to suggest he was a rich man. Rumor says that he buried a trove of gold somewhere near the town’s central green, which he’d planned to plant as a wheat field. None have dared go in to check on him or his family, though there has been no word from them for months.

Poor Chen’s Brothers ambushed the wagons carrying the pay for Rolf Gunderson’s mercenaries. If it’s not reclaimed soon, the mercenaries will quit, and the merchants don’t dare send them to retrieve it for fear that Poor Chen will use their absence as an opportunity to attack the town.



# NEST OF THE SIX-LEGGED ARMY

## Monster Nest/Lair

<b>Leader</b>	The Regent (F6), orc-ant warrior woman					
<b>Raiders</b>	On 5+, 1 unit of Heavy Infantry					
<b>Defenders</b>	2 Barriers, 1 Tower, 3 Heavy Infantry, 1 Veteran Sergeant					
<b>Assets</b>	None					
<b>Values</b>	<b>Military</b>		<b>Wealth</b>		<b>Social</b>	
	0/0	+0	0/0	+0	0/0	+0

Deep within the wilds, an abandoned tower rises from the surrounding forest. Around it, a thick casing of mortar fashioned from mud, sawdust, and gravel has been built up by slow accretion, until the tower appears to be a gigantic termite mound. Within it dwell the ant-like amazons of the Six-Legged Army.

Their creator was a wizard in the days before the Ravaging, one who dreamed of conquest at the head of her invincible army of ant-women. The quick breeding and unflinching obedience of ant-kind would be meshed with the intelligence of human brains, and together they would march victoriously upon the capital at Jinan and compel the obedience of a cowed populace.

It was the typical lunacy to be expected of an unbalanced wizard dwelling in the middle of a wilderness, but she was unusual in that her plans of creation were largely successful. Through assorted hideous experiments and mergings, she eventually was able to breed a race of centaur-like human-ant crossbreeds with the upper bodies of humans and the six-legged thorax of an ant. The vast majority of them were female workers and soldiers. A few dronish males were created to serve the wizard, who imagined herself an appropriate queen for the nest.

Her shining hopes of conquest were cut short when the Shou rolled down from the western mountains. Her army fought valiantly, and the price they exacted bought certain nearby villages time to escape the onrushing horde, but in the end the outcome was certain. The wizard was slain, her troops were slaughtered, and the horde swept on to conquest.

For the past century, deep within the nest, the few remaining soldiers and workers struggled to maintain the colony. The ant-amazons possess the lifespan of humans, but without the wizard to create more their numbers were sure to dwindle. In

desperation, some of the amazons began to study the wizard's surviving books and perform experiments on Shou and humans they captured from the surrounding area. Their success was limited at first, but eventually they were able to partially replicate the wizard's research. Without a queen, they could not reproduce by egg-laying, so it was necessary to transform adult humans into new members of the nest.

The Six-Legged Army has long since abandoned desires of conquest, but the dangers of the wilds and their own inevitable mortality has required a steady infusion of new subjects for transformation. They capture them from the surrounding Shou tribes in the main, preferring orcs as best-suited for the process. A few human villagers or wayfarers also fall prey to their nets and their clubs. The complex regimen of potions, ant-derived chemicals and selective surgery requires a month for completion, but after the first fortnight there is no hope of escaping the change, and once complete there is no known sorcery short of a *Wish* able to undo the magic.

The change does not destroy the subject's mind, though it leaves them powerfully influenced by the subtle chemical emissions of their sisters and the nest. Some deeply regret their transformation and despise their current form, but even these malcontents cannot bear the thought of living alone as a horrific freak in the outside world. Even former Shou and humans work together to sustain the nest.

Some members of the Six-Legged Army believe that it would be better to simply accept extinction, growing old and dying off as creatures never meant to live. Others secretly study their creator's texts in hopes of someday finding a way to reverse the process. Most of the Six-Legged Army remains heavily influenced by the chemicals of the nest, however, and the compulsion to ensure its safety ensures their helpless loyalty.

## PLOT SEEDS

A few ant-amazons have learned of a cache of magical research related to the making of monsters, and hope that there may be some lore in it to help reverse the process. The location of the cache just happens to be in the ruin that the PCs are currently exploring.

A traveling noblewoman from Lintao has been captured by the nest, and her lone surviving guard begs the PCs to help rescue her before she is made into a monster.

## Town

<b>Leader</b>	Usman Karmani (F6), harried cavalry captain					
<b>Traits</b>	Survivors, Destined Conquerors					
<b>Obstacle</b>	Disunity/7					
<b>Assets</b>	Wall (4/-1/0), Training Ground (4/-1/0), Trading Center (-1/4/0), Shrine (0/0/2)					
<b>Units</b>	1 Tower (-1/-4/0), 1 Horse Archer (-2/-2/-0), 1 Heavy Cavalry (-2/-3/-0), 2 Levies (-2/0/0) The Barracks eliminates the cost of the horsemen.					
<b>Values</b>	<b>Military</b>		<b>Wealth</b>		<b>Social</b>	
	4/8	+2	2/0	+1	2/4	+0

Nestled on the margin between the green spray of the jungle and the broad semitropical grassland, Qalat is a divided town. The native residents are heirs of a hard-bitten band of Ravaging survivors, while the recent arrivals are a detachment of Eshkanti cavalry recently sent from the Mandarinate of Xian. The brash lords of the eastern city thought that Qalat would be easily absorbed as a foothold in the Westmark, but the locals have different ideas about where their allegiance should lie.

In the aftermath of the Ravaging, the survivors of broken Taian were driven east by the onrushing Shou, forced to flee mile upon weary mile to stay ahead of the horde. Qalat was where the few that lived made their stand, supported by a small Xianese border fort that had held against the distracted Shou. The ensuing siege was bloody and brutal, but in the end, the Shou moved further east in search of softer prey. The soldiers and the survivors made the fort the heart of a new town that lived on farming the grasslands and lumbering jungle timber. They maintained a prickly independence of their neighbors that lasted until a year ago, when Xian decided that it was time to reassert their long-lapsed rights upon the fort.

The nominal lord of Qalat is Captain Usman Karmani, a black-bearded warrior possessed of peerless skill as a horse archer and the implicit loyalty of his men. Unfortunately, he is accustomed to dealing with the disciplined and well-ordered troops of Xian rather than a town full of sullen bordermen. He arrived one year ago at the head of his horsemen and a group of Xianese merchants charged with keeping the men supplied with their military necessities. The locals grudgingly gave over control of the fort to Usman's troops, and have spent the past twelve months seething at this affront to their independence.

This anger has been fanned by agents of Taian, with servants of Lady Halah making much of every drunken cavalryman and stolen chicken and goading complaints about the unfair prosperity of the Xianese army merchants. These agents spread whispers of how Qalat can regain its old freedoms with the help of friendly Taian, and that all that is necessary to gain their liberty is to get rid of the soldiers. With Xian sent packing and Taian as a trusted friend, their self-determination will be secure.

In truth, of course, Lady Halah plans to take Qalat for her own, the better to help control the southern border of the Westmark. Those of the residents that object to the new state of affairs will be enslaved and dispatched to Taian's work camps and those who showed excessive collaboratory urges toward the "occupying forces of Xian" will be executed as examples to the others. All she needs is for Captain Usman and his men to be killed or sent packing, and Taian's troops will be able to seize the town at her convenience.

Captain Usman tries to impress upon the people the value and importance of the Xianese troops as a defense against Taian and the Shou, but he is more of a soldier than a political leader, and he grows frustrated by the stubborn recalcitrance of the locals. It is true that they must pay steep taxes to support his troops and that the Xianese merchants have advantages in trading with their eastern brethren, but is it not benefit enough that they can sleep safe in their houses at night? Were they not Xian's spears that saved Qalat's founders from the Shou hordes? His orders are to hold Qalat for Xian as a bulwark against Taian, and he means to carry out that command.

## PLOT SEEDS

Usman's spies have located the jungle base of the Taianese, where the plotters keep the funds they've been given to inspire revolt in Qalat. Unfortunately, several important Qalati citizens are there as well, working with the agents. Usman needs the base taken out and the agitators dead, but the town would never forgive his troops if they executed those "upstanding citizens". Usman's looking for deniable assets to do the work for him.

A native Qalati merchant is seething over the competition from a Xianese rice-seller, who gets his wares at a rate subsidized by the Xianese government. He can overcome the merchant's price advantage if he can get some old rice paddies back into operation, but the farmstead is infested by monsters. Or if something happened to the merchant, well, that would work too....

Taian agents need something more spectacular than filched poultry and cheap rice to infuriate the Qalatis, so they're going to manufacture the event. A young girl from town is secretly seeing a Xianese horseman; they intend to slaughter the girl and pin the blame on the foreign occupier. Once the town is duly enraged, they plan to start a riot and march on the fortress, where at best they'll take the garrison unawares, and at worst they'll convince Usman that the town is ungovernable. One of their Qalati adherents has discovered their plans, and he is desperate to find someone he can tell- he's convinced the Xianese would hang him for his complicity, and his fellow natives would think him a lying turncoat for the Xianese.

## RESOURCE LOCATIONS

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Resource locations tend to be less developed than other areas, largely because they are, by definition, a source of largely untapped and unfinished raw materials. Every Resource has its own obstacles to easy annexation, however, and the following list provides details of each such location in Westmark.

***Hraffi's Glen*** / Good Hunting / Shou Raiders-3 : The land here is exceptionally abundant in deer, wild boar, and other game animals. This abundance has also attracted the attention of Chief Sangasu and the wolf-riding goblins of the Yellow Skull tribe. The chief is a fanatical hunter, and his tribe loves to play cruel games of wolf-and-mouse with those humans who stray into the glen.

***Red Rock Mine*** / Good Mine / No Workers-4 : The rusty-red stones of this remote shaft mine are rich in iron ore. The mining village around it was smashed during the Ravaging, however, and no one remains to work the diggings. Any attempt to restore the place would require the construction of new homes, the planting of fresh fields, and the destruction of those Shou raiders and roving bandits who would doubtless come to plunder the fresh prey.

***Rotten Head Hole*** / Good Mine / Harsh Conditions-6 : Gemstones await the pick in the twisting tunnels of this mine, but the stones are set in a fibrous, powdery mineral that flakes into a haze of tiny particles when struck. Worse, the mineral reacts with exposed skin, producing a dull, maddening itching that can drive those exposed to it for long periods into deranged fits of scratching. In the days before the Ravaging the mine was worked by convicts and criminals, many of whom died when they tore open a vein during their convulsive clawing, and their restless spirits and sharp-fingered revenants still lurk within the mine. Finding the right protective gear or skin treatments is liable to require extensive sampling of the mine's locations.

***Rusty Gold Mine*** / Good Mine / Bad Feng Shui-5 : Before the Ravaging, this mine was a rich and prosperous gold mine. The Shou witch-priestess who led the horde that sacked it was a powerful sorceress, and her magic collapsed several important tunnels, rerouting an underground river and slumping half a hill over the

main entrance to the delve. Until workers are able to undo the damage to the site's feng shui- and deal with the undead miners who have been trapped inside for a hundred years- the mine will suffer from luck so bad that even gold tarnishes in its vicinity.

***Salt Soil Dig*** / Good Mine / Contaminated Land-6 : The earth of this mine is stained with a crystalline white powder that leaves the soil dead. Mounds of ancient tailings and the winds of decades have spread the dust widely around the mine, and a broad stretch of land about it has been permanently destroyed for agriculture. Extended exposure to the dust causes boils and sickness in humans. If some antidote for the damage cannot be found, it will be all but impossible to establish a mining camp sufficiently close to the diggings.

***Sawyer's Wash*** / Good Timber / Covetous Polity-7 : Taian keeps a jealous watch on this stretch of superb hardwood timber. Numerous small streams allow for floating the logs out of the patch, and the convenience of cutting makes this particular expanse of jungle a great deal more valuable than most. The officials back in Taian are still feuding over which of them is to take control of the lumber and the consequent skimming of the profits, but they are apt to unite in seeking to repel any grasping outsiders from their forest.

***The Coughing Glade*** / Good Hunting / Recurring Sickness-4 : This stretch of land is thickly matted with a peculiar golden flower that the local antelopes find delicious. The pollen of the flower has an unpleasant effect on human and demihuman lungs, however, provoking fits of painful, racking coughs whenever it is disturbed.

***Zafiya's Garden*** / Medicinal Herbs / Wasted Production-5 : A renowned sage of plant lore once dwelled in this area until the coming of the Shou, and the ruins of her tower still stand at the center of it. Her experiments have since spread outward from the tower, and include numerous plants with valuable medicinal properties. A great many peculiar beasts have been drawn by the odd herbs, however, and their voracious feeding uses up much of the available harvest.

## SAKAI'S ALTAR

### Splinter Group/Lair

<b>Leader</b>	Watanabe Yoshi (C9), a driven priest of the Hells					
<b>Raiders</b>	On 5+, 2 units of Cultists					
<b>Defenders</b>	2 Barriers, 4 Cultists, 1 Red Jade Templar, 1 Hell Priest					
<b>Assets</b>	Hell Shrine (2/4/2)					
<b>Values</b>	<b>Military</b>		<b>Wealth</b>		<b>Social</b>	
	0/2	+0	0/4	+0	0/2	+0

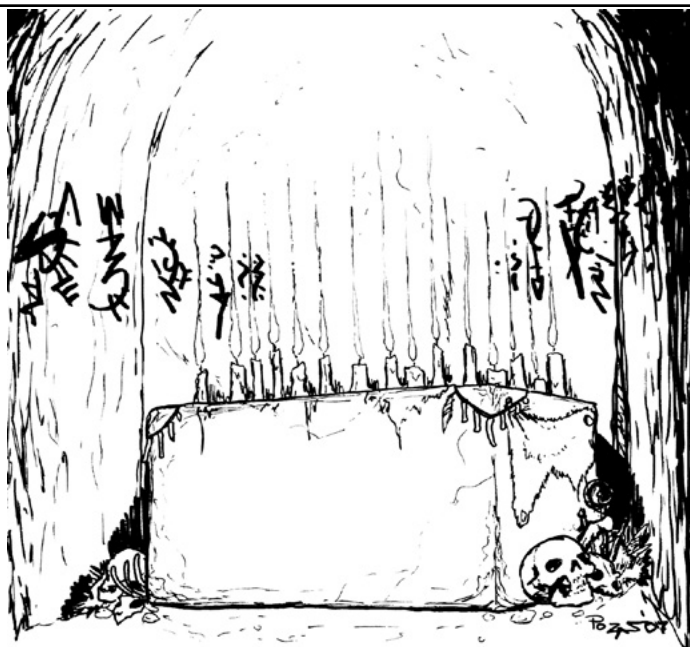
A temple of pale stones and rusted brown stains stands deep within the Galukan Wald, southwest of the town of Machida. Within its profaned halls dwell servants of the Hell Kings, devout acolytes of everlasting damnation. They intend to profit by their service in this life, and in the next they expect to rule their less obedient brethren from palaces of iron and red jade. The Hell Kings promise much to their faithful, and grant at least enough to make their lies sound plausible.

The leadership of Sakai's Altar is directed by Watanabe Yoshi, a Hell Priest sent from Kitaminato to serve as the Shogun's representative in Westmark. He has been gifted with great sums of gold to help press the infernal cause in the province, and the Hell Kings grant rich material blessings in the form of swift-ripening grain, heavy fishing nets, and easy hunting. Many of the devotees of Sakai's Altar are runaway slaves and downtrodden peasants who have given up their former faiths for the sake of easy rice and pleasant living.

Of course, the Hell Kings demand their own price for such munificence, and not all of it is paid in the world to come. Acolytes of the Altar are sent throughout Westmark to establish small cells of infernalists, carefully shepherding the lost, desperate, and amoral to the service that the Hell Kings enjoy best. The goal of their lords is to ensure the damnation of their followers, and goading their worshipers into increasingly horrific acts of evil is the inevitable purpose of the cults. The infernalists also strive to disrupt or defile funeral services and grave sites, so as to leave a newly-dead soul without the benefit of such prayers for their protection in the afterlife. Some less-saintly souls that might otherwise safely reach the refuge of a god's chosen afterlife are thus snatched away by hungry, watchful devils.

As a consequence, infernalism is banned in most of the civilized settlements of Westmark. Only in Taian and other wholly degenerate cities are servants of the Hell King permitted open worship and public performance of their hideous rites. Most other rulers have the sense to shun their evil, even though quick and easy blessings are available to those leaders willing to bend their knee to the gods below.

The Kueh of Machida and the elven Kuan Amelatu of Kur Darisum nurse an especially violent grudge against Sakai's Altar



and its masters. The Machidans are heirs to those brave souls who fled the Shogunate rather than submit to such worship, and the Kuan Amelatu hate all who dare to profane the rest of the dead. Both the Kueh and the elves are eager to strike at the Altar at every chance they get, but the strong defenses of the temple make such efforts difficult.

The precise location of the shrine is kept hidden through regular patrols and a policy of murder or worse to any caught nearby. Still, some wood-wise locals know how to reach the stained fane and might be persuaded to show adventurers if suitably induced. Particularly talented local cultists are also often sent to join the worshipers at the Altar, and these small bands of wicked pilgrims can be found making their discreet way through the villages and wilds on the way.

### PLOT SEEDS

Cultists from Sakai's Altar have set up a cell in a village or town important to the PCs. While they pretend to be devotees of a new and innocuous deity, worshipers are systematically pumped for information that can later be used to blackmail them into serious crimes that aid the cult's purpose. Once a firm hold is obtained on the hapless believer, they are rewarded with gold and favors from the cult, the better to make clear the benefits of cooperation- and hopelessly compromise them in the eyes of any investigators.

Evidence pointing to the infernal entanglements of an important local leader falls into PC hands- yet the facts suggest that at least some unnamed members of the local authorities are also cooperating with the cult. Who do the PCs show the evidence to? Or do they perhaps attempt to blackmail the cultist for their own purposes?

# SALLACHY

## Town

<b>Leader</b>	Cormac Keir (F6), suspicious clan chief					
<b>Traits</b>	Ethnocentrists, Expert Artisans					
<b>Obstacle</b>	Monsters/5					
<b>Assets</b>	Palisade (2/0/0), Organized Militia (2/-1/0), Trading Center (-1/4/0), Barracks (2/0/0), Shrine (0/0/2), Democratic Traditions (0/2/2), United Efforts (0/0/0)					
<b>Units</b>	2 Barriers (0/-4/0), 3 Gadaal Scouts (-3/-3/-3), 2 Light Infantry (-2/-2/-0), 1 Longbowman (-2/-1/-1) The Barracks eliminates the cost of the Longbows					
<b>Values</b>	<b>Military</b>		<b>Wealth</b>		<b>Social</b>	
	0/0	+1	4/0	+1	4/5	+1

Nestled close to the foothills of the Godbarrows along the banks of the White Jade River, Sallachy is a market town for the numerous hill villages of the west. These small hamlets crouch in deep valleys or shelter in the lee of thickly-wooded hills, and their herds and slope-scratch corn feed a race of tough, insular survivors.

Sallachy has more than its own share of such insularity. When the Ravaging sent the Shou hordes pouring out of the Godbarrows, many clans of Gadaal mountain folk were driven from their high homes and forced to seek refuge in the lower hills. There were times when it seemed that the whole western end of the march would be wiped clean of human habitation, and the Gadaal took the worst of it in the first days of the catastrophe. The Gadaal of Sallachy are determined to preserve the blood and ways of their people, and strangers would do well to keep their customs to themselves when within Sallachy's wooden walls.

Strangers come all the same, however, for the gemcutters of the Gadaal are some of the finest in Westmark. Even dwarf-mother work does not best the quality of the finest Sallachy artisans, as the Gadaal use their customs of luck-finding and auspicious omens to fashion jewelry that brings good luck to the wearer. Most of the gems they shape are river-worn stones which they find by steady panning and luck-charms. Jade, garnets, agates, rubies, sapphires, emeralds, and the occasional diamond all turn up in the hands of Sallachy prospectors.

Such good fortune extracts its own price. The Gadaal astromancers know perfectly well that when good fortune is turned in one direction, bad luck comes in through a different door. For Sallachy, that blight comes in the form of regular monstrous depredations on the hills around the town. Prospectors go armed, and hill-farms are fenced high and strong against the night. If there's some misshapen beast for a dozen miles around, it's all but sure that it will end up creeping around Sallachy's walls sooner or later.

This ill fortune keeps the town's chief regularly employing outsiders to clear out these beasts before they make too much of a nuisance of themselves. Caravan guards often hire out for such

work in between other employment, and some eastern freebooters build up their resources by doing some beast-hunting before venturing in search of rich tombs or crumbled towns.

The Sallachy-folk are somewhat numbed to this steady peril, and beasts that would leave a town in grave agitation elsewhere are shrugged away as "a flatlander's bread and beer". There have been times when this complaisance has bought them trouble, however. Not all beasts are so easily dispatched as they imagine, and more than one farmstead is now no more than an ugly memory thanks to the teeth of some misshapen thing.

Sallachy also faces increasing pressure from Taian to the southeast. The Lady Halah would very much like to have the jewels of Sallachy for her arcane experiments, to say nothing of the financial benefits to be gained from the trade. Sallachy has always mistrusted outsiders, and they particularly mistrust Taian. The city has done too much evil too recently for any neighbors to feel well about handing over their independence to a Taianese envoy. The Lady Halah is disinclined to give them any choice in the matter, and her sorcerous servants have been busy in the laboratories stitching together fresh abominations from the flesh of beasts and wretched slaves. Wizards do excel at the creation of monsters, and Halah intends for Sallachy's luck to be very bad indeed until they come around to a more reasonable relationship with their betters.

## PLOT SEEDS

A hill-country astromancer has come down from the west to eat the luck of Sallachy. He's built himself a tower a half-day's walk from the town's walls, and he works dark sorceries of sacrifice to the stars above in order to steal away the luck that Sallachy's jewelers craft. The locals fear to approach the tower, as the ferocious vortex of ill-omen makes the most ordinary act a mortal peril to those who dare draw near.

The beasts about the town have been fewer of late- but not because they come more rarely. A hideous creature lurks in the forest, a thing of fangs and eyes and many tongues, and it commands its lesser brethren like a monarch might his soldiers. The Great Beast plots first to cut off the place from outside help, and then bid his feral servants hunt the people of Sallachy through the streets of their own town.

Forty years ago, the Heart of the Hollow was cut by the legendary jeweler Aengus Keir for his brother Colm. The gem was said to provide a bounty of luck, such that a man who held it in hand could never die. Yet the Colm died high in the hills when his lover Moira stabbed him to possess the jewel, leaving him on a barren slope to tell his tale to a passing hunter before he expired. Moira never returned to Sallachy, but now the astromancers of the town declare that the omens indicate that the Heart will be found again somewhere a half-day's march from where Colm lay down to die. The prophecy has brought a dozen bands of hard and greedy men out to look for the priceless jewel and discover what might have become of treacherous Moira.

## SCREAMING STONES

A deep, broad hollow of stripped earth and brittle stone lies on the plains southwest of Hamtun, a depression cut into the damp grasslands by ancient dwarves. Broad, wide-spread veins of gold and other precious metals snaked near the surface here, and it was an easier and simpler to just peel away the earth than drive a thousand small shafts to follow each twist of the vein. The sides of the bowl have softened over the centuries since the ancient dwarves disappeared, and many of the dwelling-entrances that once lined the walls of the pit are now concealed under slumped earth.

The plainsmen stay away from the old dwarf mine. Those who draw too close hear screams from below the earth, faint sounds of torment bubbling up through the rocks in thin, whispering echoes. Adventurers who go there to plunder the ancient dwarf-houses find lairs for savage beasts or unquiet dead, and some never return at all.

In truth, the Screaming Stones serve as the lair for the largest group of dwarven Repenters in Westmark. As detailed in the Hammersong entry, these cultists are fanatically devoted to the infliction of pain and penitential suffering. Their bodies are marked with cruel piercings, scars, ritual tattoos of abnegation, and the occasional outright mutilation. They serve the broken shards of the Mother Below, and at the heart of their deepest halls here, a crippled fragment of the goddess holds court over her wretched slaves.

The shard takes the form of a queenly woman dressed wholly in golden ornaments- yet portions of her are missing, as if torn out by teeth or clutching fingers. With every passing moment a different part of her vanishes or becomes mangled, her body a shifting tapestry of rents and tears. She remains seated upon a golden altar-throne at the heart of the delve, and the dwarves worship her with gruesome rites of torment and abnegation.

The Screaming Stones have many slaves within their halls, both to tend the fungal gardens and beetle-farms that feed the dwarves and to serve as sacrifices to their goddess. More wretched than the living, however, are the spirits of the dead. Dwarven prisoners are slain with consecrated, red-runed picks that pin their spirits to the mortal world. The Repenters use dark rituals to give these spirits fresh bodies of flesh, the better to inflict new agonies on the hated traitors to their Mother Below. Many have been rendered hopelessly insane by decades of torture, while others are wretched, beaten things utterly subservient to their tormentors. Their tattered shapes roam the halls below to fall like wolves on intruders. If slain, they can simply be embodied anew with the next new moon's ritual.

While the nominal rule of the Screaming Stones lies in the hands of the Mother Below's shard, practical control is in the cruel grip

## Dwarven Outcasts/Lair

<b>Leader</b>	Varinka Truefaith (D10), dark Repenter priestess					
<b>Raiders</b>	On 6+, 1 unit of Dwarf Warriors					
<b>Defenders</b>	1 Tower (buried fortifications), 3 Dwarf Warriors, 1 Dwarf Crossbows, 1 Dwarf Hero					
<b>Assets</b>	Temple (0/-1/4)					
<b>Values</b>	<b>Military</b>		<b>Wealth</b>		<b>Social</b>	
	0/0	+0	0/-1	+0	0/4	+0

of Varinka Truefaith, a traitor fled from the dwarf-holds of the Altgrimmr mountains after her blasphemy was discovered. She is a darkly beautiful dwarvish woman, her scarring, jagged piercings, and tattoos of fealty all easily concealed beneath ordinary clothing or her armor of glyph-marked black steel. Most of her subordinates are lost in a haze of masochistic penitence and sadistic infliction of punishment, but Varinka retains enough focus and dark determination to advance many schemes in the outside world.

Aside from her interference in Hammersong's affairs, she has also struck a bargain with the Lady Halah of Taian, who is eager to discover much of the soul-lore known by the Repenters. Several Taianese blood sorcerers are in residence at the Screaming Stones, there to carefully study the processes by which the souls of prisoners are entrapped and tormented. In exchange for this assistance, Halah's sorceries disguised the Repenter pilgrims who infiltrated Hammersong, and Taianese gold is fueling the establishment of numerous smaller cells of Repenters in the hills and mountains of Westmark.

## PLOT SEEDS

A fight with a Taianese blood sorcerer results in the discovery of a dispatch among his belongings- an order from his master in Taian to go to the Screaming Stones and "assist our allies there". Directions are given to the hidden main entrance of the hold, and a password to allow admittance.

When the party is in the general vicinity of the lair, a dwarf in the party receives a vision from the ancestors. These ghostly ancients impart a brief image of the entrance to the hold and a glimpse of the eidolon of the Mother Below perched upon her golden altar-throne.

A herder who runs his flocks closer to the Screaming Stones than others commonly dare is growing frustrated with his losses, and blames wild beasts. He's looking for outsiders innocent of the Stones' reputation in order to go there and clear out the wolves he blames for the takings.



## City

<b>Leader</b>	Lady Halah (MU13), aspiring immortal					
<b>Traits</b>	Trading Hub, Educational Tradition					
<b>Obstacle</b>	Xenophobia/6					
<b>Assets</b>	Temple (0/-1/4), War Academy (8/-2/0), Great Academy (0/8/-2), Brutal Tyranny (4/0/0), Slavery (0/4/-2), Wall (4/-1/0), Trade Center (-1/4/0), Necromantic Cult (0/0/-2), Militia Muster (1/0/0), 3 Atrocity points (-2/-2/-2) Slavery eliminates the cost of the cult.					
<b>Units</b>	2 Barriers (0/-4/0), 2 Towers (-2/-8/0), 4 Dead Legions (-8/-4/0), 1 Necromancer (-1/-2/-1), 4 Archers (-4/-4/0), 1 War Mage (-1/-2/-1), 2 Heavy Infantry (-4/-4/0) War Academy eliminates the cost of 2 Dead Legions and 2 Towers					
	<b>Military</b>		<b>Wealth</b>		<b>Social</b>	
<b>Values</b>	0/0	+3	8/0	+4	4/0	+1

The Carrion City, the Great Rot, the White Jade Shackle... the city of Taian has many names in Westmark, and all of them are ill. Even those neighbors that do the most business with it mistrust its evil mistress and the cruel dealings of its people. It pledges its nominal loyalty to the Enlightened Sage of Tien Lung far to the south, but everyone knows that Lady Halah rules for herself and herself alone.

Thirty years ago, Taian was little more than a boggy heap of rubble crouching against the southern jungles. Once a great city, its walls had been thrown down and its people driven out by the Ravaging a century past, and those who dwelled there now were mere ruin-pickers and slave-takers come up from the bleak tropical wilderness of Tien Lung lands. Lady Halah's dispatch from the south was to be a permanent exile and a punishment for her failed intrigues.

Halah surprised the spies of Tien Lung when she set her hand to rebuilding the city. Most such exiles lived out their days in a haze of drugs, regret, and useless magical experimentation, but Halah seemed to take an unnatural interest in practical matters of state. She organized the locals with ruthless vigor and set them to restoring the wreckage of their home.

Within a few years, Taian had blossomed under the care of Halah's potent sorceries and canny leadership. Nearby villages were "encouraged" to accept Taian's rule, and in exchange for "eminently reasonable" taxation they were permitted the protection of Taianese troops. Those who failed to recognize their betters were reduced to slavery and their homes given to southern colonists who could be trusted to be more tractable.

The slave trade is very great in Taian, and as many as a fifth of the population is held to servile labor. Most sweat in the rice paddies that surround the city, while others are gilded toys for the wealthy

and the city nobility. The least fortunate are sacrifices to empower Stitched Path sorcerers such as Lady Halah. As many as eight men and women a week must die in careful agony if Lady Halah is to have access to her strongest sorceries. Those able-bodied men and women who can find no better jobs are often employed as overseers and guards for the slaves, and take out their lowly state and frustration on their helpless charges. Slave-owners are found of every race and kith within the city, save for dwarves- the deep folk consider slavery to be a blasphemy against their ancestors, and the dwarves of Westmark hate Taian and its Vulture Queen. Those few dwarves taken as slaves never last long. All but the most cowed and broken inevitably go on a murderous rampage before submitting to the whip and collar.

Halah's bloody rites have their price, however. The Stitched Path maims the sorcerer's soul, leaving it tattered and enfeebled compared to users of purer magic. Her youth and beauty are preserved by magic, but as her soul tatters further, the magic has more difficulty in finding purchase. She is desperate to unlock the secrets of immortality, that she might finally attain enough power to avenge herself on the Enlightened Sage and the city that drove her forth. To this end, she has cut bargains with Saint Tancred of the Red House of the Maker in order to acquire more slaves for vivisection. She has also bartered with Varinka Truefaith of the Screaming Stones in order to send Taianese blood magi to study the lore of soul-molding practiced by the heretical Repenter dwarves who dwell there. Other expeditions are regularly dispatched to any location that promises a further scrap of occult lore relevant to her passions.

Taian's nickname of "the Carrion City" has derived from its practice of using necromantic troops in battle. While tireless, fearless, and savage in battle, these dead legions are a standing horror to the region. Even the jaded decadents of Taian are disquieted by the sight of those fleshless soldiers, and quietly fear that they and their loved ones might be so enlisted when the time comes. The atrocity of it has left the city unsettled.

## PLOT SEEDS

A slave in Taian begs the PCs for help in escaping. The luckless soul is slated to be sacrificed to their owner's magical research, and they swear that they have kinsmen in Lintao who will pay well for their freedom. That vow may or may not be true, but the master will pursue the escapee relentlessly, as they alone will serve for the magical rite he is preparing.

Agents of Lady Halah approach the PCs. A former ally of theirs has ended up on Taian's bad side, and is slated for a lingering and unpleasant death. They are willing to overlook the ally's trespasses and release him or her to the PCs provided the party does a little favor for the Vulture Queen- one involving the recovery of an ancient stone tablet from the ruins of a nearby monastery. If the PCs survive, the Taianese will keep their words and offer quite respectable pay for the work. They may skip directly to that financial inducement if the party appears to be of sufficiently mercenary character.

# THE GRASS GENERAL’S FORTRESS

Halfway between the southern jungles and the Galukan Wald stands a stretch of towering forest. Massive hardwoods reach skyward with leaves broader than a man’s chest filtering out the sunlight into a hazy green glow below. Within this forest is a citadel of living wood, and within this stronghold is the wizard known as the Grass General.

The origin of the mad enchanter is unknown, but travelers first mention his home some twenty years ago. It took no more than a few months to turn an empty patch of brooding, silent forest into the tower-crowned edifice of living wood that stands there now, and the Grass General was quick to proclaim his rule over the surrounding lands. The few farming villages close to the forest thought to defy him at first, until warriors of bramble and cruel thorns marched upon their homes. The survivors meekly offer the tribute demanded by the sorcerer, largely in wagonloads of fertilizer and coffles of young men and women.

The Grass General is convinced of the natural superiority of plant life over that of coarse, bestial animals. Their serenity, grace, and resilience is proof of their finer nature, and their intoxicating beauty is a reward for those who cultivate them.

To better fulfill his passions, he has labored to devise strange amalgams of plant and human, carving away portions of human flesh to graft upon green stems and vines. Guardians with long liana-arms and human faces keep watch upon the lands around his fortress, and orchid-crowned concubines sun themselves in strange gardens within the walls. Most are fashioned from the tribute he takes from the villagers, and all but a few have wholly lost whatever memories once made them men and women.

The General plots to grow the surrounding forest until it has entirely consumed the Westmark. Eventually, all humans will be replaced by the plant-hybrid creatures he fashions, and all animal life will be replaced by the strange equivalents he grows in his gardens. Of course, such efforts will require decades to accomplish even with the aid of his mighty magic, but he takes solace in the ageless patience that is the natural birthright of the floral world.

The chief agents of the forest’s expansion are a dozen creeping, vine-tentacled boles of matted plant life. These swollen creatures crawl to the edges of the forest and drive their tendrils deep into the earth, where they form the rootstock of a fresh stand of trees in

## Mad Wizard/Lair

Leader	The Grass General (MU9), plant-obsessed mage					
Raiders	On 6+, 1 unit of plant-like Warbeasts					
Defenders	1 Barrier, 1 Tower, 3 Light Infantry, 1 Warbeast, 1 War Mage					
Assets	None					
Values	Military		Wealth		Social	
	0/0	+0	0/0	+0	0/0	+0

a matter of weeks. Such rapid growth requires the transference of life from a different source, and as the use of innocent plant life is unthinkable, animals and humans are fed to the thorny jaws of the cultivator to hasten the growth. Their belongings are stripped away to better adorn the odalisques of the fortress and the vaults of their master.

These cultivators have begun to encroach on the lands of several farming villages, and the roaming grass-soldiers who kidnap fresh human stock are pressing hard on the settlements. Even the old tributes no longer ensure safety from the Grass General’s creations, and the village elders have considered flight. It may be too late for some; about several villages, the General’s servants have caused vast rings of impassible thorns to erupt overnight, trapping the humans within until it is time for them to be harvested for the forest’s glory.

## PLOT SEEDS

An ally is mortally sick, and the only cure available relies on a flower plucked from the mane of one of the Green General’s most terrible hunting-beasts.

The forest is encroaching on an ally’s village, and if the cultivator responsible is not hunted down and destroyed, the settlement is sure to be left uninhabitable.

The half-mindless servants of the Grass General have confused a massacre site’s nest of undead for a band of humans. They’ve captured the undead and fed them to a hungry cultivator, causing strange undead hybrids to grow and uproot themselves in search of human flesh. The cultivator itself is infused with dark power and has been possessed by the strongest of the undead spirits.

# THE PAGODA OF CRIMSON DREAMS

## Broken Temple/Ruin

<b>Leader</b>	Abbot Kolbrand (C9), missionary Tide Priest					
<b>Traits</b>	Pre-Exile Relics					
<b>Obstacle</b>	Tide Cult/7					
<b>Assets</b>	Temple (0/-1/4)					
<b>Values</b>	<b>Military</b>		<b>Wealth</b>		<b>Social</b>	
	0/0	+0	2/1	+0	4/8	+1

Far to the west, on the slopes of a verdant mountain, there rises a tall and stately pagoda of red-enameled roof tiles and golden-hued pillars. Elaborate statues of all the Nine Immortals favored by Xianese worshippers adorn niches in the tower, and the mountainside surrounding it has been sculpted into a serene garden of stones and lush greenery. It is an incongruous site so far into the dangerous, Shou-infested mountain lands.

Those with an eye for magical influences will detect the tell-tale waft of sorcery from the tower, however, and powerful spells of true sight will strip away the illusion. In truth, the tower is a jagged-crowned ruin, the garden is an overgrown waste, and those niches protected from the depredations of beasts are choked with the bones of men, women, and children. The Pagoda of Crimson Dreams is the lair of a master maddened by despair and his quarreling, demented underlings.

Abbot Kolbrand was master of the pagoda when the Shou first came, and survived along with a handful of his followers by hiding in the deep vaults below. The rest were slaughtered when the pagoda was stormed, and when the Shou passed on Kolbrand emerged from the vaults with a heart full of bitterness. He was certain that eastern humanity was doomed, and when no human travelers came for years after, he grew all the more convinced that he and his followers were the last surviving humans in the world.

The Tide's whispers came to him then, and promised him a world restored. It promised mankind returned to its rightful place and the dead revived to a new and better life. The abbot was a broken man, and in time he submitted to the whispers and performed the red rites of the Tide.

Through Kolbrand's influence, the rest of the survivors soon fell under the sway of the mists. The Tide's twisted influence gave the broken monastery the semblance of fresh wholeness, and when the first few survivors finally turned up at the monastery, the monks were convinced that the Tide had kept its promise to revive humanity. Of course, these strangers told stories of having evaded the Shou in the first place, but it was only natural that the Tide should restore them with soothingly false memories.

Admittedly, the first of these visitors were distressingly ungrateful to the Red Tide for its blessings, and the monks were forced to kill and eat them, but their contumacy gave Kolbrand his

new mission. He and his followers would go forth to spread the worship of the Tide and aid the remade world in recognizing its true benefactor. They may be frightened and ignorant folk, but the miracles of the Tide and the blessings that came with its worship would soon put them on the right path.

Ever since, small groups of monks from the pagoda have ventured forth into the eastern lands to plant small cells of Tide-worship among the villages and towns. They most often present themselves as ecumenical priests of the Nine Immortals, carefully selecting and converting the most suitable believers to establish a self-sustaining cult before moving on. Of course, the mutation and self-destructive madness induced by the Tide makes most of these cults into short-lived horrors, but the monks are tireless, and always ready to renew their efforts in an area.

Most Tide cults would have self-destructed long ago, but Abbot Kolbrand's particular mania seems to please the Tide, and he and his followers have not experienced the cataclysmic mutations and incomprehensible urges that burn out other Tide infestations. The rites used to revere the Tide are hideous and soul-scarring, of course, and many of the monks are subtly or greatly changed beneath their saffron robes, but they can function in civilized society without drawing undue attention.

The abbot makes particular use of the numerous ancient relics kept within the pagoda's vaults. Countless holy books, pre-exile tokens of authority, and precious works of lore were stored there, and the authenticity of them lend additional strength to the teachings of his wandering servants.

## PLOT SEEDS

A yellowed map dating back before the Ravaging is discovered, marking out the location of the temple in the western mountains. It is labeled as "the holy shrine of golden pillars" and its great wealth of relics is mentioned.

The PCs are in a remote village but are in need of clerical magic. The "missionaries of the Nine Immortals" cheerfully offer to aid with their own blessings, and actually are genuinely helpful to the PCs, preferably offering support over a longer period. Then the PCs discover their ties with the Tide. How do the adventurers wipe out the threat without being suspected as potential cultists themselves?

A friendly NPC is in desperate need of a particular jade chop that will prove his right to claim his ancestral lands from a greedy interloper. The chop was given as a gift to the Shrine of Golden Pillars in the far west, and there it must be found. Abbot Kolbrand will cheerfully welcome outsiders and even direct them to the temple's undead-infested vaults, confident that he can turn the PCs to the true faith once they've cleaned out his basement a bit.

## THE PALACE OF VERDANT WISDOM

The lush heat of the southern jungles is vibrant with life. Strong buildings of stone are cracked and tumbled by the press of insistent vines, and the proudest works of men are soon buried under insistent growth. In the days before the Ravaging, scholars from the east came to study the strange geomantic power that bubbled up in the emerald depths of the jungle, and the Palace of Verdant Wisdom is all that remains of their efforts.

It is uncertain whether jungle Shou or the jungle itself destroyed the school during the Ravaging. Even now, the surrounding lands are dangerous and deep-forest villages are few and suspicious of outsiders. There are things in the deep green that are unknown to dwellers in more temperate climes, and most of them are hungry for the flesh of men.

Whatever brought about the destruction, the sages of the school appear to have wrought some last, desperate sorcery in an attempt to preserve their lives. The very plants and beasts of the jungle were snared in a great enchantment, twisting them into manlike guardians with an obsessive hatred of intruders. Some of these altered things could even pass for human, while others are shambling mounds of vines, or gnarled creatures of fang and claw.

In the decades since the Ravaging, these creatures have formed a half-dozen mutually-hostile tribes within the ruins of the school. The sprawling stone towers and crumbling academies are homes for these savage creatures, and they spend their time hunting the surrounding jungles or skirmishing with each other. The enchantment on the school prevents them from leaving it for long, and natural population pressures have left them at each others' throats.

The same enchantment compels them to a red hatred for intruders. Many are quite intelligent enough to form different opinions about outsiders, but the curse forces them into instinctive hostility. Still, their hatred of each other is so fresh that it might outweigh external hostility long enough to form some kind of arm's-length bargain if it results in death to their rivals.

The heart of the curse is in four glyphed pillars of white jade, each one placed within the heart of an ancient academy. The locals are geased against approaching or harming the pillars, but if an outsider was able to smash them or devise some geomantic means of cutting off their ambient mystical energy, the curse could be lifted. Of course, the immediate instinct of the creatures would be to spread outward into the jungle, there to prosper or to perish, and the human villages in the surrounding lands may not appreciate such fresh perils.

Within the crumbling buildings of the school are many arcane relics, some of them dating back before the exile. A few are of even

## Shattered School/Ruin

<b>Leader</b>	Assorted beastman and plantman chieftains					
<b>Traits</b>	Lost Techniques					
<b>Obstacle</b>	Ancient Curse/6					
<b>Assets</b>	Academy (0/4/-1)					
	Military		Wealth		Social	
<b>Values</b>	0/0	+0	6/10	+1	0/-1	+0

stranger provenance, having been discovered in ancient prehuman ruins. Many of the paper and bamboo books of sorcery have collapsed into piles of rot in the humid jungle heat, but the most potent grimoires were inevitably equipped with charms against such mundane destruction. It is unlikely- but not impossible- that the local creatures have somehow managed to master some of the incantations revealed in these texts.

Meanwhile, several sorcerers and local governments have sent expeditions to the school in hope of salvaging something of value. Many of these expeditions perish to the perils of the surrounding jungle, while most of the survivors meet their end on the spears and darts of the native creatures. Some do survive long enough to emerge with precious relics, and the handful of successes are enough to keep outsiders trying.

### PLOT SEEDS

Enemies of the Grass General seek the ancient lore of the Palace in hopes of finding some way to unravel his enchantments. The PCs are dispatched to search the ruins, while at the same time a rival group of plantman servitors have been sent by the Grass General to beat them to the prize.

A handful of beastmen have escaped the curse, and have picked out a harsh existence outside the ruins. In an encounter with the PCs, they beg the adventurers to break the jade pillars and free their people, offering what they know of the ruins in help. If the PCs succeed in the task, they will reveal a hidden cache of ancient relics as a reward.

A powerful enchanter plans to subvert the curse, binding the creatures to his own service. He hires the PCs as guards and minions, but a careless servant will reveal his master's true plans. The magical subversion requires the enchanter to retain control of one of the four jade pillars and smash or deface the other three.

# THE PORCELAIN TOWER

## Empty Tower/Ruin

<b>Leader</b>	The Clay Emperor, sorcerous porcelain golem					
<b>Traits</b>	Great Art					
<b>Obstacle</b>	Disputed Possession/4					
<b>Assets</b>	None					
<b>Values</b>	<b>Military</b>		<b>Wealth</b>		<b>Social</b>	
	2/2	+0	4/4	+0	0/0	+0

A great tower stands on a lonely moor to the north of Machida. Its walls are paneled in brilliantly-colored porcelain, sculpted images of crimsons and golden hues and blues as piercing as those of a cloudless sky. The images of men and women and cities of the world before the Tide are so perfect as to be almost truer than life, even shadow and light captured within the play of cold porcelain.

Despite the passing of lonely decades, the walls remain unmarred. Nothing short of a battering ram can chip the glassy surface, and those who come close with such siege tools are struck by bolts of flame hurled from the crown of the tower. The walls are smooth and free of windows, with only thick translucent panes of porcelain to admit light into the tower's interior.

Legends say that the Porcelain Tower was the redoubt of a reclusive mage-artist before the days of the Ravaging, an isolated home and workshop where he could sculpt his memories of the days before the Tide and the good things that he had forever lost. He shunned visitors, but strangers still came from far away to look upon the walls of his tower and admire their peerless skill.

No one is certain when the artist met his end, and some say that he lives still within his painted tower. The gates remain open, and some brave adventurers still dare to enter and seek the tower's reclusive master. Few emerge, and those that do speak of berserk effigies of clay and porcelain that attack those who defy their strange demands of fealty and obedience.

Presently, Machida and Hamtun both claim rightful possession of the tower and the exclusive authority to permit incursions into its heights. The dispute is not sufficient to bring the two towns to blows, particularly since Hamtun knows it would be unlikely to win such a conflict, but it does make for harsh sniping between the two, and a group known to be selling porcelain plunder from the tower is apt to incur the anger of town officials who did not give permission for such an expedition.

In truth, the tower is under the control of one of the artist's last creations, a marvelously lifelike replica of the Ninefold Celestial Empire's last ruler. Dressed in porcelain robes that flex like silk, crowned with jewels of brilliant, translucent glass, the Clay Emperor is convinced that he is the empire's reincarnated master, and that all the Sunset Isles ought properly to bow to his august authority.

Unfortunately for the Clay Emperor, authority over the tower and the power to release its denizens was not entrusted to him by the artist. Instead, such power was given to the Pale Lady, a sad-eyed concubine of clay and glassy polish and perfectly lifelike warmth fashioned by the mage. The Lady grieves still for the death of her creator so many years ago, and has long suspected the Clay Emperor of being complicit in the accident that killed him. She is kept in durance vile by the crazed effigy, but she has a golem's resolve, and she refuses to utter the words that will free him and his clay soldiers from the deep vaults of the tower.

The Clay Emperor has altered the tower's interior for better security, forcing those who enter to delve down into the extensive underground complex beneath the tower before they can come back up a stairway that leads to its heights. In these underground passages, dull creations of unfired clay dig out the materials the Clay Emperor requires in order to make more such servants, and vast rows of inert statues await his summons.

Despite his grandiose plans and impressive sorcerous powers, the Clay Emperor is fundamentally flawed, and prone to carelessness and the neglect of important details. Some of the artist's original creations still exist within the tower, recognizable by their vastly superior artistry and lifelike appearance, and these creations nurse a secret hate against the Clay Emperor's cruel megalomania. They are likely to aid outsiders in finding a way through the dungeons and their occupants.

## PLOT SEEDS

A wealthy, obsessive collector of fine porcelain seeks prizes from within the Porcelain Tower, and is willing to pay top price for any artifacts that can be salvaged.

A herdsman reports hearing a strange, beautiful singing from high up the tower. He could not see the source of the music, but the singer sang of a maiden in need of brave rescuers and a grave peril that grew within the tower's walls. He was going to creep closer when the song ended with a sudden cry of pain.

# THE RED HOUSE OF THE MAKER

Several years after the chaos of the Ravaging, a brave band of Makerite templars established a fortified monastery in the eastern plains of the Westmark. Building strong walls of the ruddy stones to hand, the Red House of the Maker was one of the first strongholds of humankind to return to the scoured land, and its Spears of the Iron Prophets fought fearlessly for their kindred.

The Red House was a bulwark for the dispirited survivors of the Shou hordes. Its walls sheltered them from rampaging bands of orcish warriors and its warriors held back the depredations of goblin raiders. The Westmark was a howling wilderness in those first decades, but the Red House was responsible for keeping at least part of it habitable by humanity. The Makerite knights accepted the service of enough tenants to keep the temple fed and its warriors supplied in the field, but it always shunned direct political control. Its holy mission was that of protection and restoration, and secular rule could only distract from its cause.

Ten years ago, the Red House of the Maker was one of the strongest redoubts of order and justice in Westmark. Yet within its councils, a fierce disagreement had come to a head between the Patriarch Ulric and one of the younger members of the monastery's ruling council, Sir Tancred. Tancred was convinced that the Patriarch had grown too cautious and too worldly in his leadership. He was too wary of losses in dispatching his men, too willing to see evil prosper rather than sacrifice the necessary price for its destruction. The monastery was rich and powerful and honored, and many of the best families in the province sent their younger sons to join the order. Should it not be more interested in the good of the world than the profit that came by its deeds?

The Patriarch maintained that the Red House was too important to the stability of the eastern province to spend its men carelessly. Their strength held back innumerable petty wars and blood feuds, and their gold did good work in sustaining impoverished villages and hard-pressed wanderers. Sacrifices should only be made when they promised to be worthy of the price.

Nine years ago, Tancred and his followers made their point in brutal and final fashion. A vast Shou horde had formed in the forests around Jinan, and their warlord had chosen the Red House of the Maker to prove his dreadful might. Less than an hour before the horde was to crash into the monastery's walls, Tancred and those who agreed with his words rode out of the fort and left the remaining Makerites to their fates.

Had they stood together, the battle would have been bloody but victorious for the fierce and disciplined Makerites. As it was, the Nine Days Fall was a massacre for both sides. The walls of the monastery were broken, numerous buildings within were shattered, and the Patriarch Ulric and his greatest paladins were all slain. A little more than a hundred Makerites survived when the Patriarch commanded them to flee that the world should know of Tancred's treachery and that the order should not be utterly destroyed. The survivors escaped, only to see Tancred and his men charging in to mop up the remnants of the Shou after the savage warriors had finished off their former brethren.

## Broken Temple/Ruin

<b>Leader</b>	"Saint" Tancred (F10), fanatical Makerite heretic					
<b>Traits</b>	Scattered Heirs					
<b>Obstacle</b>	Conquering Heirs/7					
<b>Assets</b>	Hell Shrine (2/4/2)					
<b>Values</b>	<b>Military</b>		<b>Wealth</b>		<b>Social</b>	
	2/4	+0	2/6	+1	2/4	+0

Tancred promptly proclaimed the loyal survivors to be cowards who had fled the monastery in its hour of need, and more than a few listeners were willing to believe him. He quickly set about reorganizing the Red House upon different lines- a heartless, fanatical dedication to the destruction of the wicked.

His Knights of the Blazing Hammer have poured out their blood like water in war against the Shou and the incursions of the Tide. Such extravagant expenses have cost Tancred dearly, and he has been forced to make bargains with dark powers in order for his men to gain the strength they require. In exchange for sinister favors granted to Taian, Lady Halah has arranged for certain infernal powers to bless Tancred and his men. Tancred alone realizes the truth, but the Knights of the Blazing Hammer are empowered not by the Maker, but by the red blessings of the Hell Kings.

Tancred knows perfectly well that he is everlastingly damned. He has abandoned his former clerical powers out of shame, and he knows that there can be no forgiveness in this life or the next for what he has done. But he is a man of sacrifice, and if it is necessary that his soul be sacrificed so that evil will be destroyed, so be it. Even Lady Halah will know the wrath of the Blazing Hammer in the proper hour, and for now his templars obey him with zealous assurance.

## PLOT SEEDS

A shabby and seemingly useless NPC turns out to have been a Spear, and a survivor of the Nine Days Fall. He has a key to a hidden vault of Makerite relics in the temple ruins, and is convinced that the PCs have the mettle to sneak past the Blazing Hammers to get down into the long-sealed catacombs. If they can bring out the sacred relics, the surviving Spears will have a rallying point- or the PCs could simply sell them.

Tancred has a peculiar indifference to Hell Cults compared to his savage zeal in killing Shou and Tide-worshippers. His Blazing Hammers fight such cultists where they find them, but strongholds such as Sakai's Altar are left unmolested. One reckless Hammer struck at a nearby Hell King cult, only for his companions to be slaughtered and he himself captured for later sacrifice. A survivor begs the PCs for aid in rescuing him. If recovered, the Hammer will relate with horror the truth revealed to him by the gloating infernal priest- that the Order of the Blazing Hammer gains its powers from the Hell Kings, and that their blessings are identical to those given to the infernal Red Jade Templars.



# THE TOMB OF THE WAITING ONE

High up on the slopes of a thickly-wooded mountain, a stone portal yawns open. The thick granite door lies before it, cracked into two heavy slabs by some recent shifting of the mountain's bulk. Should a patient investigator manage to lift the face of the fallen door, he would find a glyph of binding etched finger-deep in the rock, now broken into two equal fragments.

Ages ago, in the time when serpent priests ruled among the lizardfolk, one among them appalled even that harsh race with his thirsts and his cruel excesses. For a time he even seemed likely to ascend to rulership over all his kind until a pact among his rivals resulted in his sudden fall from glory. So great was his sorcerous might that his rivals feared to actually kill him, lest his blood bear a curse that they could not break. Instead, they stripped him of his regalia and arcane implements and imprisoned him deep within the mountain under nine great stone seals.

The better to keep watch on him, all five of his rivals moved their own lairs into the mountain. Their own apprentices and mates would serve as vigilant guardians over their hated foe. Within the mountain, they built laboratories and temples and serpentine pleasure-gardens for their delight. For centuries, the long-lived snake priests dwelled in tense harmony.

Such peace was ruined when one among them appeared to have the chance to ascend to the throne. The others dragged him down before all five became prey to a swift tangle of betrayal and counter-treachery. In mere months their peaceful lair became an abattoir, and none lived to escape the stone door.

Yet the Waiting One still lived, translated from living flesh to immortal corruption by the sheer, malicious hatred that boiled in his serpentine breast. He could do nothing within his living crypt, an undead serpent-priest condemned to eternal isolation beyond the wards and walls of his betrayers' homes.

That changed three years ago, when a shift in the mountainside cracked the outermost of the nine seals. It was little, but it was enough. The Waiting One could send dreams to his own kind, and his beckoning brought several tribes of wild lizardfolk to live in the dry mountains. They strongly dislike the climate, but they yearn to be close to the "holy mountain".

Yet these same shamans refuse to enter the tomb. They know perfectly well that the Waiting One could eradicate them all with a wave of a clawed hand, but his sendings bring the shamans great authority among the tribe's warriors. They intend to simply use the Waiting One as a beacon to attract more lizardfolk tribes until

## Ancient Evil/Lair

<b>Leader</b>	The Waiting One (C13), undead lizardfolk cleric					
<b>Raiders</b>	On 5+, 1 Lizardfolk Warrior					
<b>Defenders</b>	3 Dead Legions, 2 Lizardfolk Warriors, 1 War Mage					
<b>Assets</b>	None					
<b>Values</b>	<b>Military</b>		<b>Wealth</b>		<b>Social</b>	
	0/0	+0	0/0	+0	0/0	+0

they are ready to lead them south in conquest of wetter, lower lands. The vague images the Waiting One can send are all of rage and frustration, but the shamans interpret these dreams as being signs that the soft-skins must be scourged for their invasion of rightful lizardfolk territory.

The shamans keep the lizardfolk at a healthy distance from the shrine, just in case the Waiting One can do more than scream at them in their dreams. They are glad to use him as a symbol of the ancient glory of the lizardfolk, but none of the cold-blooded shamans are stupid enough to imagine that he would use them as anything more than expendable pawns.

Such is the Waiting One's rage that he is even beginning to send dreams to nearby human settlements, glimpses of the wealth and ancient lore hidden within the mountain. The plunder of his old rivals is all but untouched, and these soft-skinned creatures are notorious for breaking and meddling where they should not be. Surely some brainless lot of adventurers can be found to smash the remaining eight seals in hopes of finding gold behind each.

That much they will find- along with the mummified undead forms of the ancient lizardfolk who dwelled in the mountain, and the strange ecosystem of cave life that built up from their pleasure gardens and cisterns. Those who survive those perils can expect much wealth, and the dire temptation of that last, fragile clay seal.

## PLOT SEEDS

A neutral tribe of lizardfolk has passed word to a nearby village of the dreams being sent from the "holy mountain", and how it foretells evil for the lowlanders. They do not intend to go to the mountain, but they know that many of their brethren surely will.

An ancient clay tablet written in the sinuous lizardfolk script describes the glorious subterranean palace of the five great adepts of the snake god. The tablet is long on descriptions of the gold, jewels, and precious lore within their halls, and fails to mention the unholy monster being kept beyond its deepest doors.

# THE YELLOW TEETH

So far into the Godbarrows that even canny Gadaal mountaineers know it only as a rumor, the Yellow Teeth are the towers of a lost city. Weathered, darkened pillars of pale stone rise high atop this mountain plateau, pierced here and there with doorways and windows, the lowest of which are twenty feet above the plateau's surface. The few that have found the way to this ancient city have soon fled or been destroyed, for in it lurk the heirs to a grim and terrible hunger.

In the ancient days of another world, the god Shakun had but a handful of worshipers remaining to him. The Red Tide had found his world and had slowly, relentlessly driven back his people. They had made the Shou as warriors against the Tide, and these orcs, goblins, and bugbears were specially gifted in slaying its creations and resisting its maddening blandishments, but it was not enough. In desperation, Shakun spent the last of his strength to hurl the entire archipelago of the Sunset Isles to a different world, where his people might yet live. That world was this one, and the Yellow Teeth are the ruins of an ancient Shou city translated in the shift.

The translation was harsh. Such was the jolt that the Yellow Teeth were shifted twenty feet upward, with their doorways high above the earth. The sophisticated sorceries of the ancient Shou were disrupted and their marvelous artifacts and devices often failed in this new world. Within a few centuries, desperation and intercine strife had made simple tribal hunters of the Shou, and it was these ferocious warriors that the first explorers discovered when they came upon the Sunset Isles.

Other Shou cities had survived more or less intact, but Yellow Teeth was in the process of being overrun by the Tide when the translation went off. As a consequence, there was hardly a living Shou in the city when it arrived in this world. Only in the bottommost of the towers, in the complex of crackling energies and sophisticated artifices, was there yet intelligent life to be found. A new batch of Shou were being grown in the genesis vats to be rushed to the front lines, but now there was no one to monitor the machines, or teach the newly-emerged Shou of civilization.

The genesis vats worked ceaselessly to produce more and more feral Shou, their calibration slowly and steadily shifting. One Shou batch would appear perfectly healthy and manlike, and the next batch would have fangs on their fingers and seven eyes encircling their crowns. Worse still, the high mountains had almost no food to eat, and no shipments of lowland supplies as the city had once received. The vat-born Shou were forced to cannibalize each other simply to survive.

The vats generate life from geomantic energy and arcane Shou artifices, and they have steadily emitted fresh generations of Shou ever since. The warring tribes within the ruins take the strongest of each batch for their own and eat the weak- and any rivals they can

## Prehuman Ruin/Ruin

<b>Leader</b>	Various feral chieftains (F9)					
<b>Traits</b>	Forgotten Sorceries					
<b>Obstacle</b>	Things From Below/8					
<b>Assets</b>	None					
<b>Values</b>	<b>Military</b>		<b>Wealth</b>		<b>Social</b>	
	0/0	+0	6/6	+1	0/0	+0

catch as well. The entire ruin's ecosystem is based on cannibalism. Those few Shou who have dared to seek something else are almost inevitably killed by other Shou tribes in the mountains, who fear Yellow Teeth as a place of awful ill omen.

The feral Shou have managed to retain language and a few crude crafts, but most of their weapons and armaments are made of the remains of their meals. A few precious artifacts of the ancient Shou still function in the Yellow Teeth, however, and these black glass wands of killing light are tribal treasures, as are the rings and helmets that accomplish various eldritch feats.

More of these artifacts would be available to them if they dared to search the entire city, but certain parts are taboo to them. The very air of these underground dens is lethal to those who enter, a curse that rots the bones of those who dare profane them. A *Cure Disease* spell can undo this radiation poisoning before it kills a victim, but otherwise someone who enters these areas is sure to die within a month.

The passages and chambers beneath the towers make up a massive underground complex dominated by the genesis vats. These holy vessels are sacred to the feral Shou, and each tribe controls one of the vat chambers. Those so blasphemous as to attempt to destroy the vats are inevitably slain by a great steel beast that butchers all such heretics.

## PLOT SEEDS

A peculiar gripped wand of black glass has turned up in the Hammersong market. According to the mountaineer who brought it for sale, he found it on a Shou who was fleeing the high mountains. It was the strangest Shou he'd ever killed; its clothes were made out of Shou-skin and it had a bone spear in its hand. The mountaineer is willing to give directions to the place where he killed the Shou in exchange for suitable inducement.

A Shou warlord is cutting a red swath through the hill country, charging higher and higher up into the mountains and burning everything in his path. The human survivors want him dead- but in truth, the warlord is heading for Yellow Teeth, convinced that the taboos of his tribe merely conceal a treasure ripe for his taking.

## Town

<b>Leader</b>	Xiulan the Liberator (C7), avenging ex-slave					
<b>Traits</b>	Rebels, Martial Tradition					
<b>Obstacle</b>	Demagogue/7					
<b>Assets</b>	Training Grounds (4/-1/0), Dwarf Friend (0/4/0), Market (0/2/0), Shrine (0/0/2), Palisade (1/0/0)					
<b>Units</b>	2 Barriers (0/-4/0), 5 Light Infantry (-5/-5/0), 1 Dwarf Warrior (-2/-1/-1), 1 Holy Man (0/-1/-2) The Training Grounds eliminate costs for Barriers.					
<b>Values</b>	<b>Military</b>		<b>Wealth</b>		<b>Social</b>	
	4/2	+1	2/2	+1	2/1	+0

Tianfeng is a town of escaped slaves. Runaways and rebels from the cruel lands of Tien Lung to the south, these men and women have escaped to the foothills of Westmark's southern jungles. There they have made a home beyond the reach of their merciless former masters.

For years, Tianfeng has been a humble hiding-place, one with little more than the bare necessities for supplying the small farms that dotted the surrounding land. Taian and the Tien Lungan towns to the south gave no thought to attacking it. The natives would doubtless simply flee into the hills and leave the troops hunting them uselessly for weeks while fending off savage jungle beasts.

That meek solitude has changed in the past year. Twelve months ago, a ragged woman stumbled from the jungle and into the town. Her eyes burned with a strange light, and she worked miracles that no onlooker could deny. She declared that she was Xiulan the Liberator, that she had been blessed with a vision of Tendai, the Breaker of Ways, and that she was to bring his word as a righteous sword against all who dared to keep slaves.

Tendai is one of the less widely-worshipped of the Nine Immortals, the most popular pantheon of human gods. He is the Black God, the Perverter of Customs, the Innovator, the One Who Cheats. His devils cultivate perversions and selfish indulgence and his holy tulpas bring better ways and break corrupt systems of every kind. Xiulan believes that Tendai has appointed her to break the shackles of slavery from every man and woman so prisoned in Westmark. After, she will lead them in a cleansing crusade to shatter the walls of Tien Lung and drag the Enlightened Sage from his tower.

Xiulan has ample reason to hate the Enlightened Sage and his decadent city. Raised within the amber walls of his palace since her girlhood, she has suffered terribly at the hands of his extraplanar servitors and experienced the alien torments possible only to the prey of great sorcerers. The experience has greatly disturbed the prophet. Her loathing of slavery and all that stinks of Tien Lung is so intense as to blind her as to the consequences of her actions and the inevitable outcome of any direct confrontation with the major slaving powers in the Westmark.

At one level, Xiulan is confident that Tendai will deliver victory to the warriors of Tianfeng. The Breaker of Ways will not permit his chosen prophet to be defeated, and her faithful companions will surely crush any force that dares to oppose their righteous cause. Thus far, her successes have helped convince the locals that she really is right on that count. The few Taianese patrols and outposts that reach near Tianfeng have been badly bloodied by ferocious assaults from the citizens of Tianfeng. Baffled at this sudden violence from a mere rabble of runaway slaves, the Carrion City has yet to discover the reason for the slave hideout's sudden ferocity.

At a deeper level, Xiulan is profoundly scarred by her experiences as a slave. She suffers from sweating nightmares, fits of uncontrollable anger, and spasms of barely-controlled, reflexive panic when in the presence of magic-users. She is convinced that these weaknesses will vanish once she has attained sufficient victories over the forces of tyranny. If only she can kill enough slavers, burn enough pens, break enough walls, surely she will no longer be afraid to sleep.

A weaker mind would long since have snapped under the horrors experienced within the golden palace of the Enlightened Sage. But even so, Xiulan is badly deluded about her chances against Taian, let alone the great city of Tien Lung to the south. If the Carrion City finally decides to wipe out this annoying nest of runaways the locals of Tianfeng have no hope of defeating Taian's forces. Direct confrontation can only result in a massacre.

Xiulan refuses to see this, and any attempt to point it out risks branding the malcontent as a "friend to slavers". Her miracles and her ferocious charisma have won the great majority of Tianfeng's inhabitants to her cause and imbued them with a euphoric conviction of their certain victory that is apt to dramatically collapse after their first real defeat. Only then will they reconsider their leader's wisdom- if any are left alive.

## PLOT SEEDS

Vasili Ironhand is a dwarven abolitionist from Hammersong, one who provides much of the weaponry and armor used by Tianfeng's defenders. The dwarven hatred of slavery meshes well with Tianfeng's customs, but he recognizes the odds. He wants the PCs to steal papers from a Taianese military outposts that will reveal the true strength of Taianese troops in the area, and hopefully be enough to at least convince Xiulan's followers that a direct confrontation is impossible right now.

Taianese provocateurs are actually goading Xiulan into organizing an attack, hoping to convince the slaves to stand and be slaughtered or recaptured rather than scatter into the jungle. One of Tianfeng's citizens has discovered evidence of this plot, but fears to draw Xiulan's anger by seeming doubtful of the cause. He wants the PCs to find irrefutable evidence of the scheme.

# TONGREN

When the city of Jinan fell in the flames of the Ravaging and the Shou drove its survivors into the wilderness, most perished in short order. Wild beasts, Shou raiders, starvation, or simple despair cost the lives of nine of every ten who lived through that terrible day of ruin. The larger part sought refuge in the town of Lintao, but the magistrate charged with the town's defense refused to admit any but a few of the best warriors. He had no food for the others, and he expected a Shou siege at any hour. The survivors were forced to move on.

In the end, the Shou never came to Lintao. They were too busy charging east to richer land, and their skirmishers crossed the refugees' paths once more. Even more of the survivors died in the escape, and the sad remnants took shelter in the crumbling ruins of a deep-forest town from long before the exile. Whatever people had founded the place had vanished centuries ago, but the hollow houses and slumped walls of Tongren provided some haven for the wretched refugees.

As the months passed, more and more refugees from Jinan found their way to Tongren. Many of these were hardened and wild from their time in the wilderness, and it was necessary for the town's populace to make terms with each band of new citizens. Over time, this necessity smoothed out into a tradition of councils, and a town magistrate subordinate to the will of the nine most respected members of the community. At the winter solstice, each adult citizen declares their loyalty to a particular patron, and the nine most esteemed rule for the following year.

Tongren has never forgiven Lintao for its refusal to admit the refugees. They especially despise the heirs of those warriors who agreed to leave the other refugees in return for sanctuary for their families; while these Jinanese families in Lintao consider themselves righteous defenders of Jinan's ancient interests, the folk of Tongren count them as loathsome turncoats to their people. As such, those visitors from Lintao invariably claim to be from some lesser village in the region lest they be in for a vicious beating and a summary exile from the town.

Tongren hates Lintao, but it also needs the city. Much of the trade between the northern and southern halves of Westmark must pass through the Galukan Wald, and Tongren is placed at the thinnest section of the old forest's heart. A good portion of the wagons and caravans that pass through the town gates are either from or bound to Lintao, and dealing roughly with these merchants would beggar the town in short order. Tongren content themselves with asking few questions and admitting less about their dependence.

This does not prevent Tongren from quietly countenancing certain raids on Lintaoan holdings and military units. The town council has been able to cheerfully ignore these raids because the assailants were never strong enough to do more than kill a few careless perimeter guards or burn a village inn or two. It was enough to needle Lintao, but not enough to draw the city into actual war. So long as the attackers maintain that delicate balance of insufficient provocation, Tongren sees no need to do anything to restrain them.

## Town

<b>Leader</b>	Magistrate Ogmund Ulstein (F7), grizzled judge					
<b>Traits</b>	Outcasts, Councils					
<b>Obstacle</b>	Tide Cult/5					
<b>Assets</b>	Palisade (1/0/0), Barracks (2/0/0), Organized Militia (2/-1/0), Trading Center (-1/8/0), Mercantile (0/4/0), Shrine (0/0/2)					
<b>Units</b>	3 Barrier (0/-6/0), 1 Longbowman (-2/-1/-1), 1 Heavy Infantry (-2/-2/-1), 2 Light Infantry (-2/0/0) Barracks eliminates the cost of the Heavy Infantry					
<b>Values</b>	<b>Military</b>		<b>Wealth</b>		<b>Social</b>	
	0/	+0	2/7	+2	6/7	+1

This cheerful willingness to tolerate questionable groups is buying Tongren more trouble than they realize. One of the several bands of "foresters" that trade in the town is actually a covert Tide Cult, one still young enough to have retained the capability to masquerade as normal humans. They're spreading quiet talk of the "justice" they're inflicting on Lintao's rich merchants, and recruits who agree to go with them to their hidden camp in the forest don't come back until they've been dragged into the worship of the Red Tide. Those too strong to be broken become tragic martyrs lost in battle.

The leader of the cult is a flaxen-locked archer, Ilsa Svendsdottir, with flashing eyes, a winning smile, and several concealed tentacular growths on her body. She and her followers are convinced that worship of the Tide will result in their sparing when the mist completes its inevitable conquest of the Isles, and in the meanwhile the euphoric mania produced by the Tide's rituals leaves them unconcerned about their physical changes. Presently they still have enough presence of mind to hide their mutations from outsiders, but eventually they'll lose this inhibition and become blatantly obvious in their worship, likely days before they're finally able to open a gate for the mist and its demons.

## PLOT SEEDS

A merchant with ties to Lintaoan businesses is weary of having his caravans attacked. He's looking for outsiders willing to guard the next shipment north, and fails to mention that his prior caravans were not simply attacked, they were wiped out entirely. The party's caravan is ambushed, but by Tide cultists rather than mere bandits. Linking the cult to Tongren would be disastrous for the town's reputation, and some may be willing to pay to suppress evidence of the tie- or kill those who obtain it.

Ancient outbuildings of the former town have been discovered outside the walls, and passages going deep beneath the earth. Perhaps the town's former residents fled below to escape the Shou who threatened outsiders even then. Who is to say what manner of creatures they may have become?

# TWELVE SPEARS

## Ancient Settlement/Ruin

<b>Leader</b>	Blackhand, hill giant forge chief					
<b>Traits</b>	Ancient Armory					
<b>Obstacle</b>	Monsters/4					
<b>Assets</b>	1 Hill Giant Warband					
	<b>Military</b>		<b>Wealth</b>		<b>Social</b>	
<b>Values</b>	2/2	+0	4/4	+0	0/0	+0

In the days before the Ravaging, Twelve Spears was a prosperous forge-town in the foothills of the Godbarrows. Some long-lost ancient people had raised the walls and dug the iron mines that made the town so prosperous, and veins of hot magma fueled forges that never slept. Most of the weaponry fashioned in the Westmark came from the fires of Twelve Spears.

That made it a natural target for the Shou. When the Ravaging came, Witch-Queen Agrahti's horde crushed the valiant defenders, plundered the town of weaponry, and charged onward to the east. Nothing was left behind but bones and cold forges.

For decades, the ruins lay uninhabited by anything more than beasts and wandering Shou. Five years ago, however, an unusually foresightful hill giant chief led his clan to take up residence in the tumbled halls and deep delves of the town. He took human smiths as prisoners and forced them to teach his people the rudiments of mining and smithcraft before eating the luckless slaves.

The giant chief, now known as "Blackhand" for his sooty fists, has prospered in the years since. Shou tribes come from far distant with tributes of food and slaves in exchange for steel weapons from Twelve Spears' forges. Blackhand's clan are no dwarf-smiths, but their incredible strength and the richness of Twelve Spears' mines make up for such deficiencies. Their weapons are crude but far superior to the articles of bone and stone that most Shou can fashion without aid.

Blackhand dreams of more than mere rule of a tumbled ruin. The Shou have no love for giants, but they do not hate them the way that they hate the invading humans or their own loathsome kin. Blackhand imagines that he will be able to bribe and bully enough Shou to use them as support for his giant clan and together storm a human market town. If he can succeed in smashing enough

humans beneath his club, the Shou may well rally to his banner, and Blackhand could rule more than forges and rubble.

Blackhand's giants are not the only inhabitants of Twelve Spears, however. Several small groups of bandits and merchants can often be found in the ruins, come to trade with the giants for raw steel or finished weapons. Most keep a low profile; if a Shou tribe were to visit while they were there, they would need to remain well-hidden if they were to live. Trading with such a monstrous foe of humanity is also a grave crime in Westmark, and such traders have no desire to have their identity recognized by others.

Aside from the intelligent inhabitants of the ruins, many hill-country beasts and monsters lair around the periphery of the ruined settlement. The giants largely ignore such beasts, few of them being dangerous enough to seriously threaten an adult giant. These monsters take a cruel harvest of less capable entities, however, and the Shou do not come to Twelve Spears save in a well-armed hunting band.

The outside world knows little of what is truly happening in Twelve Spears. Even adventurers usually know it simply as a ruin deep in the western hills, one that might have something worth plundering. The few bands that have ventured west in the past few years have not returned, but such vanishment is hardly remarkable when dealing with wandering freebooters. The bandits and merchants who deal with the giants have, of course, every reason to remain quiet about their dealings.

## PLOT SEEDS

An eastern guildmaster yearns to learn the secrets of Twelve Spears' magnificent forges and smelters. He seeks bold adventurers to head west and make careful plans of the installation.

An old letter is discovered, dated just before the Ravaging. Sent by the apprentice of a powerful sorcerer, it speaks of a powerful magical sword fashioned from "the soul of the burning stone". The apprentice appears to have been writing to a ninja clan with the intent of commissioning them to steal the sword from its hiding place within the town, before the wizard could present it to the Mandarin of Xian as a token of fealty. The Mandarin certainly never received the blade, so it may well remain where the letter says it is hidden.

# VANGUARD KEEP

Once a bold keep on the Westmark borderlands, Vanguard Keep was the first conquest of the Witch-Queen Agrahti when she and her hordes rolled out of the Godbarrows. For too many decades, the mountain tribes had been quarrelsome and disorganized, easy prey for disciplined Xianese soldiers. With the Witch-Queen to unite them, their numbers and wild sorcery were too much for the high walls of the keep. The gates were shattered and the soldiers within slaughtered before they even knew what was happening.

Agrahti knew that haste was her best friend in crushing the Westmark, so she was profligate in hurling soldiers against the strong walls of the keep. Wave upon wave of Shou were sent forward to break upon the stones and to fill the trenches with mounds of their own dead. All the while, Agrahti's witchcraft conjured elemental forces to shake the foundations of the fort.

When the fortress was broken and the Shou surged east, nothing was left behind but the unburied dead. The sudden, savage release of so much death and mystical energy left a pall over the ruined keep, one that slowly infected the bones of the dead. It was not long before they rose once more to repeat the battle, rusted swords and broken spears becoming spectral weapons in their hands. Each cloven skull and broken pelvis became whole with each new dusk, and the dead rose once again to repeat their battle.

Neither side can ever truly win. The patterns of mutual destruction are too strong and old destinies still cling to their bones. The great war-chief Takul leads his rotting kinsmen against the spears of Castellan Liu's bodyguard, and every time all are slain in the end. The battle begins at dusk, and often runs straight to mid-afternoon of the next day.

It is during those few precious hours between the last broken charge and the first fall of dusk that Vanguard Keep is vulnerable to plunderers. Small bands of undead may still remain within the walls and strange creatures that have no quarrel with undead might be found in the tumbled buildings, but most of the undead await their eventual restoration. It is in this brief window that adventurers can rifle the bones of the dead and seek what treasure was left with their unquiet remains.

Those ambitious lords who seek to reclaim the keep must deal with this unceasing battle. The curse can be broken if Castellan Liu

## Crumbling Fortress/Ruin

<b>Leader</b>	Castellan Liu, mummified Xianese officer					
<b>Traits</b>	Commanding Location					
<b>Obstacle</b>	Severe Damage/7					
<b>Assets</b>	Walls (4/-1/0)					
<b>Values</b>	<b>Military</b>		<b>Wealth</b>		<b>Social</b>	
	2/6	+1	2/1	+0	0/0	+0

is ever able to “survive” from one dusk to the next. He is usually one of the first to “die” in the initial attack, as Takul and his dead kinsmen come by the hundred to swarm within the walls, with the remainder of the battle spent cleaning up the ferocious defenders by the surviving undead Shou.

The simplest way to aid Liu's survival is to repair the broken fortifications. If the old patterns are broken and the walls are whole before Takul's attack, the curse will be unable to exert the old pattern upon the keep, and Liu has a chance of surviving until dusk. Such repair would be exceedingly expensive and laborious, as it could only be done between mid-afternoon and dusk. Still, it is likely to be the only solution short of a valiant defense by hundred-slaying heroes.

## PLOT SEEDS

Castellan Liu bore an ancient seal of authority brought over from the Ninefold Celestial Empire during the exile. This seal grants the bearer the power to command many ancient Xianese golems and war-constructs, and several powers have an avid interest in acquiring it. Unfortunately, the Castellan was not carrying it when he died, and so it must be found somewhere within the keep's ruins.

In the wake of the keep's destruction, a number of nearby caves have become infested with human bandits. The numerous small groups fight and quarrel amongst each other, but they take advantage of the perpetual unearthly battle nearby to discourage large bands of warriors from seeking them out.



# WHITE JADE HILL

## Abandoned Town/Ruin

<b>Leader</b>	Nobu Kitano (C7), priest of the Jade God					
<b>Traits</b>	Rich Resources					
<b>Obstacle</b>	Sinister Cult					
<b>Assets</b>	Shrine (0/0/2)					
<b>Values</b>	<b>Military</b>		<b>Wealth</b>		<b>Social</b>	
	0/0	+0	4/4	+0	0/2	+0

In the days before the Ravaging, White Jade Hill was a prosperous quarry town nestled amid the low hills of the Galukan Wald. Where other masons sent heavy blocks of granite or limestone down rivers on wooden barges, the townsmen of Jade Peak sought rare stone- the precious jade that had so much value for Imperial sorcerers and so much beauty for other eyes.

Countless different kinds of jade were pulled from the low hills that surrounded the forest town: the spring-green luster of “green apple jade”, the brilliant green-flecked white of “moss-in-snow”, the golden luminescence of “sun jade”, and rarest of all, the flawless emerald translucence of celestial jade. The greatest archmages of the Ninefold Celestial Empire used this precious material for some of their most powerful artifacts, as the purest forms could endure the channeling of massive amounts of geomantic energy without shattering. Even aside from the deposits of gem jade were great slabs of creamy mutton-fat jade that could be cut out to adorn the walls of rich merchants’ houses and the palaces of daifus.

There was always a certain puzzlement at the hills, though. Elsewhere in the Isles, jade was a thing found in loose boulders and worn river stones, not in great masses beneath the earth. Still, who were they to kick at luck? The hillsides were stripped of their trees and became runneled with great strips of black earth torn to bare the white stone below.

This all ended when the Shou came. The Witch-Queen Agrahti and her horde burned Westmark to the ground, and White Jade Hill was no exception. The people were slaughtered and devoured, the buildings were toppled, and the hillsides were left to return to the forest’s green embrace. The roads that had led to the town were reclaimed by the Galukan Wald and its name became no more than a wistful memory.

Perhaps it was a consequence of the jade itself- a side-effect of such horror and slaughter committed in the proximity of such magically-potent mineral, but the dead did not rest easily in White Jade Hill. Slowly, fragments of jade dust and powdered stone crusted over the bones of the dead, mantling them in shrouds and layers to give them the seeming of perfect, pallid life. Were it not for their perfectly smooth skins and the pallor of their eyes and faces, the bodies that rose from their uneasy slumber would seem to be entirely normal men and women.

For decades, these unquiet shapes mimicked the lives they had led before the slaughter, pantomiming the tasks they had been about at the moment of their death. Outsiders were answered in

vague, dreamy fashion, or ignored, or torn to bloody pieces if they threatened one of the townsmen. For many years, White Jade Hill lived on as a ghost of itself.

That changed fifteen years ago, when the wandering adventurer Nobu Kitano and his adventuring party came to liberate the ruins of their remaining fragments of wealth. The Galukan Wald treated the little band harshly, and only Nobu and three companions yet lived by the time they reached the ruins. One of these died not long after they arrived, and Nobu and his friends despaired of escaping the place alive.

It was then that Nobu discovered the power of the place, when his dead companion was crusted in creeping jade dust and rose as if alive once again. He remembered little of his past and cared nothing for more than contemplating the white hills and the soothing perfection of the jade. Nobu counted it a miracle, and became determined to discover the secret of the power that dwelled in the ruins of White Jade Hill.

With time, he became convinced that the ruin itself was the birthplace of a new god, a spirit summoned of the life of all who died here. He counts himself a priest of this new “Jade God”, and is determined to strengthen it with sacrifices of new life. With each wayfarer and kidnapped farm girl who perishes under his knives, a fresh minion of the Jade God is soon to follow after. Nobu commands these undead with the power of a dark priest, and dreams of some day leading them on a great crusade out of the ruins to bring the truth and the glory of everlasting life to the heathen lands beyond.

Nobu has enlisted a number of living helpers over the years, mostly adventurers and scholars who have come to plunder the ruins and remained to learn more of its secrets. Most of them have little conviction in the Jade God, but are wise enough not to reveal that to Nobu. They spend their days searching for precious jade or studying the magical aura of the ruin, trying to find some way of replicating its undeath-inducing enchantment in a more practical form.

Yet when they walk beneath the gutted hills, even the most skeptical among them cannot help but feel a certain watchful presence there....

## PLOT SEEDS

A rich daifu’s son has lost his father’s chop, and is terrified lest it be discovered. He can have a new one made, but the jade must perfectly match the old- and the only place where the precise jade can be gotten is in a certain mine in White Jade Hill.

With the revival the Westmark, the Mandarinate of Xian is preparing to confirm old land records for those who present deeds of claim. They need a hearty band of surveyors to go out and inspect the ruins- and PCs make a good, expendable first batch of inspectors to clear the way for more important officials.

# ADVENTURER'S GUIDE TO THE WESTMARK

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One hundred and twenty-one years ago, the Westmark was a prosperous and thriving border province. Cities and towns dotted the peaceful landscape and men did not fear to go beyond their home village's palisade. The ancient ruins and abandoned dwarf-delves were proof enough that other peoples had been less fortunate in their settlements, but all seemed well for the Westmark.

One hundred and twenty years ago, that world ended in fire. The savage Shou tribes of the western mountains came down in a tide of screaming hate to reclaim the lands that men had taken. The Witch-Queen Agrahti was at their head, and she peeled this land like a bloodied knife. The only reason that any ruins retain two stones atop each other was her ferocious impatience to reach the richer eastern provinces and plunder Xian, the capital of men.

She roared over the Westmark leaving only smoke and weeping in her wake, and when she broke on Xian's walls in the coming months, it was no consolation to the border. So many had died in repulsing the Shou that there was no need for a far border any more; it had pushed east until men feared to ride two days from Xian's walls. For more than a century, humanity has slowly, painfully recovered from the devastation of the Ravaging.

Now men are returning to the Westmark. Not just the bandits, outlaws, malcontents, and exiles that have always sought refuge in this untamed land, but sturdy colonists and pioneers sent by the

richer lands of men. The dwarven folk have revived old delvings and their trade in iron and stone is helping to rebuild villages lost for a century or more. The pressure of growing population in the east is beginning to tell in Westmark's growing vitality.

And yet despite this, the land is choked with ruins still. Broken cities, plundered towns, the detritus of those ages before with their strange monolithic structures and ancient dwarven holds... all of these things await the attention of adventurers.

And more than that, this is a land of promise for conquerors as well as plundering hands. The great cities of Xian and Hohnberg and Tien Lung are far away, and their writ does not run easily in the Westmark. There is room for a canny adventurer to make his own destiny here, and if the great cities come to find a new lord among their number, why should it not be you?

But be wary. The Westmark is old in killing ways, and those who live here are not soft eastern souls, to fear every bully with a blade. The Shou still roam the wilderness in quarreling tribes, the Hell Kings still have their infernal priests blandishing the despairing and lost, and the hideous cults of the Red Tide that drowned the world so long ago can still be found in hidden places. If all of these are evaded, then a brave adventurer might yet live to cross blades with rival princes and enemies of high estate.

## IMPORTANT TOWNS AND CITIES

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**Hammersong** is a dwarven clanhold in the southwestern jungle hills. The dwarves within are pledged to forge war-harness for their dead ancestors, and view it as a point of piety to hammer out blades and armor for their forebears. A friendly lot, save towards slavers, whom they hate as all dwarves hate.

**Hamtun** is a sorry cluster of swamp shacks and half-drowned rice paddies in the northern swamps. The great city of Hohnberg to the north dispatched pikemen to set it up as a foothold in Westmark. It seems that Eirengarder pikemen are better at killing people than plating farmland. Friendly, but mind your manners.

**Kur Darisum** is a mountain fortress more than a town, hard by the western Godbarrow peaks. Its inhabitants are a Creed of elves known as the Kuan Amelatu, who are some kind of death-worshipping sorcerers. Not a friendly lot, but they'll trade with strangers at the gate.

**Lintao** is the jewel of northern Westmark, on the north shore of White Fin Lake. It and Taian are the only true cities in the province, and much that is wanted can be had here. Be careful of the local politics, though- the wrong answer to the right question can get your head split by the local toughs.

**Machida** is the gateway town, the main mercantile route for trade with Westmark. It's run by an insular bunch of Kueh. Not a bad folk, but they like their ways just fine, thank you, and don't care much for foreign customs.

**Naozishan** is a land-rush village in the far western hills. Plenty of cheap land to be had there, but there's been talk of some kind of rebel band operating in the nearby mountains. Naozishan's merchants cheated them somehow, they say.

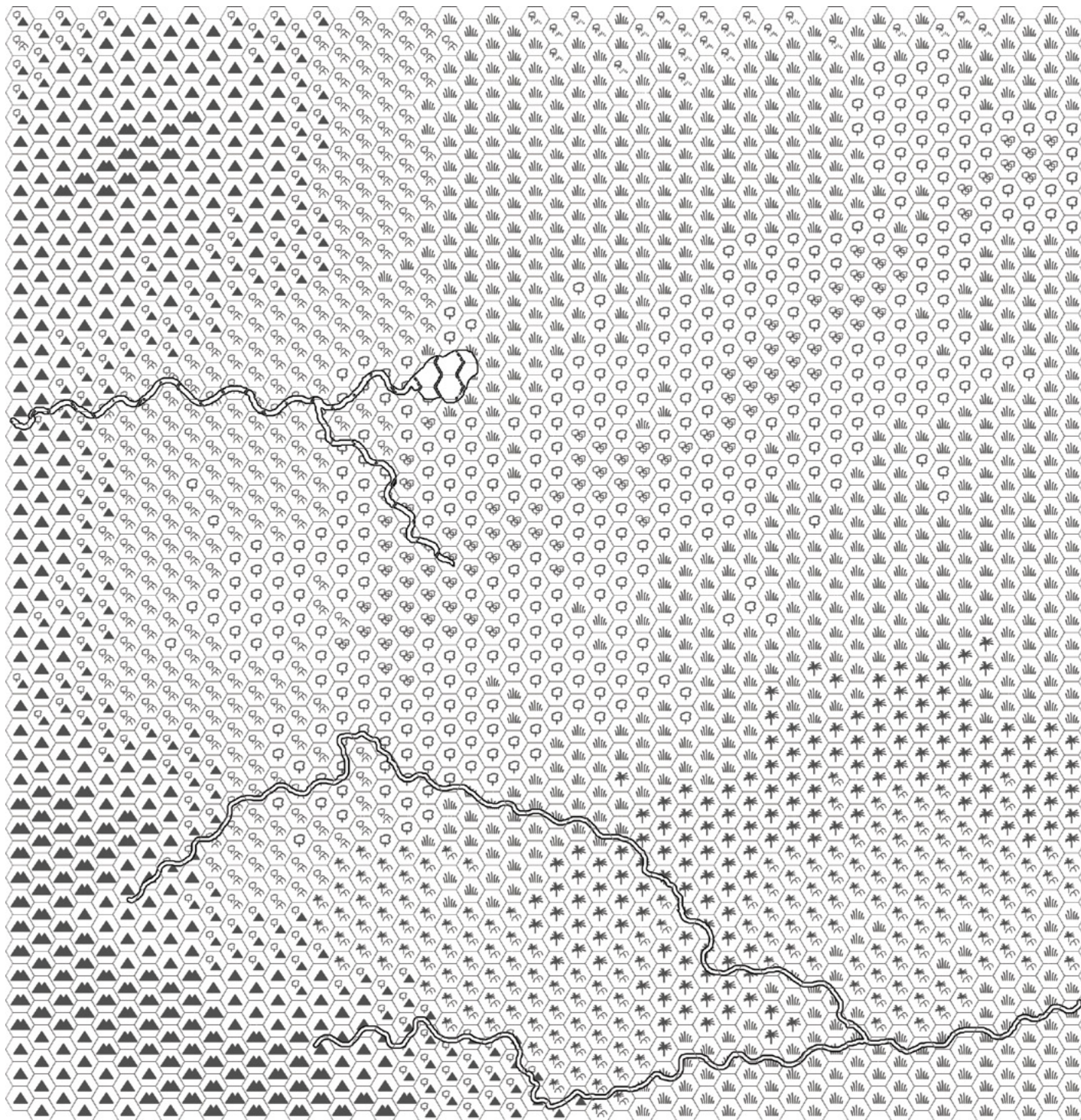
**Qalat** is an eastern timbering town full of prickly, independent sorts. They don't much like the regiment of Xianese horsemen that rode in a while ago, and some say they're about ready to rebel.

**Sallachy** is a town for Gadaal hill folk and their fine jewel-work. They're glad to trade with you, but if you're not Gadaal, they're just as glad for you to keep moving on.

**Taian** is the Carrion City, a bonepicker city of slavers, ruffians, blood sorcerers and worse. The Vulture Queen, Lady Halah, is a fearsome sorceress from the dark city of Tien Lung far to the south, and she never saw a man she couldn't sacrifice to something with too damn many arms.

**Tianfeng** is a town full of ex-slaves and runaways, most of them from Taian and the Tien Lungan lands to the south. They keep to themselves for the most part, but I hear they've got some kind of messiah now to rile them up against the old masters.

**Tongren** is a trade village in the Galukan Wald. They've got an old grudge against Lintao. If anyone asks you, you damn well aren't from around there.



**Map Key** 1 Hex = 5 Miles



# LOCATION

# LOCATION

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